The Role of Victim Assistance Professionals in Responding to Mass Violence Incidents

This tip sheet clearly defines the crucial role of VAPs in the response phase of a mass violence incident.

Please note that this document offers recommendations for a variety of professionals who support victims of mass violence. While some of the tips may apply to all victim assistance professionals, others may only be relevant to a specific subset i.e. victims compensation professionals, court based victim advocates, community based victim advocates, etc.

- Partner with allied agencies to provide centralized, collaborative leadership and communications in the immediate aftermath of a MVI.
- Offer the capacity to be physically present at the Joint Information Center and Joint Operations Center to enhance the accuracy of information and communications relayed to victim assistance professionals (VAPs) at the Response Center (RC)
- Help set up, organize and staff the initial RC and Family Assistance Center (FAC) with “go kits” prepared in advance that include relevant victim information and forms, supplies, and technology support for RCs and FACs
- Contribute to the creation of accurate lists of victims and survivors by working with law enforcement, medical examiners, and other first responders and hospitals
- Help law enforcement establish an area within the RC and FAC that is separate by sight and sound for victim/survivor and witness interviews and victim identification
- Help facilitate the return-of-property that was lost or damaged during the MVI
- Demonstrate best practices to enhance victim/survivor privacy and confidentiality, both on-site at RCs and FACs and through all communications and case work
- Conduct victim/survivor needs assessments and establish case management protocols that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed
- Help survivors understand and apply for crime victim compensation on-site at the RC and FAC and online:
  - Provide shortened or abbreviated application forms
  - Create a secure area for law enforcement and victim compensation staff to facilitate the expedited documentation and completion of applications
  - Help coordinate victim compensation benefits with other public benefits available to MVI survivors, and public charitable initiatives that seek to help MVI victims and survivors
  - Rapidly create a MVI-specific page on the victim compensation agency website that provides important information about victim compensation, coordination within/among states, and the overall application process
- Provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) and victim advocacy support to victims, survivors, witnesses, first responders and community members who are directly affected by the MVI
The NMVVRC is grateful to the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards, the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, the Orlando United Assistance Center, and many survivors and victim assistance professionals who contributed to this tip sheet.