

Psychosocial support for people affected by serious accidents in Czech Republic

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Introduction

When working with a person affected by an acute stress reaction, the presence and expertise of a psychologist is usually not necessary. We use mostly so-called first psychological aid or crisis intervention (similar to the provision of the first aid for physical injury). There is no psychotherapy or treatment. This support can be provided by trained professionals, so called interveners (peers in FRS). These professionals undergo a specific type of education that will prepare them for the provision of first psychological assistance to affected persons – in field during/ after the intervention of the emergency services.



Psychological services develop in all three main parts of the integrated rescue system of the Czech Republic dynamically since 2000. On the base of first so called Psychosocial intervention teams, which provided Critical Stress Management for affected professionals after serious incidents. Each part of the rescue system developed a broad network of professionals educated in principles of psychological first aid or crisis intervention, which covers all 14 districts of the Czech Republic and different types of serious accidents. Documents, which coordinate the cooperation, are standard operational procedures and also guidelines for assistance centers in big disasters. The Police of the Czech Republic has 265 crisis interveners in all districts.

They provide crisis intervention to affected police officers and mainly to victims of violent crime, but often also to survivors, relatives and witnesses of suicide or traffic accidents. The Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic has 276 trained firefighters (peers) and over 1000 firefighters educated in psychological first aid in all districts. They deliver psychosocial care to people touched by crisis events and peers can also do post-traumatic care to their colleagues. The Health department (which includes medical emergency service providers) is currently developing the System of psychosocial intervention service. The system is currently composed of the 207 peers who are responsible for assisting the health professionals who were directly impacted by critical event and 252 interveners who are administrating psychological first aid to the relatives who were indirectly impacted by the event.

Integrated Rescue System of the Czech republic (IRS CZ) Cooperation

Cooperation IRS CZ is stated in the law

Standard operational procedure – includes the guideline for each organization for providing psychosocial care with an accident on coordination
Guidelines for Humanitarian Assistance Centers in case of big disasters - a focal point for information and assistance to all those affected by an emergency, and also providing support to survivors of an emergency

Posttraumatic care teams of Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic



Internal norms of FRS CZ about psychological care and about peer-support system.

⇒ 14 regional teams of posttraumatic care, 1 emergency unit team
regional coordinators = regional psychologists
central coordination = head psychologist of FRS CZ

Peers are members of FRS CZ and volunteers, each candidate is interviewed before acceptance to the system of training ⇒ the quality of personality of each peer-supporter is important in addition to training and knowledge

Peers are trained in: Critical incident stress management - advanced (40 hours)
First psychological aid I and II (20 hours and min. 16 hours)
+ min. 3 days of training each year (supervision, theory, model situations, case reports)

Activities of peers:
Support for colleagues – colleague support, colleague counselling, detection, alerting, advise for referral, long-term monitoring etc.

Psychosocial support of the people affected by emergency situations – (first on-site of an accident) - psychological first aid, providing information, liaison to other care personnel

List of posttraumatic care team members is in each fire brigade station.

In the last years about 1200 interventions for the public, around 500 interventions for the firemen (psychological counseling / psychotherapy is not included in this number)

Actual numbers – 20 psychologists and 276 peers
Over 1000 firefighters trained in psychological first aid
Continuous training of other firefighters



Crisis intervention system of the Police of Czech Republic

Internal norms of the Police of CR about psychological care and about peer-support system.

⇒ 14 regional teams of crisis intervention, 14 regional teams of peer support
regional coordinators = regional psychologists or crisis interveners
central coordination = head of the crisis intervention group at the Police presidium

Crisis interveners are members of Police of CZ, each candidate is interviewed before acceptance to the training ⇒ the quality of personality of each crisis intervener is important in addition to training and knowledge

Crisis interveners are trained in: Basic of crisis intervention and first psychological aid (24 hours)
+ min. 2 days of training each year (supervision, theory, model situations, case reports)

Activities of crisis interveners:

Support for colleagues – colleague support, stabilization, alerting, advise for referral, long-term monitoring etc.
Psychosocial support of the people affected by emergency situations – (first on-site of an accident) - psychological first aid, providing information, liaison to other care personnel. Most cases – survivors and relatives of victims of crime or car accidents, suicide, victims of sexual abuse.

Each year about 3000 interventions for the public, around 30 interventions for the policemen (just crisis intervention, psychological counseling is not included in this number)

Actual numbers – 64 psychologists and 265 peers
Continuous training of police officers – how to communicate bad news
Telephonic helpline – for armed forces



System of psychosocial intervention service.

The system of psychosocial intervention services (SPIS) provides psychosocial support in healthcare. It is based on the Methodological recommendations issued by the Ministry of Health. It's run by two professional guarantors (clinical psychologist) and coordinators in each region in the Czech Republic

The system of SPIS works within two basic platforms:

PEER support – provision of psychosocial help to healthcare employees after going through emotionally exhausting situations such as difficult interventions for paramedics, EMT or EMS people, failed rescue (of children), death in their own team, attack of a healthcare worker, etc. Support is provided by trained colleagues – medical PEERs. In the need of further or professional help, care is provided by psychologists or further specialist. In this part of PEER support, this type of care is given to approximately 2000 medical workers per year.

Interventional support – is provided to secondary victims, which are affected by acute stress reaction due to loss of a close person, sudden illness of a close person, witnessing an extraordinary or traumatizing event.

This first psychological help is provided by trained medical professionals. This type of support is given in more than 1500 cases per year.

SPIS - System of psychosocial intervention service, is not yet introduced across all medical facilities.

Currently, an intense preparation of support teams for further medical facilities is in going on.

In the Czech Republic a medical PEER or an intervener go through the same basic, integrated training of 86 hours and is furthermore continuously being educated. They also go through a regular intervention and supervision.

Actual numbers
18 Psychologists
274 medical peers
314 medical interventions
Telephonic helpline for healthcare workers
Continuous training of peer and interveners



Example Tornado in South Bohemia

- On 24th June 2021 in the evening a tornado ruined big parts of five villages in South Moravia and surrounding fields. 6 dead people. No person is missing. In the affected area is a huge damage of houses, no infrastructure.
- At midnight 24th June 2021 one police psychologist and 3 interveners are on place. All three systems are informed and the psychosocial systems are activated. members of the SPIS team of ZS JMK arrived in the affected area with the region coordinator of SPIS in charge.
- On 25th June 2021 the psychologist of the firefighters overtakes the coordination of psychosocial intervention – in accord with the standards for psychosocial aid in disasters. 5 assistance centers are established in the most destroyed villages.
- During the 25th June 2021 police and firefighters psychologists and interveners arrive from other districts of the Czech Republic. Each assistance center has minimally one psychologist and 4 to 6 interveners. On the request of a SPIS coordinate, another 5 psychosocial SPIS interveners were sent into the field, to give psychological support. Interveners in couples walk around the villages and identify needs of people. In the first phase they stabilize people under shock. They inform about available help and also help directly – inform about news, deliver water or food.
- On 26th June 2021 – social workers join the psychosocial intervention teams. The health care intervention system starts to care for people brought to the hospital in Hodonín. They contact also the personnel and clients of a nursing home, which was evacuated to a hotel (around 100 people).
- From 27th June till 7th July psychosocial interventions are offered by psychologist and interveners of the rescue system (later also army) in cooperation with NGOs – mainly the Red Cross and Spondea. Teams are going around monitoring needs and offering help. People also come to the assistance center.
- On 9th July NGOs overtake the midterm and longterm care for about 70 people, who were identified as under risk. NGOs are still present on place.