

Clinical Counseling Unit Emergency Response Services

Introduction

A College Emergency Response Plan is a tool to be used by the college in the preparation for, response to, and recovery from events or crisis. Each crisis can pose distinct and unique challenges. It is neither feasible nor possible to anticipate every possible crisis scenario, it is necessary and sufficient that the plan is a “living” document which will be regularly reviewed and revised as circumstances dictate. The Emergency Response Plan should provide for:

- 1) The Identification of teams, their roles and responsibilities during emergency
- 2) Regular training for each team identified
- 3) Education to students, faculty and staff on the steps to follow during emergencies, and
- 4) Regular exercises involving students, faculty, staff and emergency teams to test the college plan’s ability to respond in a coordinated and effective fashion.

At the Community College of Baltimore County, the administrative responsibility for the College Emergency Plan is under the auspices of the Vice President of Administrative Services.

The Clinical Counseling Unit is one identified response team at the Community College of Baltimore County. This staff with emergency response training will deliver the following professional services as needed:

A. Crisis Intervention

This is a form of mental health intervention provided in the midst of a crisis situation. It is an active, but temporary, intervention with these objectives:

- Shielding the crisis victim from additional stress
- Assisting the victim in organizing and mobilizing emotional and physical resources
- Returning the victim to a state of equilibrium approaching pre-crisis levels

Elements of the intervention include:

- Assessment of current and relevant pre-crisis stressors
- Assessment of extent of the impact of crisis on current functioning potential (e.g., potential threat to self)
- Assessment of current problem- solving and coping capacities
- Provision of pragmatic emotional support
- Education as appropriate:
 - ❖ Phases of emotional response to crisis
 - ❖ Additional coping methods that can be utilized
 - ❖ Warning signs of ineffective coping behaviors
 - ❖ Identification of resources and support systems
 - ❖ Consideration of further mental health assistance
 - ❖ Referral for additional services and assistance as needed

B. Powerful Event Group Support (PEGS)

This form of intervention is often directed toward emergency responders and victims. It may be conducted during, at the end of, or subsequent to a response to a crisis or emergency on an individual basis or with small groups of responders. This intervention is an attempt to mediate post-traumatic stress symptoms which are likely to arise after the resolution of the emergency and which may continue for weeks, months and even years after the crisis. The PEGS is not a critique, but rather a discussion of facts and feelings surrounding the crisis event, with the protection of confidentiality and under the direction of trained, competent professionals. It also provides education about stress reactions, normal responses, and indication of the need for further assistance and the identification of coping strategies.

C. Crisis Management Briefing

This is a group crisis intervention technique designed for use with relatively large groups of primary victims. It may be implemented with victims of mass disasters, students following school-related incidents, and employees after work-related crises. Objectives of this intervention are:

- Provide accurate and current information
- Rumor control
- Reduce sense of chaos
- Provide coping resources
- Facilitate follow-up care
- Engender increased cohesion and morale
- Assess further needs
- Restore adaptive levels of functioning

D. Immediate Small Group Support

This form of intervention has the same objectives as the PEGS, but is less formal and likely to be briefer. It is a discussion of the feelings and reactions to a critical incident that is facilitated by a trained professional (and is usually conducted during or within 12 hours following a precipitating event) in a group format. After participants express feelings and reactions, a leader discusses or reviews adaptive and maladaptive stress-reducing and coping techniques.

Individual Crisis Intervention

This intervention may vary from a casual inquiry about how people are feeling or coping to a more private discussion about a particular difficulty or issue. It is directed toward victims and responders and involves some assessment of the individual or group's psychological state (e.g., expressions of anger, anxiety, grief, etc.), validation of feelings and educating about the recovery process with recommendations for further assistance.