

Helping Victims of Mass Violence and Terrorism: Death Notifications

Welcome!



Technical Overview

- If you are experiencing any technical issues with the audio for this session, please let us know in the feedback box.
- If you have technical difficulties during the webinar, contact:
Jason Adams
jadams@ovcttac.org
- Today's session will be recorded and made available in a few days on the training site.
- If you have questions, type them in the feedback box.

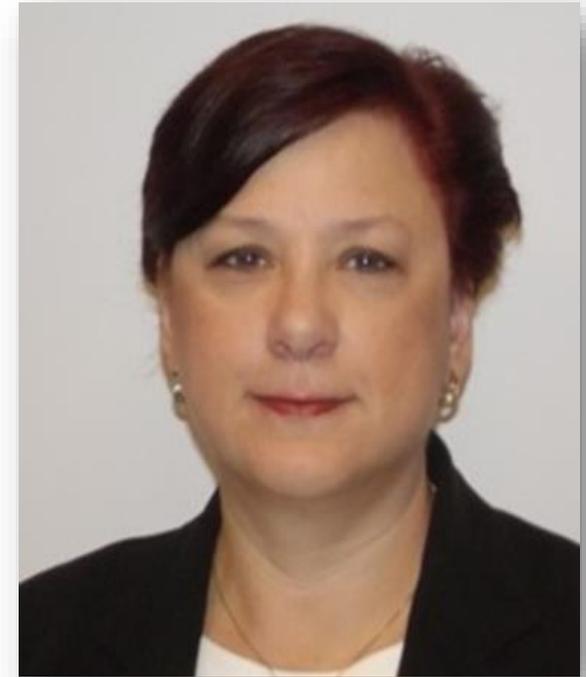
Today's Presenters



Eugenia Pedley



Krista Flannigan



April Naturale

The Purpose of This Training Series

Helping Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism PLANNING, RESPONSE, RECOVERY, AND RESOURCES

Mass Violence and Terrorism Death Notification Webinar

The OVC TTAC *Helping Victims of Mass Violence and Terrorism: Planning, Response, Recovery, and Resources Toolkit* [web-based training series](#) continues with an indepth look at the Notification victim assistance protocol. While the process of delivering death notifications is similar for a single homicide or a mass violence incident, there are also some unique aspects of mass fatalities that should be considered. This training is an opportunity to learn more about—

- The factors related to delivering mass violence death notifications.
- The dynamics of death notification teams.
- The training needs of death notification teams.
- How to integrate a trauma-informed approach.

Lessons learned from previous incidents consistently underscore that all response and recovery efforts are more effective when—

- Organizational roles are defined prior to the incident.
- Relationships are in place to create a more efficient response and faster recovery.
- There is a planned and comprehensive communications management strategy that focuses on communication among all responders, with victims and survivors, and with the community during the response and recovery phases.

Please plan to join one of the scheduled webinars to learn more about this essential victim assistance protocol.



OVC's Response and the Toolkit



OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS



OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

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JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS • JUSTICE FOR ALL

Mission Statement

The mission of the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) is to enhance the Nation's capacity to assist crime victims and to provide leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices in ways that will promote justice and healing for all victims.

OVC's Response and the Toolkit (continued)



Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program (AEAP)

Grants

- Crisis Response (up to 9 months)
- Consequence Management (up to 18 months)
- Criminal Justice Support (up to 36 months)
- Crime Victim Compensation (any time) to reimburse victims for eligible expenses

Training and Technical Assistance (TTA)

- Needs assessments
- Victim services coordination
- Response strategy development
- Assistance with drafting grants
- Toolkit assistance (plan, respond, recover)

OVC's Response and the Toolkit (continued)

Helping
Victims of Mass Violence & Terrorism
 PLANNING, RESPONSE, RECOVERY, AND RESOURCES

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

PARTNERSHIPS & PLANNING RESPONSE RECOVERY **TOOLS**

Tools

Checklists

PARTNERSHIPS & PLANNING CHECKLIST
 WORD PDF

Partnerships & Planning Checklist. Use this checklist to develop a robust victim assistance plan, well in advance of an incident of mass violence or terrorism.

RESPONSE CHECKLIST
 WORD PDF

Response Checklist. Use this checklist during the initial response phase.

RECOVERY CHECKLIST
 WORD PDF

Recovery Checklist. Use this checklist to help your community recover during the months and years after a tragic event.

ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

Response Through Recovery: Activities at a Glance. Read this guide for an at-a-glance overview of the activities conducted from response through recovery.

