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# **Mass Shootings:**

## **Resources for Mayors & Local Leaders**

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# Mass Shooting Research

Northeastern University IRB approved research. We interviewed mayors, staff, law enforcement, victim assistance, and a city lawyer in connection with six mass shootings:

- Case Brief: [Dayton](#) Oregon District Shooting (Ohio)
- Case Brief: [El Paso](#) Walmart Shooting (Texas)
- Case Brief: [Orlando](#) Pulse Nightclub Shooting (Florida)
- Case Brief: [Parkland](#) School Shooting (Texas)
- Case Brief: [Pittsburgh](#) Tree of Life Shooting (Pennsylvania)
- Case Brief: [San Bernardino](#) Terrorist Attack (California)

# Our Findings

- Mayors and local officials have a significant role to play that is not well understood
- Crisis communications, victims services, manage legal risk, aid for business community, and plan long term recovery
- Preparedness is crucial

# Resources

- Mass Shooting Protocol: First 24 Hours
- Mass Shooting Playbook: comprehensive resource
- Case briefs
- Tabletop Exercise Template



# Mass Shooting Protocol FIRST 24 HOURS

A RESOURCE FOR U.S. MAYORS AND CITY MANAGERS



PUBLIC  
HEALTH  
ADVOCACY  
INSTITUTE

Sarah C. Peck  
Emily Nink  
and  
Mark Gottlieb

The Mass Shooting Protocol & Playbook is a two-part resource intended for mayors, city managers, and their staff. The Protocol covers the first 24 hours of the response. The supplemental Playbook provides best practices and resources city officials can use to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a public mass shooting.

## Mass Shooting Protocol: Checklist

(Selected actions from the comprehensive checklists found in the Playbook)

### Communications

- Establish a regular schedule for communicating with the press and follow it.
- Decide which officials will speak and in what order at press conferences.
- Keep messages simple, credible, and consistent. Correct misinformation.

### Emergency Operations

- Activate the Emergency Operations Center. Request regular briefings from a designated law enforcement official.
- Assemble your "C4" team to provide coordination and legal compliance.
- Consider whether to make a declaration of emergency.

### Establish Family Reunification and Assistance Centers

- Work with law enforcement, the American Red Cross, the FBI, and local partners to establish the Family Reunification Center (FRC) and the Family Assistance Center (FAC).
- Ensure both centers are located separately from the Joint Information Center (away from the press), have a secure perimeter, and are scalable.
- Communicate FRC and FAC locations and services in press briefings.
- Urge the coroner to release victim's names to families as soon as possible.

### Establish the Victims Fund

- Establish a victims' fund right away using city-operated 501(c)(3) charitable entity, the National Compassion Fund, or a local foundation.

### Begin Planning for Recovery

- Seek the guidance of mental health experts to develop trauma-informed messaging and to ensure appropriate mental health services are available.
- Plan vigils in consultation with families and the affected community.



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# Mass Shooting PLAYBOOK

A RESOURCE FOR U.S. MAYORS AND CITY MANAGERS



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INSTITUTE

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## Chapter 1: Communications

Strategies for engaging with the press, social media management, and developing trauma-informed messaging

## Chapter 2: Emergency Management

Operationalizing the emergency response to a mass shooting through municipal preparedness plans and systems

## Chapter 3: Victim and Family Assistance

Key considerations for providing services to victims and their families

## Chapter 4: Collaborating with Law Enforcement

Best practices for effective engagement with law enforcement agencies

## Chapter 5: Donations & Volunteer Management

Best practices for establishing the victims' fund and managing volunteers

## Chapter 6: School Shootings

Issues and resources specific to school shootings, including school security considerations and student mental health and wellness

## Chapter 7: Community Partnerships

Strategies for engaging local and national partners in the preparation, response, and recovery phases (especially important for victims' services)

## Chapter 8: Legal Considerations

Issues that should be reviewed by the city's attorneys to reduce potential liability

## Chapter 9: Commemorations

Guidance for commemorating the victims, planning permanent memorials, and preserving artifacts

## Chapter 10: Mental Health

Information and resources related to trauma recovery and community resilience

## Afterword: A Note About Community Gun Violence

## Appendix A: Training and Preparedness Recommendations

## Appendix B: Managing VIP Visits

## Appendix C: Funding Opportunities

## Appendix D: To Prevent Mass Killings, Prevent Suicides

## Appendix E: Additional Resources from the National Mass Violence Victimization Resource Center



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# Chapter 2: Emergency Operations and Public Health

**"This can happen anywhere. Think about your plan."**

– Mayor Buddy Dyer, Orlando FL

## Chapter Summary

Emergency preparedness is the creation of organizational structures within government agencies that enable them to provide support, resources, and services needed during and after emergencies. Although you may never be fully prepared for a public mass shooting, you can take steps to ensure your agencies are equipped to handle the specific challenges posed by a mass casualty incident.

