
UNIT 6. FAMILY ASSISTANCE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

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Unit 6. Family Assistance Support Operations

Unit Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the importance of providing effective and compassionate services to family members.
 - Explain how the Family Assistance Center is created as the focus of these services.
 - Describe how the type of event impacts the operation of the FAC.
 - Describe the functional areas of the FAC.
 - Identify who could be involved in setting up and running the FAC.
 - Describe how to conduct a family briefing.
 - Resolve special issues surrounding family assistance.
 - Determine when to close the FAC.
-

Scope

The scope of this unit will include:

- Introduction and Unit Overview.
 - Setting Up the Family Assistance Center.
 - Staffing the Family Assistance Center.
 - Closing the Family Assistance Center.
 - Unit Summary.
-

Time Plan

The suggested time plan for this unit is shown below.

Topic	Time
Introduction and Unit Overview	15 minutes
Setting Up the Family Assistance Center	65 minutes
Staffing the Family Assistance Center	45 minutes
Closing the Family Assistance Center	5 minutes
Unit Summary	5 minutes
Total Time	2 hours 15 minutes

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INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Visual 6.1



Notes:

Note how important the Family Assistance Center (FAC) is to family members and those who are performing the identification process. The unit will cover the FAC and will include:

- Setting Up the Family Assistance Center.
 - Jurisdictional laws governing next of kin.
 - Managing 1-800 calls.
 - Using hotels and motels as Family Assistance Centers.
 - Communicating with family members.
 - Managing family expectations around timeframes for processing and releasing remains.
 - Handling issues of unclaimed remains.
 - Providing death notifications to the next of kin.

- Staffing the Family Assistance Center.

- Closing the Family Assistance Center.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers

Visual 6.2

Family Needs After an Incident

Three types of needs:

- Information needs
- Physical needs
- Grief counseling needs

The FAC helps to meet these needs.



 **FEMA**

Visual 6.2
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

Families and friends have three categories of needs to be managed. These are:

- The need for information.
- Physical needs.
- Grief counseling needs.

The FAC is key to meeting these needs.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers

Visual 6.3

Purpose of the FAC

- To provide family members with information about the event
- To provide family members access to services
- To provide a controlled facility where family members can receive and provide information while their privacy is protected
- To allow investigators and the ME/Coroner access to family members to collect antemortem information

Visual 6.3
Mass Fatality Incident Response

FEMA

Notes:

Families may travel to the disaster site and remain away from their homes for an extended period of time. The FAC addresses their basic physical needs, including:

- Food.
- Shelter.
- Transportation.
- Communications, such as telephones, e-mail, and Internet access.
- Child care.

The purpose of the Family Assistance Support Operations is threefold:

- Share information with family members about victim identification efforts, search for and recovery of victims, handling and management of personal effects, and progress of the disaster investigation.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers

- Provide family members access to support services for family members, such as disaster grief counseling, health support, child care, funds, and other local, State, and Federal agencies offering such support.
- Obtain before-death (antemortem) information about the deceased from family members to allow for identification. Families will also provide information to the medical examiner/coroner to assist in identification of victims. Interviews will be conducted by ME/C representatives with each victim's family in a private setting.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers

Provide, as an example, The Station nightclub fire, which occurred in West Warwick, Rhode Island. Stress the role played—and the issues faced—by FACs.

On Thursday, shortly after 11:00 p.m. on February 20, 2003, a fire ignited at The Station, a single-story wood-frame nightclub located in West Warwick, Rhode Island. The Station club fire would prove to be the second deadliest nightclub fire in the United States in the past 50 years. The fire resulted in 100 fatalities and an estimated 230 injuries.

The nearby Cowesett Inn, a restaurant located directly across the street from the nightclub, served as a triage and treatment site for burn victims and other injured persons, as well as a rehabilitation site for firefighters and a gathering point for local leaders. This location also served as an informal command post, which quickly became crowded by the surge of responders, including representatives of the Governor's Office, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), the American Red Cross of Rhode Island, other volunteer agencies, and leaders from neighboring communities.

The Inn was also the initial location where friends and relatives of potential victims gathered to seek information about the whereabouts of missing persons. Intermingling with members of response agencies, those individuals often could overhear details of the incident at The Station.

When officials realized that the situation at the Cowesett Inn was becoming untenable for the responders, the victims, and family members, at 2:45 a.m., the Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff recommended that family services and support functions be moved to the Crowne Plaza Hotel, a process that began by 4:00 a.m. By approximately 7:00 a.m., more than 200 family members and friends gathered in the hotel's ballroom, which served as the primary FAC gathering room. At 7:30 a.m., the first family briefing was conducted. Family briefings were conducted throughout the day by the most senior and/or most appropriate person, with most of the briefings being conducted by the Governor himself. This FAC would be in operation for 5 days.

To restrict access to family members by media representatives, the main entrance to the ballroom was closed, and the FAC could be accessed only through a side door secured by the local and State police. When several out-of-State journalists were able to obtain guest rooms and attempted to enter the FAC, they were detained and evicted.

