District of Columbia Family Assistance Center (FAC) Plan



Overview

In a mass fatality event, the District of Columbia, as part of its overall response operations, shall establish a Family Assistance Center (FAC) at a pre-designated location. An FAC is essentially a hub for information collection, sharing, and human services regarding the missing or deceased in a public health emergency. This exchange of information will be between officials staffing the center and the family and friends of loved ones who have been affected by the event. This is a multi-agency operation coordinated by the DC Department of Human Services and supported by a number of other DC agencies and a cadre of volunteers that will be called upon to staff the center. The goal of the center is to collect antemortem information from family and friends of the missing and deceased; in order and reunite them, whether living or deceased. Once information is collected and reunification takes place, the FAC shall provide psychological first aid and other mental health services for the grieving friends and family of the deceased, if requested. The FAC is a caring environment to support family and friends of the deceased.

Purpose

This plan serves as an appendix to the DOH Public Health Fatality Management Plan. The District Department of Human Services (DHS), as ESF-6 lead, will establish and be the lead for Family Assistance Centers (FAC). DOH, along with other District agencies and community partners will support the services being provided at the centers in the wake of a public health emergency.

Scope

A Family Assistance Center will need to be established as quickly as possible in a mass fatality event, in order to provide a range of services to those seeking assistance regarding the status of their loved ones. The Department of Human Services, DC Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Department of Mental Health, and Department of Health, DC Office of Victims Services, and the American Red Cross will all have roles and responsibilities in the services provided at the centers. The nature of the mass fatality event and type of hazards faced will determine when and where the FAC is established within the District.

Situations and Assumptions

There are a number of identified hazards and events that could occur within the District resulting in a mass fatality event and activation of an FAC. It is important to note that a FAC will most likely not be established until 48 to 72 hours out from the onset of the event. Federal resources are not likely to be deployed until 48 hours into the event. However, the American Red Cross (ARC) will provide family reunification services post-event and before the decision to activate an FAC is made. The ARC will support mass care operations and stand up it's "Safe and Well" registry. This registry allows victims to register into a database where family and friends are able to check on their status. ARC family reunification services taking place near the scene of the event may either be shut down or transitioned to District FAC operations as the response unfolds. Once all casualties have been removed from the scene and operations shift to recovery, the transition will take place to full FAC operations, coordinated by DC DHS. The Incident Commander, situated at the District Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will make the decision to begin this transition. ARC may continue to support DHS and its partners during FAC operations.

If there are incidents involving transportation, particularly airline accidents, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and/or the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and airline carrier may take the lead in establishing family assistance and reunification services. District agencies would most likely be called upon as support to these operations. If there is an event involving a Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD, biological, or chemical weapons, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) may intervene as part of the criminal investigation and establish family assistance under their direction. It is likely that all District agencies involved in family assistance will be called upon by Federal assets to assist in these operations.

If it is a radiation, chemical, or biological event, it may extend the time to recover bodies, as the area may be too dangerous for operations.

Notification and Activation

Initial notification for a mass fatality event will come from the Unified Communications Center (UCC) or MPD to the OCME. The request to establish a Family Reunification Center will come from the UCC or the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) Watch Officer to DHS or the ARC.

If the ARC is the entity called upon to establish a Family Reunification Center, they will deploy a Disaster Response Team who will connect with the Incident Commander and coordinate which resources and type of support is needed. If it is the DHS who is first notified, the DHS Director or Emergency Response Coordinator may deploy a supervisor or a small task force to coordinate with the Incident Commander in regards to resources and support that is needed.

After the initial assessment of the scenario and resource support, a Family Assistance Center (FAC) may need to be established within the District. The DHS Director or Emergency Response Coordinator will determine which facility will be used as the FAC and activate the necessary Memorandum of Agreement with said facility.

