WORKSHOP SUMMARY

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI), in partnership with the African American Health Program (AAHP), Latino Health Initiative (LHI), and Community Action Agency (CAA) hosted a free workshop entitled “Active Shooter Planning and Response” as part of the Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Project 2018. Launched in 2011, ECHO is a series of practical and professional training workshops aimed to build the capacity and sustainability of community organizations.

“Active Shooter Planning and Response” encouraged community members and leaders to better plan and prepare for the possibility of an active assailant event in their community. As part of the presentation on “Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events” by Sergeant Kevin Ream of the Montgomery County Department of Police, the workshop featured a short video that provides an overview on the Avoid, Deny, Defend (ADD) strategy that civilians can implement in an active shooter situation.

Workshop attendees participated in a group activity led by John Burke, an Emergency Management Specialist with the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Through the activity, attendees discussed steps communities can take to start preparing for an active assailant event. They also explored different methods to alert and activate systems for emergency response in a timely manner, including coordinating with first responders. The workshop concluded with a comprehensive question and answer session with the attendees.

The workshop was attended by 25 individuals who represented 15 organizations from the community.

This document presents a summary of the discussion shared throughout the workshop. Please note the information may be subject to change. Published on 12/7/2018.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Workshop Summary ......................................................................................................................... 1
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................................ 2
Presentation ........................................................................................................................................ 3
Group Activity .................................................................................................................................... 7
Audience Questions & Answers ......................................................................................................... 10
Workshop Feedback .......................................................................................................................... 12
Workshop Attendees .......................................................................................................................... 13
Contact Us ......................................................................................................................................... 14
Handouts ........................................................................................................................................... 15
Sergeant Kevin Ream  
Montgomery County Department of Police  
Website: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/POL/index.html

See introductory video “Surviving an Active Shooter Event – Civilian Response to Active Shooter”  
See presentation slides “Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events”

Introduction:
• Instead of “shooter”, “assailant” may be a more appropriate term because the weapon at an attack will not necessarily be a handgun or firearm.  
• The presentation will demonstrate the recommended ways to react during an active assailant event.  
• There are three stages of disaster response: denial, deliberation, and the decisive moment.

Denial:
• Denial is when people think they hear something but unsure of what it was. People tend to stay put. The sound of a firearm can be muffled in large buildings and you may assume nothing harmful would happen to you in your workplace or place of worship.  
• In this phase, people will want to look at their coworkers and gauge their behavior. During the September 11, 2001 attacks people were calling their office mates to ask what they should do because they were in denial.  
• Bring yourself out of this phase as quickly as possible no matter the emergency. This will allow you to move to deliberation.

Deliberation:
• Deliberation is when your mind or your body tells you something is wrong and you need to think about what to do next.  
• This is when you start panicking because the realization of possible death comes to you. Your heart rate goes up, you may lose fine motor skills and vision, and suffer from auditory exclusion or the inability to speak.  
• Stress Response Heart Rate Diagram (Refer to slide for diagram)
  o Code White: A normal resting heart rate is about 60 beats per minute (BPM).  
  o Code Yellow: A heart rate of 90 BPM is a very mild workout or when you are excited. You still have control of your body.  
  o Code Red: At 120 BPM, you start to lose your fine motor skills. For example, when there was a shooting at a market in Israel, one of the videos showed that a mother was unable to unbuckle her baby from its stroller for 30 seconds even
though she has likely unbuckled that stroller thousands of times. You will also start to lose your hearing at this heart rate.

- **Code Grey:** At 150 BPM, you start getting close to the blackout stage. Your ability to hear or see deteriorates quickly and you are unable to make rational decisions. In the same incident in Israel, a video showed a man crawling out of the grocery store as if he had been shot in the legs. In reality, he had just forgotten how to walk because he was so stressed out that his brain shut down.
  - Instead of deliberating what actions to take before making a decisive moment, you should be more like the lizard. A lizard will instantly run away if under attack. The lizard brain is the concept of deliberating quickly and get to a decisive moment fast.

- **Code Black:** At 175 BPM, you might pass out and you are unable to control bodily functions. Some people may defecate themselves.

