



Responding to Victims of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes

Coordination and Collaboration Between
American Red Cross Workers and
Crime Victim Service Providers



Office for Victims of Crime
OVC
"Putting Victims First"


American Red Cross

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Introduction and Overview

The American Red Cross (ARC) and the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) in the U.S. Department of Justice fill critical and complementary roles in assisting victims of terrorism and mass violence. The deceased, survivors, and bereaved family members in these events are victims of a deliberately perpetrated criminal act. As such, they may be eligible for both state and federally legislated services and ARC disaster services.

Disaster-related human need and suffering trigger ARC relief operations. ARC disaster operations are activated based on the *results* of a disaster, not its cause. ARC assists communities affected by natural disasters, epidemics, transportation accidents, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and other hazards. In contrast, OVC and state and local crime victim assistance programs are activated when there is significant indication that a disaster has been caused by a criminal act. When both ARC and crime victim service agencies are involved in a response, thoughtful coordination of each program's efforts facilitates better service to victims and family members.

Since 1983, OVC has assisted crime victims at the federal, state, and local levels by funding direct support, advocacy programs, and compensation programs for crime-related expenses. More recently, OVC has supported the development of innovative programs and approaches for assisting victims and their families in cases like the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, the Columbine High School shootings, the bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the September 11 terrorist attacks in Pennsylvania, New York, and Virginia.

Similarly, ARC provided a range of disaster relief services in each of these criminal incidents, including food, shelter, emergency financial assistance, mental health support, and assistance with locating missing persons. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) designated ARC to be the lead family assistance provider following aviation disasters. ARC disaster relief services are activated immediately after an air disaster, usually before the cause of the crash has been determined.



OVC/American Red Cross Collaborative Timeline

To better serve the victims of terrorism and mass violence, ARC, OVC, and the Executive Office for U.S. Attorneys (EOUSA) signed a letter of intent in 1996 that emphasized the necessity for close interagency cooperation among OVC, ARC, the U.S. Attorney's Office victim-witness coordinators, and state compensation and assistance programs to ensure timely and appropriate delivery of services to victims. This agreement was based on lessons learned from the Oklahoma City bombing response.

In 1999, ARC implemented a weapons of mass destruction/terrorism program to ensure that chapters across the Nation and in all lines of service are prepared to respond to terrorist incidents. This comprehensive program includes preparedness guidance and training for ARC chapters, information for the American public, and outreach to other federal agencies—including OVC—to promote a coordinated response.

Although nothing could have prepared our country completely for the events of September 11, 2001, the working relationship between OVC and ARC enabled both agencies to effectively meet unforeseen challenges and provide needed assistance to the victims of these horrific events. This booklet supports this

important cooperative effort by providing ARC with the following information and support:

- It acquaints ARC chapters and disaster services staff and volunteers with the needs and rights of crime victims involved in these disasters so ARC may coordinate with crime victim assistance programs at the local, state, and federal levels during nationally administered relief operations.
- It assists ARC's disaster relief workers in responding to the unique concerns of victims of criminal acts involving terrorism and mass violence.

This booklet addresses the following issues:

- How are natural disasters similar to and different from disasters caused by criminal human behavior?
- How can ARC workers assist victims of terrorism and mass violence crimes?
- What is the Office for Victims of Crime?
- What types of crime victim assistance and services may bereaved family members and survivors receive following human-caused disasters?
- What is the significance of the criminal justice system for victims of terrorism and mass violence?



Natural Disasters, Acts of Terrorism, and Mass Violence Crimes: Similarities and Differences

Many types of natural disasters, such as floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes, follow regional and seasonal patterns. These patterns provide some degree of familiarity and predictability for community victims, emergency responders, and disaster relief workers. When a major disaster is caused by deliberate human acts, sudden and unexpected threat, horror, and destruction inevitably impact innocent and unsuspecting people in the course of their daily routines. The resulting deaths and property destruction become reminders to many of their own vulnerability and their inability to keep their loved ones out of harm's way. When fostering terror is the goal, the threat of attack at any time and in any public setting is implicit and intended.

In the guidelines for OVC's *Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes*, "terrorism occurring within the United States" is defined as—

Activities that (A) involve acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, (B) appear to be intended—(i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnaping; and (C) occur primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States [18 U.S.C. § 2331, as amended].

OVC has developed a working definition of "mass violence" as—

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

Mass violence crimes may be under federal or state jurisdiction, but acts of terrorism are always federal crimes.

