

**Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
Emergency Preparedness Bureau**



**POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**December 2010**

# **MA RESPONDS POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL**

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## **SECTION A: INTRODUCTION AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

Recent experience with large scale disasters has consistently shown that an effective response requires that volunteers be pre-credentialed and deployed through a coordinated effort. Well meaning but unaffiliated volunteers who spontaneously present to disaster sites are often unable to be assigned. With limited time and resources to process volunteers, often only those with known credentials are permitted access to the disaster response. By registering with MA Responds, you can be part of an alert system and respond, when activated, to a significant disaster or public health emergency. Participating volunteer organizations in Massachusetts have recognized that a statewide system will improve data management and alerting programs. MA Responds will serve as an asset to local volunteer groups and will improve volunteer coordination during a public health emergency

MA Responds is Massachusetts's initiative to pre-register, manage, and mobilize existing clinical and non-clinical volunteers to help in responding to all types of disasters. The volunteer management system is part of a nation-wide effort to make sure that volunteer professionals can be quickly identified and their credentials checked so that they can be properly utilized in response to a public health emergency or disaster. This system is a partnership of local Medical Reserve Corps units (MRCs), the Massachusetts System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (MSAR) and other volunteer organizations in Massachusetts, coordinated administratively by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH).

### ***1. Who can register with MA Responds?***

- Massachusetts is looking for anyone willing to volunteer their skills in the event of a health emergency. These persons include:
  - Healthcare professionals, such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, veterinarians, and medical and health information technicians, etc.
  - Public health professionals
  - Behavioral health and social service professionals including psychologists, social workers, counselors, interpreters, and chaplains
  - Support staff from other professions who will serve as clerical workers, data entry, greeters, traffic control, canteen workers, etc.
  - Volunteers may be practicing, retired, college students, or otherwise employed
- MA Responds offers both medical and non-medical volunteers a chance to join a network of people who are trained and ready to respond to an emergency when called to assist local health and safety officials. By registering with MA Responds volunteer nurses, doctors, pharmacists, dentists, EMTs, and other volunteers learn how to assist in the response to a disaster affecting their communities. Even people without medical training are encouraged to join, as their non-medical skills are also useful during a response. Volunteers are provided valuable training free of charge, and they learn how to prepare themselves and their families during an emergency.

**2. *Can I register in MA Responds if I'm not currently licensed or if I do not have any experience or training in public health or healthcare?***

- Yes. Whether you are actively licensed, a student, retired health professional, or someone with an interest in volunteering during a health emergency, you are encouraged to register. Because many health professionals will already be committed to a role during an emergency, many areas are actively recruiting "non-health" professionals who will assist health professionals when the need arises.

**3. *I am already a member of my local Medical Reserve Corps. How does that work with MA Responds?***

- This system is partnership of local MRCs, MSAR, and other volunteer organizations, coordinated administratively by DPH. Under MA Responds, MRC units retain full control of their volunteers, and you would continue to work directly with your local unit. MRC volunteers in the system will not be contacted or activated directly by MA Responds or the MA Department of Public Health without the permission of the local coordinator.

**4. *I volunteer for other organizations that do not participate in MA Responds....will this interfere with that?***

- You may certainly volunteer in other ways. The system will ask you about prior commitments and ranking of volunteering preference so that this information is understood at the time of deployment. Prior commitments will be considered when deployment decisions are being made.

**5. *Can I specify that I want to volunteer in my own community or outside my community?***

- Yes. You can indicate that you are only willing to volunteer in your local area and/or that you are willing to volunteer in the event of a larger emergency that occurs in other communities, statewide, or even in other states that may require your assistance. If you register at [www.maresponds.org](http://www.maresponds.org), your local volunteer program will receive your information. You can also contact your local Public Health agency to find out who is coordinating volunteer efforts in your area.

**6. *What kinds of local programs will I be able to work with? Do I have a choice as to what types of programs I can participate in?***

- When you register for MA Responds you may choose from a list of participating programs to volunteer with. As we add more volunteer programs to the MA Responds website, more choices will become available. Also, you may choose to volunteer with other programs in your area. Check with local public health, emergency management, and private agencies in your area to see what opportunities are available.

**7. *What is my responsibility to my current employer?***

- You must make necessary arrangements with your employer in order to take the time to volunteer. We recognize that your employer may have particular needs, including needs related to the specific disaster, and that you must choose how to respond to those needs. The conditions under which an employee will be released to volunteer in an emergency remain between the employer and the employee.

**8. *How many people will you need during an incident?***

- The number of volunteers needed vary depending on the emergency and the needs of the community. There is also the chance that a number of volunteers will have conflicts at the time they are requested to help that prevent them from volunteering. We would like to register a large number of volunteers so each community will have enough when the need arises.

