

Policy & Procedures



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Introduction

History of MRC

During the events of September 11, 2001, it became clear that there was no method for coordinating the services of thousands of well-meaning volunteers, who showed up at disaster scenes wanting to help. There was no mechanism for checking credentials or assigning volunteers where they could do the most good and no pre-planning was done to ensure their safety. Nor had these volunteers been trained in methods that would allow them to work effectively as a team, interacting with other agencies at the scene. In fact, the presence of unidentified care providers created numerous problems and potentially put trained rescuers at risk.

Over time, an umbrella organization called Citizen Corps was created to engage potential volunteers in disaster response, as well as to maintain public safety and preparedness. Citizen Corps includes CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams), Fire Services, an expanded Neighborhood Watch, VIPS (Volunteers in Police Service), and the Medical Reserve Corps. (See www.CitizenCorps.gov for details about Citizen Corps.) The first grants to launch the Medical Reserve Corps were issued in July 2002. (See www.MedicalReserveCorps.gov for information about the national program.)

The New Orleans Health Department reinstated the New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps in April 2013 to develop a cadre of qualified medical, non-medical and public health volunteers that can assist the health department during a public health crisis and natural disasters.

Mission

The mission of the NOMRC is to be a diverse group of committed volunteers with skills and expertise to supplement public health emergency preparedness and response efforts in New Orleans.

Goals

The goals of the NOMRC are to:

1. Develop and maintain a group of well-trained and credentialed volunteers.
2. Promote public health preparedness amongst at-risk populations.
3. Respond appropriately, effectively, and efficiently to emergencies when the NOMRC is activated.
4. Local, state and federal government and public health agencies will recognize and trust the NOMRC.

Service Area

The NOMRC is directed out of the New Orleans Health Department and therefore will cover only their jurisdictional area: the city of New Orleans/Orleans Parish. As the program grows there may be an opportunity for the NOMRC to deploy to other assist other MRC programs.

Program Activities

1. Member Recruitment

Members will be responsible for planning and carrying out recruitment to grow and enhance the NOMRC. Recruitment will focus on medical personal and will be an on-going task of the members with a large push for volunteers in early spring to prepare for hurricane season.

2. Member Development

In order for members to be activated in the NOMRC, they must complete orientation and required FEMA trainings. Orientation will occur monthly and other trainings will be offered quarterly throughout the year. All members will be required to attend the pre-hurricane season meeting.

3. Member Activities

Members will participate in regular activities throughout the year, such as Special Needs Registry outreach to at-risk populations. NOMRC will be activated during emergencies to assist with shelters, call centers and PODs. NOMRC may also be called upon to assist with emergency exercises and conducting needs assessments. As the NOMRC grows, these activities may expand to include other community health initiatives.

Program Evaluation

The NOMRC will be evaluated in order to gather and provide information that can improve operations and effectiveness. Stakeholders will be engaged in the ongoing evaluation process by means of surveying and general meetings. Activities such as our outreach efforts will be evaluated as well in order to make sure the program is providing the most effective outreach to the communities with the greatest need. Reports will be written following the completion of each activity in order to document the reason for deployment, date and length of time for the deployment, what was accomplished on each deployment as well as the activities that should be continued for future deployments and what should be changed. More detailed information can be found in the NOMRC Strategic Plan.

Program Sustainability

The NOMRC will be sustained through existing and new-found partnerships and by seeking new funding opportunities consistent with the NOMRC mission, as well as other in-kind support. The NOMRC members will be responsible for maintaining sufficient volunteers for the NOMRC to function during times of emergencies.

Recruitment

Recruitment Policy

- Anyone with a desire to volunteer is invited to apply for membership in the Medical Reserve Corps. While the MRC focuses on health care and public health operations, health care experience is not required nor does it serve as a prerequisite for volunteering with the unit. Volunteers with no health experience can still assist with critical support functions such as outreach, shelter support, communications, logistics, etc. Volunteers will have the

opportunity to perform a variety of tasks and will be matched based on their experience and credentials. They will also be asked about their interest and willingness to perform specific tasks and functions.