A sign-in station was implemented for family members to register, sign in, and sign out.

The local police department established a work area in the ballroom to interview family members, collecting information that could help in the victim identification process, such as types of clothing and jewelry and distinguishing marks or conditions. The police requested access to dental records and completed missing-person reports.

(Over)

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers (Continued)

Representatives of the Rhode Island health department gathered at the hotel to gather their own patient disposition and treatment data—absent a declaration of disaster, some hospitals were unwilling to release information directly to RIEMA. The American Red Cross of Rhode Island established a cellular telephone-based disaster welfare inquiries system to gather information on possible victims and take calls from concerned family members. Through this system, 4,500 calls were received and processed. (RIEMA also established a hotline, which responded to 18,000 calls.)

Whenever identification of a victim was made, the Rhode Island Office of the Medical Examiner contacted a State health department representative at the FAC. The notification team at the FAC consisted of a staff member from RI Health, a counselor from the American Red Cross of Rhode Island or the State mental health department, a clergy member from the Rhode Island State Council of Churches, and a West Warwick police officer. These notifications took place in a private counseling area, where grief counseling and spiritual care were immediately available.

Names of victims were released to the public only after the notification process was completed. Notification to the public took place at regularly scheduled Joint Information Center (JIC) press conferences.

On the following Sunday, February 23, more than 400 family members and close friends of the victims were taken by bus from the FAC for a careful tour of the incident site, where they walked a planned route, protected from public view. The tour was planned by RIEMA, the American Red Cross of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island State Police, the Governor's office, and town leaders.

During its 5-day operation, the FAC served more than 300 family members with a staff of 460 professionals and volunteers. The hotel, in coordination with the American Red Cross of Rhode Island, served more than 7,500 meals, using its own resources and those donated by area caterers and restaurants. The hotel itself absorbed costs estimated at \$168,000.

At 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 24, the FAC transitioned to the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (RI DHS), with only 1 victim not yet having been identified. Provisions were made to accommodate the family awaiting confirmation.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Purpose of Family Assistance Centers

In an extensive After-Action Report, the following are among the findings and recommendations about family services and support during this incident:

- The Crowne Plaza Hotel was an ideal choice for the FAC, considering its proximity to the fire scene, the size and composition of its facilities, and availability of trained staff.
- One instance of erroneous notification occurred, caused in part by duplication of effort among several agencies collecting, processing, coordinating, and disseminating information. One agency should have had this responsibility, rather than it having been a fragmented effort.
- Because no formal emergency declaration was declared, the Governor was not empowered to suspend some privacy restrictions, allowing a smoother flow of information from hospitals. A decision point for declarations is recommended.
- Sensitive victim information was faxed from RIEMA headquarters to the front desk of the hotel, where it was retrieved by hotel staff and given to FAC personnel. Victim information should be handled with caution in a secure situation. Plan ahead with the local telephone service to request quick installation of telephone and fax lines.
- Many family members did not use the sign-in and sign-out procedure and thus sometimes could not be located. The procedure should be firmly implemented.
- The RI Medical Examiner did not have the time or resources to explain the procedures involved in victim identification. Plans should include augmentation of the ME staff for this purpose.
- Victims and their families appreciated the mental health support provided by counselors who established a “compassionate presence” at the FAC.
- The Unified Command (ARC RI and RIEMA) was generally effective, but a comprehensive review of FAC operations was not conducted immediately after the event.

Further information about the FAC and other aspects of this incident are included in the source for the above overview: *Rhode Island—The Station Club Fire After-Action Report: State, Local, and Federal Government and the Private Sector*, prepared by The Titan Corporation under contract to the Office for Domestic Preparedness, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit Objectives

Visual 6.4

Unit Objectives

- Describe the importance of providing effective and compassionate services to family members.
- Explain how the Family Assistance Center (FAC) is created as the focus of these services.
- Describe how the type of event impacts the operation of the FAC.
- Describe the functional areas of the FAC.



FEMA

Visual 6.4
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

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- Explain how the Family Assistance Center (FAC) is created as the focus of these services.
- Describe how the type of event impacts the operation of the FAC.
- Describe the functional areas of the FAC.

INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW

Unit Objectives

Visual 6.5

Unit Objectives

- Identify who could be involved in setting up and running the FAC.
- Describe how to conduct a family briefing.
- Resolve special issues surrounding family assistance.
- Determine when to close the FAC.

