

A Guide to Agencies That Respond to Mass Violence Incidents

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.

This list features the key federal, national and state agencies that assist in activities related to readiness, response and resilience in mass violence incidents.

Federal Agencies

U.S. Department of Justice:

The **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Office for Victim Assistance** informs, supports and assists victims in navigating the aftermath of crime and the criminal justice process with dignity and resilience. Through its **Victim Assistance Rapid Deployment Team (VA-RDT)**, FBI Victim Services personnel provide direct services and support to survivors and families at Response Centers and Family Assistance Centers in the aftermath of MVIs. The VA-RDT also oversees the **Crime Victim Emergency Assistance Fund** to aid survivors following a MVI. Visit their website: <https://www.fbi.gov/resources/victim-services#For-First%20Responders>

Established in 1998, the **Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)** is committed to enhancing the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practice to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime. Visit their website: <http://www.ovc.gov>

An overview of OVC's services, including victim assistance, victim compensation, and assistance to survivors of mass violence and terrorism, is available at:

https://www.ovc.gov/publications/factsheets/what_is_OVC2010/intro.html#cap

OVC published the **"Helping Victims of Mass Violence and Terrorism" Toolkit** that can help states and jurisdictions with readiness and planning activities relevant to assisting survivors of MVIs.

<https://www.ovc.gov/pubs/mvt-toolkit/>

The **OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center** provides resources for strategic planning, training and technical assistance to support readiness, response and resilience activities and resources relevant to MVIs. <https://www.ovcttac.gov/>

OVC administers the **U.S. Department of Justice Anti-terrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP)** to support jurisdictions that have experienced incidents of terrorism or mass violence through the provision of grants for crisis response, consequence management, criminal justice support, and training and technical assistance. <https://www.ovc.gov/AEAP/>

U.S. Attorneys are responsible for prosecuting federal cases resulting from MVIs in which the alleged defendant(s) are not deceased, and whose cases result in a trial. **U.S. Attorneys Victim/Witness staff** help MVI victims and survivors understand and exercise their rights in accordance with federal law, and help guide them through the federal criminal justice process.

<https://www.justice.gov/usao>

<https://www.justice.gov/usao/us-attorneys-listing> (listing of U.S. Attorneys)

<https://www.justice.gov/usao/resources/crime-victims-rights-ombudsman> (Federal victims' rights)

The **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** provides a variety of resources to help jurisdictions prepare for and respond to mass violence incidents including training for emergency response leaders, hospitals, and law enforcement, guidelines for exercises to help prepare to respond to MVIs, guidance in crisis communications and infrastructure protection, and development of "lessons learned" following MVIs.

<https://www.fema.gov/>

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-management-agencies> (Links to state emergency management agencies)

The **National Transportation Safety Board** sponsors the **Transportation Disaster Assistance Division (TDA)**, which coordinates disaster response resources of federal, state, local and volunteer agencies in transportation disasters. TDA Specialists work closely with these agencies and the transportation carrier to meet the needs of disaster victims and their families, including family counseling, victim identification and forensic services, communicating with foreign governments and translation services. <https://www.nts.gov/tda/Pages/default.aspx>

The **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)** coordinates behavioral health resources to help responders and communities prepare for, respond and recover from disasters and mass violence incidents, including the **Disaster Technical Assistance Center**, the **Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series**, and the **Disaster Distress Helpline**.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/disaster-preparedness/samhsas-efforts>

The **International Terrorism Victim Expense Reimbursement Program (ITVERP)** provides assistance to victims and survivors who are killed or injured by terrorist attacks outside of the United States.

<https://www.ovc.gov/itverp/>

National Organizations

The **American Red Cross** provides a wide range of support following MVIs, including emergency shelters, comfort kits, emergency supplies, and support at Response Centers and Family Assistance Centers, including health and mental health volunteers to provide first aid and emotional support, and meals and snacks.

<https://www.redcross.org/>

<https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html> (ARC chapter locator)

The **National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)** is the membership organization of all state emergency management agencies in the United States, which develop plans to prepare for, respond to and recover from mass violence incidents and other mass casualty events.

<https://www.nemaweb.org/>

NEMA provides oversight to the national **Emergency Management Compact System** that administers mutual aid efforts among states when a disaster strikes, and provides training and resources related to incident management, law enforcement, mass care, public and medical health, and telecommunications response.

<https://www.emacweb.org/>

The **National Center for Victims of Crime** sponsors the **National Compassion Fund** that provides a single, trusted way for the public to donate **directly** to victims of a mass crime, such as a shooting or terrorist attack. It has been developed by the NCVV in partnership with victims and family member from past mass casualty crimes. The National Compassion Fund serves donors by honoring their intent and crime victims by distributing donations directly to them, in a fair and transparent manner. <https://nationalcompassionfund.org/>

The **National Organization for Victim Assistance** offers Crisis Response Team Training™ that has over thirty years of evidence-informed and field-tested best practices as a crisis management utility that includes trauma mitigation and education protocols. NOVA Crisis Response Teams often respond and provide trauma mitigation, education and emotional first aid in the aftermath of a critical incident, either small-scale or mass casualty.

<https://www.trynova.org/>

State Agencies

Victim Assistance Administrating Agencies (VAAAs) oversee the dissemination of federal funds derived from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) to local, regional and state victim assistance organizations and agencies. VAAAs help coordinate all readiness, response and resilience efforts for MVIs, and are often the point-of-contact in seeking AEAP funding and providing state level VOCA funding to help survivors, first responders and communities affected by MVIs.

<http://www.navaa.org/statedirectory.html> (directory of state VOCA Administration Agencies, from the National Association of Victim Assistance Administrators)

Victim Compensation Programs offer financial support as a “payer of last resort” to eligible victims of violent crimes (including MVIs) who report the crime and cooperate with law enforcement. In the aftermath of MVIs, financial support can help cover the costs of medical treatment, mental health counseling, funerals and burials, and lost wages among other expenses. Victim compensation programs often create special pages on their websites to provide information and assistance specific to MVI victims; and develop claims forms and processes that are streamlined for MVI victims and survivors.

<http://www.nacvcb.org/index.asp?sid=6> (directory of state Victim Compensation Programs, from the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards)

State **governors** assume responsibility for harnessing all federal, state and local resources needed to respond to a MVI. Through their membership organization, the National Governors Association, they have access to a wide variety of resources related to homeland security, emergency preparedness and emergency communications.

<https://www.nga.org/governors/> (links to Governors’ websites)

<https://www.nga.org/bestpractices/divisions/hsp/> (National Governors Association Homeland Security and Public Safety Division)

City or town **mayors** also assume responsibility and take action in response to MVIs that occur in their jurisdiction. Through their membership organization, the United States Conference of Mayors, they have access to a wide variety of resources.

<https://www.usmayors.org/> (links to Mayors’ websites)