

Ohio Assist Program Overview

- Ohio *ASSIST* facilitates 2, three-day Post Critical Incident Seminars (PCIS) per year for Ohio First Responders (Law enforcement, fire / EMS and corrections) at no cost to the agency or the individual.
- Ohio *ASSIST* has partnered with 6 other states, sharing peers and resources for PCIS in these states. The Ohio program mirrors the other states and the PCIS program has been in place since 2000. South Carolina just completed their 36th PCIS in January.
- PCIS gives the participants the chance to talk about their incident and the effects it has had on them and their families.
- Participants are given the opportunity to meet with clinicians, familiar with public safety in a one-on-one environment to discuss any issues or concerns they have and also, if applicable, experience Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), a technique that helps remove the trauma associated with a particular aspect of the event. (Very high success rate).
- Participants meet in small groups to have conversations with other first responders who have been involved in similar incidents. The idea being to show that they are not alone in their issues and concerns and that they are having a normal reaction to an abnormal circumstance.
- Issues such as addiction, physiological effects of stress, relationship and communication issues, faith, fear and coping are discussed as lectures and small groups.
- Peers, who have received training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) and have also been participants themselves, are utilized to support the participants.
- Peers come from agencies all over the state including state, county and municipal public safety as well as spouses and professional staff.
- A licensed and certified clinician is utilized as the clinical director to oversee the mental health aspects of the program.
- **PCIS is best described as participant driven, peer facilitated and clinician supported.**

Ohio *ASSIST* also offers, at no cost, training for public safety and civilians on crisis awareness and also a post critical incident course for public safety executive leadership. These programs have been very well received across Ohio.