



TO: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager
FROM: Claude-Alix Jacob, Chief Public Health Officer
DATE: December 2, 2014
SUBJECT: Response to Policy Order #3, adopted 7/28/14

Text of Order: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to devise and implement a system that will require the City to publicize and convene a community meeting within 72 hours of any catastrophic event - including but not limited to murders, shootings, or other similar episodes - that could impact public safety or the perception of public safety; and be it further that the City Manager is requested to report back to the City Council on this matter in a timely manner. Full text: (http://www2.cambridgema.gov/cityClerk/PolicyOrder.cfm?action=search&item_id=44093)

Traumatic events can impact not only victims and their families, but also the larger community.

Following the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the fatal shooting of a CRLS student, a group of city leaders came together in 2012 to think about what Cambridge should have in place to counter both the immediate and long-term effects of trauma on a community.

The Cambridge Community Response Network (CCRN) includes leadership from public health, police, human services, public schools, emergency communications, and the Peace Commission. The group is facilitated by the Cambridge Public Health Department.

The CCRN has met on an ad hoc basis in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events impacting the city, including the Marathon bombings and the shooting death of a 22-year-old Cambridge resident in 2014.

CCRN members have served in a liaison role between city leadership and groups that are organizing vigils and meetings to ensure that these gatherings achieve the goal of stabilizing the community. CCRN members have also provided consultation to city departments that have organized community meetings following a tragic event.

A meeting format that has worked successfully in Cambridge in recent years includes these elements:

- **Information:** A presenter(s) from relevant city or state agencies provide facts about the situation.
- **Support:** A trauma expert discusses what people impacted might be expected to think, feel, or do as a result of the event, as well as appropriate ways to talk about the event and available resources.
- **Q&A:** Audience members have an opportunity to ask presenters questions.
- **Resources:** City staff and other providers offer a range of resources for attendees—written materials, hotlines, and counseling support—and provide counseling support at information sessions, debriefings, meetings, vigils, and other events, as appropriate.

Recommendation

The Cambridge Public Health Department recommends convening several meetings of the Cambridge Community Response Network during the first six months of 2015 to develop formal guidance on how the City should inform, educate, and engage the community following a traumatic event, as well as how to build resiliency in the community.

In addition, the health department recommends that representatives from community groups that have served as de facto conveners or organizers of post-event vigils and meetings participate in the planning process.

Issues to consider during the planning process include, but are not limited to:

- Goals or purpose of a community meeting following a traumatic event.
- Level of flexibility that should be in place with regard to the City's role in organizing or supporting community meetings.
- Protocols and resources should be in place in advance of a traumatic event.
- Appropriate and effective communication channels for publicizing community meetings following a traumatic event.