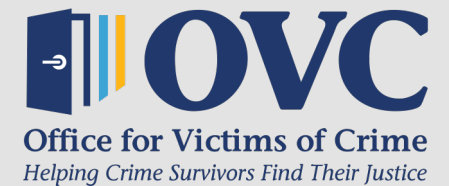


Not If, But When: Supporting a Victim- Centered Response to Mass Violence Incidents

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Learning Objectives

- Articulate common challenges in mass violence response
- Identify ways training and technical assistance might mitigate issues arising from mass violence incidents
- Know where to find resources to learn more about mass violence response

Leveraging OVC TTAC Resources

To improve your capacity to serve crime victims in your community, there are many ways OVC TTAC might work with you.

- Provide skilled trainers with specific subject matter expertise for your upcoming training event.
 - Conduct an organizational needs assessment and design a targeted response through training, technical assistance, or peer support.
 - Develop a basic evaluation strategy for determining your program's effectiveness.
 - Mass violence TTA, AEAP assistance
-
- Strengthen advocacy programming that helps assure equal justice for victims and produces a positive, sustainable impact.

OVC Anti-Terrorism Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP) Grants

Help supplement overwhelmed communities

- Technical assistance (TA) provided to communities at no charge
 - Assess victims' needs
 - Coordinate victim services (including identifying gaps in services)
 - Develop response strategies
 - Draft AEAP grants

