Goal: To provide information on support and resources available to supervisors and managers who are involved in managing a critical incident.

Objectives:
1. Communicate the University’s process for effectively managing critical incidents.
2. Acknowledge the incident and demonstrate how members of the campus community are supported by the University.

Context: A critical incident is a traumatic event that is sudden, unexpected, and outside of the norm of daily experience. Such incidents typically evoke strong emotional, physical and behavioral responses. Examples of critical incidents include a suicide or accidental death, an act of violence, or a serious accident. The physical, mental and emotional effects that go along with these types of events are known as a critical incident stress response. While this is a normal reaction, experienced by normal people to abnormal events, it can worsen if not addressed.

Critical incident stress management assists work groups acknowledge and manage the stress reaction that arises from a critical incident. Services are available through the EFAP at no cost and benefit those involved by:
- normalizing their experience;
- encouraging group cohesion and social support;
- encouraging use of constructive methods for dealing with acute stress;
- decreasing the likelihood that participants will use destructive means to cope with stress; and
- providing encouragement to those who require additional support to access individualized services.

There are two types of crisis intervention offered, debriefing and defusing.
- **Debriefing** should be arranged within 24-72 hours of the incident, once individuals have had the opportunity to assimilate the experience. This is the most commonly used intervention. The group and one-on-one sessions offered provide individuals involved an opportunity to discuss the situation, as well as their feelings, and learn about further services and supports available to assist them.
- **Defusing** provides an immediate, on-site response to trauma and is intended to be therapeutic and preventative. It is recommended in situations where the immediate emotional response the individual is experiencing to the event is so great there is concern that unrealistic fear or panic may set in. In most cases, though, debriefing rather than defusing is the more appropriate response.

Key Points:
1. The supervisor/manager should contact Health Promotion and WorkLife Services to make arrangements for critical incident debriefing as soon as possible—no later than 72 hours after the incident. **Contact information follows on page 2.** You will be asked for the information outlined below when you call:
   - Specific nature and time of the incident, number and relationship of staff members or students involved, location of the affected group or team, and observations regarding how they are doing
   - Contact information for someone who can be easily reached to coordinate the response
   - Scheduling considerations

2. Following the incident, it is important to support those involved by acknowledging their feelings, expressing concern for their well being, offering suggestions and encouraging them to access individualized services through the EFAP or Health Promotion & WorkLife Services as required. The supervisor/manager plays a critical role in providing this support.
3. If the incident occurs outside of normal business hours, and an immediate onsite response is required due to the severity of the situation, the senior administrator involved should contact the EFAP directly at 780.428.7587 to arrange for a psychologist to be dispatched to the worksite. Where this request is made, the senior administrator involved should also email one of the contacts listed below to appropriately report the critical incident and arrange for further services or follow-up.

4. It is important to monitor the reactions of staff members involved in the weeks following the incident. Contact the Program Consultant & EFAP Administrator or the assigned Rehabilitation & WorkLife Consultant to discuss any questions or concerns arising from conversation with staff members or students.

Contact Information for Critical Incident Response

Manager, Health Promotion and WorkLife Services
Melanie Goroniuk
phone: 780.492.5399
melanie.goroniuk@hrs.ualberta.ca

Program Consultant & EFAP Administrator
Sarah Flower
phone: 780.492.2249
sarah.flower@hrs.ualberta.ca

HR General Reception
phone: 780.492.4555 and ask to be transferred to a staff member in Health Promotion and WorkLife Services

For an immediate onsite response by a psychologist to an emergency outside of regular business hours call Homewood Human Solutions at 780.428.7587 or 1.800.663.1142.