



## **Overview of the Long Beach Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Sponsored by the Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services**

### **Why was the Long Beach MRC created?**

The Long Beach MRC is comprised of organized medical, public health professionals, and non-medical professionals who serve as volunteers to respond to natural disasters and emergencies. These volunteers assist the local community during emergencies and for ongoing efforts in public health. The Long Beach MRC was established in June 2008. It is housed under the City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services.

The need for trained supplemental medical and public health personnel to assist with emergency operations was highlighted after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Many medical and public health professionals sought to support emergency relief efforts, but there was no organized approach to channel their efforts. The Long Beach MRC provides the structure necessary to deploy medical and public health personnel in response to an emergency, as it identifies specific, trained, credentialed personnel available and ready to respond to emergencies.

### **What does the name Medical Reserve Corps mean to our community?**

Each community is different, and these differences may require alternative approaches to natural disasters and emergencies. The terms “medical” and “reserve” indicate that the trained personnel are available to respond to emergencies requiring support to the community’s health and medical resources. “Corps” refers to an organized body of individuals with a similar function, in keeping with the example of Citizen Corps and the USA Freedom Corps. Despite differences among communities, all communities can benefit from the MRC and can understand the MRC similarly. The “medical” in Medical Reserve Corps does not limit MRC units to medical professionals. Individuals without medical training can fill essential supporting roles.

### **How is the direction of the MRC established?**

The direction of the MRC program exists at the national, state and local levels. Each level has key personnel responsible for overseeing activities at their respective level,

At the local level, each MRC unit is led by an MRC Unit Coordinator, who matches community needs—for emergency medical response and public health initiatives—with volunteer capabilities. Local coordinators are also responsible for building partnerships, ensuring the sustainability of the local unit, and managing the volunteers.

The Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (DCVMRC) oversees the activities of the 10 MRC Regional Coordinators, who collaborate with national-, state-, and local-level emergency preparedness and response medical and healthcare personnel.

The DCVMRC runs the MRC program at the national level. It is headquartered in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). It functions as a clearinghouse for

information and best practices to help communities establish, implement and maintain Medical Reserve Corps units nationwide. The DCVMRC provides technical assistance to unit leaders, hosts a website, and coordinates with local, state, regional and national organizations and agencies to help communities achieve their local visions for public health and emergency preparedness.

## **With whom is the national MRC affiliated?**

Sponsored by the ASPR, the MRC coordinates its efforts with several groups and has multiple affiliates. The MRC is a specialized component of Citizen Corps, a national network of volunteers dedicated to ensuring hometown security. Citizen Corps, along with AmeriCorps, Senior Corps and the Peace Corps are part of the President's USA Freedom Corps, which promotes volunteerism and services throughout the nation.

## **What training do I need to become a Long Beach MRC volunteer?**

Emergency preparedness and response is a highly coordinated effort that allows communities to maximize their capabilities during times of extraordinary disorganization and stress. Volunteers may already know how to perform some of the necessary medical and health functions. Training for the Long Beach MRC includes, but is not limited to the following training: Point-of Dispensing sites, Incident Command System, HIPAA, and disease investigation.

Support/administrative volunteers receive guidance on how to perform their particular functions, which may vary depending on the needs of particular communities. They may need to participate in practice drills if their duties interface with those of front-line/direct service volunteers. Overall, the training includes support skills training, communications and Incident Command System.

Training requirements for front-line/direct services volunteers is typically extensive and specialized according to their licensure. Generally these volunteers are trained in primary emergency response and public health procedures, including basic life support and CPR/AED; Community Emergency Response Team training; identifying the signs, symptoms and treatment of hazardous materials, which may include nuclear, biological and chemical agents; and basic first aid skills to deal with emergencies such as shock, allergic reactions, bleeding, broken bones, burns, chemical splashes, choking, eye injuries, skin wounds, dislocations, head trauma, heat exhaustion, stroke and poisoning.

