

CIRT ACTIVATION

The MCBHC CIRT can be activated in two ways. First, anyone employed by the BHC can be contacted directly by someone of another organization requesting assistance. A second route is through our county 911 system. As crisis calls come through the 911 system the BHC crisis worker on call may activate the system. Because 911 is aware of ongoing or developing incidents before the general public they are often the first ones asked to provide MH assistance. The 911 system can also contact the team to disseminate information. The MCBHC CIRT never responds without a formal invitation.

Through either method of activation, critical information on the incident is collected and disseminated to the CIRT Coordinator. This individual, assigns an on site team leader, makes the determination as to how many responders are needed, where the team will meet and what will be a general course of action. This information is then used to activate the phone chain. A response plan is enacted and the intervention is provided.

There is no cost associated for the services provided by the CIRT or Helping Hands teams. All of the workers participate on a voluntary basis and are only deployed to a scene when officially invited. The team is available to meet the critical incident emergency behavioral health needs of the community 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Mercer County
Behavioral Health
Commission, Inc
8406 Sharon-Mercer Rd
Mercer, PA 16137**

724-662-1550 Administration
724-662-2230 Central Intake Unit
724-662-2227 After hours Emergency

Revised 02/25/2011

**Critical
Incident
Response
Team**



CIRT HISTORY

Since its conception in 1998, the MCBHC CIRT effort has evolved into a multi-system response network that includes 38 trained responders from various social service, educational, law enforcement, and clerical resources in the Mercer County area. The team follows the principles of the National Organization for Victims Awareness (NOVA) and has participated in various levels of training from NOVA. Of these 38 responders, 17 have received the five day basic NOVA training and 21 have additionally completed the three day Advanced NOVA training.

The MCBHC CIRT maintains mutual aid agreements with the Mercer County Department of Public Safety and The American Red Cross. CIRT participates annually in mock FEMA disaster drills in conjunction with the Department of Public Safety.

CIRT IMPACT

Since its conception the CIRT team has been officially activated 60 times. The team has been called to the scenes of disasters, to schools, hospitals, health centers, and industrial sites. Reasons for activation have included student and teacher deaths, suicides, murder, car accidents, industrial accidents, bomb threats, terrorism, and natural disasters. Those the teams have worked with include students, teachers, families, labor industry workers, and other Mental Health professionals.

MCBHC CIRT

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mercer County Behavioral Health Commission, Inc will provide a Critical Incident Response Team to coordinate a multi-system response in the event of a disaster. This team will serve as a resource for support, education, and training.

BASIC NOVA PRINCIPLES

The basic principles of NOVA are to provide intervention of victims of traumatic events. While one on one intervention is available, group intervention is provided whenever possible. Basic objectives of NOVA intervention include:

Safety and Security– assuring victims they are safe and that this is a safe environment for them to express their thoughts and feelings.

Ventilation and Validation-allowing victims to “tell their story” and understand that most reactions to horrific events are not abnormal

Prediction and Preparation-allows victims to identify and plan for the practical issues that they may face in the aftermath of a tragedy.

CIRT INTERVENTIONS

Critical Debriefing: provided to individuals that have directly witnessed or experienced a traumatic event. Usually provided in a group– setting, but can be provided individually if needed.

Supportive Intervention: provided to individuals that have experienced a traumatic event indirectly

Grief/Loss Intervention: provided to individuals that have experienced the loss of a loved one or close friend through a traumatic event

Psychological First Aid: triage and assessment provided to individuals immediately following a traumatic event.

Disaster Crisis Outreach/Referral: provided in the event of a disaster. Team approach involving community outreach to triage and assess individual and community needs for immediate and long term needs. Activated by local EMA, PEMA, or FEMA.