



Toolkit – Quick Reference Post-Investigation Debriefing

What is a debrief?

Debriefing is focused on gaining understanding and insight regarding a specific incident and involving those people who were personally involved. This may involve sharing experiences and feelings from our point of view. Debriefing includes both the facts and emotional responses and invites feedback. Debriefing is an opportunity to share in depth recent experiences without judgement or criticism. Most debriefings are conducted by a person of authority or subject matter expert, and usually, but not always, without an agenda. Debriefings are typically short in duration, normally lasting from a few minutes to a few hours if many stakeholders are involved.

Who is involved?

1. Involve the employee(s) directly involved in the incident, if appropriate and if agreeable to being part of the debriefing process.
 - Providing an opportunity for the employee(s) involved to put into words what they experienced. The process of relating the events provides an opportunity for reflection.
 - Hearing versions from the other people involved also gives a more fulsome picture and a clearer idea of the sequence of events.
 - Talking about the incident takes away from any misunderstanding or 'blame seeking' related to the incident. **Note:** Supervisors and managers need to be continuously observant and mindful of the mental health of employees after an incident. The availability of local support and counselling should be reiterated and emphasized as deemed appropriate.
2. Involve the applicable supervisors and managers.
3. If the incident was related to a resident/client then debriefing is recommended with the family members and visitors, if appropriate.
4. Discuss the investigation outcomes with the Joint occupational Health and Safety Committee and other committees if applicable.

Debriefing Ground Rules

- Respect colleagues
- Refrain from personal remarks or assigning blame
- Be honest and willing to share your knowledge and experience
- Keep discussions about individual performance within the group
- Read through any available background information
- Avoid getting bogged down by small details
- Think about the big picture
- Provide paths forward and solutions where possible
- Observe the time limits allotted for the debriefing

When should it happen?

Debriefing should take place as soon as practical, relative to when the incident actually occurred. This makes it easy to reconstruct details while the event is still fresh in the participants' minds.

What should be discussed?

A debrief is a straight forward analysis of how everyone performed and should be structured around five things:

1. **What Occurred?** (i.e. We all agree the Titanic struck and iceberg and sank. At this point in the debriefing, why the ship is on the bottom of the ocean is irrelevant.)
2. **What were you doing before the event occurred?**
3. **How did it happen?** (i.e. Simply ask the question, what did you do and what did you see everyone else do? But describe the events with just the facts, not using opinion-based words. For example: "I watched Betty attempt to transfer" vs. "I watched Betty move the wheelchair"
4. **What was the end result?**
5. **What could have been done differently to improve the end result?**