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# NEWS & NOTES



# NMVVRC

Readiness · Response · Resilience

*A quarterly update from the  
National Mass Violence Victimization  
Resource Center*

## A NOTE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Dean Kilpatrick, Ph.D.

National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center Director

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines stress as *"the reaction people may have when presented with demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope."*

A certain amount of stress can be helpful in getting us motivated and active, but too much stress — particularly if it persists over a long time — can be harmful to our physical and mental health. Decades of research on stress show that uncertainty is one of the biggest contributors to our feeling “stressed out” because human beings have an innate need to understand things that happen to them and have a general idea about what is likely to happen in the future.

One major source of national uncertainty is the COVID-19 pandemic that is now in its third year. The American Psychological Association recently released results of a Stress in America national study of more than 3000 U.S. adults. The study confirmed that levels of uncertainty and stress have increased substantially and that this pandemic is taking its toll on our nation’s physical and psychological health.

If this true for most Americans, imagine how much more stressful it must be for those who have suffered from mass violence, responded to mass violence incidents, or experienced mass violence vicariously through assisting survivors through their recovery process and through criminal justice proceedings.

Imagine the uncertainty that survivors experience by not knowing whether what they are feeling is “normal,” whether what they are doing to cope with their feelings is right, and what the criminal justice system process will be like. If you are a victim service professional, imagine the impact of not knowing how to answer survivors’ questions about what procedures they are likely to experience. Imagine how stressful it is to try to assist survivors to prepare for court proceedings when you are not sure about what to do because you are uncertain about best practices.

**We at the NMVRC do not have to imagine these things because we have seen this happen time after time.**

I would like to highlight two specific resources the NMVRC has created to help reduce stress and manage uncertainty:

- We have created practical tools for survivors, responders, and victim service professionals that take the mystery out of what stress is and provide them with better ways to cope with it. Our free ***Transcend NMVC*** mobile app is a great example. It contains numerous tips about stress as well as tools and techniques for stress management. We believe that ***Transcend NMVC*** may be helpful to many people irrespective of the primary source of the uncertainty driving their stress, and the best ways to cope with it.
- We are pleased to announce the development and imminent release of a new ***Planning and Implementation Guide for Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials***. This guide is comprehensive in nature, a year-and-a-half in the making, and was a collaborative effort with the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of South Carolina. We believe it will go a long way towards demystifying the criminal justice system process for both survivors and victim service professionals by providing them with solid information, helpful suggestions, and best practices based on relevant experience.

If you haven't already done so, please give our ***Transcend NMVC*** app a look. Also, stay tuned for the release of the ***Planning and Implementation Guide for Comprehensive, Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials*** and review it carefully when it becomes available.

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## Preparedness, Response & Recovery

Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D.

Unfortunately, our country has again seen a rise in mass violence incidents these past several months and the Response Division at the NMVVRRC has been diligently providing consultation, developing additional resources, and working with our partners — including the [National Governors Association](#), [U.S. Conference of Mayors](#), and the [American Hospital Association](#) — to ensure our resources reach impacted communities.

In the aftermath of mass violence incidents over the past 30 years, mass violence victims and

survivors have created **Survivor-Driven Non-Governmental Organizations**. These organizations offer services and resources to victims and/or to address prevention and response.

We have developed a plan to strengthen informal connections among these organizations by hosting a bi-monthly, virtual forum. This forum provides a space to connect and receive mutual guidance, training, and technical assistance to strengthen their respective and collective capacity to help victims, survivors and communities affected by mass violence.

