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 2,483,561 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, hospital nurses needed help in transporting 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 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 greatly enhanced the operation of public health and provided an opportunity for the volunteers to assist the community in a visible role.

Volunteers were scheduled for weekend and holiday shifts to provide the support for several months at the COVID-19 response continued to evolve. Experiences were shared at meetings, centers, offices, long-term care facilities, mobile COVID-19 testing sites and other locations for transport to the State Public Health Laboratory.

COVID -19 TESTING SUPPORT

COVID-19 testing is one of the key tools in the public health armamentarium. In the pandemic, volunteers stepped forward to help with this crucial activity in many ways and in many communities. In the Lowcountry, the first week was very busy for the RNC volunteers to assist with administrative duties for a large-scale testing event held at Trident Tech in July 2020. This was in support of MUSC Health, and a host of other agencies and businesses spanning the event. Participants received a COVID test and a COVID-19 antibody test containing IgG, IgM, and IgG antibodies against SARS-CoV-2. Volunteers worked 24 hours in 36 degree heat working with registration of clients, who remained in their vehicles. A pop-up multiple volunteer also assisted with testing events in cooperation, traffic control and logistics support.

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 expanded from weeks to months. Some of the physicians were needed on-site and others were providing telemedicine to a wider area than normal due to the impact of the pandemic on the healthcare providers working in doctors' offices.

Volunteer physicians were asked to serve on call for several months, starting on March 2020 through March 2021 to support the activities based in those offices.

Volunteer physicians were asked to provide advice to the state health laboratory.

Some of the other health professionals available to help included advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs), attorneys at law, area subject matter experts to support staff and RNC volunteers.

For more information contact:
Stefanie Roy - rroy@dhss.sc.gov - 843-513-4350
Jenny Layton - jlayton@dhss.sc.gov - 843-331-7575

Medical Reserve Corps

Medical Reserve Corps volunteers assist with vital support missions, such as building vaccine ancillary kits, supporting non-congregate care sheltering and contact tracing teams for vaccine administration or testing sites, a variety of these activities can be carried out using remote tools, such as web-based platforms, online training, telephoning, etc., allowing for the inclusion of volunteers, such as homebound individuals at high risk for exposure to COVID-19.

NON CONGREGATE CARE SHELTERING (NCS)

Some individuals, first responders and stranded travelers who are exposed to COVID-19 or tested positive needed to have a place to stay while awaiting test results, such as a hotel room. This required a daily check-in to monitor their health. This assignment was a chance to engage volunteers who were able to provide assistance to shelter individuals with similar needs and to assist staff in their daily activities. It also resulted in the development of a handbook and training modules for volunteers in low numbers to guide the activities of the volunteers. (Special thanks to RT técnico, Laura Dabbup.)

VACCINE ANCILLARY KIT ASSEMBLY AND OPERATION SNOWBALL

As the pandemic wound down, the TeamNakorne staff acted to provide vaccines for our citizens. In anticipation of having large quantities of vaccines, public health was looking for ways to increase the number of vaccines available for the community and to increase accessibility for everyone. In support of these initiatives, a warehouse in the Pee Dee and the North Carolina area was used to assemble vaccine distribution kits for the vaccine delivery. The warehouse footprint expanded to a much larger area to accommodate an additional 500,000 vaccines. Volunteers from across the state volunteered to assemble them and participate in the distribution process. The warehouse is now at capacity and volunteers are supporting vaccine delivery across the state.

For more information contact:
Stefanie Roy - rroy@dhss.sc.gov - 843-513-4350
Jenny Layton - jlayton@dhss.sc.gov - 843-331-7575

VACCINE ADMINISTRATION OR TESTING

The need for mass community vaccine administration is a major challenge for the state, especially in areas with limited access to essential resources. The state public health laboratory was asked to provide on-site volunteers at vaccination sites. Volunteers were asked to fill in for small pockets of staff who were unable to staff a site due to COVID-19. The state public health laboratory was asked to provide on-site volunteers at vaccination sites. Volunteers were asked to fill in for small pockets of staff who were unable to staff a site due to COVID-19.

FACILITY SURVEYS FOR VACCINE ADMINISTRATION OR TESTING

The need for mass community vaccine administration is a major challenge for the state, especially in areas with limited access to essential resources. The state public health laboratory was asked to provide on-site volunteers at vaccination sites. Volunteers were asked to fill in for small pockets of staff who were unable to staff a site due to COVID-19.

In the pandemic, volunteers were asked to provide advice to the state health laboratory.

For more information contact:
Stefanie Roy - rroy@dhss.sc.gov - 843-513-4350
Jenny Layton - jlayton@dhss.sc.gov - 843-331-7575

Volunteer travel must be paid by a stipend of $10 per mile.