

Ascension EAP Crisis Response Services

The sad fact is that tragedy and trauma happens sometimes. In any circumstance, a crisis (also known as a critical incident) is tough to navigate in the workplace. You may know that you need to take action, but knowing the right things to do can be difficult. EAP can help.

Critical Incident

A critical incident is a situation that challenges our beliefs of how the world should be, such as right vs. wrong; fair vs. unfair; safe vs. unsafe. These might include things like unexpected death, violence, anger, or property destruction.

Ascension EAP staff are all Master's level counselors trained in Trauma Response Services. We provide professional, organized services that are responsive and individualized to meet your needs. Past trauma response models have required certain protocols during "debrief" meetings, but modern trauma response services are not so scripted. In some instances it may be best to have a counselor come on-site to debrief about the situation with employees, but sometimes it might be better to offer resources, education, and access to on-going support. In every case your EAP counselor will assess the situation to help you determine what response will be most helpful to your organization.

It all starts at Intake

Licensed EAP staff can be reached by phone or e-mail during regular business hours, but we know that sometimes life happens outside of business hours. Our answering service will triage your call and get you connected to a counselor any time of the day or night.

At first contact the EAP counselor can help in many ways. They will listen and help you stay calm, suggest immediate resources for you and associates, and help you make a plan. We'll ask you a lot of questions, but you don't have to know all the answers. We are just trying to understand the situation as best we can, so we can determine the most appropriate response.

For more information:

Ascension WI EAP

| (800).540.3758

| eap@ascension.org



Your Role as a Leader

When it comes to your role as a leader in critical incident situations, there are several things you can do for yourself and your associates. First, you must be able to identify that a Critical Incident has happened. This may sound easy, but it's not always so black and white. Some of the obvious critical incidents may include workplace violence, tragic death, or major natural disasters, however; sometimes layoffs or even “close calls” might be considered a critical incident for some people. But don't worry—you don't have to determine if a situation is truly a critical incident. Just give us a call and we will help you figure out what to do in every case.

Once you've identified an incident, it is important to attend to immediate needs first. This might include moving people to safe areas, communicating work process changes, or contacting police or other emergency responders. After all immediate needs have been addressed then it is time to call EAP. Sometimes leaders want EAP counselors to come on-site before the smoke has even cleared. This is usually not a good idea because after a crisis incident people need to rest and be close to loved ones. They are often not ready to talk to a counselor until hours or even days after the event. In any case, we will encourage you to take good care of yourself through this difficult situation, so that you will be in the best shape to monitor associates and their reactions, provide resources to associates, and consider which EAP interventions will be most helpful. And remember—you never have to figure these things out yourself. EAP staff are trained and ready to assess, triage and serve your organization.

Collaboration

It is important to note that EAP staff will always work with natural supports within your organization to support affected associates. These might include Chaplains, HR, supervisors/leaders, and other key players. We believe that it takes a collaborative effort of support, education, encouragement and self-care to help people build resilience and recover from the effects of trauma and tragedy. Ascension EAP will guide the trauma response every step of the way, but collaborating with key players is crucial to the success of our associates and our organization, and we want you to be involved!

Contact US

The bottom line is that Ascension EAP is here for you. Contact us anytime. We're ready to help.

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Trauma Response Tip Sheet

This tip sheet will help you lead purposefully and effectively in the event of grief or tragedy.

- 1). ***Don't panic.*** When a death or tragedy happens it is easy to get caught up in the fear and panic of the moment. Do your best to remain calm. If you feel yourself getting frantic take several deep breaths and force yourself to slow down. Call EAP to process your reactions and begin planning a response for the organization.
- 2). ***Take calm, assertive action.*** Immediately following a death or trauma employees want facts. Let them know as much as you can about the incident without breaching the privacy of the surviving family or confidentiality of the employee. Explain to workers that you will tell them more as information becomes available, and mention available services to help them cope (such as EAP). Understand that employees will want to talk to each other about the incident, so do your best to avoid rumors by giving them accurate, timely information.
- 3). ***Have realistic expectations.*** In the trail of a death it is often difficult to estimate the impact it will have within an organization. Sometimes when we think people will be devastated and need intensive services they really do ok on their own. On the other hand, be careful of underestimating how people will be affected. Make arrangements to offer support to employees, but be careful not to catastrophize the impact on your staff. People are resilient.
- 4). ***Understand that people need time to process.*** Ascension EAP wants to support your company, but an immediate response is not always the best response. Grief is a long process that unfolds over time. If counselors respond to the workplace immediately, people may be too shocked, fatigued or confused to be able to process with a counselor. Usually it is best to wait several days before a counselor would be best utilized. Before deciding on a response, talk it over with an EAP counselor to determine the best course of action.
- 5). ***Consult with the counselor on how to reach out.*** In general, people are usually not comfortable getting counseling in their workplace, but sometimes grief-share groups are helpful and sometimes just offering EAP services to employees is helpful. Please allow the counselor to offer input as to how services can be tailored to fit the circumstances and needs of your organization.
- 6). ***Continue to assess your employees.*** Sometimes people may need more help and support days or even weeks later when the shock has worn off, especially around the holidays or anniversaries of the death or tragedy. Continue to monitor the work environment long after a significant loss. Things will never be quite the “same,” but if the employee atmosphere is not progressively returning to “normal” or things just don’t seem “right” you can always call EAP to consult with a counselor about what other help and support can be offered.

For more information:

Death of an Employee

When a death happens in or around the workplace, people want information. It's important to publicly share information in order to avoid the rumor mill; however, it's also important to respect the privacy of the surviving family. This template will help you determine just what to say.

Dear Team,

It is with much regret that we inform you that [person] died [when].

[Share details of the death without revealing anything the family wishes to keep private. Many families do not wish to disclose suicide. When in doubt, play it safe, and NEVER reveal the method used in suicide. In all cases be sure to avoid any gruesome details—general statements are best.]

Example: We regret to inform you of the reported suicide of [employee] on [date, time]. With the family's permission we are sharing the facts as we know them and are offering support for those who might need it through our Employee Assistance Program.

Example: By now I am sure many of you are aware of the loss suffered by [person, department]. Her [family member] died suddenly on [date, time]. The cause of death was [illness, accident, etc.]

Example: We are sad to let you know of the death of [employee], who passed away [date, time] after fighting for many years with [terminal illness]. We are sad for this tremendous loss of an exceptional individual [who made a remarkable impact on this company; who was a devoted family member, friend, etc.].

The family has requested... *[Relay any special instructions about contacting the family, charities they would like donations to go to, any special requests, etc.]*

[The funeral arrangements are as follows: / We will inform you of any details about a memorial service as they become available.]

We understand that this loss will affect each person differently, and we respect each person's need to grieve in their own way. Please remember that we have a free and confidential service available to support you through this time: Employee Assistance Program 800-540-3758.

[Designated person] will help coordinate a [donation / gift] to the [family/charity], if you would like to contribute.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

For more information: