



NMVC

National Mass Violence Center

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

National Mass Violence Center
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences
Medical University of South Carolina
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Community and Multi-Faith Community Leaders: Tips for Commemorating the Annual Observance of a Mass Violence Incident

Leaders from the community and faith institutions in the jurisdiction where a mass violence incident (MVI) occurred have the opportunity to provide leadership, and emotional and spiritual guidance and support, on the annual observance of the MVI. It is a date filled with trauma and sorrow, but one that can also be recognized and commemorated with dignity and respect. These tips are designed to help plan MVI annual commemorative events.

- ⇒ **Ensure that MVI victims/survivors, first responders and others directly affected by the MVI are involved in planning annual commemorative events**, and recognized at such events as honored guests. They may wish to participate in private events hosted solely for victims, survivors, first responders, and their loved ones. Members planning the memorial should consider whether or not there is still an active investigation and/or prosecution pending.
- ⇒ **Prepare MVI survivors for the high level of interest that the MVI annual observance will generate** among the news media, social media, and concerned individuals. This can help them predict and prepare for their personal capacity to be involved or to be unavailable, depending upon their personal circumstances.
- ⇒ **Publicize public health announcements about the range of potential emotional reactions** via the news media, social media, and community outreach/education venues.
 - Refer to the tip sheets below regarding possible reactions to annual commemorations:
 - ▷ [Anniversary Reactions in Adults, National Center for PTSD](#)
 - ▷ [Tips for Families on Addressing the Anniversary, National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- ⇒ **Seek a national, state, Tribal, county and/or city proclamation** commemorating the anniversary of the MVI.
 - White House proclamation for “Patriot Day & National Day of Service and Remembrance” to be commemorated nationally each September 11th (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/09/10/a-proclamation-on-patriot-day-and-national-day-of-service-and-remembrance-2021/>)
 - A proclamation by the California Governor establishing November 1st as a “Day of Remembrance of the Las Vegas Mass Shooting” (<https://www.ca.gov/archive/gov39/2017/11/01/news20047/index.html>)
 - A proclamation by the Florida Governor establishing every February 14 as “Marjory Stoneman High School Remembrance Day” (<https://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Marjory-Stoneman-Douglas-PROC-2021.pdf>)
- ⇒ **Consider sponsoring simple commemorations that can engage the entire community or Nation**, such as lowering flags to half-staff; a collective community/state/national moment of silence or lighting of candles; and/or the simultaneous ringing of courthouse and church/synagogue/temple/mosque bells.



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- ⇒ **Consider what some communities do and sponsor a day of community service on the annual observance of the MVI**, which brings together individuals, organizations and businesses to honor MVI victims by helping others. One example inspired by the survivors of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 is the National Day of Service and Remembrance, which provides on-line opportunities for people to volunteer and/or register their volunteer projects each year on September 11 (<https://americorps.gov/newsroom/events/911-day>). Seek out other nationally designated commemorations such as Parents of Murdered Children's (POMC) National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims on September 25th of each year and sponsor events on those dates.
- ⇒ **Support the unique needs of your community members.** Memorial events should be varied and suited to the needs of each segment of the community. There is no single, correct approach. Engaged community members know what is best for them. Local groups will plan their own remembrances through sporting events, fundraisers, concerts, premiers of films or documentaries, picnics and other events. Governmental agencies can plan formal services, a place for discussion, or other recognition of the event. Balance small and large events, i.e. benefit concerts versus small group gatherings.
- ⇒ **Make it clear to MVI victims and survivors that their community is still supportive and understanding**, and has not forgotten about the MVI and its devastating impact on them.
- ⇒ **Coordinate the schedule so that few events overlap.** Multiple overlapping events can leave some people feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.
- ⇒ **Proactively engage local and national news media**, many of which will want to cover memorial events and activities. A press release or press advisory that lists all identified memorial events should be prepared and disseminated widely to print and broadcast media.
- ⇒ **Proactively develop a comprehensive social media strategy.** In addition to publicizing information about commemorative events, social media outreach can also feature "handles" and "hashtags" associated with the MVI and related commemorations to promote an "on-line sense of community."
- ⇒ **Some victims and survivors will avoid certain events**, do not want reminders, and may leave town during the commemoration period. Sometimes only their private rituals bring comfort. For some, nothing helps to relieve the pain except time.



Scan to download tip sheet