Activation Checklist

	Based on the incident size, number of victims, and other factors listed in the plan determine the approximate scale of the event Incident Type					
	Date	Time				
	Approximate number of victims					
	Estimated number of family/friend to arrive at FAC					
	Estimated Incident size					
	☐ Logistics: review site assessment worksheets and s	elect the location of the FAC facility				
	FAC Facility Activation Information					
	Facility Name					
	Street Address					
	CityState _					
	Contact Person:					
	Phone Email					
	☐ Identify services that will be provided at FAC (chec	k all that apply)				
	 Reception/Registration 					
	 Family Briefings 					
	 Victim Information Services 					
	o First Aid and Medical Care					
	O Disaster Mental Health Services					
	o Missing Persons Services					
	 Support Services 					
	 Childcare services 					
	 Translation/Interpretation Services 					
	 Social Services (List Below) 					
		6				
		7				
		8				
		9				
	5	10				
	☐ Finance/Administration: identify all staff and volun	Finance/Administration: identify all staff and volunteers				
	☐ Logistics: identify and acquire all equipment and su	ipplies needed for the FAC Facility				
	☐ Coordinate with partners and local agencies to fill a	any resource or staff needs				
	☐ Set-up FAC Facility					
	Ensure Information Technology needs are met and Phones, Fax Machines, Radios)	tested (Television/Cable, Phones, Internet, Cell				
	\square Law Enforcement: establish and implement tactica	l security plan for the facility				
☐ Open FAC Facility and coordinate messaging with Public Information Officer; location, hou services.						

Social Services that may be required at a FAC

Not all services will be necessary at a FAC facility; the list below provides suggestions on possible social services that may be necessary

Animal Care
Banking
Basic Medical Care
Benefits Counseling/Assistance
Child/Youth and Family Services
Communications (phone and internet)
Crime Victims Assistance
Disability Information
Educational Services
Employment Services
Financial Assistance
Financial Services
Food Services
Foreign Nationals
Health Care Information Services
Housing Assistance
Identification Replacement Services
Immigration Assistance
Insurance Advocacy
Labor Services/Union Assistance
Laundry Services
Legal Assistance
Mail
Material Goods/Personal Property Replacement
Medical Assessment
Physical Health
Provision of Medications
Public Benefits
Relocation Assistance
Senior Citizens Service
Small Business Assistance
Tax Benefits/Extensions
Therapy Dogs
Transportation
Unemployment benefits
Veterans Affairs
Translation/Interpretation Services
Workers Compensation

Roles and Responsibilities

Agency	Roles and Responsibilities			
Department of Human Services Coordination of Family Assistance Center operations, in				
	not limited to:			
	Reunification services			
	Food and water services			
	Temporary sheltering			
	Child care services			
	Communications services (telephone, internet, translation			
	services)			
	Administrative tasks			
	Facility accommodations necessary for professional and			
	appropriate interaction with next-of-kin			
	 Engagement of community and faith based 			
	organizations/volunteers as needed to support operations			
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)	 Collection of antemortem data for identification of human remains 			
	Management of data collection system			
	Conduct photo ID of decedents, if necessary			
	Gathering of belongings and personal effects to be given to			
	family/friends of deceased			
	Press releases to media			
Department of Mental Health	Grief counseling			
(DMH)	Crisis intervention counseling			
	 Follow-up for additional mental health services 			
	Deployment of rapid response teams			
	Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Response Program			
Department of Health/Medical	First aid services			
Reserve Corps	Health screenings			
(MRC)/Emergency Healthcare	 Psychological first aid from mental health professionals 			
Coalition (EHC)	within MRC			
	 Provision of lay responders for center logistics 			
	Patient tracking (EHC)			
Metropolitan Police Department	 Provision for security to family assistance centers 			
(MPD) and Protective Services	Death notifications to next of kin			
Police Department (PSPD)				
Mayor's Office of Victim's	Victim compensation services			
Services	Provide necessary referrals to community based			
	organizations via internal database			
	Recovery of personal property/effects			
	Provide necessary referrals to Wendt Center for Loss and			
	Healing			
A	Forensic nursing services			
American Red Cross (ARC)	Provide reunification services			

 Provide general and psychological first aid training for volunteers
Provide call center operations to receive calls from the public
 Provide resources such as vehicles, tents, communications equipment, Disaster Response Teams and mass care volunteers
 Works in coordination with DHS on provision on services (food, water, etc.)

