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# NEWS & NOTES



# NMVC

National Mass Violence Center

Providing Resources to Victims,  
Survivors, & Those Who Serve Them

## From the Director's Desk

Dean Kilpatrick, Ph.D.

National Mass Violence Center Director

The last few months for our Center have been very exciting, with several important developments that have strengthened our mission and ongoing work. As a result, we are tired but truly inspired!

As you may have noticed from our header, our Center has a new name! A formal launch and re-brand are underway as we transition to now being called the National Mass Violence Center.

In mid-September we learned the USDOJ Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) selected and funded our Cooperative Agreement to continue and expand the National Mass Violence Center (NMVC) for three more years, beginning October 1, 2023. On October 11, 2023, a delegation from the Office for Justice Programs and OVC visited the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) to announce that MUSC had been selected to continue its critical work hosting the NMVC. This event, which generated considerable media coverage, was attended by the Mayor of Charleston, the U.S. Attorney for the District of South Carolina, and several dignitaries from MUSC.



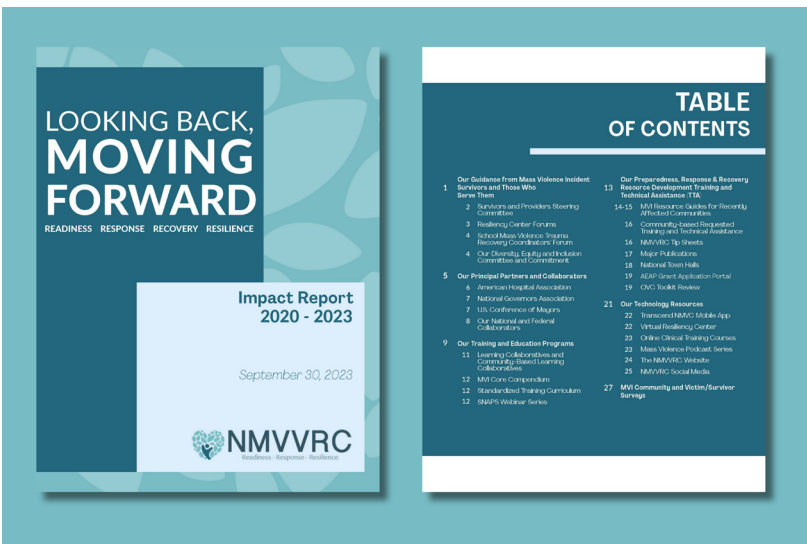
Shortly thereafter, we learned the American Public Health Association selected us to be featured in its Thought Leaders in Public Health Film Series because of our work with mass violence victims and survivors. Mass violence is clearly a public health problem, as well as a public safety and a mental health problem. However, many public health professionals approach mass violence from a primary prevention perspective (e.g. trying to prevent gun violence by increasing gun safety laws and practices) and pay less attention to the victims and survivors of mass violence, and how better public health policies and practices designed to help victims and survivors might prevent development of secondary physical, behavioral, and mental health problems. The NMVC is extremely mass violence victim/survivor-centric, so we were gratified to have an opportunity to highlight this perspective to a large, high-profile audience of public health professionals.



*The National Mass Violence Center (NMVC) stands as an unwavering beacon of support and healing for victims, survivors, and families affected by the devastating aftermath of mass violence incidents. With a compassionate and dedicated team at its core, NMVC offers a lifeline to those who have experienced the unimaginable, providing vital resources, counseling, and community outreach to help them navigate the tumultuous journey of recovery.*

Click the Image or [HERE To View](#)

Why are we tired? For one thing, we were very busy even before the new phase of the Cooperative Agreement began on October 1. Here is the link to [Looking Back, Moving Forward: Readiness, Response, Recovery, Resilience](#), our Impact Report documenting the most important of those activities from 2020-2023. If you read it, I'll bet you will get vicariously tired too! Also, in the new phase of the Cooperative Agreement, we are continuing our previous projects but also expanding into some new areas, including mass violence community preparedness. The remainder of this newsletter describes many of these new activities.



