

# Recovering and Moving Forward

Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School



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# Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

A Report for the Broward County Board of County Commissioners  
and the  
Broward County Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School After-Action Task Force

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## In Memory

This report is provided to Broward County in the memory and honor of the 17 victims of the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018:

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## Acknowledgements

The National Police Foundation assessment team would like to thank the Broward County Board of County Commissioners, Broward County Administrator Bertha Henry, Assistant Broward County Administrator Alphonso Jefferson, and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) After-Action Task Force who supported this effort and without whom this report would not have been possible.

Thank you to the City of Parkland, City of Coral Springs, and Broward County government employees who supported our review process. These thanks extend to other government agencies; public safety agencies; MSD students, teachers, and parents; other community members; and, organizations who provided us access and insights into the events of February 14, 2018, and its aftermath.

## Executive Summary

On Wednesday, February 14, 2018, at 2:21 pm, a lone gunman entered Building 12 of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) in Parkland, Florida.<sup>1</sup> With a semiautomatic rifle, the suspect opened fire on students and staff members at his former high school, killing 17 people and injuring 17 others.<sup>2</sup> Before being confronted by law enforcement, the suspect discarded his rifle, a magazine-carrying vest,<sup>3</sup> and ammunition; left the building; and, fled the scene by blending in with other students.<sup>4</sup> The suspect was apprehended approximately 80 minutes after the incident began—at 3:41 pm—on a residential street approximately two miles away from MSD, in neighboring Coral Springs.<sup>5</sup> By the time the attack was over, the shooting had become the deadliest shooting at a high school in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that the MSD shooting occurred on a Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) campus in the City of Parkland set in motion a response that can be characterized as uncoordinated and inefficient. The BCPS does not have an independent school district police department—like those in larger jurisdictions such as Miami-Dade, Florida; Houston, Texas; and, San Bernardino County, California—so emergency services are provided by law enforcement and fire/emergency medical services (EMS) agencies where each school is located. Since the City of Parkland contracted with the Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO) for law enforcement services and the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD) for fire/EMS, the emergency response to the MSD shooting was led by two agencies with different response protocols and tactics.

The county and municipal government structure in Broward County created operational silos, and inefficiencies which impeded information sharing and resource coordination. As a result, despite the efforts of government and public safety officials, service providers and community organizations opportunities were missed during the response to the shooting, immediately following, and in the recovery. Broward County government, the BCPS, BSO, and the municipal governments of Parkland and Coral Springs had extensive resources available to assist in the response and recovery, but the lack of leadership, cross-agency partnerships and coordination, and interaction between the various entities within the county tested the ability of government officials and stakeholders to work together. The lack of solid, pre-existing relationships and

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<sup>1</sup> Almukhtar, S., K.K. Rebecca Lai, Anjali Singhvi, and Karen Yourish. (2018, April 24). What Happened in the Parkland School Shooting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/15/us/florida-school-shooting-map.html>

<sup>2</sup> Burch, A., and P. Mazzei. (2018, February 14). Death Toll Is at 17 and Could Rise in Florida School Shooting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/14/us/parkland-school-shooting.html>

<sup>3</sup> According to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, the vest was “a magazine-carrying vest (the vest did not have any anti-ballistic qualities).” For more, see Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*. Retrieved from <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/CommissionReport.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Almukhtar, et al. (2018, April 24). What Happened in the Parkland School Shooting.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Willingham, AJ, and E. Levenson. (2018, April 20). 19 years ago, Columbine shook America to its core. Now, it's not even among the 10 deadliest shootings in modern US history. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/07/health/deadliest-mass-shootings-columbine-in-modern-us-history-trnd/index.html>

collaborative planning between those in charge of coordinating various aspects of the response and those with the resources and the desire to contribute, also created challenges both in working toward a unified response and to effectively building community resilience. Approximately 16-months after the MSD shooting, the barriers to interagency, intergovernmental, and community-wide collaboration and coordination continue to challenge Broward County as a whole<sup>7</sup> as it endeavors to develop emergency preparedness and mental health plans that focus on providing services and moving forward.

The analysis in this report is intended to provide objective feedback to Broward County—not in judgement, but in careful study. Over the course of the review, the National Police Foundation assessment team met with a number of community members, organizations, and government officials who continue to work tirelessly to learn from the MSD shooting, address and advance preparedness, planning, and resilience throughout the Broward County community. In addition to creating the Broward County Commission MSD After-Action Task Force to collaboratively affect change, officials in Broward County have already:

- begun implementation of the Local Government Radio System to accommodate non public safety users such as BCPS bus drivers and Broward County employees,<sup>8</sup> and begun construction of the new P25 radio system;
- agreed to allow personnel in the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center to dispatch BSO deputies in Parkland;
- provided the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center immediate access to a BSO radio set on the Parkland channel in their communications center, added ways for the Coral Springs Police Dispatch to monitor a Parkland channel, and programmed the BSO channel into the Coral Springs – Parkland Fire channel;
- reconvened the radio governance committee—similar to the already-established computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and Law/Fire governance committees—to address radio communications;
- created a subcommittee of City Managers to discuss and resolve issues that relate to communications involving multiple municipalities; and,
- the City of Parkland has agreed to route all 911 calls to the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center.<sup>9</sup>

This report details the government and community structures in Broward County and how the interaction between the relevant stakeholders compares to national promising practices and

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<sup>7</sup> “Broward County as a whole” refers to the county and municipal government agencies and elected officials; community organizations, leaders, and members; non-governmental organizations; and, other stakeholders throughout Broward County and its municipalities.

<sup>8</sup> In July 2019, BCPS announced the completed migration of 1,367 buses to the new radio system that operates separately from the one used by public safety agencies. For more, see: Barszewski, L. (2019, July 26). School bus radios won’t slow police communications anymore. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-ne-buses-off-broward-public-safety-radio-system-20190726-mdmmgot6krh4vpgcp5qlzwzpuq-story.html>

<sup>9</sup> In May 2019, the City of Parkland agreed to have all 911 calls originating within the city limits routed and delivered to the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center. However, the City asked that the project be postponed until a temporary solution for integrating the relevant CAD systems could be identified.

impacted the response to the MSD shooting and continues to challenge recovery. Similarly, the findings and recommendations are intended to provide opportunities for the relevant stakeholders to come together and address the challenges that emerged on February 14, 2018, and to provide public safety agencies, school districts, and governments across the nation with critical guidance to inform the response to future school shootings.

## Introduction

On Wednesday, February 14, 2018, at 2:21 pm, a lone gunman entered Building 12 of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) in Parkland, Florida.<sup>10</sup> A couple minutes later, the suspect opened fire on students and staff members at his former high school, killing 17 people and injuring 17 others.<sup>11</sup> Before being confronted by law enforcement, the suspect left the building and fled the scene by blending in with other students.<sup>12</sup> The suspect was apprehended approximately 80 minutes after the incident began—at 3:41 pm—on a residential street approximately two miles away from MSD, in neighboring Coral Springs.<sup>13</sup> By the time the attack was over, the shooting had become the deadliest shooting at a high school in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

The active shooter<sup>15</sup> event occurred on Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) property. The Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO) and Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD) had primary responsibility for the law enforcement and emergency medical (EMS) responses. Administrators from MSD and the BCPS assumed authority for school-related aspects of the response. In addition, Broward County commissioners and government staff; City of Parkland and City of Coral Springs commissioners and government employees; and, non-profit and community organizations provided assistance during the initial response and in the weeks and months that followed the event. However, the County's government structure, the independence of municipal government, the lack of pre-planning and operational silos, created missed opportunities. These issues continue to challenge critical incident response and recovery in Broward County as a whole.

## Incident Timeline

The following is a summary timeline of the major events—relevant to the rest of this report—related to the MSD shooting. A more-comprehensive timeline of the MSD shooting, can be found in the [Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Initial Report](#).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Almkhtar, et al. (2018, April 24). What Happened in the Parkland School Shooting.

<sup>11</sup> Burch, A., and P. Mazzei. (2018, February 14). Death Toll Is at 17 and Could Rise in Florida School Shooting.

<sup>12</sup> Almkhtar, et al. (2018, April 24). What Happened in the Parkland School Shooting.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Willingham, AJ, and E. Levenson. (2018, April 20). 19 years ago, Columbine shook America to its core.

<sup>15</sup> The FBI defines "active shooter" as, "one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area." For more, see <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-in-the-us-2018-041019.pdf/view>

<sup>16</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*. Retrieved from <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/CommissionReport.pdf>

<b>February 14, 2018</b>	
2:21:16 p.m. <sup>17</sup>	Suspect entered Building 12 of MSD through the east hallway doors. The suspect began firing approximately 22 seconds later.
2:32:42 p.m. <sup>18</sup>	The first responding law enforcement officers entered Building 12 through the west doors.
3:37:45 p.m. <sup>19</sup>	The suspect was apprehended approximately two miles from MSD.
Before 4:12 p.m. <sup>20</sup>	The Family Reunification Center (FRC) was established at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club & Convention Center.
<b>February 15, 2018</b>	
After 3:00 a.m. <sup>21</sup>	The FRC was closed.
8:00 a.m. <sup>22</sup>	Broward County Public Schools opened several grief counseling centers.
<b>February 28, 2018</b>	
7:40 – 11:40 a.m. <sup>23</sup>	Students and staff returned to MSD for the first day of instruction.

## Scope and Goals of the Review

In April 2018, the Broward County Commission formed a multi-jurisdictional task force to review the community’s public safety response to the February 14, 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.<sup>24</sup> The MSD Task Force engaged the National Police Foundation (NPF) to conduct an independent, third-party after-action review of the County’s response to the incident:

“The Police Foundation shall analyze the preparedness of entities responsible for the safety of MSD, the response to the event by involved entities and individuals, recovery efforts following the event and miscellaneous information relevant to the event, including AARs and hot washes developed by other entities and conduct interviews to complete an

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Because the National Police Foundation (NPF) assessment team was not provided detailed incident response logs from any of the responding agencies, this timestamp is based on the BSO Twitter account.

<sup>21</sup> Because the National Police Foundation (NPF) assessment team was not provided detailed incident response logs from any of the responding agencies, this timestamp is based on this article: <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-reg-parkland-shooting-notification-20180300-story.html>.

<sup>22</sup> Phillips, D. (2018, February 15). Grief counseling centers available for Stoneman Douglas students, staff, families. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-sb-school-shooting-counseling-20180215-story.html>

<sup>23</sup> Grinberg, Emanuella, Dianne Gallagher, and Meridith Edwards. (2018, February 28). His daughter died in the Parkland shooting. Today, his son went back to school. CNN.com. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/28/us/florida-school-shooting/index.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Broward County. (n.d.). MSD Task Force. Retrieved from [www.broward.org/MSDTaskForce](http://www.broward.org/MSDTaskForce).

assessment of the event to provide an official AAR to County that will communicate the strengths, successes, and opportunities for improvement.

The AAR will contain the Police Foundation's recommendations based on lessons learned during the after-action review. Recommendations provided in the AAR will be based on best practices and relevant government guidelines.

The key components of the AAR will include: overview; goals and objectives; analysis of the outcomes (e.g. what went right, what went wrong, what can be improved); analysis of the capacity to perform critical tasks; summary and recommendations (including specific improvements for each community partner). The Police Foundation may include additional components in the AAR that the Police Foundation deems necessary."<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the National Police Foundation review, several other investigations and after-action reviews were commissioned within the State of Florida and Broward County, some of which are still ongoing (see Ongoing Investigations and Reviews below). These investigations and reviews include, in part:

- The Florida State Attorney for the 17<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit is conducting a criminal prosecution of the suspect, who remains in custody.
- The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission (MSDHS PSC) was commissioned by then Governor Rick Scott to, "investigate system failures in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting and prior mass violence incidents in this state and develop recommendations for system improvements."<sup>26</sup> The Governor also directed the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to conduct an investigation of the law enforcement response to the shooting.
- The BSO Division of Internal Affairs opened investigations regarding the actions of deputies in response to prior calls-for-service involving the suspect and the on-scene response.
- The FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit conducted an active shooter review to assess the psychological profile of the suspect.
- The Broward League of Cities School and Community Public Safety Task Force authored an initial report and recommendations.<sup>27</sup>
- The Broward County Public Schools contracted with Safe Havens International to conduct a review of school safety and best practices.

In June 2018, the National Police Foundation advised the Broward County Administrator and the MSD Task Force that it believed the multiple investigations, reviews, and AARs would impact its ability to conduct the comprehensive review originally contemplated by the MSD Task Force.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Original contract between Broward County and the Police Foundation.

<sup>26</sup> "Chapter 2018-3." Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 7026. Retrieved from <http://laws.flrules.org/2018/3>

<sup>27</sup> The Broward County League of Cities' School and Community Public Safety Task Force. (2018, June 4). *Initial Report and Recommendations*. Broward County, FL: Broward League of Cities. Retrieved from [http://browardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BLOC\\_PUBLICSAFETY\\_TASKFORCE\\_FINAL\\_RR\\_6\\_2\\_18\\_PM1.pdf](http://browardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BLOC_PUBLICSAFETY_TASKFORCE_FINAL_RR_6_2_18_PM1.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> National Police Foundation. (2018, June). "Police Foundation-Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School: After Action Review."

The Broward County Administrator and the MSD Task Force agreed with the NPF's assessment and requested that the NPF focus its initial review on: radio communications, 911 call taking and dispatch.

In January 2019, the NPF submitted an initial report regarding radio communications, 911 call taking and dispatch to the MSD Task Force. The report, *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County: A National Police Foundation Interim Review of the Impact of Communications Systems and Processes on the Response to the February 14, 2018 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting*, identified the communication challenges that effected the public safety response to the MSD shooting and presented recommendations to improve operations, systems and processes.

Also in January 2019, the NPF team submitted a follow-up memorandum in which it re-defined its scope of work based on the investigations and reviews that were still being conducted. The focus areas outlined in the memorandum included:

- Leadership, Coordination, Command and Control;
- Community resiliency and recovery;
- Broward County Public Schools and Law Enforcement Relations and Coordination;
- Fire/EMS Response and Coordination with Law Enforcement;
- First Responder Safety and Wellness;
- Public Information; and,
- School Security, Training, Communication, and Equipment.<sup>29</sup>

The Broward County Administrator and the MSD Task Force acknowledged that a comprehensive review could not be completed by the NPF and agreed to the revised scope of work.

### **Limitations of this Review**

Broward County and the MSD Task Force provided commendable access to documents and records, and provided introductions to government officials, public safety leaders, hospital administrators, mental health care providers, and community and non-profit organizations to assist the NPF assessment team in gathering information for this review. However, because of the various investigations and assessments detailed above, as the NPF assessment team continued its review—and despite the commitment and efforts of the Broward County Administrators and Task Force members – the assessment team was unable to gain access to all of the leaders and individuals necessary to complete a comprehensive review of the MSD shooting response and recovery.

Some agency/organization leaders declined to participate in the NPF review or to make their personnel available for interviews citing ongoing investigations, reviews, mental health or legal

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<sup>29</sup> National Police Foundation. (2018, June). "Police Foundation-Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School: After Action Review." Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

concerns. The leadership of the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) and the Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO) declined requests for interviews, and have not made their personnel available for interviews. The BCPS administration did not respond to NPF assessment team requests for interviews and documents in March and April 2019 nor did they allow their staff to formally participate in interviews and focus groups. This prevented the NPF assessment team from conducting an appropriate evaluation of school safety and preparedness, the impact of the shooting on MSD teachers and staff, and BCPS' recovery and resiliency efforts. It should be noted that BCPS engaged Safe Havens International (SHI) to conduct a comprehensive safety and preparedness assessment and has shared a redacted public version of the SHI report, *School Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Assessment for School Board of Broward County, Florida*.<sup>30</sup>

On January 11, 2019, Governor Ronald DeSantis replaced BSO Sheriff Israel with Gregory Tony. Neither Sheriffs Scott nor Tony provided the NPF assessment team access to former or current BSO leadership or personnel who responded to the MSD shooting. The BSO provided requested documents, but declined, on advice of counsel, to make any of their members available for interviews or focus groups with the NPF assessment team. The General Counsel cited:

“multiple ongoing investigations related to these events, including by the FDLE, the MSD Public Safety Commission, a statewide grand jury that is in the process of being impaneled, and most importantly there is a pending criminal and/or the criminal prosecution. Many of the persons that the NPF wishes to interview will be witnesses in one or more of the above investigations and/or of the criminal prosecution. Accordingly, while BSO will participate fully with the County's after action assessment, BSO will not be making our employees available for interview by the NPF until those investigations and the prosecution have concluded. BSO will continue to cooperate with information and document requests from the County or NPF that are part of the public record.”<sup>31</sup>

However, it should be noted that some senior members of Sheriff Israel's command staff agreed to and did meet and were interviewed by the NPF assessment team following their retirement or dismissal from the BSO.

Coral Springs police and fire leadership spoke with the NPF assessment team several times and provided a number of documents and relevant policies, but requested that the NPF assessment team not speak with individual police officers, firefighters, and medics who were on scene to avoid the potential of re-traumatization.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Safe Havens International, Inc. (2018, August). *Phase I Report: School Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness Assessment for School Board of Broward County, Florida*. Macon, GA: Safe Havens International, Inc. Retrieved from [http://bcpsagenda.browardschools.com/agenda/01522/Item%201G%20\(52079\)/SUPP\\_DOCS/Exhibits/Doc2.pdf](http://bcpsagenda.browardschools.com/agenda/01522/Item%201G%20(52079)/SUPP_DOCS/Exhibits/Doc2.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Email from General Counsel, BSO, to Assistant County Administrator, Broward County, March 27, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> NPF assessment team member phone call with CSPD employee, March 22, 2019.

The inability to interview individual fire, EMS, and law enforcement personnel prevented the NPF assessment team from being able to fully assess the impact of the incident and the mental health services provided immediately after, and in the months that have followed, the shooting. At the June 4, 2019 meeting of the MSDHS PSC, a BSO detective spoke about his mental wellness and that of other first responders:

***“I wish I could tell you that I was the consummate professional, who left there unaffected, and that this was something that you get used to in my line of work and the constant exposure, but this is not, and should not be anything that one gets used to. I am affected. We all are affected.”<sup>33</sup>***

The NPF assessment team believes that there are many first responders in need of continued mental health services and recommends that an independent third party conduct interviews, focus groups and/or surveys to evaluate the impact of the MSD shooting. The NPF and its mental health partners would like to conduct this important research.

The limitations identified prevented the NPF assessment team from holding important interviews and focus groups, reviewing some materials and resources, and completing the full scope of work agreed to in January 2019. This report does not discuss the Broward County Public Schools’ response to the shooting, its relationship and coordination with law enforcement, or school security, training, communications and equipment because the District did not provide the access necessary for the NPF to complete conduct its review.

The information, including the findings and recommendations, contained in this report are based on the information that was available to the NPF assessment team and focus on the areas identified below:

- 1) Leadership, Coordination, and Command and Control;
- 2) Community Resilience and Recovery;
- 3) Fire/EMS Response and Coordination with Law Enforcement; and,
- 4) Public Information in relation to the MSD shooting.

## Ongoing Investigations and Reviews

Several of the investigations and reviews of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting continue:

- The Florida State Attorney’s Office criminal investigation and prosecution of the suspect.

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<sup>33</sup> The Florida Channel. (2019, June 4). 6/4/19 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Part 2. Retrieved from <https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/6-4-19-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school-public-safety-commission-part-2/>

- The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission published its initial report on January 1, 2019 and continues to hold commission meetings to address the MSD shooting as well as school safety issues in the State of Florida.<sup>34</sup>
- The Florida Department of Law Enforcement’s (FDLE) investigation of the law enforcement response to the shooting. On June 4, 2019, the FDLE arrested former BSO Deputy Scot Peterson.<sup>35</sup>
- Since the appointment of Sheriff Tony and the continuing BSO Internal Affairs investigation, several former command staff, sworn personnel, and civilian employees have been terminated, resigned, or retired.

## Methodology

To conduct this review, the NPF assembled a team of subject matter experts with extensive experience in public safety leadership, operations, tactics and decision-making; school safety and security; mass violence and trauma; policy analysis; and, critical incident response. From May 2018 through May 2019, the NPF assessment team:

- conducted interviews and focus groups with public safety personnel, city and county elected officials and government employees, community organization representatives, mental health providers, MSD teachers, and community members;
- reviewed the [\*Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Initial Report\*](#) and monitored the Commission’s public meetings;
- reviewed additional AARs, and other materials produced by other organizations investigating/reviewing the incident or aspects thereof;
- reviewed materials including charters, policies, procedures, official AARs, mental wellness and recovery services provided, and other related reports on response and recovery;
- reviewed incident recovery and response data;
- examined open source media and social media related to the incident;
- researched national promising practices related to public communications, emergency preparedness planning and coordination, and recovery and resilience; and,
- studied AARs from previous mass violence attacks—specifically those following mass violence attacks on school campuses—to provide a basis for this report.

Based on the analysis of this body of information, the NPF assessment team developed the findings and recommendations contained in this report. A full detailed methodology can be found in Appendix B.

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<sup>34</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (n.d.). Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission: Commission Meetings. Retrieved from <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings>

<sup>35</sup> Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (2019, June 4). FDLE Arrests Scot Peterson for child neglect, negligence and perjury. Retrieved from <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/News/2019/June/FDLE-Arrests-Scot-Peterson-for-child-neglect,-negl>

## Report Organization

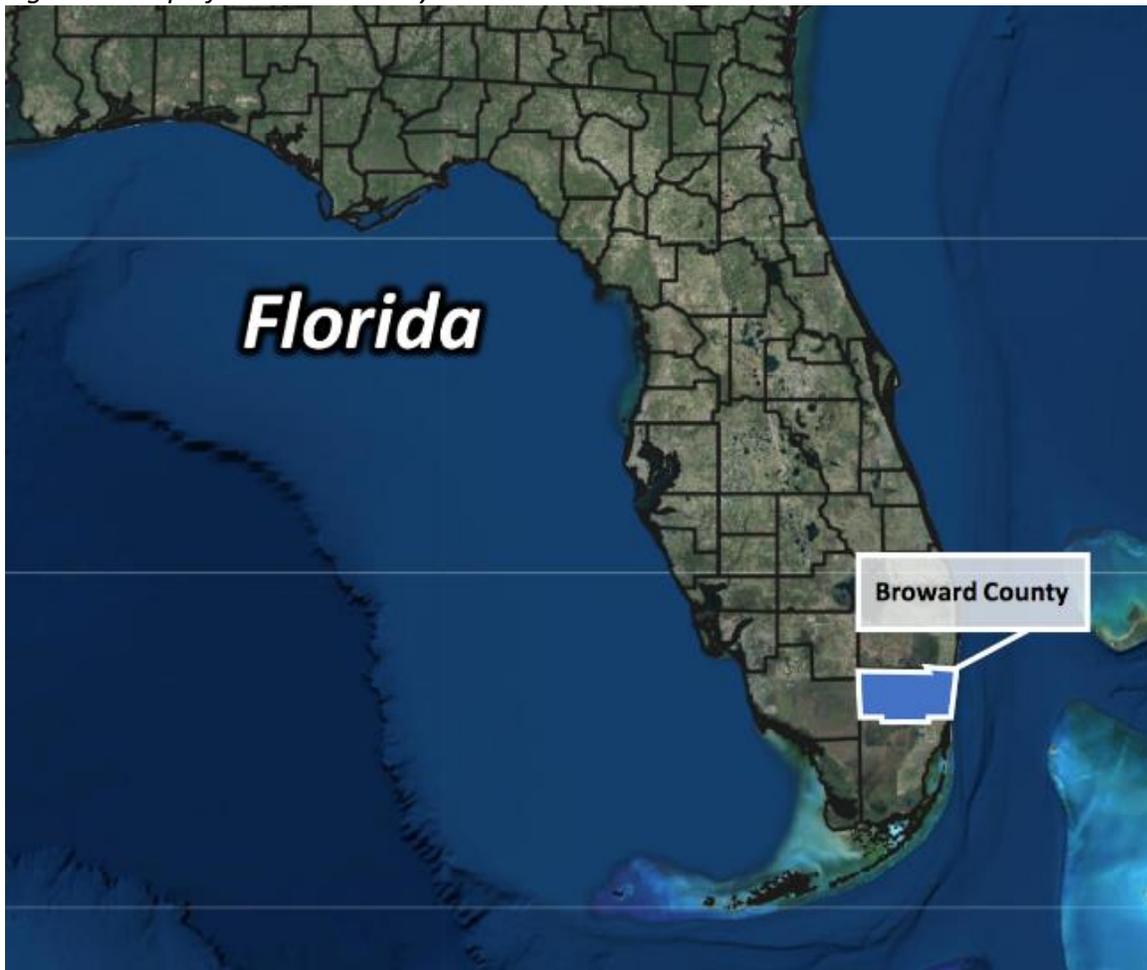
The following chapter provides an overview of Broward County and the major government agencies that played a role in the response to the MSD shooting. The chapter provides background information regarding Broward County, the Broward County Public Schools, the Broward County Sheriff's Office, and the 31 municipalities within the county, as well as an overview of the City of Parkland and its public safety services. Chapter 1 describes the structure and authority of Broward County government, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the different municipalities and organizations within Broward County as a whole during a critical incident. Chapter 2 assesses incident command, coordination, structure, and leadership within the context of the MSD shooting. A comparison is then made to national promising practices and the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Chapter 3 provides an overview of emergency communications and the public information process that was implemented in response to the shooting. Chapter 4 analyzes the mental health resources provided—highlighting the immediate, short-term, and long-term response. The final chapter summarizes the key themes identified during the review and areas for future consideration by Broward County and municipal government officials and community leaders.

