

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST FOR VICTIM-BASED RESPONSE TO A MASS VIOLENCE INCIDENT



NOTE: This checklist is intended to serve as a flexible guideline for Emergency Management personnel during the aftermath of a Mass Violence Incident (MVI). The timing and order of actions may vary based on the specific circumstances and evolving needs of the incident. Users should apply professional judgment and adapt these recommendations to best support an effective, victim-centered response. This information is not intended to replace existing emergency response plans, but to supplement existing plans to include victims' issues.



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## Within Minutes to One Hour After the Incident

Activate Emergency Operations Center (EOC), if applicable, to implement mass violence incident (MVI) plans

Implement Unified Incident Command System (ICS) to coordinate response efforts across multiple agencies

### Establish communications

- Initiate ongoing communications with law enforcement leaders and state/local emergency response teams. This may need to be via radio monitoring if the threat is still active.
- Provide early warning to area hospitals so they can extend shifts, call in additional personnel and clear surgery suites as needed.

Identify or Confirm the location of the Friends and Relatives Center (FRC) and staffing requirements

- The FRC should preferably be near the location of the MVI so that it is accessible to victims, yet far enough away that it will not interfere with emergency operations. The location should have easy access for transportation (ex. shuttles, personal transport, etc.).
- Ensure that location allows for privacy, confidentiality, and security.

## Identify resource gaps

- Assess any deficiencies in required resources or services.
- Notify local and state Victim Services Provider (VSP) leaders identified in the Plan, potentially including the FBI Victim Services Response Team (VSRT) about the incident and possible need for supportive services.
  - ◊ Internal FBI Request: VSRT can be requested through the Victim Services Division Assistant Director.
  - ◊ External Law Enforcement Agency Request: VSRT can be requested through your local FBI Field Office.
- Notify city or county Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) which includes the American Red Cross (ARC), United Way, and Salvation Army (among others) about the incident and potential need for support.

## Coordinate public information

- Ensure that all victims have been notified about the status of the case and investigation prior to information being released to the public, if possible.
- Prepare to share information with the community regarding the location of the FRC, missing person reporting, and relevant hotline or website details.
- Identify the primary authorized source of information where updates will be released as they come in (i.e., the jurisdiction website or social media). If information is being shared or released that was not obtained from the identified source, it is not considered validated. Communications must be transparent, accurate and consistent.
- Set up a Joint Information Center (JIC) or Public Information Office (PIO) (if JIC a is not established) to provide “on-going situation...more information as we know it” until definitive information is ready to be shared with the public and media. All communications from agencies and elected officials must be coordinated and consistent and should be made accessible in multilingual formats. Broadcast communications such as press conferences should provide ASL interpretation.
- Activate a call center, utilize an existing official website (e.g., mayor’s office), and/or set up a new website with public information about the MVI response and recovery efforts.
- Engage a social media strategy to share information with the public during and after the event.
- Limit the dissemination of images and information about the perpetrator unless necessary for public safety, to prevent undue media focus.

### **Confirm points of contact (POCs)**

- Confirm the POCs for lead VSPs responding to the incident and the location of the FRC if being requested to respond.
- Assign a team to work on setting up reunification services for survivors to locate their loved one and trauma notification of injuries or deaths.

### **Coordinate detailed briefings**

- Coordinate with lead VSPs regarding plans of any community leaders to visit the initial FRC for direct support.
- Continue updating any social media sites that have been deemed primary sources of information.

## Within Several Hours After the Incident

### Begin identifying a location for the Family Assistance Center (FAC)

- The location should have easy access for transportation (ex. shuttles, personal transport, etc.) and allow for privacy, confidentiality, and security.

### Secure external resources and communications

- [Helping Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism: Planning, Response, Recovery, and Resources](#)
- Contact NMVC to request an NMVC Resource Guide with information and resources curated to the impacted community for victims, survivors, first responders, elected officials, community members, and response partners.
  - ◊ Reach out to nmvc@musc.edu
  - ◊ A sample Resource Guide is attached.
  - ◊ Integrate these resources into traditional and social media communication strategies.
  - ◊ Request comprehensive briefings on casualty figures and sensitive death notifications from law enforcement, Medical Examiner/Coroner, VSPs and behavioral/mental health professionals.
  - ◊ Consider contacting the National Organization of Victim Advocacy (NOVA) Crisis Response Team.