Trauma's Impact

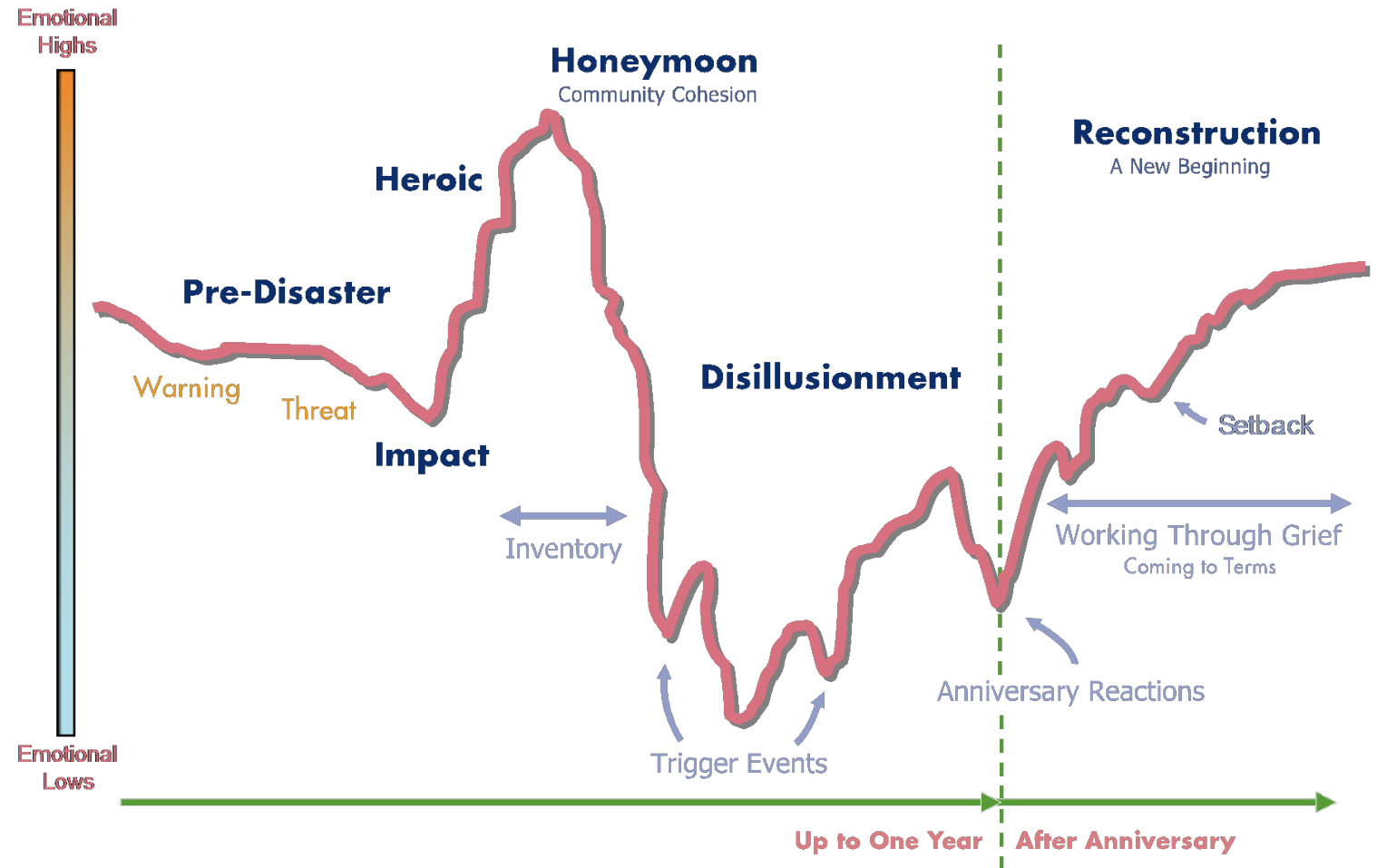


@Microsoft

- The three defining characteristics of a traumatic event (or situation)—
 - Unpredictable
 - Overwhelming
 - Sense of Powerlessness

Typical Phases of an Incident: Individual and Community

Adapted from Myers & Zunin,
1990; SAMHSA, 2018



Mass Fatality—Defined as four or more casualties in a single incident (FBI); not OVC definition

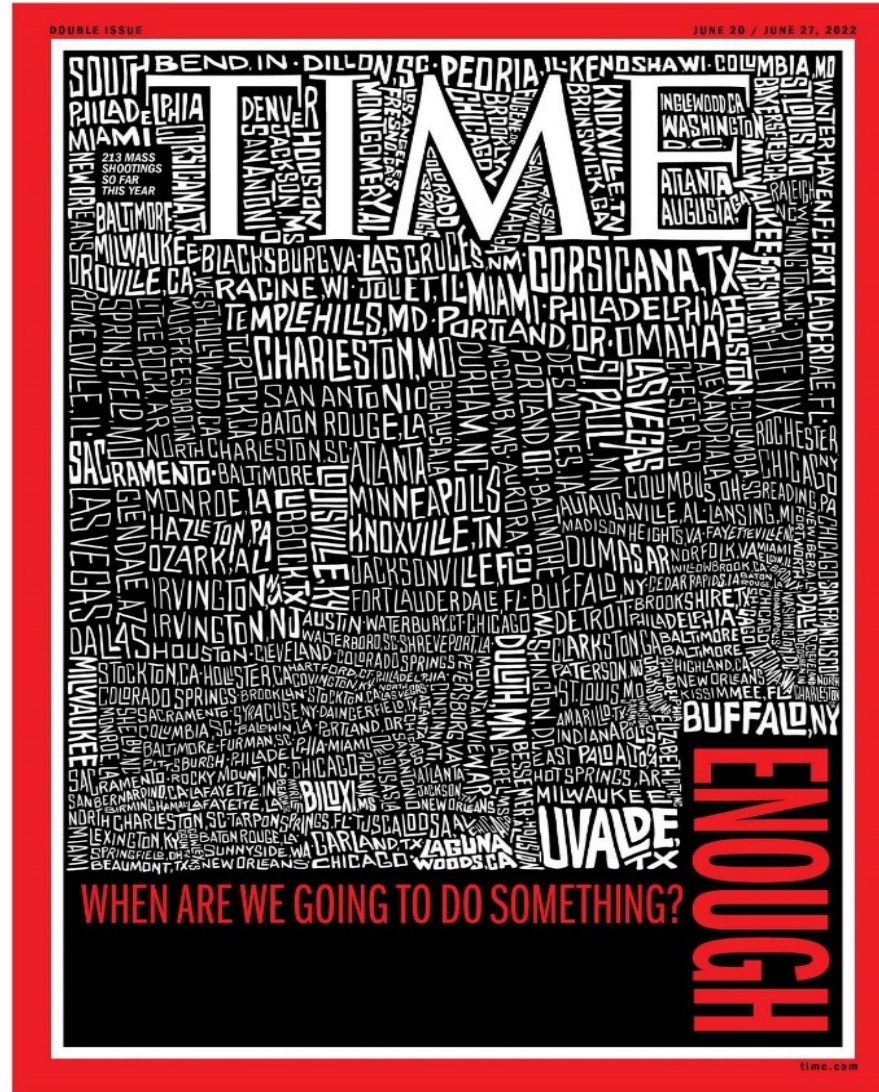
1 in 4 Mass Violence victims are children and teens;