## Background

### About Broward County

Broward County is located in southeastern Florida, and was formed in 1915 from portions of Dade and Miami Beach Counties.<sup>36</sup> In 2017, Broward County's total population was approximately 1,935,878 residents, with its population growing over 10 percent from 2010 to 2017.<sup>37</sup> The county is the second most populous in Florida and the seventh largest in size at 1,209 square miles.<sup>38</sup>

*Figure 1: Map of Broward County in Florida*



Source: Esri, Earthstar Geographics.

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<sup>36</sup> Broward County Historic Preservation Board. (n.d.). History of Broward County. Retrieved from <http://www.broward.org/History/Pages/BCHistory.aspx>

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). QuickFacts: Broward County, Florida. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/browardcountyflorida>

<sup>38</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (n.d.). History of the Broward Sheriff's Office. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Administration/Pages/History-of-the-Broward-Sheriff's-Office.aspx>

## Broward County Public Schools

The Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) Board is comprised of nine-members elected by countywide voters. The School Board “is responsible for the organization and control of the public schools of the District and is authorized by Florida Statutes to determine policies necessary for the effective operation and the general improvement of the school system.”<sup>39</sup> The School Board selects a Superintendent to serve, “as the executive officer of the district school board” and to oversee the day-to-day operations of the school district.<sup>40</sup>

The BCPS is the second largest school system in Florida and the sixth largest in the United States, with 234 public schools, approximately 36,375 employees, and approximately 271,517 students.<sup>41</sup> The district serves a diverse population of students—with approximately 51.2 percent White, 40.4 percent Black, 34.7 percent Hispanic, 3.8 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent Native American or Native Alaskan (0.7 percent) and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.2 percent)—from more than 200 countries who speak approximately 190 languages.<sup>42</sup> The school district also has the largest Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program in the nation<sup>43</sup> and has numerous Exceptional Student Learning Support programs to serve the approximately 32,000 students with a variety of emotional, behavioral, physical, and learning disabilities.<sup>44</sup>

## Broward County Sheriff’s Office

The Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO) is one of the largest fully accredited sheriff’s office in the United States.<sup>45</sup> The BSO has a total of more than 5,400 employees spread across operational, administrative, and support departments. The BSO is a full-service public safety agency that has the capacity to provide law enforcement, fire and emergency rescue, and dispatch services throughout Broward County.<sup>46</sup> Included in the 5,400 employees are approximately 2,800 certified deputies, more than 600 fire rescue personnel, and 447 communications personnel predominately organized into the Department of Law Enforcement (DLE), Department of Detention, and the Department of Fire Rescue (DFR).

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<sup>39</sup> School Board of Broward County. (2008, December 16). Policy 1005. “School Board- Responsibilities and Authority.” Retrieved from <https://web01.browardschools.com/sbbcpolicies/docs/1005.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Office of Talent Development. (2015, April 7). *Master Plan: Broward District School Police Department School Emergency Preparedness Program*. Broward County, FL: Broward County Public Schools. Retrieved from [https://www.browardschools.com/cms/lib/FL01803656/Centricity/Domain/13712/ic-mp/bcps\\_pd\\_EP.pdf](https://www.browardschools.com/cms/lib/FL01803656/Centricity/Domain/13712/ic-mp/bcps_pd_EP.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (2018). About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/domain/13954>

<sup>42</sup> The BCPS separates student demographics by race—White, Black, Asian, Native American or Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Multiracial—and by Ethnicity—Hispanic and Non-Hispanic. For more, see <https://www.browardschools.com/domain/13954>

<sup>43</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (2018). About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/domain/13954>

<sup>44</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (n.d.). Exceptional Student Learning Support (ESLS). Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/34158>

<sup>45</sup> Broward County Sheriff’s Office. (n.d.). Office of the Sheriff. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Administration/Pages/Office-Of-The-Sheriff.aspx>

<sup>46</sup> Broward County Sheriff’s Office. (n.d.). Inside the Broward Sheriff’s Office. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Pages/About-Us.aspx>

The BSO DLE provides full-time law enforcement services to the Broward County Courthouse, the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, areas of the Everglades and Port Everglades, and the unincorporated areas of the county—specifically in the northwest and central parts of Broward County.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the BSO DFR provides full-time fire suppression and fire protection—as well as Hazardous Materials, Air Rescue, Everglades Rescue, and Technical Rescue teams—throughout Broward County.<sup>48</sup> The BSO DFR also provides emergency medical services (EMS) to the unincorporated areas of Broward County.

In addition to the full-time services provided to the special and unincorporated areas, the BSO maintains various types of service agreements with incorporated cities and towns within Broward County. The BSO provides contracted law enforcement services to 13 incorporated jurisdictions—including the City of Parkland—and seven incorporated jurisdictions have contracts to receive only BSO DFR services.<sup>49</sup> This variability throughout the county results in a scattering of differing relationships between the BSO and local police and fire departments in the municipalities that have at least one of their own emergency services.

### **Municipalities in Broward County**

Broward County is comprised of 31 incorporated municipalities, including Coral Springs, Fort Lauderdale, and Parkland (see Figure 2).<sup>50</sup>

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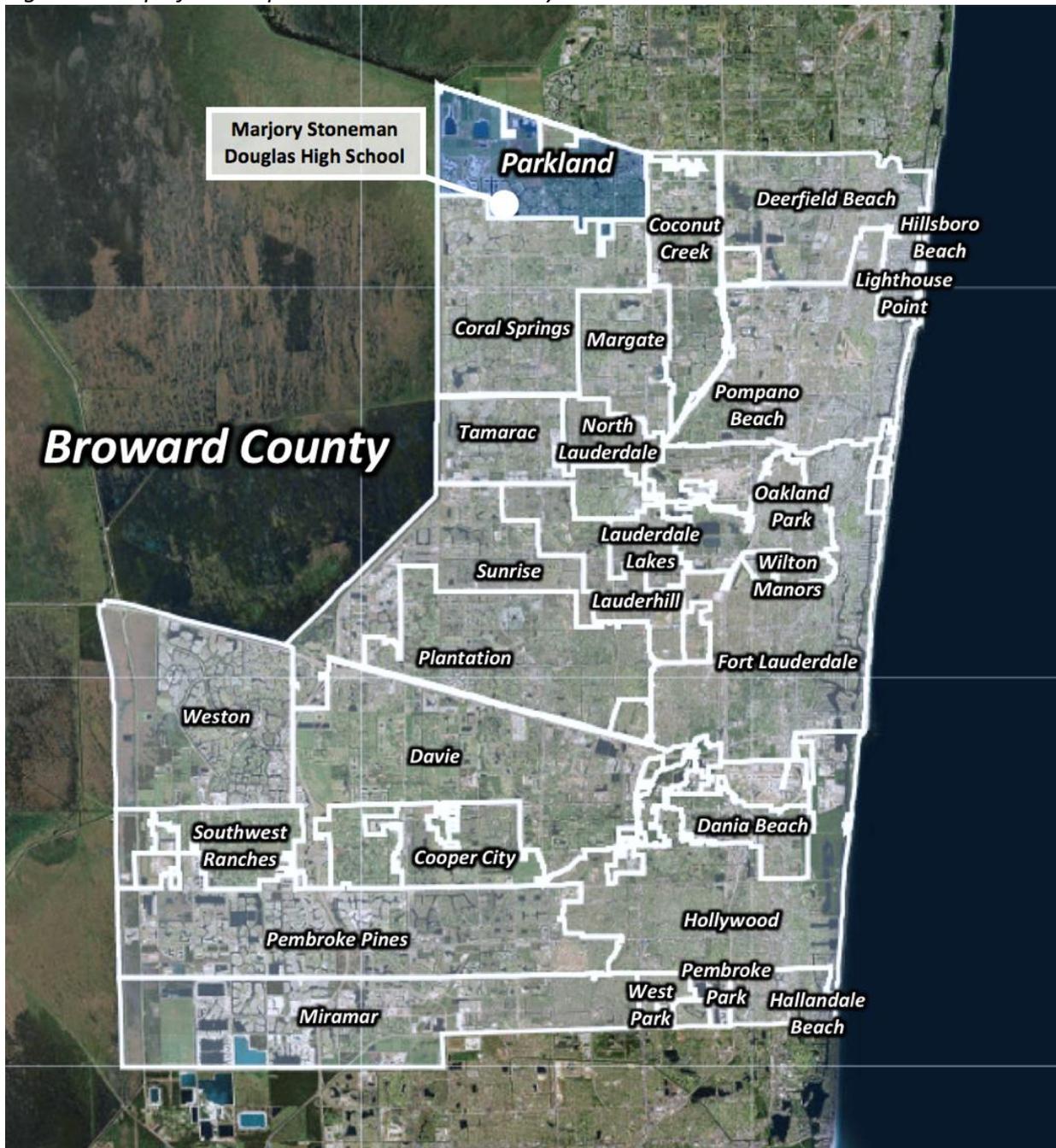
<sup>47</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (n.d.). Department of Law Enforcement. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/LE/Pages/Home.aspx>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Broward County Video Central. (2019, May 14). Commission Budget Workshop. Retrieved from [https://broward.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=3&clip\\_id=3815](https://broward.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=3815)

<sup>50</sup> County. (n.d.). Broward County Municipalities. Retrieved from <http://www.broward.org/Publications/ResidentsGuide/Pages/BrowardCountyMunicipalities.aspx>

Figure 2: Map of Municipalities in Broward County



Source: Esri, Earthstar Geographics, Broward County BMSD PRD EPGMD.

## About the City of Parkland

Incorporated in 1963, the City of Parkland, Florida, is a predominantly residential city of approximately 14.3 square miles located in the northwestern part of Broward County.<sup>51</sup> The city prides itself on multipurpose trails, numerous parks with sports field lighting and other amenities, and an equestrian center.<sup>52</sup> The western part of Parkland borders part of the Everglades Wildlife Management Area and the eastern part of the city is approximately 13 miles from numerous beaches that line the Atlantic Ocean.

Approximately 32,202 people live in Parkland, an almost 40 percent increase in population since 2010.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, almost one-third of the population (30.2 percent) of Parkland is under 18 years old.<sup>54</sup> To accommodate for the school-age population, five public schools and two private schools reside in Parkland.<sup>55</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) is the only public high school in Parkland and is the second largest high school in the Broward County Public School District. During the 2017-2018 school year, MSD had approximately 3,208 students from grades nine through twelve and 129 teachers.<sup>56</sup>

## Public Safety Services in Parkland

The City of Parkland contracts with the BSO for law enforcement services and contracts with the City of Coral Springs for fire/EMS services. In May 2019, the City of Parkland agreed to have all 911 calls originating within the city limits routed and delivered to the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center. However, the City asked that the project be postponed until a temporary solution for integrating the relevant CAD systems could be identified. The BSO, the City of Coral Springs, and the City of Parkland also reached a joint decision to have the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center provide dispatch services to the BSO deputies in the City of Parkland, in May 2019.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> City of Parkland. (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved from <https://www.cityofparkland.org/59/About-Us>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). QuickFacts: Parkland city, Florida. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/parklandcityflorida/PST045217>

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> City of Parkland. (n.d.). Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.cityofparkland.org/628/Schools>

<sup>56</sup> Diaz, J. (2018, February 14). Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland: Facts about the site of mass shooting. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-sb-stoneman-marjory-douglas-high-school-facts-20180214-story.html#>

<sup>57</sup> Tony, Gregory, Clyde Parry, and Nancy Morando. (2019, May 6). Joint Decision – CS PSAP. Provided by the Broward County Assistant County Administrator to NPF assessment team members electronically on July 8, 2019.

## Police

In February 2004, the Parkland City Commission disbanded its police department and began contracting with the BSO for comprehensive law enforcement services to the city. The Parkland BSO District oversees all law enforcement and code enforcement throughout the City of Parkland.<sup>58</sup> The original contract between Parkland and the BSO was signed for a five-year period (expired in 2009). The contract was renewed for another five years (expired in 2014) after the initial period of performance. At the end of September 2014, the City of Parkland chose to operate on a month-to-month basis with the BSO, until August 2015, when the current five-year agreement (which expires in September 2019) was signed. As of May 2019, based on the recommendation of the Center for Public Safety Management, which was hired as a consultant by the City of Parkland in June 2018 to, “identif[y] a series of questions to be addressed regarding security within the city as well as the delivery of law enforcement services to Parkland,”<sup>59</sup> the City of Parkland is planning to renew the agreement.<sup>60</sup>

The 2015 agreement established the overall Parkland BSO staffing structure that was in place during the MSD shooting (see Figure 3 below), including a minimum staffing of “one (1) Patrol Deputy Sheriff to cover each Patrol Zone Shift,” and shift schedule—currently 12-hour shifts—for BSO personnel in Parkland.<sup>61</sup> It also provided for Parkland to receive a number of services, “to the extent that such services would be provided by BSO to any and all other municipalities in Broward County that request such service irrespective of whether or not the CITY has a contract with BSO.” In return, the City of Parkland provided the BSO with a Police Service Center to use as a district station in the city.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> City of Parkland. (n.d.). Police Services (Parkland BSO District). Retrieved from <https://www.cityofparkland.org/878/Police-Services-Parkland-BSO-District>

<sup>59</sup> Center for Public Safety Management. April 2019. Security Review Report. Provided by the Broward County Assistant County Administrator to the NPF assessment team via email on May 15, 2019.

<sup>60</sup> Huriash, L. (2019, May 3). Parkland decides to keep Broward Sheriff’s Office after Stoneman Douglas massacre. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-ne-parkland-consultant-sheriff-office-20190503-story.html>

<sup>61</sup> City of Parkland. (2014, August 12). Resolution No. 2015-90. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Administration/MunicipalContracts/City%20of%20Parkland%20-%20DLE%20Services%20-%20100114.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Figure 3: BSO Staffing Structure in Parkland

Position	Number of Staff
Captain	1
Executive Officer/Lieutenant	1
Deputy Sheriff Sergeants	5
Deputy Sheriffs	22
Deputy Sheriff Detectives	3
School Resource Deputies/Deputy Sheriff	5
Full-Time Civilian Code Enforcement Officers	2
Community Service Aides	2
Administrative Specialist	1

Source: City of Parkland. (2014, August 12). Resolution No. 2015-90. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Administration/MunicipalContracts/City%20of%20Parkland%20-%20DLE%20Services%20-%20100114.pdf>

In fiscal year 2017, (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017) the BSO responded to 20,025 calls-for-service in the City of Parkland.<sup>63</sup>

### Fire/EMS

The City of Coral Springs began providing EMS services to the City of Parkland in 1996. In 2004, the two cities entered into an agreement to expand the services provided by Coral Springs to include fire. In August 2015, the City of Parkland approved a five-year contract to enhance the partnership that provided fire and emergency medical services with the City of Coral Springs, leading to the creation of the Coral Springs–Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD).<sup>64</sup> Three of the eight CSPFD stations are located in the City of Parkland. In fiscal year 2017, the CSPFD responded to 15,137 calls-for-service, of which 2,541 (16.8 percent) were located within the City of Parkland.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Broward County Sheriff’s Office. (2018). Proposed Budget: Fiscal Year 2018/2019. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriff.org/Administration/Documents/BudgetBooks/FY%202018-19%20Proposed%20Budget%20Book.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Sivasankaran, A. (2015, August 3). Springs inks fire-EMS contract with Parkland. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/fl-cspf-firecontract-0805-20150803-story.html>

<sup>65</sup> Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department. (2017). Coral Springs Parkland Fire Department: Annual Report Fiscal Year 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.coral springs.org/government/other-departments-and-services/fire/about-us/annual-report>

## Chapter 1: Broward County Governance and Roles and Responsibilities

The Broward County response and recovery efforts following the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) shooting have been impacted considerably by the county’s governance structure. The organization of the county, the oversight and accountability structure, and the level of cooperation and coordination between the relevant stakeholders within Broward County, centers on independence and localized control to the detriment of strong county governance and jurisdiction for the purposes of enhancing public safety. This chapter provides background information about the governance structure of Broward County, how the Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO) and the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) systems are incorporated into the county structure, the interaction between Broward County and the City of Parkland. The chapter also describes the roles and responsibilities of each agency—based on their Comprehensive Emergency Response Plans (CEMPs)—in the response to a mass violence event, such as the MSD shooting on February 14, 2018.

### Broward County Governance

The Broward County governance structure is designed to provide significant deference and oversight to independent municipalities, the elected sheriff, and the elected school board members versus county government employees. The county charter outlines the day-to-day operations of the county and the extent of the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the county commission and county government staff, but also significantly limits the extent of the county’s reach.<sup>66</sup>

### Broward County Government

A county commission with nine members who are elected by geographic district for four-year terms governs Broward County.<sup>67</sup> The commission members annually elect one among their number to be the mayor, who serves as the county’s representative and ceremonial dignitary. The county commission also appoints a county administrator, who is responsible to the commission for the administration of county matters including the day-to-day administration of county departments, divisions, offices, and agencies.<sup>68</sup>

### The Broward County Sheriff’s Office and the Broward County Public Schools

The BSO and the BCPS Board are considered independent entities and do not fall under the purview of the county commission, county administrator, or the county mayor. While the county commission is responsible for providing finances and facilities for the BSO and approving the BSO budget each year, neither the commission nor the county administrator has any policy or

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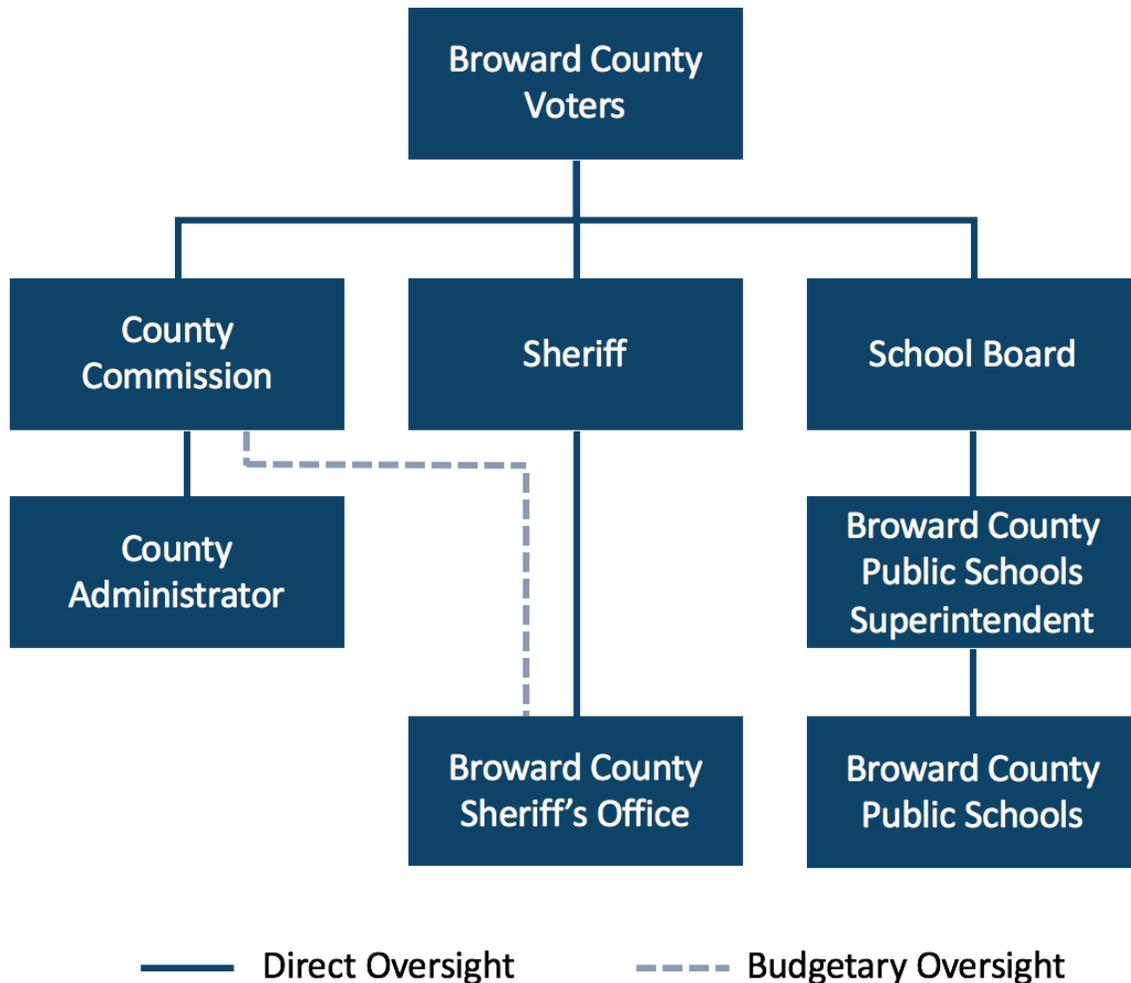
<sup>66</sup> Broward County. (2016, November 8). Charter of Broward County FL. Retrieved from <http://www.broward.org/Charter/Documents/BC-Charter.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

procedural oversight over the BSO, even in the unincorporated areas of the county. The county commission and county administrator also have no authority over the BCPS, including its budget; policies and procedures; the BCPS board, superintendent, or any of the administrators; or, safety and security on campuses. Additionally, BCPS staff and BSO personnel are each covered by their own human resources policies and departments, which are separate from the Broward County Human Resources Department that covers Broward County government employees.

Figure 4: Broward County Organizational Chart



This structure has created a system in which operational silos exist and agencies often compete for limited funds and voter approval for new taxes and income streams.

## Broward County and Municipalities

Each municipality in Broward County operates under the principle of Home Rule, which localizes traditional governance roles, responsibilities, and authorities. Municipalities have their own charters that address organizational structure, governance, roles and responsibilities. The charter for the City of Parkland exemplifies the considerable deference provided to the city over any policy or ordinance established by Broward County, noting, “The powers of the City under this Charter shall be construed liberally in favor of the City and a specific mention of particular powers in the Charter shall not be construed as limiting in any way the general powers cited in this Article.”<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the Broward County charter indicates:

“Any County ordinance in conflict with a Municipal ordinance shall not be effective within the Municipality to the extent that a conflict exists regardless of whether such Municipal ordinance was adopted or enacted before or after the County ordinance...In the event a County ordinance and a Municipal ordinance shall cover the same subject matter without conflict, both the Municipal ordinance and the County ordinance shall be effective.”<sup>70</sup>

Under Home Rule each municipality determines how it will provide public safety services to their citizens. The City of Parkland contracts with the BSO for law enforcement services and with the CSPFD to receive fire/EMS services.

## Roles and Responsibilities in a Mass Shooting in Parkland

Broward County and the City of Parkland each have a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) that provides direction for all relevant stakeholders in the event of disasters. At the time of the shooting, neither of the CEMPs included protocols for responding to incidents within their city/county limits that occur on BCPS property or for coordinating the response with BCPS security personnel. The Broward County CEMP identified terrorism and mass migration as the two “Most Significant Hazards of Concern for Broward County,”<sup>71</sup> and the City of Parkland CEMP assessed “Civil Disturbance and Terrorism,” as low risk. Neither of the CEMPs included a mention of an active shooter or mass violence incidents that did not meet the definition of terrorism.<sup>72</sup> The BCPS had a district-wide safety plan and each school had a safety plan and emergency code procedures.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> City of Parkland. (1982, November 2). Home Rule Charter of the City, Ordinance No. 70. Retrieved from [https://www.cityofparkland.org/DocumentCenter/View/429/city\\_charter091207?bidId=](https://www.cityofparkland.org/DocumentCenter/View/429/city_charter091207?bidId=)

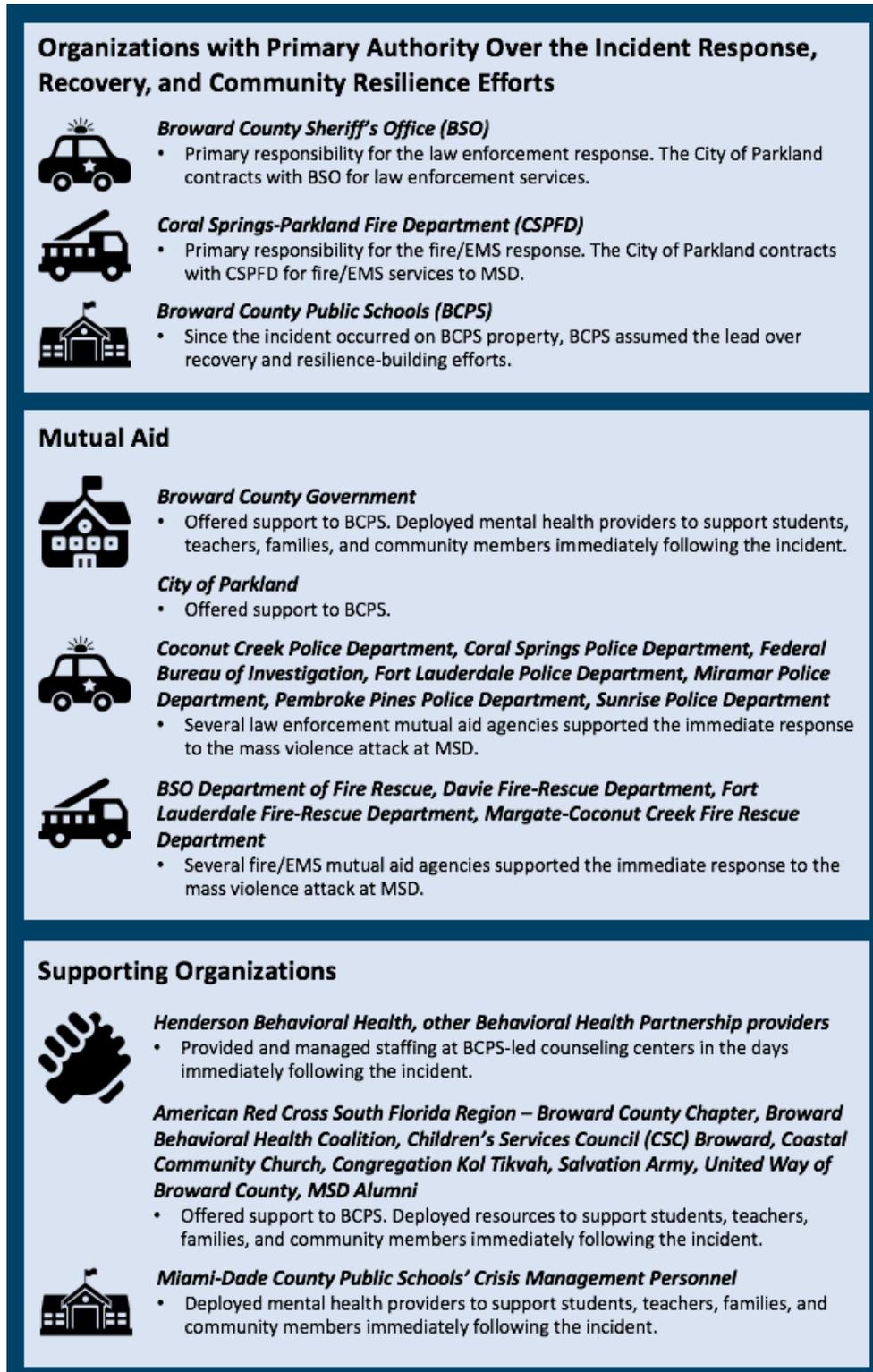
<sup>70</sup> Broward County. (2016, November 8). Charter of Broward County FL. Retrieved from <http://www.broward.org/Charter/Documents/BC-Charter.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Broward County. (2015, September 15). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Broward County, Florida: Broward County Emergency Management.

