

FIELD GUIDE

**RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF
MASS VICTIMIZATION**

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Framing expectations

Incidents of mass victimization have the potential to cause considerable trauma. The immediate response and interactions between responders, collaborative partners, and members of the community are often complex. Navigating those interactions while meeting the demands of your role will have its rewards and challenges.

Whatever position you may hold, whether on-scene or off-scene, you have the power to influence one or more victim's path to recovery. The ability to understand the impact of trauma and apply the best practices for interacting with impacted individuals is critical to the success of your organization's crisis response. **This field guide is designed to serve as a basic roadmap for assisting individuals recently impacted by a mass victimization incident.**

Role Considerations

- You will be given an operational assignment that will fill a specific "position" that adheres to the Incident Command System, under NIMS (National Incident Management System, established by FEMA). This can involve serving as a liaison between local and state government, an administrative time-keeper, a greeter for community members, a guide through the assistance center, or whatever role that addresses gaps in services that may arise (finance, logistics, etc.)
- Roles can vary depending on the deployment site, whether it is a LAC (Local Assistance Center), DRC (Disaster Recovery Center), the SOC (State Operations Center), or JFO (Joint Field Office). An assignment may also involve visiting families, shelters, places of work, and other locations near the impacted community.
- Depending on what you are asked to do, your direct interactions with victims may be limited. However, having a set of skills to help victims on-scene or support colleagues/partners with their interactions is vital to being prepared for any assignment.
- If your role during a crisis response involves office coverage or administrative support, you are still a critical part of a response. Your work affects the sustainability of the work on the field. You also have the potential to be impacted by vicarious trauma and burnout.
- You are not a mental health professional. ***Remember your boundaries.***

How to use this field guide

There are four modules in this field guide. The content in each module builds upon concepts introduced in earlier modules. It is recommended that new users of the field guide orient their understanding by starting from the first module. This field guide is also designed to serve as a job aid that can be packed in a go-bag and referenced on-demand.

Each module contains

- **Key takeaways** from the module.
- **Pro tips** from experienced crisis responders.
- **Videos** that provide a deeper dive into the topic. Due to the subject matter, certain videos contain heavy content that may be disturbing for some viewers. Access the videos by scanning the QR code or typing the link in your web browser. (Users of the digital field guide can click on the link to watch the video).
- **Questions for reflection** to help the user apply the information shared in the videos to their own experience.
- **Charts and infographics** on trauma and trauma-informed practices for the user to reference.
- **Notes** pages with space to add personal notes.

Checklists and planning guides have been separated into their own section for ease-of-access.

Additional resources to explore are listed at the end of the field guide and are available at the time of publishing.

NOTE:

The content in this field guide is not intended to replace formal crisis response training. Potential responders should consider every opportunity available to take formal training.

VICTIMS OF CRIME AND VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS

	VICTIMS OF CRIME	VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS
Definition of event	Acts of terrorism and mass violence crimes are caused by human evil, deliberate socio-political act, human cruelty, revenge, hate against a group, or mental illness.	Natural disasters are caused by an act of nature, interactions between natural forces and human error or actions.
Examples	Mass shootings, bombings, aircraft hijackings, mass riots, bio-terrorism.	Hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, droughts.
Response to event	Response environment may be more complex, intense, and demanding. Impact area is a crime scene, which may limit the movements of responders.	Local government emergency management agency leads the response activities; other agencies lend support as needed.
Subjective experience	Victims are suddenly caught in a dangerous, life-threatening situation. Many experience terror, helplessness, betrayal, and violation. Outrage, blame, desire for revenge or justice are common.	Anger and blame are directed toward agencies / individuals responsible for prevention, mitigation, and disaster relief.
Psychological impact	Mass casualties, threat to life, exposure to trauma, and prolonged recovery efforts can result in significant, long-term reactions. High rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and traumatic bereavement are common.	Separation from family members, evacuation, lack of warning, threat to life, and loss of home or objects of significance contribute to stress reactions. Relocation, financial stress, and other daily challenges may coincide.
Stigmatization	Some victims may have feelings of humiliation, responsibility for others' deaths, survivor's guilt, or that they are unworthy of assistance – thus, assigning stigma to themselves.	Disasters tend to have greater impact on people with fewer economic resources because they live in more vulnerable, lower cost residences that are less structurally sound and located in higher risk areas.
Media	Risk of violations of privacy and re-traumatization by graphic media exposure and replays. The greater the horror and psychological impact, the greater the media interest.	Risk of violations of privacy of vulnerable victims. Short-term, temporary media interest fosters a sense in the disaster-impacted community that the “rest of the world has moved on.”

