



# MRC In Touch

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

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

## Featured Article

### MRC Pharmaceutical Readiness



The connection between pharmacies and emergency preparedness is evident as our country faces larger, more complex emergencies that test our local, state, and federal systems. Knowing that access to pharmaceuticals, medication shortages, and manufacturing and distribution issues are almost inevitable, how can we better prepare our communities to face these challenges?

This month's newsletter features North Carolina's Capital MRC (CMRC) Unit #1227, which received a 2017 Challenge Award to establish its pharmaceutical task force initiative.

CMRC's Pharmaceutical Task Force was established to bring together state and county emergency management and public health officials to identify at-risk communities whose

residents would most likely seek refuge in general population shelters and would require additional resources, namely pharmaceuticals. The goal of the task force was to connect these pre-identified communities with local retail pharmacies and durable medical equipment distributors to ensure that vulnerable populations could continue to receive needed services and supplies in the event of a disaster. CMRC volunteers serve as a force multiplier for the task force when the state's medical response system is activated.

The task force identified at-risk individuals including those who:

- Receive Medicare/Medicaid benefits;
- Depend upon home healthcare services;
- Depend upon electric medical equipment;
- Are classified as geriatric, according to the CDC (age 55 and above); and,
- Live below the poverty line.

These individuals could be disproportionately impacted by a disaster, more likely to seek refuge in a general population shelter, and may require more than the usual resources to maintain their standard of living while in a shelter. Capital MRC used ArcGIS mapping software to identify higher concentrations of vulnerable populations and locate all retail pharmacies and durable medical equipment distributors. Outcomes of this mapping initiative can be viewed [here](#).

Once communities were identified, the task force partnered with NC Emergency Management to train 40 MRC volunteers across the state to identify the needs of individuals with access and functional needs through Functional Access Support Teams (FAST). The task force also partnered with the American Red Cross to teach CMRC volunteers basic shelter operations and invested in mini-refrigerators to store medications for shelter residents. The refrigerators will be distributed to counties that open general population shelters. Moving forward, the task force will be working to engage with public health agencies and private organizations to assist the identified communities to better prepare for service interruptions.



The CMRC Mobile Pharmacy Trailer's fully functioning and licensed/certified cleanroom is capable of mixing, storing, and dispensing almost all types of medication.



CMRC Volunteers Supporting the State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT)

During Hurricane Florence, 10 CMRC FAST-trained volunteers were deployed to support shelter operations throughout the state. Overall, 15 CMRC volunteers and 30 newly trained volunteers were deployed to 3 special medical support shelters, 2 general population shelters, and 2 disaster hospitals. CMRC and the Pharmaceutical Task Force were able to support disaster medical equipment coordination directly to 5 counties (indirectly impacting 30 counties) by providing the location and contact information of retail pharmacies and durable medical equipment distributors to support shelter residents.

Ultimately, CMRC and the task force were able to work with state public health officials to develop new procedures for how prescription medications (including narcotics) would be filled at general population shelters and special medical support shelters statewide. Moving forward, the unit hopes to continue providing pharmaceutical support by deploying the mobile pharmacy trailer to at-risk communities with few or no pharmacy access. The trailer can also be used to maintain medication stockpiles or support operations at large general population shelters until larger corporate pharmacy trailers arrive.

**Additional Resources:**

- [HHS ASPR Pharmacy Topic Collection](#)
- [Public Health Emergency Preparedness 101 for Pharmacy Professionals](#): A free training program for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and student pharmacists.
- Healthcare Ready Issue Brief: [Pharmacy and Emergency Preparedness: A Landscape Analysis](#)
- Healthcare Ready: [Rx Open Program](#)

**About Capital MRC Unit #1227**

Capital MRC was created in 2007 and currently has 81 volunteers including 57 Medical/Public Health and 24 Non-Medical/Public Health. Its governing body is seated within the CapRAC Disaster Planning Committee (DPC). As the Raleigh area's Level One Trauma Center, WakeMed Health and Hospitals is the administrative agency charged with leading regional emergency preparedness initiatives, including the MRC. The CapRAC State Medical Assistance Team (SMAT-800) has a 100+ members, comprised of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists, case managers, paramedics, EMTs, and other clinical and allied health professionals and support personnel. The Capital MRC is part of CapRAC SMAT 800 and all members train and function together. The Capital MRC is activated through the State Office of Emergency Management (NCEM), in collaboration with the State Emergency Management System (NCEMS). Members of Capital MRC and CapRAC SMAT have experience with several deployments, including a 52-day mission that served in Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina. Capital MRC responds to local events as well as mitigation and awareness efforts to better prepare citizens and businesses to be prepared for disaster.

Thanks to Nicholas Thorpe, Capital MRC Unit Coordinator, for support in developing this article.

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## MRC/NACCHO Connection

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### Stories from the Field

The NACCHO MRC Team always enjoys hearing stories from the field. Whether your unit has recently launched a new community outreach initiative, developed a specialized response team, or recently supported a local exercise, we would love to hear about it!

Share with us and you could be featured in future editions of the MRC InTouch Newsletter. Information about the event and images can be shared with us at, [mrc@naccho.org](mailto:mrc@naccho.org). We look forward to hearing your stories!

### NACCHO NHSS Award Application Open

NACCHO and HHS ASPR are pleased to announce the fourth annual [National Health Security \(NHS\) Award!](#)

This award recognizes local health departments that have demonstrated significant accomplishments in implementing health security-related initiatives within their jurisdictions. NHS Award winners will receive a travel scholarship to be recognized at the 2019 NACCHO Annual in Orlando, Florida.