Emotional and Psychological Effects of Disaster

The psychological and emotional aftereffects of a major disaster are more severe and longer lasting when the disaster results in significant numbers of fatalities, seriously injured victims, and destroyed businesses and homes. Those most personally touched are likely to experience the greatest suffering. Surviving victims and bereaved families will experience a range of short- and long-term impacts that are emotional, physical, financial, and legal.

The characteristics of a disaster, which include a lack of warning, extreme threat to life, exposure to trauma, and uncontrollability, also contribute to the

severity and duration of the victims' psychological reactions. It is important to note that these attributes can be associated with either natural or human-caused disasters. Because mass casualties are usually an objective of terrorism, mass violence crimes, or incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, adverse psychological consequences are likely to be prominent.

Effects of Media Coverage

Criminal events that are highly traumatic and cause mass casualties receive considerable media coverage, exposing millions of U.S. citizens and people around the world to the horror and trauma of the tragedy. ARC disaster relief workers, traveling from different parts of the country, have likely viewed the disaster and its impact on television and bring their own reactions, fears, opinions, and personal vulnerabilities to the disaster operation. Disasters involving violent criminal mass victimization result in intensified psychological reactions not only among victims and families, but relief workers as well—thus making the relief effort more challenging and stressful.

Disaster's Effects on Targeted Groups

The crime may have targeted a particular group defined by culture, religion, nationality, politics, or ethnicity. Or, the crime may have been perpetrated by individuals from a specific group. Unfortunate social reactions may include blaming, scapegoating, stereotyping, and acting with prejudice to inflict additional trauma on already disenfranchised groups. Anger and the desire for revenge may motivate some people to aggressively act out their fears and feelings of powerlessness. It is important that relief workers foster community healing through respectful and equal treatment of all who seek services.

The table below presents many of the key differences between natural and human-caused disasters. The more prepared ARC relief workers are for the unique challenges of disasters involving criminal mass victimization, the better able they are to understand and respond to victims' needs.

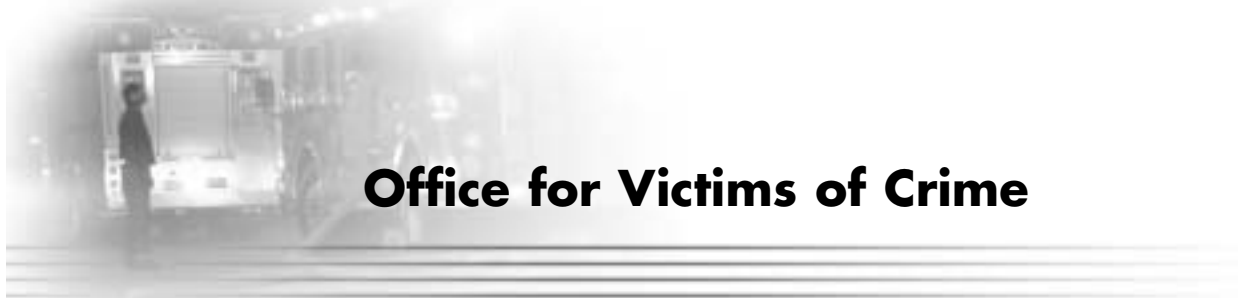
Comparison of Natural Disasters and Acts of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes

	Natural Disasters	Acts of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes
Examples	Hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, droughts.	Terrorist bombs, mass riots, aircraft hijackings, mass shootings, bioterrorism attacks.
Cause	Act of nature, interactions between natural forces and human error or actions.	Human evil intent, deliberate sociopolitical act, human cruelty, revenge, hate or bias against a group, mental illness.
Response	Local government emergency management agency leads the response activities; other agencies lend needed support.	Response environment often more complex, intense, demanding, chaotic, and stressful. Disaster impact area is a crime scene, which may limit the movements of responders.
Subjective Experience	Expectations defined by disaster type. Awe expressed about the power and destruction of nature. Disasters with warnings increase feelings of predictability and controllability. Recurring disasters pose ongoing threat. Anger and blame are directed toward agencies/individuals responsible for prevention, mitigation, and disaster relief.	Victims suddenly caught unaware in a dangerous, life-threatening situation. Many experience terror, fear, horror, helplessness, betrayal, and violation. The event seems incomprehensible and senseless. Some view the disaster as uncontrollable and unpredictable, while others view it as preventable. Outrage, blaming the responsible individual or group, desire for revenge, and demand for justice are common.