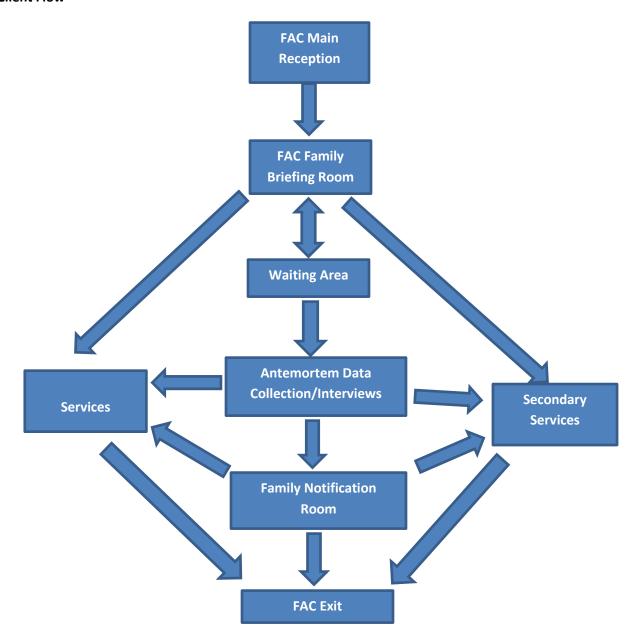
^{*}NOTE: Not all roles and responsibilities listed above will take place at the FAC. Some tasks are supportive to FAC operations and overall mass fatality operations within the District.

Facility Logistics

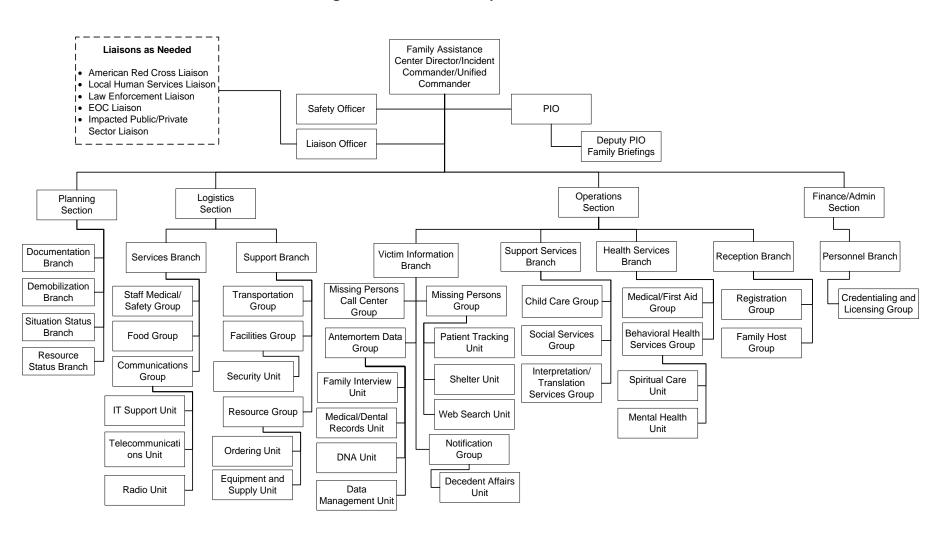
The location of the FAC will be a predetermined site by DHS and will be able to accommodate large numbers of people, as well as the range or services that will need to be provided. Additional smaller to medium size satellite sites shall be determined as back-ups or if the scenario necessitates the need for multiple centers to be established. The facility used as an FAC will need to have a number of amenities and types of equipment in order to meet the needs of all services the center will provide to the public. These amenities include but are not limited to:

- Square footage large enough to accommodate large numbers of the public and staff
- Adequate number of rooms for all services (including quiet and private areas)
- IT equipment/Internet/Cable
- Telephones
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Handicap accessibility
- Electricity
- Water supply
- Heat/Air Conditioning

Client Flow



Scalable Org Chart for Family Assistance Center



Registration

- 1. As families enter the facility have greeters present to show them to the reception area.
- 2. Families will check-in to the facility.
 - a. All family members must sign-in upon arrival.
 - b. Family members are required to produce government issued photo identification upon entry to ensure the identity of all visitors.
 - i. In the event that a family member does not have a government issued identification (minor children, undocumented persons, identification unavailable, etc.) reception staff, with the assistance of Law Enforcement, should take reasonable steps to ensure the identity of the individual.
 - c. Law Enforcement should be on hand to verify all identification and issue each person a badge. Badges should have a unique feature (e.g. color coding) and have a photo.
- 3. If this is the family member's first visit to the FAC they must complete a Family/Friend Registration Form.
 - a. If someone arrives at the FAC and is not looking for a family member notify security immediately.
- 4. Provide all family members with a Family Resource Packet.
- 5. Family Hosts should provide family member with a brief overview of the services provided at the FAC, a tour of the facility (if possible) and assist them with any immediate needs.
- 6. Translators/Interpreters should be on hand to provide assistance with the registration process if necessary.
- 7. Behavioral Health providers should be on hand at all times to provide assistance to families.
- 8. Security Personnel should be available for assistance if necessary.
- 9. All family members must return their badge upon leaving the FAC.