Communities and institutions are secondary victims, limiting their response capacity;

Overwhelms a community's resources for response and recovery;

Results in “fracturing” in a community: isolation, civil suits, increased crime, loss of first responders, conflicts caused by donations, etc.; and,

Sustaining recovery is difficult and expensive for impacted communities.



Everyone and Their Dog Shows Up



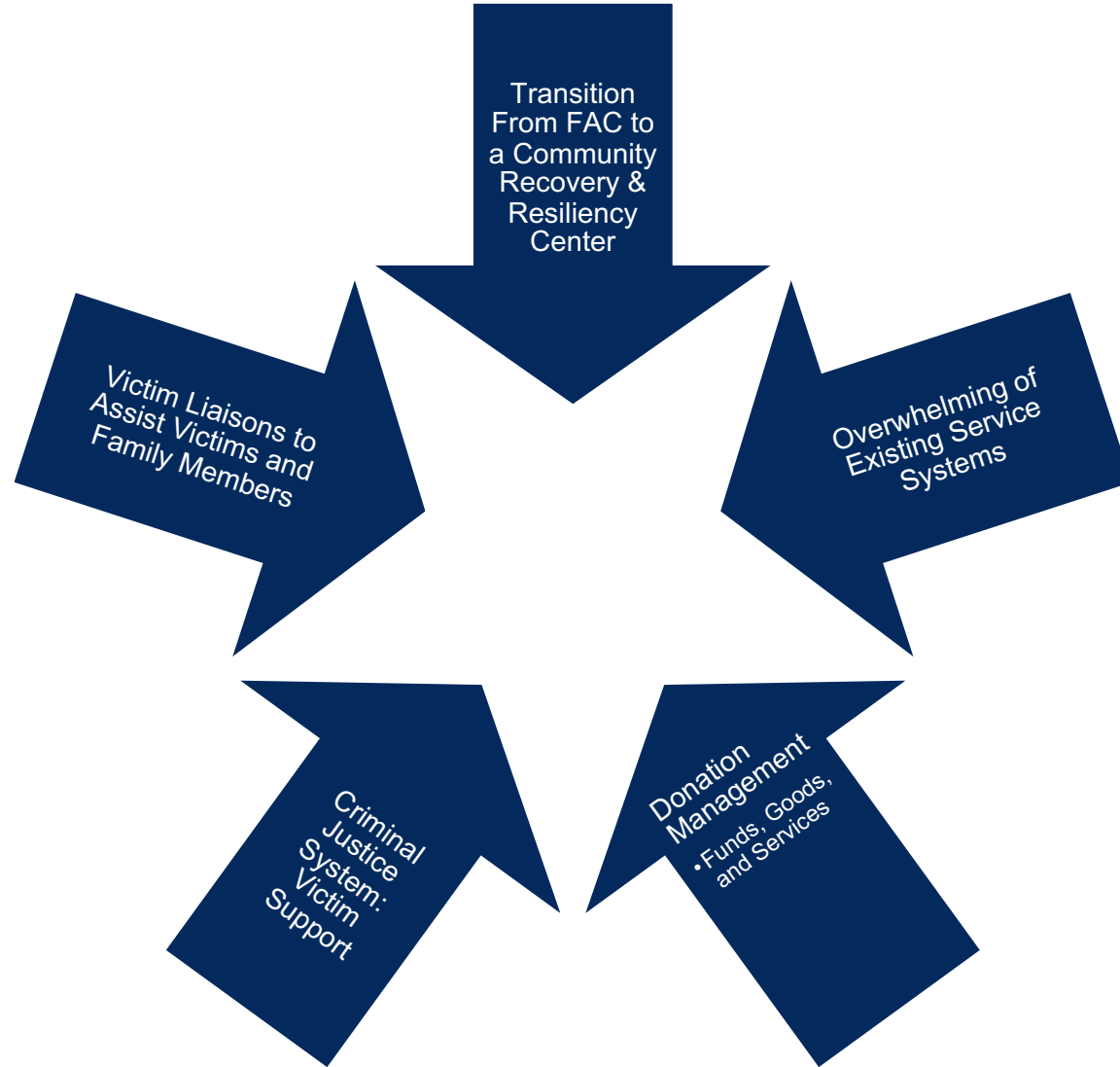
Mass Violence is Different for Survivors AND Helpers