Comparison of Natural Disasters and Acts of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes (continued)

	Natural Disasters	Acts of Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes
Psychological Impact	Separation from family members, trauma, evacuation, lack of warning, threat to life, and loss of irreplaceable items and homes contribute to disaster stress reactions. Property loss and damage are often primary results of a disaster; reactions are related to loss, relocation, financial stress, and daily challenges. Traumatic stress from a disaster is typically resolved in 18 months unless the number of fatalities and serious injuries was high.	Mass casualties, threat to life, exposure to trauma, and prolonged recovery efforts may result in significant and long-term physical and emotional reactions. Higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and traumatic bereavement that can last a long time.
World View/ Basic Assumptions	Spiritual beliefs may be shaken (“How could God allow this destruction?”). Lost sense of security in “terra firma”—no longer believe the earth is solid and dependable. Loss of all illusion of invulnerability—realization that everyone is vulnerable to random acts of nature.	Assumptions about humanity change—that the world is secure, just, orderly, and that danger can be kept out. Survivors confronted with the reality that evil things can happen to good people. Resulting distrust and fear of people or being “out in the world,” may cause withdrawal and isolation. Loss of the illusion of invulnerability—realizing that anyone can be in the wrong place at the wrong time.
Stigmatization of Victims	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. Certain groups, including survivors from specific cultural, racial, and ethnic groups; single parent families; people with disabilities; and the elderly on fixed incomes experience greater barriers to recovery, causing double jeopardy and potential stigma.	Some victims may come to feel humiliation, responsibility for others’ deaths, survivor guilt, self-blame, and unworthy of assistance—thus assigning stigma to themselves. The larger community, associates, friends, and even family may become distant to avoid facing the fact that crime victimization could happen to anyone. Well-meaning loved ones may urge victims and those bereaved to “move on,” causing them to feel rejected and wrong for continuing to suffer. Hate crimes reinforce the discrimination and stigma that targeted groups may already experience.
Secondary Injury	Disaster relief and assistance agencies and bureaucratic procedures can be seen as inefficient, fraught with stressors, and impersonal. Disillusionment can set in when the gap between losses, needs, and available resources is realized. Victims rarely feel that they have been “made whole” through relief efforts.	Victims’ needs may conflict with necessary steps in the criminal justice process. Steps required to obtain crime victim benefits and compensation can seem confusing, frustrating, and bureaucratic, triggering feelings of helplessness. Bias-crime victims may suffer prejudice and blame. Victims often feel that the remedy ordered or the punishment imposed on the criminal is inadequate compared to the crime and their losses.
Media	Risk of violations of privacy of vulnerable victims. Need to protect children from harmful media exposure. Short-term, temporary media interest fosters a sense in the disaster-impacted community that “the rest of the world has moved on.”	Risk of violations of privacy and retraumatization by graphic media exposure and replays. The greater the horror and psychological impact, the greater the media interest.





Office for Victims of Crime

The Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) was passed by Congress in 1984 with the overarching goals of reducing the mental health and other negative consequences of crime victimization and supporting victim participation in the criminal justice process. Programs supported through VOCA funding that focus on these goals have been implemented at the federal, state, and local levels across the country. Funding for these programs is derived primarily from fines and penalties assessed against convicted defendants of federal crimes, which are deposited into the Crime Victims Fund (the Fund). The funds are also used to compensate victims for out-of-pocket crime-related expenses, including medical and mental health services, lost wages, and burial expenses. OVC oversees the distribution of monies in the Fund to federal, state, and local programs. In addition, OVC plays a major role in influencing policies and procedures for the delivery of crime victim services in the field.

Services provided by VOCA-funded local crime victim assistance programs include crisis intervention, advocacy, and accompaniment to hearings and trials. They also provide support groups and trauma counseling for families of homicide victims and for victims of violent crime, including sexual assault, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. At the local level, crime victim assistance programs may be affiliated with police departments, district attorneys' offices, hospitals, and mental health agencies. Nationwide, there are more than 10,000 victim assistance

programs. Further, all 50 states and 5 U.S. territories have crime victim compensation programs.

Large scale criminal acts, such as the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, and the September 11 terrorist attacks victimized thousands of people. Whether responding to a single assault victim or to thousands victimized by a terrorist attack, crime victim service organizations implement the following basic service goals:

- Protect the civil and legal rights of crime victims.
- Promote and restore the victim's sense of safety and dignity.
- Provide information about, and support victim participation in, the criminal justice process.
- Facilitate access to state crime victim and other appropriate compensation programs.
- Streamline procedures for accessing services and benefits.

In response to criminal acts of mass violence or terrorism, OVC coordinates with other federal and state agencies and nongovernmental organizations, including the American Red Cross (ARC). OVC disseminates information about resources, services, benefits and compensation; posts news releases; uploads timely information on available services to the OVC Web site; and may provide assistance in the form of

resources and referrals to crime victims through a national toll free help line. In addition, OVC provides technical assistance and supplemental funding to local crime victim assistance programs working directly with the victims and their families.