- Prior to becoming a member, each applicant will undergo a screening process, which will include a background check as well as the verification of any credentials or licenses held.
- The Medical Reserve Corps reserves the right to refuse membership based upon background check failure, credentialing and licensure issues of concern and those with a non-disclosed criminal history.

General Recruitment Methods

- Information and application materials for the NOMRC will be posted on the New Orleans Health Department website.
- New Orleans Health Department leadership will provide information about service opportunities in the NOMRC when presenting information to community groups.
- Information will also be dispersed to local businesses and university health programs on how to get involved with NOMRC.

Targeted Recruitment

While anyone is encouraged to apply to the NOMRC, specific groups will be targeted for recruitment over time.

- Licensed Healthcare Workers—doctors, nurses, technicians, etc. to help generate interest within the medical community. As the team grows, we will need to be sure to differentiate between the medical professionals already assigned disaster positions with their hospitals, EMS, etc.
- School Nurses—School services may be interrupted during an emergency or disaster. School nurses may therefore be able to serve in a volunteer capacity.
- Pharmacy Professionals—Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants may be needed to assist with mass dispensing operations.
- Medical Subspecialists—Professionals who provide subspecialty care such as dermatologists, ophthalmologists, and gastroenterologists may be available to assist with primary care services in a disaster or emergency.
- Dental Professionals—Dentists, dental hygienists, and dental assistants may be available to assist with specific assessments and tasks in a disaster or emergency.
- Veterinary Professionals—Veterinarians may assist with specific assessments and tasks in a disaster or emergency, and will provide critical expertise in the event of a zoonotic disease emergency.
- Mental Health Professionals—Mental health professionals will be needed to provide disaster mental health services and to assist with communications by public health and the health care delivery system.
- Clergy Members—Clergy members may provide disaster mental health services.

- Medical Education Students—students enrolled in nursing, medical, EMS and community health programs.
- Community Health Workers—professionals who understand the needs of the community, especially here in our border region.

Application and Selection

All candidates for the NOMRC membership will be required to:

1. Complete the NOMRC Volunteer Application Form.
2. Register with LAVA at <https://www.lava.dhh.louisiana.gov/>. This organization will confirm license/credentials.
3. Pass a criminal background check.
4. Attend Orientation. (Held at least once a month)
5. Complete online FEMA courses. (ICS 100, ICS 700)

All applicants that complete the above steps, have approved background checks, and approved credentials, if applicable, will be accepted members of the NOMRC.

Membership & Training

The New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps volunteers may include medical and public health professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, and epidemiologists. Many community support members—interpreters, chaplains, office workers, legal advisors, and others—can fill key support positions. In addition, non-medical staff is needed in various roles such as, greeters, line staff, etc, in order to keep activities running smoothly. Individuals in these capacities need not have any special licensures.

The NOMRC reserves the right to refuse membership based upon background check failure, credentialing and licensure issues of concern and those with a non-disclosed criminal history.

Orientation

Once applicants have completed the steps outlined in the Application and Selection Section they are ready to attend NOMRC Orientation. Orientation will be two hour session during non-business hours lead by the NOMRC Coordinator. The goal of orientation is to give an overview of the MRC and inform members of the MRC Core Competencies listed below.

NOMRC Orientation	
Included Trainings	Required Paperwork
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to MRC • Role of NOMRC • Overview of Policy and Procedures • HIPPA • Family Disaster Plans • Basics of ICS & NIMS • Responder Safety & PPE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIPPA & Confidentiality Agreement • Receipt of Policy & Procedures • Photo Consent Form • VIGOR Form • Emergency Contact Form

MRC Core Competencies

The NOMRC will follow the national MRC Core Competencies, adopted from Competencies for Disaster Medicine and Public Health.