- Globalized fear
 - What kind of world do we live in?
 - Who can I consider to be “safe”?
 - Systems can’t be trusted to keep me safe anymore
 - Activated by each new mass violence incident
- Tendency to compare “my” mass violence incident to others
- Survivors connecting
- Survivors of more than one incident
- Complicating factors
 - gun control debate
 - views on vulnerability
 - sensationalism

Evolving Response Challenges

Self-Deployment	Legal Action	Death Notification
Donation Management	Fraud	Directed Donations
Transportation: Remains, Property, Family	Ability of Responders to Maintain Response	Fracturing: helpers, community, victims

Longer Term Recovery Challenges



A Tale of Two Responses

- Case studies
- Examples are true but are made in a composite
- The level of detail may be activating or troubling

Car Used as a Weapon at Seaside Town Festival

- Four killed, 20 injured, 300 indirect victims, 200 first responders
- Perpetrator fled, it was several hours before he was apprehended, a cache of weapons was found in the car, the act was intentional
- Police waited to dispatch emergency medical services (EMS) and thus witnesses administered emergency first aid
- The high school marching band was playing at the festival and witnessed the incident
- OVC contacts the VOCA administrator within 24 hours to offer assistance through funding (AEAP grant) and/or OVC TTAC mass violence subject matter experts (SME). The administrator advises that the community has great resources and it's a very political environment, so they are standing down.
- To prepare, OVC TTAC researched the incident, the community, and the impacted victims and communicated with other national responders to gather information. Two consultants with extensive experience matching anticipated needs and reflecting the diversity of the community are asked to be available for deployment and are approved by OVC.

Six Months Later

- Seaside Town's Congressional delegation demands an explanation from OVC about why the town has not received TTA support and financial resources available through OVC.
- OVC TTAC works with OVC to select new SME consultants as those selected earlier are deployed to a subsequent incident.
- The Congressional delegation continues to insist on knowing who placed a hold on assistance and the level of involvement from the Governor's office.
- OVC TTAC consultants and staff begin working with the community and find the following:
 - There was an initial information center staffed by town personnel placed on additional duty. It moved three times, did no public outreach, and closed after 5 days due to lack of use.
 - The #strong signs are everywhere, causing activation in the community.
 - The police department and individual department members are being sued for perceived response challenges.
 - Each time documents are produced in the suit, they are leaked to the press, which activated survivors and produced a cascade of overwhelming calls to community services (social services, mental health, the one nonprofit).
 - Victims and survivors appear at every town council meeting demanding various things, including memorial statues where their loved ones died in the public park and the renaming of public buildings.

