

Tips for Community Leaders: Managing Donations

After a mass violence incident (MVI), people from your community and around the country may want to support the victims/survivors and their families. Those donations may come in many forms, including stuffed animals, clothing, or money.

- Establish a plan for managing donations in advance.
- Create a central non-profit to channel funds with incorporation papers, a bank account, website and PayPal account. Be clear on who is responsible for managing funds.
 - See [this Harvard Business Review](#) article on lessons learned from the Boston Marathon bombing
- Avoid stressful and prolonged negotiations needed to disburse money that is donated in victims' names by using new models of giving.
- In the absence of a community non-profit, consider using the [National Compassion Fund](#), a safe, transparent way for the public to give directly to the victims of mass casualty crimes.
- Funneling funds through existing foundations usually delays money from reaching victims, and the foundations may take substantive administrative fees.
- Put out a news release and public service announcement through local, national, and social media to advise well-wishers and donors what is needed and where to send financial donations.
- Notify the public not to send gifts or in-kind donations unless they are requested specifically. Money is more useful.
- Communicate with the public about how gifts will be stored, dispersed, or disposed of in a respectful way.
- Contact local businesses for specific needs. You know your community and what resources are available. Be innovative.
- Set up a separate category of giving for victim services and make it distinct from giving directly to victims, if feasible.
- Create a committee with a well-respected and experienced chair to manage funds. Include representatives from key agencies. Enlist local banks to oversee collection and control systems.
- Identify an individual from the Attorney General's office who can monitor the collection of money and how it is being managed.
- Both GoFundMe and GiveForward employ a variety of safeguards to deter scams and ensure that the funds go to the intended victims. GoFundMe has a team that vets any suspicious campaigns. GiveForward assigns a live "fundraising coach" to each campaign that guides fundraising and will only write checks in the name of the named beneficiary.
- Maintain exact records of what is received, what is spent, and what is distributed.
- Develop a fair formula for how victims, survivors, and families will be helped.
- Accurately educate the public about crime victim compensation from state or federal sources explaining what they do and do not cover.

- Clarify the different sources of compensation: the Office of Victims of Crime, the Department of Justice, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, state funds, etc.
- Translate crime victim compensation information into languages specific to your location.
- Request that television stations put crime victim compensation messages on the scrolling line at the bottom of their programming
- No matter how much you raise, there won't be enough to cover all needs. Focus on the survivors and the families of the victims and let them decide what to do with the money.
- Trust your citizens. Resist the temptation to divert funds for bureaucratic functions.
- Consider retaining counsel for mediation or alternative dispute resolution.
- Follow the rules. Sometimes the law, a statute or the rules require you say no to donors. Explain to people as best you can that these programs must be very principled.

What NOT to DO

- Do not allow disputing factions to derail the functions of the fund and further hurt your community cohesion.
- Do not place blame on one group of victims or survivors. Everyone is hurting, and we should assume everyone is seeking a fair solution, though people may have different perspectives on what is fair.
- Do not make public (or private) statements that may inflame emotions during a difficult time.
- Do not keep secrets. Without accurate and timely information, people start rumors that are hard to control.

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