Responding to Mass Violence Incidents

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Vision: To provide communities access to evidence-based information and resources needed to effectively prepare for and respond to mass violence incidents.

www.nmvvrc.org

Topics

- What is a Mass Violence Incident (MVI)?
- How common are MVIs?
- What is the impact of MVIs on victims and communities?
- How can we help victims and communities recover from MVIs?
What is a Mass Violence Incident (MVI)?

**Terms**
- Mass violence
- Mass casualties
- Mass killings
- Mass murder
- Mass shootings
- Active shooter

**Multiple definitions used by government agencies, media, advocacy groups, researchers, and others. No legal definition.**

**Some sources of definitions**
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Department of Homeland Security
- Congress (P.L. 112-265)
- Office for Victims of Crime
- Congressional Research Service
- Mother Jones
- Washington Post
- Gun Violence Archive
- Mass Shooting Tracker

Common Definition Criteria

- **Number killed or wounded** (1 or 4 killed or 4 killed or injured)
- **Weapon used** (gun, bomb, vehicle, chemical or biological agent, other)
- **Setting** (schools, houses of worship, public buildings or areas, homes)
- **Number of perpetrators and/or conspirators** (1, more than 1)
- **Perpetrator-victim relationship** (stranger, family member, friend acquaintance, gang member)
- **Other crimes committed** (robbery, home invasion, drug deal, stolen merchandise, etc.)
- **Level of planning** (brief, extensive, state-supported, gang-related)
- **Perpetrator motivation** (revenge, power, loyalty, hate, political, terror, profit, anti-abortion, other)
- **Victim selection** (random, hate focus, group member, crime target)

Common exclusions from Mass Violence Incident definitions

- **Gang or organized crime-related violence**
- **Killings occurring in the commission of another crime** (home invasion, drug deal, robbery, fencing, other felonies)
- **Family violence** (spouse, child, or parent killings)
- **Defense of self or property**
- **Police shootings or vehicle crashes**
- **Suicides**
- **Death of perpetrator not included**

**Typical Focus**

- "High-fatality indiscriminate killings in public venues..."
- "Events that occurred in a relatively public area and in which victims appeared to have been selected randomly"
“Mass Killings”

“the term ‘mass killings’ means 3 or more killings in a single incident...” in a place of public use.
  - Public Law 112-265, Sec. 2, para. a2II.

“Mass Murder”

“...multiple homicide incident in which four or more victims are murdered, within one event, and one or more locations in close geographical proximity.”
  - Krouse & Richardson, 2015
  Congressional Research Service

“Active Shooter”

“...an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.”
Office for Victims of Crime

“An intentional violent criminal act, for which a formal investigation has been opened by the Federal Bureau of Investigation or other law enforcement agency, that results in physical, emotional, or psychological injury to a sufficiently large number of people as to significantly increase the burden of victim assistance and compensation for the responding jurisdiction as determined by the OVC Director.”


Mass Shooting Tracker

www.massshootingtracker.org

“…a mass shooting is an incident where four or more people are shot in a single shooting spree. This may include the gunman himself, or police shootings of civilians around the gunman.”


Gun Violence Archive

www.gunviolencearchive.org

Mass Murder

“Four or more killed in a single event [incident], at the same general time and location not including the shooter.”

Mass Shooting

“Four or more shot and/or killed in a single event [incident], at the same general time and location not including the shooter.”

Spree/Serial Murder

“The unlawful killing of two or more victims by the same offender(s), in separate events.”

Role of Media Coverage of MVIs

April 27, 2019
Chabad of Poway synagogue
Poway, CA
1 killed, 3 injured

April 28, 2019
2 rural homes
Westmoreland, TN
7 killed, 1 injured

How common are MVIs?

Some Major Mass Violence Incidents

- Gnadenhutten Massacre - 1782
- Pan Am flight #103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland - 1988
- World Trade Center bombing - 1993
- Bombing of Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City - 1995
- Olympic Centennial Park bombing, Atlanta - 1996
- Women’s Health Clinic, Sandy Springs, GA - 1996
- September 11th Terrorist Attacks - 2001
- Virginia Tech shootings - 2007
- Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings - 2012
- Boston Marathon bombing - 2013
- San Bernardino shootings - 2015
- "Mother Emanuel" AME Church Massacre - 2015
- Pulse Nightclub, Orlando, Fl - 2016
- Truck bike path attack, New York - 2017
- Tree of Life synagogue shooting - 2018
- Florence, SC ambush of police - 2018
- Henry Pratt Company, Aurora, IL - 2019
Definitions matter

FBI Data on “Active Shooters”

Figure 1: Mass shootings in the United States, 1976-2016.
Fox & DeLateur, 2014
Mass Shootings 2014-2018


Mass Shooting Incidents in 2019


What is the impact of MVIs?
Who are the victims?

