



Vermont Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer Handbook

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Welcome

Dear Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer:

On behalf of the Medical Reserve Corps, welcome! We thank you for joining us.

This handbook was created to provide you with information that will help to maximize your volunteer experience. Please take the time to read through it and refer back to it as questions arise.

If you need help accessing or understanding this information, contact MRC@vermont.gov

On behalf of our Program, we're happy to have you.

Heather J Rigney, MRC Statewide Coordinator

Introduction

Purpose of the MRC Community

- Assist public health by providing additional, trained personnel;
- Enables communities to meet specific health needs;
- Gives community members the opportunity to participate in making their communities healthier and safer;
- Provides mechanisms for information sharing and coordination between all partner organizations; and
- Allows for national recognition of local public health efforts.

How is MRC Organized

Medical Reserve Corps is a national program that was initially founded as part of Citizen Corps. MRC is designed to provide a cadre of trained public health and healthcare professionals as force multipliers in times of emergency. It was created in 2002 and expanded nationwide in 2006, in response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Like many organizations which deploy medical professionals, the MRC subscribes to the Emergency Services for Advanced Registry of Volunteer Health Professionals, or ESAR-VHP. ESAR-VHP requirements entail a detailed background check of all volunteers who work with at-risk populations, as well as verification of professional licensure.

MRCs across the nation are organized differently. Some are non-profit organizations, while others are affiliated with local, county or state health departments, emergency management agencies, or others. There are MRCs affiliated with businesses, and those that are part of university campuses.

All MRCs are required to file a charter with the Administration of Strategic Preparedness and Response, which provides federal oversight for the MRC. In the charter, the MRC organization is required to have a Housing Organization, which provides administrative and financial support. They are also required to convene an Advisory Board of community members who provide coordination and strategic direction for the MRC.

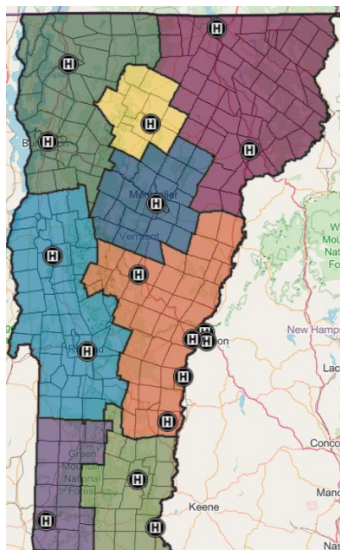
In Vermont, administrative support is provided by the Vermont Department of Health, a statewide public health agency. Fiscal support is provided by a local Fiscal Agent, who manages the MRC's grant money and serves as a voting member of the Advisory Board for their local Unit.

Vermont MRC currently has eight (8) MRC Units, which serve all 14 of its counties. Each MRC Unit is based out of one of VDH's regional District Offices and is supported by a VDH staff member who serves as Unit Coordinator. Many Units also have a senior volunteer serving as a Unit Co-Coordinator.

All MRC Units have an Advisory Board, and maintain governance documents. Each MRC operates in support of local community missions, but in times of public health emergency, fold into the Vermont Department of Health structure to support statewide emergency operations.

MRC at a State and Regional level maintains a number of formal and informal partnerships and affiliations.

Below is a map of the MRC service area:



Mission Statement

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a national network of more than 267,000 volunteers, organized in about 700 units to improve the health and safety of their communities. The MRC recruits, trains, and activates volunteers to respond to community health and safety needs during emergencies.

Policies and Protections

Identification

The MRC will issue a photo ID badge to each volunteer. Badges must be worn during all MRC events except during internal unit meetings or trainings.

Uniforms

MRC members are expected to wear the specified uniform articles, as directed, when responding to official MRC business.

Must only be issued to and worn by qualified MRC volunteers who have registered in the State's Responder Management System, and become an Accepted member by satisfactorily completing a background check.

To be worn while acting as an MRC volunteer under the direction of the MRC Unit Coordinator. The MRC volunteer SHALL NOT wear MRC uniform items when responding to an emergency or disaster as a volunteer with another entity.

