

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Integrated Training Summit

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A Chaplain's Role in a
Mass Fatality Event:
Comfort for the Living,
Peaceful Rest for the Dead

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www.coastalcrisischaplain.org



Objectives

- Explore the role of a Chaplain in a Mass Fatality Incident
- Provide better understanding of how a Mass Fatality Incident supports the role of the Chaplain
- Create an understanding that a Chaplain is not a “Religious Pusher”, but rather a Spiritual Guide through adversity in life

Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy

- Began in 1990
- Serves 36 agencies
- 4 full-time employees
- 19 volunteer Chaplains
- Board of Directors, serving a 3 year term
- Respond to some 1,400 emergency calls per year
- Annual budget of \$350,000

"The preservation of the soldier's health should be the commander's first and greatest care."

George Washington

Mass Fatality Incidents

- Be pro-active in recruiting a Chaplain, not re-active
- Applications to be a Chaplain
 - Never processed during an Incident

Mass Fatalities Deployments

- Hurricane Andrew – 1992
- Hurricane Marilyn – 1995
- EgyptAir Flight 990 – 1999
- New York City – 2001
- Hurricane Katrina – 2005
- Sofa Super Store fire in Charleston, where 9 firefighters died – June 18, 2007

Qualifications desired for a Chaplain

- Masters Degree from a Seminary
- Be ordained
- Pass a criminal background check
- Served at least three years as a Chaplain with First Responders
- Possess a valid Driver's License
- Have taken at least ICS 100 and 700
- Have taken one, if not both, of ICISF's Pastoral Crisis Intervention Courses

"All Chaplains are called to Minister,
but not all Ministers are called to be
Chaplains"

Chaplain must be a team player

- Ministry of filling in the gaps, is often the role of the Chaplain
- Support before, during and after the Incident; for the Incidents will come

Incident Command System (ICS)

- The best way for a Chaplain to be seen as a resource before, during and after an Incident is for “him” to be acknowledged by the IC, which is where the Chaplain often intersects.
- The Chaplain should be part of some, if not ALL, command staff meetings
 - “Linked at the Hip” with OPS Chief
 - Possibly LOGISTICS Chief
- The Chaplain should have the ability to “hang out” with a “ministry of presence”.

ESF 8

- The functional place for chaplains during an Incident
- Key to have this worked out before a Mass Incident
- Pre-determine a place for responding Chaplains to be screened and given ID, or not given ID

The 11th Commandment

“Thou Shalt be Flexible”

Duties during a Mass fatality Incident

- Provide Religious Services
- Attend all briefings (when invited)
- Connect and coordinate with responding clergy
- If needed, respond additional chaplains
- Offer pastoral intervention, not pastoral counseling

Duties during a Mass Fatality Incident (cont.)

- Be a cheerleader, e.g., calling the Red Cross
- Be prepared to assist with notification of next of kin
- Being a Servant: offering assistance where needed, at the FAC, morgue, etc.
- Liaison/Advocacy Intervention
- Psychological Intervention
- Spiritual and Religious Intervention

Early intervention Hedges PTSD

- Early Intervention and care – searching those struggling with Spiritual, Behavioral, Physical, Cognitive and Emotional Issues
- Signs of respect
- Lessening the impact for those “in our care”, e.g. “home-cooked” meals, and cards from home

“BOLO” for Compassion Fatigue

- Job performance goes down; mistakes go up; morale drops
- Personal relationships are affected and deteriorate

Be ye wary of the following characteristics

- "Police wannabes"
 - "Chaplain Jacket Syndrome"
- Seeking the spotlight, giving news interviews, writing books
- Conversion oriented
- Not having the ability to minister to persons outside their faith group, and to those who have no faith

'Traits' of un-healthy characteristics

- Those who self-deploy
- Conversion oriented
- Those who can only stay for several days

Self-care while Deployed

- Length of stay – so as not to become part of the Incident
- Work only your shift – no overtime
- Take a shower whenever possible 😊
- Take your work clothes off and go find some food not from a canteen
 - See a movie, go bowling, something not associated with incident.
- Get a massage!

Self-care when you have returned home

- Do not expect too much of yourself
- Share with those you wish to share and not with others
- If things like nightmares or irritability continue for more than a couple of weeks the Chaplain must refer for further counseling

Links to Resources

- Concern of Police Survivors
www.nationalcops.org
- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation
www.ICISF.org
- International Conference of Police Chaplains
www.ICPC.org



**May the Lord continue to bless
you in your Ministry**

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