

Response Checklist

During the response phase, which occurs immediately after an incident, law enforcement officials, first responders, victim service providers, and others will manage, coordinate, and implement many of the protocols developed during the partnerships and planning phase. These protocols include Committee Meeting, Incident Command System, Communications, Family Assistance Center, Victim Identification, Victim Notification, Volunteer Management, and Donation Management. The primary agencies will be following the protocols simultaneously in a chaotic atmosphere, requiring them to coordinate their activities.

The Response Checklist can be downloaded and tailored to fit the needs of your community.

For information about free training and technical assistance related to the Mass Violence Toolkit, contact the OVC Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) at TTAC@ovcttac.org or 1-866-682-8822.

Committee Meeting Protocol Developing a meeting protocol will ensure that committee meetings are strategic and inclusive and will help ensure timely and effective responses if an event were to occur. <i>Key issues to consider:</i>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status
Convene the steering committee and primary agencies involved in the victim assistance response plan within the first 12 hours of the incident.		
Schedule and conduct regular meetings of the primary agencies. Daily check-ins may be helpful at the beginning and end of each day.		
If the event involves victims from multiple jurisdictions, states, or countries, incorporate key state government officials and the state Victims of Crime Act administrators into meetings and response plans. See the Office of Justice for Victims of Overseas Terrorism Web site .		
Depending on the nature and scope of the incident, you may consider including additional organizations in the meetings. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park Service. • Federal Aviation Administration. • U.S. State Department. • Animal control. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Transportation (roads). • Family law professionals. 		
<p>Maintain a contact list, which is critical for collecting, maintaining, and tracking contact information, resources, and roles and responsibilities for committee members. Regularly update and distribute the list, which should include contact information for committee members and their available resources.</p> <p>See Contact List Template (in this toolkit).</p>		
<p>Incident Command System Protocol</p> <p>The Incident Command System (ICS) provides a unified command in a multiresponder emergency in which all agencies have a jurisdictional responsibility for the crisis response.</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status
<p>Coordinate with your ICS. Deploy a victim assistance liaison to the ICS.</p> <p>See FEMA’s National Incident Management System Web page.</p>		
<p>If necessary, identify a safe space, near the scene of the event, to serve as a reunification center for families who are in search of family members and information. Assist family members in reunification. Depending on the scope of the incident, you may need multiple centers.</p> <p>Examples: libraries, schools, churches, fire stations, stadiums</p>		
<p>In coordination with law enforcement, deploy victim service providers to support victims and survivors before, during, and after interviews with law enforcement officials.</p>		
<p>Communications Protocol</p> <p>During and after an event of mass violence or terrorism, the Joint Information Center (JIC) will provide official information through various media (radio, TV, Web), in multilingual and multicultural formats, and, if appropriate, through alternative sources (e.g., phone texts, social media, online apps).</p>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status

	<i>Key issues to consider:</i>		
	Deploy appropriate representative(s) to the JIC. See National Response Team (NRT) Joint Information Center Model: Collaborative Communications during Emergency Response .		
	Deploy a primary spokesperson based on the nature and scope of the event.		
	Communicate accurate information and the FAC's location through various media, in multilingual formats, and through alternative sources (e.g., smart phone emergency text alert programs, social media, apps). JIC representatives may also need to correct misinformation and address rumors.		
	Distribute a fact sheet or brochure to victims regarding their rights with the media. Post this information on your Web site. See: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim Media Advocacy: How to Build Positive Relations With the News Media • Communicating Your Message: Media Tips & Tools • Communication Opportunities—Keeping Victims/Survivors Updated 		
	Be aware that there will be a difference in how information is communicated, depending on whether there is a criminal prosecution of the offender or the offender is deceased.		
	Develop FAQs for victims and for the public that list available victim assistance and services. Distribute the FAQs in person and post them online. See, for example, the FAQs that the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance developed in response to the Boston Marathon bombings.		
	If appropriate, engage a social media strategy to share information with the public during and after the event. See FEMA's Social Media in Emergency Management course.		