**9. *How do I register?***

- Registering is as simple as logging on to the web site and entering the information requested. When you log on to [www.maresponds.org](http://www.maresponds.org), select “Register Now.” You should have information about your applicable license and contact information available in order to complete the registration process. You may start and stop the registration process at any time. Simply login to the system using the username and password you have created to complete anything you have not finished.

**10. *How much personal information do I have to share with MA Responds?***

- You will be asked to provide details about your contact information and personal information required for background checks. You will also be asked to provide licensing information, if appropriate. You may choose not to provide some information, but if you do so, the extent of your volunteer participation may be limited. You will also be asked some general questions about your health status in order to determine if there is any limitation to your ability to be deployed.

**11. *How often should I update my information?***

- We request that you update your information any time you have a change in status. In addition, we recommend that you check your profile and update as needed every 6 months. Licensure information must be kept up to date or your volunteer participation may be limited.

**12. *Who will have access to my personal data?***

- You, your local volunteer program administrator and specified staff at the Emergency Preparedness Bureau at DPH will have access to the data you provide. Anyone with access to the data will be trained in proper security and privacy procedures. Your information will be contained within a central, secure database administered by DPH. Your information will ONLY be used to engage you in activities related to your local volunteer program or MA Responds, including recruitment for participation in a disaster drill or exercise, to provide you with program information or to request your assistance at the time of a large-scale disaster or public health emergency. DPH will not sell or otherwise provide information to anyone else without your consent.

**13. *What is required for participation?***

- You must first register with the program at [www.maresponds.org](http://www.maresponds.org). Your local program administrator for your area will contact you about their expectations for participation. You may be asked to attend a program orientation or other training to help prepare you. If and when activation becomes necessary, the local volunteer coordinators will contact affiliated volunteers to determine availability. All volunteers can accept or refuse a request for help. No matter what the extent of the need is, these are voluntary deployments and participants are not required to respond to a request.

If you have questions about MA Responds, contact your local program administrator, or use the MA Responds website to contact us.

**14. *Do I have to have any special training or expertise to volunteer?***

- Your local program administrator will contact you for training opportunities, or any requirements for participation. Some programs will choose to wait until they need you and then provide just-in-time training to prepare you. When you are asked to volunteer, you will know what type of event it is, where you are being asked to respond, what will be expected from you, and what you need to know to help out and keep yourself safe.

**15. *Can I get training in order to be a more effective volunteer?***

- All volunteers are encouraged to seek training opportunities that will make them more effective if deployed to an emergency. Contact your local program administrator to see what trainings are recommended or required. The MA Responds program plans to develop a wide array of training opportunities. As opportunities are created, enrollees will be notified and those opportunities will be posted on this site.

**16. *How can I ensure that my particular talents/training/expertise will be utilized?***

- When you register, you will have the opportunity to enter information about your particular skills, expertise, certifications, etc. At the time of deployment, this information will be considered by those doing the deployment. Efforts will be made to match skills with needs. You can help ensure the proper match by keeping the information about your own competencies and certifications up-to-date in the system.

**17. *What can I anticipate that I will be asked to do as part of MA Responds?***

- Assignments will be made by local volunteer coordinators and the clinical managers in receiving facilities. In making those assignments, licensure, training, experience, competencies, and certifications will all be considered. You can expect that you will be asked to perform tasks that are consistent with your level of licensure.

**18. What if multiple programs contact me to volunteer during a crisis?**

- All volunteers have responsibilities that must be met before they can respond to a callout. Whether it is your family, your job, your local MRC, your local fire department, DMAT or other group or organization, you will need to decide for yourself what commitments you can make and what your preference is for deployment, which you will be able to designate in the system. Prior to accepting deployment, you should check with others and obtain any needed consent from your employer if deployment interferes with your work schedule.

**19. Are there any specific health concerns—e.g., vaccinations—that are required for me to participate in MA Responds?**

- No prior vaccinations are required for volunteers. However, in the event of certain emergencies (e.g., pandemic influenza, bioterrorism) where a medical countermeasure is available you may receive the countermeasure if needed.

**20. How will I be notified that my services are required?**

- When you register you will enter information on the best way to contact you. If a deployment is required, this is the information that the system will use to contact you. Therefore, please be sure that the information you give is accurate and up-to-date. Any time you have any change in that information, please log on and update the information.

**21. What if I am called and am unable or unwilling to help?**

- When you are called to volunteer, you can make a decision about your availability at that time. MA Responds volunteers are never under any obligation to participate. You always retain the right to decline for any reason. You can withdraw your application or discontinue your enrollment as a volunteer at any time by emailing the MA Responds program at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us).

**22. How far would I have to travel?**

- When you register, you will have the opportunity to indicate your willingness to travel. You will be asked if you are willing to volunteer locally, within the state, or even outside the state. These preferences will be considered when deployment decisions are being reached.