Six Months Later

- Survivors from other incidents and conspiracy theorists begin holding press conferences at the park around a variety of issues, which impacts the grieving process for residents and makes them feel unsafe.
- To quell survivor demands, Seaside Town Council commissions an “investigation” from an “independent” consulting firm on the crime and response. Responding entities and their leadership are tied up producing documents and participating in interviews that are not trauma-informed. This impacts internal and external recovery efforts.
- There is no centralized place for impacted individuals to get assistance.
- The new victim witness director at the prosecutor’s office does not have a list of victims or witnesses, they have not talked with the court about ensuring victims’ rights at the trial, and they have 2.5 full-time staff.

Six Months Later

- The peer support program for the police department is overwhelmed. There is a high rate of suicidal ideation in the department. EMS, which used the program before, will not now due to trust issues created by the delayed deployment. The Chaplains who volunteered for the program also delivered death notifications after the incident.
- Resources, like well meaning volunteer therapists and comfort dog handlers, are no longer responding to requests for assistance.
- The town librarian, who was the hub for assistance because she was always a community convener/organizer, resigned.
- The “navigators” (town staff assigned to extra duty to help survivors because they are friendly) are seeking their own counseling, but the EAP wait time is 2 months for an appointment, and their co-pays are \$150 per session.

Six Months Later

- The fund the town set up in response to the Mayor declaring they were “going to pay everyone’s bills” is being sued by different victim groups, including survivors, injured, and first responders.
- The one local nonprofit is overwhelmed by requests and unsure how to work with crime victims. Also, many of the staff witnessed the incident.
- Park staff, who provided crime scene clean up, are also being sued for not blocking off the festival properly. Staff are taking lots of sick days and are fearful of being in public.
- Seaside’s Town Council, Mayor, and administrative leadership continuously express frustrations about the delay in receiving federal resources.
- The high school is experiencing higher than normal levels of assaults, suicidality, and kids bringing weapons to school.

REWIND!



Same Incident—

- OVC calls the VOCA administrator who says, “We are not quite sure about everything that is going on, but please send in the consultants to help assess needs and provide responsive TTA to the community.”
- OVC TTAC consultants deploy to the community while the information center is still open. While onsite, they provide the following:
 - A level set training to everyone staffing the center and leadership of responding agencies on normal consequences of mass violence (including civil suits) and help them predict and prepare for future needs. This also helps stabilize the responders.
 - They talk with the emergency manager about the benefits of declaring an emergency to get in-state resources, like Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), to give temporary relief to the Town staff and others working at the site, and to provide additional vetted resources like childcare.
 - They pull out and share the Mass Violence Toolkit Response Checklist to help response leaders think about gaps and next steps.
<https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/mvt-toolkit/index.html>

REWIND!

- They gather information about the characteristics of the impacted community to help the Town plan culturally responsive services for underserved or marginalized communities.
- If possible and/or appropriate, they may meet with victims and survivors to hear more about unmet needs and other concerns.
- OVC TTAC consultants connect Town officials to the National Compassion Fund to help with the influx of monetary donations.
- They help Seaside Town understand that, due to potential civil suits and the stretching of staff, it is unlikely it can continue sustained response. They encourage Town to be a cheerleader and convener and support a neutral service provider. The Town may still need funding for certain response needs, but it will not be the primary service provider.
- They work with the Joint Information Center (JIC), which now exists due to the emergency declaration, to develop uniform, trauma-informed messaging in the short, medium, and long terms. They also help with trauma-informed branding. They work with the JIC to issue fraud alerts relative to the fraudulent “GoFundMe” accounts and “doorknockers.”

