

Innovative Missions

Medical Reserve Corps volunteers can assist strained health departments during a pandemic in innovative ways. In South Carolina the activities presented here are examples from the Medical Reserve Corps units in Lowcountry and Pee Dee Regions. The volunteers supported the delivery of 2,303,543 COVID vaccinations through October 15th, 2021, saving countless lives. The availability of volunteers was possible because of the ongoing work to recruit, train and deploy volunteers through the Medical Reserve Corps.

COVID SPECIMEN COURIER TRANSPORT - WEEKEND/HOLIDAY



Early in the pandemic, biological specimens needed to be transported to the State Public Health laboratory in Columbia SC for COVID -19 testing. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers were recruited and trained to provide COVID 19 Weekend/Holiday Specimen Transport Courier Service.

The State Public Health Laboratory created a training module to provide the essential information needed by the volunteers to safely transport "Infectious Substances" following applicable State and Federal regulations. This quickly enhanced the capabilities of public health and provided an opportunity for the volunteers to assist the community in a vital role.

Volunteers were scheduled for weekend and holiday shifts to provide this support for several months as the COVID 19 response continued to evolve. Specimens were picked up at Hospitals, coroners offices, long term care facilities, mobile COVID - 19 testing sites and other locations for transport to the State Public Health laboratory.



Volunteers David Gillins and Charley Francis prepare to transport specimens to the State Public Health Laboratory.

113 Volunteers with the Lowcountry and 58 volunteers with the Pee Dee Region in South Carolina provided 2,879 hours of service during the pandemic response from March 2020 through March 2022 to support the activities listed on these posters.

COVID -19 TESTING SUPPORT

COVID -19 testing was one of the few tools in the public health arsenal early

in the pandemic. Volunteers stepped forward to help with this crucial activity in many ways and in many communities.

In the Lowcountry, the call to action was sent out for PHRC volunteers to assist with administrative duties for a large two-day testing event held at Trident Tech in July 2020. This was in support of MUSC Health, and a host of other agencies and businesses sponsoring the event. Participants received a free COVID test, and a COVID 19 Supply Kit containing PPE, cleaning supplies, educational materials. Volunteers worked two full days in 90 degree heat assisting with registration of clients, who remained in their vehicles. In Pee Dee, multiple volunteers also assisted with testing events in registration, traffic control and logistics support to event tents.



Volunteers Butler Derrick, Brian Rodwell and C of C Student Intern assisting with registration at a COVID-19 testing site.

REGIONAL MEDICAL DIRECTOR SUPPORT

Medical Professional Volunteers provided support to the Regional Medical Directors, who were inundated by a flood of information and tasks as the response stretched from weeks to months. Some of the physicians who volunteered were retired and others were practicing physicians in active practices that were idled due to the impact of the pandemic on the health professionals working in Doctors offices.

Volunteer physicians sat in on conference calls for both external partners and internal staff to help with information sharing to DHEC personnel. External partners were seeking information and guidance for critical decision making for operational strategies for compliance to keep employees and the public safe. Volunteer physicians also supported the needs of COVID testing teams operating on weekends.

Some of the other health professionals available to help included advance practice registered nurses (APRN's), attorney at law subject matter experts for COVID, and mental health subject matter experts to support Staff and PHRC volunteers.



Pee Dee Region
South Carolina



Lowcountry Region
South Carolina



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Medical Reserve Corps

Medical Reserve Corps volunteers can assist with vital support missions, such as building vaccine ancillary kits, supporting Non Congregate Care Sheltering and surveying sites for use as vaccination or testing sites. Any of these activities can be carried out using remote tools, such as web based platforms, online training, telephone etc., allowing for the inclusion of volunteers, such as homebound individuals or those at high risk for exposure to COVID-19.

NON CONGREGATE CARE SHELTERING (NCS)

Homeless individuals, first responders and stranded travelers who were exposed to COVID-19 or tested positive needed to have a place to stay while recovering, such as a hotel room. This required a daily check in to monitor their health. This remote assignment was a chance to engage volunteers unable to provide onsite assistance with other types of activities, and freed up staff to focus on other activities. It also resulted in the development of a hand-book and monitoring form by volunteers in Pee Dee to guide the activities of the volunteers. (Special thanks to volunteer Joyce Cady).



FACILITY SURVEYS FOR VACCINE ADMINISTRATION OR TESTING

The need for multiple community sites serving rural communities mushroomed as the vaccine became available in the Spring of 2021. This led to a need to identify additional sites across a broad geo-graphical area. A condensed version of the facility survey form for vaccine/testing sites was created, and a pool of volunteers was recruited, trained and deployed to conduct surveys. The training was provided via an online platform, and this activity provided an opportunity for engagement of volunteers who were unable to work in the crowded vaccine sites.



VACCINE ANCILLARY KIT ASSEMBLY AND OPERATION SNOWBALL

As the pandemic neared the Holidays of 2020, the Nation awaited the release of a vaccine. In anticipation of having that powerful weapon, public health was preparing for mass vaccination campaigns. Volunteers stepped up to the plate to assemble thousands of vaccine kits across the Lowcountry and Pee Dee Regions of South Carolina.

A warehouse in the Pee Dee and the North Charleston Coliseum in Lowcountry served to stage an assembly operation for the vaccine ancillary kits. The State Public Health Logistics warehouse sent box trucks of supplies out to these sites and volunteers worked tirelessly to assemble the kits.

This was also an opportunity to engage community partners and willing volunteers who had been unable to help before. Operation Snowball was launched to transfer cotton-balls from large bags to smaller packets of 100 each. This project enabled many homebound volunteers to participate. Volunteers from Joint Base Charleston Fire Department assisted in the warehouse operations in The Lowcountry, and volunteers with Palmetto Health Tuomey assisted in the Pee Dee.



In the Lowcountry, the MRC HOSA partnership provided 23 students to volunteer on weekends to build ancillary kits during the COVID 19 Health Response Event. They provided support for Operation Snowball during the week at the school and came on Saturday to build kits.



Volunteer George Mudd pictured here with a pallet of vaccine kits.