Finding the Missing Pieces to Help Survivors of Mass Shootings
Christa L. Drakulic, M.A., Joy Quiles Tajes, M.A., & Kristine M. Jacquin, Ph.D.

Future Recommendations
Smith, Ramsdell, Wusik, & Jones (2017) found that despite the enduring impact of mass shootings and the need for treatment, the numbers of those who seek psychological intervention are quite low and of those who do, there is a high drop-out rate. There is much speculation regarding why survivors may fail to seek treatment including stigma, avoidance of having to relive the traumatic events, and believing that their symptoms are manageable, not severe enough to seek treatment, and that they will dissipate (Smith et al., 2017). Forensic psychologists need to be more aware of the psychological consequences of mass shootings including suicide risk, and not assume that they are able to be handled like other traumas such as natural disasters or mass casualty incidents like 9/11 (Wilson, 2017). In addition, better prevention and intervention efforts are needed along with more research to better comprehend the effects of mass shootings.

Psychological Implications: Short- and Long-term Effects of Mass Shootings
Survivors have described developing survivor’s guilt or mental health conditions (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder, acute stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, panic disorder) in the weeks and months after a mass shooting (Lowe & Galea, 2017).

There are no boundaries in terms of who may be affected by mass shootings; individuals who are at the scene, those who know victims, people who hear about the events (via media, news, word of mouth), family members, and whole communities may be negatively impacted (Lowe & Galea, 2017; Shultz et al., 2014).

The effects depend on various factors: previous trauma exposure; prior psychological functioning; degree and proximity of exposure to the incident; emotional sensitivity; gender; level of expressive ability; perceived family and social support; adaptive and coping skills; reactions of family, faculty, and friends; biological resilience; and level of cognitive development (Lowe & Galea, 2017; Shaw, Espinel, & Shultz, 2012; Shultz et al., 2014).

In addition, several suicides appear to be connected to mass shootings (Capatides, 2019; Janega & Graham, 1999; Mazzei, 2019; Shapiro, 2019; Shenfeld, 2019; Silverstein, 2019; Smith et al., 2017; Vera, 2019).

Shocking Statistics
According to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA, n.d.), from January 1, 2019 until February 27, 2020, there have been 463 mass shootings resulting in 524 deaths and 1,886 injuries (including the shooters).

The longest time span from the start of 2019 in which a mass shooting was not reported was seven days; between March 3 and March 10, 2019 (GVA, n.d.).

Since the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012, when 20 children and six adults (excluding the perpetrator) lost their lives, there have been an estimated 2,387 mass shootings in the U.S. resulting in 2,706 deaths and about 9,946 injuries (Lopez & Sukumar, n.d.).