Victim Assistance Protocols
Protocol*
Contact List Protocol
Committee Meeting Protocol
Practice Drills and Exercises Protocol
Incident Command System Protocol
Communications Protocol
Family Assistance Center Protocol
Victim Identification Protocol
Notification Protocol
Planning and Preparedness Grants and Emergency Funding Assistance Protocol
Volunteer Management Protocol
Donation Management Protocol (Funds, Goods, and Services)
Criminal Justice System: Victim Support Protocol
Community Resiliency Protocol

Goals of This Webinar

After completing this webinar, you should be able to—

- Describe the factors related to delivering mass violence death notifications.
- Explain the dynamics of a trained death notification team.
- Identify the training needs for those providing death notifications.
- Integrate trauma-informed processes to prepare for these notifications.

Receiving a Death Notification

A compassionate and dignified notification procedure is a basic requirement for minimizing the trauma of receiving a death notification.



Receiving a Death Notification (continued)



Reactions to news of a violent death:

- Behavioral
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Physical
- Spiritual

Delivering a Death Notification (continued)

- Notifications should be delivered in teams of two.
- Use the terms “dead,” “died,” or “killed” to avoid confusion (the victim is not “missing” or “injured”).
- Offer to contact social support, and wait for the support to arrive.



Delivering a Death Notification (continued)

What NOT to say:

“They are in a better place.”

“I understand how you feel.”

“You’ll get over this in time.”

“Now you have closure.”

“God doesn’t give you more than you can handle.”

It’s better to remain quiet and present.

Delivering Mass Death Notifications



Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)

Unique aspects of mass fatalities:

Multiple victims and more intense reactions



Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)

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Multiple victims and more intense reactions

Longer amount of time to identify bodies

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Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)

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Multiple victims and more intense reactions

Longer amount of time to identify bodies

More individuals seeking information

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Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)

Unique aspects of mass fatalities:

Multiple victims and more intense reactions

Longer amount of time to identify bodies

More individuals seeking information

More trained professionals needed

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Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)

Unique aspects of mass fatalities:

Multiple victims and more intense reactions

Longer amount of time to identify bodies

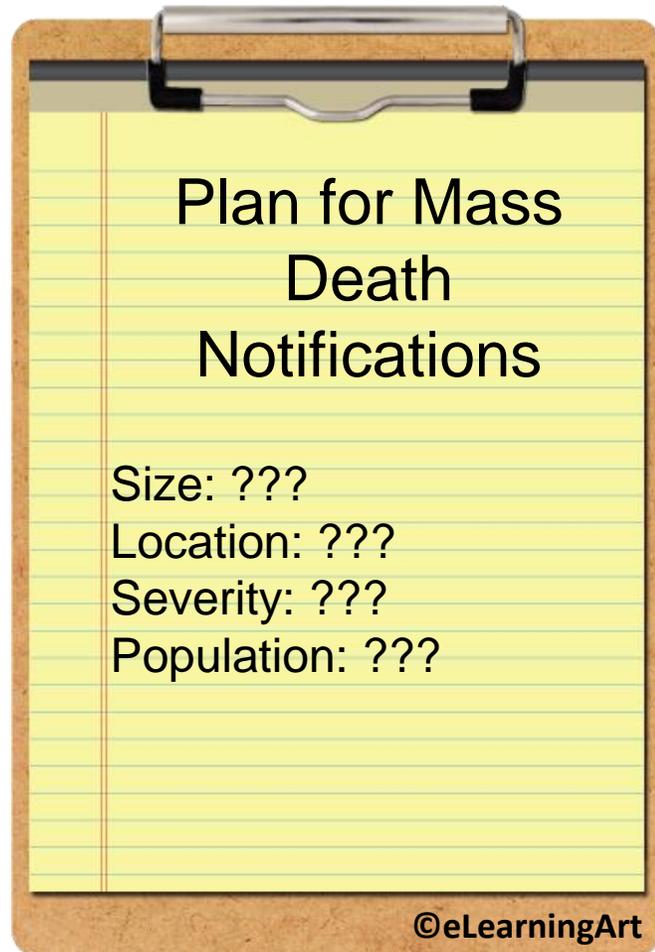
More individuals seeking information

More trained professionals needed

Widespread misinformation via social media

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Potential Challenges to Planning



How can you plan
for what you don't
know?