Derived from “Responding to Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes” by the Office for Victims of Crime and the American Red Cross

The Impact of Trauma



The Impact of Trauma

The stress reactions that survivors experience are normal responses to an abnormal event.

Stress - A response to a stimulus, characterized by increased physiological and psychological arousal.

Trauma - An adverse reaction caused by any event outside the usual realm of human experience that is markedly distressing and evokes reactions of intense hopelessness, fear, helplessness, etc.

Stress is ordinary. **Trauma is extraordinary.** Humans are not wired to “bounce back” from trauma the way they normally do with stress.



<https://vimeo.com/126501517>

How does trauma impact the brain?

The human body is wired for survival. When the brain senses danger, the body reacts on instinct to protect itself. But when a traumatic incident occurs, the brain's signaling can get hijacked and stuck in a “survival mode” that complicates recovery. Watch this video from *NHS Lanarkshire EVA Services* to learn how trauma uniquely impacts the brain.



Question for reflection...

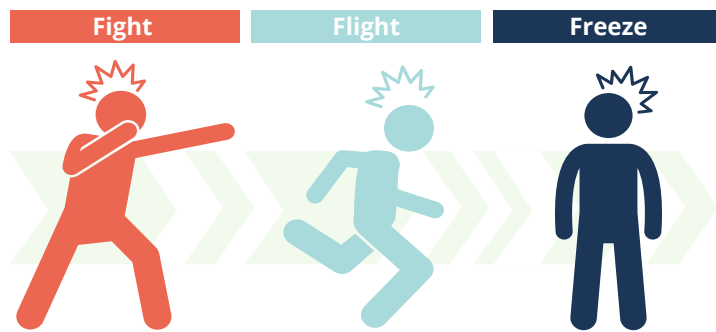
What are some ways that information about trauma could be useful in your interactions with survivors?

PRO TIP

Reactions to trauma can vary person to person, case by case, moment to moment.

When the brain senses danger, the body prioritizes survival.

The **3** Survival Responses:



Being able to move and do something to protect oneself is a critical factor in determining whether or not a horrible experience will leave long-lasting scars.



Bessel A. van der Kolk
The Body Keeps the Score



<https://youtu.be/45itsp3zK7E>

Short-term and long-term impacts of trauma: A survivor's account

Kristina Anderson was 19 years old when she was carried out of her French class at Virginia Tech in April 2007. She had been shot three times by a student who killed 32 and wounded 16 others. Watch this video from *CBS News* for Anderson's account of the physical and mental toll she endured after surviving a mass shooting, and what victims of similar mass casualty incidents might anticipate during their recovery.



PRO TIP

Trauma is life-changing. It is not uncommon to feel like or behave like a different person after surviving trauma. Only those who have survived the same or a similar experience can truly "get" it.

The dynamics of trauma



<https://vimeo.com/493842861/fbecfef827>

The dynamics of trauma in victims: An interview with a crisis responder
There are many reactions that an individual might experience in response to traumatic events. Whether a natural disaster or an act of violence has impacted their community, these individuals have survived an extraordinary event that will have lasting impacts. Watch this video from *Waymakers* to learn more about the roller-coaster of reactions a responder should prepare to face during their interactions.



Questions for reflection...

The video listed several intense physical reactions that survivors might experience. Which of these intense physical reactions stood out to you and why?

How can a responder help a survivor normalize some of the traumatic reactions they may be experiencing in the aftermath of an incident?

PRO TIP

An earth-shattering event like mass casualty trauma can lead to a crisis in worldview. Survivors may begin questioning their core beliefs in a way they have never questioned before, and this shift will affect how they move through the world after the event.

