

“At-a-Glance” - The Role of Victim Assistance Professionals

READINESS	RESPONSE	RECOVERY & RESILIENCE
• Help create state-and local-level emergency response plans that validate the important role of VSPs in preparing for MVIs. • Coordinate victim/survivor/witness responses to MVIs among international, federal, national, state, Tribal and local agencies and organizations that assist survivors. • Help create plans and develop agency/ organizational and inter-agency policies that promote collaborative responses to MVIs. • Participate in coordinated drills and disaster response exercises to prepare for MVIs. • Encourage the presence of a state's or jurisdiction's victim assistance leader in the Joint Operations Center (JOC) or Joint Information Center (JIC) during the initial response to a MVI. • Clarify the role of VSPs and coordinate with allied agencies to identify and fill gaps in services to victims, survivors, witnesses and first responders. • Develop and regularly update a roster of VSPs who are trained to respond to MVIs.	• Partner with allied agencies to provide centralized, collaborative leadership and communications in the aftermath of an MVI. • Offer the capacity to be physically present at the Joint Information Center (JIC) and Joint Operations Center (JOC) to enhance the accuracy of information and communications relayed to VSPs at the Response Center (RC). • Help set up, organize and staff the initial RC and Family Assistance Center (AC) with “go kits” that include relevant victim information & resources. • Contribute to the coordinated creation of accurate lists of victims and survivors. • Help law enforcement (LE) establish a secure, private area within the RC and FAC for survivor/witness interviews and 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. • Conduct victim/survivor needs assessments and establish case management protocols that are survivor-centered and trauma-informed.	• Research and write an “After-Action Report” (AAR) that is specific to the overall effectiveness of VSPs' response to the MVI and/or contribute to the general AAR. • Provide a strong leadership role in applying to the USDOJ Anti-terrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP) that provides long-term support. • Contribute to the creation of a Resilience Center (ResC) that is centrally-located, safe and secure to continue to identify/address survivors' needs. • Provide survivor services (sometimes available in multiple languages) such as a hotline; website; intake and needs assessments; coordinated case management; support groups; counseling; life coaches; financial literacy; vocational rehabilitation; interventions/advocacy with employers, schools, etc.; and meeting spaces. • Provide a social media presence to share and disseminate information for survivors and community members (including the establishment of “closed” or “private” groups).



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• Educate VSPs and partner agencies that respond to MVIs about federal and national sources for victim/survivor. • Conduct training sessions that are evidence-based and trauma-informed to prepare VSPs to respond to MVIs. • Help develop cross-training curricula and programs that educate partner professionals about the coordinated roles of VSPs in MVI planning and responses. • Prepare “go kits” from victim/survivor assistance agencies that include relevant victim information and forms, supplies, and technology support for initial Response Centers (RCs) and Family Assistance Centers (FACs). • Proactively promote the availability of victim compensation for violent crime victims to increase general knowledge about this important victim right and service prior to an MVI. • Develop and implement plans to be able to provide quality services to victims who have physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities, who are Deaf, do not speak English, or who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).	• Help survivors understand and apply for crime victim compensation on-site at the RC, FAC and online. • Provide Psychological First Aid (PFA) and victim advocacy support to victims, survivors, witnesses, first responders and community members. • Provide trained VSPs who can partner with LE and medical examiners (MEs) to conduct sensitive death notifications and follow-up with surviving family members. • Provide support to and coordinate with allied MVI responders at the RC and FAC to help create a survivor-centric response (such as hospitals, mental/behavioral health professionals, American Red Cross, transportation, DMV, lodging and hospitality industry, childcare, employer intervention & advocacy). • Provide support to RC and FAC leadership and LE to help survivors locate their loved ones. • Offer support and referrals for victims who reside in jurisdictions away from the site of the MVI.	• Publicize the services of the ResC to the affected community, ensuring outreach for marginalized victims/survivors (by race, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), and community members. • Offer trained “navigators” to help victims access services/support across systems & jurisdictions. • Sponsor peer support groups for victims, survivors, witnesses, VSPs and first responders. • Advocate for victims/survivors in the news media and via social media. • Continue to provide information to victims and survivors about their statutory rights under law. • In cases that result in prosecutions, provide victim/survivor advocacy and accompaniment to all relevant hearings and meetings. • Educate others about “trauma cues” that emanate from MVIs and provide support to address them.

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	• Promote cultural understanding & language access in overall service delivery. • Offer information to survivors about their statutory rights as victims of crime. • Provide information about and referrals to legal professionals who can provide advice and counsel to survivors. • Contribute to effective media relations and public outreach that reflect and respect survivors' privacy by supporting individual victims in the media, as needed and upon request. • Publicize social media links that provide timely and accurate information to survivors and communities affected by MVIs.	• Provide training and guidance to leaders of all involved agencies about vicarious trauma and strategies to promote individual and organizational wellness. • Provide tip sheets to MVI survivors and first responders (including VSPs) about the challenges they may face, and resources to help them cope. • Provide tips to and information/referrals for community members (and for children and adolescents) about practical strategies to help them feel safer. • Provide information about public and private sources that provide financial support & information about harmful fraudulent schemes. • Help organize and publicize memorial events (including anniversary tributes) and physical memorials in the community that are survivor-centric and guided by the wishes of survivors. • Provide guidance and support to victims and survivors who seek to become activists, establish nonprofit organizations or foundations, effect changes in laws, or improve future coordinated responses to MVIs.