**23. Once I've registered, how should I prepare for deployment? What should I bring with me?**

- We are currently gathering a number of resources to help volunteers prepare for a possible deployment. Your local group may also have more information about what they would expect you to do to prepare for deployment. In the event of a deployment you will likely receive an e-mail about deployment preparation and, of course, you can always check back on the web site for more up to date information.

***24. Is there any compensation for participating in MA Responds?***

- Volunteers will not be compensated for their service under MA Responds. Any person registered in the system as an employee of an entity that will respond to emergencies will be compensated according to the arrangement they have with that entity.

***25. Do I have professional liability and workers compensation protection?***

- MA Responds does not provide overarching professional liability or workers compensation protections. You should ask your local MRC unit or other volunteer group if they provide coverage. There are several Massachusetts General Laws that offer some form of protection to health care professionals volunteering under public health programs. View a [summary of liability and workers' compensation protections](#) for Massachusetts health care volunteers in disaster response.

## **SECTION B: MA RESPONDS VOLUNTEER TERMS OF SERVICE**

In times of emergency the need for volunteers to assist in providing aid to victims and families becomes critical. MA Responds is an integrated program that pre-registers medical and non-medical volunteers who have chosen to volunteer with participating locally organized Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units, the Massachusetts System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (MSAR), and other volunteer groups. Please read the *MA Responds Policy and Procedures Manual* for further information about the MA Responds Program.

By using or registering on the MA Responds Site you agree to these terms and conditions (“Terms of Service”) and the site Privacy Policy. You agree to accept notices electronically. Each time you use the site, you reaffirm your acceptance of the then-current Terms of Service. If you do not wish to be bound by these Terms of Service, you may discontinue using the site. You cannot use, access data or credentials, sign up, or register on the site until you have accepted these Terms of Service. If you do not agree to these Terms of Service, do not use this site. You may not use the site for any illegal or unauthorized purpose.

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- I hereby certify that all statements made in my application are true and I agree and understand:
  - By registering on the site and using the site, I represent and warrant that I am eligible to register as a member of one of the participating organizations.
  - Any misstatement of material facts may cause forfeiture of my eligibility and removal from enrollment as a volunteer in the MA Responds system. I understand that there may be penalties associated with knowingly providing false or misleading information.
  - Submitted information is my responsibility. MA Responds does not accept any responsibility for the information submitted by me or my sponsoring organizations.
  - Submitting an application does not guarantee my selection for placement as a volunteer.
  - By registering with or using the MA Responds website, I consent to the collection and use of my Registration Information and the transfer of this information to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and authorized third parties for processing and storage. I authorize the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and/or affiliated MA Responds programs to consult with any representative(s) of the medical/professional or administrative staff of any health care organizations with which I have or have had employment, practice, association or privileges, and any other organizations (including without limitation state licensing boards and the National Practitioner Data Bank) and individuals who have information bearing on my credentials, competence, professional performance, clinical skills, judgment, character, and ethical qualifications, and to inspect such records which shall be material to the evaluation of my professional qualifications and competence to carry out the duties of a MA Responds volunteer, as well as to my moral and ethical qualifications.

- Any health care organizations with which I have or have had employment, practice, association or privileges, and any other organizations (including without limitation state licensing boards and the National Practitioner Data Bank) and individuals who have information bearing on my credentials, competence, professional performance, clinical skills, judgment, character, and ethical qualifications are authorized by me to provide and/or release information (both written and oral) to MA Responds bearing on my credentials, competence, professional performance, clinical skills, judgment, character, and ethical qualifications. Such information includes but is not limited to information regarding any and all malpractice actions, pending or final disciplinary actions, alterations in privileges, and any information with respect to whether I am able to perform the essential functions of a MA Responds volunteer with or without a reasonable accommodation, according to accepted standards of professional practice and without posing a direct threat to patients or staff (including without limitation information regarding any impairment due to the use of drugs or alcohol).
- My medical malpractice liability insurance carrier is authorized by me to release information regarding any claims or actions for damages pending or closed, whether or not there has been a final disposition.
- I must notify MA Responds at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us) as soon as I become aware that any health care organization, hospital, or any licensing, certifying, or regulatory authority has taken disciplinary action of any kind against me, or that there is a material change to any of the information I submitted either directly or through my employer or any other entity as part of the MA Responds application.
- That a national sex offender records search will be conducted about me, using publicly available information.
- I will submit a separate form authorizing a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) check.
- I retain the right to refuse to serve as a MA Responds volunteer under any circumstance and for any reason and I can withdraw my application or discontinue my enrollment as a volunteer at any time by emailing the MA Responds program at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us).
- The username and passwords associated with my profile and registration information must remain confidential. I will notify MA Responds at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us) as soon as possible when I learn about or suspect any unauthorized use of my username or password.
- Participation in MA Responds does NOT confer malpractice liability insurance or Workers' Compensation coverage on me. I should consult with my employer or insurance carrier to determine whether I will have any coverage when I am volunteering with MA Responds.
- There are NO employment protections or rights through the MA Responds Program.
- Failure of me or DPH to insist upon compliance with any of these Terms of Service at any time shall not waive compliance with such Terms of Service at any other time. No waiver by me or DPH of any default or breach by the other shall constitute a waiver of any subsequent default or breach.
- Any actions arising out of my access to the MA Responds website or activities as a MA Responds volunteer shall be governed by the laws of Massachusetts and shall be brought and maintained in a state or federal court in Massachusetts which shall have exclusive jurisdiction thereof.