- It is critical to lower your heart rate so that you can move to the next phase. There are a few methods that can be used to lower your heart rate:
  - Practice combat breathing
    - In through your nose, hold for a few seconds, out through your mouth. This can lower your heart rate by 20-30 BPM.
  - Shift your emotion
    - You will focus on the emergency at hand, but shift your mindset from “I am dying” to “I am getting out of this alive”. Give yourself a winner’s mentality.
  - Stay fit
    - Studies show that people in better shape are more likely to survive.
  - Practice by knowing your primary and secondary exits whenever you enter a building. This can help in any emergency situation.
    - For example, many of the 100 people who perished in the Station nightclub fire died due to crowding around the front door. There were two additional exits at the venue that could have been used and would have helped reduce the crowding.

**Active Shooter Events**

- **Definition**
  - The definition of an active shooter event is an attempted mass murder. These individuals want to take as many lives as possible, in the quickest amount of time.
  - There is no set profile for an active assailant, but over 90% are male and 98% are one person. Race and age are not constant variables.
  - Most assailants have the avenger mindset. This could be the result of bullying, worsened in recent years by social media. Others feel wronged by their church, their boss, or their ex-girlfriend. In their minds, they did nothing wrong.
Some assailants broadcast by talking about taking revenge or joking about shooting a place up. If you see signs from anyone you know, take it seriously and call the police. It can be anonymous; the police will investigate and determine if the threat has any validity.

**Statistics**
- Between 2000-2014, there were 179 active assailant incidents in 14 years (not including shootings which were an offset of another crime).
- When people think of an active assailant, they assume most of these events take place in schools but in actuality 52% of active assailant events happen in commerce. Commerce includes restaurants, nightclubs, stores, and workplaces. The next most common setting is education at 26%. These events can happen anywhere at any time.
- The number of deaths in an active assailant event is based on two things: how quickly the police arrive and target availability.
- The average police response time to an active assailant event is three minutes. Most active assailant events last between three to five minutes. About 60% of active assailants take their lives before police get there.
- In those three minutes, it is critical to get through the denial and deliberation phases as quickly as possible so that you can use your decisive moment to avoid, deny, and/or defend and thereby limit target availability.

**Decisive Moment (Civilian Response):**

- It is critical to get out of the denial phase as quickly as you can. Once you have determined something is wrong, do not take the risk. Do not “hide and hope” because a bullet can penetrate 80% of construction material.
- Once you know something bad is happening, it is time to deliberate. You will decide whether you should avoid, deny, or defend.
- **Avoid**
  - Get out of the area as quickly as possible. If you see a door that goes outside, run and do not stop running until you cannot see the building anymore. You can call 9-1-1 once you are in a safe area.
  - Know your primary and secondary exits! Use windows or ladders to the roof.
  - Do whatever you can to get further away from the area where shooting is happening and buy yourself time. Three to five minutes is all you need.
- **Deny**
  - If you cannot avoid the area, the next strategy is to deny. Do your best to keep the assailant away from you.
  - Lock your door using a belt, a rubber door stopper, or a PVC pipe depending on the type of door. Barricade the room with anything heavy and as much of it as you can.
o Turn off lights and stay out of sight. Get down low in case the assailants decide to shoot through the wall.

o Active assailants are looking for target availability. They will by-pass inconvenient or seemingly empty rooms and areas unless they have a connection to the room. This is not guaranteed but likely.

- Defend
  o If you are not able to avoid or deny, the last thing to do is defend yourself. You have a legal right to defend yourself if an assailant is trying to harm you or harm the people you are with. You have a right to survive.
  o In this situation, there are no rules. Use anything you can find and fight dirty, such as attacking the eyeballs and the groin. Use the “I am going to see my family again” mentality and fight like your life depends on it because it does.
  o However, this should be the last strategy to use. You should avoid this situation as much as possible.

Police Response:

- When the police arrive, they will be sorting through an overload of information. They will not know exactly what the assailant looks like; thus it is important to listen when you hear commands.

- Keep your hands up, palms out, and do not hold your phone (or anything that can be misconstrued as a weapon).

