



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

Criminal Justice Institute – University of Arkansas System
School Violence Resource Center

Community Crisis Preparedness Workshop OVERVIEW

Everyday, a community somewhere in our country will face a crisis. From natural disasters to human-caused tragedies, a community can find itself faced with mass casualties, significant property damage, economic loss, and its citizens suffering significant psychological trauma. The manner in which first responders and service providers manage a crisis, or fail to do so, can have a lasting impact on the physical and emotional recovery of that community.

Communities can more effectively respond to crisis by pre-planning and identifying community resources before a crisis occurs. The School Violence Resource Center (SVRC), a program within the National Center for Rural Law Enforcement, understands the significance of community involvement when planning for a crisis whether on a school campus or within the community. This became more apparent after the many technical request received by the SVRC Helpdesk from school districts to review and critique critical incident and emergency plans. Analysis of these plans revealed that the majority of them were being developed in a vacuum and without the benefit of partnerships with key community groups such as law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, health, mental health, victim services, clergy, and others. In response, SVRC created a Community Crisis Preparedness Workshop curriculum.

The **Community Crisis Preparedness Workshop** is designed to provide guidance to rural communities on preparing and implementing strategic crisis management based on a formal collaboration between service providers and available community resources. The workshop focuses on the importance of utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach and enhancing existing community resources. The curriculum currently includes:

- *Managing Crisis - The Incident Command System*
- *Developing a Framework for Effective Crisis Response by Addressing Community Barriers and Solutions to Multi-Disciplinary Team Planning*
- *Weapons of Mass Destruction*
- *Understanding Victimization*
- *Tabletop Drills for Evaluating Crisis Planning*
- *Team Building Exercises*

The uniqueness of the Community Crisis Preparedness Workshop model is that it is focused on:

- **Collaborative Planning** by community stakeholders, including law enforcement, educators, fire, medical, emergency management services, health, state and federal governments, mental health, victim services, faith-based community, community service organizations, and others.
- **Integration of Victim Services** in an incident command system. The workshop emphasizes the need for victim services to be a viable component of any response to critical incidents.
- **Rural communities.** The workshop is provided at no cost to the community.

Through a partnership with the Jefferson Institute, SVRC worked with, and provided preparedness assistance to two Arkansas counties – Pulaski and Faulkner. Additionally, using a modified version of the community crisis planning initiative stressing preparedness, SVRC has held workshops in three Arkansas counties (Craighead, Ouachita and Calhoun counties) and in Seneca Falls, NY, Deming, NM, and Scappoose, OR.

The National Center for Rural Law Enforcement believes that preparedness education through pre-planning and assessment of resources by rural communities can mitigate the impact of a crisis event and provide victims with critical and timely assistance. Utilizing the Community Crisis Preparedness Workshop and its multi-disciplinary methodology, NCRLE will continue to make significant contributions to rural communities across the country.