



MRC IN FOCUS

VOLUNTEERS BUILDING STRONG, HEALTHY, AND PREPARED COMMUNITIES

Philadelphia MRC Introduces Volunteers to the Unit with an Anthrax Drill

Over 150 volunteers with the Philadelphia MRC (PA) participated in a comprehensive new volunteer training on November 8.

Many volunteers in attendance included medical, nursing, and pharmacy students. The morning featured an introductory training that finished with a hands-on point of dispensing (POD) drill for volunteers to learn how to distribute antibiotics to thousands of Philadelphia residents in the event of anthrax exposure. Lessons learned from previous new volunteer trainings showed that concluding with an exercise helped to boost their understanding of the concepts introduced earlier in the day.

During this exercise, volunteers participated in a just-in-time training to serve as medical screening staff, medication dispensing staff, and line management staff to run a POD while other volunteers acted as "patients." Each patient represented a family who had to be screened for appropriate medication, directed to the correct tables, and given the accurate medications and dosages, with an emphasis on fast and accurate dispensing of emergency medication. Within 15 minutes, 70 patients had moved through the POD and then switched roles with the volunteers in staffing positions.



A volunteer participates in the POD drill



Philadelphia MRC volunteers are trained as POD staff during a new volunteer training

The afternoon featured lectures about challenges that volunteers may face while performing leadership roles providing medical care at emergency shelters, working at PODs, and, unique to this training, current Ebola preparedness measures occurring in Philadelphia. At the end of the lectures, volunteers engaged in small discussion groups to work through several challenging leadership scenarios they could face while volunteering at a POD or shelter. The discussion also provided MRC leadership insight about the specific concerns that volunteers have about Ebola in Philadelphia and what their roles might be in Ebola preparedness and response.

Philadelphia MRC regularly hosts three annual new volunteer trainings to introduce volunteers to the unit of 1,900 members. These trainings often include presentations from partner agencies like Philadelphia's Office of Emergency Management and Department of Behavioral Health, in addition to volunteer organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and Team Rubicon. People from these agencies and organizations often also serve as Philadelphia MRC volunteers.

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National Notes



**CAPT Rob Tosatto, Director
Division of the Civilian Volunteer
Medical Reserve Corps**

Dear Colleagues,

Happy New Year! The start of a New Year is a great time to reflect and also to look forward. The 2013 MRC Network Profile study report published last year (and available online at <http://bit.ly/NetworkProfile>) was the first in-depth analysis of the MRC network and it is a great tool for reflection. This comprehensive study, developed through our cooperative agreement with NACCHO, was part of our strategy to better understand the MRC

network, especially its composition, administration, and community impact.

The data from the 2013 Network Profile report has been a significant resource that we have used to help shape our strategic direction in order to lead the MRC network toward greater capability, efficiency, and success. The information allowed us to have a more comprehensive and accurate representation of the processes, activities, successes, and challenges of the MRC network that we could share with our leadership, stakeholders, and partners.

We hope that you were also able to utilize the report, infographics, and PowerPoint presentation (available on NACCHO's website at <http://bit.ly/MRCNetworkProfile>) to show the strength and impact of the MRC network across the nation and the critical roles that you fill at the local level. We wanted the profile to be a tool that you can use to share information in your own reports, newsletters, social media, presentations, and proposals with your local and state political leaders, stakeholders, policymakers, business leaders, funding agencies, and the media.

We are looking forward to the next iteration of this report: the 2015 Network Profile of the Medical Reserve Corps. This next report will build on the data obtained in 2013; and while many questions will remain the same, some will be modified and others will be new.

You should have received the personalized survey link in your inbox from NACCHO last month. I thank all of you who have already completed the current survey; it will be open for a few more weeks. The information you provide is essential for us to best represent the challenges and successes of the MRC network, and allows us to continue to build a strong and sustainable network.

Keep up the great work that you are doing in your communities and, as always, let us know what we can do to better support your efforts.

Warmest Regards,

Connections across the MRC Network Create New Opportunities for Local Units

The MRC of North Idaho has approximately 30 mental health professionals in the unit and in 2012 MRC unit coordinator Judith Scarborough started to look for a new way to use their skills in a disaster or emergency response.

Thanks to the MRC listserv, Judith found what she was looking for and decided to form a Resiliency and Emotional Support Team (REST). "I can tell you unequivocally that without the MRC listserv I wouldn't have been able to do this," Judith said.

Judith started her research by asking questions on the MRC listserv and in just a few days had been in touch

with unit coordinators in Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Washington, and Wyoming. Betty Duggan, MRC Director in New York City, connected Judith with Adela Rodriguez, the coordinator of the New York City REST team, who shared her materials. Nancy Carlson, Minnesota Behavioral Health MRC Coordinator, also shared her training materials with Judith.