- It is important to remember that when the police arrive, their priority is to stop the killing. They have to bypass victims who might need help because they need to find the assailant before there are any more victims.

- During the Columbine school shooting, police waited for the SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams to arrive. Now the police are trained to get in the environment as quickly as possible to stop the killing. Once the area is secured, the police will go back to help the wounded.

- The police will also evacuate the area as quickly as possible. Follow the police’s commands to exit one at a time with your hands up. Do not make sudden movements and be sure to follow their commands.
Introduction: For this activity, we will go through an active shooter scenario at a place of worship. Using the knowledge you gained from the ECHO presentation, discuss what actions you may take and how you will respond to each part of the scenario below.

- This place of worship can represent a church, a synagogue, a mosque, or any other type of house of worship. It can also be imagined as a place of business or a grocery store.

Part 1: It is 8:40 am on a typical fall day and people are arriving at your place of worship for 9:00 am service. There are two greeters at the front entrance to greet attendees/worshippers as they enter. Fifteen minutes before the service is to begin one of the greeters notices an adult male entering whom they do not recognize as a normal attendee. The person entering is carrying a small backpack which appears full and the greeter feels as if the man is “acting strange”.

Discussion Remarks:

- One attendee commented that as a greeter at her church, they have a policy to check every backpack. It could be wise to have a metal detector or a wand, but it is not typical to have security at a place of worship.

- An unfamiliar individual who is “acting strange” probably would not or should not be treated differently at a place of worship. This brings up the topic of cultural competency. Are we labeling this man as strange just because he is not part of the community? We should be mindful when we are identifying people. There is a difference between “acting strange” and carrying a giant bag or putting in earplugs. Also, it is important to note that the assailant could be a regular attendee of this place of worship. It is about the complete picture as opposed to one or two factors. As Kevin said, shooters come in all shapes and sizes.

- The place of worship should have a standard policy on how to approach a person who is new and potentially suspicious. Through this process, members might be able to figure out who they are and know how to react. However, in most church related shootings, the assailant will typically just burst in and open fire.

- Having a security guard at a place of worship is progressive and well-prepared. The greeter’s role could be to welcome and pre-check people. However, it is also important to have a system in place for when they do notice something, such as whom to notify and how will this news be broadcasted. John does not suggest pulling the fire alarm but there could be a mass text alert or a light signal.
**Part 2:** The person with the backpack passes the greeters and enters a nearby men’s restroom. If you think something is wrong at this point, would you call 9-1-1?

Discussion Remarks:
- The backpack causes more concern for it to be a bomb than a gun.
- Most people would probably not call the police just because an unfamiliar man went to the bathroom with a backpack. That is close to profiling.
- Again, this is a good time to decide at your place of worship if you should implement a security team or ways to notify people about the situation.

**Part 3:** At 8:45 am, the person with the backpack exits the bathroom holding a handgun in front of him and begins randomly shooting people who are congregating inside the front of the building. Numerous people appear to be either killed or seriously wounded by the gunfire while others begin to panic and run from the area. The gunman continues to move through the building shooting people as he encounters them.

Discussion Remarks:
- Using the strategies learned, we should try to get away and avoid and deny in this situation.
- A house of worship usually has other exits. However, if there are no other exits, you will need to decide whether you will shelter in place or lockdown the building. This would depend on the people in the congregation. Depending on place of worship’s location, different people may react differently. An inner-city place of worship will have a different reaction than a congregation in the suburbs. Some people may look for alternate routes to get out while others might try to apprehend the assailant. It depends on the demographics.
- As part of preparation, places of worship and establishments should decide whether anyone is assigned to notify 9-1-1 if or when something happens.
- How do you notify everybody about what is going on? Or do you? Are there designated safe locations with heavy doors and locks? These are some of the questions to consider.
- If people congregate in one place and there is no place to avoid or deny, how do you defend in that situation? Kevin recommends defending yourself and charging the assailant. It would take one person to step up and then other people would follow.

**Part 4:** It is now 8:50 am, law enforcement has arrived on site and immediately begins to enter and search the building for the active shooter. The Fire Department/EMS are staged nearby outside to attend to the wounded when the scene is determined clear. Do you have any methods to call emergency services? Is there somebody who can coordinate with law enforcement/fire/EMS so they know where they need to go?