- Killed, injured, at the scene survivors
- Family, friends, neighbors and loved ones of direct victims
- First responders (Firefighters, Law enforcement, EMS, other officials)
- Medical service providers (initial and in recovery)
- Search and recovery workers (clean-up crews, construction workers)
- Chaplains, clergy
- Mental health service providers
- Volunteers
- Community members (proximity to the scene)
- Media viewers and listeners
- Taxpayers

Mental Health Impact of Mass Shootings

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder symptoms
  - Intrusion
  - Avoidance
  - Negative alternations in cognitions and mood
  - Alterations in arousal and reactivity
- Depression
- General anxiety
- Increased fears
- Anger
- Decreased perceived safety

- Most victims (~60%) will be resilient (Orcutt et al., 2014)
- Prevalence of related psychiatric disorders will decrease over time (Lowe & Galea, 2017)

High Risk Incidents

- Frequency of the manner of death in the community
- Expectations of safety in the situation
- Intentionality of the death
- Randomness of the death
- Level of violence and gore in the incident
- Suffering of the victim(s) during incident
- Number of casualties
Factor domains associated with higher risk for problems after an MVI

1. Demographics and pre-incident characteristics
2. Incident exposure
3. Post-incident functioning and psychosocial resources

- Lowe & Galea, 2017

High Risk

1. Demographics and Pre-incident Characteristics
   • Female gender
   • Lower income
   • Lower education
   • Youth not living with two biological parents
   • Pre-incident psychological symptoms and psychiatric disorders
   • Emotional regulation difficulties
   • Prior trauma exposure
   • Fair or poor physical health
   • Fewer social resources

High Risk

2. Incident Exposure
   • Greater proximity to the attack
   • Seeing or hearing the events
   • Physical injuries
   • Acquaintance with the deceased
   • Perceptions of life threat, injury threat, danger
   • Peritraumatic dissociation
   • Repeated exposure to media reports
### High Risk

3. Post-incident functioning and psychosocial resources
   - Diagnosis of any psychiatric disorder predictive of later PTSD
   - Concordance between major depression and PTSD
   - Fair to poor (vs. good to excellent) physical health
   - Increased physical symptoms
   - Beliefs events are random and uncontrollable
   - Punitive attitudes toward crime
   - Rumination and avoidant coping style
   - Disengagement from difficult emotions, sensations, thoughts and memories
   - Loss of life direction, pride, optimism
   - Loss of resources (instrumental, psychological, social and interpersonal)

### Protective Factors

- Forms of coping that involve:
  - Taking action
  - Cognitive processing of the incident
  - Acceptance
- Greater resources
  - Instrumental
  - Psychological
  - Social and interpersonal

### Terrorism or hate crimes

- People are targets because of...
  - Who they are - race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identification
  - What they believe - religion, political affiliation, ideology
  - What they do - government workers, company worker, elected officials, law enforcement, military, physicians
  - Where they live - citizen, resident, event participant, congregant, member, customer

- Goals
  - Inspire persistent fear and terror in all members of the group
  - Force them to significantly change their lifestyles and behavior
  - Erode confidence in societal identity, institutions, and customs
  - Spawn social or political change
  - Difficult to alter your target status
How can we help victims and communities recover from MVIs?

Office for Victims of Crime Mass Violence & Terrorism Toolkit

www.ovc.gov/pubs/mvt-toolkit/index.html

Phases of MVI Victim Assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Recovery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>1-4 weeks</td>
<td>2-6 months</td>
<td>12-48 months</td>
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</tbody>
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Lucy Berliner, MSW & Ben Saunders, PhD
Response

- Rapid and broad, immediate help
- Triage needs
  - Physical safety
  - Medical care
  - Physical needs – Housing, food, clothing, transportation, funds
  - Problem-solving
  - Communication with loved ones
  - Information
  - Emotional support and psychoeducation
- Provide information - traditional and social media
- Self-help resources - websites, apps, media, schools, churches, organizations, person to person
- Psychological First Aid

www.nctsn.org

Self-help Mobile Apps

Resource Websites

Cautions

• “Experts” of every sort
• Purveyors of information, training, programs, interventions, treatments, materials
• Victims and victim programs from other MVI towns
• Scam artists – GoFundMe, telephone donations
Hoaxers and Deniers

https://www.facebook.com/VICE/videos/84520149051110/

Transition and Recovery

◦ Goals
  • Resume everyday activities
  • Process and resolve issues related to the events
  • Facilitate effective grieving processes
  • Recalibrate to a new normal
  • Seek a future orientation
◦ Provide ongoing services and activities
  • Resiliency Center
  • Case management, community coordination
  • Coordinated, evidence-based support and treatment services
  • Memorial services

Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP)
www.ovc.gov/AEAP/

Mother Emanuel AEAP Grant Services

◦ Law Enforcement Services
◦ Empowerment (Resiliency) Center at Mother Emanuel AME Church
◦ Security, support, and advocacy for victims when attending court hearings.
◦ Self-help materials including mobile apps
◦ Specialized mental health services
  • Support groups
  • Evidence-based trauma and grief-focused individual therapy
  • Resiliency building activities
Evidence-based trauma treatments

**Adults**
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE)
- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Complicated Grief Therapy (CGT)

**Children and adolescents**
- Trauma-Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Child Traumatic Grief components (CTG)

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Professional Training Websites

- www.musc.edu/tfcbt
- www.musc.edu/cpt
- www.musc.edu/cvweb
- pe.musc.edu
- www.helping-heroes.org
- www.cebc4cw.org

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Information About Evidence-Based Interventions

CEBC Scientific Rating Scale