Click the Image or [HERE To Read](#)

Why are we inspired? We are inspired because we know how important mass violence preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience are to victims, survivors and impacted communities, and because OVC has given us an opportunity to continue to make a difference. We are inspired by the leadership and dedication of the OVC and of our 20 national partner organizations with whom we'll work over the next three years. Most of all, we are inspired by the victims and survivors whose courage gives us hope, and whose needs constantly remind us of why the NMVC exists.

# Response, Recovery, and Resilience

Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D.

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As part of the NMVC new Cooperative Agreement, the Response, Recovery, and Resilience Division has expanded scope to provide behavioral/mental health consultation on the most up-to-date research findings related to the impact of mass violence and evidence-based practice for individuals and communities who have experienced a recent mass violence incident. Given feedback from over 20 Resiliency Centers that the NMVC has had the humble opportunity to interact with during our Resiliency Center Director's Forum, our team can offer lessons learned in the initial establishment, programming, outreach, services, training, and sustainability to Resiliency Centers in the aftermath of mass violence. We have been able to provide direct consultation to three recently impacted communities since October 2023 and several additional communities that have experienced mass violence over the past several years. Speaking to Resiliency Center work, our Division team members are actively working on the development of a Best Practices Guide for Resiliency Centers based upon feedback and input from our active Resiliency Centers Directors Forum. Be on the look-out for this much needed resource in the field coming early Summer 2024.

We are excited about the work ahead of us in upcoming years to develop resources and guides to assist with response and recovery. These include a peer support guide for mass violence victims, an employer guide to support the recovery efforts in the aftermath of mass violence, revisions to the Office for Victims of Crime Helping Victims of Mass Violence and Terrorism Toolkit, Best Practices Guide for Leadership to Mitigate Secondary Trauma, Guide for Survivors and Victim Service Professionals about Post-Conviction Review Process, and an already needed update to our existing Planning and Implementation Guide: Comprehensive, Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials. We will also be working with consultants and our Steering Committee on the development of materials and resources for specific impacted communities such as hate/identity-based related incidents and addressing the needs of under-served and marginalized populations.

And lastly, we continue our very successful NMVC quarterly, virtual MVI National Town Halls (NTHs). Our motto for NTHs is "Know Before You Need To." The goal of the NTHs is to provide an opportunity for the ongoing exchange of information and ideas about best practices, "lessons learned," and lived experiences that can improve coordinated community responses to MVIs. Our most recent NTH #8 in November 2023 entitled, [\*Helping the Helpers: Addressing Needs of First Responders Following MVIs\*](#), addresses the perspectives of first responders who have experienced MVIs, the scope of various support services to help first responders' resilience in the aftermath of MVIs, and important resilience skills and strategies needed for first responders. Prior recent NTHs included: [\*Road to Recovery for Mass Violence Survivors\*](#) in August 2023 and [\*School-based Mass Violence Incidents: Addressing Student, Caregiver, and School Personnel Impact\*](#) in May 2023. To view all recordings and find additional resources about these recent NTHs, please visit [here](#).

# Data Collection & Evaluation

Angela Moreland, Ph.D.

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Hello from the Data Collection and Evaluation team! We are in the process of reporting findings from our community surveys to individual communities so results can be helpful and incorporated into services provided to victims, family members, and community members as a whole. These findings can be used to: (1) inform city and government officials about existing availability and use of different victim services; (2) emphasize the importance of service provision as it pertains to individual mental health and community recovery, and (3) allow communities to better allocate resources after an MVI. We also plan to work with Resiliency Centers to ensure survey data can be utilized for reporting or other needs related to the centers.

In exciting news – we recently began collecting victim surveys in El Paso, Texas in collaboration with the El Paso United Family Resiliency Center! We are thankful for their collaboration and look forward to obtaining information which will be used to inform the field and better serve victims and their families following an MVI.

# Preparedness

Angela Moreland, Ph.D.