We want to hear about the projects making a difference at the local level. Local Health Departments are invited to submit applications for consideration in the following areas, which are based on the new ASPR priority areas:

- Priority I: Provide strong leadership
- Priority II: Building regional disaster health response capabilities
- Priority III: Support robust and reliable public health security capacity
- Priority IV: Advance an innovative medical countermeasures enterprise

One winner will be selected from each category, and arrangements will be made for awardees to be present at NACCHO Annual 2019, where they will be recognized for their invaluable contributions and commitment to National Health Security. Winners will also be featured in the NACCHO Preparedness Brief.

**Important Note:** While every section does not require applicants to make the connection between the project/program and national health security, reviewers have been instructed to evaluate entire applications for how completely this connection is made. The most successful submissions will consistently demonstrate strong national health security themes throughout the entire application.

**Applications will be accepted now through April 26, 2019.** LHDs are invited to submit one application per category, but will only be eligible to win one award. To preview the application, [click here](#). To apply, [click here](#).

Please note: Applications must be completed in a single sitting and will not auto-save if you close your browser before submitting your response. We encourage you to document your responses on a word document and have



that document available for copy and pasting into the web version of the application. Only applications submitted through the application website will be accepted.

## MRC TRAIN: Establish Community Partnerships

The more than 3,800 training opportunities available on MRC TRAIN cover a wide breadth of topics. Some are [aligned with the Core Competencies for Disaster Medicine and Public Health](#), while others offer continuing education credit.

Many also support the [Factors for Success](#). Factor for Success 2 focuses on establishing community partnerships.

We reviewed available training on MRC TRAIN to provide a sample of those available on the topic of community partnerships:

1. [Community Partnerships and Perspectives – Intermediate Level](#) (South Central Public Health Partnership)
2. [Community-Based Disaster Coalitions: Sustaining Coalitions - Module 2: Coalition Building and Sustainment](#) (USF PERLC)
3. [Community Partnerships and Perspectives – Advanced Level](#) (South Central Public Health Partnership)
4. [Working with Community Partners \(Basics of Public Health Preparedness, Module 8\)](#) (UNC)

Remember, MRC TRAIN is here to work for you! Contact the MRC TRAIN Support Desk at [mrctsupport@train.org](mailto:mrctsupport@train.org) for additional support.

## Announcements

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### ASPR Releases 2019-2022 National Health Security Strategy

*Every four years, HHS ASPR develops the National Health Security Strategy (NHSS) to establish a strategic approach to enhance the security of the nation's health in times of crisis. The 2019-2022 NHSS provides a vision to strengthen our nation's ability to prevent, detect, assess, prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies, including strategies to improve readiness and adapt operational capabilities to address new and evolving threats. (ASPR, [NHSS Overview](#))*

*The [2019-2022 National Health Security Strategy](#) (NHSS) provides a vision to strengthen our nation's ability to prevent, detect, assess, prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies. It describes strategies to improve readiness and adapt operational capabilities to address new and evolving threats. By coordinating a whole-of-government approach that engages external partners and supports public health authorities and health care stakeholders, we can better safeguard the health and well-being of people across the country. (ASPR, [NHSS Webpage](#))*

For more information, visit [ASPR's NHSS Webpage](#).

### High School MRC Volunteer Receives National Award

Mia Herrera is a senior at Bosque High School (Albuquerque, NM) and co-president of the Bosque School junior MRC, overseen by unit coordinator, Daniel Shaw. Mia was recently honored by a national program, the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

Mia responds to medical and trauma calls as a certified medic with her school's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program, teaches other students how to be emergency medical technicians, coordinates community volunteer opportunities for other MRC members, and raised money for the MRC program by selling a self-published poetry book. Mia had been interested in the MRC program from the time she was in middle school, but an incident her freshman year convinced her she had to get involved. "My mom fell off a chair right in front of me and hit her head on concrete," she explained. "I didn't know how to help my mom before the EMS arrived. After this incident, I never wanted to feel helpless again."

She took a comprehensive first responders course, passed a national exam, obtained a license and joined her school's student-run MRC program. Over the past two years, she has tended many times to fellow students who needed medical attention, doing things like checking vital signs, cleaning cuts, administering asthma medications and testing for concussions. When she became MRC co-president last year, Mia began creating and teaching EMT lesson plans at biweekly meetings attended by approximately 30 students and arranging for fellow MRC members to volunteer at community events such as health care fairs, first-aid courses and roller derby competitions. In addition, Mia has donated to MRC hundreds of dollars earned from the sale of her recently published book of poetry. She had first posted her poems – a different one each day for a whole year – on her Instagram page in

place of her own photos, in hopes of inspiring other young people to change the way they use social media." Read the full news article [here](#).

### **[Bosque School Junior MRC Unit #1310](#)**

The Bosque School MRC was developed based on the school's need for a medical response system for students and faculty, it operates under the supervision of a medical director. The group is recognized by Bosque School with ~30 members, ages 16-18. In addition to providing medical response to students and faculty, the MRC intends to: 1) provide opportunities for members to learn about medical professions; 2) participate in public health outreach and emergency response activities; 3) train its junior members as First Responders and EMT Basics; and, 4) assist the NM Department of Health and the Albuquerque Area MRC in emergency response activities and public health outreach activities. In NM it is possible to become a First Responder at the age of 16 and an EMT Basic at 17. Upon receiving licensure, MRC members will serve as the medical element for our school athletic programs.



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).