The uniform items are to be issued for the duration of their volunteer membership. Upon termination of MRC membership, all issued uniforms must be returned to the MRC unit upon request.

Required Uniform:

- MRC vest, polo shirt or tee-shirt

- MRC ID Badge and lanyard

Optional Items:

- MRC logoed hats, packs, patches, etc. issued by Units/Groups

Additional Attire:

- Closed-toed shoes for all deployments, exercises, and hands-on trainings

- Shorts or pants kept in good repair

Liability and Worker's Compensation

MRC members are protected by liability and workers' compensation coverage during all MRC events. This coverage is provided by the State of Vermont through the Vermont Department of Health. In order to be assured of this coverage, MRC volunteers must sign in and sign out of every event they attend.

Liability and Workers' Compensation coverage is in effect only while in attendance at the MRC event. This coverage is not in effect while traveling to or from the MRC event.

Vermont Statute, Title 3, Chapter 29:

§ 1101. Obligation of State to defend employees; definition

In any civil action against a State employee for alleged damage, injury, loss, or deprivation of rights arising from an act or omission to act in the performance of the employee's official duties, it shall be the obligation of the State to defend the action on behalf of the employee and to provide legal representation for that purpose at State expense, except to the extent that such representation is provided by an insurance carrier, or except in an action resulting from the service of civil process.

any person who volunteers for a State agency by providing services at the request of that agency and under the direction and control of that agency, but who does not receive hourly or salary compensation;

Professional liability is not covered by the MRC except when the MRC volunteer is working under the Medical Direction of the Vermont Department of Health, or when waivers are in place pursuant to a State or Federally-declared disaster.

Volunteer Safety

All volunteers will receive safety training that is appropriate to their function in the MRC unit. It is recommended that all volunteers who are field-deployed have current immunizations. MRC retains discretion to review vaccination status if deployment may compromise the safety of the volunteer or the public.

All volunteers will be provided opportunities to access education and supports related to psychological health and safety prior to activations, and will be encouraged to participate in hotwashes, debriefings and additional psychosocial supports geared towards responder resilience.

The MRC Responder Health and Safety further addresses event-specific precautions that should be followed during activations. Guidance on health and safety is also available from Vermont Department of Health's Safety Officer in declared emergencies.

During localized emergencies and events, safety concerns should be addressed by the Unit Coordinator or supervisor on scene. SOP guidance is available for protocols surrounding volunteer injuries or illnesses contracted during deployment.

Any volunteer who becomes injured or falls ill while on assignment with MRC is expected to follow the protocols for reporting the illness or injury according to the MRC SOP Volunteer Liability and Worker's Compensation Claims.

Harassment Free, Drug Free, Violence Free

The MRC is committed to providing a harassment and discrimination free work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. It is the policy of the MRC that harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, age, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or military status is strictly prohibited. If you feel that you may have been the subject of discrimination or harassment, you should contact your Unit Coordinator.

The MRC is dedicated to a safe, healthy and drug-free work environment. All MRC volunteers are expected to report to duty free from drug and/or alcohol impairment and to remain in a condition that enables them to perform their job duties in a safe, efficient, legal, and professional manner.

The MRC does not tolerate any type of act or threat of violence committed by or against a volunteer, and therefore prohibits workplace violence.

These provisions called out above are specifically identified within the MRC Code of Conduct at the end of this document.

Volunteer Membership

Participation in Vermont MRC is voluntary and is open to any Vermont resident age 18 or older. No medical specialty is required, so long as the volunteer is interested in supporting our public health or medical Mission. At this time, Vermont MRC is composed of equal parts medical and non-medical professionals, and includes students, actively working individuals and retirees,

Qualification for membership in MRC is determined by an application on our Responder Management System, completion of a background check verified through the State's Human Resources Department, and an onboarding regimen which includes assignment to an MRC Unit and incorporation into the meeting, training and mission schedule of that Unit. It is our hope that participation in MRC gives a volunteer the opportunity to grow personally and professionally, become more involved in their community, and network with other members and community partners, while contributing in a personally satisfying way.