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As part of the new OVC award that began on October 1, 2023, the NMVC will lead the Improving Community Preparedness to Assist Victims of Mass Violence and Domestic Terrorism: Training and Technical Assistance (ICP TTA) efforts as a new division of the NMVC. The mission of the Preparedness division is to ensure local, state, regional, and tribal jurisdictions across the country are better prepared to respond to the needs of victims following MVIs. Primary activities of the Preparedness division include promoting protocols and strategies that address the immediate and long-term needs of victims, families, and first responders; providing individualized training and technical assistance; augmenting existing emergency response plans; and providing overall consultation regarding preparedness for MVIs.

We are very excited to launch the Preparedness division and have begun working with several communities to conduct needs assessments and making plans for assisting with preparedness plans. We look forward to providing updates as these activities progress! If you are interested in any type of consultation surrounding preparedness for MVIs, please reach out!

# Resources & Technology

Daniel Smith, Ph.D.

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We are very excited to announce that the Virtual Resiliency Center (VRC) on-line resource is undergoing initial pilot testing and will be launched publicly later this spring. We have spent a lot of time trying to put together a resource that will be valuable to mass violence victims across the country, and which communities affected by mass violence can use while they are applying for and establishing their own Resiliency Centers. The VRC features sections addressing Victim & Social Services, Social Connection & Empowerment, Health & Wellness, and Managing Grief & Trauma. Each of these major sections contains several topic areas that provide text-based information, insight from experts and survivors, links to resources, and information graphics designed to help mass violence victims and survivors on their healing journeys. We can't wait to share it with you – be sure to follow our social media for information about the launch!

Also, in addition to the VRC news, we happy to announce that after a long hiatus, the MVP – Mass Violence Podcast – will be making its hotly anticipated return in March. Our first episode is going to feature our own Associate Academic Program Director, Anne Seymour, sharing her extensive expertise about best practices for mass violence victims when it comes to dealing with the media. It's a conversation not to be missed! We'll be ramping production on the MVP back up and will be featuring a National Crime Victims' Rights Week episode in April, with monthly episodes following throughout 2024. Tune (back) in!

Finally, we're thrilled to announce an important addition to our Technology & Resources team. Joining us in the role of Public Information Director is Carter Coyle, who joins us after almost two years working in MUSC's Public Relations Department. Before that, she was an award-winning local television journalist. We are so excited we get to be the beneficiary of her energy, expertise, and ideas for helping us tell the world about helping victims and survivors of mass violence. Welcome, Carter!

# Training & Technical Assistance

Rochelle Hanson, Ph.D.

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## Highlights of Activities for the Training & Education Division:

- We are continuing development of a standardized training curriculum, entitled: *Behavioral Health Pathways After an MVI: What Everyone Should Know*. This will be an in-depth curriculum, with the idea that it can be tailored to meet the needs of different communities. This is scheduled to be completed in March.
- We are in the initial planning stages for a Community Based Learning Collaborative on Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy with the Broward County Public Schools.
- We will be leading a virtual webinar for the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, *An Overview of Psychological First Aid for Victim Service Professionals* (presenters: Dr. Rochelle Hanson & Aurelia Sands Bell)
- We have recorded two additional Snaps for our NMVRC Snap Series (all available on the NMVC website). The purpose of this series is to teach one to two practical skills on a specific topic, with each SNAP designed to run less than 30 minutes. To date, recorded SNAPS include:
  - *An Overview of the NMVC & How to Access Our Resources*, by **Dr. Angela Moreland**
  - *Helping Children & Teens Manage Trauma and Grief Following a Mass Violence Incident*, by **Dr. Rochelle Hanson**
  - *Overview of Three Centers Involved in the Mass Violence Response*, by **Anne Seymour**
  - *Tips to Identify a Trained Trauma Therapist*, by **Dr. Rochelle Hanson**
- Others in the planning stage include:
  - *Role of VSPs in Readiness, Response, and Recovery*
  - *Survivor-Centered Court Guide for VSPs*
  - *Overview of Psychological First Aid*
  - *Overview of Skills for Psychological Recovery*
  - *Skills for Clinicians in the Court Room: Survivor-Centered Court Processes*
  - *Hate Motivated MVIs*
  - *An Overview of the Transcend Mobile App*



Click [HERE](#) to access all SNAPS recordings

As always, we welcome suggestions for new training and education materials and requests for training or consultation.

