# Essex County Medical Reserve Corps

Volunteer Handbook

**Handbook Name: Volunteer Management**

**Originating/Responsible Party: Medical Reserve Corps.**

**Approval Authority:** Maya Lordo, M.S., MCHES, REHS, H.O. – Director/Health Officer

**Date of Original Plan: 6/10/23**

**Mandatory Review:** Annual

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# Welcome to the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

Dear Essex County, Medical Reserve Corps Volunteer,

On behalf of the Essex County Medical Reserve Corps, welcome and thank you for joining our team and making the Medical Reserve Corps part of your volunteer activities.

Our MRC is a community-based program designed to develop a well-trained team of medical and non-medical volunteers who are willing to contribute their skills and expertise to the community. Our efforts ensure that we all may be better equipped to prepare for and respond to a wide range of emergencies.

Volunteers can choose how they would like to contribute their time and talents to the program. You may choose to assist only during a public health emergency, or you may volunteer throughout the year by assisting in various areas of need within the health department.

This handbook was created to give you important information about volunteering and will hopefully help make the most of your volunteer experience with the MRC Program. The handbook functions as a guide for MRC Volunteers.

For each volunteer opportunity you participate in, there will be more specific policies and procedures regarding your role. You will learn much of the information regarding your specific responsibilities "on-the-job."

Please take the time to read this handbook carefully. The handbook should serve as a reference to use when you have questions or concerns, but please feel free to contact us directly for additional information or comments. We value your suggestions, comments, and professionalism to improve the coordination and response of our members to emergencies and other public health issues.

Once again, thank you and welcome to the Medical Reserve Corps!


Sincerely,


Essex County MRC


Maya Lordo, M.S., MCHES, REHS, H.O.- Director/ Health Officer




Geraldine Cespedes, B.A.- MRC Unit Coordinator

# Program Contact Information

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# Online Resources

**Essex County Medical Reserve Corps**
https://essexcountynjhealth.org/

**New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps**

https://njlmn.njlincs.net/

**National Medical Reserve Corps**
www.aspr.hhs.gov/MRC/

# History and Purpose

The New Jersey Medical Reserve Corps (NJMRC) is a network of community-based, locally organized units comprised of volunteers who help ensure their communities are healthy, prepared, and resilient. With nearly 5,000 volunteers, the NJMRC promotes healthy living throughout the year, and it stands ready for deployment in the event of a disaster or other emergency.

In addition to Health Professional volunteers, such as doctors, nurses, Emergency Medical Technicians or EMTs, therapists, dentists, counselors, and veterinarians, who can provide clinical services, we are also looking for Community Health volunteers. Community Health volunteers serve a variety of important functions including reception and clerical services, information technology, language translation, assistance to disabilities and access and functional needs individuals, hospitality, food services, and security.

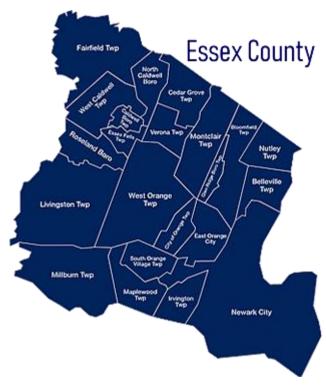Please consider joining the NJ MRC today.



# Purpose:

The mission of the Essex County Medical Reserve Corps is to provide trained and prepared individuals, from both medical and non-medical backgrounds, who will respond to public health emergencies and other health related community needs, to save lives and reduce the threat of disease or injury in Essex County communities.

# Essex County Public Health

Essex County covers a large geographic area with a million citizens, and includes the following 22 municipalities: BELLEVILLE TWP., BLOOMFIELD TWP., CALDWELL BORO TWP., CEDAR GROVE TWP., EAST ORANGE CITY, ESSEX FELLS TWP., FAIRFIELD TWP., GLEN RIDGE BORO TWP., IRVINGTON TWP., LIVINGSTON TWP., MAPLEWOOD TWP., MILLBURN TWP., MONTCLAIR TWP., NEWARK CITY, NORTH CALDWELL BORO, NUTLEY TWP., CITY OF ORANGE TWP., ROSELAND BORO, SOUTH ORANGE VILLAGE TWP., VERONA TWP., WEST CALDWELL TWP., and WEST ORANGE TWP.