**Note: It will be at the discretion of OVC and NMVC to determine if an incident is considered an MVI for purposes of generating a Resource Guide. Every request will be considered on a case-by-case basis.**

### Coordinate with health care providers

- Obtain updates from hospital leaders and the Medical Examiner/Coroner Office regarding patient tracking and victim support (HIPAA rules will apply).

## **Documenting costs**

- Ensure process is in place to track response/recovery costs for potential reimbursement of victim-related expenses not related to investigative matters.

## **Coordinate with law enforcement on interviews and personal property return**

- As necessary, ensure all procedures comply with relevant regulations such as HIPAA FERPA and address the privacy needs of all affected individuals.
- Property return process
  - ◊ Confirm that a comprehensive, pre-determined process for personal property return is in place, including documented chain-of-custody procedures.
  - ◊ Determine in advance which agency or individual is responsible for property return and activate any Memorandum of Understand (MOUs) with contracted companies to secure and return personal belongings.
  - ◊ The FBI can assist communities with obtaining, cleaning, and returning victims' personal items.

# Day Following the Incident

## Prepare for activation of the Family Assistance Center (FAC)

- Determine/confirm location for the FAC in a secure, easily accessible space near the incident but sufficiently removed to avoid direct exposure to its sights, sounds, and odors. The location should be able to handle large groups and have adequate parking and public/private transportation and access to food and other essentials. The space should also be secured to limit access by non-authorized personnel.
  - ◊ A sample FAC layout is attached.
- Activate any necessary MOUs for host locations and begin setting up FAC activation.
- The FAC is usually at a different location from the FRC.
- Ensure that any external partners who may need to support the FAC are notified of the location and anticipated activation date/time and hours of operation.
- Assign personnel to begin transition planning to move from the FRC to the FAC including dissemination of information to the victims, survivors and families.
- Determine date/time FAC will open and begin executing transition plan from the FRC to the FAC.
  - ◊ Determine hours of operation and agencies/organizations that will be present.
  - ◊ Establish protocols for people entering the FAC, credentialing of service workers, and coordination of volunteers.
- Coordinate with the Public Information Officer (PIO) to ensure impacted families and friends are aware of the FAC location and hours.

## Review ongoing support and services update

- Obtain updated briefings from lead VSPs about victim/survivor assistance needed and ongoing behavioral/mental health services.
- Identify any service gaps that need to be addressed or additional resources that may be required.

### **Update victim/survivor information**

- Ensure that updated lists of victims, survivors, and impacted individuals are maintained and verified.
- Utilize this information for reporting and to facilitate support services.

### **Begin to document community response**

- Collect briefings and visual documentation (photos/videos) of spontaneous memorials or community tributes.
- Identify if there is an organization within the community to help archive tribute materials.
- Integrate these briefings into your overall coordination efforts.

### **Manage media narratives**

- Reminder: Continue to limit the dissemination of images and information about the perpetrator unless necessary for public safety, to prevent undue media focus.
- Provide media with important trauma-informed messages to impart to the public. They can assist in disseminating important public information.

## Donations and volunteer management

- Activate the donations management plan.
- Coordinate with the PIO to implement a communications plan to inform the public about where to send donations and how donations will be used.
- Discourage in-kind donations if possible unless items are specifically requested and needed to provide services.
- The National Compassion Fund sponsored by the National Center for Victims of Crime can help communities establish a local Fund for public donations; or provide community leaders with free technical assistance to establish a Fund.
- Coordinate with the nonprofit organization identified in advance to serve as a centralized collection and disbursement entity for monetary donations (i.e., United Way, National Compassion Fund, etc.).
- Message that donations will support victims generally rather than a specific activity, such as a funeral. Funerals could likely be covered by state victims' compensation.
- Coordinate with accredited nonprofit organizations to assist with volunteer management and credentialing (i.e., American Red Cross, Salvation Army, VOAD, etc).

