

District 14 Critical Incident Stress Management Annual Report FY23

Total interventions	51
Debriefings	6
Defusings	16
CMB	2
Orientation Session	3
Mutual aid requests	4
Peer Support/ One on ones	11
Consultations	4
Referrals	5

Peers Served	282
Team Members Activated	77

Activations- We had a busy year with activations. We were requested 51 times in FY23. At every activation, Chief Flannery records the number of team members present and the number of first responders (peers) present. He records this as “peers served” and “team members activated”. All in all, we reached 272 peers in FY23. Many of these peers attended a defusing and required no further action. This is a great way for few team members to reach multiple peers. A defusing is a meeting shortly after a critical incident where team members ask the 1st responders present about the facts of the incident. The goal is to get people to share their thoughts and memories to prevent further mental trauma. A defusing is also a screening to find people that may need a full debriefing or further treatment. Alternatively, we had 20 requests for peer support through a one on one, consultation or referral. These one on ones typically come from someone who was educated after a critical

incident or also may seek out help on their own.

Training- was conducted monthly in a hybrid fashion at our monthly meetings. We offered all in person meetings as a hybrid option, and held some meetings fully remote. Several of the topics are required by the Massachusetts Peer Support Network. We spent more time this year focusing on reviewing our activations. This creates more participation and learning from each other.

Personnel-In 2021 we had 26 team members. We have seen consistent growth. We are currently up to 31 members with 4 more in various stages of initial training. It takes about a year to get fully trained with academy schedule and the team trainings. Because of this, we let new applicants join the team prior to completing all certifications. However, people who have not completed all certifications can not participate in activations.

Looking ahead- Chief Flannery and I hope to do more work with the onsite academy in Gardner, MA. This is a mental health rehab facility that is available for three- or five-day sessions for first responders in Massachusetts. We recently visited and got a tour of the facility. The work that is being done up there is truly amazing. Not every 1st responder requires a weeklong trip to a facility; the peer support is typically an opportunity to share one’s concerns or issues and this may be enough to curb the issues without going away. A referral would be the next step in peer support, where a peer is referred to the onsite academy. This past year a firefighter on the District CISM team started a peer support group in addition to the district 14 CISM team. A lot of the work is similar, but the goal would be have a trained firefighter handle some problems in house prior to stress spiraling out of control and creating a greater problem. This is a new endeavor and may be part of the CISM umbrella in the future. We hope that by training firefighters about stress and coping mechanisms early in firefighters careers, that less careers be cut short.