<sup>72</sup> City of Parkland. (2017, May). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Parkland, FL: City of Parkland.

<sup>73</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (n.d.). School Emergency Guide for Parents. Retrieved from [https://www.browardschools.com/cms/lib/FL01803656/Centricity/Domain/1942/Parent%20Emergency%20Guide\\_fnl.pdf](https://www.browardschools.com/cms/lib/FL01803656/Centricity/Domain/1942/Parent%20Emergency%20Guide_fnl.pdf)

Figure 5: Organizations Involved in the Incident Response, Recovery, and Community Resilience Efforts



Note: This list is not exhaustive, as limited access to certain individuals and agencies prevented the NPF assessment team from being able to verify a complete list.

## Broward County Government

Under the Broward County CEMP, the County Commission has the authority to “declare, limit and terminate a state of emergency in all or part of Broward County.”<sup>74</sup> The CEMP also allows for the establishment of the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) at the discretion of the Director of the Broward Emergency Management Division and with the concurrence of the County Administrator—which may be done prior to, in conjunction with, or after the establishment of a Municipal Emergency Operations Center (MEOC) by one of the municipalities within Broward County.<sup>75</sup>

However, the County CEMP also follows the principle of Home Rule established in the County charter. The County CEMP places much of the responsibility for responding to natural and manmade disasters on local/municipal governments and acknowledges the presence of other emergency operations centers. The CEMP notes, “each level of government will accomplish the functions for which it is responsible, requesting assistance from the next higher level of government only after resources at that level are clearly inadequate to cope with the effects of the situation.”<sup>76</sup>

The CEMP addresses coordination between the CEOC and similar bodies established by individual municipalities, noting, “To ensure coordination of resources and requests for assistance, direct communications will be established between the CEOC and MEOCs/Command Posts. A municipal representative is assigned to the CEOC to coordinate emergency operations with their respective municipality.”<sup>77</sup> The County CEMP also notes that those centers “will communicate and may provide their respective representative in the CEOC with an ongoing status of operations.”<sup>78</sup>

## The City of Parkland

The City of Parkland also has a CEMP, “to document and detail its policies and operational concepts to be used during emergency response operations, as well as the organizational responsibilities for the plan implementation and maintenance.”<sup>79</sup> The CEMP provides city personnel the authority to activate the EOC, stating “The City will activate its emergency operations center and its Incident Management Team to respond to the disaster needs of the community,” including: “Whenever an emergency situation, a special situation, or event in the jurisdiction requires inter-agency coordination for additional resources.”<sup>80</sup> It also assigns the City Manager the responsibility of Incident Commander (IC) to coordinate field operations at the

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<sup>74</sup> Broward County. (2015, September 15). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Broward County, Florida: Broward County Emergency Management.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> City of Parkland. (2017, May). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Parkland, FL: City of Parkland.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

scene of an incident within city limits.<sup>81</sup> The IC is then responsible for notifying the emergency response team of any incident that may meet the conditions of EOC activation, and if the EOC is activated, working with the Incident Management Team to coordinate actions to, “provide additional resources to incident scenes, to allocate resources among multiple scenes, and to coordinate municipal operations with other jurisdictions, higher levels of government, and contractor[s] providing disaster support resources.”<sup>82</sup>

The CEMP also takes into account that the city relies upon contracted law enforcement and fire/EMS services, but states, “The City has coordinated closely with all contract service providers to ensure that the emergency preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities can be effectively implemented during times of disaster.”<sup>83</sup> Despite this assurance, the CEMP also notes, “The City does not have direct management control over either the Sheriff’s Office or Fire Rescue resources,” which limits the ability of city commissioners and government employees to direct first responder resources and/or personnel in response to a critical incident.<sup>84</sup>

### **Broward County Public Schools**

The BCPS maintains a district-wide safety plan and also requires each school to review and update its safety plans and emergency code procedures on an annual basis. Although the plans are provided to administrators, neither the district-wide plan nor the plan for Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) are available online. It should be noted that the NPF assessment team was unable to review the plans and their requirements for coordination with law enforcement, municipal and/or county resources in the event of a critical incident on BCPS property.

While the BCPS does have a Special Investigative Unit (SIU), which serves as the law enforcement and investigative agency; a school district Fire Chief on the Environmental Health and Safety Team; and a Chief of the Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Office, each school is afforded the opportunity to contract with a municipal law enforcement agency, the BSO, or a combination of the two for the presence of armed law enforcement personnel on campus. Similarly, fire/EMS services are provided by the agency with primary jurisdiction where the school is located. For instance, since MSD is located within the City of Parkland, the Coral Springs–Parkland Fire Department is responsible for providing fire/EMS services and the school administrators chose to contract with the BSO for a school resource deputy (SRD). Also, because Parkland contracts with BSO for law enforcement services, BSO was the primary law enforcement agency responsible for providing general and emergency services to MSD.

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 2: Command Coordination, Structure, and Leadership

This chapter analyzes command coordination, structure, and leadership challenges during the response to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) shooting. The chapter concludes with findings and recommendations regarding these areas as related to the MSD shooting.

### Command Coordination and Structure

An effective, efficient, and coordinated command structure is critical during the response to a complex incident involving multiple phases and jurisdictions.<sup>85</sup> As demonstrated during the response to a mobile mass shooter in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in February 2016, the ability to immediately establish incident command at each of the three shooting locations significantly improved communication and coordination across scenes and among responding agencies, contributing to the timely arrest of the suspect and his successful prosecution.<sup>86</sup>

Operational and jurisdictional decisions can be difficult during routine incidents. The challenges become magnified during the response to an incident of the magnitude and complexity of the MSD shooting. When critical incidents occur, decisions regarding which agency should lead the response, which agencies and organizations should play a supporting role, and what each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities are, depend on pre-established inter-agency agreements, protocols, and exercises. Therefore, a command structure that can seamlessly integrate relevant stakeholders and be scaled as an event ebbs and flows is essential to an effective critical incident response.<sup>87</sup>

### National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS)

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security doctrine that “guides all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and the private sector to work together to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from incidents.”<sup>88</sup> NIMS provides stakeholders across the community with a shared vocabulary,

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<sup>85</sup> Police Foundation. (2015). *Police Under Attack: Southern California Law Enforcement Response to the Attacks by Christopher Dorner*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Police-Under-Attack.pdf>

<sup>86</sup> Straub, F., B. Cowell, J. Zeunik, and B. Gorban. (2017, April). *Managing the Response to a Mobile Mass Shooting: A Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Safety Response to the February 20, 2016, Mass Shooting Incident*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation. Retrieved from [https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PF\\_Managing-the-Response-to-a-Mobile-Mass-Shooting\\_5.10.17.pdf](https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/PF_Managing-the-Response-to-a-Mobile-Mass-Shooting_5.10.17.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Straub, F., J. Cambria, J. Castor, B. Gorban, B. Meade, D. Waltemeyer, and J. Zeunik. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience: A critical incident review of the Orlando public safety response to the attack on the Pulse nightclub*. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Orlando-Pulse.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2017, October). *National Incident Management System: Third Edition*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved from [https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1508151197225-ced8c60378c3936adb92c1a3ee6f6564/FINAL\\_NIMS\\_2017.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1508151197225-ced8c60378c3936adb92c1a3ee6f6564/FINAL_NIMS_2017.pdf)

structure, and processes to coordinate and deploy resources effectively and efficiently. Because it is based on authorities, management structures, communication capabilities and protocols, and roles and responsibilities, NIMS can easily be adapted to fit the structure of any jurisdiction. Additionally, NIMS is scalable, so it can be leveraged to respond to incidents from daily traffic crashes to major natural and manmade disasters.

According to NIMS, local authorities generally handle the response to most incidents using their communications systems, dispatch centers, and incident personnel, but the response to larger and more complex incidents can rapidly expand to multijurisdictional and multidisciplinary efforts. A standard incident command and coordination structure allows for the effective integration of external resources in four key areas: 1) tactical activities; 2) incident support; 3) policy guidance and senior-level decision-making; and, 4) outreach and communication with the public.<sup>89</sup> Tactical activities include mutual aid agreements and understanding of one another's roles and responsibilities to provide assistance with necessary resources on scene during and immediately after the response to an incident. The development of a comprehensive tactical response strategy that is directed by a coordinated and collaborative unified command and control structure is critical to responding to and resolving complex events involving multiple partners across multiple jurisdictions—generally conducted by law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies who run their individual emergency operations out of agency-specific incident command posts, which share information with and receive direction from, a single Unified Command Center (UCC).<sup>90</sup> Incident support and operational and strategic coordination, resource acquisition, and information gathering and analysis—typically conducted at an emergency operations center (EOC)—provides further support to responding agencies and their tactical activities on scene. Outreach and communication—through the establishment of a joint information center (JIC)—allows for relevant stakeholders to establish and coordinate information sharing with the media and the public to ensure unity of message.<sup>91</sup>

According to the Incident Command System (ICS) within NIMS, “ICS specifies an organizational structure for incident management that integrates and coordinates a combination of procedures, personnel, equipment, facilities, and communications.”<sup>92</sup> The composition of the UCC depends on factors including incident location and the nature of the incident. For example, in the response to a school shooting, a district official—either a school or district administrator or school law enforcement representative—can be included in the UCC. Likewise, as the response to an incident becomes more complex, the ICS allows for leaders from the appropriate stakeholder organizations to be effectively and efficiently incorporated and provide necessary assistance.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>91</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2017, October). *National Incident Management System*.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

## Structure in Broward

The unique structure of Broward County government, the Broward County Public Schools, the Broward County Sheriff's Office, other first responder agencies, as well as individual municipalities within the county affected the overall response to—and recovery from—the MSD shooting.

During the response to the MSD shooting, the command and coordination structure was based on the emergency response structure in place in the City of Parkland. As the law enforcement agency with primary jurisdiction in the City of Parkland, the BSO led the law enforcement response and the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD) led the emergency medical services (EMS) response. MSD and BCPS administration assumed responsibility for the mental health response to MSD students, staff, and their families. The BCPS also coordinated with the first responder agencies on sharing public information regarding the incident following the shooting. Without an effective multi-agency/jurisdiction NIMS-based incident command structure, challenges were experienced in deploying BSO, CSPFD, and CSPD personnel and resources on scene. The BSO did not have an effective incident command structure or tactical deployment protocol in place.<sup>93</sup> Confusion over the location of the command post, the staging area, and the tactical operations center, as well as the incident command structure on scene also contributed to intra-and inter-agency communication challenges.<sup>94</sup> Communication challenges affected situational awareness, operations and determinations regarding the activation and utilization of the County and municipal EOCs.<sup>95</sup> Because neither the municipal emergency operations center (MEOC) in Parkland, nor the county emergency operations center (CEOC) in Broward County, were fully utilized despite being activated, there were challenges with senior-level decision making, incorporating mutual aid, community partners and available resources, during and immediately following the response to the MSD shooting. The disconnected command and control structure also impacted the development and distribution of coordinated and consistent public messaging in the hours and days following the incident.

## Response to the MSD Shooting

From the immediate response to the MSD shooting, there were challenges amongst on-scene leadership. Incident commanders from the primary first responder agencies experienced difficulties locating and communicating with one another, in part because of uncertainty identifying the incident commanders from each agency.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Broward County Video Central. (2019, May 14). Commission Budget Workshop. Retrieved from [https://broward.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=3&clip\\_id=3815](https://broward.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=3815)

<sup>94</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*.

<sup>95</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with Broward County Emergency Management staff, June 26, 2018. NPF assessment team focus group with City of Parkland government officials, April 17, 2019.

<sup>96</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*.

The CSPFD arrived on scene at 2:28 pm, with members of their command staff arriving and setting up their initial incident command post at 2:29 pm at Holmberg Road and Pine Island Road (on the northwest side of the campus, as indicated in Figure 6 below). The BSO established a staging area at approximately 2:34 pm, about 13 minutes after the first shots were fired, on Coral Springs Drive, which was in a separate location from where the BSO incident commander was located—closer to the CSPFD triage location.<sup>97</sup> The CSPD established its own incident command post near where BSO deputies had staged on Coral Springs Drive at approximately 2:53 pm.<sup>98</sup> BSO maintained two separate command areas until approximately 3:18 pm, when BSO’s mobile command bus arrived on scene.<sup>99</sup> Unified command was then established between a BSO colonel and CSPD captain —approximately 58 minutes from the time when the first shots were fired.<sup>100</sup>

Figure 6. MSDHS Campus Map



Sources: ArcGIS, State of Florida, USDA FSA, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, CNES/Airbus DS. Labels taken from Broward County Sheriff’s Office, (2018, April 24), Marjory Stoneman Douglas Shooting Overview, retrieved from <http://www.broward.org/Documents/MSD%20Overview%20Public%204-24-18.pdf>.

Additionally, according to some CSPFD personnel, after arriving on scene, they began setting up rescue task force (RTF) teams to deploy inside Building 12; however, the BSO commander advised the building had to be rendered safe before the RTF could be deployed. After the initial ask, the

<sup>97</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

CSPFD focused on setting up a triage/medical treatment area at the intersection of Pine Island Road and Holmberg Road, along with a CSPFD command post and staging area. The CSPFD RTF teams repeatedly indicated their readiness and ability to enter Building 12 to provide medical treatment—these offers were denied by the BSO commander.<sup>101</sup> It is important to note that despite the fact that the RTF was not deployed into Building 12, BSO Fire Rescue paramedics, trained as members of the SWAT team, were inside Building 12 and assisted in rendering aid. Medical staff from Broward Health North and Broward Emergency Medical Center—where the majority of the seriously wounded victims of the MSD shooting were treated—indicated that the emergency aid rendered by law enforcement inside the building and the fire rescue personnel outside and during transportation saved numerous lives.<sup>102</sup>

The lack of coordination among public safety personnel on scene impacted, to some extent, the process of clearing Building 12. BSO special weapons and tactics (SWAT) personnel “used a color-coded glow stick method to mark certain rooms,” in Building 12, but with the movement of law enforcement personnel and students and teachers being evacuated, some of the glow sticks were kicked out of place.<sup>103</sup> This created confusion among other law enforcement personnel who were also inside and helping to evacuate teachers and students from Building 12.<sup>104</sup>

After the suspect was apprehended and businesses and homes in the area were able to lift their lockdowns, the Coral Springs City Manager called an executive at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center (Marriott), to ask if the Marriott was available to serve as the FRC. The executive indicated that the convention center was not in use and the Marriott was designated as the FRC.<sup>105</sup> Representatives from local law enforcement agencies—including the BSO and the CSPD—deployed to the FRC to conduct victim and witness interviews, to coordinate security, and control access to the FRC.<sup>106</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) also deployed agents to assist with collecting statements and offered to assist with the delivery of next-of-kin notifications.

### **Challenges Incorporating Mutual Aid/Relevant Stakeholders**

Several community-based organizations sought to provide direct assistance to individuals affected by MSD shooting, while others offered to provide financial and personnel support behind-the-scenes. However, because an overarching structure to coordinate personnel, resources, and capabilities—immediately following the shooting and for the days that followed—was never fully established, there were numerous missed opportunities. The lack of a

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<sup>101</sup> Statement by CSPFD commander, February 14, 2018. Provided to NPF assessment team, June 5, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with Broward Health North medical staff, August 24, 2018 and Broward Emergency Medical Center staff, September 19, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

<sup>106</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

coordinated leadership structure impacted the ability to identify needs and match community service providers to address them; coordinate the wide variety of resources and support available; and, to effectively scale personnel and resources as the incident evolved beyond the acute phase.

While some organizations—including the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army—that had experience responding to emergency situations immediately deployed to the CEOC and waited for further instructions or requests from the scene, others deployed directly to the scene or did not deploy at all.<sup>107</sup> As time progressed, and no guidance was provided regarding resource deployment, some agencies took it upon themselves to deploy their resources at the scene and other nearby locations.<sup>108</sup> For example, the Salvation Army activated their mobile canteen for first responders, as they had after Hurricane Irma and the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport shooting.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, the Broward County Chapter of the American Red Cross set up a tent near MSD with water and snacks for first responders and also deployed to the family reunification center (FRC) to provide support to the MSD students, staff, and their families.<sup>110</sup>

An executive at the Marriott hotel noted, there were people from community organizations dropping off blankets, food, water, and other resources, and without the presence of law enforcement officers there would not have been any organization.<sup>111</sup>

## **Moving Forward**

The Broward County Commission, the Parkland Commission, and the public safety agencies interviewed by the NPF assessment team all expressed commitment to strengthening their collective response to critical incidents, including active shooters. In this regard, Broward County and Parkland should expand their emergency management plans to include active shooter incidents in public buildings and venues. Large-scale, multi-agency training exercises that focus on the response to a mass violence incident should be held on a regular basis. In addition to public safety and government agencies, these exercises should also include community service providers and relevant private sector organizations.

Many of the community-based organizations that were involved in the response to the MSD shooting expressed their desire to identify lessons learned from this incident and national promising practices.<sup>112</sup> Leaders from the Broward County Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the United Way are members of the Broward County Commission MSD After-

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<sup>107</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community organization employee, April 15, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Salvation Army employee, April 15, 2019.

<sup>109</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Salvation Army employee, April 15, 2019.

<sup>110</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Red Cross employee, April 18, 2019.

<sup>111</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

<sup>112</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community organization leaders, April 15-17, 2019.

Action Task Force and are taking a proactive role in planning and preparing for critical incidents in Broward County. For example, since the MSD shooting, the Broward County Chapter of the American Red Cross has begun to work with local law enforcement agencies and other community-based organizations to develop emergency communications strategies in preparation for future events.<sup>113</sup> The goal of formalizing emergency coordination processes is to reduce duplication of efforts and expand the collective reach of community-based resources during emergency situations.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the Salvation Army has hired an Emergency Disaster Coordinator to foster and maintain relationships with government and first responder agencies and emergency preparedness stakeholders throughout Broward County.<sup>115</sup>

## Leadership

In response to the 2013 Boston Marathon, leaders of public safety and government agencies took charge of specific aspects of the response, but no individual or agency assumed command of the overall event. The leaders of the relevant agencies exhibited a level of coordination and inter-agency understanding and awareness that eliminated competitiveness and posturing between agencies and elected officials. According to the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative, a joint program of the Harvard School of Public Health and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Center for Public Leadership (2014), the Boston Marathon response was characterized by the principles of “swarm intelligence.” A promising practice that the NPF subsequently observed in the response to the 2016 terrorist attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, and the 2015 terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California.<sup>116</sup>

The principles of swarm intelligence include:

- “1. An overriding object that forges unity of mission and connectivity of action...
2. A spirit of generosity that rallies groups and individuals to assist one another and overcome constraints of resources, know-how, or tools to achieve the paramount mission...
3. Respect for the responsibilities of others, described as ‘staying in one’s lane’ while assisting others to succeed in their lane to accomplish mission critical duties and tasks...
4. Neither taking undue credit nor pointing blame among key players, oftentimes portrayed as ‘checking your ego at the door’...

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<sup>113</sup> NPF assessment team interview with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

<sup>114</sup> NPF assessment team interview with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community organization leader, April 15, 2019.

<sup>116</sup> Marcus, L.J., E. McNulty, B.C. Dorn, and E. Goralnick. (2014). *Crisis Meta-Leadership Lessons From the Boston Marathon Bombings Response: The Ingenuity of Swarm Intelligence*. Boston, MA: The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Retrieved from <https://cdn2.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2014/04/April-2014-Prelim-Report-Dist1.pdf>

5. Genuine interpersonal trust and respect developed well before the event so that existing and dependable leadership relationships, integrity and camaraderie can be leveraged during the event, often described as ‘don’t wait for an emergency to exchange business cards.’”<sup>117</sup>

The unique structure, authorities, roles and responsibilities of Broward County government, the BCPS, the BSO, other first responder agencies, and individual municipalities within the county effected how each organization interacted in response to the MSD active shooter incident. Although the overriding unity of mission was to provide for the well being of MSD students, staff, their families, and the larger community, there were instances of individual agencies acting independently of each other in several phases of the response.

It is recommended that because of the nature of Broward County government, and the autonomous 31 municipalities within the County, that greater efforts be made to identify a leadership structure within the context of NIMS that could be put in place, if and when, natural and/or manmade crisis overwhelm the capability of one governmental entity. Using the principals of swarm intelligence, individual authorities and jurisdictions could remain in place while effective pre-plans could be implemented to facilitate resource allocations, inter-agency coordination and collaboration.

## Command Coordination, Structure, and Leadership Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 2.1: The Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO), the Coral Springs–Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD), the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), and other mutual aid agencies that responded to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) lacked an effective, efficient, and coordinated command structure.** During the response to the MSD shooting, the BSO led the law enforcement response, the CSPFD led the emergency medical services response, and the MSD and BCPS administration assumed responsibility for the mental health response to MSD students, staff, and their families and coordinated with the first responder agencies on sharing information. At times, agencies operated independently of the others and outside of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) model.

**Recommendation 2.1.1: As soon as possible and practical during an incident, a unified command center of all primary first responder agencies should be established to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.** Without an effective NIMS-based incident command structure and delays in establishing a unified command center, there were challenges in deploying all the available BSO, CSPFD, and CSPD first responder resources and personnel on scene and communicating with supporting stakeholders. This impacted

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<sup>117</sup> Marcus, et al. (2014). *Crisis Meta-Leadership Lessons From the Boston Marathon Bombings Response*. Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

decisions to activate the emergency operations centers in Parkland and Broward County, which would have provided additional coordination and support to the response.

**Recommendation 2.1.2: Broward County should work with the Broward League of Cities and relevant stakeholders to develop an all-hazards emergency response plan that includes NIMS/ICS principles.** Broward County and relevant stakeholders should work together to evaluate various multi-agency coordination models (Unified Command, Incident Complex, and Area Command) and work with response agencies and stakeholders to build capabilities to operate using NIMS/ICS principles in response to critical incidents, to include active shooter events.

**Finding 2.2: Broward County and City of Parkland comprehensive emergency management plans (CEMPs) do not include provisions for managing responses to active shooter incidents.** Jurisdictional and operational decisions can be difficult even during routine incidents, becoming magnified during the response to an incident of the magnitude of the MSD shooting. When these incidents occur, decisions regarding which agency should lead the response, which agencies and organizations should play a supporting role, and what each stakeholder's roles and responsibilities should be, can become particularly challenging.

**Recommendation 2.2.1: Broward County, the City of Parkland, and all municipalities should regularly review their CEMPs to expand beyond natural disasters to include current and emerging threats such as active shooters and other mass violence events.** Because of the unique governance structure in Broward County, greater efforts should be made to develop and implement strategies and plans to increase collaboration and coordination among the County, the BSO, the BCPS, the 31 municipalities, and community organizations in response to natural and manmade critical incidents.

**Recommendation 2.2.2: The Broward County CEMP should be adapted and enhanced to include the role of County government, public safety agencies, and relevant partners in mass violence and other manmade disasters.** The Broward County CEMP acknowledges that it is, "a 'living document' that must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis in order to...maintain preparedness to respond and recover from emergencies."<sup>118</sup> The most recent version of the CEMP is from September 2015, and it should be updated to include countywide plans, policies, procedures, and strategies from active shooters and emerging threats.