Inaugural REST Team class

In 2012, the MRC of North Idaho received a Competitive Capacity Building Award from NACCHO to initiate the REST team and bring in subject matter experts to conduct the initial training for the new members. Following the initial training, advisory team members helped plan and execute an all-hazards training based on the New York model in June 2014 and another in the fall.

"Basically, our North Idaho REST team is a success story based on the success of Adela and her team in New York, and being willing to share the wealth of knowledge with others," Judith shared.

MRC Units Prepare for and Respond to Ebola in Their Communities

Nearly 200 MRC units across the country have been engaging in educational activities, call center support, epidemiology and surveillance support, screening support, and maintaining situational awareness to prepare their communities for cases of Ebola.

When cases of Ebola emerged in Dallas and New York City in September and October 2014, the Dallas County MRC (TX), Collin County MRC (TX), and New York City MRC units were ready to respond.



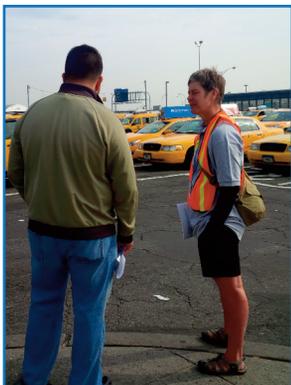
Dallas County MRC volunteers answer calls at the call center

Dallas

As soon as the first U.S. diagnosed case of Ebola was confirmed in Texas on September 20, Dallas County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) enlisted support from the MRC and 95 volunteers donated 641 hours during the response. For 22 days, 56 MRC volunteers staffed the DCHHS call center to answer 633 calls about Ebola, addressing concerns from callers around the world about symptoms, testing, exposure, water safety, and more. Thirty-seven volunteers also attended just-in-time community outreach training sessions and eight volunteers canvassed neighborhoods for four days to interact with concerned residents and distribute Ebola information in affected areas.

Collin County

On October 17, Collin County Healthcare Services requested help from the Collin County MRC to run a call center to track 40 contacts on the airline with nurse Amber Vinson who had contracted Ebola. The majority



New York City MRC volunteers conduct outreach and education to taxi drivers at LaGuardia airport

of these contacts were students on a field trip—a teacher was the only contact for all 40 children, making it difficult to get in touch with each child's parents. Thirty-two volunteers made calls to find the parents' contact information and finally reached all of them after three days.



New York City MRC volunteers hand out "Am I at Risk?" palm cards during the Africa Day Parade

Once this was complete, volunteers shifted their focus to start monitoring the contacts of Thomas Duncan and the first infected nurse, Nina Pham. MRC volunteers used smartphones to conduct active monitoring by using video calling capabilities on Skype and Tango to observe individuals taking their temperatures and individuals submitted photos of the temperature on their thermometers for record keeping.

Several lessons learned emerged during the response, including having a backup in place for the MRC coordinator. Collin County MRC has now identified a volunteer co-coordinator who has access to necessary items for the next public health emergency.

New York City

When the first case of Ebola emerged in New York City on October 23, volunteers with the New York City MRC had already been conducting community outreach and education about Ebola. MRC volunteers corrected misinformation spread about Ebola and reached out to the populations at highest risk to contract the virus. Volunteers addressed the extreme prejudice people from Africa experienced; how Ebola is spread; and how unlikely it would be for someone living in NYC to catch the virus. With nearly 7,700 members, the MRC unit is very diverse, and "because of this our members were trusted by communities because they looked like them," said Betty Duggan, New York City MRC Director.

In the wake of Ebola's arrival in New York City, MRC volunteers conducted outreach to 5,000 taxi and limousine drivers at JFK and LaGuardia airports who had become increasingly scared of transporting passengers—often refusing to take cash or have contact with passengers. More than 500 New York City MRC volunteers were also trained for presenting Ebola 101 courses to increase the dissemination of evidence-based information about Ebola.

Getting Started with the MRC: The Colorado Acupuncture MRC

Special thanks to Honora Lee Wolfe, Licensed Acupuncturist and CAMRC member, for submitting this story.

The Colorado Acupuncture MRC (CAMRC) formed after the Colorado floods in September 2013 so that stress-relieving acupuncture could be offered easily in emergency and disaster situations. Fifty certified acupuncture and health professionals have joined our MRC as of October 2014. We are now growing our ranks and spreading the word to other MRC units across the state.

During the Colorado floods in 2013, unit coordinator and licensed acupuncturist Randi Savage organized various acupuncture groups and addressed the concerns of response officials. There was acceptance for acupuncture in most quarters, but legal and liability



CAMRC volunteers

concerns in others. Although over 1,200 acupuncture treatments were given to flood victims, first responders, city and county officials, and volunteers, many people who could have benefited from acupuncture were unable to receive it at that time.

