

# Comprehensive Pre-Planning Considerations Guide



Toolkit for Response for Advocates in Colorado

## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### **Key Partners:**

Each community is unique with regard to available resources and key partners with whom they will collaborate. For example, communities may form close relationships and rely on law enforcement based or shelter victim services, the school system, human services, professionals, and mental health agencies for assistance in a crisis response. It is important to identify and plan for the distinction between agency/individual expertise and the role each will play. To ensure a coordinated, professional response, it is critical to have collaborative training in Crisis Intervention, Incident Command and protocols specific to that community. Partners should also participate in emergency response training exercises together as part of this training.

Example: The following is a list of Key Partners that responded to a school shooting in Jefferson County (Columbine High School) and their self-identified roles:

#### **Fire/Police**

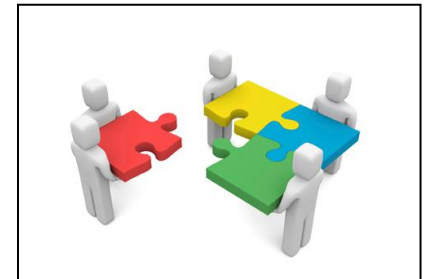
- Incident Command/Control
- Public Safety

#### **Emergency Management**

- Coordination of resources to support Incident Commander's requirements
- Activation and management of the Jefferson County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Emergency situation assessment and recommendations to the County Commissioners, County Administrator and Sheriff

#### **Local Mental Health Teams**

- Crisis Intervention
- Debriefing/Defusing
- Counseling Services
- State-mandated responsibility for provision of needed mental health services
- Planning and implementation of mental health crisis and disaster services



**Mayflower Team ADD LINK: <http://www.healthoneems.com/mayflower.html>**

Volunteer teams of mental health and first responders available to respond:

- At the request of Incident Commander, for on-scene advice to command with regard to reactions of emergency personnel
- To provide defusings/demobilizations as emergency teams leave the disaster area
- To provide decompressions for those involved in on-going operations
- To provide debriefings, at the request of first response agencies for involved staff and their significant others

**DA's Office/Victim Witness and Crime Victim's Compensation**

- Provide backup to Law Enforcement Advocates
- When a crime has occurred:
  - Inform victims/families
  - Provide Victim Rights information
  - Administer Crime Victim Compensation benefits
  - Accompany Victims/Witnesses to court or prosecution related meetings

**Coroner's Office**

- Identify victims
  - Determine cause and manner of death
  - Arrange for notification of families
- For additional information on disaster mortuary response, see

<http://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/responders/ndms/teams/Pages/dmort.aspx>

**Police Psychologist**

- Respond at request of incident command for defusing/debriefing of first responders
- On-scene advice to command re: trauma reactions

**Sheriff/Police Based Victim Assistance**

- Crisis Intervention on-scene/hospitals, etc.
- Coordinate and assemble crisis intervention teams
- Assist Coroner with death notifications
- Provide information/referrals and resources

- Debriefings/Defusings

### **Clergy/Faith Community**

- Crisis Intervention
- Follow-up support
- Provide space for meetings/activities
- Access to volunteers

### **School District**

- Crisis Intervention
- Mental health support - students and families
- Possibility of space/transportation

### **Public Information/Media**

- City, County or Law Enforcement PIO

### **COVA: <http://www.coloradocrimevictims.org/>**

- Maintain 24-hour hotline
- Access to volunteer trained responders
- Coordinate resources (\$)

### **American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/co/denver/programs-services/disaster-services>**

- Mental health workers
- Vouchers for hotel/motel and food/clothing
- Provide food for victims/responders
- Set up shelters
- Set up 24-hour hotline

### **Local Hospitals:**

Medical care to victims

Consider **deployment strategies** for Victim Advocates and assistance accessing victims (See the sample section of pre-planning for a **Form Letter to Assist Accessing Victims in Hospital care**) after they are admitted into hospitals.

**Large Companies in Your Community**-Consider introducing your team to Emergency Managers of larger entities in your communities (Businesses, School Districts, Hospitals) with the understanding that collaboration might be necessary in a large-scale event.

## **PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE**

### **Understanding the Need for Victim Services:**

Local Emergency Management assigns key responders Emergency Support Functions (“ESF”). Every Emergency Management plan should include an ESF for responding to the needs of citizens affected by the event. These needs could include shelter services, medical needs, mental health, financial resources...