**Recommendation 2.2.3: The Broward County CEMP should be adapted and enhanced to address the coordination between the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) and similar bodies established by municipalities (MEOCs) during the response to a manmade disaster.** Currently, the Broward County CEMP addresses coordination between the CEOC and MEOCs, noting, "A municipal representative is assigned to the CEOC to coordinate emergency operations with their respective municipality." During the

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<sup>118</sup> Broward County. (2015, September 15). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

response to a natural disaster, municipal governments will already be overtaxed and unable to arrange for a representative to go to the CEOC. Therefore, Broward County and municipal officials should work together to address opportunities to have a CEOC representative deploy to an MEOC or to establish virtual coordination during a manmade disaster.

**Recommendation 2.2.4: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should develop tabletop and training exercises to address the County government response to active shooter incidents.** Tabletops and other similar training exercises can be valuable tools to collaborate with stakeholders from other organizations, including public safety organizations.<sup>119</sup> Involving all relevant stakeholders in a unified incident command, as well as planning and exercising roles and responsibilities prior to an event, can help build familiarity with the emergency response and recovery system and aid its implementation during critical incidents.<sup>120</sup>

**Recommendation 2.2.5: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should also work with the BSO, other first responder agencies, and municipalities to conduct NIMS/ICS trainings and exercises.** Broward County should engage the BSO, and other regional first responder agencies—including law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management, other government and non-government stakeholders—in NIMS/ICS critical incident response training, to include active shooter events. NIMS/ICS planning, training, and implementation must involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure preparedness and situational awareness across specialties and the effective coordination and deployment of resources.

**Recommendation 2.2.6: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should develop tabletop and training exercises that coordinate individual municipalities, and relevant stakeholders—including private and non-profit organizations—in responding to active shooters and other critical incidents.** Lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities between county and city government agencies, first responder agencies, and community-based organizations exacerbated issues—particularly related to leadership, coordination, and communication during the response to the MSD shooting. This uncertainty created missed opportunities to leverage available resources.

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<sup>119</sup> Straub, F., J. Brown, R. Villaseñor, J. Zeunik, B. Gorban, B. Norton, and E. Reyes. (2018, February). *Advancing Charlotte: A Police Foundation Assessment of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department Response to the September 2016 Demonstrations*. Washington, DC: Police Foundation. Retrieved from

<https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Advancing-Charlotte-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> Straub, F., H. Aden, J. Brown, B. Gorban, R. Monroe, J. Zeunik. (2017). *Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis: An After-Action Assessment of the Police Response to Protests, Demonstrations, and Occupation of the Minneapolis Police Department's Fourth Precinct*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Maintaining-First-Amendment-Rights-and-Public-Safety-in-North-Minneapolis.pdf>

**Finding 2.3: Active shooters and other critical incidents can quickly exhaust individual agency resources, suggesting the importance of strong inter-personal and inter-agency relationships to ensure collaboration and coordination.** Few individual government or public safety agencies have all the resources necessary to manage a major critical incident and the needs of the community in its aftermath. It is important for leaders to be aware of the capabilities and capacities of their organization, as well as their mutual aid organizations. Organizational awareness involves leaders assessing and testing the strengths and needs of their agency and knowing when the response to an incident requires more resources than the primary agency can offer and when to accept assistance or build a regional response capability.

**Recommendation 2.3.1: Broward County, individual municipalities, and public safety organizations should regularly assess and test the strengths and needs of their agencies, mutual aid, and relevant stakeholders in preparation for a critical incident.** Agency leaders should cultivate a strong sense of organizational awareness and accept assistance when appropriate. Particularly following critical incidents, invoking assistance from other agencies can be valuable to manage demanding and resource-intensive responses. Leadership requires decision-making based on constantly evolving information, circumstances, and the needs of those they represent as well as an awareness of individual and agency capabilities and needs.

## Chapter 3: Communication and Public Information

In addition to a unified command and control structure, consistent and accurate communication between first responders, supporting stakeholders, and coordinated messaging with the media and the public is essential to an effective response to a critical incident of the magnitude of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) shooting. This communication is imperative to maintaining situational awareness, requesting and receiving additional resources and personnel, and ensuring tactical and operational coordination throughout the response. Equally important, consistent communication between responding agencies and relevant stakeholders is necessary to provide timely and accurate information to the media and the public. This chapter summarizes the internal communications and the public information processes and challenges during the response to the MSD shooting.

### Communication Between Stakeholders

Public safety communications systems are essential to an effective response to a critical incident. Emergency call-takers and public safety dispatchers play critical roles in providing immediate and sometimes life-saving aid to victims, facilitating the deployment of public safety resources to the scene of an incident, providing situational awareness, and relaying valuable information to first responders during a critical incident. Challenges fully leveraging various communications technologies—including the 911 call taking system, the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems, and radio networks—intended to connect co-responding police, fire/EMS, and hospital personnel exacerbated situational awareness and coordination among first responders’ activities on- and off-scene during the response to the MSD shooting.<sup>121</sup> Broward County has reconvened the radio governance committee to address radio communications issues and a subcommittee of city managers has been formed to discuss and resolve similar communications issues that involve or affect multiple municipalities.<sup>122</sup>

### Communication Between First Responder Agencies

As a result of separate protocols and systems, the sharing of information amongst first responder agencies was inhibited during the response to the MSD shooting. Emergency communications personnel in Coral Springs could not dispatch BSO deputies and their colleagues at BSO could not dispatch fire/EMS resources from Coral Springs. Call-takers and dispatchers at the Coral Springs and Broward County emergency communications centers were required to manually transfer calls and relay information between one another in order for law enforcement and fire/EMS personnel to be dispatched to MSD. Transferring calls from one public safety answering point (PSAP) to another adds approximately 30 seconds to each call.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, calls that were not

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<sup>121</sup> Straub, et al. (2019, January 4). *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County*.

<sup>122</sup> Email from Broward County Assistant County Administrator to NPF assessment team members. July 8, 2019.

<sup>123</sup> Broward County Sheriff’s Office. (2018, March 8). Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Shooting Time Line of Events. Retrieved from <https://app.box.com/s/jwall9dpcornuwn92xzy9hgl300xzton>. According to the state MSDHS Public Safety

transferred or were dropped prevented the effective and efficient transfer of critical information to responding public safety personnel.<sup>124</sup>

In addition to the challenges caused by the call taking and transferring processes, public safety personnel from Coral Springs, the BSO, and mutual aid jurisdictions surrounding Parkland experienced disruptions on the radio system as they responded to MSD. When a user turns on a radio, pushes to talk, or changes channels, that inbound request is processed through the system's controller, which is a built-in function that coordinates "traffic" between the radio sites. The controller puts the actions, in order, for completion. This process is designed to allow the system to work its way through the queue of inbound requests at various levels of activity. When the queue becomes particularly long or the system gets close to 250 inbound requests-per-minute, it is commonly referred to as "throttling" or "bonking." Throttling is a safety mode that prevents the system from crashing completely from an overload of radio activity. Without an overarching structure to coordinate personnel and resources, many first responders continued to manipulate their radios to find the correct radio channel(s) and tried to use their radios to communicate, which caused further disruptions on the Broward County radio system and delayed important communications between on-site personnel.<sup>125</sup>

### **Communication Between the Broward County Sheriff's Office and School**

Additional challenges were created by the delays in primary agencies sharing information with one another in a timely manner. Approximately four minutes after the incident began, one of the MSD campus monitors called the first verifiable "Code Red" over the school radio system, which notified persons on the MSD campus that the ongoing incident was a serious emergency.<sup>126</sup> Almost 20 minutes after the incident began, one of the MSD assistant principals and a campus monitor were engaged by a BSO sergeant regarding their observations and the school camera system. Despite being together, it was not until approximately 34 minutes after the incident began, that the assistant principal shared with the BSO sergeant that the information from the school camera system was not live, because the cameras were on a delay.<sup>127</sup> This information impacted the nature of the response, as law enforcement officers initially believed the suspect was still in Building 12. It then complicated the search for the suspect when it was learned 34 minutes later that he had left the building, and most probably the campus, expanding the response into the surrounding community.

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Commission, the number of 911 calls received on February 14, 2018, related to the incident at MSDHS was approximately 211. The BSO received approximately 81 calls and Coral Springs received approximately 130. For more, see the MSDHS Public Safety Commission communication timeline, November 13, 2018, retrieved from <http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MeetingFiles.zip>

<sup>124</sup> Straub, et al. (2019, January 4). *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County*.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission. (2019, January 2). *Initial Report Submitted to the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Senate President*.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

## Communication Between First Responder Agencies and Government Officials

As the response evolved, the communications and information-sharing challenges also impacted the establishment of a fully staffed joint information center (JIC).<sup>128</sup> The public information officers (PIOs) from the primary responding agencies were present in the area of the BSO and CSPD command posts, and were included in a smaller JIC, but PIOs from the City of Parkland and Broward County government were not invited or included to help coordinate the dissemination of information to the community or the media.<sup>129</sup> The JIC that included PIOs from BSO and CSPD was established in the same location—under the Sawgrass Parkway—as the command posts, was primarily focused on the incident and the response. Without an organized communication structure and effective coordination between responding public safety agencies and relevant stakeholders, important information was not shared with some stakeholders—including government officials from the City of Parkland, Broward County, and the Broward League of Cities. Some government officials received updates from the first responder agencies that had deployed to MSD as part of mutual aid agreements, while others received updates from second-hand accounts and by watching television news.<sup>130</sup>

Challenges regarding the exchange of information impacted the ability of personnel responsible for activating the Parkland municipal emergency operations center (MEOC) and the Broward County emergency operations center (CEOC) to determine the appropriate level of activation. The City of Parkland established a modified EOC in the mayor’s office in City Hall. Because Parkland’s City Hall is located so close to MSD—and the City Hall had been on lockdown prior to the suspect being apprehended—government staff were unable to leave the building but were available to assist.<sup>131</sup> City staff received limited information and communication from primary agencies on scene, but—in an effort to not contribute further to the chaos—they did not proactively engage public safety personnel. The Broward County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) is activated at the discretion of the Director of the Broward Emergency Management Division and with the concurrence of the County Administrator, and can be activated in part or in whole for a variety of natural and human-caused hazards.<sup>132</sup> Soon after the shooting, the county partially activated the CEOC. Similar to the MEOC in Parkland, after not receiving any communication from the BSO, the BCPS, or other stakeholders involved in the response to the MSD shooting, the CEOC was underutilized.<sup>133</sup> This further affected the ability of the county to provide support and to assist in the coordination of government agencies and community-based organizations that could have provided support to the incident.

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<sup>128</sup> A JIC is, “a physical or ‘virtual’ operation where public information staff representing all agencies and organizations involved in incident management activities coordinate and disseminate official, timely, accurate, easy to understand, and consistent information to the public.” See: <https://www.hsd.org/?view&did=765584>.

<sup>129</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with City of Parkland government staff, April 17, 2019.

<sup>130</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Broward County and City of Parkland government officials, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>131</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with City of Parkland government staff, April 17, 2019.

<sup>132</sup> Broward County. (2015, September 15). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Broward County, Florida: Broward County Emergency Management.

<sup>133</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with Broward County Emergency Management staff, June 26, 2018.

## Public Information

Public safety agencies and government officials face a delicate balance between informing the public about what is taking place as it is occurring, protecting victims and responding personnel, and ensuring the integrity of the response. When multiple agencies are involved in the response to an event, there is increased potential for conflict and confusion regarding public information with each agency operating under different media guidelines. Added to the general challenges associated with public information during a critical incident, the likely involvement of minors—as potential suspects and victims—further complicated the public information process during the response to the MSD shooting.

## Uncoordinated Messaging

Without the full utilization joint information center (JIC) including public information officers (PIOs) from the city and county government, public information and external communications were uncoordinated. This impacted awareness of the existence of the Family Reunification Center as well as the recovery and resilience process.

## Impact on Awareness of the FRC

As students and faculty were escorted out of the buildings, some fled in groups, while other teachers instructed their students to run to their parents or run to a safe place away from campus where they would be able to meet their parents. In some cases, teachers who were unaware of a meeting point reported trying to “corral” their students to determine next steps. Even after the Family Reunification Center (FRC) had been established, communication about its existence was uncoordinated and many teachers and students—particularly those in Building 12—were not told about the FRC and its location. Since many teachers and students had to leave behind their cell phones, keys, and bags during the evacuation, they were unaware of BCPS notifications that bus transports were available to the FRC or that an FRC had been established.<sup>134</sup> Likewise, inconsistent communication between the first responder agencies that were clearing the buildings led to some MSD students and staff being unaware of the establishment of the FRC. Therefore, several groups of students walked to Congregation Kol Tikvah—a temple in the same area as Parkland City Hall—because their families were congregants there.<sup>135</sup> Other groups of students and teachers walked to nearby homes of students or were driven to a safe area by community members using their personal vehicles.<sup>136</sup> Others were in such a state of shock that they found themselves wandering and wondering what they should do next.<sup>137</sup> The lack of guidance, coordination and information contributed to the fear surrounding the already chaotic situation.

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<sup>134</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD faculty, April 15-17, 2019.

<sup>135</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Congregation Kol Tikvah leader, April 15, 2019.

<sup>136</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD faculty, April 15-17, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD faculty, April 15-17, 2019.

## Impact on Recovery and Resilience

Inconsistent messaging about the events that had unfolded at MSD impacted the ability of leaders to develop a cogent response to calm and unite the community in the aftermath of the shooting. In the aftermath of a critical incident, one of the most important roles that leaders perform is to bring calm to a highly charged, dynamic, and volatile situation.<sup>138</sup> In an interview with the NPF assessment team, one City of Parkland official mentioned that none of the MSD or BCPS administrators, the BSO Sheriff or the Coral Springs Fire Department chief, or elected officials from Broward County assumed a public leadership role which may have helped traumatized community members regain a sense of certainty in an otherwise uncertain time.<sup>139</sup> This created a scenario in which the most vocal people often received the media's attention, and divisive media stories overshadowed messages of unity and resilience.<sup>140</sup>

Despite the divisiveness of the media and lack of coordinated leadership, government agencies and community-based organizations focused on rallying behind the hashtag #MSDStrong. Students and staff from the MSD drama program sang with Broadway musicians at the Tony Awards and were on national television programs in June 2018;<sup>141</sup> a documentary following the MSD football team after the death of Coach Aaron Feis was filmed and aired on a major television network;<sup>142</sup> and, students and parents of MSD students and victims have been invited to speak at national conferences, provide testimony on Capitol Hill, and have been invited to the White House. However, one teacher indicated that the teachers and school administrators who were seen on national television accepting awards and using the hashtag #MSDStrong were not the ones who truly spoke for the teachers, because most of the teachers have remained publicly silent.<sup>143</sup>

## Communication and Public Information Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 3.1: All Broward County area public safety and government agencies share responsibility to construct strong communications systems and processes that can collectively support the public safety response in and beyond their jurisdictions during incidents requiring a multi-agency/multi-discipline response.** The collective inability of the public safety and government agencies in Broward County to cooperatively develop, prepare, and strengthen their

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<sup>138</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>139</sup> NPF assessment team interview with City of Parkland government official, April 18, 2019.

<sup>140</sup> Wamsley, L. (2018, February 26). Broward Sheriff Under Scrutiny For Handling Of Parkland Shooting. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/26/588900401/broward-sheriff-under-scrutiny-for-handling-of-parkland-shooting>

<sup>141</sup> Today Show. (2018, June 11). Meet the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High students who rocked the Tonys. Retrieved from <https://www.today.com/video/meet-the-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-students-who-rocked-the-tonys-1252783171602>

<sup>142</sup> Cancian, D. (2019, February 8). 'Parkland 17': Heart-Wrenching ESPN Doc Shows How Marjory Stoneman Douglas Football Team Got Over Tragedy A Year On. *Newsweek*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/parkland-17-marjory-stoneman-douglas-shooting-parkland-shooting-nikolas-cruz-1324134>

<sup>143</sup> NPF assessment team interview with an MSD teacher, April 17, 2019.

communications systems, to include predicting and mitigating potential communications issues, created significant challenges in the response to the MSD shooting.<sup>144</sup>

**Recommendation 3.1.1: Broward County administrators, BSO officials, and government and public safety executives from the municipalities within Broward County should work proactively and collaboratively to identify and address challenges and develop a strategy to implement the appropriate solutions.**<sup>145</sup>

**Finding 3.2: It continues to be apparent that the various agencies (Broward County, the Broward County Sheriff's Office, and municipal first responder agencies within Broward County) that fund, service, and operate the various communications systems, equipment, and operational practices and processes—including computer-aided dispatch, radios and call-taking and transferring processes—each have their own mission and goals.**<sup>146</sup> Presentations from the Broward County Police Chiefs Association and a municipal police chief, the Broward County Fire Chiefs Association, and the Broward County Administrator during the June 2019 meeting of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, highlighted the continued disagreements over resolving the communications shortcomings that created significant challenges to the response to the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 3.2.1: All parties in the Broward County region should continue to take steps to move toward a well-functioning, unified, and fully-integrated regional public safety communications system that meets the needs of all user groups and is optimal for public safety in Broward County.**<sup>147</sup>

**Recommendation 3.2.2: Consider emergency communications models and best practices to determine the most appropriate system—including the technological system as well as the system of policies, procedures, protocols, standards of use, memoranda of understanding, and training supporting the technology's use—for Broward County and its municipalities.** Different communications models provide promising practices that Broward County and area municipalities can learn from as they make decisions that affect the future of their emergency communications systems. The Broward County Office of Regional Communications and Technology and user groups can conduct research regarding these systems and share findings broadly to identify what may or may not work in Broward.<sup>148</sup>

**Finding 3.3: While it is unavoidable that communications devices, systems, and processes may be overtaxed and experience some technical issues during large-scale critical incidents, the**

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<sup>144</sup> Straub, et al. (2019, January 4). *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County*.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

communications challenges during the response to the MSD shooting impacted coordination between first responder agencies, BCPS, and government officials.<sup>149</sup>

**Recommendation 3.3.1: All agencies with assignments in the Broward County and/or their municipal CEMP should have plans that clearly guide at least one representative—generally a public information officer—to coordinate public information efforts among participating agencies through the Incident Command System and the creation of a JIC.**<sup>150</sup> As the AARs of the responses to the 2012 Aurora Century 16 Theater shooting<sup>151</sup> and the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings identified, a JIC can ensure the provision of consistent, accurate, and unified messages from all disciplines, agencies, and responders.<sup>152</sup>

**Finding 3.4: Broward County partially activated<sup>153</sup> the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) and the City of Parkland activated a modified municipal EOC (MEOC), during the response to the MSD shooting, but both played a minimal role during the response and in the immediate aftermath because they did not receive timely information from the scene.**<sup>154</sup>

**Recommendation 3.4.1: Broward County and individual municipalities should consider activating their EOCs early in the response to a critical incident to create a central location from which to direct and allocate resources and support to first responders and provide information, resources, and services to the community.** Activating the MEOC and the CEOC early in the response to a critical incident can help secure additional resources and relieve pressure and responsibility on agencies directly involved in the immediate response.<sup>155</sup>

**Recommendation 3.4.2: Broward County should work with the Broward League of Cities (BLOC) and relevant stakeholders to develop an effective process for establishing EOCs during critical incidents.** To eliminate confusion over roles and responsibilities and to maintain a common operating picture on countywide emergency response activities, Broward County and the BLOC, acting on behalf of the municipalities, should establish methods for designating mutually beneficial representation and communication between MEOCs and the CEOC. This will assist agencies; government officials and community-

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<sup>149</sup> Straub, et al. (2019, January 4). *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County*.

<sup>150</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis*.

<sup>151</sup> TriData Division. (2014). *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting: After Action Report for the City of Aurora, Colorado*. Arlington, VA: TriData Division. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/critical-incident-review-library/aurora-century-16-theater-shooting-after-action-report-for-the-city-of-aurora/>

<sup>152</sup> Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). (December, 2014). *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*. Framingham, MA: MEMA. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/critical-incident-review-library/after-action-report-for-the-response-to-the-2013-boston-marathon-bombings/>

<sup>153</sup> Partial activation of an emergency operations center involves staffing the EOC with positions and functions as required to respond to an incident. See <https://emilms.fema.gov/IS775/assets/EOCActivationLevels.pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with community organization leaders. April 15, 2019.

<sup>155</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

based organization with a role in an emergency response better coordinate the deployment of personnel and resources.

**Finding 3.5: Inconsistent messaging impacted the ability of leaders to develop a cogent response to calm and unite the community in the aftermath of the shooting.** Unified leadership and messaging before, during, and immediately following a critical incident sets the tone for the days, weeks, and months to follow. In an interview with the NPF assessment team, one City of Parkland official mentioned that none of responding public safety leaders or elected officials assumed a leadership role, or extended the opportunity to the City to do so, which exacerbated uncertainty and fear in the community.<sup>156</sup> This created a scenario where the most vocal people often received the media's attention, and divisive media stories at times overshadowed messages of unity and resilience, which also hampered the ability of the entire Broward community to focus on a collaborative recovery process.<sup>157</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.1: Broward County government officials, law enforcement and fire/EMS leaders, school officials, and other stakeholders should develop relationships, roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication in advance of a critical incident.** It is important to show the public a unified front of government agencies working together.<sup>158</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.2: Include public information officers (PIOs) from all relevant County, municipal, and relevant stakeholders in command-level briefings and strategy sessions to increase coordination.** Lessons learned from previous critical incident reviews highlight the importance of including the PIOs in all political, command-level briefings and strategy sessions.<sup>159</sup> Prior to the 2016 attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, PIOs from all Orlando city agencies established a process for communication during various event types that helped to develop a coordinated media and public information strategy during the incident.<sup>160</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.3: Broward County and the relevant stakeholders should expand their use of social media to release timely and accurate information both to the public and to the media.** Social media can be used to improve community outreach, as an

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<sup>156</sup> NPF assessment team interview with City of Parkland government official, April 18, 2019.

<sup>157</sup> Wamsley, L. (2018, February 26). Broward Sheriff Under Scrutiny For Handling Of Parkland Shooting. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/02/26/588900401/broward-sheriff-under-scrutiny-for-handling-of-parkland-shooting>

<sup>158</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Managing the Response to a Mobile Mass Shooting*. See also: Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>159</sup> Braziel, R., F. Straub, G. Watson, and R. Hoops. (2016). *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015 Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Policing Services. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Bringing-Calm-to-Chaos-Final-1.pdf>

<sup>160</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

investigative tool when seeking additional information, to dispel rumors, and to make time-sensitive notifications.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Law Enforcement Policy Center. (2019, May). Considerations Document: Social Media. International Association of Chiefs of Police.  
Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

## Chapter 4: Recovery and Resilience

In the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) shooting, similar to other critical incidents, the roles and responsibilities of public safety and government agencies do not end once the suspect is apprehended, injured victims are transported for medical care, and the crime scene secured. In the immediate aftermath of an incident, considerable attention must be given to identifying the victims, reuniting families and significant others, and providing next-of-kin notifications to the families of the hospitalized and deceased.

Also of importance is that the focus turns to demonstrating the community's resilience, honoring the victims, and providing support to all those effected by the tragedy. The focus on providing resources and support for those impacted by the event continues and changes as time progresses and important dates approach, which requires a long-term strategy. Recovery requires a phased and multi-faceted approach and infrastructure that can be scaled appropriately as time passes and challenges emerge. To be effective, the recovery strategy must be planned, documented, practiced, and agreed to by government and community leaders prior to a critical incident. Additionally, the strategy, similar to other components of the emergency response plan must be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it reflects the current state of affairs in the jurisdiction, local and national best practices. This chapter reviews the immediate, short-term, and ongoing recovery and resilience efforts in Broward County following the MSD shooting.

### Immediate Aftermath

In the immediate aftermath of the MSD shooting, public safety personnel were responsible for reuniting students and staff with their families and providing next-of-kin notifications to the families and relatives of the hospitalized and deceased victims. The Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) assumed responsibility for providing mental health services for MSD students, staff, and families. Government agencies, community-based organizations and individual community members mobilized quickly to provide direct and indirect support for the MSD community and first responders, primarily at the Family Reunification Center (FRC).

The needs of the community as well as the outpouring of support and resources can quickly overwhelm public safety and government agencies that do not have pre-existing plans and strategies to coordinate the recovery. For example, in the aftermath of the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, officials and organizations struggled with a lack of pre-planning to coordinate, identify needs, and appropriately and efficiently connect individuals with services.<sup>162</sup> Although government officials and agencies in Broward County and community-based organizations and individual community members tried to fill needs as best they could, opportunities were missed and additional challenges were caused by the lack of structure and coordination.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Sandy Hook Advisory Commission (2015, March 6). *Final Report of the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission Presented to Governor Dannel P. Malloy, State of Connecticut*. Retrieved from [http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC\\_Final\\_Report\\_3-6-2015.pdf](http://www.shac.ct.gov/SHAC_Final_Report_3-6-2015.pdf)

<sup>163</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

## Family Reunification Center (FRC)

As identified in AARs following the 2013 Washington, DC, Navy Yard shooting;<sup>164</sup> the 2015 terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, California;<sup>165</sup> and, the 2016 attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida, a Family Reunification Center is critical to provide an accessible, controlled, and safe environment to reunite families, take preliminary statements from witnesses, offer immediate assistance to those traumatized by the shooting, and to conduct next-of-kin notifications to families of the victims.<sup>166</sup> As law enforcement officers cleared and evacuated the MSD campus, a securable location with the capacity to accommodate the thousands of students and staff, was needed to serve as an FRC.

