

ANNUAL OBSERVANCES

When considering an annual observance, respect for the victims is essential. An observance can be initiated by a public or private entity, victim/family members, private individuals, businesses, or a community group. In all cases, victim and family participation is always voluntary. Sensitivity to the experiences and trauma that have occurred is an important component in planning an event.

Security is a requirement at these observances. Victims of high profile crimes can be re-victimized physically, emotionally, or psychologically by other people or the media coverage. A security presence will help to protect victims and families from further victimization.

The following information is designed to help create ideas for an annual observance. Each community must find the best way to provide dignity and respect to their remembrance events.

1. Government Planned Observances
 - a. Meet with the victims to get their input
 - b. Develop a committee to plan the observance
 - c. Assign a coordinator at the local or state level
 - d. Choose a location
 - e. Choose a time
 - f. Contact the media
 - g. Order or organize event materials such as candles, tents, chairs if needed
 - h. Organize advocates for vigil to provide support needed
 - i. Work with PIO and designer to create a flyer/media release
 - j. Invite victims and family/friends by special invitation
 - k. Invite speakers
 - i. Government official(s)
 - ii. Notify Victim Support Agencies such as COVA
 - iii. Victim or friend/family of victim
 - iv. Clergy
 - v. Musician
2. In a case when the family/friends plan an event:
 - a. Assign a liaison if requested
 - b. Provide support, if requested, to assist with:
 - i. Run/Walk
 - ii. Bike run
 - iii. Candlelight vigil
 - iv. Benefit concert
 - v. Balloon release

3. In a case where a private organization plans an event:
 - a. Support the organization and event in whatever way is appropriate
 - b. Private organizations often do not look for governmental support in planning an event.
 - c. If you are included, review plans for trauma sensitivity.
Example: A 21-gun salute may be a symbol of honor, but not necessarily to a victim or family of a shooting trauma.

4. Special events for first responders at an annual observance:
 - a. Remember to allow time and space for first responders to reflect and heal
 - b. A private ceremony or event may be helpful to bring first responders together away from their care-taking roles
 - c. Any first responders ceremony should not be publicized outside the target group, should be in a safe environment, and should be tailored to the current needs of the responders.
Example: The Walk and Talk event for Aurora, Colorado victim advocates that provided a safe peaceful location to be together to reflect and support each other.

5. On the anniversary of the event, provide on-site support where the incident occurred whether or not a planned observance is scheduled.

6. In a rural community, victim services may be asked to take a more active role in the observance planned by a private organization and/or family members. The level and scope of this involvement should be agreed upon within the government agency before finalizing plans with the outside group

EXAMPLE:

Aurora, Colorado formed a group after the July 20, 2012, theater shooting. The group was called "Community Healing Committee." This group, which incorporated many sectors of the community, took the lead in planning the majority of the 1st annual remembrance events in 2013. The focus was on healing, remembrance, and positive community action. With that premise, the group encouraged organizations to create service projects, donations to non-profit organizations, and volunteerism. For a flyer related to this event, see "Additional Resources."