

ISSUE
NO. 11

APRIL
2022

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

We at the National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center are dedicated to improving the understanding of the consequences of mass violence for survivors and helping communities improve services for survivors of mass violence incidents. From my perspective as a trauma-informed mental health professional, I would like to discuss three commonly held misconceptions about mass violence and its consequences that hinder our ability to understand the needs of mass violence survivors and provide them with the services they need at the times they most need them.

The first misconception is thinking that a mass violence incident is a discrete event with relatively short-term consequences that persist for days or weeks as opposed to months or years. This results in service programs that focus more on the immediate response and short-term recovery period than for the long haul. However, needs assessment surveys that we and others have conducted show that many mass violence survivors are still experiencing behavioral health problems such as PTSD, depression, and fear of mass violence attacks years after their mass violence incident occurred. Most resiliency centers are not set up or funded to provide services years after the mass violence incident occurs, so survivors who need such services often cannot find them. **This gap should be addressed by designing programs that can provide services to survivors with persistent long-term needs.**

A second misconception is that the consequences of mass violence fall only on direct survivors. The truth is that the ripple effects of mass violence extend to many others, including first responders, criminal justice professionals, health care providers, victim service professionals, and members of the community in which the mass violence incident happened. Our mass violence community needs assessment surveys found that adults in these communities had elevated rates of PTSD and depression years after the incident happened. Other consequences include enhanced fears of becoming victims of mass violence in the future. Another enduring consequence of each new mass violence incident is increased risk of re-traumatization of those who have experienced a previous mass violence incident. In summary, the ripple effects of each new mass violence incident are powerful and create service needs that extend far beyond the direct survivors of that incident.

A final misconception is that all mass violence incidents, survivors, and communities are alike. **Each mass violence incident is unique.** So is each survivor, although many of them share some of the same challenges and needs. They all need accurate information, fair and equal treatment, and justice. Some have more resources than others, including strong social support networks that help them deal with mass violence and other stressful events. Some live in communities characterized by lack of jobs and economic opportunity, underfunded schools, high crime, and lack of access to health care and social services. Some have personal histories that include prior criminal victimization or other potentially traumatic events. Some communities in which mass violence incidents happen are better prepared than others and have more resources with which to address survivors' needs and problems.

These are but a few of the things we need to consider when we are trying to understand what the consequences are for a

given survivor who experiences a given MVI in a particular community.

This is complicated, but one *size does not fit all*. True equity doesn't always mean assuming that everyone has the same needs or problems. It doesn't always mean treating everyone the same way. It sometimes requires treating each survivor as an individual, with kindness and respect, and then customizing what you do based on a careful assessment of their history, situation, strengths, vulnerabilities, and what they need.

Response, Recovery, and Resilience

Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D.

This past quarter's theme for the Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Division has been **collaborations and connections**. We believe it is vital that disseminating evidence-based strategies to prepare for and respond to mass violence depends on joining with communities, grass-root efforts, organizations, and partnering agencies.

We have been meeting with our partners – including the [American Hospital Association](#), [United States Conference of Mayors](#), [National Governors Association](#), as well as the [FBI Terrorism and Special Jurisdiction Unit](#) – to identify resources and needs for preparing and responding to mass violence.

We have also been working closely with Resiliency Directors within the NMVRC Resiliency Directors' Forum on gathering "lessons learned" from each other on sustainability planning for resiliency centers. Most recently we have established a Mass Violence Incident Survivor-Driven Non-Governmental Organization Forum to strengthen the informal connections among non-governmental organizations, provide a safe space for them to connect and receive mutual guidance, training and technical assistance to strengthen their 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, [please reach out to us](#).

As part of our theme of collaborations, members of our Preparedness and Response Division have been providing direct consultation to several communities – including Parkland, FL, where we are providing consultation related to victim service and mental/ behavioral health preparation for their upcoming penalty trial. In addition, check out a new Tip Sheet we published in February ["Trauma-Focused Treatments Versus Trauma-Informed Resiliency"](#) that assists individuals in understanding the complexities between trauma-focused treatments and trauma-informed resiliency.

And last, our first National Town Hall in January was a success! We provided information about current mass violence resources offered by the Office for Victims of Crime, the Office for Victims of Crime Training & Technical Assistance Center, and the NMVRC. Please join us for our second MVI National Town Hall on May 5, where we will address the topic of preparedness. We have a great line-up of presenters. We look forward to seeing you there!