- I release from liability any and all individuals and organizations that, in good faith and without malice, provide information to DPH for the purpose of evaluating this application. I also release from liability DPH, their respective medical/professional staffs and their respective agents and representatives for their acts performed in good faith and without malice in connection with the evaluation of my professional skills, competence, character, credentials and qualifications and the exchange of information with respect to my professional skills, competence, character, credentials and qualifications.

I will use the MA Responds site for lawful purposes only. I will not post on or transmit through community areas (e.g., message boards, e-mail, calendars) or other means, any material that (1) violates or infringes in any way upon the rights of others, (2) is unlawful, threatening, abusive, defamatory, invasive of privacy or publicity rights, vulgar, obscene, profane, indecent, or otherwise objectionable, (3) encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offense, (4) gives rise to civil liability, (5) violates any policies posted in any community areas or (6) otherwise violates any law. I also will not undertake any conduct that restricts or inhibits any other user from using or accessing the data on the site. Further, I agree not to collect or distribute information about the site users unless prior written permission is obtained from DPH. I agree not to reproduce, duplicate, copy, sell, resell, or exploit for any commercial purposes any portion of the site, or access to the site. All trademarks appearing on the site and on any site products are the property of their respective owners.

With the widespread use of cell phone cameras and other digital media devices, the MA Responds program cannot entirely prevent third parties from photographing or videotaping volunteers at public events. I understand that if I have concerns, it is my responsibility to prevent my image from being recorded or used.

### **Confidentiality of Medical Information / HIPAA Agreement**

Consistent with applicable state and federal laws, the Principles of Ethics of both the American Medical and Hospital Associations, and established MA Responds policies and procedures, individuals who may come in contact with patients, information, and records, whether medical, financial, or any other, whether in electronic, written, or oral form, must agree to protect confidential information.

- I understand that the unauthorized access, use, copying, disclosure, or dissemination of any confidential information or records whether stored in hard copy, film, or electronic form is strictly prohibited. I will not share or release any username or passwords.
- I acknowledge my legal and ethical obligation to maintain the confidentiality of all personal data pertaining to the MA Responds program, my volunteer program, its volunteers, and its patients/clients.
- I understand that accessing confidential information about other individuals or allowing access by unauthorized individuals, whether intentional or not, or any other breach is grounds for my immediate and permanent dismissal as a volunteer and will be investigated and possibly reported to applicable federal and state authorities.
- I agree to safeguard all confidential information as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). I understand that I may visit the HIPAA website at [www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa](http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa) for further information.

- I will contact MA Responds immediately at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us) if I believe any confidential information may have been compromised.

I understand that I must continue to adhere to these Terms of Service even after I leave the MA Responds Program.

## SECTION C: PRIVACY POLICY

The purpose of this Privacy Policy is to inform you, as a user, of what kinds of information we may gather about you when you visit the MA Responds website, how we may use that information, whether we disclose it to anyone, and the choices you have regarding the information. This privacy policy applies to all site content.

Information in the MA Responds system will be protected from disclosure to the extent allowed by applicable Massachusetts laws, including the Fair Information Practices Act (MGL c. 66A). DPH reserves the right to exercise control, as specifically provided by agreement with participating volunteer programs, over the access, use, disclosure, and disposition of personal information.

The information provided during registration will be used by designated MA Responds staff at DPH or affiliated programs to determine the status of your credentials, including confirmation that any license you hold is current, valid, and free of any restrictions. DPH or its agent may consult with any representative of any health care organizations with which you have or have had employment, practice, association, or privileges, and any other organizations (including without limitation national, federal, and Massachusetts licensing and credentialing authorities) or individuals who have information bearing on your credentials, competence, professional performance, clinical skills, judgment, character, and ethical qualifications, and to inspect such records as may be material to the evaluation of your professional qualifications and competence to carry out the duties of a MA Responds volunteer, as well as to moral and ethical qualifications.

DPH and/or affiliated programs for which you volunteer may access databases maintained by a state, the federal government, or other agencies or organizations. A national sex offender records search will be conducted about you, using publicly available information. You will also be asked to submit a separate form authorizing a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) check. The information you provide will be used by designated MA Responds registry staff to verify your credentials, employment, and criminal history and to assign you an Emergency Credentialing Level in accordance with applicable Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professional (ESAR-VHP) standards ([Federal Credentialing Level Chart](#)). The assignment of an Emergency Credentialing Level neither designates or grants clinical privileges nor authorizes you to provide health care services without proper authorization and supervision.