**If you are part of a Survivor-Driven Non-Governmental Organization** and want to join this newly formed forum, email Aurelia Sands Belle — [sandsabe@musc.edu](mailto:sandsabe@musc.edu) — **to register!**

Thanks to ongoing input from the Center's Stakeholders, Forum members, and communities that experienced a mass violence incident last year, we developed several new Tip Sheets and detailed guides to address needs of victims, survivors, and communities:

- [Twelve Self-Help Tips for Coping in the Aftermath of Mass Violence](#) (August 2021)
- [Unexpected Challenges for Communities in the Recovery Phase of a MVI](#) (August 2021)
- [The Role of Victim Service Providers in Readiness, Response & Resilience Matrix](#) (August 2021)
- [Mindfulness and Meditation to Support Resilience After Mass Violence](#) (August 2021)
- [Trauma-Informed Mindfulness and Meditation](#) (September 2021)
- [Trauma Cues Related to Mass Violence Incidents](#) (October 2021)
- [How to Identify an Experienced Trauma-Focused Therapist](#) (November 2021)
- [Coping with the Holidays After the Death of a Loved One](#) (written by Janice Harris Lord and updated in November 2021)

In addition, please see the full description below about our new victim-centric guide for mass violence incident trials: the ***Planning and Implementation Guide for Comprehensive, Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials***. Developed with the [Office of the U.S. Attorney, District of South Carolina](#), we believe this will be an essential tool for those planning and implementing victim assistance during court processes. **The guide will publish soon.**

Finally, **come join us on January 27<sup>th</sup> for the inaugural, free virtual Mass Violence Incident**

**National Town Hall.** The quarterly National Town Hall will kick off an ongoing exchange of information and ideas about best practices, “lessons learned,” and lived experiences designed to help communities improve their coordinated responses to mass violence incidents. **This National Town Hall is for victim service professionals, organizations, government entities, and victims /survivors** to come together virtually to learn the latest news, resources, and hot topics in the mass violence field. We look forward to seeing you there!



## National Town Hall

### Event details

- 1/27/2022, 3:00 PM - 1/27/2022, 4:30 PM  
Time zone: (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
- Microsoft Teams meeting
- The National Town Hall hosted by the [National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center](#) (NMVVRC) will provide timely, basic and evidence-informed information and resources about mass violence readiness, response and resilience/recovery to a national, interdisciplinary audience of survivors, victim/survivor assistance professionals, mental and behavioral health professionals, law enforcement and criminal justice officials, and allied professionals.

### Register for this event

\* Required

First name \*

Last name \*

Email \*

Job title \*

Organization \*

[REGISTER HERE](#)

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## Research & Evaluation

[Angela Moreland, Ph.D.](#)

Hello from the Data Collection and Evaluation team!

We are very excited to update you about our needs assessment conducted with direct victims

from the shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017, with significant assistance from the [Vegas Strong Resiliency Center](#) to connect with victims.

A total of **177 direct victims** completed the needs assessment and provided information on a range of topics including degree of impact, response factors, and mental health consequences following the Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting.

Our team is running preliminary analyses and plans to share these results with the Las Vegas community, as well as the general public.

Additionally, we have been speaking with stakeholders of various communities where needs assessments were conducted with community members to plan some information sessions to provide feedback to the communities about our findings.

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## Resources & Technology

[Daniel Smith, Ph.D.](#)

This newsletter marks the first full calendar year of [CPTWeb2.0](#)'s existence. Although the course officially launched late in 2020, this past year was the first full calendar year that CPTWeb2.0 — our updated course for mental health professionals who want to learn how to deliver Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) — was fully live.

Cognitive Processing Therapy is an evidence-based, cognitive therapy for PTSD symptoms that can develop after all kinds of trauma, including mass violence. Cognitive Processing Therapy has a clear structure and progression of therapy objectives, but within sessions there is room for flexibility and creativity to allow therapists to utilize their own personal style. We're really proud of CPTWeb2.0, and it seems like the course has gotten off to a very good start.

Over the course of 2021, **4,103 learners registered and paid for the course**, which translates to about **342 learners per month**, or **just over 11 learners per day**. While we would love to see those numbers climb, we think this is a great first year for the new course.

**We successfully obtained American Psychological Association continuing education credits for the course**, and we are pursuing similar approvals from other membership organizations, including various social work groups. We're also closely working with Cognitive Processing Therapy's developers to generate new ideas to promote the course more broadly.

