

MSD Public Safety Commission

Reunification and Injury/Death Notification
Evaluation and Feedback



Tom and Gena Hoyer Parents of Luke Hoyer

Gena Hoyer was at home when she was contacted by a friend and told to turn on the television because there had been a shooting at MSD. The news showed fire/rescue working on what appeared to be a student that was outside of the school. Gena then contacted her husband, Tom.

Gena tried to call Luke, but he did not answer. She thought that Luke may have left his phone behind while trying to evacuate. After not hearing anything, she thought he might have been injured and decided that she and Tom would go to local hospitals to try and locate Luke.



Tom and Gena Hoyer Parents of Luke Hoyer

Tom called the Broward Hospital and was told by the charge nurse that she could not say if Luke was at the hospital and did not provide any information at all. Tom then drove to the hospital in an attempt to locate his son, but was denied entry because the hospital was on lockdown. Tom had to enter through the emergency room and finally spoke to staff. Gena responded to the North Broward Hospital and was told to respond to the Marriott for information.

Upon arrival to the Marriott, Tom and Gena checked in with BSO personnel who took their names and asked for Luke's information. Tom and Gena were placed in a ballroom with several other people and were called out to a smaller room to provide BSO with Luke's information several more times.

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Tom and Gena Hoyer Parents of Luke Hoyer

While waiting in the ballroom, the police asked the families to provide pictures of their children. According to Gena, the family's were asked several more times to provide pictures of their children after previously doing so. Although there were many law enforcement employees from multiple agencies present, none were providing any information. Gena had no idea who was in charge.

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Tom and Gena Hoyer Parents of Luke Hoyer

At approximately 1 a.m. Tom and Gena were called to a separate room and were advised that Luke had been shot and killed. Gena was told that Luke was alone when he was killed on the third floor of building 12. She found out several days later that she had been provided incorrect information. Luke had actually been shot on the first floor of building 12 and was in close proximity to Gina Montalto and Martin Duque. Immediately after being told of her son's death, Gena was provided with paperwork to sign.

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Fred and Jennifer Guttenberg Parents of Jaime Guttenberg

Fred received a call from his son who also attended Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that there had been a shooting at MSD. He could not find his sister and was running because he had heard gunfire. Fred instructed him to keep running. Fred and Jennifer continued to text and call Jaime's phone with no response. They knew it was still at the school.

At approximately 3 p.m. Fred posted on Facebook that he was trying to locate Jaime. Between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m. he received a message to go to the Marriott. Fred sent some of Jaime's dance friends and their family's to the hotel so that he could attempt to locate Jamie at the hospital. Jamie was not there. The hospital checked other databases as well, but could not locate her.

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Fred and Jennifer Guttenberg

Parents of Jaime Guttenberg

At approximately 5 p.m. Fred received information via Jamie's friends that Jaime was not at the Marriott. Fred then reached out to a personal friend who knew Jamie and is also a Detective who was at the scene of the shooting. Fred received confirmation that Jamie was deceased.

Fred received this information while he was en-route to the Marriott Hotel. Fred contacted his wife who was also driving to the Marriott and instructed her pull her car off the road and onto the shoulder. It was there that Fred told his wife that Jamie had been murdered.

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Fred and Jennifer Guttenberg

Parents of Jaime Guttenberg

The Guttenberg's did not respond to the Marriott and instead drove back to their residence to be with friends and family. The media was there almost immediately. At approximately 9:30 p.m. Fred and Jennifer left their home to be with the other family's at the Marriott. Fred and Jennifer were at the Marriott until approximately 2:30 a.m.

While at the hotel, they received the official death notification from BSO around 1:30 a.m. They were in a room full of people, not provided any information and little empathy. Fred describes one of the victims parents as having a "Melt down" due to the lack of information. Fred felt it was a "7 hour vacuum" and did not recall seeing any victim advocates present.

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Tony and Jennifer Montalto

Parents of Gina Montalto

Tony Montalto found out about the shooting and Jennifer, his wife immediately responded to MSD. The students were coming out of the school but Jennifer could not locate Gina. She called her cell phone but did not get an answer. Jennifer thought that Gina may have left her phone behind when trying to escape from the shooting.

At some point Jennifer was told to go to the Marriott. She saw the chaos there and did not go in. Tony and Jennifer received information that a female matching Gina's description was possibly at the hospital so Jennifer headed there and Tony went to the hotel. Tony was told that if he went inside the hotel he would not be allowed to leave. He decided not to enter and instead headed to meet Jennifer at the hospital.

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Tony and Jennifer Montalto

Parents of Gina Montalto

While at the hospital, Jennifer was not provided with any information and was only asked what Gina was wearing that day. BSO separated Jennifer from her family and friends who were there to support her. Jennifer was instructed to sit in a room by herself while waiting for Tony to arrive. Jennifer was not given any information and was only asked what Gina had been wearing that day. A priest or some other religious official were present when a BSO detective and possibly a "counselor" eventually notified Tony and Jennifer that Gina was deceased. They were not given any other information. They asked to see Gina and was told no. Tony and Jennifer were visibly shaken, but were not offered a ride home or any other assistance.

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Debbie Hixon
Wife of Chris Hixon

Debbie Hixon was at her school when she saw the news of the shooting at MSD. She called Chris's phone at 2:42 p.m. Chris' phone was answered by Security Specialist Kelvin Greenleaf who passed the phone to Assistant Principal Jeff Morford. Debbie was not provided with any information by Morford.

Debbie left her school at 3:30 p.m. and went home. Debbie was contacted by Cadre Director for High School Principals, Alan Strauss, who advised her that Chris had been shot and told her to go to the Marriott.

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Debbie Hixon
Wife of Chris Hixon

Debbie arrived at the Marriott around 7:30 p.m. She met with someone from the FBI who seemed ready to tell her something, but instead directed to another room where she felt she was forgotten.

The Red Cross was present at the hotel and Debbie felt the FBI was in charge. She was asked to provide pictures of Chris. The FBI and BSO repeatedly gave instructions for the "Parents", but she wasn't sure what to do since she wasn't a parent of someone who had been shot.

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Debbie Hixon

Wife of Chris Hixon

Debbie received several messages on her cell phone offering condolences, but hadn't yet been notified of Chris's death. Around 10 p.m. she showed the texts to BSO Major Osgood and told him she needed answers. He informed her she would need to go to the hospital in order to get any new information and she would be able to meet with someone from BSO there.

Around 11 p.m. she arrived at the hospital, but she did not find anyone from BSO. The hospital said that at 3 p.m. they knew that Chris was deceased and that BSO was supposed to notify her. At 2 a.m., BSO called Debbie to notify her that Chris was deceased. At this point Debbie was already home and knew of Chris' death. In the following days, a detective came by to apologize for the notification process taking so long.

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Common Concerns and Perceptions

Organization

- Lack of communication from officials regarding reunification site location, word of mouth
- No indication that any entity was in charge
- Lack of organization at reunification site
- Families isolated to a room where they waited for hours and were given little to no information

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Common Concerns and Perceptions

Organization

- Given misinformation
- Families were not provided a single point of contact
- Media was allowed to be in close proximity to the Marriott
- Families in the larger room could hear the crying and screaming coming from the smaller room and felt “it was like waiting to be slaughtered”

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Common Concerns and Perceptions

Support

- Separated from personal support groups
- Not aware of the presence of any victim advocates
- Not shown appropriate empathy
- Not given transportation assistance
- Not provided any information about what to expect in the upcoming days

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