



Law Enforcement
Management Institute of Texas

Post Critical Incident Seminar



MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM™

PCIS FY 2019 Summary Report

February 21, 2020

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In FY2019, the Office of the Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Division provided funding to the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) and Sam Houston State University in order to implement the Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) to first responders and companions. One component of this funding was an assessment of PCIS implemented over the course of the year. Here, we highlight key findings from the seminars implemented in 2019.

What is PCIS?

The PCIS program is part of a nine-state collaboration that offers the seminar to law enforcement and first responders after they experience a critical incident. LEMIT defines a critical incident as "any event that results in an overwhelming sense of vulnerability and/or loss of control" (PCIS 42, 2019). This partnership follows the pre-existing PCIS program model directed by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program (SCLEAP) that is based on the FBI's Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program first put into use in 1983.

PCIS is a peer-led stress recovery program that includes a number of program components, such as large group seminars, small peer group sessions, peer-to-peer support, mental health and professional counseling services, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) treatment sessions, voluntary massage therapy, voluntary prayer service, and follow-up referrals. These components are delivered in a highly structured, three-day seminar format.

Participants are able to share their experiences with others who have gone through the same or similar types of critical incidents. Participants also have the chance to learn from and speak with mental health professionals that specialize in critical incidents for first responders. Law enforcement officers who participate in the seminar receive 24 hours of Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE) credit and the program is offered at no cost to participants.

LEMIT's PCIS program involves a number of key personnel and volunteers to ensure each seminar is successful. This includes the program director and program coordinators, the Executive Director of LEMIT, the Clinical Director of SCLEAP, licensed psychotherapists, a medical/pharmaceutical physician, and massage therapists. Additionally, there is a team of volunteer peer support personnel. All volunteers have previously gone through the seminar themselves and "sat at the table." This means that personnel have had similar types of experiences as the participants, understand what they may be going through, and can help participants throughout the seminar.

Who attends PCIS?

The target population for PCIS is law enforcement officers, tele-communicators and dispatchers, non-law enforcement first responders (firefighters, emergency medical service personnel), as well as companions (spouses or significant others). LEMIT promotes PCIS to the field using a number of mechanisms such as bulletins, fliers, recruitment at law enforcement related conferences, and through identification from LEMIT's internal database. Participants can also be referred to the program by their agency, a peer, or through self-referral.

The primary requirement for selection into the seminar is that individuals have experienced a critical incident or have been exposed to highly traumatic events. PCIS pro-

gram personnel do not identify specific critical incident or traumatic event types that an individual must have experienced in order to be eligible for consideration. Rather, the program acknowledges that incidents affect people differently, which allows for the individual or the agency making the referral to determine what constitutes a critical incident or traumatic event.

From October 2018 to July 2019, LEMIT conducted five PCIS sessions serving 129 first responders. Using available information from the first four seminars (99 participants), findings showed that participants attended PCIS after experiencing a number of different critical incident types, ranging from officer involved shootings and motor vehicle fatalities to incidents involving children and suicide calls. Just over half of the first responders reported attending because they experienced multiple critical incidents and many also experienced additional stressors because of these incidents.

Participants also stated their emotional health, behaviors, and families had been affected because of their critical incident. Between 25-33% of participants reported experiencing symptoms of distress and trauma either in the moderate to extreme range. Approximately 40% of participants reported that their coping ability prior to attending PCIS was “very poor” to “managing to get by”.

What do Participants Say about PCIS?

Of the 99 participants, 94 indicated that the seminar met their expectations. Furthermore, not a single participant across the four seminars stated that PCIS failed to meet his/her expectations. Participant ratings of the seminar were overwhelmingly positive, as the mean rating was a 4.85 on of a 5 point scale. Participants reported gaining better coping and communication skills, a better understanding and perspective on their critical incidents, and realized that they were not alone in the healing process.

Overall, feedback indicated that PCIS allowed participants to open up and release the tension and weight that they had been carrying around since the incident occurred. For the companions, the seminar allowed them to understand what their first responder has been going through. Often-times, neither the first responder nor the spouses/families discussed the incident, which can impede the healing process.

Characteristics of PCIS Participants

Characteristics	Frequency (%)*
Reasons for Attending PCIS	
One CI	37 (37.4)
2+ CIs	50 (50.5)
Non-Work Related CI	14 (14.1)
Cumulative Stress of Job	43 (43.4)
Most Frequent CI Types	
1. Incident involving Child	61 (61.6)
2. Officer involved Shooting	42 (42.4)
3. Multiple Casualty Incident	37 (37.4)
3. Scene with Disturbing Elements	37 (37.4)
5. Motor Vehicle Fatality	32 (32.3)
6. Feeling Powerless/Helpless	29 (29.3)
7. Long Duration	28 (28.3)
8. Fellow Officer Wounded in Line of Duty	24 (24.2)
8. Officer believed s/he was going to die	24 (24.2)
10. Death of Innocent Bystander	22 (22.2)
10. Responded to Suicide Call	22 (22.2)
Additional Stressors Experienced	
1. Protecting Family from Details	44 (44.4)
2. Negative Media Attention	27 (27.3)
2. Lack of Dept. Support	27 (27.3)
4. Negative Community Response	15 (15.2)
4. Negative Co-Worker Response	15 (15.2)

* Totals do not add up to 100% because participants were to select all responses that were relevant to their experiences. (N=99 participants)

More Information

For more information about the Post Critical Incident Seminar, please visit <http://www.lemitononline.org/programs/?mode=view&item=21>. Here, general information about the seminar, including any future sessions, how to register, and FAQs is provided.

For information about PCIS in general, the following lists some additional resources.

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Weiss, D.S., & Marmar, C.R. (1997). The Impact of Event Scale-Revised. In J.P. Wilson & T.M. Keane (Eds.), *Assessing Psychological Trauma and PTSD* (pp. 399-411). New York: Guilford Press.

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