

Tips for Community Leaders: Managing Volunteers

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.

- Designate a local agency to take applications and make assignments for volunteers.
- Make public announcements about which volunteers are needed, how people can help and where to go.
- Recruit already trained volunteers from VOCA grant-funded programs.
- Victim assistance professionals should be included in all planning for victims and their families. They are experienced and connected to state and federal funding agencies such as the Office for Victims of Crime.
- Professional mental health volunteers should be evaluated and supervised by trauma trained specialists before speaking with victims or families.
- Create job descriptions for lay volunteers and establish a process for identifying and screening.
- Define exactly how non-professional volunteers can help, such as sending thank you notes to donors, organizing material donations, entering data to track donations, distributing goods or answering phones.
- Keep a contact list of volunteers for tasks that may appear weeks or months later.
- Have a clear line of professional supervision for all volunteers.
- Avoid volunteer burnout by good scheduling.