

Communication Opportunities – Keeping Victims/Survivors Updated

Getting the message out in a timely manner is a key component. If there are a large number of victims in the case, establishing a method for timely and accurate information is important.

It is helpful when the agency has one central person who communicates to the media, victims, etc. This becomes the “face” of the incident. Victim advocates can arrange for this person to speak to groups of victims to update them on the status of the case, where to go for resources, who to contact for further information, and access funds that have been set up. In the Columbine shooting, this person was the district attorney. In the Platte Canyon School shooting, it was the Sheriff.

It is important to identify one agency that will be the primary contact for victims/survivors. This agency should at a minimum have in-person phone coverage staffed with people who have access to information about available resources and services. It is ideal if initially that agency has 24/7 in-person phone coverage following the incident.

There are several options for communicating with a large number of people. This can be helpful when there is a prosecution of the case for notifying victims about court dates, continues, etc. It can also be useful for communicating with victims about other issues. Below are a few tools to consider.

Establishing and Maintaining an Official Website

A website is one method to get accurate and timely information to people affected by the tragedy. The website should be administered by a governmental agency or the organization that is overseeing the response. It is important that all people are referred to that specific website for “official” information. Information on the site must be posted in a timely manner. It may be an existing website utilized by a governmental agency or it may be one that is developed specifically for this purpose. Information should include resources, information on community events, requests for information, etc. The information should always be timely and informative. It is suggested that the person maintaining the website has a good working relationship with the public officials who are working with the media to get out the information.

On the website, there could be a member’s only section where only those who are invited can access certain information. This could be used for more detailed information for victims.

Emails, Texts, Notifications, Webinars for Victims and Families

Utilizing push alerts or mass emails/texts can be beneficial when delivering news or updates to a large group of people. Find out what your community already has in place as far as an Emergency Notification System and see how it can be utilized post incident.

http://ehstoday.com/fire_emergencyresponse/communications/disseminating-information-social-media-1028

There are also notification systems that are available to notify large groups of people for status updates, changes in court dates, etc. Some of those include; Cleo Stroom, Amerilert, ADT Select Link.

<http://www.cleo.com/products/cleostroom.php>

<http://www.amerilert.com/safe-towns>

http://www.adt.com/wps/wcm/connect/ed48b3804fa0988aa632f6c42acc82f5/L7426-00_ADTSelectLink_IRIS_SSFINAL.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Specifically designed web-sites can also prove to be helpful:

<http://newsroom.redcross.org/disaster-response-guide>