Mass Shooting Preparedness: Checklist

As your community’s chief elected leader, you have a significant role to play in the event of a mass shooting. This Checklist can help you prepare for it. For more information, consult the Mass Shooting Playbook: A Resource for U.S. Mayors and City Managers.¹

**Plan crisis communications**

- Develop a communication strategy to ensure unified messaging.
  - Review the CDC’s Crisis and Emergency Risk Communications (CERC) Manual.²
    If you have limited experience speaking to the national media, consider crisis communications training.
- Assess whether to establish an Emergency Notification System. Develop a policy for its use and request regular testing and operation of the system.

**Ensure law enforcement agencies are prepared**

- Establish personal relationships with leaders of potential responding agencies (e.g., police, sheriff, FBI, neighboring city law enforcement agencies). Ensure mutual aid agreements are in place.³
- Ensure your law enforcement agency has adequate training, equipment, and funding to effectively respond to a mass shooting. Priorities include: ⁴
  - Active Violent Incident (AVI) training for all officers.⁵
  - Training includes tactical emergency casualty care.
  - First responder radio systems are inter-operational.
  - Protocol for self-deploying law enforcement agencies.
- Personally attend a multi-agency law enforcement active shooter drill.

**Prepare to provide victim services**

- Meet with representatives of public health agencies, the FBI Victim Services Division, the American Red Cross, and community-based organizations to develop a plan to provide victim and family services. The Office of Victims of Crime (OVC) can refer you to federal funding, training, and other resources.⁶

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¹ The Playbook, a Tabletop Exercise Template, and other resources are available at www.UnitedOnGuns.org.
³ See the Mass Shooting Playbook chapter on Legal Considerations for more information.
⁴ These recommendations were informed by the DOJ Uvalde Report. https://cops.usdoj.gov/uvalde
⁵ The gold standard is the federally funded ALERRT program. www.Alerrt.org.
⁶ The National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center is an important resource. https://nmvvrc.org/
Ensure your emergency operations plan includes mass casualty events.

- Identify possible locations for “victim notification” and “family assistance” centers, ensure they are scalable, have parking, and can be secured.
- Develop plans for a resiliency center.  
- Develop a victims’ fund protocol.

**Support the needs of your staff and first responders before an incident**

- Encourage leaders of first responder agencies to establish peer support programs (including police, fire, EMT, and dispatchers).
- Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities to provide routine city services following the emergency.
- Schedule periodic active shooter drills for city staff, provide medical kits in centralized locations in city buildings, and offer stop-the-bleed training.

**Put it all together: Schedule a Tabletop Exercise**

- Organize a tabletop exercise with your team, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to discuss roles and plan a unified response.
- Include mental health experts in your preparedness planning and exercises and ensure they have the Psychological First Aid training for crisis response (which is different from “everyday” talk therapy).
- Schedule at least one tabletop focused on a school mass shooting. Meet with school officials to review safety plans, direct them to funding and planning resources, and urge them to schedule drills with law enforcement.
- Familiarize yourself with federal funding available for school safety, mental health services, and community gun violence prevention in your community.

For more information, please contact Sarah C. Peck, s.peck@phai.org or visit www.UnitedOnGuns.org

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7 Establishing a resiliency center following a mass shooting to meet the long-term needs of victims is standard practice. Consider creating one before a crisis to address the trauma caused by other forms of gun violence.

8 Stop the Bleed training will save lives. https://www.stopthebleed.org/training/

9 A template you can use to customize for your city is available at www.UnitedOnGuns.org.