FEMA
Visual 6.5
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

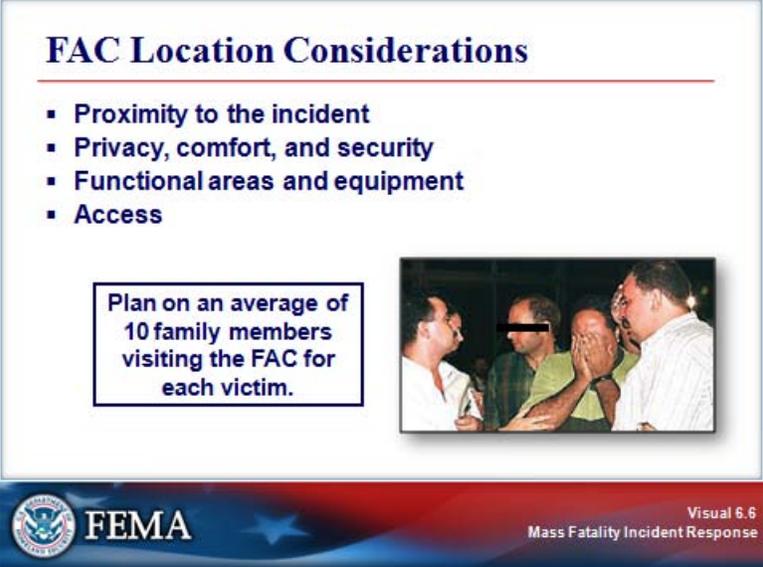
- Identify who could be involved in setting up and running the FAC.
- Describe how to conduct a family briefing.
- Resolve special issues surrounding family assistance.
- Determine when to close the FAC.

The effective operation of an FAC depends on the:

- Teamwork among many organizations and individuals.
- Establishment of a chain of command.
- Selection of a site that is appropriate for the agencies working there.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Visual 6.6



FAC Location Considerations

- Proximity to the incident
- Privacy, comfort, and security
- Functional areas and equipment
- Access

Plan on an average of 10 family members visiting the FAC for each victim.



FEMA

Visual 6.6
Mass Fatality Incident Response

The slide features a title 'FAC Location Considerations' in blue text. Below the title is a bulleted list of four considerations: Proximity to the incident, Privacy, comfort, and security, Functional areas and equipment, and Access. To the right of the list is a photograph showing several people in a dimly lit setting, with one person's face obscured by a black bar. Below the list is a text box with a blue border containing the text 'Plan on an average of 10 family members visiting the FAC for each victim.' At the bottom of the slide is a red and blue banner with the FEMA logo on the left and the text 'Visual 6.6 Mass Fatality Incident Response' on the right.

Notes:

Important considerations for the establishment of an FAC include:

- Proximity to the incident. The FAC should be far enough away from the incident site so that family members cannot watch the recovery process. It should be close enough to allow the ME and others to travel easily between the site, the morgue, and the FAC.
- Privacy, comfort, and security. The FAC should offer privacy for family members—especially from the media. It should be comfortable, offering food, drink, and other amenities that families will need for a potentially extended stay. The FAC should offer security from sightseers and other outsiders who may want to take advantage of families. Grief counselors and clergy of various faiths should be available at the site.

If hotels or motels are used as a FAC and sleeping rooms will be used, the bed(s) should be removed and sofas and chairs should be put in the rooms to create a living room atmosphere.

- Functional areas and equipment. The FAC should offer private areas for family notification and counseling and a large meeting space for family briefings. Equipment, such as phone, fax, and internet access for families and support staff will be necessary.
- Access. The FAC should be accessible by public transportation. Access to the facility itself must be controlled.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Facility Requirements

Notes:

The facility at the site under consideration must meet several requirements.

- It must be adequate to handle the number of people who may need it.
- The structure must offer adequate services and utilities, including:
 - Electrical power.
 - Telephone service.
 - Toilet facilities.
 - Controlled heat and air conditioning.
 - Water and sewage.
- It must be able to accommodate the following functional areas:
 - Joint Family Support Operations Center (JFSOC)
 - Family briefing area
 - Communications area (phones, email, etc., for family use)
 - Antemortem interview area
 - Food service
 - Disaster grief counseling support
 - Child care area
 - Local support agency areas (e.g. housing, clergy)
 - Spiritual/religious support and meditation area
- A determination must be made about whether the site can accommodate people with disabilities.

When operational, the FAC should provide:

- A routine for those whose lives have been turned upside down.
- Calmness for those who are distraught.
- Professionalism on the part of all FAC staff so that family members can feel comfortable that everything possible is being done to identify and return their loved ones' remains.
- Concern, care, and counseling to facilitate expressions of grief and emotional turmoil.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Family Care and Support

Visual 6.7



Notes:

What are some things that the FAC can provide to care for and support the families?

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Family Care and Support

Visual 6.8

Comfort for Families at the FAC

- Provide 24/7 assistance.
- Be open and honest about:
 - The procedures being taken to ensure that remains are identified properly.
 - How long it may take to identify remains.
- Provide professional child care services.
- Be sensitive to cultural differences.



 **FEMA** Visual 6.8
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

Some measures that can be taken for the comfort of families at the FAC include:

- Providing 24/7 assistance. Grief and worry don't stop at the end of the day.
- Being open and honest with the families by explaining ME/C policies and procedures—including the time it may take to identify remains. This is especially important when the remains are fragmented, and identification will take an unusually long time. Be sensitive in how information on condition of remains is presented.
- Providing professional child care services for family members' children.
- Being sensitive to cultural differences, such as the use of languages other than English. Make arrangements in advance to contact people who can be used as translators. Be aware of religious customs regarding death and handling remains.