Dr. Hanson is also co-facilitating the *School Mass Violence Trauma Recovery Coordinators Forum*. We have had three virtual meetings to date, with aims to refine our scope, goals and activities. Plans are to continue meeting on a bimonthly basis.

- **The six goals of the School Mass Violence Trauma Recovery Coordinators Forum are to:**

1. Build nationwide connections among school mass violence trauma recovery coordinators to share information, resources, and best practices, with a centralized on-line source to document and share members' resources.
2. Define "recovery" following mass violence incidents in schools, and appropriate evidence-based responses to enhance recovery that are trauma-informed and culturally competent.
3. Develop a checklist or roadmap for Trauma Recovery Coordinators to help them plan effective strategies, policies, protocols and programming.
4. Identify local, state, national and Federal resources that can support the work of school-based Trauma Recovery Coordinators, including funding.
5. Identify unexpected challenges and different types of circumstances that make a school-based MVI unique, and effective strategies to address them.
6. Recognize the potential vicarious and secondary trauma impact of this work, and effective strategies to address it and strengthen personal resilience.

If interested in learning more about the forum and the potential for participating, please contact Dr. Hanson by emailing her at [HansonRF@musc.edu](mailto:HansonRF@musc.edu).

## Survivors & Providers Steering Committee

Aurelia Sands Belle, M.Ed.

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The SPSC held two meetings within the last half of the fiscal year featuring the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) division of Environmental Crime Victim Resources and the State of Oregon's Post-Conviction Services for Victims of Crime.

**Michael Burnett**, EPA National Victim Witness Coordinator, and **Daniel Dooher**, Senior Trial Attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, spoke to the SPSC about the victim services provided by the EPA's Criminal Investigation Division (CID), the law enforcement division within EPA. The unit is responsible for investigating crimes impacting the environment that are knowingly or intentionally committed, causing danger to the environment or the health and well-being of human life. Burnett explained how a thorough investigation helps identify the physical, emotional, and mental impacts on those involved, in addition to recognizing whether the crime caused any direct financial losses. Investigators must prove the crime was committed knowingly or intentionally - and that the offense violated environmental laws by endangering the environment, human life, or health. Dooher said notifying victims in EPA-CID cases can be challenging. However, the agency uses modern notification methods, such as posting ads through community social networks apprising them of possible eligibility for services (restitution, compensation, or other state or local services).

Since its inception, the NMVC has recognized the devastation created by environmental crimes. The Survivors and Providers Steering Committee includes members who are victims and survivors of both the Deepwater Horizon explosion and the Flint Water Crisis. Having these resources within the EPA and on the committee provides an insightful perspective helpful to both victims and experts.

**Post-conviction Services** is a topic that has recently gained attention because of the increased apprehension of offenders and the consideration for release of offenders in older cases. Members of the State of Oregon's post-conviction services provided the SPSC with information about how their state is addressing this issue.



**Stephanie Stocks, Advocate,**  
Appellate Advocacy Program,  
Oregon Department of Justice



**Saydyie DeRosia, Victim**  
Services Coordinator, Oregon  
Department of Corrections

The presenters discussed their advocacy roles in ensuring victims' rights are upheld during post-conviction cases. Advocates notify victims, attend hearings, and provide information to authorities. Victim assistance programs include the Facilitated Dialogue Program, Responsibility Letter Bank, and Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE).

They also provided the committee with information about Marsy's Law. The law ensures equal rights for crime victims within the criminal justice system, mirroring many of the rights afforded to offenders, from arrest through post-conviction. The law also offers victims the constitutional rights to be heard, notified, and informed. Marsy's law has been adopted by 12 states, and supporters wish to see the legislation passed nationwide.

## Virtual National Town Hall

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Upon suggestion by members of the SPSC, NMVC hosted a National Town Hall on November 30, 2023 titled, "Helping the Helpers: Addressing Needs of First Responders Following MVIs." The town hall addressed the perspectives of first responders who have experienced mass violence incidents, the scope of various support services to help first responders' resilience in the aftermath of MVIs, and important resilience skills and strategies first responders need. The recordings and resources for this town hall can be found [under the "Learn" section of the NMVC website](#) (or by using the link embedded).