In consultation with public safety and emergency management staff and your public health agency, you can review and update your emergency management plans and determine whether a supplemental plan for a mass casualty incident is needed. You can participate in tabletop exercises and training to practice emergency operations specific to a mass shooting. You should ensure your communications infrastructure is equipped to handle such an emergency.

Include public health officials in **preparedness** planning, as they play an essential role in coordinating mental health services and other crisis response in the aftermath of a mass shooting. During this phase, assess emergency alert systems and review or revise emergency operations plans to prepare for a potential mass shooting in your city.

During the **response** phase, law enforcement will establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that coordinates first responders and law enforcement operations. This might be a mobile command unit or a permanent EOC that may have been established in the city. Collecting information will be a top priority. You will monitor all aspects of the emergency response while you work with your staff to coordinate unmet needs.

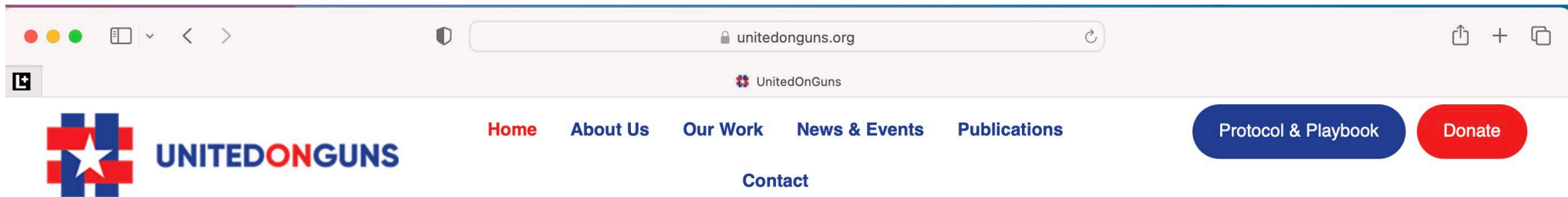
Emergency management continues after the situation is contained and the crime scene is processed. You can direct a formal evaluation of the emergency response to inform your own agencies and other localities of lessons learned. You can also work with the appropriate agencies to transition from emergency operations to long-term services to help the community "return to normal" during the **recovery**.

- Every chapter has a one page executive summary
- Covers preparedness, response, and recovery
- Highlights the best practices of mayors
- Provides links to key resources, including NIMS guidance, FEMA Training and other federal resources
- Links to each chapter on the website for convenience



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# Available to all on our website



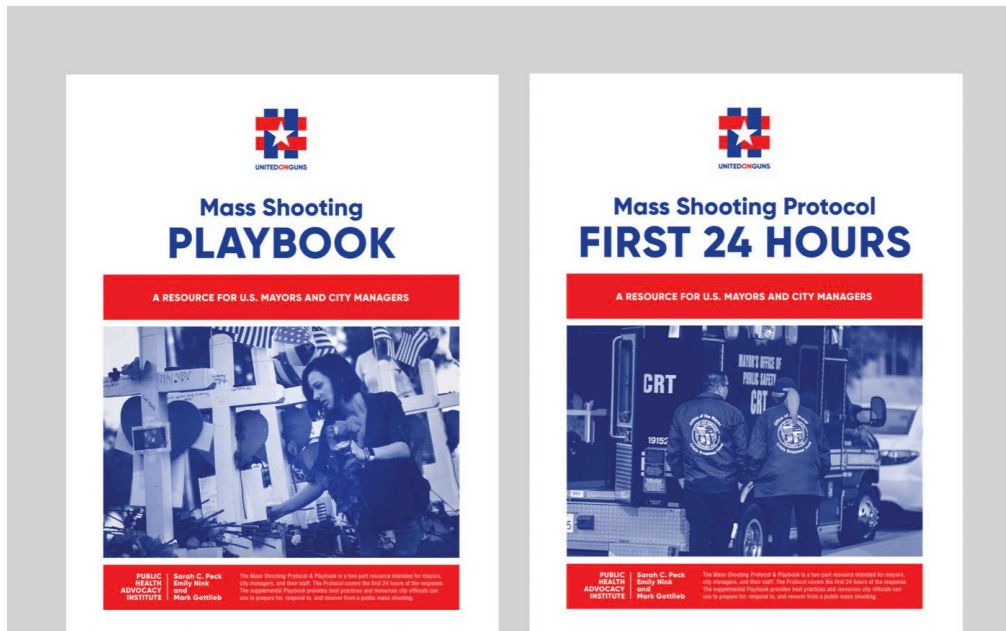
"It's not if, but when, a mass shooting happens in your community."

