

## When Trauma Strikes an Organization: Some Tips For Managers

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You have recently become aware that a traumatic event, or **critical incident**, has occurred which will likely have an impact upon your organization. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to help you and your organization recover from this event. This handout will provide you with some initial suggestions which other organizations have found helpful in the initial response to the news of a traumatic event. The EAP can help you form a plan handling this event and minimize its disruptive impact upon your organization. The following guidelines will assist you in your interim response to the event, before a more detailed plan is developed and implemented.

- ★ **Expect a reaction from your staff.** The impact of this event may trigger feelings of anxiety, anger or grief from your staff. While it may be difficult to anticipate exactly how our organization will respond to the incident, you may expect some reactions in the immediate aftermath of the event, which are best dealt with by acknowledging these reactions, rather than ignoring them.
- ★ **Be visible.** During times of anxiety and change, it is reassuring to the members of an organization to have contact with those in leadership positions.
- ★ **Gather and manage any available information about the event.** Rumors and misinformation frequently spread through organizations during times of anxiety. Also, if this was a “newsworthy” event, the local news media may be seeking a source of information to assist them in covering the event. Communications about the event should be accurate, open and straightforward.
- ★ **Develop a plan.** Soon after the traumatic event, consult with HR and EAP staff to develop a plan for responding to the event. This may include providing educational support groups, called Critical Incident Stress Debriefing groups, to those affected by the event.
- ★ **Announce your plan as soon as possible.** Once you have developed a plan for responding to the event, make a formal announcement, either in memo form or in a special staff meeting, about the services available to