Delivering Mass Death Notifications

Anticipate
challenges

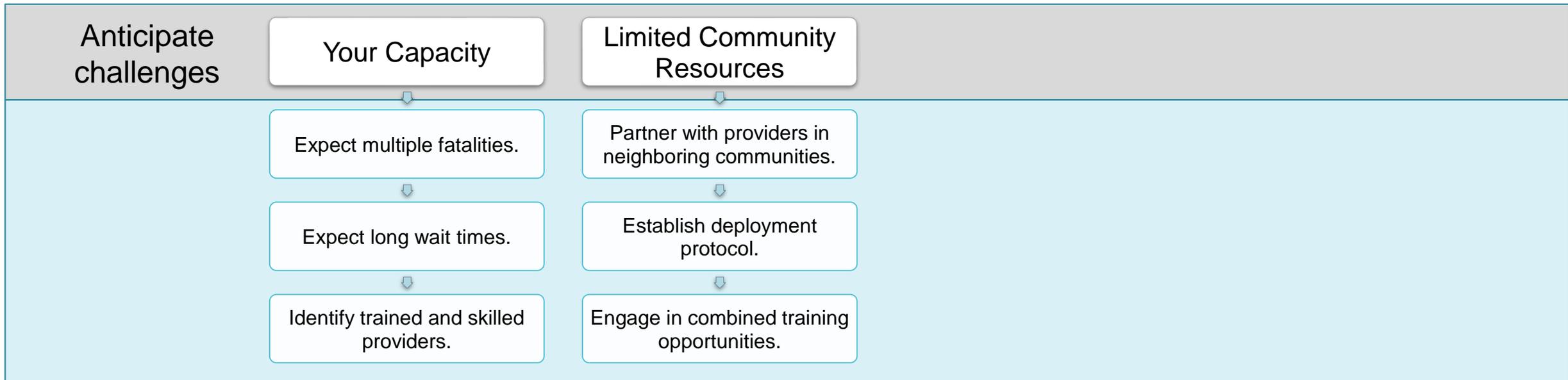
Your Capacity

Expect multiple fatalities.

Expect long wait times.

Identify trained and skilled
providers.

Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)



Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)



Delivering Mass Death Notifications (continued)



Impact of Delivering a Notification

There is no “good” way to notify survivors.



It is important that notification team members learn to tolerate another person’s expressions of grief and pain, and process their own response with peers.

Unofficial, Official, and Preliminary Notifications

Unofficial Notification

- Delivered by witnesses, media, or well-meaning friends/family
- Information has not been verified by coroner or medical examiner

Unofficial, Official, and Preliminary Notifications (continued)

Unofficial Notification

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Official Notification

- Delivered by coroner or medical examiner
- Based on jurisdiction and law

Unofficial, Official, and Preliminary Notifications (continued)

Unofficial Notification

- Delivered by witnesses, media, or well-meaning friends/family
- Information has not been verified by coroner or medical examiner

Official Notification Preliminary Notification

- Delivered by coroner or medical examiner
 - Based on jurisdiction and law
- Delivered by law enforcement, victim advocates, chaplains, etc.
 - Designated by the local coroner or medical examiner
 - An MOU is recommended



The Notification Team



The Notification Team (continued)



The Notification Team (continued)



Coordinating the Team



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- Investigating officer should be a part of the team.
- Uniformed officer may put survivors at ease.