**UPCOMING:** February 22, 2024, National Town Hall #9: **Trauma Across the Lifespan of Mass Violence Survivors & Impacted Communities**

Register for Virtual Town Hall

# Updates From the Field

Anne Seymour, Associate Academic Program Director

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## 2024 National Crime Victims' Rights Week "How Would You Help?"

On April 8, 1981, only one week after he became the victim of an attempted assassination, President Reagan proclaimed the first "Victims' Rights Week." His profound words from nearly four decades ago resound still today:

*For too long, the victims of crime have been the forgotten persons of our criminal justice system. Rarely do we give victims the help they need or the attention they deserve. Yet the protection our citizens – to guard them from becoming victims – is the primary purpose of our penal laws. Thus, each new victim personally represents an instance in which our system has failed to prevent crime. Lack of concern of victims compounds that failure...We need a renewed emphasis on, and an enhanced sensitivity to, the rights of victims. These rights should be a central concern of those who participate in the criminal justice system, and it is time all of us paid great heed to the plight of victims.*

President Reagan's challenge for a "renewed emphasis" on victims' rights, issues and concerns was fully articulated in the work of his President's Task Force on Victims of Crime that he convened in 1982. Its Final Report published in December 1982 with 68 recommendations for national action to improve the plight of victims forged a path for the victim assistance and justice professions that remains even today and in the future. Task Force Chairwoman Lois Haight explained that "the lessons of the victims run like a thread through and are the foundation of all the proposals that follow. Please take the time to learn, as we have, the depth and the human aspect of this grave social problem, then join in seeking and implementing the solutions."

This year's National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) is scheduled for April 21 to 27, 2024. Forty-three years after President Reagan's proclamation, the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime challenges this Nation to continue to center and address the needs of crime victims and survivors with the 2024 NCVRW theme,

### *How would you help? Options, services and hope for crime survivors.*

In the field of mass violence victim/survivor assistance, there are countless people who help victims, first responders and communities impacted by mass violence: mass violence survivors themselves, victim service and behavioral/mental health professionals, community and civic leaders, Faith communities, and literally anyone who recognizes the devastating impact of mass violence. Of particular note are the important efforts of community leaders who have themselves experience a mass violence incident – Governors, Mayors, Police Chiefs, and health care leaders – to provide support and peer-to-peer mentoring of their colleagues who face one of the most difficult experiences of their careers.

The National Mass Violence Center is proud to be among many organizations and professionals that provide "options, services and hope for mass violence crime survivors." Together with 20 national partner organizations, the Center offers victims and communities myriad options to help them effectively prepare for and respond to mass violence, including training, technical assistance, and the development of resources to help mass violence victim-serving professionals. The wrap-around services provided by Family Assistance Centers and 25 long-term Resiliency Centers are survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and increasingly focused on the unique needs of each impacted community. Our Center and allies continually work to promote hope that mass violence incidents can be reduced, and that affected victims, first responders and communities can build personal and collective resilience to recover in the aftermath of mass casualty crimes.



It is notable that 2024 marks a year of important anniversaries in the victim/survivor assistance field:

- Forty years ago, the [Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\)](#) was enacted into law by Congress in 1984 to use fines and fees assessed against convicted Federal defendants to fund victim/survivor services.
- Thirty years ago, the [Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\)](#) became Federal law in 1994, strengthening support and services for victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking.
- Twenty years ago, the [Crime Victims' Rights Act of 2004](#) was passed to strengthen rights for victims and survivors of Federal crimes, including many mass violence survivors.

As our Nation commemorates 2024 National Crime Victims' Rights Week, it is helpful to reflect on the history of the victim assistance field to recognize the remarkable ways that many crime survivors, victim assistance and justice professionals, and allies have provided help, options, services, and hope to all who have experienced criminal victimization and mass violence. Through innovative policies, survivor-centered programs, and ongoing committed partnerships, America continues to ensure that victims and survivors are no longer the "forgotten persons" noted by President Reagan in 1981, and recognized as people who need and deserve assistance and support.