During an emergency or disaster, some of the information you provide (name, profession, experience, contact information, etc.) will be used by authorized state and local volunteer administrators and emergency managers to assign you to volunteer services and activities for which you are adequately credentialed, and by on-site emergency operational area officials to identify you once you are deployed.

Also, our site automatically gathers certain usage information like the numbers and frequency of visitors to the site. We only use such data in the aggregate form to determine site usage and make improvements.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this statement, please contact us at [MAResponds@state.ma.us](mailto:MAResponds@state.ma.us).

**SECTION D: CORI SORI POLICY** *(next page)*



### **CORI/SORI Checks and MA Responds**

All volunteers who apply to be part of MA Responds must undergo CORI (Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information) and SORI (nationwide Sex Offender Registry Information) checks. In order to be considered a member of MA Responds, both checks must be resolved in a satisfactory manner.

The CORI check will be conducted as outlined in the MA Responds CORI Policy (*see attached MA Responds CORI Policy for a full description of the policy*).

The nationwide SORI check, using publicly available information, will be conducted automatically through the MA Responds system after a CORI check is done. If a positive SORI result is returned, DPH staff will notify the applicant, who will be given an opportunity to show that the result is inaccurate (for example that the record relates to a different person with the same name). If it appears that the SORI report is accurate and relates to the volunteer applicant, the applicant will be rejected (*see attached MA Responds SORI Policy for a full description of the policy*).

Volunteers who do not have a clean SORI record and a satisfactory resolution of the CORI process cannot participate in missions. In the event of an emergency, a local unit administrator may choose to use new (and unchecked) volunteers as “spontaneous local volunteers,” but these individuals would not be volunteering under the aegis of the MA Responds system and remain the responsibility of the unit administrator.

## MA RESPONDS CORI POLICY

Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks are part of the required background checks for acceptance of volunteer applicants as members of the MA Responds system. The following practices and procedures will be followed.

- I. CORI checks will only be conducted as authorized by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS). As part of the registration procedure for MA Responds, all volunteer applicants will fill out an online Criminal History Profile Page. Applicants will also print out, complete, sign, and mail the official CORI Request Form to CORI certified staff in the Emergency Preparedness Bureau (EPB) at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH). The applicant will be able to view this MA Responds CORI policy online by means of a link.
- II. The unit will determine that the volunteer applicant is otherwise qualified, and then the DCJIS's Web-CORI system will be queried. The applicant's CORI report will be returned to staff in the EPB at DPH.
- III. If the CORI report shows that the applicant has a criminal record, the record will be reviewed. The people who conduct the review of a criminal record are known as the review team. A representative of the unit may, if the unit so chooses, participate with EPB staff in the review of the CORI report as a member of the review team. The unit representative may choose to participate either at the stage when a CORI search has resulted in positive CORI or at the later stage if and when a prospective volunteer appeals the review team's intent to make an adverse decision about his or her participation in MA Responds. Alternatively, the unit may choose not to participate in the CORI decision-making process at all, in which case DPH's EPB staff will make the final decision.
- IV. An informed review of a criminal record requires adequate training. Accordingly, all members of the review team will be thoroughly familiar with the educational materials made available by DCJIS.
- V. Unless otherwise provided by law, a criminal record will not automatically disqualify an applicant. Rather, determinations of suitability based on CORI checks will be made consistent with this policy and any applicable law or regulations.
- VI. If a criminal record is received from DCJIS, the review team will closely compare the record provided by DCJIS with the information on the CORI request form and any other identifying information provided by the applicant, to ensure that the record relates to the applicant.
- VII. Unless otherwise provided by law, if the review team is inclined to make an adverse decision based on the results of the CORI check, the applicant will be notified. The applicant will be provided with a copy of his or her criminal record and this MA Responds CORI policy, will be advised of the part(s) of the record that make the individual unsuitable for membership in MA Responds, and will be given an opportunity

to dispute the accuracy and relevance of the CORI record. Applicants will also be provided with information from DCJIS about how to correct a criminal record and how to enroll in the Identity Theft File.