Clearly, Victim Services cannot address all the needs of all victims. An appropriate function victim advocates can address is mental health. Check with your local emergency management leaders to ensure there is an entity assigned to an ESF that addresses the mental health, behavioral health or psychological needs of residents affected by the crisis.

Work with your emergency management staff to determine if victim services in the jurisdiction of the event should be the lead agency for mental health services. If there are other agencies that could also fit into this need, work with them to determine which agency would be the better fit for a lead. Regardless of who takes lead, victim advocates need a place within this ESF. This is where Memorandums of Understanding or Inter-Agency Agreements become critical.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and Inter Governmental Agreements (IGAs) must be signed off by the heads of each agency and clearly understood prior to an event.

This is where preplanning is necessary. Issues to consider when developing these agreements:

- Confidentiality requirements of responders (including how this may impact criminal based events).
- Legal Requirements of each entity
- The ability of each entity to take the lead of an ESF.

### **Sample Forms:**

- MOU from the Jefferson and Gilpin Community Crisis Response Team.
- Confidentiality Agreement for the Jefferson and Gilpin Counties Community Crisis Response Team
- Confidentiality Statement from the Jefferson and Gilpin Counties Community Crisis Response Team

## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### **Review current capabilities:**

Develop support from the jurisdictions surrounding your county or city. Meet with them. Train with them. These people make up your local team. If your needs extend beyond you and your neighbors, you can ask for assistance from others around the state through COVA.

There are many roles for victim assistance in a large scale crisis. Consider these basic needs that most large incidents require:

- Support for direct victims: Best done with staff from the agency that will take the lead with an investigation or response. Departmental paid staff and volunteers are a good choice for this assignment.
- Crisis Intervention at evacuation sites: Can last for days, you need to consider changing shifts every 8-10 hours. Understand that Red Cross will provide mental health workers at shelters. Welcome this resource! Red Cross workers are plentiful. The goal is to coordinate services with your local Red Cross mental health lead to plan for a place for advocates at the shelter if you identify a need/role for your, or another local agency's presence such as local mental health professionals.
- Mental health needs at recovery centers: A great place for local mental health workers as well as victim advocates. Consider adding Victim Compensation representatives to this location in the case of a criminal event and law enforcement victim advocates for specific needs relating to the investigation or resource questions. In the case of a fire, Red Cross staff is very helpful for financial resources and assistance with obtaining shelter, food, clothing and other basic needs.
- Lead staff for placement at the Emergency Operations Center: Ideally, this position should be three people deep to allow for shifts on long term crisis.
- Lead staff for placement at the Incident Command Center: This position should also be 3 people deep to allow for shifts.
- Victim Assistance Needs not related to the event: Your case load will not cease while this crisis is impacting your community. Do you have one staff person who can stay in the office to handle other cases? Will your agency allow you to shift this need to individual officers on a case by case basis? Does your agency head need to make some emergency hires? Consider an assist request to your neighbors to handle your cases for a time.
- Phone Banks: Often times, Emergency Management will need to establish phone banks to relieve the pressure placed on Dispatch and allow people looking for specific information about the event a person to talk to about their concerns. These phone banks might be established to help those in the community know how to find their loved ones, know when they can return back to their homes if they have been displaced, and schedule interviews with

law enforcement. Victim Advocates are a natural fit for such a phone bank. They are trained to work with people in crisis and relaying information about investigations. It is very helpful to have a lead advocate supervise this function while not taking calls in order to run between the phone bank and emergency management to communicate needs and get questions answered so that accurate information is provided to the public. It is imperative that phone bank advocates get briefed prior to taking calls about information that they can or cannot provide. It is also important that the phone bank number have a purpose that is explained in media and social media stories. A separate phone bank may be established as a crisis line to help meet the emotional needs of a community or to field general questions. Mental health workers are a good choice for a crisis line. Consider having one or more clergy available at the phone bank to take calls that may require their expertise.

- Establish a webpage: There needs to be an “official” website where people can access essential information.
- During the initial hours of a large-scale incident, prior to the establishment of the above organized roles, advocates may find themselves filling a variety of roles.
- Talk to your agency and/or elected officials about the process for adding additional staff in the aftermath of a large crisis. The Division of Criminal Justice Office for Victim’s Programs may offer grant funding for adding staff.
- Know your I.T. staff. They will be helpful to you in getting websites up quickly for mass information sharing.



## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### Identifying the lead victim services provider(s). Who is in charge?

