



# MRC ★ In Touch

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## Featured Article

### Northwest Louisiana MRC and Partnering Organization Vaccinate Vulnerable Population in Community

The homeless population has been receiving great attention and care by the Northwest Louisiana MRC and the Pool of Siloam Medical Ministry, a non-profit free clinic which serves indigent and uninsured adults. Since 2006, the Northwest Louisiana MRC and the Pool have shared a partnership— both organizations work together to provide shelter, vaccinations, and health education to homeless clients in the community.

The collaboration between both organizations was jump-started by Terry Strain, the Northwest Louisiana MRC unit coordinator, and founder/ executive director of Pool. Strain recruited Pool volunteers to become active in the MRC unit; therefore, a group of dual volunteers work together on a variety of shelter medical responses.

After a statewide ESAR-VHP/MRC conference call in December 2009, a nearby parish health unit offered seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines to the MRC to be administered to the homeless.

Each Tuesday and Thursday evening (weather permitting), the MRC and Pool volunteers provide seasonal flu and H1N1 vaccines at the Hope for the Homeless Day Shelter, along with H1N1 and seasonal flu educational materials and food. The volunteers even visit the homeless in abandoned buildings, encampments, and streets to ensure they are receiving care.

During the first flu clinic, temperatures dropped below freezing and the Salvation Army delivered sleeping bags to the shelter. After the food and vaccines were distributed, volunteers then ventured to homeless encampments and abandoned homes to provide blankets and food to those who refused shelter.

The next day, a warming shelter was setup adjacent to the clinic. First aid, comfort items, and medical care were provided round the clock for 4 days straight and then 12-18 hours per day, until the shelter closed on day eight. Once the shelter had closed, a total of 30 people received meals and 16 people stayed in the shelter.

The MRC and Pool volunteers have faced some tough challenges reaching out to the underprivileged. For instance, many clients will not leave their remote camps, some fear injections, and intoxicated clients cannot give consent to receive a vaccination. In addition, some homeless suffer from severe mental illnesses or have histories of violence that prevents interactions with the volunteers. Although more than 100 people have been offered the vaccine, it has been refused by some people who were more focused on staying warm than receiving a vaccination.

The vaccination of this vulnerable population in the community has served great purpose—no clients have developed acute illnesses and there have been no outbreaks of flu in the day shelter or populated camps. The MRC and Pool volunteers expect to continue their successful efforts in the community.

Strain says that the homeless population trusts the volunteers because they are, “treated as individuals and called by name.”

## Tips

1. Contact local homeless shelters and faith-based organizations in your community to see if there are volunteer opportunities.
2. Develop an MOU with a homeless shelter. To view a sample MOU template with a Red Cross Chapter, visit: [http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/upload/MOU\\_Local\\_ARC-MRC-1.pdf](http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/upload/MOU_Local_ARC-MRC-1.pdf).
3. Encourage MRC volunteers to establish relationships with other volunteer organizations in the community.

## MRC/NACCHO Connections

### Strategic National Stockpile

The Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is a federally-funded program that distributes medicine during a public health emergency. NACCHO is working to strengthen the linkage between the MRC and SNS planning to assist local jurisdictions' preparedness efforts. A poster that describes how the MRC can benefit SNS volunteers can be found at: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/SNS/upload/SNS-and-MRC.pdf>. The poster also describes MRC and SNS partnerships that have worked together during an SNS activation.

To assist preparedness leaders, NACCHO collects resources from SNS Preparedness Planners and places them in a STOCKBox. A STOCKbox is an online source for SNS-related tools and resources.

If your unit has developed a tool and you would like to share it with

your public health colleagues, e-mail [got\\_tools@naccho.org](mailto:got_tools@naccho.org) or you can submit a tool directly through STOCKbox.

Visit and bookmark STOCKbox at: <http://www.naccho.org/stockbox> to learn more.

For more information about NACCHO and the SNS, visit: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/SNS/index.cfm>.

## Announcements



### **H1N1 Stories from the Field**

NACCHO has been collecting stories from the field from local health departments nationwide. Discover what practices have worked for health departments and what lessons were learned during the H1N1 response. You can also submit your own story from the field. [http://www.naccho.org/topics/H1N1/stories\\_search.cfm](http://www.naccho.org/topics/H1N1/stories_search.cfm)

### **Capacity Building Awards (CBA) Announcement**

CBA award notifications were sent via e-mail in January 2010. If you have questions, please visit the NACCHO Web site at: <http://www.naccho.org/mrccba>, or contact Chicquita Hairston at [chairston@naccho.org](mailto:chairston@naccho.org), (202) 507-4224.

### **2010 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit**

The 2010 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit will be held May 12-16, 2010 in Nashville, TN. The Web site address for information regarding this training event is <http://www.integratedtrainingsummit.org>.

Poster submissions are currently being accepted for the training summit through Monday, March 1, 2010 5:00 P.M. EST. For additional information, please visit <http://teams.hhs.gov/conference>.

### **Catch Up on the 2010 Public Health Preparedness Summit**

Did you miss the 2010 Public Health Preparedness Summit, but you want to learn about what happened? Be sure to read the Summit's blog, *SummitUp!* to learn about different sessions and activities that occurred at the Summit. <http://phprep.wordpress.com/>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch  
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