The MRC follows the State of Vermont's background check requirements. All volunteers must pass review with the State or National Child Abuse Registry, and must be checked against the Vermont Crime Information Center. Fingerprinting may be required depending

upon length of residency. When a prospective volunteer's background check raises a flag, the reason should be documented. MRC adheres to the exclusion criteria specified by the State of Vermont in making membership determinations.

Members from other states wishing to apply to Vermont MRC must pass backgrounding in their home state and Vermont.

Volunteer Membership Withdrawal and Termination

Termination specifically refers to involuntary withdrawal from an MRC Unit. Volunteer membership may be terminated by MRC leadership. MRC Unit leadership must document the reason for termination and make reasonable effort to address deficiencies leading up to termination, such as correcting non-compliance on training, addressing self-deployments, etc.

Volunteers may leave at any time of their own free will, which is considered a Withdrawal from the MRC. Volunteer members may at anytime withdraw for a number of reasons, which should be documented by their Unit Coordinator or Statewide Leadership in RMS. These may be for reasons of physical move out of state, lack of interest/time, health constraints, etc. These members will be Withdrawn from their Unit and moved to Inactive status. If a Withdrawn volunteer wishes to rejoin the MRC again at a later point, their RMS Profile may be reactivated once they have completed a new background check.

When a volunteer leaves MRC service, whether of their own accord or compulsorily, they should be given the opportunity of completing an exit survey and speaking with the MRC Statewide Coordinator, if desired.

General Information

Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities

The MRC offers flexibility and allow volunteers to choose their desired level of participation and commitment. We recognize that volunteers give of their times and have other commitments to family, work and additional volunteer obligations. However, the MRC relies on volunteers remaining active and participatory in order to build relationships and stay up to date on information that will enable volunteers to respond safely and effectively. Therefore, volunteers are expected to:

- Respond to all alerts and drills with message acknowledgement
- Attend meetings and trainings, as able (in-person or virtual options available)
- Participate in non-emergency and/or emergency events, as able

- Maintain regular communication with their Unit Coordinator

Non-compliance for a two-year period with any of the above is grounds for individual counseling by the Unit Coordinator, which may result in a volunteer being placed on an Inactive status.

All volunteers are responsible for acting in accordance with the MRC Code of Conduct for all meetings, non-emergency and emergency events.

No volunteer may self-deploy under any circumstances.

All volunteers are expected to track their volunteer time and report that to their Unit Coordinator.

MRC's Responsibility to Our Volunteers

The MRC Program will provide General and Worker's Compensation protection to all volunteers who respond in an official capacity.

The MRC will provide training opportunities for all interested MRC volunteers.

The MRC will provide appropriate equipment and supplies as needed for the volunteer's use during events.

The MRC will not share volunteers' contact information with outside sources without their permission. However, other MRC programs may have access to this information in the event of an actual emergency for coordination purposes only.

The MRC will strive to provide volunteers with opportunities to work within their own fields of expertise during an emergency event while also developing new skills and interests.

The MRC will ensure each volunteer has:

- adequate training and information to carry out their assignments;
- clear directions in the form of supervision, Job Action Sheets, and Standard Operating Procedures;
- recognition and appreciation for their contribution;
- opportunities to offer feedback, and;
- respect in their work environment.

Training Expectations

All volunteers are required to complete trainings. It is the expectation of the MRC Program that every volunteer meet a baseline of knowledge about the MRC and to operate in a safe

manner. Vermont MRC’s trainings mirror recommendations set out by national MRC Core Competencies <https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/2019-MRC-Core-Competencies-and-Training-Plan.pdf> .

- MRC Basic is equivalent to National MRC Tier 3 competencies
- MRC Active is equivalent to National MRC Tier 2 competencies
- MRC Leadership is equivalent to National MRC Tier 1 competencies

All volunteers are required to complete the mandatory Basic level of training within a year of joining the MRC.