While no pre-existing plan to establish an FRC in the event of an incident like the MSD shooting was in place, upon hearing of the incident, the Coral Springs City Manager called an executive at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center (Marriott), to ask if the Marriott was available to serve as the FRC.<sup>167</sup> The executive indicated that the convention center was not in use and could be designated as the FRC.<sup>168</sup> The FRC was established the afternoon of February 14, 2018 at the Marriott, and remained open through the early morning hours of February 15, 2018. Approximately 841 MSD students and staff and their family members were signed in at the FRC.<sup>169</sup> Representatives from local law enforcement agencies—including the Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO) and the Coral Springs Police Department (CSPD)—deployed to the FRC to conduct victim and witness interviews, coordinate security, and control access to the FRC.<sup>170</sup> Some law enforcement agencies also deployed victim advocates to provide support to those in need.

### *MSD Students and Staff*

As soon as the FRC was established, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) school buses were utilized to transport some students and staff from MSD to the FRC. Upon arrival at the Marriott, students and staff were dropped off at the main entrance to the convention center wing, where they were checked in by law enforcement and separated into three sections of the large ballroom based on where they were on campus during the shooting and if they had witnessed the

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<sup>164</sup> Metropolitan Police Department. (2014, June). *After Action Report Washington Navy Yard September 16, 2013: Internal Review of the Metropolitan Police Department Washington, D.C.* Washington, DC: Metropolitan Police Department. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Washington-Navy-Yard-After-Action-Report.pdf>

<sup>165</sup> Braziel, et al. (2016). *Bringing Calm to Chaos*.

<sup>166</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>167</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

<sup>168</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

<sup>169</sup> The Florida Channel. (2019, June 4). 6/4/19 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Part 2.

<sup>170</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

shooting.<sup>171</sup> Each of the sections had law enforcement personnel assigned to take statements from the students and staff.<sup>172</sup>

### *MSD Families*

When family members arrived at the FRC, they were also directed to the main entrance of the convention center wing, were signed in by law enforcement and cross-checked against the list of students and staff to see if they were at the FRC. If they were, family members were reunited with them. In the event that a student or staff member was not at the FRC, family members were taken to a separate conference room to wait for their loved ones to arrive.<sup>173</sup>

As the number of families waiting to be reunited decreased, law enforcement officers requested descriptions, pictures of the missing loved one, and other information that they could use for identification purposes. Despite having local and federal victim advocates at the FRC, communication between law enforcement and some of the family members who were waiting to be reunited or receive information about their loved ones was reportedly slow and, in some cases, contributed to their overall trauma.<sup>174</sup> Multiple parents, interviewed by the NPF assessment team, indicated that they went hours without receiving updates from law enforcement and that the only times law enforcement officers talked to them was to ask for pictures or details about their loved ones.<sup>175</sup> Although mental health resources and services were available at the FRC, an absence of regular communication from law enforcement or other officials at the FRC added to the uncertainty and tension felt by parents, significant others, relatives or friends attempting to reunite with persons from MSD, or receive next-of kin notifications.<sup>176</sup>

Family members waited hours for official next-of-kin notifications, as the Medical Examiner's Office worked to identify all victims and BSO conducted the notifications.<sup>177</sup> One family told the NPF assessment team that they waited for hours to receive "official notification" that their loved one had been killed, despite having been notified through other channels earlier.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, some family members reported feeling a lack of support from authorities during the next-of-kin

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<sup>171</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center executive, April 16, 2019.

<sup>172</sup> National Police Foundation assessment team focus group with parents of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students. April 16, 2019.

<sup>173</sup> National Police Foundation assessment team focus group with parents of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students. April 16, 2019.

<sup>174</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>175</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>176</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>177</sup> MSD Public Safety Commission (2019, April 4). Reunification and Injury/Death Notification Evaluation and Feedback. Retrieved from

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings/2019/April/Documents/April-10,-2019-1115-Reunification-and-Injury-Death.aspx>

<sup>178</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019. See also

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings/2019/April/Documents/April-10,-2019-1115-Reunification-and-Injury-Death.aspx>

notification process.<sup>179</sup> In some cases, family members recalled victim advocates from the FBI being in the room to provide assistance and support after the notification was made, while other families remembered only BSO deputies in the room providing the notification. Some families remembered that they were handed a document in which they were asked to acknowledge that they had received the official death notification. The document also highlighted resources that were available for funerals and other needs, while other families did not remember receiving or signing any written documents.<sup>180</sup> Finally, some families recounted receiving the notification and then being escorted to a side door by a BSO deputy so that they did not have to face the media as they left the hotel, while others indicated that they were walked partially down the convention center wing hallway and pointed to the exit.<sup>181</sup> Some families had friends, neighbors, or loved ones meet them at the FRC to drive them home, while others drove themselves home.<sup>182</sup>

### *Government Officials*

Understanding that the complexity and magnitude of the incident, local, state and federal government officials contacted their counterparts at MSD, BCPS, the Cities of Parkland and Coral Springs to offer support and assistance. For example, the Broward County Department of Human Services deployed trauma-trained clinicians to the FRC to provide support to students, staff, families, and community members.<sup>183</sup>

### *Community-Based Organizations and Community Members*

Community-based organizations and community members mobilized quickly to provide support to the students and staff at the FRC. Some organizations reached out to local and county government officials or MSD and BCPS administrators to try to coordinate their resources, whereas others bypassed official channels and delivered goods and services to the Marriott.<sup>184</sup> Some provided food, water, and blankets, while others provided funds and donations to support established efforts and organizations. Staff and volunteers from the Broward County Chapter of the American Red Cross (Red Cross) provided food, water, blankets, phone chargers, and other items to persons as they arrived at the FRC. Red Cross staff and volunteers also interacted with MSD students and staff and family members throughout the FRC, to provide assistance and connect them with appropriate available services and resources.<sup>185</sup> Red Cross personnel also provided care through specialized disaster spiritual care and disaster mental health care teams. These teams were available to support families who were waiting to be reunited or given next-

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<sup>179</sup> MSD Public Safety Commission (2019, April 4). Reunification and Injury/Death Notification Evaluation and Feedback.

<sup>180</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>181</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>182</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019. See also

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings/2019/April/Documents/April-10,-2019-1115-Reunification-and-Injury-Death.aspx>

<sup>183</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Broward County government employee, April 11, 2019. However, it should be noted that the NPF assessment team was unable to interview the clinicians that were deployed to the FRC regarding their experiences.

<sup>184</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community member, April 16, 2019.

<sup>185</sup> NPF assessment team interview with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

of-kin notifications. Red Cross spiritual care volunteers assisted persons in their efforts to connect to mental health practitioners.<sup>186</sup> Chaplains from religious institutions in Parkland and Coral Springs were also available in each room of the FRC to speak with students and faculty, as well as family members who requested assistance. Other religious officials—particularly at the temple and church closest to Parkland City Hall—were available for students that went there after evacuating, had conversations and offered support to students and staff and their families, and held impromptu prayer sessions that evening.<sup>187</sup>

## Mental Health and Wellness

### *First Responders*

In addition to providing for the safety and wellness of those involved in a critical incident, public safety organizations have a responsibility to ensure the safety and wellness of their personnel. First responders often feel they are expected to be “tough” and “resilient” and bounce back from trauma with little, if any, mental health treatment or professional attention.<sup>188</sup> In recent years, the public safety profession has done a better job recognizing that mental health and wellness is critical and particularly important during and after an incidence of mass violence. As the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, US Department of Justice, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness have described, “there are situations, such as mass casualty events, where the traumatic stress simply exceeds an officer’s ability to cope without support.”<sup>189</sup> Likewise, public safety personnel—including call takers and dispatchers, investigators, and support staff—who are not at the scene of a critical incident but respond in other ways may also be affected.<sup>190</sup> It is thus important to acknowledge and provide mental health support to all personnel. Furthermore, since there is no one-size-fits-all wellness strategy, agencies should ensure that an array of mental health and wellness resources are available immediately following a critical incident as well as in the days, weeks, and months that follow.<sup>191</sup>

Immediately after the MSD shooting, the Coral Springs–Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD) set up a “mental wellness command post” in the chief’s conference room.<sup>192</sup> Likewise, upon learning of the MSD shooting, the chief of the Pembroke Pines Police Department (PPPD) immediately

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<sup>186</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

<sup>187</sup> NPF assessment team interview with religious official, April 15, 2019.

<sup>188</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>189</sup> National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2016). *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Retrieved from <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/Publications-Reports/Public-Policy-Reports/Preparing-for-the-Unimaginable/Preparing-For-The-Unimaginable.pdf>

<sup>190</sup> IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center. (2011). *Critical Incident Stress Management: Concepts and Issues Paper*. Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police. Retrieved from <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/CriticalIncidentStressPaper.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> Nicoletti, J., S. Garrido, and M. J. Kirschner. Supporting the Psychological Recovery of First Responders Following a Mass Casualty Event. *Police Chief*. Retrieved from <http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/supporting-the-psychological-recovery/>

<sup>192</sup> Babinec, F., and C. Bator. (n.d.). “Coral Spring-Parkland Fire Department MSD Response.” Presentation provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019.

authorized the department's Crisis Response Team (CRT) to respond and assist in any way necessary. The CRT commander and the police psychologist, who trains the CRT teams, quickly developed a plan and activated the CRT team. The team responded to the BSO and the CSPD.<sup>193</sup> Although the CSPD has its own team certified in critical incident stress debriefings (CISD), several members of the Coral Springs team were actively involved in the response and were inside Building 12 at MSD, while other CSPD employees had children and family at MSD and were instructed to be with them.<sup>194</sup>

As the lead agency for the law enforcement response to the MSD shooting, a number of BSO members were involved in the response and recovery efforts. The specialized BSO employee assistance program (EAP) clinicians were requested from the BSO incident command post at MSD at approximately 4:30 pm on February 14. The BSO EAP clinicians conducted one-on-one conversations with school resource deputies, BSO employees who had family members at MSD, and communications operators.<sup>195</sup>

### *Government Agencies*

In addition to offering support for recovery and resilience efforts for the community, county government officials also sought to support the wellbeing of their employees. The Broward County Human Resources Department deployed two Employee Assistance Program (EAP) licensed mental health providers to the Broward County Medical Examiner's Office. The EAP providers were also made available for other Broward County employees who were involved in, or had family members at, MSD. Information about the EAP resources that were available to government employees, how to access them if needed, and reminders of the importance of utilizing EAP resources were disseminated to all Broward County employees.<sup>196</sup>

### **Short-Term Response**

In the days following the MSD shooting, city and county government officials and agencies, BCPS, and community-based stakeholders sought to respond to community needs. These stakeholders and organizations were able to provide an abundance of resources; but a lack of coordination and established roles and responsibilities for managing the resilience-building and recovery efforts created some unintended challenges.

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<sup>193</sup> NPF assessment team interview with PPPD CRT, April 17, 2019.

<sup>194</sup> NPF assessment team interview with CSPD chief, May 1, 2019.

<sup>195</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>196</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Broward County government employee, April 10, 2019.

## Mental Health and Wellness

### *MSD Students, Staff, and Families*

In the days, weeks, and months following the MSD shooting, the BCPS led the mental health and wellness response for MSD students and staff. The BCPS opened several grief counseling centers beginning at 8:00 am on February 15, 2018 (see Figure 7).<sup>197</sup> Anyone, especially MSD students and their families, were directed through BCPS notifications, local and national television reports to seek services at the Pine Trails Park Recreation Center and Amphitheater in Parkland,<sup>198</sup> the Coral Springs Gymnasium, and the Coral Springs Center for Performing Arts.<sup>199</sup> A separate facility was opened at the Parkland Library specifically for MSD staff members.<sup>200</sup> Counselors were also on-site for students and staff at Westglades Middle School, located next to MSD.<sup>201</sup> In addition to counseling services, each BCPS counseling center had tables with flyers, cards, and other resources.

To staff these centers, the BCPS relied on its established relationships with local behavioral health providers assembled through the Behavioral Health Partnership (BHP).<sup>202</sup> Henderson Behavioral Health (Henderson)—one of the primary BHP providers—was specifically contacted by the BCPS to support staffing at several assistance centers.<sup>203</sup> Additionally, school-based clinicians who were brought from other schools in the district and neighboring school districts saw some students and teachers who sought counseling through the BCPS.<sup>204</sup>

Henderson personnel organized schedules of the clinicians—which were selected from the pre-approved BHP providers—at each BCPS center; to ensure that only approved providers were treating students, staff, and families.

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<sup>197</sup> Phillips, D. (2018, February 15). Grief counseling centers available for Stoneman Douglas students, staff, families. *Sun Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/parkland/florida-school-shooting/fl-sb-school-shooting-counseling-20180215-story.html>

<sup>198</sup> The counseling center at the Amphitheatre would become the Broward County Resiliency Center. For more information, see <https://www.browardschools.com/crisissupport>

<sup>199</sup> Phillips. (2018, February 15). Grief counseling centers available for Stoneman Douglas students, staff, families.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

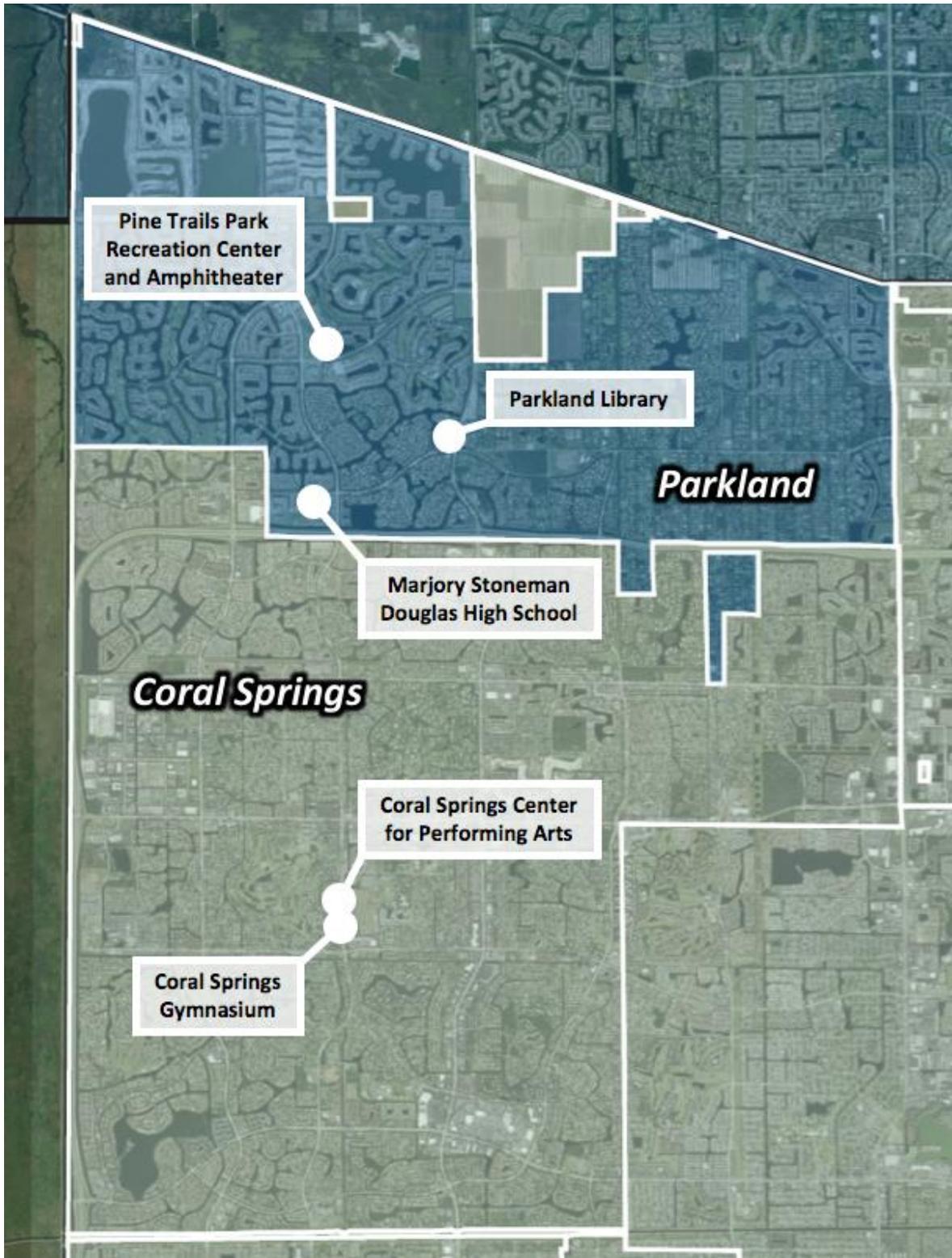
<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> For more, see: Broward County Public Schools. (n.d.). Behavioral Health Providers. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/47195>

<sup>203</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Henderson Behavioral Health employees, April 15, 2019.

<sup>204</sup> Zenere, F. (n.d.). Response to the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Retrieved from <https://melissainstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/RESPONSE-TO-THE-SHOOTING-AT-MARJORY-STONEMAN-DOUGLAS-HIGH-SCHOOL-outline.pdf>

Figure 7. Map of BCPS Counseling Centers Around MSD



Source: Esri, Earthstar Geographics, Broward County BMSD PRD EPGMD.

Some of the MSD students and staff that went to the BCPS centers noted that, despite well-intentioned efforts, there was a chaotic feeling around—and inside—the centers. Due to the constant influx of persons seeking counseling and others offering to provide services, it was challenging to maintain a clear and direct path to the school-approved service providers inside the BCPS centers.<sup>205</sup> Some individuals and service providers who were not part of the BCPS response went to parking lots and areas around the resiliency centers and handed out flyers and business cards to offer other services. On a few occasions, Henderson representatives asked the individuals offering services and passing out information outside the centers to disperse.<sup>206</sup> However, maintaining order among the groups outside of the building was difficult, particularly immediately following the tragedy, because of the volume of visitors to the center. At times, this created confusion amongst service providers and organizers, as well as for those trying to access services, resulting in unintended consequences including dissuading attendees from seeking future counseling.<sup>207</sup>

Once inside, individuals and families who came to access services were asked to sign in and were then matched with a BHP service provider who was available in the center.<sup>208</sup> After being connected with a counselor, individuals were generally asked to describe what happened to them or what they saw and heard. Some individuals, who had not fully processed what they had gone through or were still uncomfortable and unprepared to talk about their experience, noted that this caused them further anxiety.<sup>209</sup> Given the traumatic experiences being recounted, several individuals who went to one of the centers reported that when they did share their experiences, some of their counselors became very emotional and began crying. The individuals indicated that this left them feeling more confused and frustrated because they ended up having to console the counselors.<sup>210</sup> There was also no way for individuals to sign up to see the same counselor again if they established a rapport or found a specific counselor helpful.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, in the haste to provide mental health services as quickly as possible, the BCPS centers did not account for the provision of adequate privacy considerations. Some of these conversations occurred out in the open or with only thin curtain separations allowing others near them to hear their conversations.<sup>212</sup> These experiences did not provide users the level of support and comfort that students and others felt they needed, discouraging some from seeking future counseling through BCPS.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Henderson Behavioral Health employees, April 15, 2019.

<sup>206</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Henderson Behavioral Health employees, April 15, 2019.

<sup>207</sup> NPF assessment team interviews and focus groups with MSD teachers, parents, and community organization executives, April 15-19, 2019.

<sup>208</sup> NPF assessment team interview with MSD teacher, April 17, 2019.

<sup>209</sup> NPF assessment team interviews and focus group with MSD teachers, April 16-17, 2019.

<sup>210</sup> NPF assessment team interviews and focus group with MSD teachers, April 16-17, 2019.

<sup>211</sup> NPF assessment team interviews and focus group with MSD teachers, April 16-17, 2019.

<sup>212</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (2019, April 4). News Conference Regarding Healing and Recovery at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Community. Retrieved from

<https://www.browardschools.com/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=14019&ModuleInstanceID=60855&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=122627&PageID=38282>

<sup>213</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community member, April 19, 2019.

### ***Preparation, Strategies, Resources Prior to February 14, 2018***

Prior to the MSD shooting, the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) was aware of the need for general mental health and wellness resources for students. Established in 1987, the Behavioral Health Partnership (BHP) between the school district and community providers aims to provide school-based personnel with a list of behavioral health providers who have met the standards set by their Committee. The BCPS School Climate and Discipline Department also provides, “essential services, supports, and resources” related to diversity, health and wellness, instructional strategies, substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, and academic and behavioral supports. In addition, the BCPS has a Student Services Department with school social workers embedded in BCPS schools to provide intervention, crisis support, and mental health counseling in a variety of areas. The district Exceptional Student Learning Support programs also serve students with a variety of emotional and behavioral issues, as well as other learning disabilities. The BCPS also maintains a mental health and wellness portal that provides overviews on different subjects, links to other resources, and contact information on its website.

These general resources were and are available for all students dealing and coping with a variety of mental health and wellness issues. However, these resources were not necessarily well-suited to support the mental health of individuals following an incident on the scale of the MSD shooting.

Sources: Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), “Behavioral Health Providers,” <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/47195>; BCPS, “School Climate & Discipline,” <https://www.browardschools.com/domain/13726>; BCPS, “School Social Work,” <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/35685>; BCPS, “About Us,” <https://www.browardschools.com/domain/13954>; BCPS, “Exceptional Student Learning Support (ESLS),” <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/34158>; BCPS, “Mental Health & Wellness Overview,” <http://www.bcps-mentalhealth.com/index.php>.

### ***First Responders***

Continuing the recovery and resilience response for their own employees, law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies in Broward County collaborated with one another and with outside organizations to support the wellness of their members. During the two weeks after the MSD shooting, peer support teams from the PPPD, a Palm Beach County critical incident stress management (CISM) team, a Miami-Dade CISM team, a Boca Raton Police Department CISM team, and personnel from the Nova Southeastern University School of Psychology conducted debriefings for first responders.<sup>214</sup> The groups conducted at least 29 debriefings and provided peer support services, benefiting over 425 participants.<sup>215</sup> CSPFD and CSPD personnel were

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<sup>214</sup> Broward County Sheriff’s Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>215</sup> NPF assessment team interview with PPPD CRT, April 17, 2019.

among those who utilized these debriefings. Some BSO personnel also attended CISDs the day after the shooting and throughout the next week.<sup>216</sup> Debriefings were organized for any staff that responded to and were affected by the MSD shooting.<sup>217</sup> Specialized units—including school resource deputies and officers, BSO deputies and detectives stationed in Parkland, communications employees, SWAT members, bomb and arson units, K-9 units, homicide personnel, crime scene and crime lab technicians, child protective investigators, criminal investigators, and fire rescue personnel—participated in other CISDs held throughout the next week.<sup>218</sup> The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) conducted debriefings for BSO and other fire rescue personnel.<sup>219</sup>

In addition to conducting the debriefings, these teams worked to refer individuals to clinicians or other services for specialized assistance. A modified and flexible CISD and peer-to-peer support model was utilized, with the understanding that CISDs are helpful, but to be effective must be supported by a variety of mental health professionals and services.<sup>220</sup> Providing support, resources, and useful information and the ability to identify those who were significantly impacted and at increased risk are critical aspects of an effective crisis response.<sup>221</sup> Still, the intense schedule took an emotional toll on team members, some of who had family members who were first responders to MSD. Critical challenges included scheduling, logistics, and keeping a careful watch on the well being of the CRT members themselves, who have not dealt with facilitating CISD briefings and peer-to-peer support for a critical incident of this magnitude.<sup>222</sup>

As one BSO major noted, pushing other command personnel to encourage those under their command to take advantage of services:

“[February 14, 2018] was not a normal day and will certainly never be forgotten by those who witnessed the scene or dealt with grieving parents. Talking about, crying about, or sharing a personal experience from that day is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of compassion.”<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> CISD is a specific protocol used to support one or more individuals following a traumatic event. CISDs involve a formal one-on-one or group discussion conducted in a specific format by a trained mental health professional. The debriefs are specifically designed to support individuals in understanding their emotions and strengthening coping mechanisms following a critical incident. CISDs and other officer wellness-specific services provide unique opportunities to support the individuals involved as they manage stress. For more, see

<https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policy-center-resource/critical-incident-stress-management>

<sup>217</sup> BSO records on mental health resources after the MSD shooting, provided to the NPF assessment team, April 3, 2019.

<sup>218</sup> BSO records on mental health resources after the MSD shooting, provided to the NPF assessment team, April 3, 2019.

<sup>219</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>220</sup> NPF assessment team interview with PPPD CRT, April 17, 2019.

<sup>221</sup> NPF assessment team interview with police psychologist, May 2, 2019.

<sup>222</sup> NPF assessment team interview with PPPD CRT, April 17, 2019.

<sup>223</sup> Major, Strategic Investigations Division. (2018, February 21). “MSD Shooting Debrief” email. Part of BSO records on mental health resources after the MSD shooting, provided to the NPF assessment team, April 3, 2019.

However, without being able to interview BSO deputies directly, the NPF assessment team was unable to determine whether such a message reached members throughout the department and whether any other services were provided or sought in the months following the incident. In addition to these resources in the immediate aftermath, the BSO increased the hours of the two internal part-time psychologists from 15 to 20 hours-per-week.<sup>224</sup> BSO also began to examine the possibility of developing their own peer support team.<sup>225</sup>

In addition to holding debriefings, the CSPFD developed a mental wellness sustainability plan that identified several short- and long-term resources to provide their members. The plan involved coordination of mental health resources for first responders and their families, and coordination of the response to families, funerals, and the re-openings of MSD and other BCPS schools and large MSD events.<sup>226</sup> Beyond CISM and peer support opportunities, short-term resources for members in the immediate days and weeks following the incident included EAP services and a family night event.<sup>227</sup> Multiple peer counselors from across the U.S. came to support and met with every employee in CSPFD, whether they had been on scene at MSD or not, knowing that several employees had children or other family members at the school. Their Peer Support Response Team utilized three clinicians, 45 peers, and 14 liaisons over three days, providing immediate services to over 60 individuals.<sup>228</sup> Employees were afforded up to one month off with pay. Additionally, the city recognized the importance of including family members in the healing process and organized family centric activities.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>225</sup> BSO records on mental health resources after the MSD shooting, provided to the NPF assessment team, April 3, 2019.