COMMON STRESS REACTIONS TO TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Physical

- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Cardiovascular strain
- Startle response
- Hyper-arousal
- Increased physical pain
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal upset
- Decreased appetite

Emotional

- Shock
- Terror
- Blame
- Anger
- Guilt
- Grief or sadness
- Emotional numbing
- Helplessness

Behavioral

- Increased relational conflict
- Social withdrawal
- Alienation
- Distrust
- Impaired work performance
- Decreased satisfaction
- Feeling abandoned or rejected
- Over-protectiveness

Cognitive

- Impaired concentration
- Impaired decision-making ability
- Memory impairment
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Self-blame
- Intrusive thoughts memories
- Dissociation

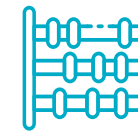
REACTIONS TO TRAUMA IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

YOUNG CHILDREN (1-5)



- Helplessness and passivity
- Heightened arousal and agitation
- Generalized fears and anxieties
- Cognitive confusion
- Inability to comprehend and talk about event or feelings
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Anxious attachment, clinging
- Regressive symptoms
- Unable to understand death as permanent
- Grief related to abandonment of caregiver
- Somatic symptoms

SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN (6-11)



- Responsibility and guilt
- Repetitious traumatic play and retelling
- Reminders trigger disturbing feelings
- Sleep disturbances, nightmares
- Safety concerns, preoccupation with danger
- Aggressive behavior
- Angry outbursts
- Irrational fears
- Close attention to parent's anxieties and reactions
- Preoccupation with "mechanisms" of death
- Concentration and learning problems
- School avoidance
- Worry and concerns for others

ADOLESCENTS (12-18)



- Detachment from feelings
- Shame, guilt, humiliation
- Self-consciousness
- Post-traumatic acting out
- Life-threatening reenactment
- Rebellion at home or school
- Abrupt shift in relationships
- Depression, social withdrawal
- Decline in school performance
- Desire for revenge
- Radical change in attitude
- Premature entrance into adulthood

PRO TIP

Children can experience the full-range of traumatic stress reactions, but they may not know that it is okay to feel those things. They often pick up distress cues expressed by their caregiver and react in-kind.

Trauma-Informed Communication



Active listening is a skill that requires double awareness: awareness of yourself and awareness of the person in front of you. Like all skills, it takes practice.

Trauma-informed communication returns agency back to a person who has just experienced an event that stripped them of all sense of control.

- Focuses more on asking good questions than providing good answers.
- Empowers the other person to take the conversation wherever they are comfortable.
- Requires cultural humility, empathy, and active listening.



Social support is not the same as merely being in the presence of others. The critical issue is reciprocity: truly being heard and seen by the people around us, feeling that we are held in someone's mind and heart. For our physiology to calm down, heal, and grow we need a visceral feeling of safety.



Bessel A. van der Kolk
The Body Keeps the Score

Cultural humility (self-awareness)

Cultural competence - the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.

Cultural humility - a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities.



<https://vimeo.com/493848776/dcee8ef8d2>

Cultural humility

Cultural competence or cultural humility? Both concepts imply the importance of cultural awareness, yet there is a crucial difference. Watch this video from *Waymakers* to see why service providers have moved to cultural humility as the better choice, the impact it can have on your communication, and ways to begin incorporating this mindset in your interactions.



Questions for reflection...

What are some potential pitfalls of relying on our own knowledge of someone's culture?

How might you practice cultural humility with victims? With colleagues? With collaborative partners?

PRO TIP

A skilled listener is someone who makes sure the other person feels understood, even if what needs to be understood is unspoken.

Empathy (awareness of another)



<https://vimeo.com/81492863>

Empathy versus sympathy

Many people believe that sympathy and empathy are the same. However, according to research professor Brené Brown, the two concepts are markedly different. One fuels connection. The other drives disconnection. Watch this video from Brené's famous *TED Talk* on the power of vulnerability to spot the difference and see how practicing empathy can help us connect more deeply with other individuals.



Questions for reflection...

Have you had an experience where you felt the difference between empathy versus sympathy?

In what ways do you think empathy could help you be trauma-informed in your communication with survivors?

Theresa Wiseman's Four Attributes of Empathy:

- **Perspective taking:** to be able to see the world as others see it.
- **Withholding judgment:** when we judge another person's situation we discount their experience.
- **Recognizing emotion in other people:** understanding what it is that someone else is feeling.
- **Communicating your understanding of that emotion:** when we communicate our knowledge of that feeling, it shows the person that they aren't alone in it.

OARS:

A model for the skill of active listening

Open-ended Questions

Designed to gather more information.



