Student Guide to Youth Engagement in the Medical Reserve Corps

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Introduction to the MRC

What is Public Health?

Public health is an exciting and growing field of study that is increasing in importance every day. Public health advocates for health through efforts aligned to prevent disease, increase longevity and improve population health. The field tackles numerous health issues, such as improving access to health care, controlling infectious disease, and reducing environmental hazards, violence, substance abuse, and injury.

Public health professionals come from wide variety educational backgrounds, and are leaders who meet the many exciting—and often complex—challenges in protecting the public's health both today and in the future.

What is the MRC?

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a national network of local volunteers who strengthen public health, reduce vulnerability and disaster risk, build resiliency and adaptive capacity, and improve community preparedness, response and recovery capabilities.

The MRC is made up of a variety of medical and public health professionals as well as other volunteers. Some of the many disciplines represented in the MRC units include:

- Physicians
- Physicians Assistants
- Nurse Practitioners
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Dentists
- Veterinarians
- Behavioral Health
- Respiratory Therapists
- Public Health
- Other Disciplines
- Non-Public Health/Non-Medical Volunteers

For more information and/or to find a local MRC near you, visit https://www.aspr.gov/readiness-response/response-operations/join-train-respond/mrc

Why the MRC is Needed?

In times of crisis – be it a hurricane, a flood, a disease outbreak, or even man-made disaster – medical and public health professionals often want to rush in, eager to volunteer in support of emergency relief activities. The Medical Reserve Corps provides an organized approach to identify these volunteers, provide training and align everyone's efforts to provide the greatest impact.

MRC units throughout all fifty states in the U.S. support local public health initiatives, as well as prepare for and respond to disaster and emergency situations when disaster strikes their community. From conducting annual flu clinics, to running first aid booths at county fairs, to deploying in hurricane response situations, MRC volunteers are dedicated to strengthening the health of their communities. In doing so, they make their cities and towns more resilient to any crisis. The healthier a community is before a disaster, the better able they are to bounce back.

Why You Should Engage with the Local MRC?

Young people make important contributions to communities in many ways, and an increasing number of youth want to participate in public health initiatives and activities. Your participation not only improves the health and preparedness of the communities, but also helps you develop leadership, service and other skills. Participating in your local MRC unit is a great way to engage and expose yourself to public health as well as a great way to learn and serve your community.

Even as a student, **you** can have a large impact on others' health and lives. Begin making a difference today by engaging with your local MRC unit.

Benefits of Becoming Involved with the MRC

- Introduction to adults: mentorship and shadowing opportunities with community and public health leaders
- Introduction to public health
- Better academic achievement
- Résumé building
- Networking with other youth and professionals
- "Real-world" experience
- New perspectives
- Sense of purpose

Testimonial from a Competitive Event Team

Having the opportunity to compete in the Medical Reserve Corps Partnership event this year was an amazing experience for our team. Going into this project, we wanted to learn more about the world of public health, but partnering with the local MRC unit unlocked opportunities we never thought were possible.

Earning first place at ILC was a huge honor, but the leadership skills, connections, and a passion for better public health that we strengthened this year with stay with us forever.

-Riddhi Bombe, Jahnavi Burugupalli, Dedeepya Kutha, Aayushi Mohanty, Nikitha Nimmagadda, HOSA members at Middleton Senior High School, FL

There are three different ways that you can engage with a local MRC unit, including joining the MRC, partnering with the MRC, and creating a Junior MRC unit. Below is a general overview of how to implement each option, though keep in mind that the experience of each organization will be different.

The most important steps to be successful are to make sure that you read through this guide, provide a copy of the Advisor Youth Engagement Guide to your student advisor, and be persistent. Tips and examples of how to contact MRC unit leaders are located in Appendices A, B and C.

How to Engage with the Local MRC

Join

- The most inclusive way to engage with your local MRC unit is to **join** as a member. This allows you to be fully involved in the MRC and function alongside adult members
- You are directly involved with the mission of the unit and can support or attend any appropriate MRC activities
- Note: some MRC units are not allowed to accept members who are under 18 years of age

Partner

- Another way (or something that can be done in addition to joining the local MRC) is to **partner** with your local MRC unit. This allows anyone in your organization who is unable to join the MRC unit to still participate in certain MRC activities

Create

- Another option is to **create** a new Junior MRC unit
- A Junior MRC unit is a MRC unit consisting of youth that goes through the standard MRC application process
- As a student, you can support the creation of a Junior MRC unit by educating your advisor about the MRC and the requirements--consider giving your advisor a copy of the "Student Advisor Guide to Youth Engagement in the MRC"

What Can Youth and the MRC Do Together?

There are a variety of activities that youth can be involved with in the MRC. Below are a few examples of such activities. For more ideas, see the Youth Engagement Toolkit, Section 3: Activity Bank.

Participate in MRC Disaster Drill

Members can act as injured patients in full scale exercises and drills. Not only will they get the opportunity to learn about preparedness and emergencies, but they will also gain an understanding of the issues that disaster survivors and victims' face. Participating in a local MRC Disaster Drill will improve their ability to perform under pressure and promote safety in communities across the country.

Volunteer at a Local MRC Flu Shot Clinic

Students could participate at a local MRC flu shot clinic by educating patients about hand washing and disease prevention as they wait for their vaccinations and shots. This can improve the health literacy of the patients.