Forms to be completed (found in "Forms" section):

- 1. Family/Friend Daily Sign-in Sheet
- 2. Family/Friend Registration Form

Reunification Services

One of the primary goals of the Family Assistance Centers will be to reunite family members with those lost loved ones. It is important to note that this includes both the living and deceased, uninjured and injured alike. There will be two distinct groups requiring reunification services:

- 1) Missing persons who have been located (living or deceased) who have not yet been reunited with family/friends
- 2) Family/friends coming to the center in search of missing loved ones

Families may also need to be connected to specific disaster services once they have been reunited with living or deceased love ones. Those staffing the reunification service area will need to be prepared to make the appropriate referrals. All of those seeking reunification services should be protected from any media scrutiny throughout the process; showing respect for those grieving.

Unaccompanied minors might show up to the FAC seeking reunification with lost loved ones. An area for child care services should be established within the FAC.

Antemortem data collection

OCME will lead the collection of antemortem through interviews with family/friends that enter the center, or by collection of medical and dental records. The Family Assistance Center Team Leader/Coordinator will establish the plan for antemortem data collection and entry plan. Family Interview Personnel will assist with data collection efforts within the center and Computer Specialists will be on hand for data entry, as well as electronic transfer of information to and from the Morgue Examination Center.

Family Notifications

MPD will assume responsibility for death notifications to families and friends. This may need to be accomplished with assistance from mental health professionals (grief counselors) who are staffing the center. Family/friend notification shall only take place after confirmation from the Identification Team and approval from the Chief Medical Examiner. A release log will be utilized document the overall process and an individual release authorization form must be completed and placed in the individual Victim Disaster Packet. If personal effects of the deceased are not determined to evidence, they may be released to the family/friend along with the body. If the family/friends of the deceased request any type of mental health professional, they should be referred to the area of the FAC designated for grief counseling and mental health services.

Call center (311)

A missing persons call 311 call center will be established out of the Family Assistance Center or other location TBD. This call center will be critical throughout the family reunification process. More than likely, family/friends of victim's will be seeking information about the status of said victim before they will seek any type of disaster services, such as grief counseling or spiritual services. Staff at the call center will receive calls from the public and provide answers based on pre-scripted messages. They will also be charged with collecting relevant antemortem data that will assist with identification of victims.

Public Information

The public must be initially made aware of the establishment of the FAC, its location, mission and purpose. All details of the functions of the FAC must be clear and accurate; in order to avoid confusion and individuals with no needs related to the center showing up. The initial release regarding the FAC should include its role in missing person's identification, body release, and mental health services. The lead agency for the release of public information will be the Executive Office of the Mayor – Public Affairs. The coordinated release of information regarding mass fatalities and FAC operations will not take place within the actual FAC. All messages should be submitted and released through the Joint Information Center (JIC).

The following Public Information Officer (PIO) Cheat Sheet can be used or modified to particular specifications if necessary:

PIO Cheat Sheet

This document is to be used to inform press briefings and media updates, but it is NOT a stand-alone document to be shared with the press. It should be completed using the judgment of the response staff, as not all items will be reported. All of the information below can be obtained from the Planning Chief of the Family Assistance Center

	Number in last operational period	Number to date
Number of families at the Family Assistance Center		
Number of families communicating with the FAC but not onsite		
Date/Time of last family briefing		
Number of calls to the Missing Persons Call Center		
Number of Missing Persons Reports received		
Number of reunifications facilitated through the FAC		

Services Provided at the Family Assistance Center

1.	
6.	