Discussion Remarks:
• It is important to remember that during an active shooter event, first responders may be overloaded with phone calls. To avoid such situation, it may be useful to have one person to coordinate with them.
• It may be helpful to have some type of go-bag ready with keys, maps, and information about the facility so that law enforcement can grab it and have access to the building.
• Also, it would be good to notify law enforcement of any spaces that they should not enter due to religious practices. You should make sure your congregation is doing training and drills and if you have questions, talk to your local policeman/fire station. Have that conversation on the front end.

**Part 5:** At 9:00 am, **law enforcement has neutralized the gunmen in a hallway of the building and Fire Department/EMS has begun to transport those wounded during the incident to local hospitals.**

Discussion Remarks:
• High schoolers have regular drills and code reds to practice what to do in this event. Churches or companies and offices should practice as well. The schools also take attendance so they know who is missing and know who is coming and going.
• Only some agencies in Montgomery County have implemented active shooter drills. If all the county employees were trained, then it could be spread to the whole community.
• One attendee is concerned that perhaps members of a church would carry guns and attempt to fight back if they were overprepared. Kevin responded that there are many steps between being educated on this topic and feeling fear to the point of concealing weapons. It is important to empower people to take care of themselves. Unfortunately, this is a reality.
• All attendees should share this information with groups, organizations, and communities to which they belong. The more that people are educated about what they could do, the better chance everyone has at survival. It is important to teach people to be an active participant in their survival.
• Law enforcement tactics have evolved because of the active shooter events that have happened, such as the Columbine and Virginia Tech incidents.
• Regarding fire alarms, it is recommended to not pull the fire alarm because of the noise and it confuses people. The assailant may pull the fire alarm in order to trick people into coming out into the hallway or in order to escape. There is currently a new active assailant alarm. The alarm will fill the rooms with fog or haze, similar special effects smoke used in concerts or at the theater, and blue lights will come on if it detects a gunshot.
• Practicing is key. Now that we have ideas and plans, we should practice them. It is one thing to talk about it, it is another to find hiding places and secondary exits. One point to emphasize is to know that police officers will pass by those in need in order to stop the assailant before more people are killed.
As an officer, what do you think is one of the main components that drives someone to become an assailant?

*Kevin*: There are many different possibilities. It could be bullying, violent video games, or mental health, but in some cases none of those are applicable.

As a member of the Street Outreach Network, my job is to keep individuals from using guns and participating in gang activity in Montgomery County. Something we have put on the table is a gun buy-back program, but nobody wants to give up their guns because everybody else has one. I believe any one of these men with an automatic weapon could be set off by some small thing.

*Kevin*: That is what happens in these situations. Sometimes there is broadcasting, but sometimes there is simply an incident that causes them to snap. The scary thing is that there are no set characteristics. The only common trait is that over 90% of active assailants are male.

Do policemen normally have a digital map of buildings?

*Kevin*: There are some building maps that are kept by emergency services for evacuation purposes. The average patrol officer responding to an emergency call will not know the layout of a building. Responders are taught to clear buildings in a certain way, by sectoring it out. Having a map might help with a long-term incident, but in the event of an active assailant the police are not going to wait. It is hard to monitor because buildings need to be more accessible, but no one wants their freedom infringed upon. We need to find a balance for “see something say something” situational awareness. People need to know what is going on around them and not feel guilty if they want to call 9-1-1 if they are suspicious of someone. Phone calls can be anonymous.

What would be the three takeaways you might give a place of worship; three steps to start preparing for an active assailant event?

*John*: Step one is to have that conversation with the leadership. Watch the video we showed earlier and assign roles in case of an active assailant event. Second, have that conversation with the members and worshippers. Tell them, “We want to stay open and accessible, but we do not want to get hurt.” Third, connect with your local police and/or fire station. Any of local police or fire station will come out and do a fire safety check or a security assessment so utilize that resource.

*Kevin*: Yes, each station has a community service officer. Security surveys are a free service provided to anyone who requests them. Police officers will come and give a presentation similar to tonight’s.
What are some challenges you have when you give this presentation to faith-based congregations? Are they prepared to accept it or is there significant denial?