During a later conversation with Colorado State MRC Coordinator Koral O'Brien, an idea emerged. To avoid these problems in the future we needed to create our own, acupuncture-specific, approved MRC unit for Colorado. After the federal review process with the DCVMRC, Colorado is now the first state where acupuncturists will have the opportunity to serve during disasters and emergencies through the MRC. "Our work can be an example and template for other groups in other states to use to create their own MRC units," Randi said.

CAMRC has already offered several free trainings required or recommended for participation by new members, including Psychological First Aid, the Incident Command System, and the CAMRC volunteer training. Over 30 participants attended each of these courses so far and more will be organized as new members apply. We hope that many more acupuncturists from all over Colorado will want to participate in this amazing opportunity to serve and that acupuncturists in other states will want to follow suit.

MRC-TRAIN

Maximizing MRC Leadership through Unit Accounts on MRC-TRAIN

Each MRC unit has access to a unique unit account on MRC-TRAIN, the learning management system available to all MRC unit leaders and volunteers through the DCVMRC. Unit accounts have complete administrative control over training functions in MRC-TRAIN, including tools that track training volunteers have completed and training plans volunteers are registered for. By consolidating training information in a unit account, MRC leaders can help plan future unit activities and assess volunteer preparedness, while documenting in a way that will be permanently accessible to future leadership.

Importantly, unit accounts can be shared across unit leadership and transferred to future leaders alongside other operational documentation. This allows current and future leaders to continue training and education curriculums, review historical trainings, analyze data, and build upon what has been done in the past.

Having and maintaining the unit account can support Factor for Success 7.4 Maintain Training Records, even when unit leader transition occurs.

If you are the unit leader and do not have access to the unit account, it is highly recommended that you contact the MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrctsupport@train.org). Remember, the MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrctsupport@train.org) is available to provide technical assistance and field questions on posting trainings, managing unit training, and much more. **MRC-TRAIN is FREE** (including continuing education), available 24/7, and on track!

Jackson County MRC Leads Volunteer Reception Center at the Traveling Wall

From September 11-14, the American Veterans Traveling Tribute and Traveling Wall was brought to the campus of Southern Illinois University-Carbondale.

The wall travels the country to connect fellow veterans and bring communities together to honor, respect, and remember veterans. In the months leading up to the event, organizers publicized the need for many volunteers to fill various roles. Concurrently, leaders of the Jackson County MRC (JCMRC) were developing a volunteer reception team aimed at receiving and processing volunteers following disasters. Unit leadership decided to offer the volunteer reception team to the Traveling Wall organizers as a way to test the team's procedures and capabilities and to support this community event.

Over several months, two MRC volunteers met with the unit coordinator to develop and refine the team's procedures to prepare for the Traveling Wall event. During the event, the volunteer reception center, a disaster trailer provided by the Memorial Hospital of Carbondale, was open for 88 consecutive hours for check-in and credentialing of the 415 general event volunteers. In addition to JCMRC staff, 17 JCMRC members and two volunteers from nearby MRC units staffed the volunteer reception center at the event, providing 102 volunteer hours. JCMRC was also able to provide ancillary services to event organizers beyond the scope of the volunteer reception center, including volunteer management, logistics, responder safety and health, planning, communications, and emergency operations coordination.



Spontaneous volunteers line up at the volunteer reception center

By committing to the provision of volunteer reception services for this event, JCMRC was able to meet the deadline for development of its volunteer reception team. Valuable lessons were learned during this event, such as the challenges with filling volunteer shifts and working with spontaneous volunteers. These lessons learned will help the team update plans and procedures.

"The JCMRC was invaluable to the success of the Vietnam Traveling Wall visit to Carbondale," said Mark "Skip" Cosgrove, Senior Vice Commandant, Shawnee Detachment #812 of the Marine Corps League, host for the Traveling Wall event. "They were very well organized and extremely helpful; even helpful beyond the scope for which they originally volunteered."

Volunteer Spotlight



Amber Mehta

attended was a cultural awareness workshop that left her wanting to do more.

Amber Mehta has been a volunteer with the Snohomish County MRC (WA) for over one year. She is a full-time mother with a background as a pharmacy technician. Amber was motivated to join the MRC after volunteering in her community's cold weather shelter. The first MRC training she

Amber has since volunteered in many different activities with the MRC, including participating in health screenings, vaccination clinics, first aid stations, and the lost person station at the state fair. What she likes best about serving as a volunteer with the MRC are the various opportunities available to volunteers, especially supporting the unit's involvement in Project Homeless Connect and the Community Health Worker course. Amber advises anyone interested in becoming a volunteer but scared or nervous to do something new to do it anyway! She says, "You will meet people you would never have thought you would have anything in common with but [who share] the main goal," which she describes is very inspiring to see in others!

