



Resources for Victims, Witnesses, Family, and Community Members Affected by the Mass Shooting in Tucson, AZ on January 8, 2011

Pima County Attorney's Office Victim Services Division

Contact us Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(520) 740-5525

The Pima County Attorney's Office seeks to ensure that victims, witnesses, family, and community members who were impacted by the mass shooting on Saturday, January 8th have access to information and resources to help them deal with their stress and trauma.

Effects of Crisis

Crisis is a normal reaction to abnormal situations and stressors. Whether it is the result of a crime, major incident, or one of life's many challenges, everyone experiences crisis reactions at one time or another. People experience crisis in response to an unexpected traumatic life event that temporarily overwhelms their normal ways of coping. ***The horrific crime that occurred on January 8th is precisely the type of event that would be expected to produce a crisis response in many people,*** including the victims, witnesses, family members, and loved ones, and even general members of the community.

Everyone responds differently to crisis situations and trauma. Individual reactions vary depending on a number of factors including severity and proximity of the traumatic event, other life stressors, past experience with trauma, level of coping skills, values and beliefs, and access to interpersonal and community resources. ***It is common and normal for people in crisis to experience some of the following physical and emotional signs, symptoms, and reactions:***

- headaches and body aches
- dry lips and mouth
- trouble sleeping
- low energy
- gastrointestinal problems
- lack of concentration
- memory lapses
- difficulty in making decisions
- anxiety
- withdrawal
- anger
- intrusive thoughts or images

While most of these symptoms typically subside after a few weeks, if they continue for longer than a month, individuals should seek professional medical and mental health services because it could be an indicator of a more serious ongoing problem, such as post traumatic stress disorder. Only a licensed mental health professional can diagnose and treat these disorders.

If someone is suicidal, or wants to hurt him or herself or others, it is imperative to access professional assistance immediately. Call 911.

Ways to Help Ease Crisis Reactions

There are a number of ways to help reduce someone's reaction to crisis. Some of the physical symptoms such as headaches and dry lips may be caused by dehydration. The body quickly dehydrates during a crisis due to crying, perspiration, and chemical reactions inside the body. ***Thus, unless there is a physical injury, someone in crisis should be encouraged to drink room temperature water.*** Cool or room temperature water is most quickly and easily absorbed. Ice water will give a traumatized person stomach cramps. Stimulants like caffeine, or sugared, carbonated, or alcoholic beverages are not helpful.

Non-strenuous exercise can be very helpful to someone in crisis. ***People in crisis may benefit by being encouraged to walk, move around, and do simple physical tasks or other kinds of exercise.*** Exercise helps various body systems return to a more normal state and helps alleviate emotional stress reactions.

People in crisis should be allowed to cry and vent. Helpers should allow this to happen naturally and freely. It is best that you do not hand someone a tissue because this stops the flow of tears. Rather, have tissues nearby and let them reach for it when ready.

One of the most helpful things for people in crisis is simply allowing them the opportunity to talk and share their feelings. ***Helpers should be active, supportive listeners.*** Through talking, people in crisis begin to try to make sense of what has happened to them. Even if they are not making complete sense, it is important to allow them to talk freely and uninterrupted. ***Helpers should avoid making judgments or giving advice.*** Just listen and be present. Don't use clichés, or try to point out positive aspects of a tragedy. This diminishes the impacts of the reactions the person is experiencing and is not helpful.

Empowering Victims and Survivors

Trauma situations often leave victims feeling overwhelmed and powerless. Thus, helpers should:

- Let them make small choices. This is not the time to make major life decisions, but making small choices can help a person start to regain a sense of control.
- Ask how you can be helpful. Don't assume that what works for you, works for them.
- Rather than "take care of" the person, encourage the person to do things for him or herself if capable.
- Provide accurate information. If you are uncertain, do not pass along guesses or misinformation. This can make a situation much worse.
- Predict and prepare. Help the person identify what may happen next and ways to cope. This is especially important if a person witnessed a traumatic incident or was a direct victim. Processes out of the person's control will be much easier to cope with if the person is well informed and prepared.

Finding Help for Someone in Crisis

Get assistance and counsel from professionals. Several community resources are listed below and trained professionals are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

| | |
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| Emergency | 911 |
| Information and Referral | (800) 352-3792 |
| SAMHC (24-hr. Crisis, Mental Health) | (520) 622-6000 |
| www.samhc.com/ | |
| Red Cross | (520) 318-6740 |
| www.redcrossarizona.org | |

Pima County Attorney Services for Victims, Witnesses, and their Families

The Pima County Attorney's Office works closely with crime victims and witnesses and their immediate family members. We provide a variety of services to victims and witnesses, including crisis intervention, emotional support, information about victims' rights, information about victim compensation funds, information about the criminal justice system, referrals to other community resources, case specific information, and court accompaniment. The Pima County Attorney's Office has already been in touch with many of the victims and witnesses who were at the crime scene or hospitals on the day of the shooting and is continuing with follow-up visits and phone calls. ***Victims, witnesses, and their families should feel free to contact us, Monday-Friday from 8 am to 5 pm, at 520-740-5525.***

Pima County Attorney Services for Community Groups

Many community members are close to or knew the victims and survivors either personally or professionally. Many of the victims and survivors have touched the lives of countless members of our community. We recognize that the groups and organizations with which these victims and survivors are affiliated (e.g., faith communities, places of employment, social groups, neighborhoods, etc.) may be experiencing their own crisis reactions and trauma. The Pima County Attorney's Office offers and can conduct *Group Crisis Intervention* sessions for these organizations. ***If your group or organization could benefit from a group crisis debriefing, please call us, Monday-Friday from 8 am to 5 pm, at 520-740-5525.***

Victim Compensation Fund

The Pima County Attorney's Office administers the Pima County *Crime Victim Compensation Fund*. The fund can sometimes provide financial compensation for victims and witnesses of crime for certain types of expenses including:

- Medical expenses
- Mental health counseling expenses
- Loss of wages
- Funeral expenses

The *Crime Victim Compensation Fund* is a fund of last resort after other sources of payment, such as insurance, have been exhausted. Any victim or witness may be eligible for crime victim compensation. ***For an application or for information, please call 520-740-5525.***

Donations for Crime Victims, Witnesses, and their Families

Some community members have expressed a desire to make a contribution to the victims and their families. Although we cannot direct donations to individual victims, there is a general fund that can receive tax deductible donations that will be used to assist these victims, witnesses, and their families. *Homicide Survivors, Inc.*, a local nonprofit victim service organization, has created the *Tucson Tragedy Victim Fund*, which will earmark donations specifically for the victims, witnesses, and their families of the January 8th shooting. The funds will be available to help cover expenses not covered by the *Victim Compensation Fund*. In addition, the funds will be available to help cover other expenses, such as property loss and damage. For relatives of victims who live outside of Tucson, the *Fund* can assist with travel, food and lodging expenses so that they are able to attend hearings and trials. If you are interested in making a donation, please send a check or money order to:

Tucson Tragedy Victim Fund
c/o Homicide Survivors, Inc.
32 N. Stone Ave., Ste. 1408
Tucson, AZ 85701
(520) 740-5729