



# MRC In Touch

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

November 2016

[www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov)

## Featured Article

### Clay County MRC deployed to conduct a Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER)

Clay County, a rural community in southern central Illinois with a population of approximately 14,000, is ranked by the Robert Wood Johnson County Health Rankings to have poor health outcomes and length of life compared to other counties in the state. To figure out why and how to improve the health of Clay County citizens, the Clay County Health Department decided to deploy their MRC volunteers in May 2016 to conduct a [Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response \(CASPER\)](#) and identify health perceptions in their community and assess resilience and preparedness.

A total of about 50 volunteers and health department staff were mobilized and trained on a data collection technique that can be implemented to rapidly assess community health needs following a disaster or to assess community preparedness. This door-to-door interviewing technique was developed with input from several partners including hospital administration, health care providers, long-term care facility administrators, community members and more. Some of findings from the CASPER identified 75% of households who plan to go to a shelter in a large scale disaster have pets; the top 3 reported health conditions in Clay County are hypertension/heart disease, asthma/COPD/emphysema, and diabetes; and 87% of households either have not or don't know if their household has been tested for Radon

Through the support and expertise of the MRC, the Clay County Health Department met their objectives of rapidly obtaining valid, representative data on emergency preparedness, health behaviors, and community health perceptions in their community; building capacity for their MRC unit and engaging volunteers in non-emergency public health initiatives; exercising the Clay County Health Department incident command staff and volunteers in volunteer management; and disseminating public health information to the community. In addition to sharing the results with their local and national partners, 6,050 households received a mailed newsletter publication using data and results from the CASPER along with educational material from health department programs.

Gathering such health and emergency preparedness information using valid statistical methods will allow public health and emergency managers to make informed decisions to improve the health and safety of Clay County residents. The Clay County Health Department believes the results of the CASPER can be used to generate recommendations for emergency management and public health decision makers and further incorporated into Clay County's Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Needs (I-PLAN) to help determine health priorities for the next five years.

## MRC/NACCHO Connections

### Reminder: MRC Challenge Awards Request for Application (RFA)

NACCHO is currently accepting applications for the [2017 Medical Reserve Corps \(MRC\) Challenge Awards](#) through **December 9, 2016**. Review the [Request for Application](#) for important details and tips for a successful application. This year's focus area are:

- Building and Sustaining Community Resiliency
- Enhancing Community Collaboration and Partnerships
- Strengthening Community Health

All potential applicants are also encouraged to view the 2017 MRC Challenge Awards [informational webinar recording](#) and [presentation slides](#). If you have any additional questions about the awards process or encounter technical issues with the website, please contact [mrc@naccho.org](mailto:mrc@naccho.org).

## Announcements

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### Learn more about how MRC Volunteers can source Mission Ready Packages

Through a cooperative agreement with the [Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response \(ASPR\)](#) and the MRC Program, NACCHO is developing resources to assist MRC Coordinators interested in utilizing the Mission Ready Package (MRP) template as a model to develop emergency response teams based on their community needs. NACCHO conducted an informational webinar (click to access the [webinar recording](#) and [downloadable slides](#)) this September, providing an overview of MRC response missions, MRC resource capabilities, and the value of utilizing MRPs to develop mission ready volunteers to support community response needs. For additional information, please visit the [NACCHO MRC webpage](#) and [Preparedness Brief Blog](#).

### The Medical Reserve Corps Program announces the winners of the MRC Serves! Video Challenge

The MRC Program Office has announced the winners of the MRC Serves! Video Challenge. The [Mercer County MRC \(IL\)](#) won in the category of "How does the MRC make my community healthier?"; the [MRC of Eastern Washington \(WA\)](#) won in the "Why do I/we volunteer with the MRC?" category; and finally the [Rocky Mountain MRC \(CO\)](#) was selected as the winner of "How does the MRC make my community more prepared and resilient?" category.

Deb Carlson, a volunteer in the [Northwest Vermont MRC \(VT\)](#), and [Pomperaug Health District MRC \(CT\)](#) both won honorable mention.

### Call for Abstracts: 2017 NACCHO Annual Conference

The 2017 NACCHO Annual conference will take place July 11-13 in Pittsburgh, PA and this year's theme is "Public Health Revolution: Bridging Clinical Medicine and Population Health." For more information about the conference and submitting an abstract, visit the conference website [here](#). Abstract submissions are open until **December 9, 2016**.

### Call for Abstracts: 2017 National VOAD Conference

The National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) is hosting its annual conference, "Bridging the Gulf," May 15-17, 2017 in Houston, TX and is currently accepting proposal submissions through **December 9, 2016**. In line with the conference theme, the topics of interest include training and education; social justice in disaster response; emerging practices & innovation; and the 4 C's, cooperation, communication, coordination, and collaboration. Additional information about the National VOAD conference and submitting an abstract can be found on the following website <https://nvoad2016.wufoo.com/forms/w1r5fuv61ylc7df/>.

### Share Your Story from the Field

NACCHO's [Stories from the Field website](#) features stories about local public health successes and challenges. This website provides a means for local health departments to share their experiences and demonstrate the value of public health. Several featured stories from the field demonstrate how the MRC continues to benefit local health departments and showcase innovative roles for the MRC. View "[Helping Seniors Stand Strong](#)", "[Public Health Emergency Program Targets Diverse Communities via Change Agents](#)", and "[Expanding a Peer Education Program that Works to Target Marijuana Use: Youth for Truth](#)" to learn more about MRC/local health department collaboration and innovative MRC projects. Do you have a story that you would like to share? Visit the [website](#) or email [mrc@naccho.org](mailto:mrc@naccho.org).

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# NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

[www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org)



The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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Please contact Alyson Jordan, NACCHO's MRC Communications Specialist, with any questions or suggestions for the newsletter at 202-783-5528 or at [ajordan@naccho.org](mailto:ajordan@naccho.org).