Volunteers wishing to deploy for emergencies are required to complete the Active level of training. Additional trainings may be required depending on the mission(s) the volunteer wishes to support.

Volunteers wishing to take an active leadership role in the MRC are required to complete the Leadership level of training.

See below for a list of trainings by Level.

Vermont MRC Training Matrix

| Level | Requirements |
|---------------|--|
| Basic | <p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRC New Member Orientation • Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) • Bloodborne Pathogens • Personal Preparedness • Incident Command System Overview <p>Enables volunteer to have a basic foundation and knowledge of the MRC and general safety principles expected of all volunteers.</p> |
| Active | <p>Basic-Level Requirements, PLUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid and CPR-MRC will offer annual certification/recertification in person • Introduction to Incident Command System (IS-100) • National Incident Management System (IS-700) • Psychological First Aid • Point of Distribution (POD) Overview <p>Enables volunteer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in emergency activations* <p>*With completion of any event-specific trainings pertinent to the emergency</p> |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Leadership | <p>Active-Level Requirements, PLUS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents (IS200) ▪ Leadership and Influence (IS-240c) or provision of certificate for similar course taken externally ▪ Train the trainer courses (optional) <p>Enables volunteer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supervise MRC volunteers independently of Unit Coordinator |
|-------------------|--|

Please see Appendix B for information on where these trainings are offered.

MRC uses a volunteer training platform to record completion of trainings. these are also manually entered under Trainings in the Responder Management System, and will be used to identify volunteers best suited to Groups or Missions. Documentation of successful completion in the form of certificates, transcripts, for trainings taken outside of the MRC must be uploaded to RMS or forwarded to the Unit Coordinator.

MRC Missions and Mission Sets

MRC uses the term Missions to describe the areas of focus for the MRC. Our Missions are:

- Medical Surge
- Community Education
- Auxiliary Communications

Within these categories, there are Mission Sets, which center on those activities which support our Missions. A Mission Set describes the activities, trainings and planning considerations needed to carry out the targeted activity.

Some Mission Sets are statewide in nature and are carried out by each MRC Unit, or by a trained group of volunteers spread across geographic areas. Other Mission Sets are designed for local community activities carried out by a certain MRC Unit.

Additional Missions may be identified based upon a unit’s interests and capabilities. Vermont is in the process of developing new mission areas for the MRC which will continue to grow and expand our ability to support the state and its residents. To find out more about the Medical Reserve Corps on a national level and the work being done across the nation, visit <https://aspr.hhs.gov/MRC/Pages/index.aspx>

MRC volunteers may participate in emergency and non-emergency event support by signing up in the Missions section of the Responder Management System.

MRC Groups

MRC Groups are designations for volunteers who are trained, exercised and coordinated to support a Mission. Most Groups accept members from multiple Units unless their focus is in a specific geographical area.

Volunteers must request membership in a Group and must complete the requirements to become part of that Group.

Communications

MRC's electronic communication systems; including use of the Responder Management System database, telephone, e-mail, portable radio, voice mail, fax and internet, are available to conduct MRC business. All electronic data is the property of the MRC and may be considered public records. The Responder Management System may be accessed at <https://rms.vermont.gov>.

Emergency Events

MRC volunteers may be activated in a localized or statewide emergency when volunteers are urgently needed to fulfill a task associated with the MRC mission. MRC volunteers in emergencies are considered the 'volunteer arm' of the Health Department and prioritize missions that affect the life safety of Vermont residents and visitors. MRC volunteers will have the opportunity to decline any activation opportunity, and it will in no way impact their inclusion during any future events. As the MRC recognizes that volunteers may have jobs or other commitments that affect their ability to respond, we ask all volunteers to determine which organizations will receive their priority consideration during a response.

Unlike non-emergency events, emergency activations are mainly communicated directly from the MRC Statewide Coordinator after an activation of the Health Operations Center or State Emergency Operations Center. Emergency events will normally be communicated directly from the MRC Statewide Coordinator to volunteers via use of the Responder Management System.

