

Mental health support following a critical incident

A Leader's guide



If you are in a leadership role in which you have individuals reporting to you, it is important to be aware of the mental health supports and consultative resources available on campus so that you can effectively guide your team following a critical incident. This document is a reference guide that can be used to reduce distress and help you direct individuals to the appropriate on and off-campus resources for consultation and support.

To support a psychologically safe workplace, leaders are encouraged to become familiar with this document and discuss it with their teams proactively.

What is a critical incident?

Everyone experiences the world differently and there is no single way to define a critical incident, but generally a critical incident is *an unexpected and unusual event perceived by an individual as being threatening or traumatic*. Some examples of critical incidents are:

- acts or threats of violence
- serious injuries, near deaths or fatalities
- natural or human-caused disasters.

To overcome the acute stress and emotional reaction that can come with such an experience, a person may need to utilize additional or different coping strategies than usual.

Responding to a critical incident

1 Get help and assess effects

- Call **911** for life-threatening situations. Call **Campus Security** 24/7 at 403.220.5333 for all other situations.
- **Campus Security** will assist in identifying and addressing immediate safety concerns at the scene of the incident.
- Inform your leader that a critical incident has occurred and discuss immediate operational concerns and actions.
- Recognize the potential mental health impact on individuals (staff, faculty and/or students) who were directly or indirectly involved — consider the possible effects for each individual.

2 Communicate, connect and identify resources

- Check in with affected individuals before they leave work for the day. Listen and provide an opportunity for informal and voluntary discussion while respecting the confidentiality and privacy of those involved.
- Inform **Staff Wellness** about the situation as soon as possible and provide details about who could be impacted in relation to staffing group, faculty and/or student involvement. This will assist in allocating appropriate resources.
- In consultation with **Staff Wellness**, discuss potential impacts and the possible need for onsite or individual support services. Upon consultation with the **Staff Wellness** mental health consultant, you will be directed to appropriate onsite or offsite resources to share with individuals.
- Provide detailed information about the available and recommended resources listed in this document. Encourage individuals to access supports as soon after the incident as possible — supports may also include peers, family members and/or personal coping strategies. The individual can choose to access resources as they feel appropriate.

3 Follow up

- Every critical incident is unique and will present varying challenges and reactions. **Staff Wellness** and the **Student Wellness Centre** are available for consultation and follow-up support for staff, faculty and students.
- Talk openly and regularly with your team in the days and weeks following the incident and offer help to connect them with resources as needed.
- Reflect on your own mental health and access support and/or resources available as needed.

Resources

On campus resources

Campus Security (24/7)	403.220.5333
Staff Wellness	403.220.2918 ucalgary.ca/staffwellness
Sexual Violence Support Advocate	403.220.2208
Human Resources	Contact your area's HR Partner ucalgary.ca/hr/about/hr-services
AUPE Local 52	403.220.8511 local052.aupe.ca
The Faculty Association of the University of Calgary	403.220.5722 tucfa.com
Student Wellness Services	403.210.9355 ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre

Off campus resources

Homewood Health Employee and Family Assistance (24/7)	1.800.663.1142 ucalgary.ca/staffwellness/EFAP
Distress Centre Calgary (24/7)	403.266.4357

Homewood Health Employee and Family Assistance Plan

Some of the most valuable resources available to employees who have experienced a critical incident are offered at no cost through the **Homewood Health Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP)**.

Employees and their dependents can use EFAP to access professional counselling services (face-to-face, telephone, video or online). EFAP provides additional online services including online cognitive behavioural therapy, health risk assessments, e-learning courses and an extensive health and wellness library with articles, videos and podcasts.