

Supporting Victims & Survivors: Victim Liaison Models

Offering victim liaisons to victims and family members helps to minimize the trauma that can be associated with the overwhelming onslaught of resources and demands placed on victims.

The following are examples of program models to address this issue.

Please note: the brief overviews of each of these models serve only as examples, not proven best practices. It is important to remember that whenever a victim liaison model is implemented, state/community leaders should ensure that victim liaisons receive the necessary training and support to meet the comprehensive and short- and long-term needs of victims and family members. (See also the [Sample Victim Liaison Job Description](#) in this toolkit.)

Family Liaison Program (Aurora, Colorado):

- State emergency public information center assigned a public information officer (PIO) to each family to help the families manage media requests.
- The PIOs coordinated/collaborated with the victim advocates.
- PIOs now receive training in victim advocacy/trauma – lessons learned from the mass shooting at the theatre.

Connecticut State Trooper Family Support Liaison (Newton, Connecticut):

- A trooper was assigned to each family to provide them with information and support. Troopers accompanied them on errands, to church, and at home.
- Law enforcement officers shielded families from the media and kept media vehicles away from families' homes.
- State trooper support continued for several weeks after the incident. Local victim service providers addressed the ongoing and long-term needs of families

9/11 Companions (New York City Area)

- The Family Assistance Center (FAC) assigned a crisis responder/advocate to each family. The advocate walked them through the FAC and accompanied them to the World Trade Center site.
- Crisis responders were on rotation at the FAC and supported families through the FAC for approximately three months.

Sikh Temple Shooting (Oak Creek, Wisconsin)

- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) administrators and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Office for Victim Assistance set up a FAC at the temple to reach families and to provide language and culturally appropriate victim services/resources
- A Sikh mental health specialist from Colorado traveled to Oak Creek to provide support to families.
- The FAC did not allow media in the temple.

Navigators (Boston, Massachusetts):

- The Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance (MOVA) assigned Navigators to each family.
- The CRC and Navigators were onsite at MOVA.

Safe Haven Model (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Denver, Colorado):

- The program opened during jury selection and lasted through the entire trial and sentencing process.
- A criminal justice victim support model was the foundation for this program
- Note: This model is adaptable. Aurora, Colorado, has adopted this model during the pretrial phases and will continue to use the model if the case goes to trial.

Existing Statutes/Policies

To ensure timely and effective responses to victims, survivors, and first responders, consider amending existing statutes to address funding or service gaps (e.g., catastrophic injury, information sharing). Research and review federal and state statutes and policies to understand existing mandated procedures, roles, and responsibilities:

- The Federal Crime Victims' Rights Act of 2004.
- State constitutional amendments, victims' rights statutes, court rules, administrative code, and administrative enabling statutes, which vary by state.
- State VOCA compensation program guidelines.
- State statutes and regulations regarding contracts with mental health and other service providers, which vary by state.
- State death notification statutes and local protocols, which vary by state.
- State statutes and regulations regarding privacy and confidentiality laws affecting information collecting and sharing, which vary by state.
- State worker's compensation.
- Tribal Law and Order Act.