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*Your Gift — Directly to Crime Victims*

**MEMORANDUM**

To: National Compassion Fund Chattanooga Steering Committee

From: Mai Fernandez and Jeff Dion, National Center for Victims of Crime

RE: Distribution for Chattanooga Shooting Victims

Date: January 13, 2016

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On July 16, 2015, a gunman opened fire at two military locations in Chattanooga, Tennessee, killing five before he was fatally shot by police himself. The National Compassion Fund, a program of the National Center for Victims of Crime, offered to administer charitable contributions donated for the benefit of victims (including first responders) and the City designated the National Compassion Fund as the primary relief fund for the Chattanooga attack.

A local steering committee was appointed to guide fundraising, outreach and distribution of applications. The steering committee was co-chaired by Adm. Robert Crates (ret.) and Adm. Vance Fry (ret.). It included civic leaders, and representatives of the military and first responders, including: Molly Cooper, City of Chattanooga; Kelly Cotton, Marine Corps spouse and representative on behalf of the families of the fallen; Eva Dillard; Billy Hewitt; Lt. Col. Frank Hughes (ret.), Cornerstone Community Bank; Sgt. Daniel Jones, Chattanooga Police Dept; Senior Fire Fighter Jack Thompson, Chattanooga Fire Dept.; Kevin Kuklok; Adm. Noah Long (ret.); Capt. Mickey McCamish, U. S. Navy (Ret.)/ Friends of the Festival; Elizabeth McCright; and Tyler Yount, City of Chattanooga.

Any person (other than the perpetrator and his surviving family) who was killed, injured or suffered psychological trauma and was present at the scene at the time of the attack or in the immediate aftermath, was eligible to apply for benefits. Since the National Center was not privy to the identities of all those impacted by the attack, the FBI, the U.S. Military, and the City of Chattanooga were designated to identify eligible claimants and to distribute to them applications for the National Compassion Fund. Applications

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were to be submitted by November 15, 2015. Eligible claimants who did not wish to receive benefits from the Compassion Fund were asked to submit a waiver form declining benefits.

The National Compassion Fund received \$467,335.13 in contributions from more than 556 donors. Supporters contributed \$140,289.48 directly to the National Compassion Fund through its website, the donation by text message platform, or by mailing a check directly to the bank lockbox. Friends of the Festival organized a benefit concert which collected \$327,045.65 in donations for the National Compassion Fund.

The National Center received applications from 62 victims and waivers from two eligible claimants. Each of the victims was verified by the FBI, the U.S. Military, or the City of Chattanooga as having been killed, injured, or present at the scene of the July 16, 2015 shooting.

The applications were reviewed by National Center staff and divided into four categories: Loss of Life, Physical Injury, Level-two Psychological Trauma (for persons who were present on the scene as the attack began), and Level-one Psychological Trauma (for persons responding to the scene).

An expert panel, comprised of Mary Vail Ware, former director of the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund; Brad Garrett, retired FBI agent, Anita Bush and Karen Teves, as relatives of victims of past mass-casualty crimes, Admiral Robert Crates (ret.) and Kelly Cotton, both representatives of the local Chattanooga steering committee; Mai Fernandez, Executive Director of the National Center for Victims of Crime; and Jeffrey Dion, Deputy Executive Director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, approved the following distribution plan:

- **Loss of Life Claims**  
\$331,490.00 (71% of the total funds collected) will be paid to the estates of the five victims who were killed.
- **Physical Injury Claims**  
\$61,877.13 (13% of the total funds collected) will pay benefits to three victims who were physically injured.
- **Level-two Psychological Trauma**  
\$45,968.00 (10% of the total amount collected) will pay equal benefits to twenty six claimants who suffered psychological trauma and were present as the attack began.
- **Level-one Psychological Trauma**  
\$28,000.00 (6% of the total amount collected) will pay equal benefits to twenty eight claimants who responded to the scene.

### **Distribution Rationale**

The panel felt that the families of those who were killed suffered the greatest loss as a result of the attack. Accordingly, those victims' estates will receive the majority of benefits, and greater benefits than victims in other categories.

The panel distributed benefits to those who were physically injured based on the nature and severity of harm suffered.

Psychological Trauma was divided into two categories to better reflect the differing nature of the trauma experienced. The harm resulting from psychological trauma is often a result of the shock and fear being unexpected. A large number of the level-two claimants were military personnel. While soldiers are trained for combat, our experience with the September 11th attacks and the Fort Hood shooting teaches us that many military personnel suffer greater psychological trauma from a domestic terror attack than they would from being attacked in combat, because the threat is unexpected. When in a combat theater, soldiers are mentally bracing themselves for the known dangers that surround them. While on the home front, military personnel should not engage in combative enemy operations. From a trauma perspective, they are considered victims of this attack; their status as military personnel does not mitigate the harm inflicted upon them.

Psychological trauma for first-responders, while still significant, is different from those who were attacked. The notification that they are being called to respond to reports of an active shooter gives a first-responder sufficient notice to begin to mentally prepare themselves for what they might face. Our experience at Virginia Tech, Columbine, and Sandy Hook Elementary has shown us that first responders can be horribly impacted by the images they encounter which are far beyond what would ever be expected by suburban or campus police and medical personnel.

The benefits paid to those who have suffered psychological trauma are insufficient to address all their needs, but is an important recognition of the harm they have suffered and validates their experience.

Applicants have been notified by letter of the benefit amount and asked to elect payment by check or direct deposit.

Following the disbursement of benefits, we will survey the victims and family members to obtain their feedback on the National Compassion Fund process.