# 48 Hours Following the Incident

## Facilitate ongoing communications

- Receive briefings from lead VSPs ensuring that all communications with victims and survivors are appropriate and compliant with all relevant laws.
- Verify that long-term service options and victims' rights are clearly communicated.
- Incorporate fraud alerts into public communications related to donations. Also, continue to stress the need for financial donations rather than tangible goods unless specifically requested.

# Weeks Following the Incident

## Plan for long-term recovery

- If applicable, coordinate with legal authorities by providing the NMVC's [Comprehensive Victim Assistance Court Planning Guide](#) for future trials.
- Begin planning for the creation of a long-term Resiliency Center (RC) to support ongoing-survivor-recovery. Develop a transition plan to go from the FAC to the RC.

## Ensure ongoing victim support

- Obtain briefings from lead VSPs to confirm that victims, survivors, and families continue to receive appropriate information and support.
- Review and coordinate state-level efforts to secure additional funding and support for long term recovery and resiliency initiatives. This may take the form of additional state funding, enhanced support from state Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) agencies, or supplemental Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP) funding from the US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).

### **Community commemoration and long-term planning**

- Coordinate with community leaders and lead VSPs to plan commemorative events, such as a one-year observance and other memorial tributes.
- Provide ongoing support through behavioral/mental health professionals to address stress and secondary trauma among responders, including emergency management personnel, victim service professionals, and community leaders. Most times, emergency responders (and their families) who were involved in the incident response are themselves eligible for victim services under AEAP.

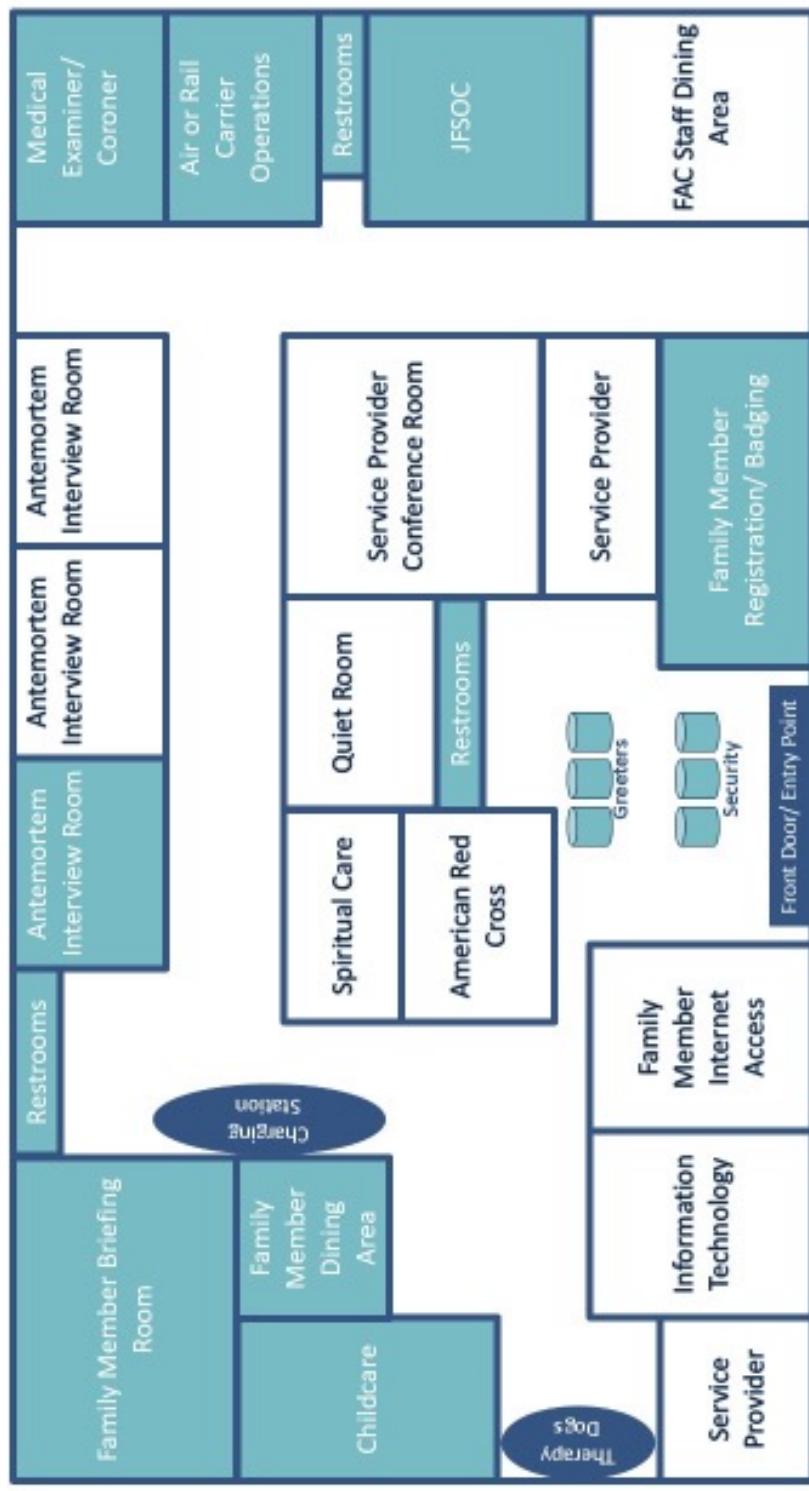
### **Monitor funding and recovery efforts**