Data Collection & Evaluation

Angela Moreland, Ph.D.

Hello from the Data Collection and Evaluation team!

As discussed in our last update, we conducted a needs assessment with **174 direct victims** from the shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas on October 1, 2017. Thank you to the [Vegas Strong Resiliency Center](#) for all of the help in connecting with victims.

In the survey, we obtained information on the **degree of impact, response factors, and mental health consequences** following the Route 91 Harvest Festival shooting.

Our team has completed preliminary analyses of the needs assessment survey and are preparing to share the results with the citizens of Las Vegas. This information will be extremely informative to the Las Vegas community – as well as to the general public – and will help those working with direct victims.

Our next goal is to invite the remainder of direct victims in Las Vegas to complete surveys and to extend these needs assessments to additional communities.

Resources & Technology

Daniel Smith, Ph.D.

“We own ‘mass violence’” – at least as far as Google’s search engine is concerned.

When we switched the content management system that supports the nmvvr.org website last year, we temporarily discontinued the monitoring of web traffic to the site. Thanks to the hard work of Jerry Glover and Mikaela Porter, however, we re-initiated gathering analytics data early this year.

Data collected over the past several months indicates that we are receiving hundreds of unique visits to the website every week, usually from “new” users (or at least those who had not visited the site since we began collecting data again). Our NMVVR home page is, perhaps obviously, phenomenon. Other pages that get high numbers of visits, on average, include our new [Mass Violence Core Compendium](#), the recently created [Planning and Implementation Guide for Comprehensive, Coordinated Victim Assistance for Mass Violence Incident Trials](#), our new [Transcend home page](#), and our [Tip Sheets catalog](#). It’s wonderful to see that the excellent content created by our faculty and staff drawing clicks, and more importantly, eyes to our site.

But perhaps most exciting, if you Google “mass violence definition” or another similar term, nmvvr.org is the number one search result that you will get. We are above the [National Center for PTSD’s](#) mass violence page (and the NCPTSD has been around for decades), above the [Office for Victims of Crime](#), above the [Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center](#), and above the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s](#) mass violence related resources. While we still have work to do in terms of improving our national profile, this is pretty exciting news. We are disseminating quality content that people are seeing and finding useful, and we are determined to continue doing so.

Finally, to end on a bit of a sad note, this is the final newsletter that our current Public Information Coordinator, Mikaela Porter, will be producing. Mikaela has accepted an exciting new position with the City of Charleston’s media relations team. She will continue on a part time basis through National Crime Victims’ Rights Week at the end of April, however, so you will still have some opportunities to see her excellent handiwork. We are all sad to say goodbye to Mikaela, but also excited for her and the new challenges she is undertaking. We are already searching for a replacement. They will have very big shoes to fill.

Training & Technical Assistance

Rochelle Hanson, Ph.D.

Over the past quarter, the Training & Technical Assistance division has focused on developing training resources and materials to address the mental and behavioral needs of mass violence victims, survivors, and first responders.

One of our core activities involves a collaborative project with the Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center to develop a standardized training curriculum that will have this focus. We are in the early stages of development, so stay tuned for this curriculum, which will be titled, [Mental Health Impact and Trajectory Across MVI - from Preparation to Recovery: What Providers Should Know in Working with MVI victims](#).

On a related note, we have begun development of a resource, entitled, [A Guide for VSPs to Address Behavioral/Mental Health Across MVI Phases \(From Readiness to Resilience\)](#) – Stay tuned!

We also have been working to update the [MVI Core Compendium](#) to include content that addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion across all phases of mass violence (Recovery, Response, and Resilience).