In developing your Memorandums of Understanding with your surrounding jurisdictions, identify who will take the lead in response to the emotional needs of the victims of the incident. Below is an example from the Jefferson and Gilpin Counties Community Crisis Response Team (JGCCRT) Protocol:

*The Victim Services Unit associated with the law enforcement agency that is identified as the lead agency in any community disaster will coordinate the response to the emotional needs of the victims of community disaster. It will be the responsibility of this Victim Services Unit to coordinate services with any affected agency or business, as well as with agencies that traditionally respond to crises.*

*Victim Services will have a station at the Incident Command Center or direct access to it. Communication and coordination will originate from this point. Requests for law enforcement based victim advocates will be made as directed by the lead law enforcement agency's mutual aid policy.*

*The commanding law enforcement agency will establish a Victim Services staging area. All persons responding to aid/assist victims will report to the staging area. They will be screened for qualifications and then directed to the specific area of need. It is the responsibility of team members to maintain established rules of confidentiality and follow accepted team policies and procedures.*

*Acts of federal terrorism and aviation disasters mandate the FBI and Red Cross respectively as the lead for mental health services.*

To identify the lead victim services provider, it is imperative that you work with your local emergency management prior to an incident. Together, identify who should be assigned the Emergency Support Function (ESF) addressing the mental health or psychological needs of victims of any event. See the sample **ESF from Jefferson County** which you can share with your Emergency Management Office.

## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### Team Readiness:

In building your team, consider what criteria will you use to maintain the validity of your membership? How often will your team train? Who is the ultimate supervisor for any individual team member? Who in the community can be on your team? These are just a few points to consider when determining your comfort level. See the **Criteria for Membership from the Jefferson/Gilpin Crisis Response Team** in the sample section.

Benjamin Franklin said “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” This is particularly true when it comes to crisis response. The last thing we need in a crisis is another crisis as a result of poor planning or a lack of training.

### Suggested Training:

- Incident Command System, FEMA on-line Courses: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.aspx>
- Crisis intervention
- Psychological First Aid
- Emergency Management (what does your community have?)
- Debriefing/Defusing (consider various models and adapt to your own needs)
- Mock incidents (Fire, school disasters, tornadoes, terrorist attacks, disasters...)
- Confidentiality issues
- Relationship building
- Emergency Operations Center

An Emergency Readiness Kit will help you save time and brain cells in the midst of a crisis. Prior to a crisis, find a bag and fill it with tools you may need to respond to a call anywhere at any time. The following tools have proved to be helpful (or greatly missed) in previous incidents: air card, laptop, thumb drive, phone chargers, printer, crisis response team identifying clothing or armbands, ID cards, note pads, Kleenex, water, pens, tape, own personal needs related to your health and weather.

Preplan to take care of yourself and others. With the recognition that responders to crisis are susceptible to vicarious traumatization, healthy response planning should include vicarious trauma education for responders, and the necessity of self care. Protocols for initial debriefing following response and follow-up should be established and adhered to

whenever possible. Things to consider: Length of shift, identification of individual/group support system, and who will be responsible for immediate and follow-up with responders.

## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### Planning Tools for District Attorney's Office:

*\*This section is only meant to get you planning and is not intended to be comprehensive. Every criminal incident will be vastly different with many legal considerations. Work with your District Attorney for a comprehensive plan.*

1. Does your jurisdiction have a critical incident team? Are you part of that team?
  - a. If there is a team, consider joining. If there isn't a team, consider starting one. A trained team is essential to providing coordination of efforts to support victims of critical incident crimes.
  - b. The DA's office will be a major provider of victim services throughout a criminal case. It will be important for law enforcement agencies and other victim service providers to know what role the DA has and how you will operate and support victims during and after a criminal critical incident.
  - c. As a team, decide what involvement the DA's Victim/Witness Unit will have during the initial stages of the response and during community meetings. Working together will help clarify roles and expectations. It helps maximize communication and reduces misunderstandings later on.
2. Start by learning how your community responds to critical incidents.
3. Identify who you might need to work with to provide services during the criminal case.
  - a. In addition to the continued involvement from outside victim service agencies and professionals that work directly with victims (such as mental health, school counselors, human services), consider establishing a working relationship with agency representatives who can help you meet the needs of victims during the prosecution. They might include:
    - i. District Attorney
    - ii. Chief DA Investigator
    - iii. DA IT support
    - iv. Prosecutors assigned to the case
    - v. District Attorney Office Administrator