- VIII. If the CORI record provided does not exactly match the identification information provided by the applicant, the review team will make a determination based on a comparison of the CORI record and documents provided by the applicant. DPH may contact the DCJIS and request a detailed search consistent with DCJIS policy.
- IX. If the review team reasonably believes that the record belongs to the applicant and is accurate, then the determination of suitability for membership in MA Responds will be made. Regulations of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services at 101 CMR 15.08 will be used as guidance. The Regulations are available at this link: <http://www.lawlib.state.ma.us/source/mass/cmr/cmrtxt/101CMR15.pdf>
- X. If the CORI record reveals an outstanding warrant for any offense, DPH will inform the applicant that he or she is ineligible for membership in MA Responds unless the warrant is removed.
- XI. Unless otherwise provided by law, factors considered in determining suitability may include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:
- (a) Relevance of the crime to volunteer work with MA Responds;
  - (b) The nature of the volunteer work to be performed;
  - (c) Time since the conviction;
  - (d) Age of the applicant at the time of the offense;
  - (e) Seriousness and specific circumstances of the offense;
  - (f) The number of offenses;
  - (g) Sentence(s) imposed and length of any period(s) of incarceration;
  - (h) Whether the applicant has pending charges;
  - (i) Whether offenses were committed in association with a dependence on drugs or alcohol, from which the applicant has since recovered;
  - (j) Any relevant evidence of rehabilitation or lack thereof;
  - (k) Any other relevant information, including information submitted by the applicant or requested by the review team.
- XII. DPH will notify the applicant of the decision and the basis of the decision in writing in a timely manner, and will document all steps taken to comply with this policy.

## **MA RESPONDS SORI POLICY**

Nationwide Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) checks, using publicly available information, are part of the required background checks for acceptance of volunteer applicants as members of the MA Responds system. The following practices and procedures will be followed.

- I. SORI checks will be conducted automatically through the MA Responds online system during the registration process of the volunteer applicant. The applicant will be able to view this SORI policy online by means of a link.
- II. If the SORI check shows that the applicant is not listed in any Sex Offender Registry, the MA Responds system will automatically set the status as Completed – Passed.
- III. If the SORI check shows that the applicant is listed in a Sex Offender Registry, the information will be reviewed by DPH through the system’s Background Check Module. DPH will closely compare the record with the information in the MA Responds database and any other identifying information to ensure that the record pertains to the applicant.
- IV. If it appears that the SORI record pertains to the applicant, the applicant will be notified via email and given a stated time within which to present information challenging the accuracy of the SORI record. If the applicant does not respond within a stated period of time, the applicant will be rejected.
- V. If the applicant submits information indicating that he is not in a SORI registry, DPH will evaluate the information and will check the applicable SORI registry.
- VI. If DPH concludes that the SORI record belongs to the applicant and is accurate, then the applicant will be rejected. DPH will notify the applicant of the decision in writing in a timely manner, and will document all steps taken to comply with this policy.

## SECTION E: CODE OF CONDUCT

I understand that, as a volunteer deployed to render services at an emergency or disaster, I represent my local Medical Reserve Corps unit, MA Responds and/or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I further understand and agree to:

- Read, understand, and abide by the *MA Responds Policy and Procedures Manual*.
- Provide and maintain accurate contact, professional licensure/certification, criminal history, health, and employment information, and to notify my participating organization's administrator or the MA Responds staff at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) as soon as reasonably possible after becoming aware of any change. I understand that there may be penalties associated with knowingly providing false or misleading information.
- Provide emergency health care, public health services or other volunteer services as needed and as assigned in accordance with my MA Responds Credential Level classification and within my scope of knowledge, skills, and license/credentialing.
- Perform my volunteer responsibilities under the terms, conditions and general direction of local public health or emergency services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts departments or agencies (e.g., DPH or the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency) or other public or private health care entities (e.g., hospitals or clinics).
- Complete the required volunteer trainings as designated by my participating volunteer organization and MA Responds.
- During an activation, drill, or educational program:
  - Dress in a neat and clean fashion in a manner appropriate to my assigned duty.
  - Wear the identification provided to me at all times.
  - Conduct myself in a professional manner.
- Take the appropriate Incident Command System (ICS) training courses for my level of involvement.
- Adhere to ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- Respect the rights and dignity of all volunteers and clients while representing my volunteer agency.
- Address any issues or concerns by contacting the leadership of the event.
- Participate in debriefings/hotwashes and provide feedback following an incident.
- Not speak to the press unless authorized to do so.
- Keep my assigned MA Responds ID and password confidential. This information is non-transferable, and may not be shared with any other person. I agree to safeguard my assigned ID and password and to notify my local administrator or DPH as soon as possible when learning about or suspecting any unauthorized use.
- Use the MA Responds site for lawful purposes only. I may not post any material that (1) violates in any way the rights of others, (2) is unlawful, threatening, abusive, defamatory, invasive of privacy or publicity rights, obscene or otherwise objectionable, (3) encourages conduct that would constitute a criminal offense, (4) gives rise to civil liability, or (5) otherwise violates any law. Further, I agree not to collect information about MA Responds website users unless prior written permission is obtained from DPH. I agree not to reproduce, duplicate, copy, sell, or exploit for any commercial purposes any portion of the website or access to the website.
- Participate as a volunteer without compensation or payment for my services.

- Abide by all applicable local and state of Massachusetts laws, regulations, rules, policies, procedures and protocols concerning standards of conduct and conflicts of interest.
- Be subject to disciplinary action or dismissal if I disobey the Code of Conduct Agreement or any event-specific rules or guidance provided by the leadership.

