



Emergency Preparedness Volunteers

Frequently Asked Questions

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department
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1. What is a Medical Reserve Corps volunteer?

Medical Reserve Corps was founded after President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address in which he asked all Americans to volunteer in support of their country. It is a partner program of Citizens Corp which is dedicated to hometown security. Both are a under the USA Freedom Corps which promotes volunteerism and service nationwide.

MRC Units are community based and function as a way to organize and utilize volunteers who want to donate their time and expertise to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Our MRC Unit includes both medical and non-medical volunteers. Volunteers may choose to help communities in need nationwide, but deploying outside of Hamilton County is strictly voluntary.

Each MRC Unit functions under the purpose for which they were organized. Our MRC Unit focuses on Point of Dispensing Clinics or PODs. Public Health will open and operate PODs when it has been determined that there is an outbreak of disease or a biological release.

2. What is the Emergency System for Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP)?

The Emergency System for Advanced Registration for Volunteer Health Professionals is a national program developed to identify, pre-register and pre-qualify volunteer healthcare professionals in advance of a large scale disaster or public health emergency. This national system focuses on a state-based volunteer registry system. Tennessee is working towards implementing the ESAR-VHP system. Volunteers enrolled in the program ensure that residents of Hamilton County will receive prompt and vital health care during an emergency response.

3. Why does Hamilton County need volunteers?

For an effective emergency response plan, we must be able to quickly identify and contact volunteers. Pre-registering and placing your contact information in our database will provide a means for having an efficient and organized system of contacting volunteers.

4. Who is eligible to be a volunteer in the program?

Anyone who is interested in helping their community in times of a public health emergency is eligible to volunteer.

Medical and mental health professionals volunteering in a medical capacity must hold a valid and active Tennessee professional license or a multi-state license valid in Tennessee.

5. How does the Emergency System for Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals work?

Medical and mental health professional volunteers will provide personal contact information by completing a registration form. Once their license is verified, their information will become part of a central, confidential volunteer database. Only designated personnel will have access to a volunteer's information. Volunteers who have the required knowledge and competency for the current emergency will be contacted to see if they are available to respond.

6. What if I am called and I am unwilling or unable to help?

You retain the right to decline to volunteer if you are unable or unwilling to volunteer when you are called. Previous responsibilities and commitments will be a factor in your decision. Becoming part of an emergency response can separate you from your family for an undefined period of time. Participating in an emergency response is strictly voluntary.

7. What about my family and my job?

Volunteers will receive personal preparedness training for themselves and their family. Being assured that your family is safe will give you confidence in responding when called. Volunteers are encouraged to coordinate their volunteer time with their employers or any other non-paid obligations which might be relative to an emergency response.

8. What will my role as a volunteer be in a public health emergency?

In the event public health opens Point of Dispensing Clinics (PODs), non-medical volunteers could be asked to distribute forms, run a patient information video, assist in patient flow, receive and distribute supplies, assist patients with mobility problems, etc.

Medical and mental health professional volunteers could be asked to assist in administering vaccine and other medications needed for prophylaxis and/or treatment as well as provide triage, answer patient concerns or screen for mental health needs. These volunteers may also be deployed to area hospitals or an established alternate care site to provide surge personnel during an emergency. Assignments will be based on the volunteer's experience and competency in order to place the volunteers where their skills will be most beneficial. No one will be asked to serve in an area that is outside his or her comfort zone.

9. Will I have liability protection as a volunteer?

During a governor declared emergency or public health emergency, volunteers will be covered under:

Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act (Emergency Management Assistance Compact)

TN Code Annotated 8-42-101

TN Code Annotated 63-6-218

TN Code Annotated 63-6-708

10. What training is available?

Most classroom training sessions take approximately one hour to complete. The Medical Reserve Corps Orientation, Point of Dispensing Clinic, and the Strategic National Stockpile Training is offered together as one classroom training session. Personal Preparedness, Disaster Mental Health, and some Incident Command System trainings are also available in a classroom setting. The National Incident Management System training and Incident Command System training is available online at www.nims-ics.com/nims_training/index.htm. Any other training considered necessary for an emergency response by the Volunteer Program Manager will be offered to volunteers.

All volunteers will receive just-in-time training at the time they report to respond to an emergency. However, volunteers are encouraged to prepare themselves prior to an actual event. Volunteers may participate in emergency drills and exercises conducted by hospitals and the Department of Public Health. Participation in these exercises will prepare the volunteer for a successful and efficient response. Additional training may be required for some volunteers with more complex roles in a disaster response.

11. How do I register?

Volunteers may register by going online to: <http://health.hamiltontn.org> Look on the right side of the page under Community Issues and Projects and click on Volunteer Program to access information about the volunteer program and complete a registration form. Or you may register by accessing the state website at

<http://Thanvolunteer.health.state.tn.us>. Any volunteer may also contact the local MRC Volunteer Coordinator at (423) 209-8068 or email healthvolunteers@hamiltontn.gov to receive a registration form.

12. How will I be contacted during an emergency?

The volunteer will be contacted by using the information recorded on their registration form. The type of communication used will be determined depending on the severity of the emergency. Possible means of notification include the Hamilton County Emergency Reverse Notification System, media announcements, personal phone calls or e-mail.

13. How will I update my contact information?

As a volunteer who registers online with the state website, you will receive a unique user name and password. You will need this information to re-enter the website to update your profile. The volunteer will also receive a quarterly newsletter which has a mail-in registration update. The MRC Volunteer Coordinator can be contacted at the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department by phone (423) 209-8068 or email Susan McNabb at healthvolunteers@hamiltontn.gov to update your information.

14. Who will have access to this information?

Only designated personnel will have access to a volunteer's information. Your information will only be used to notify you of any activities related to the volunteer program and the Emergency System for Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP). Types of notifications the volunteer will receive includes: upcoming drills and exercises, updated program information, requests for assistance at the time of a public health emergency, or training opportunities. Your information will not be shared with any entity which is not a direct partner to an emergency response in Hamilton County.