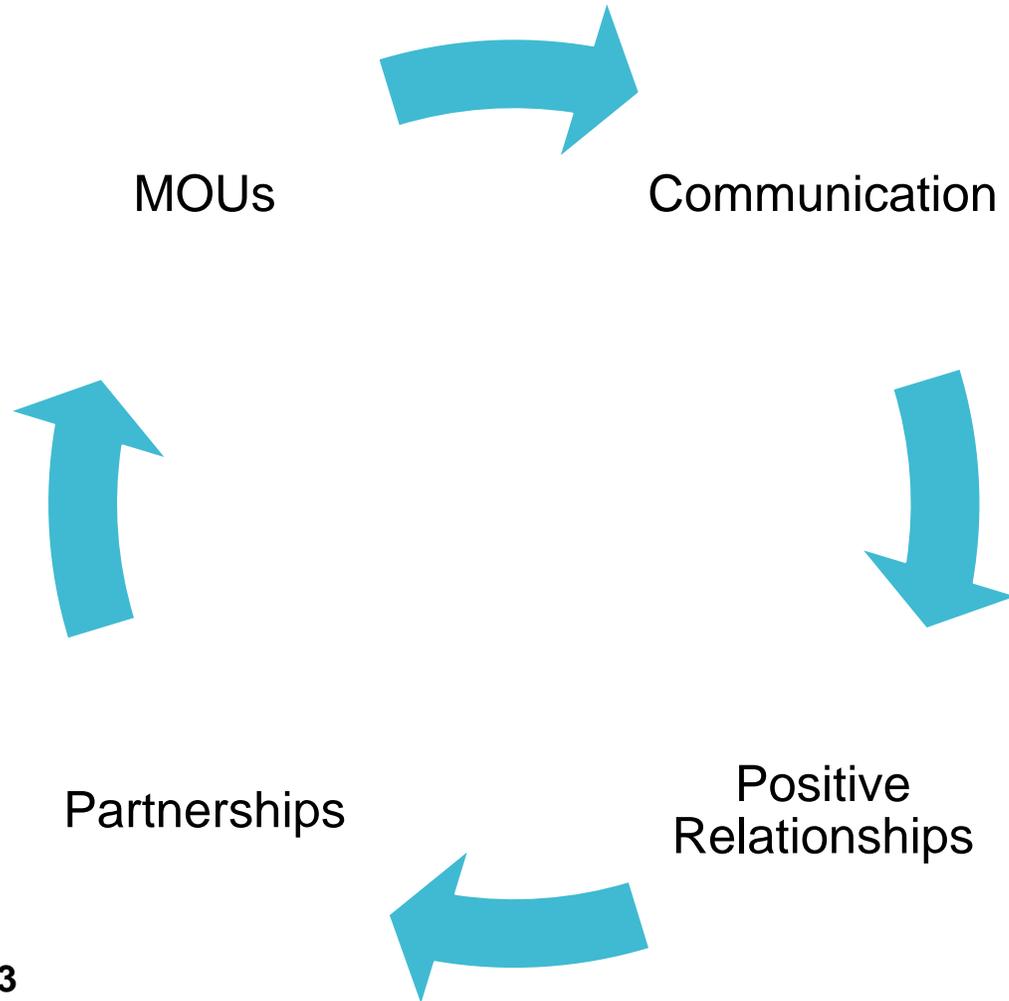
Coordinating the Team (continued)



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- Investigating officer should be a part of the team.
- Uniformed officer may put survivors at ease.
- Local officers and/or FBI may be present.
- Family liaisons and prosecution victim advocates are not typically part of the team but are helpful.

Coordinating the Team (continued)



Training Essentials: The Process



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Training Essentials: The Law



- Do federal or state laws apply?
- Who is considered the next of kin (according to the presiding judication)?
- Who will deliver the official notification?
- What information can be shared?

Training Essentials: Advocacy and Support

Advocacy:

- Basic understanding of crime victim compensation
- Basic victims' rights

Support:

- Crisis intervention skills
- Grief support training



Training Essentials: Communication and Followup Activities

Team communication and followup activities should include—

- A culturally sensitive approach.
- A gentle discussion about the possibility of organ donation.

Training Essentials: Communication and Followup Activities (continued)

Team communication and followup activities should include—

- A culturally sensitive approach.
- A gentle discussion about the possibility of organ donation.
- Identifying social support, who is present before leaving the next of kin.
- Providing written information regarding next steps (e.g., contact details, information on grief, local resources).
- Discussing how to collect personal belongings and make funeral or memorial arrangements.
- Sharing victims' rights information.

Trauma-Informed Processes

Center Locations



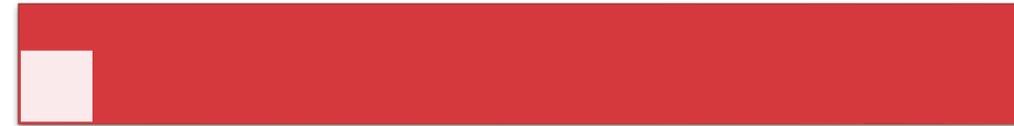
- Coroner/medical examiner authority
- No need for secondary “official” notification
- Survivors need to be out of sight from other families
- Long waits can seem insensitive



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Trauma-Informed Processes (continued)

Home or Hospital



- Designate a victim advocate to provide continuity of care
- Connect family with social support
- Deliver simultaneous notifications

Trauma-Informed Processes (continued)



Form relationships with local media entities to endorse a trauma-informed approach and avoid premature notifications.



Encourage media outlets to coordinate with the public information officer, and to receive training on the impact of premature notifications.

Trauma-Informed Processes (continued)



Planning for Your Next Steps

What's Next?

①

②

③

Review of Webinar Goals

You should be able to—

- Describe the factors related to delivering mass violence death notifications.
- Explain the dynamics of a trained death notification team.
- Identify the training needs for those providing death notifications.
- Integrate trauma-informed processes to prepare for these notifications.

Conclusion

Final Questions?



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How To Access TTA

Free Technical Assistance Available

- Initial Consultation
- Meeting Facilitation
- Protocol Development
- Followup Consultation
- No Cost for the Assistance



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Email TTAC@ovcttac.org to request an application or to find more information.