## **What training do I need to become a Long Beach MRC volunteer?**

The Long Beach MRC seeks volunteers to assist with emergency preparedness and response efforts. Volunteers in the MRC program include:

- Practicing, retired, or otherwise employed medical professionals, such as physicians, nurses, emergency medical technicians, pharmacists, certified nursing assistants, and others
- Public Health professionals
- Community members without medical training can assist with administrative and other essential support functions

## **Is the Long Beach MRC volunteer program only for medical and healthcare professionals?**

No. The MRC program seeks medical and public health professionals to assist with emergency preparedness and response efforts. However, other volunteers who have no medicals or healthcare backgrounds are also needed to properly conduct emergency preparedness and response efforts. Community members without medical training can assist with administrative and other essential

support functions. These volunteers give their time on an ongoing basis in coordination with other experts willing to donate their time and knowledge for special aspects of the effort.

## **What do individuals with a medical or healthcare background do as Long Beach MRC volunteer?**

Major emergencies can overwhelm the capabilities of first responders, particularly during the first 12 to 72 hours. Medical and other health volunteers can provide an important “surge” capacity during this critical period. They also augment medical staff shortages at local medical and emergency facilities. In short, communities often need medically trained individuals to fill in the gaps in their emergency response plans and to improve their response capabilities overall.

Possible types of “front-line” medical and public health volunteers include:

- Physicians (including surgeons, medical specialists, osteopaths)
- Physician Assistants
- Nurses (nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed vocational nurses, certified nursing assistants)
- Pharmacists
- Pharmacist Technicians
- Dentists
- Dental Assistants
- Optometrists
- Veterinarians
- Emergency medical technicians
- Public health workers
- Epidemiologists
- Infectious disease specialists
- Toxicologists
- Mental health practitioners (psychologists, substance abuse counselors, social workers)
- Health educators/communicators
- Other medical and public health professionals

## **What do individuals with a non- medical or healthcare background do as Long Beach MRC volunteer?**

Individuals with a non-medical or healthcare background typically serve their community by assisting with administrative and other essential support functions. Possible types of administrative support and other support volunteers include:

- Administrators and business managers
- Administrative assistants and office support staff
- Drivers
- Chaplains
- Training directors
- Trainers
- Volunteer coordinators
- Fundraising professionals
- Supply and logistics managers
- Interpreters/translators
- Amateur radio operators
- Other support personnel

## **Do Long Beach MRC volunteers only help during an emergency situation?**

Although, Long Beach MRC volunteers are ready to respond to disasters or emergencies, part of the MRC program's mission is to foster disaster preparedness. Long Beach MRC is also called to help during non-emergency situations.

## **How do Long Beach MRC volunteers help in a non-emergency situation?**

During non-emergent times, Long Beach MRC volunteers strengthen the overall health of their community by participating in general public initiatives like flu vaccination clinics and diabetes detection programs.

## **Once I become a Long Beach MRC volunteer, what happens when I am not available all the time?**

Volunteer availability is discussed during the application process. Long Beach MRC volunteers do not have to be available all the time. Some volunteers may only be interested in making a minimal commitment during times of crisis or for other specific community needs. These preferences are respected, given that they can be accommodated by the MRC unit's mission and work plan.

MRC Unit Coordinators match community needs for emergency medical response and public health initiatives with volunteer capabilities. They also determine prospective volunteers' availability and whether they have obligations, such as regular work responsibilities, that might conflict with serving the MRC in times of limited advance notice. Different people will have different amounts of time to give. Some may not be available year-round, and others may need to be utilized throughout the year to remain engaged with the MRC.

## **I am interested in becoming a Long Beach MRC volunteer. What do I do first?**

Contact the Long Beach MRC Coordinator, Veronica Ornelas, at 562-570-4273 or via email at [veronica.ornelas@longbeach.gov](mailto:veronica.ornelas@longbeach.gov)