News from NACCHO

Agenda Now Available for the 2015 Preparedness Summit



Preparedness Summit attendees

The 2015 Preparedness Summit will take place April 14-17 in Atlanta, and this year's theme is "Global Health Security: Preparing a Nation for Emerging Threats." Sessions will highlight how, in an increasingly interconnected world, public health threats such as Ebola can emerge on the other side of the globe and arrive on the doorstep of local health departments, hospitals, and other local health organizations. Join us for sessions about engaging volunteers, working in healthcare coalitions, how the

MRC plays a role as more global health threats are emerging in communities across the United States, and more. View the full agenda for this year's Summit and register at <http://preparednesssummit.org>

Put in a call-out box next to this article and include a small MRC Connect icon: Join the "2015 Preparedness Summit" event community on MRC Connect (<http://mrconnect.org>) to interact with other unit leaders attending the Summit.

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NACCHO Resources

NACCHO Announces the 2014-2015 NACCHO MRC Challenge Award Winners

NACCHO is pleased to announce the winners of the 2014-2015 NACCHO MRC Challenge Awards, a competitive award that promotes innovative projects in alignment with national health initiatives that are significant at the local level. Nearly 150 MRC units applied this year, and the top 44 most promising applicants were selected to receive the \$15,000 award, totaling over \$650,000. Twelve units that received last year's Challenge Award were re-awarded to continue their projects and 32

new projects will begin this year. The Challenge Award asked units to develop an innovative project proposal in one of four focus areas: chronic disease prevention; disaster risk reduction; mental and emotional well-being; and partners for empowered communities. Visit <http://mrnaccho.org> for a full list of award winners and projects, and check the site frequently as award winners will post ongoing updates as their projects progress.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We need your help to make this newsletter informative, interesting, and beneficial to MRC units nationwide. We are always accepting stories and best practices on the MRC. Remember that stories with photos are more likely to be included.

For the upcoming newsletter... **Please submit stories and photos for consideration by March 20, 2015 to mrcnewsletter@naccho.org.** We look forward to your submissions!

Submission Guidelines

- Please include contact information (e-mail and telephone number) for follow-up.
- If you include photos, please send as high-resolution JPEG, TIF, or EPS attachments.
- Digital cameras should be set for high-quality images using the maximum megapixel setting available.
- Photo submissions should also include a caption or description of the event.



A Look Back at 2014: The Impact of the MRC in Photos

In 2014, MRC units contributed 10,554* activities in their communities—an incredible impact! Here is a snapshot of how MRC volunteers donated their time in 2014.



Winnebago County MRC (IL) provides vaccinations at the 2014 Veteran's Stand Down Event (October)



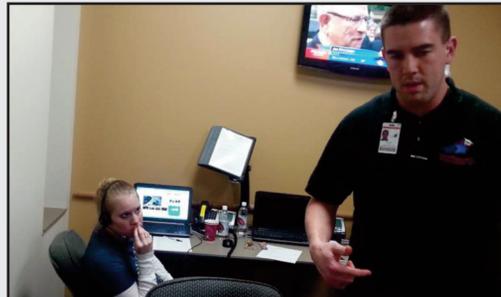
Cape Cod MRC gets ready to distribute potassium iodide pills to residents during an emergency dispensing site drill (October)



Monroe County MRC (MI) hosts a booth during the Emergency Preparedness Expo during National Preparedness Month (September)



North Dakota Public Health Emergency Volunteer MRC exercises for hospital patient surge (April)



Snohomish County MRC volunteers answered over 1,000 calls at a call center after the Oso mudslide (March)



Ventura County MRC (CA) hosts the 2014 Operation Medical Base exercise with over 15 MRC units and multiple federal, state, and local partners in attendance (May)



The MRC of Southern Nevada provides mental health support to residents of the Moapa River Indian Reservation after severe flooding (September)



The Mid-Ohio Valley MRC (WV) assists with the Elk River Chemical Spill response (January)



Thurston County MRC's (WA) 2014 outreach efforts lead to a 20 percent increase in their volunteer base (December)

*Number of activities reflects those that took place from January 1 - December 31, 2014 and reported as of February 3, 2015.

 NACCHO learned about this activity through a post on MRC Connect.



NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health



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A LOOK AHEAD

MARCH

National Nutrition Month

15-21

National Poison Prevention Week

24

American Diabetes Alert Day

APRIL

National Minority Health Month

6-12

National Public Health Week

12-18

National Volunteer Week

MAY

Mental Health Month

National Physical Fitness and Sports Month

24-30

Hurricane Preparedness Week



2015

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