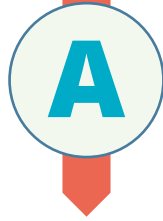
EXAMPLE:

WHAT?

HOW?

Affirmations

A genuine response that validates the victim's strength and builds confidence.



EXAMPLE:

"You have shared your experiences of the incident with me, I appreciate your honesty and strength".

Reflection

Uses empathetic listening and mirrors back what an individual has said.



EXAMPLE:

"From what I understand, it sounds like you were fearful." "I hear you are concerned. Tell me more about..."

Summarization

Rephrasing what you have heard to demonstrate understanding. Provides an opportunity for clarification.



EXAMPLE:

"Let me see if I understood correctly... Does that sound right?"

PRO TIP

Nonverbals are revealing. During your interactions, gather clues by "listening" to the other person's body language and tone. Always align your own nonverbals with the intent of your words.

On-Scene Response



SLOW down.

The scene of a mass casualty response is a lot to take in, and slowing down may be harder than it sounds when the stakes are high. But giving yourself time and space to breathe will improve your situational awareness and help you stay energized for the long-haul.

When you get the call...

- Ground yourself
- Get information
- Check your go-bag (see the **Go-Bag Checklist** in the *Checklists & Plans* section)
- Inform your partners, family, support system
- Implement office coverage protocol

When you arrive...

- Check in, identify yourself
- Clarify your role with the incident commander or the person in charge
- Introduce yourself to partners
- Familiarize yourself with layout and resources on-site

During the response...

- Check in daily and throughout the day with colleagues & leaders
- Take breaks, and help teammates take breaks
- Debrief daily with your team at the end of the shift
- Maximize your downtime post-shift if you are on a multi-day response
- Check in with your office or support system according to your communication plan



Rarely can a response make something better.
What makes something better is connection.



Brené Brown
The Power of Vulnerability

The on-scene environment



An emotionally fraught environment

In 2017, a category 4 hurricane made landfall in Houston, Texas. It was one of the costliest hurricanes in U.S. history. Hurricane Harvey affected the lives of more than 13 million people, destroying over 100,000 homes and killing 88 individuals. Watch this video from *ABC News* for a glimpse into the immediate aftermath: the chaos at the shelters, the uncertainty of safety, and the emotional roller-coaster that one survivor endured.



<https://youtu.be/B7IKrrNQDUU?t=282>

Questions for reflection...

How would you describe the emotional environment at the assistance centers?

How did Aisha's emotions fluctuate over time? What do you think helped her feel safe afterwards?

PRO TIP

Each response is unique. Even if you have responded to previous scenes, check all assumptions at the door.

A trauma-informed response

- Avoids re-traumatization
- Helps to restore a sense of safety
- Attends to the distress in the way that the victim defines it
- Recognizes cultural differences
- Works within and through the family structure
- Understands the role of belief systems



A trauma-informed response: an interview with a crisis responder

Arriving at the site of your deployment may place you immediately into 'go' mode, but it is important to consider the victims and meet them where they are in the moment. Watch this video from *Waymakers* to find out some practical tips for providing a trauma-informed response when navigating the complexities of a chaotic environment.



<https://vimeo.com/493850329/4e24a726cd>

Questions for reflection...

Have you ever wished someone was more trauma informed when dealing with you?

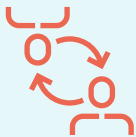
What changes can you make to even your daily interactions with these techniques?

SAFER Intervention:

A model for working with individuals in crisis

Stabilize

- Introduce yourself: "Hi, my name is _____, and I work with..."
- Meet their basic needs: "Can I get you some food, or a blanket?"
- Mitigate acute stressors: Remove triggers in the environment or apply grounding techniques.



- Let them share their story if they choose to (what happened and their personal reactions).
- Active listening is key. Your focus is on empathy with what they're going through, not whether the story adds up.

Acknowledge the Crisis

Facilitate Understanding

- Normalize their feelings: "Many people report feeling the same things."
- Explain that the stress reactions they are experiencing are due to trauma, not personal weakness. These are normal reactions to abnormal events.

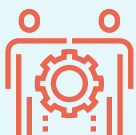


- Ask about coping strategies that have worked for them: "What are some ways you have handled problems in the past?"
- Help them identify all the different options: personal stress management tools, interpersonal support systems, mental health interventions, spiritual or religious interventions, etc.
- Delay life-changing decisions.
- Foster hope. Try to redirect their focus on the future.