Remember that families are under great stress and perceptions in the FAC can become reality for them.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Family Care and Support

Visual 6.9

Comfort for Families at the FAC

- Ensure that FAC workers are easily identifiable.
- Make medical treatment available.

Think before speaking with families!



 **FEMA** Visual 6.9
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

- Ensure that FAC workers are easily identifiable, by using a badging system. Distinctive clothing, such as suits or uniforms may augment the badging system.
- Make medical treatment available at every area where the families are gathered, allowing for timely medical help, if needed.
- Think before speaking with families to avoid “secondary assault” (inadvertent hurtful, but well-meaning, statements to family members).

Other family comfort needs will include:

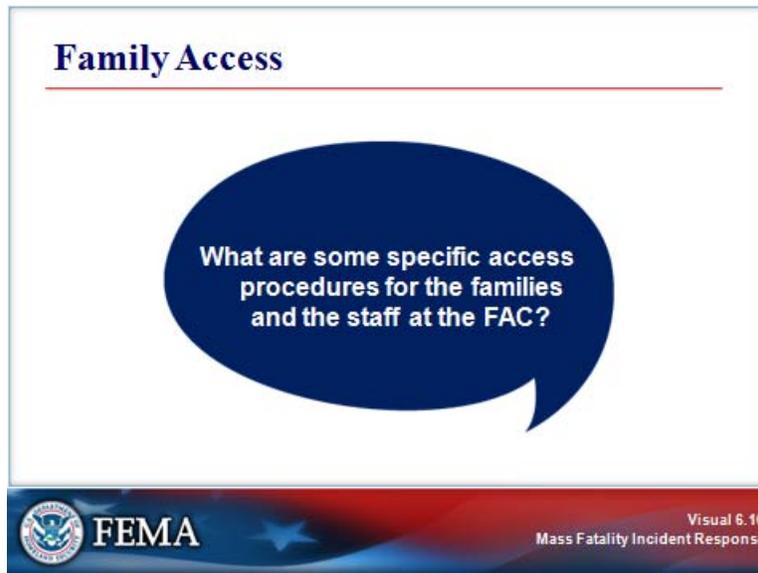
- Private areas for notification, grief counseling, prayer, etc.
- Access to clergy of various faiths.
- Access to food, water, and other basic needs.

Families should be assigned a single point of contact (POC) (or team of people to contact) to assist them with FAC services and information.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Security

Visual 6.10



Notes:

The site must allow for the implementation of security measures. Access to the FAC must be controlled so that families and friends of the victims have privacy and are not overwhelmed by the public and the media. Checkpoints will be needed at entrances to the facility and its parking lot.

For example, in Oklahoma City, uniformed sheriff's deputies and members of the National Guard were stationed at the outside entrances to the Compassion Center to check identification.

Additionally, police in plain clothing patrolled inside the center to ensure that no unauthorized persons gained entry.

What are some specific access procedures for the families and the staff at the FAC?

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Security

Visual 6.11

Family Security

- Designate specific secured entrances for families.
- Use check-in and checkout procedures.
- Assign each family a personal representative.
- Ensure that families are badged in an unobtrusive way so that they do not stand out.



 **FEMA**  Visual 6.11
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

Note the specific FAC access procedures for families.

- Designate specific secured entrances for families to allow for their privacy and security.
- Use check-in and checkout procedures to ensure access to them when their presence is needed.
- Assign each family a personal representative who can:
 - Communicate with officials.
 - Help with housing, transportation, and other logistical needs.
 - Assist with funeral arrangements.
- Ensure that families are badged in an unobtrusive way so that they do not stand out (i.e. do not use a large orange tag marked "Family Member")

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Security

Visual 6.12

FAC Staff Security

- Designate specific entrances for FAC staff.
- Use check-in and checkout procedures.
- Require identification (preferably badges).
- Verify the credentials of all volunteers.



Visual 6.12
Mass Fatality Incident Response



Notes:

Planning protocols should include specific access procedures for FAC staff. These may include:

- Designating specific secured entrances for FAC staff.
- Using check-in and checkout procedures.
- Requiring identification (badges or other identification that is specific to the incident).
- Verifying the credentials of volunteers.

Following many large incidents, thousands of volunteers arrive to help in the recovery effort. While preventing the entry of unauthorized persons, FAC staff must process and admit thousands of volunteers, by:

- Screening credentials.
- Examining documents (license, diploma, references).
- Completing forms.
- Assessing experience.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Functional Areas and Procedures

Notes:

The FAC needs to have a floor plan that will accommodate the simultaneous and effective performance of many functions for—and the delivery of services to—the families and friends of the victims.

What functional areas are always required at the FAC?