OVC relies on local programs to implement and staff crime victim services. Although ARC does not get involved at the local level with individual victims of crime, it works closely with OVC to ensure that victims of mass violence and terrorism are made aware of their rights and benefits.

Although ARC replicates its operational procedures consistently from disaster to disaster, variation can be expected from state to state with regard to the roles

and capacities of crime victim service programs.

Although state and local crime victim assistance programs have considerable expertise in assisting crime victims who have suffered violent and traumatic crimes, some programs may not have experience mobilizing a response to a large scale disaster.

Communication and effective coordination are necessary between appropriate personnel within ARC, OVC, the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's Office victim-witness coordinator staff, the state compensation and assistance programs, local crime victim service provider agencies, and others who can facilitate timely access to the range of available services provided by each entity.





Crime Victim Assistance and Services

As shown below, different types of assistance are available to crime victims at the federal, state, and local levels. At the ARC disaster operational level, liaison typically occurs with the state crime victim compensation program, the state U.S. Attorney's Office victim-witness coordinator, and the local victim assistance programs that are active in the crime victim compensation application process and in providing crisis counseling services and other services.

Services Available to Victims and Families Through OVC

Victim and Family Assistance Call Center

In certain circumstances, victims and families of victims may obtain information, assistance, and referrals through a national toll free hotline established by OVC.

Web site

Victims, their families, and the general public may seek information on the official OVC Web site. Information is provided about services; financial assistance; benefits provided by federal, state, local, and voluntary agencies; resources for coping with emotional trauma and loss; publications targeted for specific groups; updates on the criminal justice response; legal rights of crime victims and their families; and helpful Web links.

Services Available to Victims and Families Through State Crime Victim Compensation Programs

Crime victims and their family members may receive financial assistance with victim-related expenses (e.g., funerals, medical, mental health counseling, lost wages, loss of support). These programs are funded by states and receive additional funding via annual OVC formula grants. In cases of human-caused disaster, possible funding may be available from OVC's Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes. It is important to note that crime victim compensation programs are payors of last resort. This means that these programs fund crime-related expenses that other programs or organizations will not or cannot, such as a victim's private health insurance company, employer, or another social service agency. Please note that state programs vary slightly in terms of eligibility and benefits. Contact the specific state where the crime has occurred to determine exactly what costs are covered by the program.



Services Available to Victims and Families Through Local Crime Victim Assistance Programs

Crime victims, their families, and others affected by the crime may receive crisis intervention and counseling, advocacy, grief and trauma counseling, and information and referral, depending on the local program focus and capacity. These programs are funded by various sources, including annual OVC VOCA

formula funds granted to states that are then subgranted to local victim assistance programs. For information on the location of victim assistance programs in a state, you may access OVC's Directory of Crime Victim Services on the OVC Web site or contact the VOCA assistance agency in your state.





Grants and Funding Available to Organizations Through OVC

OVC administers the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes. Eligible applicants for this program include state victim assistance and victim compensation programs; U.S. Attorneys' offices; victim service and nongovernmental organizations; and federal, state, and local governments. Funding is available to assist eligible applicants in the aftermath of terrorism and mass violence incidents. Individual victims are not eligible to apply directly for funds, but may receive assistance through the organizations that receive grants through this program.

Grants are available for the following categories of assistance:

- **Crisis Response Grants.** Provide emergency funds to help victims build adaptive capacities, decrease stressors, and reduce symptoms of trauma immediately following the terrorism or mass violence event.
- **Consequence Management Grants.** Provide supplemental funds to help victims recover from the traumatic event and to restore a sense of equilibrium.
- **Crime Victim Compensation Grants.** Provide supplemental funds to state crime victim compensation programs to reimburse victims for out-of-pocket expenses related to their victimization.
- **Criminal Justice Support Grants.** Provide supplemental funds to facilitate victim participation in the investigation or prosecution directly related to a terrorist act or mass violence incident.
- **Training and Technical Assistance.** Provide tools to help federal, state, and local authorities identify victim needs and needed resources, coordinate services to victims, develop strategies for responding, and address related issues. Training for mental health service providers is available in coordination with the Center for Mental Health Services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and others.



Basics of the Criminal Justice Process

When people suffer personal and property losses due to a natural disaster, they typically engage with unfamiliar bureaucracies and procedures involving a range of federal, state, and voluntary agencies, in addition to receiving directions from their insurance carriers. The process can be confusing, frustrating, and overwhelming at times. Similarly, when victimized by a crime, those affected may become involved with law enforcement personnel, prosecutors' offices, and trial proceedings. Criminal justice procedures may not appear to make sense and can seem far removed from obtaining justice. Events throughout the criminal justice process often trigger painful feelings and distress for victims and families.