**So, if you're a mental health professional, or a student in a mental health discipline, please consider signing up.** If you're not a mental health provider, please tell your friends who are about CPTWeb2.0! The world needs more therapists who know how to deliver evidence-based trauma treatments!

Next, if you're not listening to the [MVP: Mass Violence Podcast](#), why not? We've been putting out some diverse and interesting shows over the past quarter (if we may say so ourselves), and there is sure to be something of interest to just about everyone who receives this newsletter.

We had really informative conversations with:

- [Georgia State Senator Dr. Michelle Au](#) about mass violence against the AAPI community (an enduring phenomenon that has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic),
- [Lisa Geller from the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence](#) regarding the connection between mass violence and domestic violence, and
- [Clarissa Whaley, the Victim Witness Coordinator/Victim Services Manager for the US Attorney's Office in South Carolina](#) about what it takes to be an effective advocate for mass violence victims.

Finally, this week, our podcast with **Meg Garvin of the [National Crime Victim Law Institute](#)** will go live. The discussion is focused on the importance of balancing victims' rights with defendants' rights in mass violence cases. We have several other topics coming out later this year, so please be sure to subscribe to the MVP on your favorite podcast platform (Apple, Stitcher, Spotify, etc.).

Last, but definitely not least, the Resources and Technology team has been continuing to develop the **Virtual Resiliency Center**, what will be an online resource for victims and communities affected by mass violence. We have completed a first pass at the content of the site, and we're now shifting our focus to how to deliver that content online in an engaging, interactive, accessible, and useful fashion. Our goal is to have the "VRC" ready for use by the fall of 2022. So stay tuned!



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## Training & Technical Assistance

Rochelle Hanson, Ph.D.

The Training & Technical Assistance division continues its efforts to provide **training, education, information, and resources** to address the needs of mass violence victims, survivors, and first responders.

We are very excited to announce that the **Mass Violence Core Compendium** is now available on our website. This Compendium is a compilation of existing and adapted resources that address Readiness, Response, and Resilience relevant to mass violence incidents. We have received great feedback so far! We are planning to do our best to keep the Compendium updated! If you have questions or information to share, please email [info@nmvrc.org](mailto:info@nmvrc.org).

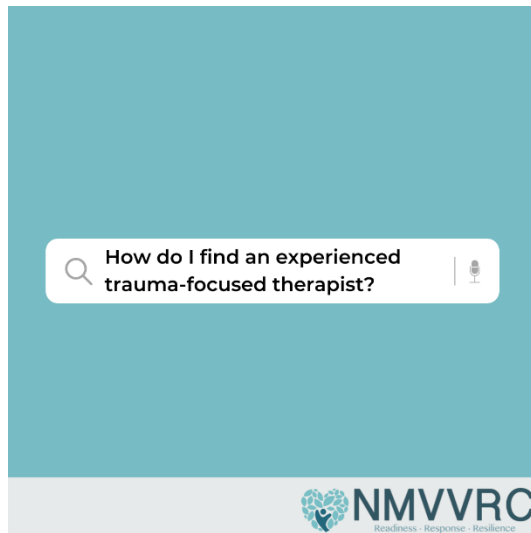
We also completed the **Final Report for the trainings on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy** that we conducted with the Broward County Public Schools district to assist students who continue to struggle with the aftermath of the school shooting that occurred on February 14, 2018. Relatedly, on October 28, we conducted a two-hour overview on TF-



CBT for social work interns and school mental health providers serving the Broward County Public Schools and are beginning to plan for a new training cohort to take place in the Fall of 2022.

We continue to work closely with the other NMVVRC divisions to update and develop resources and welcome ideas for new materials. We led development of a new Tip Sheet — ["How to Identify an Experienced Trauma-Focused Therapist"](#) — that provides information to help victims, survivors and VSPs determine whether a mental health provider has the requisite knowledge and skills to deliver trauma-focused mental health interventions.