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Functional Areas and Procedures

Visual 6.13



Notes:

FAC functional areas include the:

- Joint Family Support Operations Center and administrative offices. A JFSOC is a multiagency area where the different service groups and organizations meet. Administrative offices should be available for all of the different service groups, including local police, Medical Examiner/Coroner, grief counseling professionals, and organizations, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Because these administrative offices will hold files and confidential information generated by the FAC, they must be kept secure.
- Family briefing area (general assembly room). A large room with a public address system should be available so that updates on the search and recovery process, victim identification, and other family issues can be given on a regular schedule to large gatherings of family members and friends.

Activities in this room may require translator services, including sign language interpretation. In large cities, possible sources for translators include a local consulate, embassy, or the U.S. Department of State. More information about these services may be obtained from a local Federal agency, university, hospital, or judicial system or court.

The facility must be able to accommodate a phone conference bridge so that family members who do not travel to the FAC can call in and hear and ask questions at the family briefings.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Functional Areas and Procedures

Visual 6.14

FAC Functional Areas

- Family communications center (phone, email, internet access for family members)
- Family reception and registration room
- Individual rooms for reflection and counseling
- Child-care area



 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.14
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

- Family communications area. Private area with telephones, email, internet access, and telephones so that families can contact friends and relatives and obtain information.
- Family reception and registration room. When family members and friends arrive at the FAC, the staff should greet them and gather information about who will be visiting the FAC. Staff should assign each family group a personal family representative who will assist them throughout their time at the FAC.
- Reflection room. The FAC should provide a space where the victims' families and friends can quietly reflect, meditate, pray, seek spiritual guidance, or observe religious practices.
- Child care area. A secure area where the children of family members can be cared for by credentialed child care personnel.

The number of rooms necessary will vary depending on the number of fatalities

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Functional Areas and Procedures

Visual 6.15



FAC Functional Areas

- Interview area for Medical Examiner/Coroner
- Areas for local casework services, including housing, funds, etc.
- Individual rooms for next-of-kin notification



 **FEMA**

Visual 6.15
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

- Interview area for medical examiner/coroner
- Local casework support services area, if required: Local agencies such as those providing housing, funds, etc., may be required.
- Individual rooms for next-of-kin notification. To provide privacy and expedite the notification process, several rooms should be set aside for families to receive the information that their loved ones have been identified. Oklahoma City officials used the 4th floor of the FAC building and notification was the only function performed on that floor.

Circumstances may dictate how notification takes place. In Oklahoma City, families were asked to return to the FAC to receive the notification. Some families felt retraumatized when asked to return because they knew that this request was made so that they could be given the official death notification.

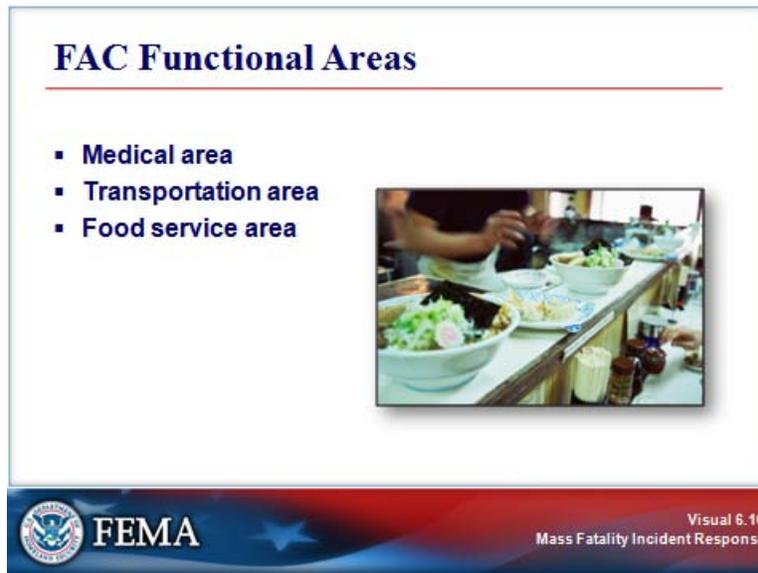
When possible, it is preferable for notification teams to be sent to the families' homes rather than requiring families to return to the FAC. Notification should be made in person by a two-person team. The Oklahoma City Medical Examiner's Office coordinated with organizations, such as the military and police departments that sent their own personnel to the families' homes to carry out notifications.

Be sure to follow jurisdictional law regarding who actually is next of kin. Do not provide anyone else information.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Functional Areas and Procedures

Visual 6.16



Notes:

- Medical area. Family members and friends of the victims may require medical assistance. EMS services should be on standby at all times to transport patients to area hospitals, if necessary.
- Transportation area. An area should be identified for families who require local transportation (e.g., to the airport, a hotel, a restaurant, etc.).
- Food service area. If the facility does not have existing food service facilities, provision must be made for an area where this function can be carried out to serve families and FAC staff.

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

FAC Equipment Needs

Visual 6.17



Notes:

What equipment and supplies will be needed at the FAC?