- 1.0 Demonstrate personal and family preparedness for disasters and public health emergencies
- 2.0 Demonstrate knowledge of one's expected role(s) in organizational and community response plans activated during a disaster or public health emergency
- 3.0 Demonstrate situational awareness of actual/potential health hazards before, during, and after a disaster or public health emergency
- 4.0 Communicate effectively with others in a disaster or public health emergency
- 5.0 Demonstrate knowledge of personal safety measures that can be implemented in a disaster or public health emergency
- 6.0 Demonstrate knowledge of surge capacity assets, consistent with one's role in organizational, agency, and/or community response plans
- 7.0 Demonstrate knowledge of principles and practices for the clinical management of all ages and populations affected by disasters and public health emergencies, in accordance with professional scope of practice
- 8.0 Demonstrate knowledge of public health principles and practices for the management of all ages and populations affected by disasters and public health emergencies
- 9.0 Demonstrate knowledge of ethical principles to protect the health and safety of all ages, populations, and communities affected by a disaster or public health emergency
- 10.0 Demonstrate knowledge of legal principles to protect the health and safety of all ages, populations, and communities affected by a disaster or public health emergency
- 11.0 Demonstrate knowledge of short- and long-term considerations for recovery of all ages, populations, and communities affected by a disaster or public health emergency

Required Forms

- **HIPAA & Confidentiality Agreement:** A signed statement of agreement to confidentiality by the team member is required. There will be times when information will be of a sensitive nature and should not be disclosed or discussed outside of approved staff members or area. All volunteers will have a basic informational lecture on HIPAA during their orientation.
- **Receipt of Policy & Procedures:** This form needs to be signed to ensure that all members have received and reviewed the NOMRC Policy & Procedures. All members will be accountable for following the guidelines in the Policy & Procedures.

- **Photo Consent:** Photo consent forms must be signed by the team member for photos and videos. We will take photos for publication, documentation and for media presentation. Your signed photo consent allows us to publish them on the newsletter, local media and at the national level. We agree to only use these photos in good taste and not to embarrass any team member. A required photo is necessary for your identification card.
- **VIGOR Form:** This is for all city volunteers so that members will be covered by city insurance if members are injured participating in NOMRC activities.
- **Emergency Contact Form:** NOMRC requires an emergency contact for each member in case of an accident during NOMRC activities.
- **Background Check Application:** NOMRC requires a background check for all volunteers.

Member Equipment

- **ID badges:** Each member will be given an ID Badge that must be worn at all NOMRC activities
- **Uniforms:** One NOMRC shirt will be provided to members each year and it is to be worn with Jeans or Khakis to all NOMRC activities. Shorts or skirts may be worn if they are no higher than 1 inch above the knee. If members would like more than one shirt they can purchase additional shirts.

Safety

Safety is the number one concern for all team members. All Team members shall attend mandatory training in safety applications as appropriate to their position assignment and not to exceed their licensure and discipline. Failure to adhere to safety guidelines and/or endangering another team member or civilian shall be grounds for dismissal from the New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps.

If a safety violation occurs during any time while on assignment or activation, the team member(s) involved shall have their membership suspended for a period of time that befits the violation or expulsion from the Medical Reserve Corps unit (i.e. mistreatment or working outside of training level). All volunteers will receive safety training that is appropriate to their function in the New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps unit.

Dual Membership

The New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps does not prohibit members from belonging to more than one volunteer organization. Each member will have to decide which organization will take priority in the event of an emergency. It is important to document your other affiliations on the Volunteer Application. When training, please discuss with you team leader if you will be responding to an emergency as an NOMRC volunteer.

Training

Trainings are an essential part of the NOMRC and required for members. In order to become a member, applicants must complete Orientation, FEMA 100 & 700, HIPPA, and General Safety. Other common trainings that are offered are Psychological First Aid, CPR & First Aid, CERT,

Shelter Management, Volunteer Management, Emergency Triage, etc. Surveys will be administered at the end of all in-person trainings to ensure effective and useful trainings.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was established in 2014 to provide guidance and leadership to the NOMRC. Committee members work to merge the interests of NOMRC volunteers with the needs of the community. This group is responsible for:

1. Increasing membership through the development and implementation of recruitment strategies
2. Assessing the interests and needs of NOMRC members to develop a yearly training schedule
3. Ensuring all activities align with the NOMRC vision and mission
4. Maintaining the NOMRC policies and procedures
5. Ensuring NOMRC yearly goals are achieved

The Steering Committee meets quarterly to review past activities, membership recruitment and retention, trainings, budgeting, and plans for future initiatives. Any member is able to join the steering committee but must commit for a one year term on the committee.