Further, I acknowledge that:

- I am of sound physical and mental capacity and capable of performing volunteer services in an emergency. Emergency settings may pose significant psychological and physical risks and there is often a lack of the normal amenities of daily life and disability accommodations. In volunteering my services, I agree to accept such risks that may occur in any emergency to which I am assigned.
- My participation in MA Responds does not confer malpractice liability insurance or Workers' Compensation coverage, and I should consult with my employer or insurance carrier to determine whether I will have any coverage when I am volunteering for MA Responds. Up to date information on liability coverage will be provided at the time of activation.
- No guarantee is provided that I will be requested for a specific emergency or disaster deployment.

I understand that my provision of information and all participation in this program is entirely voluntary. However, without it the MA Responds program administrators may not be able to accept my services as a health volunteer. In addition, either party (i.e., MA Responds or me as a registered volunteer) may terminate my registration and/or volunteer assignment by written notification at any time.

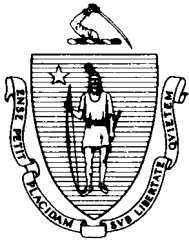
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Signature

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Date

**SECTION F: CORI REQUEST FORM** *(next page)*



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
 Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
 Department of Public Health  
 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

DEVAL L. PATRICK  
 GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY  
 LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JUDYANN BIGBY, MD  
 SECRETARY

JOHN AUERBACH  
 COMMISSIONER

MSARG  
 G

**CORI REQUEST FORM**

Mass Dept. of Public Health-MA Responds has been certified by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (formerly the Criminal History Systems Board) for access to conviction and pending criminal case data. As an applicant/employee for \_\_\_\_\_, I understand that a criminal record check will be conducted for conviction and pending criminal case information only and that it will not necessarily disqualify me. The information below is correct to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Applicant/Employee Signature

APPLICANT/EMPLOYEE INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT)

_____ LAST NAME	_____ FIRST NAME	_____ MIDDLE NAME
_____ MAIDEN NAME OR ALIAS (IF APPLICABLE)	_____ PLACE OF BIRTH	
_____ DATE OF BIRTH	_____ SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (Requested, not required)	_____ ID Theft Index PIN* (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
CURRENT AND FORMER ADDRESSES:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

SEX: \_\_\_\_\_ HEIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_ft. \_\_\_\_\_in. WEIGHT: \_\_\_\_\_ EYE COLOR: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (include state of issue)

\*\*\*THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS VERIFIED BY REVIEWING THE FOLLOWING FORM OF GOVERNMENT ISSUED PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION: \_\_\_\_\_

REQUESTED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF CORI AUTHORIZED EMPLOYEE

\*The DCJIS Identity Theft Index PIN Number is to be completed by those applicants that have been issued an Identity Theft Index PIN Number by the DCJIS. Certified agencies are required to provide all applicants the opportunity to include this information to ensure the accuracy of the CORI request process. All CORI request forms that include this field are required to be submitted to the DCJIS via mail or by fax to 617-660-4614.



Attached is a CORI Request Form. Please complete the requested information, sign, and return the Form to the program for which you have volunteered either in person or by postal mail. Your photo identification will need to be checked by your local program administrator before you volunteer for an event. Program addresses are below. If you have questions please email [maresponds@state.ma.us](mailto:maresponds@state.ma.us) or phone Lindsay Tallon at 617.994.9836.

**Amherst MRC**

Katy Conover  
Unit Coordinator  
70 Boltwood Walk  
Amherst, MA 01002  
[kmvbconover@gmail.com](mailto:kmvbconover@gmail.com)

**Berkshire MRC**

Corinne McKeown  
Unit Coordinator  
38 Avery Lane  
Great Barrington, MA 01230  
[cmckeown@wmmrc.org](mailto:cmckeown@wmmrc.org)

**Franklin MRC**

Robert Dean  
Director of Regional Services  
Franklin Regional Council of Governments  
425 Main Street  
Greenfield, MA 01301  
[bdean@frcog.org](mailto:bdean@frcog.org)

**Grafton MRC**

Dawn Farmer  
Administrative Assistant  
30 Providence Road  
Grafton, MA 01519  
[farmerd@grafton-ma.gov](mailto:farmerd@grafton-ma.gov)

**Greater Fall River MRC**

Alvin McMahan  
Director  
c/o Town Nurse  
115 Wood Street  
Somerset, MA 02726  
[aldbluesky@aol.com](mailto:aldbluesky@aol.com)

**Hilltown MRC**

Larry Holmberg  
Unit Director  
P.O. Box 176  
Chesterfield, MA 01012  
[lhholmberg@the-spa.com](mailto:lhholmberg@the-spa.com)

**MSAR Program**

MA Dept. of Public Health  
Lindsay Tallon, MSPH, CPH  
Emergency Preparedness Bureau  
250 Washington Street  
Boston, MA 02108  
[Lindsay.Tallon@state.ma.us](mailto:Lindsay.Tallon@state.ma.us)