SETTING UP THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

FAC Equipment Needs

Visual 6.18



FAC Equipment Needs

Minimum equipment needs:

- Phone lines
- Office supplies
- Computers
- Fax machines
- Two-way communications with the morgue site
- ID making equipment
- Televisions/radios for news feed



security access

 **FEMA**

Visual 6.18
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

The equipment listed on the visual is the minimum equipment required.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Notes:

FAC staffing will vary, depending on the size of the incident and the infrastructure available from which to draw. In many incidents, whether or not involving mass fatalities, FAC staffing was coordinated by the American Red Cross. The Red Cross can coordinate a variety of volunteer efforts including:

- The provision of meals—initially through the Oklahoma Restaurant Association, which provided more than 10,000 meals each day—then, later through the Red Cross itself. Many restaurant cooks stayed to help the Red Cross, and restaurants volunteered to prepare special meals for the rescue workers and for different sites.
- Grief counseling and counseling services.
- Personnel who received and followed up on calls to locate or provide information to people calling about friends and family members.
- Support functions, such as greeters, data entry personnel, and janitorial services.

Additionally, the Salvation Army can augment its staff to provide support to the victims and rescuers, while maintaining its ongoing ministry to the needy within the community. The Salvation Army can provide transportation costs, as well as caskets for families needing assistance with out-of-town funerals.

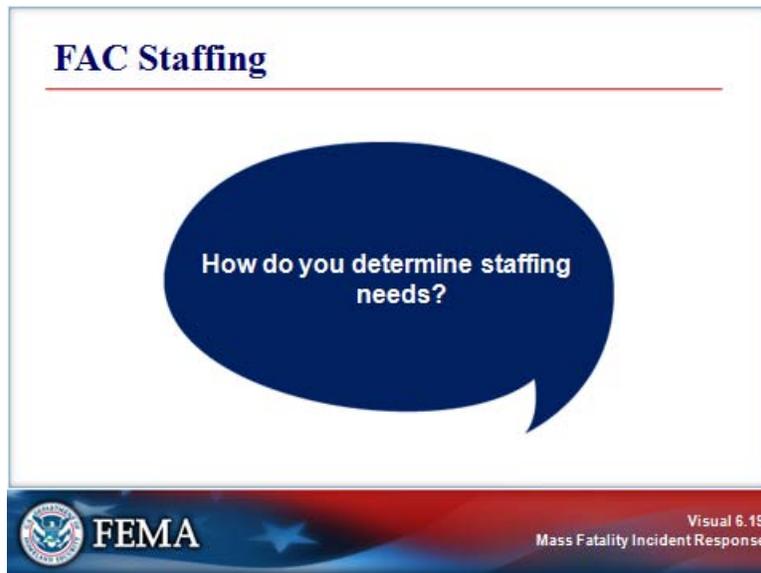
In past incidents, local clergy and grief counseling workers have established peer-review groups to check credentials and confirm that all volunteers are qualified to serve at the FAC. The chaplains and clergy also provide spiritual counseling and conducted worship services.

Note that FAC workers will require many of the same services as the victims.

- Insist that workers in the FAC take breaks.
- Provide meals and rest areas for workers, as well as for the families. Eating and rest areas should be separate from the areas provided for family members.
- Making counseling services available to FAC workers.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Visual 6.19



Notes:

Given all of the needs of the FAC, how do you determine staffing needs?

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Visual 6.20

FAC Staffing

- How many are estimated to be using the FAC?
- Are any family members likely to have special needs?
- What religions are likely to be represented among the families?
- Will meals be prepared and provided on site?
- Are sleeping arrangements on site or at a hotel close to the FAC?
- Will transportation be needed between the FAC and hotels, restaurants, etc.?
- What support services will be required?



The bottom of the slide features the FEMA logo on the left, which includes the text 'FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY' around a central emblem. To the right of the logo is the text 'FEMA' in large letters. Further right is a blue star on a red and blue background. In the bottom right corner, the text reads 'Visual 6.20' and 'Mass Fatality Incident Response'.

Notes:

The visual lists only some of the considerations that affect FAC staffing.

Refer to the job aid on the following page. This job aid will help you determine the types of workers that may be needed at the FAC.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

FAC Staffing Needs
<p>The following personnel will be needed at all Family Assistance Centers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An FAC manager• Shift supervisors (day, evening, and night)• Custodial/waste management personnel• Security personnel (for three shifts)• Registration personnel• Recordkeeping personnel• Health and medical personnel (for three shifts)• Grief counseling personnel (for three shifts)• Personal representative for family members
<p>The following personnel may be needed, depending on the incident type, family demographics, or other family assistance requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food service personnel (preparation and cleanup)• Logistics personnel• Translators• Transportation personnel (drivers, etc.)• A donations manager• A Public Information Officer• Communications personnel• Information Technology (IT) personnel
<p>Note: Other/additional personnel may be needed based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special dietary requirements.• Strict requirements for religious observances.• Strict rules about male-female relationships and privacy.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Activity: Determining FAC Staffing Needs

Visual 6.21

Activity: Determine FAC Staffing

1. Work in your table group to complete this activity.
2. Read the scenario, and develop preliminary staffing for the Family Assistance Center.
3. Select a spokesperson to present your group's answers to the class.