<sup>226</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with CSPFD command personnel, April 16, 2019.

<sup>227</sup> Coral Springs Parkland Fire Department Post-Incident Analysis Active Killer Response Report. (2018). Document provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019.

<sup>228</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with CSPFD command personnel, April 16, 2019.

<sup>229</sup> NPF assessment team focus groups with CSPD and CSPFD command personnel, April 16, 2019.

### ***Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department and the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative***

In 2016, CSPFD helped to establish the non-profit Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative (FFSHC), which provides free resources to fire departments looking to strengthen the physical and mental health of their employees through a safety committee and/or safety program. Incorporating several topics, the FFSHC has focused on firefighter cancer prevention, emotional and mental wellness, health and physical fitness, and safety on all emergency incidents. Since its inception, the FFSHC has been endorsed by hundreds of departments and several fire associations in Florida. To create regional and statewide consistency of best practices, the FFSHC has organized the state into five regions. Within each region, firefighters, safety officers, chief officers, fire chiefs, and safety and health advocates meet quarterly to share policies, procedures, best practices, and resources on firefighter safety and health issues.

After its establishment, the CSPFD also helped the FFSHC to begin a process to screen and train licensed mental health clinicians in the field of emergency services to better understand what first responders actually experience in the field. Part of this training included ride alongs and one-on-one sessions with first responders. The CSPFD has reported that the process has benefited members when they utilize these trained clinician services, as the service providers are better able to demonstrate understanding of the challenges that first responders experience.

Sources: Coral Springs Parkland Fire Department Post-Incident Analysis Active Killer Response Report, 2018, document provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019; Babinec, F., and C. Bator, "Coral Spring-Parkland Fire Department MSD Response," presentation provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019; Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative, "Home," <https://www.floridafirefightersafety.org/>.

### ***Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations***

With the BCPS leading the response to recovery and resilience efforts for MSD students and staff, several city and county stakeholders and community stakeholders offered various forms of support.<sup>230</sup> However, some organization representatives reported that inconsistent direction made it challenging for them to understand existing needs and how they may best support gaps.<sup>231</sup> Some also reported being asked by the BCPS to hold off on providing support until further notice or were told that their services—including trauma-trained mental health counselors—were not needed at the time.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with Broward County government personnel, City of Parkland personnel, and community organization representatives, April 15-19, 2019.

<sup>231</sup> NPF assessment team interview with community organization representative, April 15, 2019.

<sup>232</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with Broward County government personnel, City of Parkland personnel, community member, and community organization representatives, April 15-19, 2019.

Despite coordination challenges, community-based organizations provided resources and services at MSD, counseling centers, and community vigils and events. Red Cross staff supported staffing and provided resources at the Pine Trails Park counseling center through February 23, 2018,<sup>233</sup> before shifting to a referral source role based at their headquarters.<sup>234</sup> The Red Cross also used existing relationships with companies like JetBlue, Airbnb, and Uber to coordinate with and assist families of victims outside of Broward to travel in to the county.<sup>235</sup> Similarly, the Salvation Army served meals to anyone who needed them and began coordinating financial and resource assistance to survivors and victims' families at Pine Trails Park. With support from surrounding Salvation Army groups, the Salvation Army of Broward County staff conducted interviews with families to process their needs and provided support and resources to 72 families, including \$72,500 in assistance.<sup>236</sup>

Meanwhile, local government agencies also offered support to the BCPS and provided support to vigils and events in memory of the victims of the MSD shooting. On the afternoon of February 15, government officials in Parkland were made aware of a candlelight vigil for that evening in Pine Trails Park that was posted by community members on Facebook.<sup>237</sup> With less than six hours, city government staff reached out to and relied on offers of support from local organizations, law enforcement personnel, and colleagues from the City of Coral Springs, other municipalities, and Broward County government.<sup>238</sup> Thousands ultimately attended the vigil at Pine Trails Park—one of at least six similar gatherings scheduled in the county that evening.<sup>239</sup> Over these first several days and weeks following the shooting, City of Parkland government staff sought to support the many vigils, marches, and other events that community members wanted to have. Recognizing the importance of these events for community unity and resilience, staff worked to manage logistics and costs and continued to leverage existing relationships and partnerships with other organizations to support the events.<sup>240</sup>

## Ongoing Efforts

On February 23, 2018—just over one week after the MSD shooting—the school was partially reopened for staff who were in Building 12 to collect some of their belongings and reenter some

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<sup>233</sup> “Family Assistance Center for Marjory Stoneman Douglas.” (2018). Facebook. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/events/167711454012885/>

<sup>234</sup> NPF assessment team interview with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

<sup>235</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with American Red Cross representative, April 18, 2019.

<sup>236</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Salvation Army representative, April 15, 2019.

<sup>237</sup> Daprile, L., M. Montoya, A. C. Cardona, P. Riley, and L. Broadt. (2018, February 15). Florida school shooting: At vigil, ‘it eases the burden to band together’. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/02/15/florida-school-shooting-vigil-eases-burden-band-together/343743002/>

<sup>238</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with City of Parkland employees, April 17, 2019.

<sup>239</sup> Daprile, et al. (2018, February 15). Florida school shooting.

<sup>240</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with City of Parkland employees, April 17, 2019.

of their classrooms for the first time.<sup>241</sup> On February 25, an optional orientation was held at MSD for students and families. Many students and teachers reunited with each other for the first time since the shooting and parents were able to thank staff for their role in protecting their children.<sup>242</sup> The next day, teachers and staff returned to MSD for planning, and students returned for their first school day on February 28.<sup>243</sup> Piles of flowers, homemade memorials, support animals, and more than 100 school counselors were present at MSD for the first school day, and throughout the phased reopening a heavy law enforcement presence was in place at MSD to welcome students and staff and control media personnel.<sup>244,245</sup>

The BCPS has continued to coordinate and provide mental health and wellness resources for MSD students and staff both on- and off-campus. MSD maintains a center on campus where students can speak with counselors. The school district also partnered with local organizations to have therapy dogs on campus. Off-campus, the initial four BCPS counseling centers were eventually consolidated into one, located at the Pine Trails Park location in Parkland.<sup>246</sup> Renamed the Broward County Resiliency Center (BCRC), this center has offered grief counseling, referrals to community resources, and specialized group counseling for those impacted by the MSD shooting.<sup>247</sup> The hours of the BCRC were also adjusted to better meet the needs of students, staff, and families.

Some MSD-connected individuals have found positive connections to care through services organized by the BCPS. Others have expressed concern that these resources have been insufficient.<sup>248</sup> Some teachers reported that little encouragement was given by MSD and BCPS administration to seek therapy and take the time necessary to attend to their health and wellbeing.<sup>249</sup> Some teachers also indicated they were given conflicting directions on what to do in preparation for the school's reopening, particularly surrounding whether appropriate processes for honoring the deceased students that would have been in classes and reacclimating

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<sup>241</sup> Rorabaugh, D., and J. Sangalang. (2018, February 20). Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School aims to reopen less than 2 weeks after shooting. *TCPalm*. Retrieved from <https://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/florida/2018/02/20/marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school-aims-reopen-less-than-2-weeks-after-shooting/353796002/>

<sup>242</sup> Healy, J. and P. Mazzei. (2018, February 25). Florida Students Return, Gingerly, to Their Scarred High School.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> NBC. (2018, February 25). Teachers, Staff Start Returning to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Friday For First Time Since Mass Shooting. *NBC Miami*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/Teachers-Staff-Begin-Return-to-Marjory-Stoneman-Douglas-High-School-For-First-Time-Since-Mass-Shooting-Tragedy-474937563.html>

<sup>245</sup> Balingit, M., and S. Svriuga. (2018, February 28). 'Protect us': Two weeks after Parkland shooting, students return to class. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2018/02/28/two-weeks-after-valentines-day-massacre-students-return-to-class-at-florida-high-school/?utm\\_term=.eb74ab894b3c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2018/02/28/two-weeks-after-valentines-day-massacre-students-return-to-class-at-florida-high-school/?utm_term=.eb74ab894b3c)

<sup>246</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (n.d.). Broward County Resiliency Center. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/39597>

<sup>247</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (2018, March 13). Update Regarding Hours of Operation for the Broward County Resiliency Center. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=14019&ModuleInstanceID=60855&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=79466&PageID=39081>

<sup>248</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>249</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

survivors.<sup>250</sup> Some teachers from Building 12 have generated unofficial support groups with each other and with their students to be able to stay in communication with those with shared experiences.<sup>251</sup>

Additionally, adverse experiences with mental health providers at the BCPS counseling centers early on have impeded the ability and willingness of some individuals to seek mental health services offered by the BCPS, either on- or off-campus.<sup>252</sup> When the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act was signed into law in March 2018, it included a number of provisions requiring the documentation of referrals to mental health services.<sup>253</sup> For example, Section 24, (1)(b) requires, “each student at the time of initial registration for school in the school district to note previous school expulsions, arrests resulting in a charge, juvenile justice actions, and referrals to mental health services the student has had.”<sup>254</sup> Some parents believed that this—and other provisions in the law—could negatively impact their children.<sup>255</sup> Parents interviewed by the NPF assessment team reported hearing concerns from other parents that allowing their students to use BCPS-provided mental health services might raise red flags for colleges reviewing applications.<sup>256</sup> Such anxieties have further impacted the ability of the BCPS to provide mental health services to some students and families in need.<sup>257</sup> To avoid those issues, some parents and staff have sought private medical care. However, co-pays for private medical care has created financial challenges for some families.<sup>258</sup>

In addition to the BCPS-led efforts, in the months since the incident, agencies, organizations, and community members have sought to support community resilience. Soon after the incident, a group of MSD alumni quickly organized on Facebook to mobilize alumni efforts and information and founded the organization Mobilizing MSD Alumni.<sup>259</sup> Mobilizing MSD Alumni has over 11,000 members, and aims to meet the “needs of MSD students and teachers, organizing special recovery and advocacy projects in partnership with the school and the Parkland community.”<sup>260</sup> Some parents and teachers told the NPF assessment team that alumni support has been exceptionally helpful.<sup>261</sup>

On February 14, 2019—the first anniversary of the MSD shooting—the BCPS, the City of Parkland, and the City of Coral Springs observed a Day of Service and Love. MSD held a non-academic school

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<sup>250</sup> NPF assessment team interview with MSD teacher, April 17, 2019.

<sup>251</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD teachers, April 16-18, 2019.

<sup>252</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with parents of MSD students, teachers, and community-based organization leaders, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>253</sup> “Chapter 2018-3.” Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 7026. Retrieved from <http://laws.flrules.org/2018/3>

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>256</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>257</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>258</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>259</sup> Facebook. (n.d.). Mobilizing MSD Alumni. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/MobilizingMSDALumni/>

<sup>260</sup> Mobilizing MSD Alumni. (n.d.). About Us. Retrieved from <http://msdstrongalum.com/about/>

<sup>261</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

day that ended early and students and community members were encouraged to volunteer at service projects in the area or simply spend time with family.<sup>262</sup>

Later in 2019, with support from the Children’s Services Council (CSC) of Broward County and United Way of Broward County, and with funding largely from a grant by the US Department of Justice, the local non-profit Jewish Adoption and Family Care Options (JAFCO), opened a community wellness center near MSD.<sup>263</sup> Named Eagles’ Haven, to invoke a sense of safety for MSD students, faculty, and families, the center seeks to provide a responsive and nurturing environment for those impacted by the shooting to call or come to for free wellness information, family strengthening, and community activities.<sup>264</sup> Eagles’ Haven offers support groups for MSD teachers, students, and parents, and is continually adjusting their programming to ensure responsiveness to the needs of the community they serve. Scheduled to open in April 2019, the center opened early, in March, to be able to offer support for community members in the wake of student suicides.<sup>265</sup>

Community members have shared that Eagles’ Haven has been an immensely valuable resource since its opening.<sup>266</sup> Approximately 200 individuals visited the facility over its first 24 days.<sup>267</sup> At the same time, it is critical to recognize that, although Eagles Haven can refer families to services, it cannot serve as a replacement for trauma and other professional counseling services. As Eagles’ Haven notes, it is not a therapy center, it is a place for all of us to come together to rediscover wellness and restore hope.<sup>268</sup> Creating these spaces and promoting wellness throughout the community will continue to be valuable for community healing and resilience.

Still, like many communities in the aftermath of a critical incident,<sup>269</sup> moving forward remains challenging. The case against the alleged shooter of the MSD incident continues to remind community members of the incident, reopening emotional wounds.<sup>270</sup> In March 2019, the MSD community lost two students to suicide—one a former student and one a current student.<sup>271</sup> The BCRC is set to close on June 3, 2019, and BCPS clinical trauma-focused services will relocate to

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<sup>262</sup> City of Parkland. (n.d.). MSD Commemoration. Retrieved from <https://www.cityofparkland.org/1224/MSD-Commemoration>

<sup>263</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Eagles Haven representatives, April 17, 2019.

<sup>264</sup> Eagles’ Haven. (n.d.). Eagles’ Haven. Retrieved from <https://www.eagleshaven.org/>

<sup>265</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Eagles Haven representatives, April 17, 2019.

<sup>266</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, religious officials, and community organization representatives, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>267</sup> NPF assessment team interview with Eagles Haven representatives, April 17, 2019.

<sup>268</sup> Eagles’ Haven. (n.d.). Eagles’ Haven... rediscovering wellness, restoring hope. Retrieved from <https://www.eagleshaven.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2019-02-11-Eagles-Haven-Flyer.9.pdf>

<sup>269</sup> Hughes, T. and A.E. Dastagir. (2019, March 25). ‘We’ve lost so many’: Columbine, Sandy Hook and Parkland shooting survivors struggle with suicide, guilt. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/03/25/jeremy-richman-death-highlights-trauma-after-columbine-parkland-and-sandy-hook/3267077002/>

<sup>270</sup> Karimi, F. (2019, February 12). This is where Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz’s death penalty case stands a year later. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/12/us/nikolas-cruz-trial-a-year-later/index.html>

<sup>271</sup> Epstein, K. and K. Mettler. (2019, March 26). Parkland again faces tragedy after two apparent suicides: ‘Trauma doesn’t just go away.’ *Washington Post*. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/03/25/parkland-again-faces-tragedy-after-two-apparent-suicides-trauma-doesnt-just-go-away/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.b72d2881feda](https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/03/25/parkland-again-faces-tragedy-after-two-apparent-suicides-trauma-doesnt-just-go-away/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b72d2881feda)

Westglades Middle School, Coral Springs Middle School, and MSD,<sup>272</sup> but parents and teachers still report challenges around connecting those in need with appropriate services.<sup>273</sup> In the months and years to come, continued and appropriate support for survivors and other community members will be critical to facilitate community healing, resilience, and unity.

## First Responders

On June 4, 2019, a BSO detective presented to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission (MSDHS PSC) about the reunification process during the MSD shooting, but also addressed that he and other first responders were—and continue to be—affected by what they saw in Building 12 on February 14, 2018. He stated:

***“I can tell you, as a father of two high school students myself, that I saw my children in the faces of every victim I tried to identify. And there are still times today that when I look at my kids, I see those victims. I wish I could tell you that I was the consummate professional, who left there unaffected, and that this was something that you get used to in my line of work and the constant exposure, but this is not, and should not be anything that one gets used to. I am affected. We all are affected.”<sup>274</sup>***

The BSO detective also implored the MSDHS PSC to discuss how first responders are debriefed after a mass shooting:

***“I would humbly ask the Commission to consider in its future discussions, how first responders are debriefed after an incident like this. Not from a factual or investigative standpoint, but from a mental health perspective.”<sup>275</sup>***

It should also be noted that during a June 16, 2018, NPF assessment team focus group with now-former BSO command personnel, the individuals noted that they had received limited mental health services from the BSO following the MSD shooting and they remain affected by their work in Building 12.<sup>276</sup> The interviews of command level officers and the detective’s testimony before the Commission suggest the need for additional support and services for the first responders to the MSD shooting.

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<sup>272</sup> Broward County Public Schools. (2019, May 7). Summer 2019 Resiliency Services Offered at Three BCPS Locations in Parkland and Coral Springs. Retrieved from <https://www.browardschools.com/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=14019&ModuleInstanceID=60855&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=124391&PageID=39081>

<sup>273</sup> NPF assessment team interviews with MSD parents and teachers, April 15-18, 2019.

<sup>274</sup> The Florida Channel. (2019, June 4). 6/4/19 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Part 2.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> National Police Foundation assessment team focus group with BSO command personnel, June 16, 2018.

## Recovery and Resilience Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 4.1: Broward County, municipal elected and other government officials, businesses, and community-based organizations were able to leverage existing relationships to establish a Family Reunification Center (FRC) and provide other locations for students to be reunited with family members.** Despite not having an organized and coordinated structure, Broward County—particularly Parkland, Coral Springs, and the municipalities in the northwest—is a resource-rich community. In the hours following the shooting, commissioners and government officials from Broward County and the City of Parkland, law enforcement agencies, the Broward County Public Schools, and community members and organizations deployed resources and services to the school and the Family Reunification Center (FRC).

**Recommendation 4.1.1: Broward County and municipal government officials should work with appropriate facilities to establish memoranda of understanding or more formalized agreements to establish an FRC in accordance with best practices.** The FRC should be a safe, stable, and comfortable environment to facilitate reunification and necessary interviews, with considerations for venue security and media staging.<sup>277</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the MSD shooting, the city manager of Coral Springs was able to personally call an executive at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club, and Convention Center to ask about the availability of the convention center as the FRC. Since the MSD shooting, there have not been any formalized MOUs or agreements with large venues throughout Broward County to facilitate identifying potential FRCs following a critical incident.

**Finding 4.2: Increased, regular communication with families awaiting reunification or notification may have helped to ease the chaotic environment at the FRC.** Multiple parents indicated that they waited hours without receiving updates from law enforcement and that the only times law enforcement officers talked to them were to ask for pictures or details about their loved ones.<sup>278</sup> This time period was particularly troublesome for family members who did not know what to expect and had already begun to assume the worst. The next-of-kin notification process should occur in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members and significant others.<sup>279</sup>

**Recommendation 4.2.1: Law enforcement officials or victim advocates should provide regular updates of information to individuals awaiting reunification at the FRC.** Information may include what is known about the event, what authorities are doing, common occurrences (law enforcement and FBI protocols) following similar acts of violence, and services available at the FRC and in the community.

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<sup>277</sup> Braziel, et al. (2016). *Bringing Calm to Chaos*.

<sup>278</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>279</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*. See also:

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings/2019/April/Documents/April-10,-2019-130pm-Lessons-Learned-from-Pulse-Ja.aspx>

**Finding 4.3: The initial mental health response to the MSD shooting was uncoordinated.** In the initial hours after the MSD shooting, many community-based organizations and individual clinicians offered their services to MSD and the Broward County Public Schools. Without a pre-determined lead for mental health service provision, there was limited coordination between the various groups and individuals, which contributed to the chaotic feeling surrounding the FRC and the later resiliency centers.

**Recommendation 4.3.1: Broward County and municipal government officials, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders should partner to develop a Community Mental Health Coordination and Preparedness Plan.** This plan should identify a lead mental health organization responsible for the coordination and deployment of services in different scenarios, including active shooter situations in schools and other public areas. The plan can be used by a mental health incident commander to deploy resources in the aftermath of a critical incident, while additional state and national resources are deployed. The plan should develop a centralized source of information and resources on available disaster mental health service providers, including contact information, credentials, specialized trainings, and other applicable details. Mental health service providers should have consistent training in specific trauma treatments and familiarity with community services and differing types of treatments—including what evidence-based practices are beneficial and when they should be used following an incident.

**Recommendation 4.3.2: Law enforcement and first responder agencies should designate a mental health incident commander as soon as possible and practical following a mass violence event such as the response to the MSD shooting.** The mental health incident commander should be responsible to ensure:

- Screening of mental health and other caregivers to ensure that their skill sets are appropriate for individual and community-level care.
- Appropriate triage (initial evaluation) is completed and a treatment plan is developed and implemented by appropriate professionals for individuals – immediately following an event as well as over time.
- Coordination and implementation of the community resiliency plan.
- The mental health incident commander should be a clinician or a government employee with the appropriate trauma counseling training or experience.

During the response to the 2016 attack on the Pulse nightclub, the Orlando Police Department assigned a designated mental health incident commander to monitor their agency personnel in the aftermath of the incident, coordinate debriefings, connect personnel and families to resources as needed, and ensure a continuum of care.<sup>280</sup> In the days after the MSD shooting, the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD)

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<sup>280</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

established a group in the chief's conference room to coordinate the provision of a continuum of mental health services for all CSPFD employees.

**Recommendation 4.3.3: Broward County should include post-event victim and witness, first responder, and relevant stakeholder welfare as an integral part of interagency planning, training, and exercises.** Broward County is a resource-rich community and has a variety of government programs, clinicians, law enforcement and first responder assistance providers, and community-based organizations that can be deployed to provide appropriate and effective care in the aftermath of a critical incident. Including these stakeholders in planning, training, and exercises allows for smooth integration in a critical incident, particularly when support is needed for those providing support.

**Finding 4.4: The short- and long-term actions following a traumatic event can impact recovery, resilience, and mental health outcomes for the individual and community.** Certain services provided in the initial days following the MSD shooting inadvertently contributed to adverse reactions toward future mental health support services. Without family assistance training, “even good-hearted volunteers . . . can do harm.”<sup>281</sup> Therefore, individuals should be connected with clergy and counselors who are vetted and properly trained, and particularly with mental health providers trained in trauma-specific, evidence-based therapies.

**Recommendation 4.4.1: Mental health workers deployed immediately following trauma should be trained in psychological first aid to address the immediate needs of the individual and community.** The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)/ National Center for PTSD-Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide is a field tested, evidenced-based guide that helps with the coordination, training and implementation of immediate interventions following a traumatic experience. According to the guide, “Psychological First Aid is a supportive intervention for use in the immediate aftermath of disasters and terrorism.”<sup>282</sup> It aims “to reduce distress, assist with current needs, and promote adaptive functioning, not elicit details of traumatic experiences and losses.”<sup>283</sup>

**Recommendation 4.4.2: In accordance with psychological first aid principles, immediately following trauma, provide supportive interventions that establish human contact, provide a safe environment, meet survivors' immediate needs, offer practical assistance, recognize concerning reactions, and refer individuals to social support networks, services, and recovery services as appropriate.** Mental health and other providers should avoid individual debriefings immediately following a traumatic event; ensure confidentiality; provide continuity of follow-up with those who have sought services; and, identify those at risk due to direct trauma and exposure and follow-up with them specifically. Individuals should be able to receive referrals to mental health workers

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<sup>281</sup> TriData Division. (2014). *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting*.

<sup>282</sup> Brymer, M., A. Jacobs, C. Layne, R. Pynoos, J. Ruzek, A. Steinberg, E. Vernberg, P. Watson. (2006). *Psychological First Aid*. Field Operations Guide, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD. Retrieved from [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/PFA/PFA\\_2ndEditionwithappendices.pdf](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/PFA/PFA_2ndEditionwithappendices.pdf)

<sup>283</sup> Brymer, et al. (2006). *Psychological First Aid*.

trained in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), or exposure-based therapies to address PTSD symptoms that may occur days and weeks after the incident; and be able to be referred to psychiatry for those with acute stress disorders, PTSD, or significant symptoms of distress.<sup>284</sup> Alternative therapies may be offered after evidence-based treatments are explored.

**Recommendation 4.4.3: Multiple forms of trauma and mental health services and counseling should be available as soon, and for as long, as possible.** Mental health support is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Traumatic incidents have psychological impact on affected individuals in a variety of ways.<sup>285</sup> Particularly following a mass violence incident at a school or workplace, there should be services available in easily accessible, yet private, places. Ideally, options should be available both on- and off-campus so that people can choose where they feel most comfortable.

**Finding 4.5: Some Broward County law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies collaborated to offer mental health debriefings following the response to the MSD shooting.** At the time of the MSD shooting, Broward County had three police departments—Coral Springs Police Department, Pembroke Pines Police Department, and Plantation Police Department—with teams certified to conduct Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD), Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefings, and peer-to-peer support. Some trained individuals were involved in the response to MSD, were unavailable to conduct debriefings, and needed debriefings for themselves. Available CISD teams provided debriefings and peer support to first responders of various agencies in the weeks following the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 4.5.1: Broward County law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies should consider creating teams trained in CISD, CISM, or peer support.** Following the incident, BSO began to examine the possibility of developing their own peer support team.<sup>286</sup> While single-session individual debriefing cannot replace longer term mental health support, and is not effective for everyone, CISDs have been found to be associated with improved functioning among emergency services personnel following exposure to work-related traumatic events.<sup>287</sup>

**Recommendation 4.5.2: Vetting and special training for clinicians providing specialized counseling services to public safety professionals can help to better meet personnel**

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<sup>284</sup> Ponniah, K., and S.D. Hollon. (2009). Empirically supported psychological treatments for adult acute stress disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder: a review. *Depression and Anxiety*, 26(12), 1086-109.