The location that an MRC member may respond to is not necessarily pre-determined but may be inside or outside the volunteer's home area. Since an emergency may only affect part of an area, members may have the opportunity to serve in one of the other counties in the health district if the need arises and if they are available.

# Scope:

- Identifying the goals, objectives, tasks, resources, and timeline for Essex County MRC Volunteer Unit.
- The objective for the Essex County MRC Volunteer Unit is to be deployment ready. For that to take place, volunteers will have pre-deployment and deployment/ post-deployment training.
- Training and resources can all be found on the **MRC TRAIN** website. Volunteers should sign up and create an account to facilitate their training and track their progress.

# Assumptions:

- MRC Volunteers will pass background checks
- MRC Volunteers will complete all 11 competencies trainings
- MRC Volunteers will complete pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment training

- MRC Volunteers will actively participate in unit activities and trainings
- MRC Volunteers will inform unit coordinators if no longer interested in volunteering

## Procedures:

- All MRC volunteers must first apply for volunteer service through https://njlmn.njlincs.net/
- After approval of application, each volunteer must have and pass a background check. Applicants are called within 24 hours after the application is received to ensure interest of volunteer.
- Interested volunteers need to be trained in all 11 MRC Competencies listed on the volunteer training plan provided by the MRC Coordinator.
- Vetting for Health professionals such as nurses and doctors will take place on the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs website.

## Roles & Responsibilities:

- After background check clears and MRC volunteers are trained in all 11 MRC Competencies, they will be ready to join the Essex County MRC Unit with a Level 1 status. This allows volunteers to become deployable for EMAC/Federal, Intrastate and Local. Level 1 is the highest level for an MRC volunteer. Required training for this level include **IS-200, IS-800, MRC Core Competencies Learning Paths (volunteer leadership, community resiliency)**. At minimum, volunteers should have CPR training and or First Aid training to volunteer.
- Volunteer information is recorded on the New Jersey Learning Management Network website (https://njlmn.njlincs.net), if there are any changes necessary, volunteers can log in and make necessary changes to their profile. Spontaneous volunteers who reside in Essex County will be accepted after filling out a volunteer application on the New Jersey Learning Management Network website and it is reviewed by Unit Coordinator. Volunteers affiliated with other organizations will be accepted, after filling out a volunteer application on the New Jersey Learning Management Network website and it is reviewed by Unit Coordinator.
- Unit Coordinators can send a mass email to all active volunteers listed on the New Jersey Learning Management Network website to communicate with volunteers and activate them as necessary. Volunteers will be activated based on training and the importance of the skillset needed for a specific emergency.
- Demobilization of volunteers will support the release of volunteers based on evolving incident needs or incident action plans and coordinate with partner agencies and organizations to support the provision of any medical and mental/behavioral health support for volunteers.

## Related Policies

Essex County MRC volunteers should pass a background check before participating as a volunteer. The background checks are executed by the Essex County Sheriff's Department via the HR platform. Essex County MRC volunteers should be trained in all 11 MRC competencies, pre-deployment, deployment, post-deployment and reach a minimum of tier Level 3 or higher in required training.

# Policies on Health and Safety/Harassment

The State of New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development issued an Administrative Directive titled *NEW JERSEY STATE WORKPLACE VIOLENCE POLICY* in June 2019. The directive addresses the Department's Workplace Violence Policy which is committed to promoting a safe environment for employees, clients, customers, and visitors, and to work with employees to maintain a work atmosphere that is free from violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. The Department has a zero tolerance for such behavior in the workplace. Employees at all levels are encouraged to report threatening or intimidating behavior to the appropriate authorities in and outside the Department, which, in turn, will be promptly investigated and if substantiated, remedied with appropriate administrative or disciplinary action. The Essex County MRC Unit always enforces this policy during work/ volunteering hours.

# Code of Conduct

All volunteers of the Essex County MRC Program shall meet the following standards of conduct.

**As an Essex County MRC Volunteer, I shall:**

• Put safety FIRST in all MRC activities and always promote safe work practices.

• Dress appropriately for the job assignment and environment.

• Follow the guidelines of Incident Command System (ICS).

• Accept the chain of command and respect each other regardless of position.

• Wear the photo identification badge provided by Essex County at all times while on duty.

• Always follow all procedures to the best of my ability.

• Reveal any potential or actual conflicts of interest as they arise.

• Respect and use all equipment appropriately.

• Remain within my professional scope of practice. Maintain and abide by the standards of my profession, including licensure, certification, and/or training.