7.		_
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
Ref	erral Services Provided Through the Family A	ssistance Center
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
4.		
4 . 5.		
•••		

Number of Remains Recovered
Number of decedents identified and their families notified
Number of decedents identified and their families flottified

Language that should not be used in communications

- We know how you feel.
- Time heals all wounds.
- You should go on with your life.
- You will get over it.
- Others are worse off.
- Focus on the good times.
- The County cannot share that information. (Acceptable only if followed by why, and when the information will be available.)
- You do not need to know that
- What you do not know can't hurt you
- It was actually a blessing.
- You must be strong.
- It could have been worse.
- God never gives us more than we can handle

Talking points concerning victim identification procedures

- Fatality numbers are released only by OCME and only after confirmation.
- PIOs should not speculate on any procedures, including the need for an autopsy.
- PIOs should not assign timeframes for victim identification.
- Victims' names are only released after positive identification and notification of the family.
- Cultural considerations will be accommodated as often as practical

Additional Comments				

Mental Health Services

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) will be the lead entity within the FAC for provision of grief counseling and all mental health services required for family/friends of the deceased. DMH is able to provide surveillance, assessment, and psychiatric triage and stabilization, as well as give referrals to outside private or public services. DMH currently has 70 individuals at its disposal for rapid response teams

DMH staff and volunteers providing mental health and grief counseling should be trained in the field of disaster mental health services and certified as a disaster mental health services emergency responder.

All personnel providing disaster mental health services will adhere to their individual scope of practice (e.g. functional role, knowledge, skill, authority, continuing education, ethics, licensure, and certification) and have participated in DC DMH Disaster Mental Health Responder Certification. Mental health services will be provided in a designated area that is quiet, private and away from other services being provided at the FAC.

Volunteers

The FAC will need to be able to accommodate volunteers into the staffing and operations. Volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) will be called upon via DOH through DC Serves. These volunteers will be brought in based on expertise and can assist with a variety of operations including greeting, logistics (forms and registration), first aid, and psychological first or other mental health services. Spontaneous volunteers may show up to the FAC as well. A volunteer registration and credentialing area shall be designated to expedite the verification process and get volunteers folded into operations as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Family Briefings

There should be regularly scheduled briefings with family and friends who have shown up to the FAC (once or twice daily if possible). Family and friends can be updated on response activity as well as have the opportunity to ask questions of FAC leadership. These briefings should occur in a large, private setting within the FAC. No members of the media or legal representatives shall be allowed to attend briefings.

The following is a sample agenda for a family briefing that can be modified as needed:

- Rescue and recovery efforts
- Victim identification efforts
- Investigation updates
- Site visits, memorial services
- Disposition and return of remains
- Return of personal effects
- Description of services available at FAC

Security

There should be robust security provided at the FAC due to the large number of people that will be expected to show up for the services it provides. The DC Protective Services Police Department (PSPD) will be the designated security entity within the facility. Outside the facility, MPD will be in charge of perimeter security and any other issues that may arise that threaten the public's safety and well-being.

Cultural and Religious Considerations

Each community is unique with many cultures and faiths. Accommodating cultural and religious practices is a critical part of Family Assistance Center planning and operations. It is critical to understand

the needs of different cultures and faiths by taking into consideration different aspects of their practices, to better serve the community at the family assistance center.

- Language
- Diet (including fasting)
- Dress
- Physical contact
- Medical treatment
- Daily acts of faith, major events
- Dying and death customs
- Resources (e.g. texts, facilities, etc.)
- Names

Assumptions should not be made about the particular practices of individual families based on religion or ethnicity.

Below is a list of instances in which cultural or religious practices should be considered and incorporated to better serve the community affected by the disaster.

- Memorial ceremonies, services and anniversaries
- Food preparation and consumption
- Communications with families (e.g. family interviews, family briefings, notifications)
- Resources (e.g. texts, cultural/religious leaders)
- Space for cultural or religious practices
- Behavioral Health and Spiritual Care

Demobilization

The demobilization of the FAC will be dependent on the scale of the incident and will more than likely be a gradual wind down of operations. This can be trigged by local agencies no longer needing any assistance from outside resources or when all families and friends have been reunited with their loved ones, whether alive of deceased. Antemortem data that has been collected by OCME may need to be transferred to other sources, such as law enforcement agencies, for investigative purposes. It will be important to identify which specific data will be transferred and which agencies will need this data. Any equipment brought into the FAC from outside sources will be returned as they are no longer needed for specific operations.

It is important to note that even when the FAC operations conclude and the operation is shut down, those who have used the center's services may need ongoing support, whether it be financial or in the form of continued mental health support. These services will be incumbent upon the Mayor's Office of Victim's Services and Department of Mental Health.