- vi. District Attorney's Public Information Officer
- vii. Chief Judge
- viii. Judicial Administrator
- ix. Judicial IT support
- x. County Emergency Management
- xi. Courthouse Security

4. Plan for the prosecution of critical incidents knowing that some of these questions will not have answers until there is critical incident.
- a. Start at the beginning: How will you get victim information before the first appearance?
    - i. Will you get it from your own office through a law enforcement report, an investigator, or law enforcement advocates?
  - b. Work with law enforcement to determine the number of victims, family members or general public that you expect at the initial court hearings. Work with the Judicial Administrator and Chief Judge to plan for the following:
    - i. Will the regularly scheduled docket still exist? How will defendants and victims be notified of rescheduled hearings?
    - ii. Will the media be at the courthouse? Where will they be allowed inside the courthouse. Will they be in the courtroom or a secondary courtroom with CCTV?
    - iii. Will there be enough parking at the courthouse? Is there a place for secondary parking? Should you consider shuttling people by bus from an alternative parking lot?
    - iv. Is there enough room in the courthouse for victims, family and the public? Can you utilize a secondary courtroom or the jury assembly room and set up CCTV?
    - v. What security consideration does the court need to think about? Security at the door? More Sheriffs officers around the courthouse? Alternative entrances?
    - vi. Do you need assistance from other District Attorney's Offices? If there are a large number of victims or families, you may want to call on trusted providers to help. This may be especially true if the regular court docket is still scheduled and advocates will need to assist victims on other cases. You may need to request additional help, even after the initial court hearing.

- vii. You may consider lining up victim service professionals for crisis intervention or support. For example, you might want two or three mental health professionals on hand to help victims/families who need immediate intervention.
- c. Personnel Assigned to the case and Funding of Additional Personnel
- i. The sooner the case is assigned to a prosecutor(s), investigator(s) and advocate(s), the faster a relationship can be established.
  - ii. Establish a lead victim/witness assistant for large cases. Having a main point of contact, even if additional advocate help is needed, will facilitate in the flow of information internally and result in better accountability and communication.
  - iii. Work with the Division of Criminal Justice to determine if additional funding is available for direct victim services personnel. Grant funds may be available to allow you to hire an advocate or pay for case related office supplies/equipment as it pertains to serving victims.
- d. Determine how victims will be notified of critical stages and events?
- i. Will you use established protocols for the office (letter and phone calls)?
  - ii. Will you establish a secure (log-in) website or message board to relay information?
    1. This can be extremely helpful when describing what has happened at a hearing or what you expect to happen at an upcoming hearing.
    2. This is also a good tool to use for posting update information when court hearings have been canceled or rescheduled.
- e. Establish a procedure for transferring victims from law enforcement advocates to prosecution advocates.
- i. Victims of critical events benefit from a coordinated victim services model. (Two heads are better than one as long as those people are communicating). A victim will need the continued support of law enforcement and community advocates, but a relationship should be established with the prosecution team including the victim/witness staff. Because the prosecution is a lengthy and often confusing process, it is important that victims establish a relationship with prosecution and get court based information directly from the District Attorney's office.

- ii. Let law enforcement and community victim service agencies know who they can call/email with questions/concerns.
- iii. Let law enforcement and community victim services agencies know who victims should call/email with questions/concerns.
- iv. Establish in person meetings or conference calls when possible to transfer victims from law enforcement to prosecution advocacy.

## PREPLAN FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

### Planning Tool for Crime Victim Compensation (CVC):

- 1) Does your jurisdiction have a critical incident team? Are you part of that team?

If there is a team, consider joining. If there isn't a team, consider starting one. A trained team is essential to providing coordination of efforts to support to victims of critical incident crimes.

The CVC office will be a major provider of victim services after a criminal incident. It will be important for law enforcement agencies and other victim service providers to know what role CVC has and how you will operate and support victims during and after a criminal critical incident.

Working with the team, decide what involvement CVC will have during the stages of response and community meetings. While every incident is different, and you likely won't be involved in non-crime events, it's important to have roles pre-determined. This helps clarify expectations and roles.

- a) Do you have policies related to mass criminal critical incidents?

Special policies allow for the CVC Board to create, meet and adapt policies based on the financial resources available to your jurisdiction at the time of the crime.

You can contact the State CVC Administrator, Office for Victims of Crime at DCJ or other CVC Administrators for assistance in creating and adapting critical incident policies.

- b) Is the Board and the DA well educated on those policies?