• Maintain a high level of honesty and transparency while performing volunteer duties.

• Report injuries, illnesses, and accidents to the appropriate staff member immediately.

• Refer any request from the media for information or comments directly to my direct supervisor, project lead, Public Information Officer (PIO), or MRC Coordinator.

• The Essex County MRC Unit has available a **Public Information, Crisis & Risk Communications Plan** upon request by volunteers. This plan was updated in August of 2023.

•Avoid situations that involve conflicts of interest and refrain from actions that may be perceived as such.

• Respect the cultures, beliefs, opinions, and decisions of others.

• Treat others with courtesy, sensitivity, tact, consideration, and humility.

**As an Essex County MRC Volunteer, I shall not:**

• Self-deploy as an Essex County MRC member in any situation.

• Act in the capacity of an MRC Volunteer at any time without prior authorization/deployment from the Essex County MRC Program.

• Use Essex County MRC or any partner agency/organization equipment or resources for personal use.

• Solicit, in any form (requesting money, support, or participation), for products, groups, organizations, or causes which are unrelated to MRC volunteering.

• Accept or seek any financial advantage or gain as a result of my affiliation with the Essex County MRC; this includes selling merchandise or services.

• Disclose any confidential Medical Reserve Corps information to any outside entity or media outlet, including social media.

• Use disruptive behavior including behavior that is dangerous to myself and others; this includes acts of violence, physical or sexual abuse or harassment.

• Use profane language and/or engage in disruptive behavior including what could be considered physical or sexual abuse or harassment.

• Respond for duty under the influence of alcohol, prescription/non-prescription medication, or any other substances that may influence my ability to perform assigned tasks to the very best of my ability.

• Transport, store, and/or consume alcoholic beverages and/or illegal substances while performing duties or attending training.

• Wear Medical Reserve Corps attire while under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances.

• Participate in illegal activity.


**If at any time during volunteer work the above-mentioned statements are performed, clear grounds for separation from the Unit will be presented and consequently, the volunteer will be let go. A written notice will be provided to the volunteer, both physically and electronic form, signed by the Director of the Office of Public Health Management and the MRC Unit Coordinator.**

## Liability Coverage

The County of Essex provides liability insurance for Volunteers. According to the liability insurance, a **volunteer** means a person who is not an **employee**, who donates his or her work and acts under the direction of the County and within the scope of duties determined by the County. A **volunteer** is not paid a fee, salary or other compensation by the County or anyone else for their work. Volunteers are insured but only for acts that are within the scope of the services or work authorized by the County.

# Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

To promote volunteerism, the Volunteer Protection Act (VPA) was signed into law in 1997. This act pre-empts existing, looser state laws protecting nonprofit volunteers, encouraging the public to participate in social service.

The VPA protects volunteers against civil liability under the following conditions:

- The volunteer was acting within the guidelines of his or her job description

- The volunteer had the proper licenses, certifications or was authorized to act, and those acts were within his or her job description

- The volunteer did not cause harm that was caused by willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the rights or safety of the individual harmed

- The volunteer did not inflict harm while using a motor vehicle, aircraft or other vehicle

The VPA provides consistent protection for all nonprofit personnel since state laws vary. More specifically, many states only provide protection to the organization's director or board members, while others protect everyone associated with the organization.

The VPA does not, however, protect a volunteer from litigation brought by the organization onto the volunteer for violating one of the previously mentioned criteria.

Most importantly, the VPA does not protect the nonprofit organization from litigation; it only protects the volunteer. In other words, the organization may be liable for the negligent actions of the volunteer, even when the volunteer is immune from litigation under the VPA. Therefore, the burden of responsibility is on the organization to assure that its volunteers are acting in a lawful manner while carrying out the duties assigned to them by the nonprofit

# Record of Changes:

| Date | Summary of Change | Authorized by (Name/Title/Org) |
|---|---|---|
| 6/10/23 | **Created Volunteer Management Handbook** | **Geraldine Cespedes MRC Coordinator OPHM** |
| 11/27/23 | **Updated Volunteer Management Handbook** | **Geraldine Cespedes MRC Coordinator OPHM** |
| 11/30/23 | **Updated Volunteer Management Handbook** | **Geraldine Cespedes MRC Coordinator OPHM** |
| 12/27/23 | **Updated Volunteer Management Handbook** | **Geraldine Cespedes MRC Coordinator OPHM** |
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