General Policies

Principles of Operation

The NOMRC will operate according to the following principles.

- We treat all people, volunteers, clients, and co-workers with respect and dignity in all situations.
- We honor the fact that volunteers are donating their time and expertise, for the overall health and well being of their communities, as well as training to be of service in emergencies.
- We will communicate clearly and consistently with MRC volunteers.
- Input from members is encouraged and valued.
- No member will be asked to perform beyond the scope of his or her licensure, credentials, training, or comfort level.
- No member will knowingly be placed at risk, during training or deployment.
- Members have the option to refuse assignments for any reason.
- Response to disasters outside of their community and region are at the member's discretion, whenever they are invited to participate by the NOMRC staff.
- No member will self-deploy. Rather, involvement in any event that represents the NOMRC is strictly upon agreement with an authorized staff member.
- The NOMRC will consistently seek inclusion of New Orleans residents across all demographics, thereby truly representing all of the (adult) citizens in the region

Volunteer Code of Conduct

The NOMRC is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its volunteers. When acting on behalf of the NOMRC, volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

The following are examples of conduct unbecoming of an NOMRC volunteer and are not intended to be all inclusive. Other actions not listed herein but deemed immoral, indecent, obscene or discrediting to the NOMRC program could result in dismissal. Any of the following events should be reported directly to the NOMRC Coordinator.

- Sexual harassment
- Physical or verbal aggression
- The use or possession of illegal substances
- The use of alcohol during working hours
- Falsification or misrepresentation of credentials
- Discourteous or disrespectful language including profanity
- Violation of safety rules
- Performance of unsafe work practices
- Threatening, intimidating or coercing of others
- Divulging confidential information
- Misuse, damage or destruction of property

The NOMRC also has a strict no smoking policy. Members will not be allowed to smoke during working hours, including breaks.

Integrity and Privacy of Member Data

Policies are in place to ensure the integrity and privacy of member data.

Storage: Member data will be kept in LAVA. Hard copy printouts may be created as needed, for easier record-keeping in discussions and invitations to activities.

Security: All member records will be treated as confidential, and protected from unauthorized use.

Sharing: Health directors and representatives of the NOMRC can be given the names and specialties of members in their community upon request, with contact information as needed, if events of interest to a specific sub-group have been authorized by the directors.

Files: MRC Files are maintained in a locked location, to include hard copies of all relevant member data. These records include training courses, member participation in events, “face sheets” that associate names and basic data with photos, and miscellaneous notes and correspondence (awards, special capabilities, etc). The files serve these purposes:

- Precaution in case of power failures, so data is always available
- Thorough documentation about the unit and its members
- Rapid access to information in case of a sudden need for deployment

Liability

NOMRC members are covered by VIGOR if injured while acting in an official NOMRC capacity. NOMRC members are also covered by state law in the event that someone else is injured while in the care of an NOMRC member during an emergency. In both events, if a NOMRC member is working outside of their capacity or performs an intentional wrongful act/ gross negligence the above does not apply. All injuries or accidents should be reported to the NOMRC Coordinator.

Communications with Members

Current and planned methods of communication are as follows. These methods will vary depending on the situation (ongoing interactions versus a call-out). The unit will continue to examine its methods of contacting its volunteers, and is open to creative ideas – especially as our numbers continue to grow.