Encourage Effective Coping

Recovery or Referral

- Assess if they are able to function safely: "So where do we go from here?"
- Act as an advocate for their continued care by warmly connecting them to resources and service providers.



On-Scene Response

Understanding the SAFER model

The goal of the SAFER model is to empower an individual in acute crisis to **function safely**. Apply your trauma-informed communication skills throughout this process.

Stabilize

Stabilizing an individual is about meeting someone's **basic needs**: their physiological and safety needs. It can be as simple as checking for first aid needs, offering food or water, and making sure the person is warm and dry. Once physical needs are met, the body signals the brain that the crisis has passed and they are now safe.

Acknowledge the crisis

An important step in recovery is being able to **acknowledge that something traumatic has happened**. Some victims may derive comfort from sharing their experiences and feel the need to share with others, at length or repeatedly. Other victims may shut down, be unable to express their feelings, or feel reluctant to talk. Either reaction is normal, and you do not need to encourage victims to talk if they seem uncomfortable.

Facilitate understanding

People in crisis tend to think that their reactions to trauma are "**unusual**", or they may feel like they are going "**crazy**". Validating their feelings and normalizing their reactions to trauma is crucial. Resources such as pamphlets describing common reactions to trauma can be helpful to have on hand.

Encourage effective coping

Many victims of trauma feel that their **sense of control** has been robbed by something or someone else. In a trauma-informed response, we want to encourage victims to think of all the different options available to them and help them feel empowered to take control of their coping strategy.

Recovery or Referral

By assessing whether someone is able to function, you are not making a mental health diagnosis. You are determining **whether it is safe to walk away** or **whether the individual needs immediate specialized care**. When you arrive on-scene, take some time to familiarize yourself with the different partnering agencies, the services they can provide, and where they are located. Professionals on-scene may include: medical, mental health, spiritual, law enforcement, legal, financial, nonprofits, childcare, etc.

PRO TIP

If you need to step away from a survivor, let the survivor know and enlist help from a partner to step in for you.

For leaders...



<https://vimeo.com/493852270/8aed35ca29>

Best Practices for Leaders During A Response

A mass casualty incident response may call for you to step up as a leader. Flexibility and a trust in your team will be key components to success in such a role. In this video from *Waymakers*, a crisis response team leader offers some practical advice for anyone tasked with the responsibility of leading their colleagues on-scene.

**Questions for reflection...**

If you are called to be a leader, how would you manage your team out in the field?

How might you lead when you're not in an official leadership role?

PRO TIP

Responding to a mass casualty incident will test your endurance, flexibility, and ability to set boundaries. Be mindful of your own limitations and boundaries as you navigate your deployment.

Mitigating Burnout



It's not a question of if, but when. The more you anticipate and prepare for burnout, the better equipped you will be to recover.

The hidden cost: vicarious trauma & burnout

Vicarious trauma is an occupational challenge for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence. Exposure to the trauma of others has been shown to change the world-view of these responders and can put people and organizations at risk for a range of negative consequences.

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations.

Keep a lookout for these warning signs

Difficulty managing emotions

Feeling emotionally numb or shut down

Fatigue, sleepiness, or difficulty sleeping

Body aches and pains

Increased irritability

Depression

Cynicism or loss of compassion

Destructive coping or addictive behaviors

Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable

Change in world view

PRO TIP

Admitting your own vulnerabilities can take great strength, and doing so can empower you to take action towards your recovery.

Advice for the responder



<https://vimeo.com/493851097/acbac7815e>

Caring for you while caring for others
Burnout is a very real consideration for responding teams and their leaders as its effects can last for weeks or even months. Watch this video from *Waymakers* on how team members and leaders can help and support their fellow responders in instances when it becomes more than the victims who needs assistance.



Questions for reflection...

What behaviors do you exhibit when you are stressed? When you are run down?

Why do you think it's so hard for responders to take care of themselves in normal ways (e.g., taking breaks, eating lunch, etc.) during a deployment?

In what ways could proactively implementing self-care habits on a day-to-day basis help prevent burnout when you get deployed?

PRO TIP

Have honest conversations with your support system, in the office and at home, about what you need and how they can support you.