We also submitted three panel presentations at national conferences this quarter:

- *Strategies to Promote Mental Health Recovery: Recommendations Before, During, and Following a Mass Violence Incident*, has been accepted for presentation at the National Center for Victims of Crime's 2021 National Training Institute in St. Louis, Missouri, which will be held from October 6-8, 2022. Our 90-minute presentation (co-presenters Dr. Alyssa Rheingold and Anne Seymour) will take place on October 7.
- *Evidence-based Approaches to Address Behavioral Health Needs after Mass Violence: Readiness, Response, and Recovery*, was recently submitted to the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT), for their annual conference in November. This panel includes Dr. Rochelle Hanson, Dr. Angie Moreland, Dr. Dean Kilpatrick, and Dr. Dan Smith, as well as Melissa Brymer, from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and Elizabeth Cronin, from the NYS Office of Victim Services.
- *Lessons Learned to Address Traumatic Stress Across Diverse Populations Before, During and After Mass Violence Events*, was just submitted to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (ISTSS) for their annual conference in November. The panel involves a diverse group of individuals who have responded to mass violence incidents in the United States and Europe.

In concert with the NMVRC Response Division, we have provided initial consultation to the City of Virginia Beach regarding their plans for commemoration of the shooting that occurred on May 31, 2019, at a municipal building in the Princess Anne area of Virginia Beach.

We continue to solicit feedback from the NMVRC team and stakeholders regarding the need for new training/ education materials and requests for consultation.

Survivors & Providers Steering Committee

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

The Stakeholders Forum held its first meeting of the year on March 31. Dr. Angela Moreland-Johnson and Anne Seymour providing an overview of our activities, highlighted consultations for recent mass violence incidents and the data collected from community surveys.

The community survey results were of particular interest to the Forum members, especially those depicting survivors' long-term mental health issues and needs. They also discussed the need for more information about what happens after a mass violence incident. Mary Fetchet (September 11) suggested that it might be interesting to look at the number of years since a tragedy took place and when they conducted the study. Dr. Moreland-Johnson said that the Center would like to run a longitudinal study, and this type of question would be a part of the study. Funding, of course, for such a big undertaking is the issue.

Forum members wanted to hear more about how COVID-19 impacted victims and survivors, especially if they sought out help. Dr. Moreland-Johnson is willing to talk more about the issue of avoidance and help-seeking behaviors.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be April 24-30, with the theme "Rights, Access, Equity, for all Victims." Anne Seymour spearheaded the effort to develop a special kit from the NMVRC focusing on mass violence. The forum members liked this concept a great deal. Several members submitted recommendations for leaders, law enforcement, or the general public, and these statements will be in the kit.

Within their communities, forum members are busy working on specific issues and projects that address the problems and needs of crime victims:

- Dion Green (Oregon Historic District shooting) is working on legislation to address gun violence.
- Brittney Thomas (Heath High School shooting) is advocating for the inclusion of witnesses in the upcoming parole hearing for the defendant.
- Julie Paez (San Bernardino County Environmental Health Services building shooting) reported that the memorial of the shooting is finished and will go up in July. She is making presentations with law enforcement about her victimization.
- Yvonne Lewis (Flint Water Crisis) is still hosting weekly community webinars. The Flint community remains in a quandary between the civil and criminal processes. There is a delay in the criminal cases, and in the civil cases, the attorneys reaped most of the financial benefits.
- Rev. E. Manning (Mother Emanuel shooting) testified before the Committee on Homeland Security (Rep. Bennie Thompson, Chair) and two other panelists on The Targeting of Black Institutions: From Church Violence to University Bomb Threats.

The Forum will meet again in June.

Updates From the Field

Anne Seymour, Associate Academic Program Director

National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) will be observed across the country from April 24 – 30, 2022. The 2022 theme is "Rights, access, equity for all victims," and a tagline that resonates with all service providers who assist victims of mass violence is "*Help crime survivors find their justice.*"

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime has published an online [NCVRW Resource Guide](#) that features guidance to develop a NCVRW campaign; communications strategies; and camera-ready artwork for website, social media and public awareness activities.

For the first time, the NMVVRC has created a Tip Sheet, "Resources to Promote the 2022 National Crime Victims' Rights Week Theme," that is available on our website.

The NMVVRC website will also feature a special NCVRW message from our Director, Dr. Dean Kilpatrick; our special [Mass Violence Podcast](#) with leaders from the field with over 160 years of experience in victim/survivor services, discussing the NCVRW theme and its application to mass violence survivors and impacted communities; and a link to the U.S. House of Representatives 2022 NCVRW proclamation that pays tribute to mass violence victims and survivors.

At the NMVVRC, we commit to "help mass violence victims and survivors find their justice;" and to ensure that mass violence victims' rights and services are not only observed *annually*, but practiced *daily*.