Demobilization Checklist

General Guidelines that should be considered

- # clients seen/day
- # victims still to identify/locate
- Ability for other organization to handle current operation needs off site
- Need for daily briefings

Criteria to consider for demobilization

- Family briefings are no longer needed
- Rescue, recovery investigations and identification have decreased to be able to be handled by another ongoing operation
- Less than 5 clients per day register at the FAC three days in a row
- Memorial services have been arranged for family and friends
- Provision for the return of personal effects has been arranged
- Ongoing case management and/or hotline number has been established if needed

Reason for demobilization:		
Location/Name of FAC:		
Date/Time of Demobilization:		

Demobilization Tasks

- Create a demobilization plan for the FAC and get approval
- Set a date and time for closure and communicate this with all partners and client's families
- Address outstanding case management needs and long-term follow-up with families
- Coordinate final meeting with partners and government agencies
- Coordinate messaging for public about demobilization
- Update missing persons call center or recorded message
- Break down the FAC facility
 - o assign partners to demobilization tasks
- Follow-up report of FAC operations
- Debrief staff and volunteers

Forms

Family/Friend Registration Form Use this form if no electronic/database registration system is available

Disaster Victim Information		
Last Name	First Name	MI _
For Multiple Disaster Victin	ns of the Same Family, Use Add	itional Forms and Cross
Reference w	ith Victims Name at Bottom of t	his Page
1. Presenting Family Member/	Friend Name	
Last Name	First Name	MI _
SS# (optional)	Relationship to Victim	
Permanent Address		
City	State	Zip
Home Phone	Cell Phone	
Photo Identification Verification (t	ype/#/State/County)	
Medications/Medical Needs?	□ Yes □ No	
It Yes, Indicate Medication Needs		
Physician's Name	Physician's Pho	one #
Next of Kin to Disaster Victim?		
If No, Name of Next of Kin		
2. Presenting Family Member/	Friend Name	
Last Name First Name		
SS# (optional) Relationship to Victim		
Permanent Address		
City	State	7:0

Home Phone	Ce	ell Phone		
Photo Identification Verification ((type/#/State/	County)		
Medications/Medical Needs?	☐ Yes	□ No		
			It Yes, Indica	te
Victim Name			Medication N	eeds
Physician's Name		Physician's F	Phone #	
Notes				
3. Presenting Family Member				
Last Name	Fi	rst Name		MI
SS# (optional)	Relationsl	nip to Victim		
Permanent Address				
City	St	ate	Zip	
Home Phone	Ce	ell Phone		
Photo Identification Verification ((type/#/State/	County)		
Medications/Medical Needs?	☐ Yes	□ No		
It Yes, Indicate Medication Needs	3			
Physician's Name		Physician's F	Phone #	
Notes				
4. Presenting Family Member	·/Friend Name	e		
Last Name				MI
SS# (optional)				
Permanent Address				
City				

Home Phone	C	ell Phone		
Photo Identification Verification (ty	pe/#/State/	County)		
Medications/Medical Needs?	☐ Yes	□ No		
It Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _				
Physician's Name		Physician's	s Phone #	
1 Hysician s I vanie		1 11y 51C1a11 5	9 1 HOHE //	
Victim Name				
Notes				
5. Presenting Family Member/	Friend Nam	e		
Last Name	Fi	rst Name		MI
SS# (optional)	Relationsl	nip to Victim		
Permanent Address				
City	St	ate	Zi	p
Home Phone	Co	ell Phone		
Photo Identification Verification (ty	pe/#/State/	County)		
Medications/Medical Needs?	☐ Yes	□ No		
It Yes, Indicate Medication Needs _				
Physician's Name	Physician's Phone #			
Notes		·		
Next of Kin Information				
Has Next of Kin arrived at the Fam	ily Assistance	Center?	☐ Yes	□ No

NOK Las	t Name	First Name				
SS# (optio	onal)	Relationship to Victim				
Current A	ddress					
City		County	State	Zip		
Phone nu	mbers					
Medicatio	ns/Medical Nee	eds?	□ No			
It Yes, Inc	dicate Medicatio	n Needs				
Physician'	s Name		Physician's	Phone #		
Notes						
Victim Na	.me					
Source						
Information	on regarding Ne	ext of Kin provided by: _				
Relationsh	nip to Next of K	:				
	,	E1/E-:1	N - !1 C! !	C1 4		
		Family/Friend D Use this form if a digital credentia	•			
Victim N		Osc ims form if a aiguai creaenia	uing/ buuging sysiem is i	mi uvuuuvu		
		Fin	rst Name	MI		
Date	Time of Arrival	Family Member Na print)	me (please	Signature	Time of Departure	