



Tips for Volunteer Management & Checklist

Volunteers can be a critical element of a response to a mass violence incident (MVI) because the needs of survivors, families, responders and the community can quickly overwhelm and exceed the capacity of local agencies and organizations. Volunteers can bring skills that significantly strengthen an MVI response and help fill critical service gaps. However, managing volunteers after an MVI is very different from routine volunteer management and deployment, and even different from using volunteers in other crisis response situations.

MVI response activities are often chaotic, emotional, urgent and demanding. They also have many of the same challenges involved in responding to victims following a violent crime, including helping survivors cope with trauma and working in coordination with law enforcement and allied agencies. It's essential to plan for how to recruit and manage volunteers before an MVI occurs, as opposed to after the MVI has already happened, because it is difficult to plan thoughtfully and think clearly in the midst of post-MVI chaos. The key to successful use of volunteers is structured, managed engagement and effective utilization.

PREPARATION

- ⇒ Determine which tasks can be handled by trained volunteers based upon gaps in current community resources and the needs of the populations within the community.
- ⇒ Identify a Volunteer Coordinator who has experience in volunteer recruitment, management and evaluation; and who can work and manage volunteers in a stressful environment. Additional Volunteer Supervisors may also be needed (see below).
- ⇒ Consider types of volunteers needed
 - Skilled (contributes specific professional skills, certifications, or expertise) versus unskilled (offers time, effort, or compassion but does not need training or certification)
 - Trauma- trained and/or trained in Psychological First Aid (PFA) (a free online training program is available from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
 - Crisis counselors, behavioral and mental health professionals trained in evidence-based early interventions
 - Victim service professionals, advocates, and state crime victim compensation personnel
 - Representatives of multi-Faith communities, including clergy and chaplains
 - Red Cross or other Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) personnel
 - Translators
 - Interpreters for Deaf and hard-of-hearing clients
 - Transportation providers
 - Administrative personnel
 - Legal personnel
 - Medical personnel
 - Child care personnel
 - Food preparation and provision personnel
 - Certified Crisis Facility Canines handlers
- ⇒ Determine the different types of volunteers that may be needed both at the Friends & Relatives Center (FRC) and the Family Assistance Center (FAC), and to assist with the transition from the FRC to the FAC. There may be overlap between the Centers, but more volunteers will likely be needed at the FAC.
- ⇒ Create a volunteer outreach strategy (an example is available from the Red Cross) and volunteer recruitment plan (an example is available from Volunteer Hub). Even if volunteers come forward following an MVI, there may be a need to recruit specific types of volunteers.
- ⇒ Thoroughly screen and vet volunteers:
 - Use pre-registered or affiliated volunteers who are trained in disaster or mass violence response when possible (for example, the Red Cross Disaster Action Team or National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters [VOAD]).
 - System- and community-based victim service organizations and agencies are often an excellent source for MVI response volunteers.
 - Establish a check-in process with identification verification, background checks, and likely role assignments (which may change as the FRC and FAC develop their response activities).



PREPARATION (continued...):

⇒ Clarify roles and responsibilities:

- Provide clear job descriptions (i.e., donation management, technology, victim/survivor support or navigation, logistics). An example of a volunteer job description and worksheet is available from the Nonprofit Risk Management Center.
- Establish clear boundaries for volunteer roles at different stages of the response.
- Identify supervisors for the volunteers based upon the activities to which they are assigned, and any need for oversight.
- Provide instructions to the volunteers about expectations, supervision and chain of command.

⇒ Develop an online database to track volunteers, hours, assignments/duties and location(s).

⇒ Prepare badges/identification for volunteers.

⇒ Prepare and utilize a “Go Kit” that include credentials, sign-in sheets, markers, safety vests and

quick training handouts (see the NMVC Tip Sheet, Responding to an MVI: Victim Assistance Agency/Organization “Go Kit”).

⇒ Consider how to handle volunteers who are not invited to help, but self-deploy, and what the vetting process will be for these individuals.

⇒ Provide advance training:

- Provide an orientation program that addresses trauma-informed care, confidentiality, and self-care.
- Offer safety and security briefings before deployment.
- Provide training programs in brief interventions such as Psychological First Aid (PFA) (see above), including best practices on which interventions should not be implemented (e.g., debriefings; trauma-focused therapies that are designed to be administered only by mental health professionals; or any interventions that have no base of evidence and that can be harmful to victims and survivors.)

RESPONSE:

Begin Volunteer Coordination:

⇒ Determine what qualifications are needed, where services are to be rendered, and the likely length of deployment.

⇒ Set a cap on the number of volunteers needed to avoid being overwhelmed.

⇒ Create a “standby list” if additional volunteers are needed over time.

⇒ Set up a volunteer registration area/check-in point.

⇒ Provide a brief orientation to the FRC or FAC, and tour of the facility.

⇒ Offer a brief emotional check-in before volunteers begin, and include information about the potential for secondary trauma or vicarious trauma, and mental health resources that are available to them.

⇒ Continually monitor volunteers for stress or secondary trauma, and provide support as needed or upon request.

⇒ Be clear about schedules and ensure breaks, meals, hydration and rest.

⇒ Have a quiet space or area for volunteers to rest and regroup.

⇒ Track volunteer hours, assignments/duties and location(s).

⇒ Ensure that the Volunteer Coordinator or other volunteer supervisor is available to answer any questions and address concerns.



RESPONSE (continued...):

End of Shift/Deployment:

- ⇒ Collect IDs and other items provided during deployment.
- ⇒ Offer a brief emotional check-in or “day-in-review.”
- ⇒ Provide mental/behavioral health support resources, if needed or upon request.
- ⇒ Thank volunteers and consider whether they will be needed in the future at the FRC, FAC or in another capacity.
- ⇒ Send an email to each volunteer that thanks them for their service, and confirms that they would like to remain on your MVI volunteer roster.
- ⇒ Maintain a database of trained volunteers for future responses, such as memorial support teams, long-term recovery efforts and, if applicable, at a Resiliency Center.

Volunteer Recruitment and Management Resources:

(Some require annual membership fees, but many resources are available online for free.)

1. [Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement \(ALIVE\)](#)
2. [National Council of Nonprofits](#)
3. [Nonprofit Library](#)
4. [Nonprofit Risk Management Center](#)
5. [Volunteer Hub](#)



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