



NMVC

National Mass Violence Center

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

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Tips for Community Leaders: Supporting Victims and Families

Victims and families will have different needs immediately after a mass violence incident (MVI) and in the months and years following.

In the immediate aftermath:

- ⇒ Ensure a swift and coordinated response from law enforcement, local fire and EMS agencies, and other organizations to restore order and a sense of safety.
- ⇒ Identify an emergency Victim Service Professional (VSP) as part of the command center staff to coordinate communication and services to victims/survivors and family members.
- ⇒ Establish a **Family Assistance Center (FAC)** staffed with VSPs.
- ⇒ Identify the person(s) responsible for developing the FAC, who will find a location, call local resources, supervise personnel, and assign duties.
- ⇒ Include trained VSPs at every level of planning and response.
- ⇒ Coordinate with the FBI's Victim Services Division – which provides specially trained Victim Specialists – to give immediate on-scene support to victims.
- ⇒ Notify local mental health agencies about need for trained and screened counselors
- ⇒ Ensure FBI Victim Specialists accompany FBI Special Agents during interviews in order to provide support to victims and/or deliver trauma notifications (Law enforcement officers may not have the time or skills to do Psychological First Aid).
- ⇒ If possible, assign a permanent VSP to each victim. This keeps victims from having to tell their story over and over.
- ⇒ Coordinate forensic interviews with counseling services.
- ⇒ Coordinate efforts with other professionals, including the US Attorney's Office Victim Witnesses Coordinators and local VSPs.
- ⇒ Let people know where to go to seek help.
- ⇒ Quickly organize the collection of information so incorrect reports can be sorted out.
- ⇒ Keep victims and the public informed with regular updates. Correct information interrupts rumors and reassures the community.
- ⇒ Publicize what free services are available and where to find them.

In the first weeks and months:

- ⇒ Identify which agency will apply for federal and **state crime victim compensation** – only one organization can apply. Services can then be subcontracted under the umbrella grant.
- ⇒ Set up a resiliency center as soon as possible.
- ⇒ Assign a VSP to support the victim/survivor throughout the course of the criminal justice system.