

# TRAUMATIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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## I. Purpose

This Management Directive (MD) establishes Department of Homeland Security (DHS) policies and procedures for the Traumatic Incident Management (TIM) Program for DHS employees.

## II. Scope

This MD applies to all DHS Components.

## III. Authorities

- A. Title 5 U.S.C. § 7901, "Health Service Programs."
- B. Title 5 U.S.C. § 552a, "Records Maintained on Individuals."
- C. Office of Personnel Management (OPM)'s, "Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners."

## IV. Definitions

- A. **Components**: All the entities that directly report to the Office of the Secretary, which includes the Secretary, Counselors and their staff, Deputy Secretary and his or her staff, and Chief of Staff and his or her staff.
- B. **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**: A DHS confidential counseling program that offers assessment, short-term counseling, and referral services to employees for a wide range of problems that could interfere with work performance. Problems covered by EAP include, but are not limited to, emotional, family relationship, substance abuse, occupational, legal or financial problems. EAP also includes consultation and training for managers and supervisors seeking guidance in enhancing the work environment; improving employee job performance; and providing outreach to employees. Employee Assistance Program services are defined in DHS MD 254-02, "Employee Assistance Program".

C. **Traumatic Incident**. Any uncontrollable event or series of events that can overwhelm an individual's defense mechanisms, such as direct or indirect involvement in shootings; assaults; hostage incidents; suicides; threats on life, family or property; vehicular, helicopter or airplane crashes; or major injuries.

D. **Traumatic Incident Management (TIM)**: A wide range of programs and interventions, instituted by a Department Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that incorporates services that alleviate or prevent psychological trauma in Department personnel and enhance employees' ability to recover from significant stress or traumatic incident. TIM services may include, but are not limited to: debriefings; peer support; follow-up services; on-scene support services; information and referral services; family support services; group and individual interventions with respect to affected personnel; disaster preparedness training; and preventive, educational and informational programs. The protocol consists of EAP guidelines for implementing the various elements and procedures of a TIM model.

## V. Responsibilities

A. **The Secretary** exercises ultimate authority and responsibility for DHS with respect to assuring employee's access to confidential, responsive and comprehensive TIM.

B. **The Under Secretary for Management**, through the DHS Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), shall ensure compliance and maintenance of a DHS-wide TIM Program.

C. **The Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO)** will establish a DHS-wide TIM Program in a manner consistent with guidelines prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management. The CHCO shall:

1. Develop DHS-wide TIM policy.
2. Review Components' implementing procedures for compliance.
3. Provide guidance and coordination in the event of activation and relocation of Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) implementation.
4. Coordinate with Components following acts of terrorism or other disasters affecting Department-wide personnel or facilities needed by the Department.
5. Provide policy guidance and technical guidance in the development and implementation of Components' TIM programs.

D. **Components.**

Each Component must:

1. Develop related EAP/TIM policy and procedures that meet the needs of its respective employee population.
2. Ensure that its respective employee populations are aware of TIM policies and procedures.
3. Define its TIM program's scope of services, including after-hours procedures and eligibility.
4. Plan, promote, direct and evaluate its TIM program.
5. Coordinate with the CHCO EAP Administrator in the event of a large scale critical incident involving one or more Components.

## VI. Policy & Procedures

A. **Policy.** It is DHS policy to offer debriefing services to employees involved in or affected by a traumatic incident in order to prevent or minimize the potential for psychological injury.

B. **Procedures:** In most circumstances, an employee involved in a traumatic incident will be offered TIM services to minimize the potential of psychological injury. Participating in individual or group TIM counseling is strictly voluntary and an employee may decline such services without recrimination. As soon as possible following a traumatic incident, Component managers and supervisors shall make every effort to implement their EAP TIM protocol and assist in coordinating an appropriate EAP TIM response. TIM services may be extended to the employee's family members as the circumstances warrant and resources and contracts allow.

In the event of a terrorist attack or other disaster affecting personnel or facilities Department-wide or Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP) implementation, EAP Components shall cooperate with the CHCO in coordinating and delivering DHS traumatic incident response. The DHS EAP Administrator will serve as liaison with all affected Components, other agencies such as the Department of Justice, the National Organization of Victim Assistance, The Environmental Protection Agency's, Office of Emergency Prevention; and will coordinate with all Components in response to incidents involving mass casualties.