**Kevin:** There is denial, some more than others. Faith-based organizations want to maintain that openness, so that is why I personally do not teach lock down style prevention. I do not recommend that they use metal detectors. Instead I recommend preparing greeters so that members of the congregation will follow their lead in the event of an emergency.

**John:** Faith-based congregations have a host of problems in balancing security with openness. There could be building defacement and graffiti or homeless people taking advantage of them.
WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

The response rate from the workshop was 94%. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding and skipped questions.

1. Please rate this workshop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>a. Value of topic</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Quality of presentation content</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Quality of speakers</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>d. Quality of group activity</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>e. Usefulness of handouts</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>f. Length of workshop</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>g. Time for questions and answers</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>h. Overall rating of workshop</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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2. Please rate the following:

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<th>After attending this workshop:</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I received the information I wanted to learn about civilian response to active shooter events.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I am more knowledgeable about the stages of disaster response.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. I am more knowledgeable about civilian response options in the event of an active shooter.</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>d. I feel more prepared in my ability to identify a plan of action in an active shooter event.</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<td>e. I am confident in my ability to share the information I learned today with my community members.</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
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WORKSHOP ATTENDEES

The following workshop registrants provided permission to publish their name, organization, and email address.

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Montgomery County Community Action Agency
Montgomery County, Maryland
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Rockville, MD 20852
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Fax: 240-777-3295
Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/communityaction
Email: montgomerycountycaa@gmail.com
Handouts from the “Active Shooter Planning and Response” ECHO Workshop

Please note the information provided in this section may be subject to change. Please contact the respective organizations to ensure the most current information. The following documents were compiled on 12/7/2018.
CIVILIAN RESPONSE TO ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENTS

AVOID DENY DEFEND

CIVILIAN RESPONSE TO ACTIVE SHOOTER EVENTS
Three Stages of Disaster Response

- Denial
- Deliberation
- Decisive Moment

Denial

DENIAL IS THE FIRST STAGE OF...

NO, IT ISN'T.
Deliberation

Stress Response

Heart Rate

60 BPM  90 BPM  120 BPM  150 BPM  175 BPM
Deliberation
Human Brain

Lizard Brain

Deliberation

Fight
Flight
Freeze
Deliberation

- Calm yourself
- Combat breathing
- Shift your emotion
- Stay fit

Active Shooter Events
Definition

Active Shooter Event = Attempted Mass Murder

The Shooter

• No “Profile”
• Avenger Mindset
• Some broadcast
Location of Attacks

- Commerce: 50%
- Education: 20%
- Outdoors: 10%
- Other: 0%

Number of Deaths

- How quickly the police arrive
Number of Deaths

Target availability

3 Minutes
Civilian Response

Denial
• Don’t Deny
• Hear Gunshots
• Go to deliberation
Deliberation

• Avoid
• Deny
• Defend
Avoid

• Leave ASAP
• Know your exits
• Call 911

Avoid

• Consider Secondary Exits
Deny

- Lock the door
- Lights out
- Out of sight

Deny

- Barricade
  - Heavier = Better
  - More = Better
  - Doorstops = Better?
Deny

• Outward opening
  • Ropes
  • Tactical Cinch

Defend

• Positioning
• Grab the gun
• Fight
Virginia Tech

Norris Hall
Priority of Work

• Stop the Killing
• Stop the Dying
• Evacuate the Area
When the Police Arrive

• Follow commands
• Show your palms
• Do not move

Personnel Issues

• Expect mental trauma
• Develop a critical incident stress management plan
Do you have any questions or comments?
RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The following materials were provided to ECHO workshop attendees.

**Avoid Deny Defend Poster**

https://miningquiz.com/pdf/Active_Shooter/ADD_Poster.pdf

Informational poster on the Avoid, Deny, Defend strategy during an active shooter event until law enforcement arrives to stop the threat.

**Active Shooter Event Quick Reference Guide**


Pamphlet provides information on how to respond to an active shooter situation. Available in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Punjabi, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Urdu.