<sup>285</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). Psychological Impact of Mass Violence. Retrieved from [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/psychological\\_impact\\_of\\_mass\\_violence.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/psychological_impact_of_mass_violence.pdf)

<sup>286</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>287</sup> Tuckey, M.R., and J.E. Scott. (2014). Group critical incident stress debriefing with emergency services personnel: a randomized controlled trial. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, 27(1), 38-54.

**needs.** Reporting that the process has benefited their members, the CSPFD has helped the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative (FFSHC) to begin a process to screen and train licensed mental health clinicians in emergency services to better understand first responder experiences in the field (see Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department and the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative callout box above).<sup>288</sup>

**Recommendation 4.5.3: The leadership of any organizations involved in a critical incident should ensure that all personnel feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need afterwards.** Organizations should identify promising practices related to employee, as well as family, wellness. If the incident is at a school, protocols should also include students and their families. Many public safety personnel have access to mental health support but often choose not to use it.<sup>289</sup> Having leadership prioritize the mental health of all personnel and set the tone to be able to honestly discuss mental health needs may help to connect personnel with valuable resources and encourage them to use additional support as needed.<sup>290</sup>

**Finding 4.6: Long-term planning is essential to support victim and witness, first responder, and relevant stakeholder welfare following traumatic events.** Effectively planning and preparing, coordinating, and leveraging the vast resources available throughout Broward County to focus on healing and moving forward will result in systems and strategies that will be responsive to the needs of the entire county for years to come.

**Recommendation 4.6.1: Broward County should consider follow-up counseling for impacted individuals, as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.** Through the Department of Human Services, Broward County should consider taking the lead in organizing and vetting a countywide group of government, BCPS, first responder, and community-based practitioners and volunteers to provide an array of services for persons impacted by the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 4.6.2: Broward County should have an independent third party conduct an analysis of the current mental health resources being provided to MSD students, staff, and families; first responders; and, relevant stakeholders who were involved in the MSD shooting to identify ways to continue to support the victims and survivors—and the families—of the attack and the entire community.** Broward County officials should bring people together to support opportunities for individuals and groups to mourn and commemorate those who were lost and encourage community members to set aside differences to focus on moving forward.

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<sup>288</sup> Babinec, F., and C. Bator. (n.d.). "Coral Spring-Parkland Fire Department MSD Response." Presentation provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019.

<sup>289</sup> Carleton, R.N., T.O. Afifi, S. Turner, T. Taillieu, A.D. Vaughan, G.S. Anderson, R. Ricciardelli, R.S. MacPhee, H.A. Cramm, S. Czarnuch, K. Hozempa, and R.D. Camp. (2019). *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* 22, 1-19.

<sup>290</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

**Recommendation 4.6.3: Broward County should develop a collaborative multi-agency/multi-disciplinary community resilience plan.** Broward County should prioritize the development of a mental health coordination and preparedness plan as part of a holistic community resilience plan.

**Recommendation 4.6.4: Broward County officials should work with the BCPS to identify at-risk populations—those that directly experienced or witnessed the event, lost an individual they cared about, have prior experience with trauma, or a related psychiatric or medical condition—and provide them with special attention for support services.** Many MSD students, staff and their families, as well as first responders and employees from first responder agencies, continue to be affected by the trauma of their experiences on February 14, 2018. Implementing a short- and long-term plan to provide options for their needs will be instrumental in forging a successful path forward.

**Recommendation 4.6.5: Broward County should encourage support groups for those with common experiences.** In the months after the MSD shooting, members of MSD and others who responded to support in the immediate aftermath organically formed support groups. These may include specific groups for teachers, who were in Building 12, students who were in Building 12, a general MSD teachers’ group, a group for siblings of MSD students, a group for parents of MSD students, a group for counselors, and other groups for individuals to share common experiences. Connecting with others who were similarly affected can be mutually helpful.<sup>291</sup>

**Recommendation 4.6.6: Law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies in Broward County should develop comprehensive safety and wellness plans that address aspects of physical, mental, and emotional well being.** The critical incidents that law enforcement and fire/EMS personnel respond to are physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. It is important that agencies develop comprehensive plans and strategies to provide their employees with the tools, resources, and services to address all aspects of their health and safety.

**Finding 4.7: Law enforcement personnel in Broward County, and most probably other first responders, continue to be challenged by the MSD shooting and request mental health services.** On June 4, 2019—more than 16 months after the incident—a BSO detective implored the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, “to consider in its future discussions, how first responders are debriefed after an incident like this. Not from a factual or investigative standpoint, but from a mental health perspective.”<sup>292</sup>

**Recommendation 4.7.1: The NPF assessment team strongly encourages an independent third-party review and assessment to survey, interview, hold focus groups and gather**

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<sup>291</sup> Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress. (n.d.). Coping with Stress Following a Mass Shooting. Retrieved from [https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS\\_FS\\_Coping\\_with\\_Stress\\_Following\\_Mass\\_Shooting.pdf](https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Coping_with_Stress_Following_Mass_Shooting.pdf)

<sup>292</sup> The Florida Channel. (2019, June 4). 6/4/19 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission Part 2. Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

**information about the brain health and well being of all first responders in Broward County, particularly those impacted by this incident.** The NPF and its mental health partners would like to provide this important follow-up research as a next step.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

Even before the shooter was apprehended and the immediate threat subsided, support for Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) students, staff, their families, and the families of the victims poured in. Locally, in the hours following the shooting, commissioners and government officials from Broward County and the City of Parkland, law enforcement agencies, the Broward County Public Schools, and community members and organizations mobilized and deployed resources and services to the school and the Family Reunification Center (FRC). In the days and weeks following the MSD shooting, stakeholders provided mental health counselors and services, coordinated and conducted vigils and other remembrances, and building the foundation for community-wide recovery and resilience.

Without a pre-existing multi-agency/multi-discipline active shooter response plan or training exercises, and no identified individual or agency responsible for leading or coordinating the stakeholders and their respective resources, at times the response to the MSD shooting was uncoordinated and challenged. Shortcomings in preparation, communication, and collaboration between first responder agencies and city and county government officials impacted the establishment of emergency operations centers, joint information centers, and the ability to immediately establish roles and responsibilities to coordinate resources at the scene and the FRC. The uncertainty of roles and responsibilities and lack of communication and coordination also exacerbated challenges of community-based organizations to effectively coordinate and compile resources and integrate into the government response. Similarly, the lack of county-wide short- and long-term active shooter and manmade disaster response and recovery plans created confusion in identifying a leader or group of leaders that would exude confidence and certainty that the community would unite and emerge stronger and contributed to a number of new political, socioeconomic, and geographic challenges in Broward County as a whole. Approximately 16 months after the MSD shooting, many community members and government officials are concerned that focus remains on the investigations and after-action reviews versus on recovery, building resilience and moving forward.

It is imperative that county and municipal commissioners and government officials, first responder agencies, Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) Board members and administrators, and community-based organizations come together and address the challenges that the MSD shooting uncovered. Adapting the extensive natural disaster preparation and response plans to include active shooters and manmade disasters, partnering to develop a countywide mental health coordination and preparedness plan, a collaborative multi-agency/multi-disciplinary community resilience plan, and establishing and maintaining relationships across boundaries and organizations is key to creating a county-wide system that responds as effectively to manmade disasters as it does to natural disasters.

Developing a county-wide mental health coordination and preparedness plan and a community resilience plan are especially important. Many MSD students and staff and their families, as well as first responders and employees from first responder agencies, continue to be affected by their

experiences on February 14, 2018. As the capital trial of the suspect approaches, many of the victims, witnesses, and responders are likely to be re-traumatized. Implementing a short- and long-term plan to provide options for their needs will be instrumental in forging a successful path forward.

Broward County as a whole is a resource-rich community with very dedicated community members, organizations, and government officials. Community members and organizations have dedicated resources and efforts to caring for those who were—and continue to be—impacted. The Broward County Commission MSD After-Action Task Force was created to collaboratively affect change at the government level, and public safety officials throughout Broward County have worked together to enhance training and collaboration. In the months following the MSD shooting, Broward County officials have already made numerous advancements including:

- implementing the Local Government Radio System to accommodate non public safety users such as BCPS bus drivers and Broward County employees,<sup>293</sup> and constructing the new P25 radio system;
- agreeing to allow personnel in the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center to dispatch BSO deputies in Parkland;
- providing the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center immediate access to a BSO radio set on the Parkland channel in their communications center, adding ways for the Coral Springs Police Dispatch to monitor a Parkland channel, and programming the BSO channel into the Coral Springs – Parkland Fire channel;
- reconvening the radio governance committee—similar to the already-established computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and Law/Fire governance committees—to address radio communications;
- creating a subcommittee of City Managers to discuss and resolve issues that relate to communications involving multiple municipalities; and,
- agreeing to make changes to the routing of all 911 calls in the City of Parkland to the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center.<sup>294</sup>

Effectively planning and preparing, building and enhancing relationships across agencies and municipalities; coordinating; and, leveraging the vast resources available to focus on preparedness, healing, and moving forward can result in systems and strategies that will be responsive to the needs of the entire county for years to come and serve as one of the brightest outcomes of one of the darkest days.

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<sup>293</sup> In July 2019, BCPS announced the completed migration of 1,367 buses to the new radio system that operates separately from the one used by public safety agencies. For more, see: Barszewski, L. (2019, July 26). School bus radios won't slow police communications anymore.

<sup>294</sup> In May 2019, the City of Parkland agreed to have all 911 calls originating within the city limits routed and delivered to the Coral Springs Emergency Communications Center. However, the City asked that the project be postponed until a temporary solution for integrating the relevant CAD systems could be identified.

## Appendix A: Findings and Recommendations

### Command Coordination, Structure, and Leadership Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 2.1: The Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO), the Coral Springs–Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD), the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), and other mutual aid agencies that responded to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) lacked an effective, efficient, and coordinated command structure.** During the response to the MSD shooting, the BSO led the law enforcement response, the CSPFD led the emergency medical services response, and the MSD and BCPS administration assumed responsibility for the mental health response to MSD students, staff, and their families and coordinated with the first responder agencies on sharing information. At times, agencies operated independently of the others and outside of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) model.

**Recommendation 2.1.1: As soon as possible and practical during an incident, a unified command center of all primary first responder agencies should be established to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services.** Without an effective NIMS-based incident command structure and delays in establishing a unified command center, there were challenges in deploying all the available BSO, CSPFD, and CSPD first responder resources and personnel on scene and communicating with supporting stakeholders. This impacted decisions to activate the emergency operations centers in Parkland and Broward County, which would have provided additional coordination and support to the response.

**Recommendation 2.1.2: Broward County should work with the Broward League of Cities and relevant stakeholders to develop an all-hazards emergency response plan that includes NIMS/ICS principles.** Broward County and relevant stakeholders should work together to evaluate various multi-agency coordination models (Unified Command, Incident Complex, and Area Command) and work with response agencies and stakeholders to build capabilities to operate using NIMS/ICS principles in response to critical incidents, to include active shooter events.

**Finding 2.2: Broward County and City of Parkland comprehensive emergency management plans (CEMPs) do not include provisions for managing responses to active shooter incidents.** Jurisdictional and operational decisions can be difficult even during routine incidents, becoming magnified during the response to an incident of the magnitude of the MSD shooting. When these incidents occur, decisions regarding which agency should lead the response, which agencies and organizations should play a supporting role, and what each stakeholder’s roles and responsibilities should be, can become particularly challenging.

**Recommendation 2.2.1: Broward County, the City of Parkland, and all municipalities should regularly review their CEMPs to expand beyond natural disasters to include current and emerging threats such as active shooters and other mass violence events.**

Because of the unique governance structure in Broward County, greater efforts should be made to develop and implement strategies and plans to increase collaboration and coordination among the County, the BSO, the BCPS, the 31 municipalities, and community organizations in response to natural and manmade critical incidents.

**Recommendation 2.2.2: The Broward County CEMP should be adapted and enhanced to include the role of County government, public safety agencies, and relevant partners in mass violence and other manmade disasters.** The Broward County CEMP acknowledges that it is, “a ‘living document’ that must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis in order to...maintain preparedness to respond and recover from emergencies.”<sup>295</sup> The most recent version of the CEMP is from September 2015, and it should be updated to include countywide plans, policies, procedures, and strategies from active shooters and emerging threats.

**Recommendation 2.2.3: The Broward County CEMP should be adapted and enhanced to address the coordination between the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) and similar bodies established by municipalities (MEOCs) during the response to a manmade disaster.** Currently, the Broward County CEMP addresses coordination between the CEOC and MEOCs, noting, “A municipal representative is assigned to the CEOC to coordinate emergency operations with their respective municipality.” During the response to a natural disaster, municipal governments will already be overtaxed and unable to arrange for a representative to go to the CEOC. Therefore, Broward County and municipal officials should work together to address opportunities to have a CEOC representative deploy to an MEOC or to establish virtual coordination during a manmade disaster.

**Recommendation 2.2.4: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should develop tabletop and training exercises to address the County government response to active shooter incidents.** Tabletops and other similar training exercises can be valuable tools to collaborate with stakeholders from other organizations, including public safety organizations.<sup>296</sup> Involving all relevant stakeholders in a unified incident command, as well as planning and exercising roles and responsibilities prior to an event, can help build familiarity with the emergency response and recovery system and aid its implementation during critical incidents.<sup>297</sup>

**Recommendation 2.2.5: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should also work with the BSO, other first responder agencies, and municipalities to conduct NIMS/ICS trainings and exercises.** Broward County should engage the BSO, and other regional first responder agencies—including law enforcement,

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<sup>295</sup> Broward County. (2015, September 15). Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Broward County, Florida: Broward County Emergency Management.

<sup>296</sup> Straub, et al. (2018, February). *Advancing Charlotte*.

<sup>297</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis*.

fire, EMS, emergency management, other government and non-government stakeholders—in NIMS/ICS critical incident response training, to include active shooter events. NIMS/ICS planning, training, and implementation must involve all relevant stakeholders to ensure preparedness and situational awareness across specialties and the effective coordination and deployment of resources.

**Recommendation 2.2.6: Based on updated provisions in the Broward County CEMP, Broward County should develop tabletop and training exercises that coordinate individual municipalities, and relevant stakeholders—including private and non-profit organizations—in responding to active shooters and other critical incidents.** Lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities between county and city government agencies, first responder agencies, and community-based organizations exacerbated issues—particularly related to leadership, coordination, and communication during the response to the MSD shooting. This uncertainty created missed opportunities to leverage available resources.

**Finding 2.3: Active shooters and other critical incidents can quickly exhaust individual agency resources, suggesting the importance of strong inter-personal and inter-agency relationships to ensure collaboration and coordination.** Few individual government or public safety agencies have all the resources necessary to manage a major critical incident and the needs of the community in its aftermath. It is important for leaders to be aware of the capabilities and capacities of their organization, as well as their mutual aid organizations. Organizational awareness involves leaders assessing and testing the strengths and needs of their agency and knowing when the response to an incident requires more resources than the primary agency can offer and when to accept assistance or build a regional response capability.

**Recommendation 2.3.1: Broward County, individual municipalities, and public safety organizations should regularly assess and test the strengths and needs of their agencies, mutual aid, and relevant stakeholders in preparation for a critical incident.** Agency leaders should cultivate a strong sense of organizational awareness and accept assistance when appropriate. Particularly following critical incidents, invoking assistance from other agencies can be valuable to manage demanding and resource-intensive responses. Leadership requires decision-making based on constantly evolving information, circumstances, and the needs of those they represent as well as an awareness of individual and agency capabilities and needs.

## Communication and Public Information Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 3.1: All Broward County area public safety and government agencies share responsibility to construct strong communications systems and processes that can collectively support the public safety response in and beyond their jurisdictions during incidents requiring a multi-agency/multi-discipline response.** The collective inability of the public safety and government agencies in Broward County to cooperatively develop, prepare, and strengthen their

communications systems, to include predicting and mitigating potential communications issues, created significant challenges in the response to the MSD shooting.<sup>298</sup>

**Recommendation 3.1.1: Broward County administrators, BSO officials, and government and public safety executives from the municipalities within Broward County should work proactively and collaboratively to identify and address challenges and develop a strategy to implement the appropriate solutions.**<sup>299</sup>

**Finding 3.2: It continues to be apparent that the various agencies (Broward County, the Broward County Sheriff's Office, and municipal first responder agencies within Broward County) that fund, service, and operate the various communications systems, equipment, and operational practices and processes—including computer-aided dispatch and radios and call-taking and transferring processes—each have their own mission and goals.**<sup>300</sup> Presentations from the Broward County Police Chiefs Association and a municipal police chief, the Broward County Fire Chiefs Association, and the Broward County Administrator during the June 2019 meeting of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, highlighted the continued disagreements over resolving the communications shortcomings that created significant challenges to the response to the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 3.2.1: All parties in the Broward County region should continue to take steps to move toward a well-functioning, unified, and fully-integrated regional public safety communications system that meets the needs of all user groups and is optimal for public safety in Broward County.**<sup>301</sup>

**Recommendation 3.2.2: Consider emergency communications models and best practices to determine the most appropriate system—including the technological system as well as the system of policies, procedures, protocols, standards of use, memoranda of understanding, and training supporting the technology's use—for Broward County and its municipalities.** Different communications models provide promising practices that Broward County and area municipalities can learn from as they make decisions that affect the future of their emergency communications systems. The Broward County Office of Regional Communications and Technology and user groups can conduct research regarding these systems and share findings broadly to identify what may or may not work in Broward.<sup>302</sup>

**Finding 3.3: While it is unavoidable that communications devices, systems, and processes may be overtaxed and experience some technical issues during large-scale critical incidents, the**

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<sup>298</sup> Straub, et al. (2019, January 4). *Regional Public Safety Communications in Broward County*.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

communications challenges during the response to the MSD shooting impacted coordination between first responder agencies, BCPS, and government officials.<sup>303</sup>

**Recommendation 3.3.1: All agencies with assignments in the Broward County and/or their municipal CEMP should have plans that clearly guide at least one representative—generally a public information officer—to coordinate public information efforts among participating agencies through the Incident Command System and the creation of a JIC.**<sup>304</sup> As the AARs of the responses to the 2012 Aurora Century 16 Theater shooting<sup>305</sup> and the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings identified, a JIC can ensure the provision of consistent, accurate, and unified messages from all disciplines, agencies, and responders.<sup>306</sup>

**Finding 3.4: Broward County partially activated the County Emergency Operations Center (CEOC) and the City of Parkland activated a modified municipal EOC (MEOC), during the response to the MSD shooting, but both played a minimal role during the response and in the immediate aftermath because they did not receive timely information from the scene.**<sup>307</sup>

**Recommendation 3.4.1: Broward County and individual municipalities should consider activating their EOCs early in the response to a critical incident to create a central location from which to direct and allocate resources and support to first responders and provide information, resources, and services to the community.** Activating the MEOC and the CEOC early in the response to a critical incident can help secure additional resources and relieve pressure and responsibility on agencies directly involved in the immediate response.<sup>308</sup>

**Recommendation 3.4.2: Broward County should work with the Broward League of Cities (BLOC) and relevant stakeholders to develop an effective process for establishing EOCs during critical incidents.** To eliminate confusion over roles and responsibilities and to maintain a common operating picture on countywide emergency response activities, Broward County and the BLOC, acting on behalf of the municipalities, should establish methods for designating mutually beneficial representation and communication between MEOCs and the CEOC. This will assist agencies; government officials and community-based organization with a role in an emergency response better coordinate the deployment of personnel and resources.

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<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis*.

<sup>305</sup> TriData Division. (2014). *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting*.

<sup>306</sup> Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). (December, 2014). *After Action Report for the Response to the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings*.

<sup>307</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with community organization leaders. April 15, 2019.

<sup>308</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

**Finding 3.5: Inconsistent messaging impacted the ability of leaders to develop a cogent response to calm and unite the community in the aftermath of the shooting.** Unified leadership and messaging before, during, and immediately following a critical incident sets the tone for the days, weeks, and months to follow. In an interview with the NPF assessment team, one City of Parkland official mentioned that none of responding public safety leaders or elected officials assumed a leadership role, or extended the opportunity to the City to do so, which exacerbated uncertainty and fear in the community.<sup>309</sup> This created a scenario where the most vocal people often received the media's attention, and divisive media stories at times overshadowed messages of unity and resilience, which also hampered the ability of the entire Broward community to focus on a collaborative recovery process.<sup>310</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.1: Broward County government officials, law enforcement and fire/EMS leaders, school officials, and other stakeholders should develop relationships, roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication in advance of a critical incident.** It is important to show the public a unified front of government agencies working together.<sup>311</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.2: Include public information officers (PIOs) from all relevant County, municipal, and relevant stakeholders in command-level briefings and strategy sessions to increase coordination.** Lessons learned from previous critical incident reviews highlight the importance of including the PIOs in all political, command-level briefings and strategy sessions.<sup>312</sup> Prior to the 2016 attack at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, PIOs from all Orlando city agencies established a process for communication during various event types that helped to develop a coordinated media and public information strategy during the incident.<sup>313</sup>

**Recommendation 3.5.3: Broward County and the relevant stakeholders should expand their use of social media to release timely and accurate information both to the public and to the media.** Social media can be used to improve community outreach, as an investigative tool when seeking additional information, to dispel rumors, and to make time-sensitive notifications.<sup>314</sup>

## Recovery and Resilience Findings and Recommendations

**Finding 4.1: Broward County, municipal elected and other government officials, businesses, and community-based organizations were able to leverage existing relationships to establish a**

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<sup>309</sup> NPF assessment team interview with City of Parkland government official, April 18, 2019.

<sup>310</sup> Wamsley, L. (2018, February 26). Broward Sheriff Under Scrutiny For Handling Of Parkland Shooting. *NPR*.

<sup>311</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Managing the Response to a Mobile Mass Shooting*. See also: Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>312</sup> Braziel, et al. (2016). *Bringing Calm to Chaos*.

<sup>313</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

<sup>314</sup> Law Enforcement Policy Center. (2019, May). Considerations Document: Social Media. International Association of Chiefs of Police.

**Family Reunification Center (FRC) and provide other locations for students to be reunited with family members.** Despite not having an organized and coordinated structure, Broward County—particularly Parkland, Coral Springs, and the municipalities in the northwest—is a resource-rich community. In the hours following the shooting, commissioners and government officials from Broward County and the City of Parkland, law enforcement agencies, the Broward County Public Schools, and community members and organizations deployed resources and services to the school and the Family Reunification Center (FRC).

**Recommendation 4.1.1: Broward County and municipal government officials should work with appropriate facilities to establish memoranda of understanding or more formalized agreements to establish an FRC in accordance with best practices.** The FRC should be a safe, stable, and comfortable environment to facilitate reunification and necessary interviews, with considerations for venue security and media staging.<sup>315</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the MSD shooting, the city manager of Coral Springs was able to personally call an executive at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club, and Convention Center to ask about the availability of the convention center as the FRC. Since the MSD shooting, there have not been any formalized MOUs or agreements with large venues throughout Broward County to facilitate identifying potential FRCs following a critical incident.

**Finding 4.2: Increased, regular communication with families awaiting reunification or notification may have helped to ease the chaotic environment at the FRC.** Multiple parents indicated that they waited hours without receiving updates from law enforcement and that the only times law enforcement officers talked to them were to ask for pictures or details about their loved ones.<sup>316</sup> This time period was particularly troublesome for family members who did not know what to expect and had already begun to assume the worst. The next-of-kin notification process should occur in a timely manner to lessen the stress on family members and significant others.<sup>317</sup>

**Recommendation 4.2.1: Law enforcement officials or victim advocates should provide regular updates of information to individuals awaiting reunification at the FRC.** Information may include what is known about the event, what authorities are doing, common occurrences (law enforcement and FBI protocols) following similar acts of violence, and services available at the FRC and in the community.

**Finding 4.3: The initial mental health response to the MSD shooting was uncoordinated.** In the initial hours after the MSD shooting, many community-based organizations and individual clinicians offered their services to MSD and the Broward County Public Schools. Without a pre-determined lead for mental health service provision, there was limited coordination between the

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<sup>315</sup> Braziel, et al. (2016). *Bringing Calm to Chaos*.

<sup>316</sup> NPF assessment team focus group with parents of MSD students, April 16, 2019.

<sup>317</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*. See also:

<http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/MSDHS/Meetings/2019/April/Documents/April-10,-2019-130pm-Lessons-Learned-from-Pulse-Ja.aspx>

various groups and individuals, which contributed to the chaotic feeling surrounding the FRC and the later resiliency centers.

**Recommendation 4.3.1: Broward County and municipal government officials, community-based organizations, and other relevant stakeholders should partner to develop a Community Mental Health Coordination and Preparedness Plan.** This plan should identify a lead mental health organization responsible for the coordination and deployment of services in different scenarios, including active shooter situations in schools and other public areas. The plan can be used by a mental health incident commander to deploy resources in the aftermath of a critical incident, while additional state and national resources are deployed. The plan should develop a centralized source of information and resources on available disaster mental health service providers, including contact information, credentials, specialized trainings, and other applicable details. Mental health service providers should have consistent training in specific trauma treatments and familiarity with community services and differing types of treatments—including what evidence-based practices are beneficial and when they should be used following an incident.

**Recommendation 4.3.2: Law enforcement and first responder agencies should designate a mental health incident commander as soon as possible and practical following a mass violence event such as the response to the MSD shooting.** The mental health incident commander should be responsible to ensure:

- Screening of mental health and other caregivers to ensure that their skill sets are appropriate for individual and community-level care.
- Appropriate triage (initial evaluation) is completed and a treatment plan is developed and implemented by appropriate professionals for individuals – immediately following an event as well as over time.
- Coordination and implementation of the community resiliency plan.
- The mental health incident commander should be a clinician or a government employee with the appropriate trauma counseling training or experience.