We continue to solicit feedback from the NMVVRC team and stakeholders regarding education materials needed in the field.



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## Stakeholders Forum

[Aurelia Sands Belle, M.Ed.](#)

During the final quarter of 2021, this energetic group was as busy and involved as ever. The Stakeholders Forum remains a rich resource for the NMVVRC, with participants willing to share their experiences as survivors and service providers.

There were two quarterly meetings during the second half of the year, and as always, the voice of victims and service providers was prominent. Here are some highlights:

The NMVRC surveyed the Flint (Michigan) community about the impact of the water crisis on their mental health. The Evaluation Division worked with the assistance of stakeholder and community advocate **E. Yvonne Lewis** to gain community support and help in disseminating the survey. The response to the survey was overwhelming, and we presented a summary of the findings to the Flint community in two segments. The first segment focused on a more academic information for area universities and other scholarly groups. The second presentation addressed the concerns and questions of the community at large. The feedback to both sessions was very positive. We are grateful to Yvonne for lending her considerable influence and guidance to this effort, helping to ensure its community-wide success.

**Emma Garcia** and **Veronica Sanchez** shared about the services emanated from their center, the [Camino Real Community Service Program](#), in response to the mass shooting in Sutherland Springs (Texas) in 2017. As a public mental health entity, they had trauma-trained and experienced counselors to respond to the crisis. Emma retired as the Executive and Veronica, formally the Mental Health Director, will assume the role as the Executive Director. We welcome Veronica to the Stakeholders Forum.

Forum members participated in a number of other NMVRC activities or projects:

- **Elyne Green** and **Julie Paez** reviewed the 26 modules of the Core Compendium from their perspectives as a victim advocate and as a survivor, respectively, and offered valuable feedback to the team.
- **Hedi Bogda** and **Veronica Sanchez** worked closely with NMVRC staff to develop a workshop for presentation to the [American Hospital Association's 2022 Rural Health Care Leadership Conference](#). They offered information from their perspectives as a victim/ survivor and a service provider within a rural community. Veronica will be part of this presentation and provide her perspective on working in a rural community.
- **Keith Jones** offered his sage advice about how he continues to deal with grief, the importance of advocacy, and his ongoing healing journey.
- **Amy O'Neill** shared information about the NMVRC and especially the Transcend app with her vast network. She also suggested that the app be translated for recent Afghan

refugees to help them deal with the trauma they experienced. This suggestion indicates the relevance of the content of the app relative to trauma.

- **Brittany Thomas** shared about the practical needs and the trauma of the residents of western Kentucky following recent tornadoes. She will also meet with Anne Seymour to discuss the issues of the upcoming parole hearing for the offender in their case. She is concerned that much of the provided information is inaccurate, and witnesses have been left out of the discussions and proceedings.

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## Updates From The Field

### Anne Seymour, Associate Academic Program Director

The Center has completed the ***Planning and Implementation Guide for Comprehensive, Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials***, which is co-branded with the Office of the U.S. Attorney, District of South Carolina.

The 96-page Guide is designed to help **prosecutors, victim services and mental/behavioral health providers, and allied professionals** to plan for high-profile trials with a focus on victims' and survivors' needs, and effective and coordinated strategies to meet them. It is survivor-centered and based on the best practices derived from previous trials involving defendants charged with federal and state crimes that resulted in mass casualties and devastating victim and community impact.

The Guide includes:

- Unique considerations for mass violence incident trials, victims' rights, and survivor safety and security;
- Detailed planning strategies to ensure victim/ survivor support efforts are clarified and coordinated;
- Practical instructions to establish and implement plans for court processes, including ongoing services for victims in the post-trial phase.

Over 25 appendices include forms, guidelines, and tip sheets to complement the Guide. These additional resources provide aid for effective, coordinated victim assistance. The Guide will be published soon.

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