You have 15 minutes to complete this activity.



FEMA

Visual 6.21
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to provide you an opportunity to determine FAC staffing needs in response to a mass fatalities scenario.

Instructions: Follow the steps below to complete this activity:

1. Work in your table group to complete this activity.
2. Read the scenario, and develop preliminary staffing for the Family Assistance Center.
3. Select a spokesperson to present your group's answers to the class.
4. You will have 15 minutes to complete this activity.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Activity: Determining FAC Staffing Needs

Scenario:

An excursion train carrying a group of 112 elderly French-Canadians on a sightseeing trip to New England has derailed in your town. The derailment was caused when the train hit a log truck that was stopped on the tracks. All coaches derailed and caught fire. At least 85 passengers are unaccounted for. Many of the remains have been burned beyond recognition.

The FAC has been established in a local hotel. The hotel is located several blocks from a vacant warehouse that is being used as a temporary morgue. The hotel does not have a restaurant but there are several restaurants within ½ mile of the site.

Develop your FAC staffing requirements in the space provided below.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.22

Conducting Family Briefings

- Brief families before the media.
- Choose terms carefully.
- Be sensitive to ethnic diversity.
- Ensure appropriate voice and tone.

Visual 6.22
Mass Fatality Incident Response

FEMA

The slide features a title 'Conducting Family Briefings' in a blue serif font. Below the title is a red horizontal line. Underneath the line are four bullet points in a blue sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a small photograph showing a group of people, including an older man and a younger man, sitting at a table and looking towards the left. At the bottom of the slide is a red and blue banner with the FEMA logo on the left and the text 'Visual 6.22 Mass Fatality Incident Response' on the right.

Notes:

Family briefings are a critical part of FAC operations.

- Brief families before briefing the media. Families should never receive their information from the media.
- Choose terms carefully. Expect family members to be very sensitive in their time of grief. When briefing family members, be careful to choose words that cannot be misinterpreted or seen as offensive or insensitive.
- Be sensitive to ethnic diversity. Words, gestures, and body position mean very different things in different cultures. Take time to learn about the families' cultures and customs before conducting a briefing.
- Ensure appropriate voice and tone throughout the briefing.

Believability is important throughout family briefings.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.23

Conducting Family Briefings

People believe:

- 55 percent nonverbal (eye contact, body language)
- 38 percent vocal (volume, pitch, tone)
- 7 percent verbal (content)



 **FEMA** Visual 6.23
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

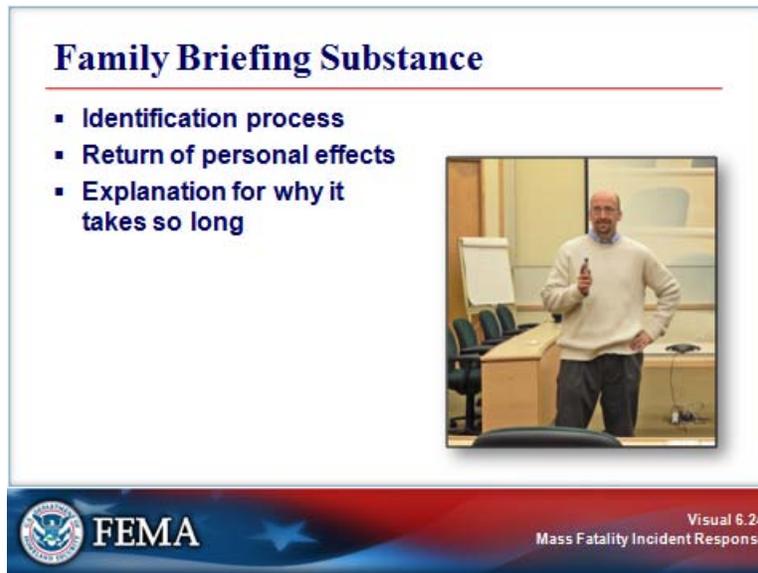
The guidelines are important because of the way they receive information. People believe:

- Fifty-five percent of nonverbal communication (eye contact, body language).
- Thirty-eight percent of vocal communication (volume, pitch, tone).
- Seven percent of verbal communication (content).

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.24



Notes:

The substance of the family briefing should center on:

- The identification process. Families should be reassured that remains will be identified accurately. This discussion should include the steps that the Medical Examiner or Coroner will take to identify remains. It should also include a discussion of what it means for family members. For example, family members may be asked to provide dental records, information about distinguishing marks, or samples from which DNA can be analyzed. It is essential that this part of the briefing be provided in layman's terms.
- Release of personal effects. Family members should understand the procedures for claiming personal effects. If personal effects will be delayed or cannot be released, they should be made aware of the delay, the reasons for the delay, and an approximate timeframe after which they can expect to receive the personal effects.
- An explanation for why identification and release of remains takes so long. Managing family members' expectations about timeframes for receiving their loved one's remains is critical. The briefing should link this topic to the identification process to explain that proper identification takes time and that careful identification is in everyone's best interests. Do not use technical language when speaking to family members.

