

Press Release

Is Your City's Mayor Ready to Respond to A Mass Shooting? Mass Shooting Protocol Launched to Help Mayors Respond to the Unthinkable

Boston, October 26, 2021— When a mass public shooting takes place, it falls on our nation's mayors to respond. While supportive state and federal resources are available, there is no coordinated national response. It largely falls to local governments to coordinate the response. UnitedOnGuns, a nonpartisan initiative of the Public Health Advocacy Institute (PHAI) at Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, announces the launch of the Mass Shooting Protocol & Playbook: A Resource for U.S. Mayors and City Managers. UnitedOnGuns Director Sarah C. Peck explained, "This comprehensive resource is intended for mayors, city managers, and their staff to help them prepare for, respond to, and recover from a public mass shooting."

Project Inspired by Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto

On October 27, 2018, Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto responded to the horrific Tree of Life Synagogue Shooting. In a meeting with Ms. Peck a year later, Mayor Peduto said he would have benefitted from having a "mass shooting protocol" to help guide his response to the shooting, but one did not exist. He urged Ms. Peck to work with mayors and other experts to develop such a protocol.

Research Methodology

As a result, UnitedOnGuns launched a research project under the aegis of Northeastern University. Beginning in 2020, researchers interviewed sixteen mayors, first responders, and experts who responded to mass shootings in Orlando, Dayton, El Paso, Pittsburgh, Parkland, and

San Bernardino. The UnitedOnGuns team created a two-part resource informed by the experience of these mayors and supplemented by public health resources prepared by the CDC, FEMA, the FBI, and other agencies. Mayor Buddy Dyer of Orlando, who responded to the Pulse tragedy, said the Mass Shooting Protocol & Playbook is “required reading for every mayor.”

Summary of Contents

The [Protocol](#) provides an overview of a mayor’s role during the first 24 hours after a mass shooting. It highlights key decisions the mayor will need to make and contains links to the Playbook that can provide additional information as needed.

The [Playbook](#) is organized in ten topic areas: communications, emergency operations, victims and families, law enforcement, donations, school shootings, community partnerships, legal considerations, commemorations, and mental health. Each chapter includes the actions and training that a mayor can take in advance of a mass shooting; actions a mayor should take during the response phase; and guidance for providing services to victims, family members and the community as they recover. The Playbook also provides guidance for planning training exercises, VIP visits, and seeking reimbursement for the cost of the city’s response.

Finally, the Playbook includes [case briefs of the six mass shootings](#) researched for the project. These case briefs and their key takeaways may be useful to mayors for planning and training purposes, as well as to researchers and law enforcement officials. Mayor Nan Whaley of Dayton said, “Having lived through the experience of a mass shooting, I now tell other mayors, ‘it isn’t if, but when a mass shooting happens in your community. You need to prepare.’ This Playbook can help you to be as ready as you can be.”

The Protocol, the Playbook, the case briefs, and individual Playbook chapters and appendices can be downloaded without charge from the UnitedOnGuns [website](#). The goal is to provide a printed copy to every mayor and city manager in the country who wants one. To donate a copy to your local official, please visit the group's [GoFundMe campaign](#).

About UnitedOnGuns

UnitedOnGuns, an initiative of the Public Health Advocacy Institute (PHAI), promotes public health approaches to reduce gun violence, while respecting the rights of responsible gun owners. For more information, contact Sarah C. Peck, s.peck@phaionline.org, or visit www.unitedonguns.org.