- Obtain updates and respond to requests for state assistance in securing OVC's AEAP funding to support long-term recovery.
- Review any community needs assessments provided by NMVC or the OVC Training and Technical Assistance (TTAC) to tailor further support.

### **Request response and recovery assistance from the NMVC**

- Reach out to [nmvc@musc.edu](mailto:nmvc@musc.edu)

### Example FAC Layout



The diagram is schematic. There are operations/service provider areas not drawn to size or meant to indicate location. Specific FAC layout will be based on the physical facility. Areas indicated in TEAL are critical areas that should be considered when determining the layout of an FAC.

## Resources for Victims, Survivors, and Community Members

- The NMVC free self-help app, Transcend NMVC, is available free on [Apple](#) and [Android](#)
- NMVC's Virtual Resiliency Center | [massviolence.help](#)
- Twelve Self-Help Tips for Coping in the Aftermath of Mass Violence Incidents | [Read here](#)
- Trauma Cues Related to Mass Violence Incidents | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Coping with Grief After a Disaster or Traumatic Event via SAMHSA | [Read here](#)
- Tips for Survivors of a Disaster or Other Traumatic Event: Managing Distress via SAMHSA | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Caregivers via SAMHSA | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Families and Educators, via NASP | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Parent Guidelines for Helping Youth After the Recent Mass Shooting via NCTSN | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Managing Distress: Grounding Tips for Crime Victims, Survivors, and Family Members | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- How to Identify an Experienced Trauma-Focused Therapist | [English](#) | [Spanish](#)
- Disaster Distress Helpline | Call or Text: 1-800-985-5990 | **Español:** Llama o envía un mensaje de texto 1-800-985-5990 presiona "2."
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline | Call or Text 988 | Chat [988lifeline.org](#) | Línea de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis 988
- National Center for Victims of Crime, Victim Connect Resource Center | 855-484-2846 | [Chat Online](#)

## Resources for Community Leaders

- Timeline of Activities to Promote Mental Health Recovery: Recommendations Before, During, and Following a Mass Violence Incident | [Read here](#)
- Tips for Community Leaders: Rebuilding Your Community | [Resources here](#)
- Navigating Community Resources in Times of Crisis | [Read here](#)
- Unexpected Challenges for Communities during the Immediate Response of a Mass Violence Incident | [Read here](#)
- Psychological First Aid: An Early Intervention to Support Individuals Impacted by Disaster and Large Scale Events via NCTSN | [Manual](#) and [Online Course](#)
- National Compassion Fund | <https://nationalcompassionfund.org>

## STATE Resources for Crime Victims and Survivors

- Crime Victim Compensation Board (USE EXACT TITLE) | [Resources here](#)
- Information about crime victim compensation and advocates (USE EXACT TITLE) | [Resources here](#)