Emergency events use all available forms of communication (email, text, home phone, work phone, TTY, fax, pager) and will be an escalating response requiring the volunteer to read/listen to the message and follow a proscribed action.

The MRC Program also has access to emergency communications in the form of satellite phone and amateur radio. While this does not allow MRC to communicate directly with its full volunteer membership, it enables the MRC to maintain contact with the Vermont Department of Health and its critical response partners. These emergency communications platforms may be deployed to support MRC emergency events in the community at need.

Non-Emergency Events

MRC volunteers may be notified when any community event may require volunteers. MRC volunteers will have the opportunity to decline any activation opportunity, and it will in no way impact their inclusion during any future events.

Non-emergency events will normally be communicated directly from Unit Coordinator to volunteers via use of the Responder Management System, as will local unit trainings. Events and trainings which encompass multiple units or are statewide in nature will be communicated from the MRC Statewide Coordinator.

Non-emergency events are typically limited to email and text communications, and rarely require a rapid response.

Working With Your MRC Unit

MRC Units organize the majority of MRC activities based around the needs of their communities and their volunteers' interests and skills.

MRC Units may use a combination of emails, social media, newsletters and other means to convey information to their membership. They regularly schedule in-person meetings and virtual meetings for information dissemination, training and social cohesion.

Trainings are centrally posted on the calendar within MRC's training site, and may be designated as Unit-only trainings or open to any volunteer.

These localized trainings and activities may be supplemented by regional trainings and activities between sister Units, or at the State level.

It is important that MRC volunteers engage with MRC activities as able, and that they stay in contact with their Unit Coordinators.

If a volunteer has a certain interest they'd like to explore locally, or wishes to request a training they feel would benefit members of their Unit, there are often opportunities to suggest these by answering feedback surveys, attending meetings, or emailing/calling their Unit Coordinators. Some of Vermont MRC's most successful Missions began as member-driven initiatives.

Appendices

Appendix A: Deployment Checklist

When you volunteer for an emergency Mission, you should be prepared to be on site for at least 12 hours, even if your shift is shorter. Sometimes the unexpected happens and you may be unable to return home. Therefore, the following are some recommended items you may want to bring with you to make your time volunteering more comfortable:

Security Items:

- At least one (1) form of picture ID
- MRC Identification Badge

Clothing: *(It is important to be prepared for both indoor and outdoor working conditions)*

- Comfortable, light-weight clothing *(Think Layers!)*
- MRC shirt or vest
- Weather-appropriate pants/shorts
- Hat (as protection from the sun, or for warmth)
- Boots or comfortable walking shoes (closed toed)
- Warm jacket
- An extra pair of socks
- Rain gear
- Gloves (to protect hands during physical labor or for warmth)

Personal Items:

- Activate Personal Preparedness Communication Plan
- Cell Phone & Charger
- Sunglasses
- Nonperishable snacks
- Bottle of water
- Sun block

- Lip balm
- Contact lenses, lens cleaner, and eye glasses protective case
- Medications (prescription or non-prescription)
- Insect repellent

Appendix B: Where to Find MRC Training

Vector

All virtual trainings required by the Medical Reserve Corps will be available on the MRC training website Vector Solutions, or linked to the website.

The trainings outlined in this Handbook may be assigned by your Unit Coordinator, along with trainings required to join a specific Group.

Volunteers may also use the Self-Assign function to choose available courses, or sign up using the Calendar function.

A full description of how to navigate the training database is available using MRC SOP Using Vector Solutions for Volunteers.

MRC TRAIN

TRAIN is a national, centralized, searchable database of MRC courses. Users can register online for many courses, create a personal learning record, have access to continuing education credits and have access to hundreds of public health and emergency preparedness courses from nationally recognized course providers.

To begin: Go to <https://www.train.org/mrc/welcome>

- Click “Create Account” underneath “Login”. (username and password are not case sensitive and can be changed at any time after initial login.)
- You will first need to agree to the TRAIN policies before proceeding.