Implementing Guidance on TIM, including definitions and instructions for management and utilization, is provided in Appendix A of this MD.

## **VII. Questions**

Address any questions or concerns regarding this MD to the Office of the CHCO.

## **TRAUMATIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **I. Purpose**

Appendix A supplements DHS Traumatic Incident Management Directive (MD # 254-03) by providing definitions, instructions, and guidelines for the management and utilization of the Traumatic Incident Management (TIM) program. The TIM program is designed to alleviate or prevent the negative psychological and physical effects from exposure to a traumatic incident through education and other group or individual interventions.

### **II. Scope**

Each Component is encouraged to make a TIM program available for its employees. A Component that elects to offer a TIM program must develop related policy and procedures that meet the needs of its respective employee population, including after-hours procedures and eligibility. Services may include, but are not limited to, those included in the Glossary of this Appendix.

### **III. Procedures**

#### **A. Reporting a Traumatic Incident**

Following a traumatic incident, it is the responsibility of the manager of affected personnel to contact the respective Component's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to report the incident and arrange for debriefing services.

#### **B. Coordinating TIM Response**

In most circumstances, an employee involved in a traumatic incident will be offered TIM services to minimize the potential of psychological injury. Participation is voluntary and an employee may decline such services without recrimination. As soon as possible following the event, managers and supervisors will make every effort to coordinate an EAP TIM response.

#### **C. Scheduling TIM Services**

All affected employees will be notified 48-72 hours after the occurrence of the traumatic incident that the EAP will conduct a two-phase traumatic incident stress debriefing intervention.

## APPENDIX A

### D. Phases of TIM Services

1. The debriefing intervention consists of a 45-60 minute debriefing conducted by a debriefing professional. Participation is limited to the debriefing professional, peer support members and employees affected by the traumatic incident. During the debriefing, employees will be reassured that the signs of distress that they experience or may experience are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Employees will have an opportunity to discuss their reactions to the event in a group session.
2. At the end of the debriefing, the debriefing professional will notify the employees that a mental health professional will be available for anyone who desires additional TIM services.
3. A series of these debriefings may be scheduled to ensure that all employees have an opportunity to attend. TIM services may be extended to the employee's family, extended family and others as the circumstances warrant and resources allow.

### E. Scheduling Services on Government Time

Employee participation in TIM services may occur during normal working hours. Consistent with the needs of the employee and governing requirements, the employee's supervisor may determine that the employee will not be charged leave while participating in TIM services on the Government's time.

### F. Follow-up Services

Follow-up short-term counseling is available through the EAP. Components with Peer Support Programs (see Section IV) will offer follow-up services through peer support members available for ongoing, informal discussions.

### G. External Assistance

In the event of a large-scale act of terrorism or natural disaster involving mass casualties or the implementation of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), the DHS EAP Administrator will serve as liaison and at the direction of management will activate a multi-agency traumatic incident response team.

The DHS EAP Administrator will develop and coordinate with the assistance of the Components EAPs a Department-wide EAP-TIM response.

## **IV. Peer Support Programs**

Peer Support (PS) Programs provide ongoing, informal and effective follow-up support. Peer support members educate coworkers about normal reactions to stressful incidents and are an informal resource for peers. These trained employees help alleviate stress-related symptoms through ongoing informal discussions. Peer support teams do not replace professional counselors or substitute for the formal TIM program. Components that elect to offer peer support programs must develop related policy and procedures that meet the needs of its respective employee populations.

A. PS Policy and Purpose. At a minimum, PS programs will have well defined purposes, policies, goals, procedures, and training. The program will define the peer selection process and a protocol for supervising and removing peers for cause, and maintain an up-to-date roster of certified peers. PS members are volunteers.

B. PS Training. Peer Support Programs will provide training in carrying out the Component's TIM protocol, understanding of post-traumatic stress disorder and related symptomology, the concept, benefit and limitations of the Component's TIM model, confidentiality parameters, death notification protocol, if applicable and ethical standards. Training and certification is mandatory for any employee wishing to become a PS member. Post-certification training should be provided each year if funding permits.

C. Certification. Each respective PS program will develop a certification system. PS trainees should be certified by the Component's EAP upon successful completion of the required training and related testing as may be established.

