

# #NAMIcon16

## The Mental Health Impact of Violent Tragedies

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# July 20, 2012 at 12:40am-Century 16 Theater

- Largest Mass Shooting in Colorado's History
- Emotional/Mental Impact:
  - Emergency responders: Carried victims from the theater and rushed them to local hospitals
  - Crime Lab Personnel: sifted through blood and debris while processing the scene
  - Homicide Detectives: 3 years of trial prep.



# Psychological Incident Commander

- Ensure responders are being provided mental health support as they process through the command center
- Provision of Psychological First Aid
  - Active listening; monitor for signs of acute distress
  - Focus on safety and immediate needs
  - Discussion of essential coping strategies
  - Provide a plan for ongoing psychological support for any high-risk individuals or groups
  - Proactive Outreach is essential



# Prior to an Event

- Stress Inoculation Training
  - What to Expect
  - How to Recover
- Peer Support Teams
  - Lethal Response Team
  - Trauma Response Team
- Employee Assistance Programs



# During and After an Event

- Senses are contaminated
- Feeling helpless
  - Distress of victims' physical and emotional trauma vs. responders own
  - Unable to utilize humor, often a “go to” coping strategy for emergency responders
- Post-incident interventions-focus on education of “normal responses” rather than tactical debriefings-give folks a chance to prepare themselves of discussing/learning from the event



# AJ DeAndrea

Sergeant, Arvada PD, Colorado



A photograph of Columbine High School. The building is a multi-story structure with a light-colored facade and several windows. A group of people is gathered on the lawn in front of the building. A yellow arrow points from the right side of the image towards the group of people.

April 20th, 1999

Columbine High School

# That Evening

EXIT





# California Group

The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features a dense network of thin, translucent fibers in shades of deep blue and burnt orange, set against a dark, almost black, background. These fibers are intertwined and layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. A prominent, dark, semi-transparent geometric shape, resembling a stylized letter 'A' or a similar angular form, is overlaid on the left side of the image. The overall effect is ethereal and textured, reminiscent of a microscopic view of biological tissue or a digital data visualization.

Anniversary



# Platte Canyon HS



# Counseling



Keyes Family



# Anniversary



YWAM



Anniversary





# Relationships



# The Impact of a Mass Casualty Incident on the Community: Planning

- Mental Health Recovery Plan
  - Schools
  - Community
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Responders
  - Business Community
  - Government
  
- Mental Health Incident Manager

# The Impact of a Mass Casualty Incident on the Community: Media



# Media, continued



# Media



# Bereavement Events



# Community Responses and Memorials



# Unanticipated Impact Events

- Victims' families
- Area schools
- Hospitals
- Churches
- Visiting dignitaries



- Hate groups
- Conspirators
- Internet
- Phone
- Mail
- Blood donorship



# Management & Coordination of Donations

- 63,000 stuffed animals
- 575 boxes of toys
- 2,075 boxes of school supplies
- 4 Pallets of tissue/paper towels
- 8+ Pallets of books
- 7+ Pallets of backpacks
- 54 Bicycles
- 19,000 sq. feet of warehouse
- 150,000 to 200,000 pieces
- of mail- Cash



# Managing Volunteers

- 600 + volunteers
- 3800+ Hours
- Answered phones
- Opened and responded to mail
- Systems logistics
- Long term v. short term



# Other Impact Matters

- Investigations
- Reports
- Anniversaries
- Permanent Memorials
- 6 Degrees of Separation
- Future use of mass casualty property
- Possible reduction of population
- Other mass casualty events