

Staff Wellness Action Team (SWAT): Description of Services

A Staff Wellness Action Team (SWAT) is a series of activities to be carried out by an organization's specially trained staff in the aftermath of a Critical Incident. They include pre-incident education, immediate (same day) response to the employee(s) directly involved with the incident, a group educational process within 3 days (CISD), follow up with the individuals within 7 days of the event and services made available to the family members when appropriate. Lastly, a Post Action Staff Support (PASS) process is provided.

A Critical Incident may be defined as any workplace event that is extraordinary in nature and which could be expected to produce significant reactions on the part of victims or those otherwise either directly or indirectly impacted, such as witnesses, colleagues and/or family members. Critical Incident Stress is often described as the normal reaction of a normal person to an abnormal situation. It may elicit within staff physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral responses.

A SWAT program should be designed around the principles identified through the work of Raymond B. Flannery, Jr., Ph.D. and utilize a full Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) range of services, as identified by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

Goals:

The essential goals of a SWAT program are to:

- To lessen the psychological aftermath of assaults upon staff, e.g., officers, teachers, housing unit managers, etc. by providing speedy services by specially trained peer and professional staff.
- To "speed up" the recovery of individuals impacted by the event.
- To demonstrate that the organization is prepared to "take care of its own".
- To develop "stress-resistant" individuals who are able to maintain reasonable mastery, caring attachments, and a meaningful life purpose (all skills that are helpful to cope adequately with life in general) when faced with traumatic acts of violence.

SWAT is applicable to many types of violence in many types of settings, e.g., corrections and police departments, corporate and industrial organizations, educational and vocational institutions, medical and psychiatric settings, community and religious agencies.

Daily Agenda:

Day 1: (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

- Scope of the problem
- Statistical patterns

- Common myths about violence
- Small group role plays
- Effective communication skills
- Dealing with strong emotions
- Developing an education briefing

Day 2: (8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

- Problem solving skills
- Small group role plays
- Intervention skills
- Referrals
- Postvention and aftercare

Learning Materials:

The instructor will supply handouts of the PowerPoint presentation used in this course. Lecture and discussion will be the main learning activities along with the extensive use of small group activities. A short post-test will also be used to measure learning.

Assignments:

Participants are expected to actively engage in dialogue with the instructors and other participants during interactive segments of the course.

Evaluation:

There will be an opportunity for the participants to complete an evaluation of the course and the instructor. Depending on the requirements of the hosting organization, there may be a short post-test of the material at the end of the seminar.