In-Person/Virtual Trainings

Most trainings for MRC are also offered in-person and virtually and are taught by MRC, qualified community partners, or contracted trainers. Courses offered are a mix of required MRC trainings and optional trainings chosen to enhance certain skills or inform volunteers about particular areas of interest which will enhance their awareness. The courses chosen rotate annually.

MRC strives to be allow equitable access to training for learners of all styles, and to make training accessible to people with varying schedules.

Regardless of the training modality you use, please remember to upload copy of your training certificate to the Responder Management System or email to you Unit Coordinator.

Appendix C: MRC Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Statement

Code of Conduct: The purpose of this code is to establish standards of conduct for all Medical Reserve Corps volunteers by identifying those acts or actions that are compatible with the best interest of the individuals served by the Medical Reserve Corps.

- I believe that we serve the whole community. I will serve all populations and strive for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice in my representation of the MRC.
- I will treat all individuals served by the MRC with care and compassion.
- I will not discuss controversial topics such as, religious beliefs, political views, nor offer medical advice outside of my role.
- I will only volunteer my time after I have looked to the safety and well-being of myself and my loved ones first.
- I will respect my own physical and psychological limitations, and understand that the MRC has resources available to me should I need them.
- I will exercise care and follow all operating instructions, safety standards, and guidelines when using equipment, machines, tools, etc. If any equipment, machines, tools or medical supplies appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair, I will notify the supervisor immediately.
- I will report any injury/illness resulting from my volunteerism with the MRC to my supervisor immediately.
- I will not accept either directly or indirectly, any gift, gratuity, or anything of value from clients served by the MRC.
- I will not report for duty while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substances, nor will I consume any such substance during working hours.
- I understand that smoking is not permitted in buildings, or on the grounds of buildings operated by the MRC.
- I shall dress neatly and in a manner appropriate to the nature of my assignment.
- I understand that it is against the policy of the MRC, and illegal under state and federal law, to sexually harass another person.
- Accurately recording time worked is the responsibility of every volunteer. I agree to sign in and sign out for every volunteer shift. If a sign-in sheet is unavailable, I will email any changes in my scheduled shift to my supervisor.

- All personal protected health information I receive from clients served through the MRC will remain confidential as per HIPAA regulations, and will only be shared with parties requiring the information to perform the duties assigned.
- I will refrain from discussing personal information of clients and volunteers given to me in confidence, and will report any gossip or inappropriate conduct to my supervisor.

Appendix D: Release Form-

Confidentiality Statement:

Initials/Date: _____

In the course of volunteering with the MRC, I recognize that it is my responsibility to maintain the confidentiality of all information that identifies a client or discloses any information about the client; and to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) standards. I agree that I will not share any information I may obtain in verbal or written form. I also agree that I will not share any client information even if the information is available through other means. I further acknowledge that the confidentiality policy applies after termination as a volunteer with this agency.

In the course of volunteering with the MRC, I recognize that I may take on administrative responsibilities which give me access to personal information about my MRC colleagues. I will maintain the confidentiality of all information that identifies an MRC volunteer with the same care as I give client information.

Release for Publication of Photographs and Video Recording:

Initials/Date: _____

I certify that I am over 18 years of age and I hereby grant to the Medical Reserve Corps the irrevocable and unrestricted right to edit, duplicate, exhibit, broadcast, copyright, use and publish photographs and/or video recordings of me, or in which I may be included, for any purpose and in any manner or medium. I hereby waive and release the MRC, its officials, officers, agents, and employees from any and all rights, claims and liability I may have relating to said photographs and video recordings. I understand that I will not receive compensation from the MRC for said photographs and video recordings.

Receipt of Handbook:

Initials/Date: _____

I have received a copy of the Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer Handbook. I have read and understood the policies and information in it and agree to abide by these policies during my volunteer term.

I, (Print your name) _____, have read and agree to the MRC Confidentiality, Release for Publication and Receipt of Handbook statements and agree to provide volunteer services in accordance with these standards.

Signature/Date: _____

Please read, sign and date this form, and return it to the MRC State Coordinator. A copy of this form can be sent to you upon request.