Ways to maximize your downtime

- Physical activities that can be safely done during deployment
Example: Go for a walk to get some fresh air and get your blood flowing.
- Breath and grounding exercises to slow down your adrenaline
Example: 4-4-4 breathing (inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, repeat).
- Music, games, and apps that release energy and help you switch gears
Example: Create a playlist before deployment that includes your favorite uplifting songs.
- Recharging the body after your shift
Example: Eat healthy meals and get your usual number of hours of sleep.

Supporting your colleagues

- Encourage your colleagues to take breaks, drink water, and step away from all that is going on even for just a minute or two.
- Lean on each other. Having a team mentality can lessen the burden of the response.
- Be open to receiving feedback from your team. They might see something that you might not recognize in yourself.

How you can help

- Suggest Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. Reaching out to an outside professional can be helpful to process the toll of being a responder.
- Take advantage of employee benefits such as EAP or mental health services.
- Encourage connection with social support systems, such as family, friends, and coworkers.

PRO TIP

Looking out for your colleagues can help mitigate the effects of burnout.

SUGGESTED IDEAS

FOR SELF-CARE

Self care is very personal. Create a plan that works for you.

PHYSICAL

- I will go to bed by a certain time each night to be fully rested for the next day.
- I will incorporate healthier foods in my diet.
- I will take a walk during my lunch break.
- I will schedule a physical at my doctor's office and actually follow his or her instructions.
- I will sign up for a class that helps me stay active (spin, yoga, cross-fit, etc.).
- I will wear a fitness tracker to help me stick to my fitness goals.

SPIRITUAL

- I will pray or meditate for 15 minutes each day.
- I will participate in a spiritual or religious community (e.g. a church service, mosque, synagogue, etc.).
- I will take a hike in the outdoors to connect with nature.
- I will sing or listen to worship/inspirational songs that are meaningful to me.
- I will listen to a sermon or read a spiritual book.
- I will connect with a spiritual mentor or chaplain.

EMOTIONAL

- I will periodically journal my thoughts and feelings.
- I will practice mindfulness exercises to regulate my strong emotions (e.g. anger, sadness, anxiety, etc.).
- I will watch a funny show that promotes positive humor.
- I will set aside time for activities that make me feel good (drawing, baking, reading, etc.).
- I will talk with a counselor, therapist, or trusted friend about the things weighing me down.
- I will avoid the things that tend to trigger my stress reactions and negativity.

INTERPERSONAL

- I will reach out to an old friend and reconnect with them.
- I will join a social group (volunteer group, recreational sports team, book club, etc.) that shares similar interests or values with me.
- I will talk with my support person and disclose how I am feeling that day.
- I will invest in my relationship with my partner by setting aside quality time with them.
- I will set boundaries on my social schedule so that I don't spread myself too thin.
- I will learn about my personality type and share it with my support network.

Pre-Deployment Action Plan

A. ON-SCENE CONSIDERATIONS

Identification

Have you worked with the other agencies represented at your area of deployment? If not, how will you identify yourself and explain your role?

Information

Who are you reporting to at your respective location? How do you plan to get information on-scene upon arrival and throughout your deployment?

Leadership

Do you have subordinates at your location that you will be supervising? What plan do you have in place for the best methods of communication with them?

Mitigating Burnout

What actions will you take during your deployment to slow down and implement self-care?

B. PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS

What is your plan for communication with your support system (family, friends, etc.) during your deployment?

What personal responsibilities (childcare, petcare, activities, etc.) need to be overseen in your absence? Who will take on these responsibilities and what information will they need to complete these duties? (E.g., instructions for house care, emergency contact numbers, etc.)

C. OFFICE COVERAGE CONSIDERATIONS

What responsibilities need to be overseen in your absence? How will you prioritize these tasks for your co-workers? Who will be responsible for overseeing them?

Who will be the point of contact listed for your "out-of-office" message in case individuals require immediate assistance? How will you receive updates from your coworkers regarding urgent tasks being covered in your absence?

What plan do you have in place for communicating with your supervisor during your deployment?

