

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.