- **Direct phone calls.**
- **Facebook.** Members are encouraged to like our Facebook Page ‘New Orleans Medical Reserve Corps’.
- **NOLA Ready Alerts.** NOLA Ready will send out alerts via email, text and calls in the event there is an emergency.
- **E-mail.** The use of individual messages, and through a ListServ, has proven to be a very efficient method of reaching members who have ongoing access to PCs.
- **Web site.** Members are strongly encouraged to check the web site on a regular basis. ListServ reminders can notify members of new postings.
- **Printed mail.**
- **Two-way radio.** These items will allow members to communicate with each other during a deployment, especially when cell phone contact is jeopardized.
- **Meetings and Training Sessions.** Every time members congregate, there is an opportunity to strengthen communications. Any scheduled session can include kickoff announcements, follow-up socializing, and informal sharing of ideas.

Communications with the Press and Outside Agencies

During a disaster, only the Public Information Officer – as specified through Incident Command – is authorized to speak with the media. Members of the NOMRC are instructed to refer the press to their supervisor (who would reference the PIO), rather than providing any opinions or information for the public.

During non-disasters times, the NOMRC Information Officer will be responsible for all communications with the media.

Use & Activation of NOMRC

Activation of NOMRC in Emergencies

In the case of a public health emergency, the NOMRC Coordinator is the contact person. The NOMRC Coordinator will:

1. Obtain as much information as possible regarding:
 - a. Type of emergency
 - b. Staging area
 - c. Number and type of volunteers needed

2. Contact members for deployment. Tier 3 members in leadership roles may be assigned to assist in contacting members.

Note: The NOMRC has the right to decline mobilization due to member availability. In the event of a public health emergency, NOMRC volunteers should be available to **respond within two (2) hours** of receiving the call, if necessary. Volunteers will follow these procedures:

- Volunteers will report to the designated reporting area specified by the recall roster. They should be appropriately attired to work at the site (see Uniforms) and carrying a photo ID (your NOMRC ID badge or a driver's license) and medical license, if applicable.
- At the reporting area, volunteers will log in and will be assigned a position to work.
- Volunteers will be given just-in-time training and report to their assigned group supervisor. The supervisor will give the volunteer further instructions.
- Before leaving the site, volunteers will brief their replacement on all pertinent information needed to perform the job and continue smooth operations.
- At the end of the shift, the volunteer will report back to the check-in area to log out and turn in any borrowed equipment.

Emergency Volunteer Positions

Level	Licensed Medical Volunteers	Non-Licensed Medical Volunteers	Non-Medical Volunteers
Level Description	Includes professionally licensed or certified volunteers. Volunteers with a current medical license can give vaccinations, help prepare vaccinations, prepare and hand out medication, provide medical screening, etc. Licensed mental health professionals can provide counseling, mental health consultation, or help with distressed or traumatized people.	Includes volunteers with medical skills and experience who may not be currently licensed. These volunteers can be greeters to provide orientation and walk patients through paperwork, answer patient questions, provide patient assistance at the registration area, and facilitate the education sessions on the site. Volunteers with translation/interpretation skills can float to different areas to provide	Includes volunteers with non-medical and non-mental health skills who can provide a variety of functions including clinic flow assistance to ensure an orderly flow of people, forms collection and data entry, logistics such as computer support, supply stocking, etc.

		patient translation.	
Positions Include:	<i>Vaccinator, Vaccinator Helper, Medicine Dispenser, Medicine Preparer, Medical Screener, Mental Health Consultant, Triage</i>	<i>Greeter, Educator, Interpretation, Medicine Dispenser, Medicine Preparer, Registration</i>	<i>Clinic Flow, Clinic Manager, Data Entry, Forms Collection, Public Information, Supply Manager</i>

Position Descriptions

Clinic Flow - Personnel will assist patients with the clinic process and ensure that they are moving through the stations in the correct order.

Clinic Manager – A key person who will manage every aspect of the site. This is a point person for the site that will provide coordination for site needs and requests.

Mental Health Consultant– Licensed mental health volunteers will provide mental health support for distressed and traumatized people.

Data Entry - Staff will enter data specific to the vaccination or medicine distribution event. The data will be entered directly into an access database. It is expected that it will take 5 to 10 minutes to enter the necessary data for each patient.

Educators – Staff will monitor a brief education session (i.e. via video) on the vaccination or medicine distribution procedure and assist patients with any questions.