Go-Bag Checklist

- ID
- Notebook and Pens
- Folder
- Phone Charger / External Battery / Cords
- Poncho
- Protective Eyewear
- Air Mask
- Emergency Blanket
- Flashlight
- Water Bottle
- Small First Aid Kit
- Personal Medication
- Hygiene Products
- Photo(s) of Loved Ones
- Personal Snacks
- Extra Pair of Shoes
- Extra Set of Clothes

PRO TIP

Check expiration dates on perishables and keep batteries charged. Pack enough for 2 days beyond the total number of days you're assigned to deploy.

Personal Resilience Action Plan

*Instructions: Open up your calendar(s) and mentally take stock before responding to the questions below. It is helpful to complete the plan **before and after** a response.*

A. BOUNDARIES

Which tasks or events give me a sense of excitement, motivation, or fulfillment?

Which tasks or events give me a feeling of anxiety, dread, or burden?

What are one or two actions I can take to establish better personal boundaries on my time, create more margin, and prioritize my energy on the things that matter most to me?

Who is in my personal support network (family, friends, colleagues, supervisor)? How will I discuss my boundaries with them?

B. SELF-CARE

In the next couple of days, what is one thing I will do for the following areas of my self-care?

Physical health:

Emotional health:

Spiritual health:

Interpersonal health:

Over the next month, what is one thing I will do consistently for the following areas of my self-care?

Physical health:

Emotional health:

Spiritual health:

Interpersonal health:

What will I depend on to help me stick to my plan? In what ways will my personal support network keep me accountable?

Post-Deployment Check In

Welcome home. You have just returned from an incredibly difficult and demanding experience. You have poured yourself into a huge, multi-layered effort to help survivors and their community move forward from an extraordinary event. Whatever role you played in the response, you have made an essential difference. Thank you for your service.

A. TAKING STOCK

Before diving back into your daily routine, pause for a moment to take stock. Be as honest as you can. If you prefer, you can invite a trusted friend or partner to ask you these questions: *How are you? What do you need right now? What do you need from others (your support system, your colleagues, etc.)?*

B. PLANS FOR RETURN

Returning to work

How will you prioritize your responsibilities once you are back in the office?

Returning home

What will you do to balance the demands from both your professional and personal life in the weeks following your deployment? Who do you need to discuss this with?

Additional Resources

Training for responders

CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management) training

<https://icisf.org/sections/education-training/>

NOVA (National Organization for Victim Assistance) Crisis Response training

<https://www.trynova.org/training/>

Resources for responder recovery

The Counseling Team International

<https://thecounselingteam.com/>

Mental health professionals that are able to provide counseling, training, critical incident intervention and support to emergency service personnel and their families within California and nationwide.

The Headington Institute

<https://www.headington-institute.org/resources/>

Resources, tools, and training for humanitarian aid workers centered on promoting long-term stress resilience and trauma recovery.

Trauma Recovery Network

<https://norcal-emdr-trn.weebly.com/>

<https://www.orangecountytrn.com/>

<https://sandiego-emdr-trn.weebly.com/>

Networks of mental health professionals trained in EMDR therapy and other vicarious trauma support services.

Apps for your mobile device

SAMHSA app

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/samhsa-disaster>

Access resources including tip sheets; guides for responders, teachers, parents, and caregivers; and a directory of behavioral health service providers in the impacted area. Download information on your phone before deployment in case of limited Internet connectivity in the field. Review key preparedness materials to help you provide the best support possible.

PFA Mobile app

<https://mobile.va.gov/app/pfa-mobile>

PFA Mobile was designed to assist responders who provide psychological first aid (PFA) to adults, families, and children as part of an organized response effort. This app provides responders with summaries of PFA fundamentals, PFA interventions matched to specific concerns and needs of survivors, mentor tips for applying PFA in the field, a self-assessment tool for readiness to conduct PFA, and a survivors' needs form for simplified data collection and easy referral.

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This field guide was created in association with the California Crime Victims Assistance Association (CCVAA); written and produced by the Victim Assistance Program of Waymakers, a non-profit organization based in Southern California. The mission of Waymakers is to build safer communities by helping individuals make their way through conflict and crisis to a place of strength and stability.

From 2018 to 2020, Waymakers developed a 16-hour training on *Responding to Incidents of Mass Victimization*. This training was offered to staff at the California Office of Emergency Services to prepare them for mass casualty crisis response deployments. In 2020, the Waymakers training team created this publication, in conjunction with a series of web videos, to encapsulate the most essential components of the training for a wider audience.

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