

Group Crisis Intervention (GCI) Overview

Group Crisis Interventions (GCIs) are facilitated discussions meant to provide individuals affected by a traumatic event with a safe place to talk about the event, experiences during and after the event, and what may happen going forward. GCIs are especially important because they allow people that have shared experiences to provide peer support and affirmation. GCIs are conducted by members of the Victims Crisis Assistance and Response Team (VCART) and is based on the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Crisis Response Team model.

The purpose of this activity is to provide a method for organizing thoughts and reactions about what happened. The discussion allows participants to address what they are experiencing now and anticipate what they may experience in the future within the context of the event.

Things to know about GCIs:

- GCIs are NOT therapy sessions
 - VCART practitioners are volunteers conducting the Crisis Intervention model of NOVA, not as behavioral health professionals.
- GCIs are not meant to “fix” people
 - Participants may learn coping strategies or receive affirmation from others that are experiencing similar reactions to the incident, but GCIs are merely a single step in the recovery process.

Please consider the follow when requesting the VCART to perform a GCI:

- Make sure the participant population is ready to discuss the incident/event
 - The GCI process is entirely voluntary
 - Potential participants should feel safe before the GCI should take place
- A secure location, away from distractions, is required to hold the GCI
 - If possible, the site should be away from the event location/crime scene
 - The room should be able to hold up to 25 participants and five VCART members
 - The space should be quiet and private
- Ensure that participants will be comfortable during the one to two-hour session
 - Location should have access to restrooms and be close to outdoors for smoking purposes
 - Room/space should have enough chairs for participants and be climate controlled
 - It is helpful to have tissues, water, coffee, and/or snacks available
- Provide the Crisis Response Leader with additional resources/information that may be helpful in the long term recovery and healing of the participant
 - Make professional therapy available or provide referrals to available services, i.e., Employee Assistance Programs for incidents that took place at work, or access to homicide support groups for survivors of murders, etc.

If you receive donations meant for victims/survivors as a result of the incident, provide information about the items or services that are available to them and how to best access them.

For more information, please email: vacrisisresponse@dcjs.virginia.gov

