



CONVENING
LEADERS FOR
EMERGENCY
AND RESPONSE

Strategies for Navigating Mass Violence Incidents

TIP SHEET

When an incident of mass violence occurs in a community, health care leaders must be prepared to determine the most effective course of action during and after the incident.

This tip sheet offers strategies and examples from the field for effectively navigating incidents of mass violence and the recovery following such events.

Key Strategies and Considerations



COORDINATE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS ACROSS COMMUNITY RESPONSE AGENCIES

STRATEGY Ensure the health care organization has existing communication systems in place to rapidly exchange information with other key community partners during a mass violence incident.

EXAMPLE Uvalde Memorial Hospital has partnered with a local community college to hold regular active shooter response drills. These drills enable the hospital and local agencies to practice rapid response coordination and information-sharing.



STREAMLINE OPERATIONAL PROTOCOLS

STRATEGY Implement regular cross-functional leadership exercises focused on working together to practice emergency response protocol and coordination.

EXAMPLE Uvalde Memorial Hospital has implemented regular cross-functional leadership exercises, where the hospital's executive, clinical and administrative teams collaborate to simulate and refine emergency response protocols. These exercises have been pivotal in enhancing a coordinated response to emergencies.

STRATEGY Review the organization's emergency response plans on an annual basis. This review should be done by a multidisciplinary committee such as an existing emergency management committee or safety committee.

EXAMPLE After assessing its emergency response plans, UofL Health was able to address identified gaps to streamline communication protocols and allocate resources for future emergencies.

“You have to think outside the box. You have to be prepared for something that you just didn't count on.”

Adam Apolinar, R.N.
CEO, Uvalde Memorial Hospital



BUILD ON LESSONS LEARNED TO IMPROVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

STRATEGY Following an emergency, conduct an after action-review to gather feedback from key leadership and response personnel and then identify gaps in existing response plans and protocols. Update response plans accordingly and train staff on relevant changes to protocols.

EXAMPLE Following the Robb Elementary School shooting, Uvalde Memorial Hospital critically reviewed and updated its crisis response plans. This update included enhanced triage protocols and streamlined communication strategies, better equipping the hospital to manage high-casualty situations and improve patient outcomes during crises.



EMPHASIZE LEADERSHIP SUPPORT AND VISIBILITY

STRATEGY Establish processes that enable the leadership team to be visible and accessible during and after an emergency like a mass violence incident.

EXAMPLE Following the Robb Elementary School shooting, leaders from Uvalde Memorial Hospital hosted recurring town halls where staff were able to ask questions and received key updates on the hospital's immediate and long-term response.



SUPPORT HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

STRATEGY Invest in resources and services that support health care workers' well-being. Consider services that can be scaled up following an incident.

EXAMPLE Following a local mass shooting, UofL ensured support services, including chaplains and mental health professionals, were available to employees. Additional resources were readily available through the health system's employee assistance program.

STRATEGY Establish a support program that extends to the community so people navigating challenges after a mass violence incident get the professional assistance they need.

EXAMPLE After the mass shooting at Robb Elementary School, Uvalde Memorial Hospital offered comprehensive recovery support to the larger community, including grief counseling, the presence of support dogs, therapeutic music sessions and catered meals.

Watch the moderated discussion on navigating mass violence incidents, part of the CLEAR Crisis Leadership Video Series:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YgTEGQVwd5Y

For additional resources, tools and guidance related to emergency preparedness and response, visit www.aha.org/aha-clear.

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