



## Tips for Community Leaders: Supporting Your Community's Remembering of Mass Violence Victims

### In the Immediate Aftermath:

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- ⇒ Make public space available for gatherings
- ⇒ Provide appropriate security
- ⇒ Focus on events that will include everyone. Reach out directly to people who may hesitate to attend due to socio-economic, racial, religious, ethnic or other differences from the majority community
- ⇒ Invite speakers, local musicians and artists from all parts of the affected community to participate
- ⇒ Address any community suspicions directly
- ⇒ Offer updates on any emerging information
- ⇒ Correct any false media narratives as soon as possible
- ⇒ Leave flowers, notes, and gifts at the temporary memorial site for a few days then find a place where the non-perishable items can be displayed for a few weeks
- ⇒ Keep condolence notes indefinitely for victims to read at a later date

### During the First Year:

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- ⇒ Encourage sharing about what happened and what it meant to people. Everyone has a different story to tell. These narratives help people remember loved ones and are an important part of healing and recovery. Include narratives from those communities who may not be normally heard due to racial, ethnic, class, gender, disability or other minority status. Encourage stories in languages spoken in the community.
- ⇒ Encourage musicians, artists, writers and the general public to honor and remember the event. Stories will be told over and over again in different ways, by the media, by your citizens, by those interested in political gain. Some people will not want to be reminded as they need to process things more slowly in their own way. Recognize these individual needs. However, it is important to correct false narratives as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Promote ongoing events to bring communities together.
- ⇒ Encourage survivors to rebuild and enhance their social connections and community supports.



## During the First Year (cont...):

- ⇒ Ensure that victims feel connected to their communities and that they know ongoing support is available to them even if they never take advantage of it. People are less anxious if they know help is available. Reach out with specific public information to communities who traditionally may feel mistrustful of or disconnected from local government or institutions.
- ⇒ Publicize public health announcements about flashbacks or other emotional reactions to trauma. Note that people with prior trauma from violence or discrimination may have stronger reactions, especially to hate crimes. Information helps to normalize feelings and identify risks such as increased alcohol or drug use, misplaced anger or prolonged sadness and depression. Include contact information for free services through the established resiliency center and local mental health centers.

## Long - Term:

- ⇒ Balance small and large events. Balance reflective events with community discussion. Some towns have so many events that people get burned out.
- ⇒ Create scholarships, mental health programs, parks, foundations with a specific purpose related to the attack. These programs will continue into the future.
- ⇒ Include members of minority groups in planning councils for all activities. Be transparent in how decisions are made. Be sure to listen to all points of view and have a process for inclusion of differing views.
- ⇒ Sponsor projects such as portraits, public installation of art, music compositions, academic books, documentaries, memoirs, theatre creations. Invite contributions from all parts of your community, including those with disabilities.
- ⇒ Support development of civic groups focused on prevention of violence (groups may differ on how they see that to be done).
- ⇒ Support a new sense of purpose for individuals and groups through civic engagement or political activism to make the community a better place. Balance differing views respectfully.



Scan for direct link to tip sheet