During the response to the 2016 attack on the Pulse nightclub, the Orlando Police Department assigned a designated mental health incident commander to monitor their agency personnel in the aftermath of the incident, coordinate debriefings, connect personnel and families to resources as needed, and ensure a continuum of care.<sup>318</sup> In the days after the MSD shooting, the Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department (CSPFD) established a group in the chief’s conference room to coordinate the provision of a continuum of mental health services for all CSPFD employees.

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<sup>318</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

**Recommendation 4.3.3: Broward County should include post-event victim and witness, first responder, and relevant stakeholder welfare as an integral part of interagency planning, training, and exercises.** Broward County is a resource-rich community and has a variety of government programs, clinicians, law enforcement and first responder assistance providers, and community-based organizations that can be deployed to provide appropriate and effective care in the aftermath of a critical incident. Including these stakeholders in planning, training, and exercises allows for smooth integration in a critical incident, particularly when support is needed for those providing support.

**Finding 4.4: The short- and long-term actions following a traumatic event can impact recovery, resilience, and mental health outcomes for the individual and community.** Certain services provided in the initial days following the MSD shooting inadvertently contributed to adverse reactions toward future mental health support services. Without family assistance training, “even good-hearted volunteers . . . can do harm.”<sup>319</sup> Therefore, individuals should be connected with clergy and counselors who are vetted and properly trained, and particularly with mental health providers trained in trauma-specific, evidence-based therapies.

**Recommendation 4.4.1: Mental health workers deployed immediately following trauma should be trained in psychological first aid to address the immediate needs of the individual and community.** The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)/ National Center for PTSD-Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide is a field tested, evidenced-based guide that helps with the coordination, training and implementation of immediate interventions following a traumatic experience. According to the guide, “Psychological First Aid is a supportive intervention for use in the immediate aftermath of disasters and terrorism.”<sup>320</sup> It aims “to reduce distress, assist with current needs, and promote adaptive functioning, not elicit details of traumatic experiences and losses.”<sup>321</sup>

**Recommendation 4.4.2: In accordance with psychological first aid principles, immediately following trauma, provide supportive interventions that establish human contact, provide a safe environment, meet survivors’ immediate needs, offer practical assistance, recognize concerning reactions, and refer individuals to social support networks, services, and recovery services as appropriate.** Mental health and other providers should avoid individual debriefings immediately following a traumatic event; ensure confidentiality; provide continuity of follow-up with those who have sought services; and, identify those at risk due to direct trauma and exposure and follow-up with them specifically. Individuals should be able to receive referrals to mental health workers trained in cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT), eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy (EMDR), or exposure-based therapies to address PTSD symptoms that may occur days and weeks

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<sup>319</sup> TriData Division. (2014). *Aurora Century 16 Theater Shooting*.

<sup>320</sup> Brymer, M., A. Jacobs, C. Layne, R. Pynoos, J. Ruzek, A. Steinberg, E. Vernberg, P. Watson. (2006). *Psychological First Aid*.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

after the incident; and be able to be referred to psychiatry for those with acute stress disorders, PTSD, or significant symptoms of distress.<sup>322</sup> Alternative therapies may be offered after evidence-based treatments are explored.

**Recommendation 4.4.3: Multiple forms of trauma and mental health services and counseling should be available as soon, and for as long, as possible.** Mental health support is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Traumatic incidents have psychological impact on affected individuals in a variety of ways.<sup>323</sup> Particularly following a mass violence incident at a school or workplace, there should be services available in easily accessible, yet private, places. Ideally, options should be available both on- and off-campus so that people can choose where they feel most comfortable.

**Finding 4.5: Some Broward County law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies collaborated to offer mental health debriefings following the response to the MSD shooting.** At the time of the MSD shooting, Broward County had three police departments—Coral Springs Police Department, Pembroke Pines Police Department, and Plantation Police Department—with teams certified to conduct Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD), Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefings, and peer-to-peer support. Some trained individuals were involved in the response to MSD, were unavailable to conduct debriefings, and needed debriefings for themselves. Available CISD teams provided debriefings and peer support to first responders of various agencies in the weeks following the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 4.5.1: Broward County law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies should consider creating teams trained in CISD, CISM, or peer support.** Following the incident, BSO began to examine the possibility of developing their own peer support team.<sup>324</sup> While single-session individual debriefing cannot replace longer term mental health support, and is not effective for everyone, CISDs have been found to be associated with improved functioning among emergency services personnel following exposure to work-related traumatic events.<sup>325</sup>

**Recommendation 4.5.2: Vetting and special training for clinicians providing specialized counseling services to public safety professionals can help to better meet personnel needs.** Reporting that the process has benefited their members, the CSPFD has helped the Florida Firefighters Safety & Health Collaborative (FFSHC) to begin a process to screen and train licensed mental health clinicians in emergency services to better understand

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<sup>322</sup> Ponniah, K., and S.D. Hollon. (2009). Empirically supported psychological treatments for adult acute stress disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder: a review. *Depression and Anxiety*, 26(12), 1086-109.

<sup>323</sup> The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). Psychological Impact of Mass Violence. Retrieved from [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//psychological\\_impact\\_of\\_mass\\_violence.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources//psychological_impact_of_mass_violence.pdf)

<sup>324</sup> Broward County Sheriff's Office. (2018, June 27). Internal Memo: Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and Employee Mental Health.

<sup>325</sup> Tuckey, M.R., and J.E. Scott. (2014). Group critical incident stress debriefing with emergency services personnel: a randomized controlled trial. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, 27(1), 38-54.

first responder experiences in the field (see Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department and the Florida Firefighters Safety and Health Collaborative callout box above).<sup>326</sup>

**Recommendation 4.5.3: The leadership of any organizations involved in a critical incident should ensure that all personnel feel valued and are provided access to the physical and mental health resources they may need afterwards.** Organizations should identify promising practices related to employee, as well as family, wellness. If the incident is at a school, protocols should also include students and their families. Many public safety personnel have access to mental health support but often choose not to use it.<sup>327</sup> Having leadership prioritize the mental health of all personnel and set the tone to be able to honestly discuss mental health needs may help to connect personnel with valuable resources and encourage them to use additional support as needed.<sup>328</sup>

**Finding 4.6: Long-term planning is essential to support victim and witness, first responder, and relevant stakeholder welfare following traumatic events.** Effectively planning and preparing, coordinating, and leveraging the vast resources available throughout Broward County to focus on healing and moving forward will result in systems and strategies that will be responsive to the needs of the entire county for years to come.

**Recommendation 4.6.1: Broward County should consider follow-up counseling for impacted individuals, as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.** Through the Department of Human Services, Broward County should consider taking the lead in organizing and vetting a countywide group of government, BCPS, first responder, and community-based practitioners and volunteers to provide an array of services for persons impacted by the MSD shooting.

**Recommendation 4.6.2: Broward County should have an independent third part conduct an analysis of the current mental health resources being provided to MSD students, staff, and families; first responders; and, relevant stakeholders who were involved in the MSD shooting to identify ways to continue to support the victims and survivors—and the families—of the attack and the entire community.** Broward County officials should bring people together to support opportunities for individuals and groups to mourn and commemorate those who were lost and encourage community members to set aside differences to focus on moving forward.

**Recommendation 4.6.3: Broward County should develop a collaborative multi-agency/multi-disciplinary community resilience plan.** Broward County should prioritize the development of a mental health coordination and preparedness plan as part of a holistic community resilience plan.

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<sup>326</sup> Babinec, F., and C. Bator. (n.d.). "Coral Spring-Parkland Fire Department MSD Response." Presentation provided to NPF assessment team, April 23, 2019.

<sup>327</sup> Carleton, R.N., T.O. Afifi, S. Turner, T. Taillieu, A.D. Vaughan, G.S. Anderson, R. Ricciardelli, R.S. MacPhee, H.A. Cramm, S. Czarnuch, K. Hozempa, and R.D. Camp. (2019). *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* 22, 1-19.

<sup>328</sup> Straub, et al. (2017). *Rescue, Response, and Resilience*.

**Recommendation 4.6.4: Broward County officials should work with the BCPS to identify at-risk populations—those that directly experienced or witnessed the event, lost an individual they cared about, have prior experience with trauma, or a related psychiatric or medical condition—and provide them with special attention for support services.** Many MSD students, staff and their families, as well as first responders and employees from first responder agencies, continue to be affected by the trauma of their experiences on February 14, 2018. Implementing a short- and long-term plan to provide options for their needs will be instrumental in forging a successful path forward.

**Recommendation 4.6.5: Broward County should encourage support groups for those with common experiences.** In the months after the MSD shooting, members of MSD and others who responded to support in the immediate aftermath organically formed support groups. These may include specific groups for teachers, who were in Building 12, students who were in Building 12, a general MSD teachers’ group, a group for siblings of MSD students, a group for parents of MSD students, a group for counselors, and other groups for individuals to share common experiences. Connecting with others who were similarly affected can be mutually helpful.<sup>329</sup>

**Recommendation 4.6.6: Law enforcement and fire/EMS agencies in Broward County should develop comprehensive safety and wellness plans that address aspects of physical, mental, and emotional well being.** The critical incidents that law enforcement and fire/EMS personnel respond to are physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. It is important that agencies develop comprehensive plans and strategies to provide their employees with the tools, resources, and services to address all aspects of their health and safety.

**Finding 4.7: Law enforcement personnel in Broward County, and most probably other first responders, continue to be challenged by the MSD shooting and request mental health services.**

**Recommendation 4.7.1: The NPF assessment team strongly encourages an independent third-party review and assessment to survey, interview, hold focus groups and gather information about the brain health and well being of all first responders in Broward County, particularly those impacted by this incident.** The NPF and its mental health partners would like to provide this important follow-up research as a next step.

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<sup>329</sup> Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress. (n.d.). Coping with Stress Following a Mass Shooting. Retrieved from [https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS\\_FS\\_Coping\\_with\\_Stress\\_Following\\_Mass\\_Shooting.pdf](https://www.cstsonline.org/assets/media/documents/CSTS_FS_Coping_with_Stress_Following_Mass_Shooting.pdf)

Recovering and Moving Forward: Lessons Learned and Recommendations Following the Shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

## Appendix B: Methodology Detail

At the request of Broward County, the National Police Foundation (NPF) created an assessment team to conduct an after-action review (AAR) of the active shooting incident at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) on February 14, 2018. To conduct this review, the NPF assembled a team of subject matter experts with extensive experience in public safety leadership, operations, tactics, decision-making, and coordination with government and community organizations and school administrators; child and adolescent psychiatry; policy analysis; public communications; and, critical incident response to thoroughly review and assess this incident in the identified focus areas. The NPF assessment team completed an interim review focused on public safety communications, which was submitted to Broward County on January 4, 2019.

The NPF assessment approach involved four means of information gathering and collection throughout the course of this review: (1) open source media review, (2) on-site data collection, (3) resource material review, and (4) off-site data collection and research. Each method is described in more detail in the sections that follow.

### Open Source Media Review

Throughout the life of the review, NPF staff have collected, reviewed, and referenced open source media. The team has read dozens of newspaper and magazine articles, watched videos, and more. This research has provided context for the interviews and other research conducted in relation to the MSDHS incident.

### On-site Data Collection

The NPF assessment team conducted two site visits—May 10, 2018, and June 25-29, 2018—in preparation for the initial communications report. The assessment team conducted a third visit during April 15-18, 2019 to gain additional insight into leadership, coordination, and command and control; community resilience and recovery; fire/EMS response and coordination with law enforcement; and, public information. During these site visits, the assessment team conducted semi-structured individual interviews and meetings with the Broward County Commission MSDHS After-Action Task Force; local officials and law enforcement leaders; and, community members, including MSD students, teachers, and parents, and local community organization leaders. The assessment team also conducted conference calls with individuals involved in the response to the incident or otherwise have knowledge of the incident response and resilience-building efforts conducted since.

More than 110 individuals were interviewed during the collective site visits and phone interviews from May 2018 through May 2019, including the following:

## **Government Agencies**

- Broward County
  - Broward County Commissioners
  - Emergency management personnel
  - Directors
  - Communications staff members
- City of Parkland
  - City Commissioners
  - Chief Administrative Officer
  - Directors
  - Communications staff members
- City of Coral Springs
- Children’s Services Council of Broward County

## **Local Law Enforcement and Fire/EMS Agencies and Associations**

- Broward County Sheriff’s Office
  - Regional Communications leadership
  - Department of Fire Rescue leadership
- Coral Springs-Parkland Fire Department
  - Command staff
- Coral Springs Police Department
  - Command staff
- Broward Police Chiefs Association
- Broward Fire Chiefs Association
- Plantation Police Department
  - Communications personnel
- Pembroke Pines Police Department
  - Crisis Response Team members
- Margate-Coconut Creek Fire Rescue Department
- Fort Lauderdale Fire-Rescue Department

## **Non-Profit Organizations, Businesses, and Other Local Organizations**

- Broward Chapter of the American Red Cross
- Broward Health Medical Center
- Broward Health North
- Broward League of Cities
- Eagles Haven
- Fort Lauderdale Marriott Coral Springs Hotel, Golf Club and Convention Center
- Henderson Behavioral Health

- Kol Tikvah
- Mission Critical Partners
- Motorola
- Salvation Army
- United Way of Broward County

### **Community Members**

- MSD students
- MSD teachers
- Parents of MSD students

### **Resource Review**

The NPF assessment team collected and reviewed the BSO and City of Coral Springs’ policies, procedures, reports, data, and audio and video from the incident. In addition, Broward County provided presentations, AARs, assessments, emails, and other reports conducted by other agencies and organizations. The NPF assessment team also followed the publicly available MSDHS Public Safety Commission proceedings and reviewed relevant presentations, transcripts, and incident timelines. Each resource was reviewed to better understand the department’s response to the incident. Resources reviewed included the following:

- Broward County Charter
- Broward County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- City of Parkland Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- BSO Department of Law Enforcement Standard Operating Procedures
- CSPD and CSPFD Standard Operating Procedures
- CSPFD Post-Incident Analysis
- BSO mutual aid agreements
- CSPD and CSPFD incident reports
- BSO 911 call transcripts
- Available after-action reports by responding agencies
- BSO and MSDHS Public Safety Commission incident timelines

The team also reviewed hours of records—including 911 calls, video footage at MSDHS on the day of the incident, and other records made public by Broward County—and reviewed open source media articles, news clips, and relevant video and audio regarding the incident.

### **Off-site Data Collection**

In addition to the information collected from Broward County, and to ground the incident review in national standards, model policies, and recognized promising practices, the NPF assessment

team researched and reviewed scholarship on public safety response, communications, and coordination with an emphasis on critical incidents. The team also reviewed and analyzed relevant critical incident reviews and AARs from national and international incidents. The team conducted relevant research in other areas published by researchers from academia and from organizations including the following:

- Federal Communications Commission
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- National Emergency Number Association
- National Fire Protection Association
- National Police Foundation
- Police Executive Research Forum
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- U.S. Department of Justice

## Analysis

The NPF assessment team used the totality of the information collected to conduct a gap analysis, which focused on identifying key areas to develop a set of recommendations for Broward County, involved agencies, and the larger public safety field.

## Appendix C: About the Team

**Frank G. Straub, PhD**, is the Director of Strategic Studies and the Center for Mass Violence Response Studies (CMVRS) at the National Police Foundation. Dr. Straub provide on-site project management, managed the document review process, coordinated the work of subject matter experts, and provided law enforcement guidance to the project. Dr. Straub has conducted in-depth studies of the San Bernardino terrorist attack, the Kalamazoo mass shooting, and the Orlando Pulse nightclub shooting. He is currently leading a review of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. Dr. Straub leads the CMVRS' Averted School Violence project, the National Applied Research and Data Platform and a countering violent extremism project in Boston. Dr. Straub is a 30-year veteran of federal and local law enforcement, having served as the police chief in Spokane, Washington; the Public Safety Director in Indianapolis; the Public Safety Commissioner in White Plains, New York; and the New York City Police Department's Deputy Commissioner of Training and Assistant Commissioner for Counterterrorism. He also served as a member of the FBI-NYPD Joint Terrorism Task Force during his tenure with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security and the U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service. Dr. Straub is a non-resident fellow at West Point's Center for Combatting Terrorism providing expert advice regarding the domestic law enforcement response to terrorism and acts of mass public violence. Dr. Straub holds a B.A. in Psychology, a M.A. in Forensic Psychology, and a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice. He has co-authored a book on performance-based police management as well as articles and reports on school violence, critical incident response, community policing, police reform, youth violence and homeland security.

**Blake Norton**, provided off-site leadership and oversaw all planning, organization, and conduct of activities related to this report. As the Senior Vice President at the National Police Foundation, Ms. Norton oversees National Police Foundation projects aimed at providing local police agencies with assessments and technical assistance to improve operations. Prior to joining the National Police Foundation in March 2014, she was the Division Director for Local Government Initiatives at the Council of State Government's Justice Center. She oversaw four program areas: Law Enforcement, Mental Health, Reentry, and School Discipline, providing technical assistance to cities, counties, and nonprofits focused on cross-system collaborations between law enforcement and other criminal justice entities, with a significant focus on the intersection between law enforcement and behavioral health systems. Before joining the Justice Center, Blake spent more than 19 years with the Boston Police Department, where her last position was as the Director of Public Affairs and Community Programs. Blake helped shape the agency's reentry efforts and successfully worked with citizens and faith-based organizations to advance consensus-based strategies for improving public safety. She designed and managed the police department's community affairs activities, including programs for court-involved and at-risk youth. She received her B.A. from the University of Massachusetts and her M.Ed. from Boston University.

**Jennifer Zeunik** is the Director of Programs and served as a writer, editor, and quality control manager on the report. Ms. Zeunik has 20 years of public sector and nonprofit project

management experience, working closely with all levels of government. In her career, Ms. Zeunik has provided strategic management expertise to international, federal, state, and local criminal justice clients focused on justice policy research, business development activities, program management, strategic planning, training and technical assistance management, and development of strategic communications. She served as a lead writer on numerous published reports throughout her career, including the *IACP National Policy Summit on Community-Police Relations: Advancing a Culture of Cohesion and Trust* report as well as the COPS Office–funded Police Foundation Orlando Pulse nightclub critical incident review, [\*Rescue, Response, and Resilience\*](#); the San Bernardino terrorist shooting critical incident review, [\*Bringing Calm to Chaos\*](#); and, [\*Collaborative Reform Initiative: An Assessment of the St. Louis County Police Department\*](#).

**Dr. James “Brett” Meade** is a Senior Law Enforcement Program Manager, who provided on-site support and served as a writer and editor on the report. Chief (Ret.) Brett Meade joined the National Police Foundation in November 2018 after serving over 36 years policing in complex urban environments, Chief Meade has over 22 years command/supervisory experience, with 17 years in command and executive level positions of increased responsibility, accountability, and diversity requiring specialized leadership skills, traits, and dedication. In September 2014, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Police for the University of Central Florida Police Department. UCF is one of the largest universities in the United States with over 80,000 students, faculty, and staff. In October 2018, he retired with a promotion to Chief of Police. Chief Meade previously served almost 25 years with the Orange County Sheriff’s Office, A 2,500 employee CALEA Flagship accredited law enforcement agency with annual operating budget of \$200 million retiring as a Patrol Commander, Chief Meade has practical command leadership in administrative as well as operational positions to include Campus Law Enforcement, Internal Affairs, Tourism Safety, Intelligence, Patrol Command, and Youth Prevention programs. He embraces Community Policing, Evidence Based and Intelligence Led Policing philosophies, with documented and proven success in crime reduction by developing and implementing successful collaborative community strategies, anti-gang initiatives, and prevention programs. He possesses extensive command experience in managing large-scale events and disaster response to include operational planning, deployment, development, and evaluation utilizing the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) and holds a SECRET security clearance with the United States Department of Defense. Chief Meade is an accomplished public speaker, instructor and recognized expert in domestic terrorism specializing in the sovereign citizen movement, having trained over 8,000 personnel across the State of Florida on Sovereign Citizen Encounters. He was instrumental in obtaining legislation designed to protect public officials and citizens from paper terrorism tactics employed by sovereign citizens within the State of Florida.

**Michael L. Johnson** is a Certified Protection Professional and CEO of Clearpath Alerts, a Fort Lauderdale, Florida-based security technology company that provides domestic and international entities with risk, security and dynamic communication technology solutions. Prior to joining Clearpath, Mr. Johnson served as president of Clearpath, managing the day-to-day operations and ensuring multi-national corporate clients received the best international risk mitigation solutions. Mr. Johnson also spent almost 27 years in three different federal law enforcement

agencies, last serving in senior management as a Special Agent in Charge at the Diplomatic Security Service and the Office of Export Enforcement.

**Alyse Folino Ley, MD**, graduated from Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2002. Following medical school, she completed a general psychiatry residency and a child and adolescent fellowship at Michigan State University in 2008. Dr. Ley is board certified in both general psychiatry and child and adolescent psychiatry by the American Board of Neurology (ABPN) and the American Osteopathic Board of Neurology and Psychiatry (AOBNP). Dr. Ley has clinical expertise in working with children and adolescents with mood and anxiety disorders, developmental disorders, ADHD, learning disorders, and psychotic disorders. Dr. Ley is the director of the four-year general psychiatry residency program at Michigan State University. Dr. Ley also teaches medical students in the MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine and the MSU College Human Medicine. She is the co-director of OST 577-Psychopathology at MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine.

**Ben Gorban** is a Senior Project Associate and served as a document reviewer and writer and editor on the report. Mr. Gorban has more than nine years of experience supporting law enforcement–related projects including the provision of technical assistance and policy analysis support on projects related to countering violent extremism, community policing, and after-action reviews of public safety responses to critical incidents. Mr. Gorban has served as a team member, writer, and editor for a series of National Police Foundation after-action reviews including: [\*Rescue, Response, and Resilience: A critical incident review of the Orlando public safety response to the attack on the Pulse nightclub\*](#) and [\*Managing the Response to a Mobile Mass Shooting: A Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Safety Response to the February 20, 2016, Mass Shooting Incident\*](#). Prior to joining the National Police Foundation, Mr. Gorban spent more than five years at the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Mr. Gorban’s areas of expertise include research, resource development, and information dissemination. He received his MS in Justice, Law, and Society from American University in 2011 and his BA in Philosophy and Justice, Law, and Society from American University in 2009.

**Rebecca Benson** is a Senior Project Associate, provided on-site support and served as a writer and editor on the report. Prior to joining the National Police Foundation, she most recently served as a Crime and Intelligence Analyst with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Olympic Division, responsible for preparing and providing analytical support to assist in the creation of new area boundaries, mapping and documenting community resources, activities and special locations as well as analyzing personnel resources and shift schedules. Following the official opening of the division, she was responsible for daily crime analysis and mapping of the division. Ms. Benson also led weekly crime control meetings with the Command staff and organized strategies around prevention and deterrence with Command, Detective, and Senior Lead Officers. She received numerous commendations and was awarded Civilian of the Year for 2009. Ms. Benson began her law enforcement career and spent many years with the Boston Police Department.

**Joyce Iwashita** is a Project Associate and served as a document reviewer and writer and editor on the report. Ms. Iwashita has been a team member on multiple National Police Foundation after-action reviews and operational assessments. A Harry S. Truman Scholar, Ms. Iwashita received her BA in Economics from Lewis & Clark College and is currently pursuing her MA in Security Studies with a concentration in Technology and Security from Georgetown University.

## Appendix D: About the National Police Foundation

The National Police Foundation is America's oldest non-membership, non-partisan police research organization. We were founded in 1970 by the Ford Foundation to advance policing through innovation and science. We integrate the work of practitioners and social scientists to facilitate effective crime control and the progress of democratic policing strategies. We have a wide breadth of projects throughout the U.S. and Mexico. Among other efforts, we conduct scientific evaluations of policing strategies, organizational assessments, critical incident reviews, police data projects and issue timely policing publications critical to practitioners and policymakers. We also have a strong interest in officer safety and wellness, preventable error in policing and helping policing enhance community trust and confidence, especially in the area of police use-of-force.

National Police Foundation assessments and incident reviews include:<sup>330</sup>

- [\*After-Action Review of the Orlando Fire Department Response to the Attack at Pulse Nightclub\*](#)
- [\*2017 Presidential Inauguration First Amendment Assembly Independent Law Enforcement Review\*](#)
- [\*Advancing Charlotte: A Police Foundation Assessment of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department Response to the September 2016 Demonstrations\*](#)
- [\*Rescue, Response, and Resilience: A critical incident review of the Orlando public safety response to the attack on the Pulse nightclub\*](#)
- [\*Managing the Response to a Mass Mobile Shooting: A Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Safety Response to the February 20, 2016, Mass Shooting Incident\*](#)
- [\*Engaging Communities One Step at a Time: Policing's Tradition of Foot Patrol as an Innovative Community Engagement Strategy\*](#)
- [\*Collaborative Reform Initiative: An Assessment of the St. Louis County Police Department\*](#)
- [\*Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis: An After-Action Assessment of the Police Response to the Protests, Demonstrations, and Occupation of the Minneapolis Police Department's Fourth Precinct\*](#)
- [\*Bringing Calm to Chaos: A critical incident review of the San Bernardino public safety response to the December 2, 2015 terrorist shooting incident at the Inland Regional Center\*](#)
- [\*Police Under Attack: Southern California Law Enforcement Response to the Attacks by Christopher Dorner\*](#)

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<sup>330</sup> For a full list of National Police Foundation publications, visit <https://www.policefoundation.org/publications/>.



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