- i) The DA needs to know how you will react to victim and community needs and to understand why your program might have a significant influx of work, even if there will not be criminal charges.

- c) Have you disseminated those policies to law enforcement agencies?

- i) All first responding agencies in your community should be aware of your specialized policies. This obviously



helps reduce the risk of misinformation being given to victims.

- d) Have you educated the critical incident team in your community regarding your special policies?
  - i) Members of the team need to know what the role of the CVC program is and how your program will operate and support victims during and after a critical incident.

2) Do you have a special application process or forms for mass criminal critical incidents?

Specialized forms make identifying claims associated with mass incidents efficient and timely. Keep in mind that in order to utilize specialized applications, you must be willing to disseminate them almost immediately after an incident. This might involve bringing them to the command center immediately after the incident.

Many jurisdictions have condensed applications that are a special color. For a sample of a condensed application you can call the State CVC Administrator, Office for Victims Programs at DCJ or many of the CVC Administrators.

- a) If you use a specialized application, who will make the decision as to whether to use the form?
  - i) Will you decide when to use the forms or will you leave that decision to the law enforcement coordinator?
- b) How will the applications be disseminated?
  - i) Will you hand deliver the applications? Will you email them? Will you provide each jurisdiction with a hard copy and allow them to make copies as needed?
- c) Do law enforcement coordinators know how to contact you immediately for the applications or for critical incident policies?
  - i) If you will be the person deciding when to use the applications, law enforcement coordinators need to be able to contact you or someone from CVC in an emergency.

d) Keep an electronic copy so that it can be posted on appropriate websites dedicated to the incident.

3) What special reporting might I be asked to complete?

Before entering any claims, decide if you should set up a special crime code and payment code in CVC. Doing so will allow you to pull reports exclusive to the incident. This can be extremely useful and helpful for reporting purposes later. Do not set up special crime codes or payment codes until you need them, and remember, once you put them into CCVC- they remain in CCVC.

4) How will I determine what money is available for victims?

Whatever is unencumbered and in your main fund could be available for victims. However, there might be federal funds available for the incident. Call the State CVC Administrator, Office for Victims Programs at DCJ to determine if there are additional funds available for victims through CVC. The Office for Victim Programs at DCJ will also be able to help you with the projection of the financial need to help determine whether additional funds or specialized fiscal policies are necessary.

5) To the degree possible, consider the financial impact to the CVC program. What resources might you need to process claims?

- a) There will be an increase in claims/files which means there will be an increase in paper and printing costs.
- b) Do you have administrative support available to you? You may need to request the assistance of another CVC Administrator in order to process claims, or you may need to hire temporary assistance.
- c) If you need additional administrative support, do you have a workstation and a computer that has CCVC available?

#### Outreach to victims and claims processing

1) Provide ongoing outreach to victims

- a) Consider sending out press releases about the availability of CVC. Ongoing press releases may be helpful in highlighting that CVC is an ongoing resource.
- b) Have your application (or condensed application) put on to official incident websites.

- c) Continue to educate first responders about your policies and who should be receiving your application.
  - d) Consider sending applications directly to victims of the crime. This can be done in stages- several months, 6 months and 1 year anniversaries.
- 2) Set up specialized crime codes and payment codes to track the number of applications and payouts specific to the incident. If you aren't sure how to do this, call another CVC Administrator for assistance.
  - 3) Ask for assistance to process or enter applications. There may be money available to hire additional staff or you may want to ask assistance from other CVC Administrators.
  - 4) Stay informed and involved in community meetings. Your involvement will remind service providers that CVC is actively involved and available. It may also provide you information about resources that are available for losses that may not be eligible under the CVC program.
  - 5) Support your staff and yourself. Have regular meetings and contact to debrief and discuss challenges. Encourage your staff to limit their exposure to media to help avoid vicarious trauma. Know and disseminate information about your office Employee Assistance Program.
  - 6) Know your communities mental health services. If you have a critical incident team, you know what agencies/individuals may be called upon for community and victim mental health needs. If you do not have a critical incident team, or even if you do, review which mental health providers can provide specific services. Who does group support? Who can serve mono-Spanish speaking victims? Who will provide immediate crisis intervention?

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime has a Crime Victim Compensation Mass Violence Protocol. It was created by CVC Administrators from across the nation who provided CVC assistance after a mass incident. Please contact DCJ or the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards for a copy or a link to the most current document. <http://nacvcb.org>

Included in the sample section on the pre-planning page is the Colorado CVC response to the columbine tragedy.