One topic of high interest to family members is the site visit and/or memorial service.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.25

Site Visits and Memorial Services

- Should be a coordinated event
- May not always be possible



 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.25
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

Site visits and memorial services should be coordinated events. By coordinating the visit or service, family members can have their needs met in a controlled way. During coordinated site visits or memorial services, counselors can be made available for anyone who needs their services.

Depending on the circumstances, it may not always be possible to make a site visit. If that is the case, family members should be told why a site visit isn't possible at that time and when they might expect to visit the scene.

Above all, families should be provided a private environment during site visits and memorial services. Media should be kept away or at a distance. Families should be transported together by bus.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.26

Taking Questions at Family Briefings

- Set ground rules.
- Remember that family members:
 - Come from all walks of life.
 - May display a wide range of emotions.

The slide features a photograph of a woman with a blacked-out face. At the bottom, there is a FEMA logo and the text 'Visual 6.26 Mass Fatality Incident Response'.

Notes:

Briefers should always plan a question-and-answer session near the end of the family briefing. Before taking questions, be sure to set the ground rules about what types of questions can be answered, etc. (For example, questions about an ongoing criminal investigation would be out of bounds.) Also, remember that family members:

- Come from all walks of life. Be prepared for a wide range of questions—and be prepared to respond to those questions in a way that family members will understand.
- May display a wide array of emotions, ranging from anger to hysteria. These emotions should be expected and, regardless of the emotions displayed, the briefer should remain calm.

STAFFING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Conducting Family Briefings

Visual 6.27

Closing Statement

Should cover:

- A summary of key points
- Any remaining housekeeping items
- The schedule for the next briefing



 **FEMA** 

Visual 6.27
Mass Fatality Incident Response

Notes:

At the end of the briefing, the briefer should include a closing statement. The closing statement should include:

- A summary of the key points from the briefing.
- A reminder of any remaining housekeeping items.
- The schedule for the next briefing.

CLOSING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Notes:

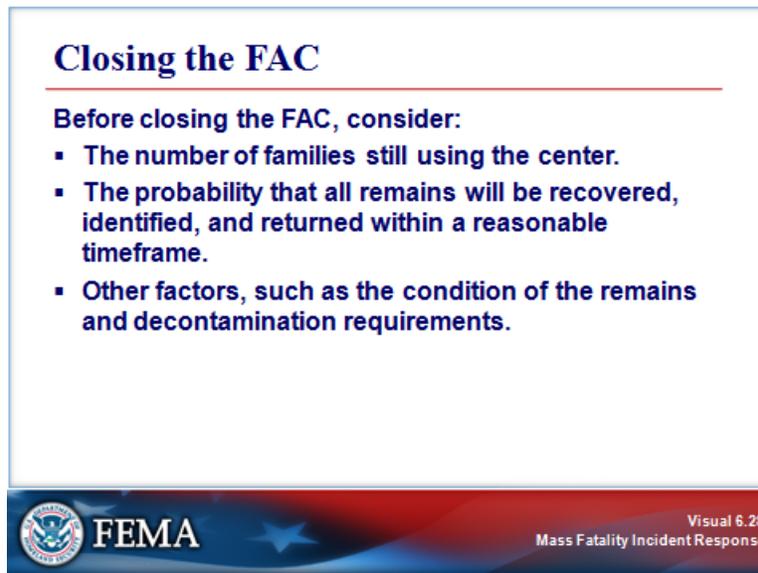
As the incident winds down, the time will come to close the FAC.

What are some indications that the FAC should be closed?

In some cases, the decision to close the center will be evident, but in other cases—such as following a very large incident in which all remains have not been located or cannot be identified—the decision to close the center will be more difficult.

CLOSING THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER

Visual 6.28



Notes:

There are several factors to consider when determining whether to close the FAC, including:

- The number of families still using the center.
- The probability that all remains will be recovered, identified, and returned within a reasonable timeframe. Note: The disposition of unclaimed remains is determined by the Medical Examiner or Coroner.
- Other factors, such as the condition of the remains and decontamination requirements.

Families using the FAC should receive ample notification before the FAC closes. Ensure that families who have not been notified:

- Know how notification will be made.
- Have a reasonable timeframe for expecting notification.
- Provide families and close friends contact information for questions after the FAC is closed.

Provide transportation and take care of other family needs before the FAC closes and to determine if any families require special provision for notification (e.g., a translator, clergy requirements, etc.).

UNIT SUMMARY

Visual 6.29



Notes:

Note that:

- The FAC is one of the most important facilities required following a mass fatalities incident.
- It is important to act effectively when setting up, staffing, and closing the FAC.

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