– Mayor Nan Whaley, Dayton OH

When a mass shooting takes place, it falls on our nation's city leaders to respond. UnitedOnGuns created the **Mass Shooting Protocol & Playbook: A Resource for U.S. Mayors and City Managers** to support local governments.

The **Mass Shooting Protocol** is a four-page overview of a mayor's role during the first 24 hours after a mass shooting. The **Mass Shooting Playbook** is a resource guide city leaders can use to prepare for, respond to, and help their community recover from a mass shooting.

The **Tabletop Exercise Template** is a tool city leaders can use to plan their response to a mass shooting.



# Example: El Paso Timeline



# Law Enforcement Response



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# Law Enforcement

- 8/3 El Paso Shooting takes place
  - Multiple agencies arrived within 6 minutes
  - Shooter arrested within 25 minutes
  - First press conference that day (Mayor/LE)
  - Family Reunification Center established
- 8/14 Investigation complete
- Trial has not been scheduled

# Timeline of Mayoral Response to a Public Mass Shooting

This timeline illustrates an aspirational mayoral response to a hypothetical public mass shooting. The time frames are based on interviews with mayors, first responders, and subject matter experts. In response to actual mass shootings, many mayors did not take these actions within the suggested time frames. However, with advance planning (as recommended in this playbook), the timeline shown is achievable and would improve public safety and public health outcomes.

## Day 1

- Shooting occurs
- Law enforcement response begins
- Family and Friends Reception Center (FRC) opens
- Death notifications made within hours (ideally)
- Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and Joint Information Center (JIC) established
- State of Emergency declared (optional)
- First press conference held
- First vigil takes place

## Day 2

- Victim's Fund is launched to accept donations
- Key partners are contacted, including American Red Cross and FBI Victim Services Division
- Meeting is held to determine Family Assistance Center needs
- Family Assistance Center (FAC) opens
- Presidential/VIP visits may take place
- Regular press conferences begin
- Regular updates from law enforcement continue
- Social media policy is implemented

## Week 1

- Funerals and vigils are scheduled
- Visit victims and families in FAC and hospital
- Meet with mental health experts
- Messaging transitions from factual updates to messages of healing
- Begin responding to public record requests
- C4 team meets daily
- Establish city website for regular updates

## Week 2

- FAC closes and Resiliency Center opens to provide services to families and community
- Community board is formed to oversee victims' fund management
- Meeting is held to determine Family Assistance Center needs

## Later

- Potential criminal trial
- Ongoing victim and family services
- Apply for funds to defray costs of response
- Plan first annual remembrance
- Begin planning permanent memorial
- Conduct after-action review of response
- Update training and protocols for future emergencies

# Mayor Dee Margo

- Shooting takes place
  - Mayor returns from Austin
  - First press conference with LE
- Daily press briefings continue
- Call for blood donations, mayor donates
- Host President Trump
- Establish Family Assistance Center
- Speak at first vigil
- Meet with families and attend funerals
- Grand Candela to honor victims is unveiled
- First remembrance ceremony one year later
- Establish Resilience Center (3+ years)



# You're the Experts

- Share these resources with elected and appointed officials *during* an emergency
- Better, share *before* they are needed
- Invite mayors/staff to observe your drills
- Tabletop with city officials to plan *their* role
- Incorporate these materials into your protocols
- We are available to brief cities, membership groups





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