REWIND!

- They assess the organizational capacity of those at the FAC/IC and observe where victims, survivors, and others feel most comfortable receiving services.
- They meet with the victim witness director and their staff to provide information about serving victims of mass violence and discuss things to think about when preparing for a trial. They plan followup tasks, meetings, trainings, and support.
- They work with mental health providers on unmet training needs, connect them with resources, and/or plan a near-term training.
- They meet with Seaside Town Council members to encourage postponing an after-action report while the community focuses on recovery and moving through the trial.
- They conduct training for EMS and assess current and future needs.
- They assess the needs of the police peer support program and develop a plan to provide them with a consultant to help build their capacity and implement sustainable practices, like using case management strategies and obtaining clinical support. This engagement will continue concurrently with the response.

REWIND!

- They help the Town work through creating a phone number and website and developing a plan for a resiliency/recovery center to open with a small team after day 5. They help identify neutral sites (convenient, safe, not overly governmental, etc.), potential staff, and legitimate volunteers from other entities.
- They train supervisors from the park system, LE, EMS, and the local nonprofit on common responses to mass violence, how to identify struggling staff, and how to get them assistance.
- They work with OVC TTAC to bring in mass violence SMEs with expertise in schools to provide proactive TTA and work with the school on resources and what they may want to have in place to assist the marching band.
- They advise financial staff in each responding agency to develop a charge code to capture costs that AEAP can reimburse.
- They begin identifying other potential funding sources for the community to help them deconflict from potential AEAP funding.
- They work with the community to keep the focus on recovery and manage expectations around state and federal assistance.

REWIND!

- The SMEs meet with the leadership of hospital emergency departments that received injured victims to determine unmet needs (supervisor training, level setting with staff, implementing vicarious trauma organizational practices)
- The SMEs met with the coroner or leadership at the morgue to discuss issues similar to those discussed with the hospital.
- They work with each entity to develop the next steps, TTA still needed, and a plan for virtual and in-person proactive TTA support.
- They work with the VOCA administrator to identify funding that might be available in the short term and provide information on organizational capacity and service gaps.

REWIND!

- They begin writing a needs assessment and the AEAP grant.
- The SMEs work with the Compensation Administrator to:
 - Understand limitations, areas of opportunity, and how to fill any gaps from a financial perspective.
 - Help develop a shortened application and work with the program around the immediate issues (injured victims, co-pays for EAP services).
 - Help the Compensation program navigate challenges to obtaining required information (victim/survivor lists, investigative reports).
 - Provide information on creative outreach strategies.
- The SMEs meet regularly with the SAAs to update them on emerging issues, service gaps, and community needs.

OVC TTAC Mass Violence Resources

Mass Violence
SME Consultant
Support

OVC Mass
Violence Toolkit

OVC TTAC
Mass Violence
Web Page

Mass Violence
Toolkit Web
Training Series

Training and
Technical
Assistance

Vicarious
Trauma Toolkit

Tell Me More About These Fantastic SMEs!

- There are only a handful of people in the United States who have responded fully to 15+ large incidents—they are all connected to the OVC TTAC Mass Violence SME Team.
- All members have firsthand response experience in multiple incidents and represent the following disciplines:
 - Victim Advocacy
 - Emergency Management
 - Local Government Administration/Grant Writing
 - Mental/Behavioral Health
 - College and University Administration
 - Law Enforcement
 - Former SAAs
 - Primary and Secondary School Administration
 - Legal Services
 - Some SMEs are survivors of other incidents *and* have the above experience.
 - SMEs represent a variety of cultures, ethnicities, faith traditions, and some are bilingual.

Take Away

- When you get that call from OVC, just say yes.
- You can make that call proactively.
- You may also want to work with your state to develop a scalable mass violence response plan (we can get you to the right resources!).



Evaluation QR Code

https://www.research.net/r/MV_VicCentRespo_Aug2023