Forms Collection - Staff will collect the forms from recipients before departure and verify that the forms are signed by the vaccination or pharmaceutical distribution team, and have the lot numbers entered on the appropriate documents.

Greeters - Orientation and paperwork. Volunteers will greet and conduct initial orientation to patients upon their arrival. They will ensure that personnel are on the access list for the clinic.

Interpretation – Volunteer staff will be available to assist non-English speaking patient through the process as needed.

Medical Screeners - Licensed medical professionals will go over the patient history forms with the patient. They will contact the physician on-call with any questions about contraindications or if the patient wishes to speak to a physician. The nurses will go over common reactions to the vaccine or medication and answer any remaining questions that the patient may have.

Medicine Dispensers – Staff will fill and distribute emergency pharmaceutical prescriptions, record lot numbers and patient information on paperwork, and ensure that patients who receive medicine are identified (i.e. via hand stamp)

Medicine Preparer – Staff will assist with sorting the emergency pharmaceutical stock and preparing the medicine for distribution, assist with recording accurate lot numbers and patient information, etc.

Public Information – Staff person with experience in working with the media, to act as point of contact for public information and to communicate with the designated emergency PIO team.

Registration - Registration staff will distribute informational material and clinic documents, explain how to complete the documents, and answer questions. They will check the forms for completeness and accuracy prior to the patient moving to the screening station.

Supply Manager – Volunteer to track, restock, and order supplies.

Triage - Licensed volunteers to help screen clients before they enter the clinic to direct sick or exposed clients to appropriate care.

Vaccinators - These positions will be staffed by vaccinated health department nurses, and/or licensed volunteers. They will

be trained in administering the vaccine.

Vaccinator Helpers –Licensed volunteers to help prepare the vaccination area for the vaccinators, and assist with patients.

- A shift schedule for volunteers and workers will be created based on the scale of the emergency, the number of workers available, and the need. The Coordinator will communicate with volunteers about the schedule and any needs the volunteers may have.

Recommendation Preparation for Deployment

Before each deployment, it is recommended that members prepare a kit of supplies that may be needed. Below is a list of supplies that may be helpful:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunscreen• Hat• Jacket• Notepad and pencil• Sunglasses• Chapstick	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cell phone• Comfortable shoes—appropriate for the season• Photon Micro Light or flash light• Extra batteries for flashlight• Snacks, such as granola bars
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It is recommended that members keep their immunizations up to date. Immunizations specifically recommended are tetanus, influenza and hepatitis B.

Deactivation of NOMRC

At the end of an emergency all members must record their hours worked and role they served during those hours on the Deployment/Activity Time Log. Surveys will also be administered to evaluate the deployment.

Non-Emergency Activation Procedures

If the NOMRC is requested for non-emergency public health outreach activities, the NOMRC members must be notified thirty days prior to the event. The NOMRC Coordinator will send an email to volunteers requesting 1) a volunteer to organize the NOMRC participation in the event, and 2) volunteers for the event. If no volunteers wish to serve as event organizer, the Coordinator will decide if the NOMRC will still participate.

For non-emergency NOMRC activities volunteers will follow these procedures:

- Volunteers will report to the designated reporting area specified by the NOMRC Coordinator or volunteer in charge of the event. They should be appropriately attired to work at the site (see Uniforms) and carrying a photo ID (your MRC ID badge or a driver's license) and medical license, if applicable.
- At the reporting area, volunteers will log in and will be assigned a position to work.

- Before leaving the site, volunteers will brief their replacement on all pertinent information needed to perform the job and continue smooth operations.
- At the end of the shift, the volunteer will report back to the check-in area to log out and record their hours on the Deployment/Activity Time Log.
- Surveys will also be administered to evaluate the deployment.

Use of NOMRC

At this time the NOMRC will only respond to emergencies and emergency preparedness activities activated by the City of New Orleans. The Health Department will notify the NOMRC Coordinator of the need for activation. Any other requests for use of the NOMRC should be directed to the Coordinator.