Lock Down Video

Write, record and edit an informative video that outlines what a school should do in case of a lockdown. This will improve public health preparedness and educate members on how to act under pressure.

Elementary School Visit

Visit the local elementary school to teach younger children about a variety of public health topics, such as healthy eating and exercise, avoiding tobacco use, safety, hygiene, and proper hand washing. This will promote good health and wellness in the younger generations.

Connect on Social Media

Young members could create a Facebook, Twitter (X), and/or Instagram for the MRC unit. This will promote interest in and raise understanding of the MRC, and could possibly assist with recruitment. Please note all social media posts must be approved by the MRC unit.

How to Further Existing MRC Relationships

In order to have a successful and sustainable partnership, strive to participate regularly in community events with your local MRC. Take initiative within the unit by volunteering to take a leadership role in larger projects! You can also encourage other youth organizations to partner with the MRC unit as well! See Appendix C for a sample email suggesting the partnership to another youth organization.

Another way to specifically further the MRC- HOSA relationship is to participate in the MRC Partnership competitive event (guidelines of which can be found at www.hosa.org/node/117), which allows HOSA members to develop a relationship with their local MRC unit. All HOSA chapter activities planned and implemented for this event MUST be done in partnership with the Medical Reserve Corps. If there is no local unit, consider creating a Junior MRC unit.

There are also Public Health, CERT skills, and CPR/First Aid competitive events, which relate to the overarching mission of improving community health and preparedness. The MRC Volunteer Recognition Award also exists to recognize outstanding youth volunteers for their service in supporting the mission of the MRC, HOSA, and Office of the Surgeon General. These are great ways for students who work with the MRC to be recognized for their hard work throughout the year.

Next Steps

Establishing a relationship with your local MRC unit can be beneficial to you and the MRC unit, and also your community as a whole. MRC volunteers increase the preparedness and resilience of their communities, as well as educate and inform through supporting numerous public health initiatives. The experience can be incredibly rewarding and beneficial to everyone involved.

If you have further questions, please reach out to your youth organization student advisor, your local MRC leaders, the MRC Program office, or MRC units that have been successful in including youth within their units.

HOSA-Future Health Professionals is a national student-led organization which has historically had successful relationships with MRC units. HOSA state advisor information can be found on the HOSA website at www.hosa.org/node/24.

Appendix A

Tips for Reaching Out to MRC Leaders

1. **Professionalism is key when reaching out to others.**
   You are asking a community leader to help (and possible partner) with you. They want to work with polite, professional students who want to make an impact on their community.

2. **Introduce Yourself.**
   Who are you? How did you hear about the MRC? Why do you want to get involved with the MRC?

3. **Give some background of your past experience with community service.**
   Inform the leader about what you and your school/organization have been involved in that has impacted your community. This will show them your dedication to service and ability to make a contribution to their unit.

4. **Be clear and outline what you want the MRC to do for you.**
   Now that you have reached out, what is your "call to action"? How will their involvement benefit them?

5. **Include the following:**
   "This is what we want. This is what we would like you to do. This is what we can accomplish together."

6. **Leave them with your contact information.**
   Give them a way to get in contact with you.

Appendix B

Sample Email: Invite MRC Leader to a School Activity

Dear *<MRC Personnel>*,

My name is *<name here>* and I am a member of HOSA-Future Health Professionals at *<school name here>*. HOSA is a Career and Technical Student Organization catered for secondary and post-secondary/collegiate members who are interested in pursuing a career in the health care field. My HOSA chapter has been very involved in the community: from participating in food collection drives after Hurricane Sandy to hosting blood drives on our campus, we strive to make the strongest positive impact that we can. This is one of the reasons that other members and I are interested in forming a relationship with the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC).

We want to host a career fair at our school. The student body is hoping you can supplement our efforts by attending this event as a representative of the MRC. We would appreciate it if you could help set up a stall, start discussions with students and promote the MRC. This partnership will benefit the MRC's efforts in involving more youth to impact the community. Raising awareness can push members to lend a helping hand and experience volunteering with the MRC. Our connection will be enriching for both your network *and* our school community.

Please let us know if you are interested and able to support our event. We look forward to the possibility of working with you in the future.

Thank you,

<Full Name>
<Organization Name>
<Position within the Organization>
<School Name>

Appendix C

Sample Email: Partnership Proposal

Dear *<Insert Student Organization Name>,*

My name is *<name here>*, and I am a member of HOSA-Future Health Professionals here at *<school name>.* Our HOSA chapter currently has a partnership with our local MRC unit, and we would love to have *<student organization name>* join the partnership.

The Medical Reserve Corps is a national network of local volunteers whose mission is to strengthen public health, emergency response and community resiliency. Our chapter members have been volunteering at events that promote public health and wellness in our community such as feeding the homeless, teaching proper hand washing techniques to local elementary students, collecting personal hygiene items for the women and children's shelter, among other various activities. We want to help further the overall health of our community by strengthening the efforts of the local youth. There are countless volunteer opportunities available through our partnership with the MRC, and we know your members can benefit from these opportunities.

Please let us know if you are interested in joining our partnership with the local MRC unit. We look forward to the possibility of working with you in the future.

Thank you,

<Full Name>
<Organization Name>
<Position Within Organization>
<School Name>