

Supporting Employees After a Critical Incident

A critical incident is an unexpected, high-impact event that can disrupt an employee's ability to function. As a manager, your response is key to providing immediate support and restoring stability. The following tips offer practical and compassionate guidance.



Responding as a Manager

Follow Organisational Policies and Procedures: Most organisations have protocols in place for managing critical incidents. Before taking action, familiarise yourself with your company's guidelines to ensure you provide appropriate support.

Create a Safe Space: After an incident, employees may need a quiet, private space to process what happened. Provide a calm environment where they can step away from work pressures and begin to regain a sense of control.

Acknowledge Normal Reactions: Experiencing a range of intense emotions—such as shock, fear, sadness, guilt, or anger—is a natural response to an abnormal event. Reassure employees that their feelings are valid and encourage them to communicate their needs.

Provide Clear Information: Understanding what happened can help employees make sense of the situation. Share factual information without speculation or personal opinions. If an employee is struggling with self-blame, offer alternative perspectives while remaining factual.

Offer Practical Assistance: Employees may need to make urgent phone calls or adjust personal arrangements. Help facilitate these tasks so they can focus on their well-being without added stress.

Listen and Validate Their Experience: Be available if they wish to talk but avoid minimizing their distress. Comments like "it could have been worse" can feel dismissive. Each person processes trauma differently—respect their individual response and recovery timeline.

Provide Support Without Imposing: Some employees may welcome company, while others prefer solitude. Respect their preference but ensure they are not left alone if displaying signs of severe distress, such as panic attacks or disorientation. Seek professional help if necessary.

Encourage Professional Support: As a manager, you are not expected to act as a counsellor. Encourage employees to access professional support, such as counselling, to assist with coping strategies and long-term recovery.

To book an appointment with one of our counsellors, call or scan the QR Code



1300 66 77 00
www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au

Supporting Employees After a Critical Incident Cont...

Assess Readiness to Return to Work: Do not assume employees are ready to resume duties immediately. Give them time to process the event and check in on their ability to continue working. Offering flexibility can aid their recovery.

Promote Healthy Coping Strategies: Encourage light activities like walking or drinking water. Discourage reliance on substances like alcohol, drugs, or excessive caffeine, which can interfere with recovery.

Follow Up in the Weeks Ahead: Support shouldn't end after the initial response. Check in periodically to see how employees are coping and reinforce their ability to navigate challenges.

Support Services for Managers

Onsite Critical Incident Support: Access Wellbeing Services (AWS) provides immediate onsite support using evidence-based approaches such as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and Psychological First Aid (PFA). Sessions are conducted within 24-72 hours post-incident to assist individuals and teams.

Manager Support Hotline: Managers and supervisors can access AWS's Manager Support (MS) service for advice on handling employee-related challenges. A 15-minute consultation is available via phone, with additional face-to-face support as a fee-for-service option.

Employee Wellness Checks: AWS offers Wellness Checks (WC) to provide immediate support, assess risk, and connect employees with EAP services. This includes a 15-minute phone consultation, with follow-ups as needed.

General EAP Counselling: AWS provides confidential counselling for individuals, couples, and families to support resilience, workplace wellbeing, and personal growth. Highly qualified EAP counsellors offer guidance across various therapeutic modalities to support recovery and productivity.

For more information on these services, contact AWS directly.

To book an appointment with one of our counsellors, call or scan the QR Code



1300 66 77 00
www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au