## **V. Documentation and Reporting**

A. Records. Components cannot establish a TIM system of records which in any way identifies the individuals who have sought or received TIM services due to a traumatic event. PS members may not keep records or notes pertaining to any individual that may have received assistance while carrying out official duties as a PS member. This requirement does not preclude Components from keeping necessary administrative records or to tracking activities and services provided through TIMs. Components may also keep an historical record of TIM services by the type of service, number of individuals served, and time of services provided, etc.

## APPENDIX A

B. Confidentiality. Consistent with laws, regulations and ethics, TIM personnel have a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of those they serve. Information obtained about an employee during any TIM service by peers, TIM support personnel, chaplains and EAP personnel, etc., is considered confidential and may not be shared with any non-trauma incident management person, except as provided in MD 254-02, Employee Assistance Program. TIM personnel that provide individual or group debriefings following a traumatic incident must advise recipients who receive such services, that confidentiality, while honored within the program as described above, cannot be assured in group settings, or when provided by an unlicensed mental health counselor.



## ATTACHMENT 1 GLOSSARY

1. **Debrief**: A mental health practitioner trained in disaster psychology, crisis intervention, stress management, human communication, intervention strategies and post-traumatic stress disorders. For law enforcement related events, debriefers will have experience and training working with law enforcement personnel.
2. **Distress**: Includes normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Distress can be manifested in the following categories:
  - A. Physical – fatigue, nausea, headaches, shock, etc.
  - B. Cognitive – confusion, poor problem solving, inattentiveness, etc.
  - C. Emotional – anxiety, guilt, denial, panic, depression, irritability, etc.
  - D. Behavioral – changes in activity, withdrawal, emotional outbursts, drug consumption, inability to rest, etc.
3. **EAP**: The EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is defined in DHS MD, 254-02, “Employee Assistance Program”. EAP is a DHS confidential counseling program that offers assessment, short-term counseling, and referral services to employees for a wide range of problems that could interfere with work performance. Problems covered by the EAP include but are not limited to, emotional, family, relationship, substance abuse, occupational, legal, or financial problems. EAP also includes consultation and training for managers and supervisors seeking guidance in enhancing the work environment; improving employee job performance; and providing outreach to employees.
4. **Family Members**: Family members are defined as spouse (including a valid common law marriage) and unmarried dependent children under the age of 22 (twenty-two), including legally adopted children and recognized biological children who meet certain dependency requirements. Stepchildren and foster children are included if they live in a regular parent-child relationship. A regular parent-child relationship means one that is exercising parental authority, responsibility, and control over the child by caring for, supporting, disciplining, and guiding the child, including making decisions about the child’s education and health care. Foster children must live with the employee and the parent-child relationship must be with the employee, not the child’s biological parent. The employee must be the primary source of financial support for the child and the employee must expect to raise the child to adulthood. An unmarried

dependent child who is older than 21 (twenty-one) and incapable of self support due to a mental or physical disability that existed before age 22 (twenty-two) is also an eligible family member. Components wishing to provide services to a broader range of family members may do so if circumstances warrant and if resources are available.

5. **Peer Support Program:** An optional EAP/TIM program, sanctioned and managed by an EAP that uses Department employees who volunteer to act as peer support members. Peer support members are trained to support other employees and their families following a traumatic incident, to encourage them to seek medical or mental health counseling when it is in their best interest, or to more generally assist in implementing elements of the EAP's TIM program and outreach activities.
6. **Substance Abuse:** The use of alcohol or a psychoactive substance for other than medicinal purposes that impairs the physical, mental, emotional, occupational, or social well-being of the user.
7. **Traumatic Incident:** Any uncontrollable event or series of events that can overwhelm an individual's defense mechanisms, such as direct or indirect involvement in shootings; assaults; hostage incidents; suicides; threats on life, family or property; vehicular, helicopter or airplane crashes; or major injuries.
8. **Traumatic Incident Management (TIM):** A wide range of programs and interventions, instituted by a DHS EAP that incorporates services that alleviate or prevent psychological trauma in Department personnel and enhance employees' ability to recover from significant stress of a traumatic incident. TIM services may include, but are not limited to: debriefings; peer support; follow-up services; support services; information and referral services; family/significant other support services; group and individual interventions with respect to affected personnel; disaster preparedness training; and preventive, educational, and informational programs. The protocol consists of EAP guidelines for implementing the various elements and procedures of a TIM model.
9. **Traumatic Incident Stress Debriefing:** An educational process designed to minimize the impact of a traumatic incident on employees.