<p>Family Assistance Center Protocol</p> <p>A well-organized Family Assistance Center (FAC) is critical to supporting victims and their families. FACs allow victims streamlined access to multiple partner agencies, resources, and information. They may provide referrals to local and regional services for mental health counseling; health care and childcare; crime victim compensation; and assistance with legal matters, travel, creditors, work-related issues, financial planning, insurance benefits, IRS/tax policies, social security/disability, FEMA, and so forth. FACs should have a physical location and a Web site for online access.</p> <p>(Note: During past incidents, hotels have proven to be effective FAC spaces because food, lodging, and parking are easily available.)</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	<p>Agency Responsible/Partner Name</p>	<p>Current Status</p>
<p>Contact the representative at the facility in your community where the FAC will be located.</p>		
<p>Immediately after an event occurs, it is critical to identify a temporary safe location for families of victims and missing persons to gather as they await information. (In some cases, this location may need to be a secure facility that is only accessible to survivors and family members if there are security concerns.) Local fire stations, churches, municipal buildings, schools, and so forth could serve as temporary reunification centers for families. Identifying this temporary safe and secure location is important because the FAC may not be ready yet.</p>		
<p>The primary agency prepares the facility and sets up the physical location for the FAC in coordination with the committee and local service providers (e.g., mental health counseling, health care, childcare, legal assistance, travel assistance, financial planning assistance, victim services, crime victim compensation).</p>		
<p>During intake, determine if victims or witnesses have contacted law enforcement regarding the incident. If not, refer them to law enforcement. Consider having an investigator on site to take reports.</p>		
<p>Develop and distribute FAQs that list available victim assistance and services in person and online.</p>		

	See, for example, the FAQs that the Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance developed in response to the Boston Marathon bombings.		
	Implement the FAC's security plan and credentialing process.		
	If necessary, create a temporary space within the FAC for families to gather as they await information.		
	The primary agency launches and manages the online version of the FAC, which provides up-to-date information on available victim assistance and services.		
	Consider establishing a uniform statistical data collection process in coordination with the primary agencies to track outreach and services delivered. (These data may be useful when conducting needs assessments and applying for funding.)		
	If the event causes a large number of injuries, consider setting up mobile FAC stations at local hospitals to support victims and family members.		
	See: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass Fatality Incident Family Assistance Operations—Recommended Strategies for Local and State Agencies, National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) • Managing Mass Fatalities: A Toolkit for Planning, Santa Clara County Public Health Department • A Victim Assistance Guide to Planning and Responding to Critical Incidents: Toolkit for Response for Advocates in Colorado, Office for Victims Programs, Division of Criminal Justice, Colorado Department of Public Safety 		
	<p>Victim Identification Protocol</p> <p>A process needs to be developed for identifying and verifying victims and family members in coordination with the medical examiner or coroner; managing information about missing persons; releasing personal effects (cleaning and return of personal effects); and assigning case managers to provide services to victims and their families (including hospitalized victims and those who are not present).</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status
	Access (or develop) and implement a victim database to collect critical information.		

	See the sample Victim List Template (in this toolkit), which was provided by the FBI and can be adapted to fit your community's needs.		
	Share information with family members about which hospitals are treating injured victims and where their loved ones are located.		
	Identify and verify victims and family members in coordination with the medical examiner or coroner.		
	Identify victims with injuries not requiring immediate medical attention and victims who were exposed to but not injured during the traumatic incident.		
	<p>Manage information about missing persons.</p> <p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster Response Web page, National Center for Missing & Exploited Children • Attachment 6 in Mass Fatality Management Planning Toolkit, Texas Department of State Health Services • Developing a Missing Persons Protocol, University of North Texas Center for Human Identification 		
	<p>Implement a process for managing personal effects (cleaning and return of personal effects).</p> <p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Effects Best Practices: A Guide for Police and Public Safety Personnel, NTSB 		
	<p>Assign appropriately trained victim services case managers (i.e., victim liaisons) to victims and their families (including hospitalized victims and those who are not present). State and community leaders should ensure these victim liaisons receive the appropriate training and support to meet the comprehensive and short- and long-term needs of victims and family members.</p> <p>See Sample Victim Liaison Job Description (in this toolkit).</p> <p>Several communities that have experienced incidents of mass violence or terrorism</p>		

<p>have developed victim liaison models. The following models serve only as examples, not proven best practices</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigators: Boston, Massachusetts • Connecticut State Trooper Family Support Liaison • Family Liaison Program: Aurora, Colorado • Companions: New York City area 		
<p>As necessary, refer to the key provisions of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as they relate to information sharing in the event of an act of mass violence or terrorism.</p>		
<p>Leverage existing memorandums of understanding or memorandums of agreement to facilitate information sharing.</p>		
<p>Notification Protocol</p> <p>A team with training in notifying family members needs to be identified to coordinate with law enforcement and faith leaders in providing information on fatalities, injuries, recovery, temporary identification, missing persons, and the release and disposition of personal effects.</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	<p>Agency Responsible/Partner Name</p>	<p>Current Status</p>
<p>If you have not done so previously, review existing death notification statutes with the state attorney general’s office and local prosecutors’ offices.</p> <p>See Family Concerns and Religious/ Cultural Considerations in Managing Mass Fatalities: A Toolkit for Planning.</p>		
<p>Assemble the team (law enforcement officials, victim advocates, mental health professionals, crisis counselors, and faith/spiritual leaders), whose members are trained in notifying family members, that will provide information on fatalities, injuries, recovery, identification, missing persons, and the release and disposition of personal effects.</p>		
<p>Deploy the team to inform families once victims are positively identified by the medical</p>		