Basic information about the criminal justice system is included in this booklet so that ARC workers may better understand this key aspect of the aftermath of mass criminal victimization. For many victims and family members, a critical part of coming to terms with having been traumatically victimized is participating in the criminal justice process. Because the disaster was caused by a deliberate human act, all who have been impacted have been victimized by a crime that is punishable through the criminal justice system. Determining culpability and imposing punishments for these criminal acts are of significant concern for many crime victims and their loved ones.

Overview of the Criminal Justice Process: Investigation and Prosecution

Following an act of terrorism or mass violence, an investigation begins. If the investigation has identified suspects, then these alleged perpetrators may be arrested if located and depending on the circumstances of the case. When the initial investigation is completed, the law enforcement agency makes recommendations regarding the criminal offense charges to the prosecutor's office. The case is then transferred to the office responsible for prosecution of the crime.

Prosecution

A preliminary hearing or grand jury may be conducted to determine if there is sufficient evidence to proceed to trial. At the arraignment hearing, the suspect or accused is informed of the charges pending. At this point, the accused is referred to as "the defendant." The defendant then enters a plea of "guilty" or "not guilty." Each of these steps is likely to be distressing for victims and their loved ones.

Duration

There may be a long delay before the case goes to trial. If there has been considerable publicity surrounding the crime, the location of the trial may be

moved to another part of the country, making it more difficult for families to attend. The trial, sentencing, and appeals process may continue for years after the event. Updates regarding the discovery process, case events, continuances, and plea or sentence bargaining may be provided via telephone, written correspondence, and/or an official government Web site administered by the jurisdiction prosecuting the case.

Victim Impact Statement

During the sentencing phase of a criminal trial, some victims and family members may elect to provide written and/or oral victim impact statements to the judge and/or jury. A victim impact statement allows victims to express how the crime has affected their lives.

Victim service providers can assist victims with a written or oral impact statement as this is often an extremely important and emotional process for crime victims.

Role of Victim Assistance and Advocacy Programs

A primary mission of OVC, U.S. Attorneys' Offices, state and local prosecutor offices, and crime victim assistance programs is to ensure that crime victims and their loved ones have the following:

- Information about the criminal investigation, the criminal justice system, the prosecution of the criminal case against the defendants, upcoming proceedings, and status updates.
- Emotional support that anticipates and responds to the impact of key events in criminal justice proceedings.
- Opportunities to make informed decisions about participation in the criminal justice process.
- Protections from intimidation and harassment.

Crime victim assistance providers and advocates remain engaged with the victims and their family members until the criminal justice process has concluded. In contrast to most ARC disaster relief and assistance responses, crime victim assistance programs may remain actively engaged for many years. In particular, the trial and sentencing phases require a significant programmatic response to ensure that the civil and legal rights of crime victims are protected. Advocacy and trial support involve providing frequent informational updates and explanations of case issues and legal procedures; providing crisis counseling and emotional support; possibly establishing closed-circuit television sites for viewing the trial; and funding the travel and lodging costs for out-of-town victims and family members attending the trial.





Conclusion

Following an act of terrorism and/or mass violence, components of ARC, OVC, and state and local crime victim assistance programs have key roles in assisting victims and their families. A timely, coordinated response to victims is enhanced by

- Understanding the unique issues faced by crime victims.
- Being informed about local and state crime victim assistance and compensation agencies and their services.

Exchanging resource information and clarifying the assistance roles and responsibilities prior to an act of terrorism or incident of mass violence aid coordination during the aftermath and, *most importantly*, result in victims having access to needed services more quickly.



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Helpful Internet Sites

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
<http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs>

Office for Victims of Crime (OVC)
 U.S. Department of Justice
www.ovc.gov

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center (OVCRC)
www.ncjrs.org

Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center (OVCTTAC)
www.ovcttac.org

Contact Information for State Crime Victim Assistance and Compensation Programs

Information on all assistance and compensation programs can be found online. The National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators provides

information about crime victim assistance at www.navaa.org. The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards provides information about crime victim compensation programs at www.nacvcb.org. OVC provides state contact information for crime victim assistance and compensation programs at www.ovc.gov/help/links.htm.





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Submit your questions to Ask OVC at <http://ovc.ncjrs.org/askovc>.
Send your feedback on this service via <http://tellncjrs.ncjrs.org>.

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