	examiner or coroner.		
	Assist with death certificates, autopsy reports and information, and other documentation for legal needs and benefits.		
	Assist with planning and organizing funerals and memorial services.		
	<p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Concerns and Religious/ Cultural Considerations in <i>Managing Mass Fatalities: A Toolkit for Planning</i>, Santa Clara County Public Health Department • Tips from Survivors, National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children • Coroner and Death Notification, protocol for Jefferson County, Colorado • Delivering the News With Compassion: The GRIEVING Death Notification Protocol, American College of Emergency Physicians 		
	<p>Volunteer Management Protocol</p> <p>A process needs to be developed for training volunteers in advance of an event and for supervising, assigning, and assisting them during the response and recovery phases. Spontaneous volunteers should also be addressed.</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status
	Deploy the primary agency responsible for managing volunteers.		
	Credential volunteers (which includes conducting background checks).		
	Create job descriptions for volunteer roles during the response phase to ensure that volunteers are appropriately matched with roles.		
	Deploy credentialed mental health professionals, victim advocates, and crisis counselors (trained in trauma-informed crisis care).		
	Manage, supervise, and assist previously trained volunteers.		
	<p>Screen, credential, and deploy spontaneous volunteers.</p> <p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Red Cross 		
	Conduct regular debriefings with volunteers (daily debriefings may be necessary).		
	<p>Donation Management Protocol (Funds, Good, and Services)</p> <p>Donation management is a complex process that can be managed effectively if planned for in advance of an event. Donation management and disbursement can be one of the most challenging aspects of response and recovery. Not everyone in the community will agree on the final donation management strategy, and you must keep the entire community's needs in mind. Be aware that there may be a perceived inequity of compensation between victims of mass violence and terrorism and victims of other types of crimes.</p> <p><i>Key issues to consider:</i></p>	Agency Responsible/Partner Name	Current Status
	Consider setting up a centralized phone number and e-mail address for the public to use either to make a donation or to request assistance. The phone number and e-mail address should be active as long as they are needed. The planning committee may consider streamlining hotlines to one centralized phone number to simplify access for the public and victims.		
	If applicable, review the needs assessment conducted during the planning phase and update it as necessary to address emerging and unanticipated needs as they surface.		
	Funds		
	Engage existing partnerships with law firms, trust accounts, brokerage firms, and financial institutions.		
	Coordinate with the nonprofit organization identified in advance to serve as a centralized collection and disbursement entity for monetary donations.		
	Be aware that individual families may set up individual funds to collect donations. Discuss how these individual funds may affect the disbursement strategy of the centralized fund.		
	Incorporate fraud alerts into public communications related to donations. If you have not already done so, discuss involving the state attorney general's office or other law enforcement officials to assist in the development of consumer protection strategies to prevent fraud and discourage scams such as fraudulent Web sites, t-shirt sales, etc.		

	Implement the communications plan to inform the public on where to send donations and how their donations will be used. Consider leveraging technology and the media to collect donations (e.g., social media, texting) as needed.		
	Use the database developed during the planning phase (or develop one if not previously done) to help collect, track, disburse, and acknowledge monetary donations.		
	Coordinate the funding disbursement process with the victim advocates (e.g., liaisons, navigators) who will be assigned to victims and family members.		
	Manage specific donor requests.		
	<p>See:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The One Fund (Boston, Massachusetts) • September 11th Victim Compensation Fund • Oklahoma City Disaster Relief Fund • National Compassion Fund 		
	Goods and Services		
	Engage existing partnerships with local community nonprofits and local rotary clubs to assist in the process.		
	Use the database developed during the planning phase (or develop one if not done previously) to help collect, track, disburse, and acknowledge donations of goods and services.		
	Store and manage donated goods at a local facility/warehouse. Consider leveraging (or developing) partnerships with local city services to assist in the transport of donations.		
	Implement the communications plan to inform the public where to send and bring donations (e.g., supplies, goods, perishable items) and how their donations will be used. Consider leveraging technology and the media to collect donations (e.g., social media, texting) as needed.		
	Coordinate the disbursement process for goods and services with the victim advocates (e.g., liaison, navigator) who will be assigned to victims and family members.		