**Nonotuck MRC**

Trish Abbott  
MRC Director  
50 Payson Avenue  
Easthampton, MA 01027  
[nurse@easthampton.org](mailto:nurse@easthampton.org)

**South Hadley/Granby MRC**

Frosty Bean  
Unit Coordinator  
66 Fort Square West  
Greenfield, MA 01301  
[bfrostine@yahoo.com](mailto:bfrostine@yahoo.com)

**University of Massachusetts MRC**

Katy Conover  
Unit Coordinator  
714 N. Pleasant Street, Arnold House 320  
Amherst, MA 01002  
[kmvbconover@gmail.com](mailto:kmvbconover@gmail.com)

**Wilbraham MRC**

Terry Nelson  
Unit Coordinator  
P.O. Box 236  
Wilbraham, MA 01095  
[tnelson5282@charter.net](mailto:tnelson5282@charter.net)

## **SECTION G: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

#### **Between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health**

**And \_\_\_\_\_ (Unit)**

This agreement represents a mutual understanding and establishes a partnership between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Unit) in developing a plan for and maintaining a registry of public health, health care, and emergency response volunteers who can be activated to assist with federal, state, and/or local activities.

#### **GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOTH PARTIES**

DPH and Unit will collaborate in the planning and acceptance of the above-described volunteers into a state-sponsored electronic registry known as MA Responds.

Unit will be considered an autonomous entity (referred to as a Unit) within MA Responds. Each Unit registered in the system will receive a minimum of two system administrator accounts that will have 24/7 access to MA Responds excluding scheduled and emergency maintenance periods. Each administrator account will be tied to a specific username and password to track all changes to records in MA Responds and to ensure accountability. Administrator accounts are not to be shared between unit administrators.

#### **Each party agrees to the following requirements:**

- ✓ Adhere to all MA Responds policies and procedures.
- ✓ Ensure that volunteer information is collected, maintained, and utilized in a manner consistent with all federal, state, and local laws governing security and confidentiality.
- ✓ Ensure that access to the volunteer database is available 24/7 at the state and local level in case of emergency, excluding regularly scheduled or emergency maintenance.
- ✓ Comply with the current version of the Interim Technical and Policy Guidelines, Standards, and Definitions: System Development Tools from the federal Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) Program to verify the credential information of applicable volunteers and assign them an emergency credential level.
- ✓ Ensure that volunteer information is updated so volunteer professional credentials can be re-verified at least every 6 months.
- ✓ Ensure that only authorized personnel have access to MA Responds, and use all reasonable means to prevent sharing or theft of usernames and passwords.

## **SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH PARTY**

### **DPH agrees to:**

- ✓ Maintain a web-based volunteer registry database system known as MA Responds.
- ✓ Conduct a nationwide sex offender registry check on all volunteer applicants, and reject applicants who are listed in a sex offender registry. DPH makes no representations or warranties, either express or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the information upon which it makes its decision, and assumes no responsibility for any damages resulting from any errors or omissions which may be contained in the information it receives.
- ✓ Conduct a Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check on all volunteer applicants, and for each applicant who has a criminal record, decide whether the applicant will be accepted into MA Responds. DPH makes no representations or warranties, either express or implied, as to the accuracy or completeness of the information upon which it makes its decision, and assumes no responsibility for any damages resulting from any errors or omissions which may be contained in the information it receives.
- ✓ Contact a participating unit's local administrator(s) to request any activation of unit-affiliated volunteers; DPH agrees that it will not activate any affiliated volunteer unless specifically directed or authorized to do so by local administrator(s).
- ✓ Ensure that local units maintain independence and autonomy over their volunteers while being affiliated members of MA Responds.
- ✓ Make all reasonable efforts in accordance with current ESAR-VHP guidelines to verify credentials and licenses of volunteer health professionals.
- ✓ Ensure system security and maintain a back-up system in a secure location.
- ✓ Promote and conduct targeted marketing of MA Responds.
- ✓ Provide local administrator user training for participating programs.
- ✓ Provide emergency notification via e-mail, phone, text message, and fax as part of the MA Responds database system.
- ✓ Make available and keep updated the *MA Responds Policies and Procedures Manual*.
- ✓ Provide technical assistance for use of the system.

### **Unit agrees to:**

- ✓ Assist with input of existing affiliated volunteer records into MA Responds.
- ✓ Maintain and manage records of all Unit-affiliated volunteers.

- ✓ Provide DPH with the names and 24/7 contact information of two individuals who will serve as the local administrators for the Unit.
- ✓ Receive two system administrator accounts for the MA Responds database.
- ✓ Ensure security of each local system administrator's user name and password and prohibit the practice of sharing user names and passwords between individuals.
- ✓ Sign-in to MA Responds no less than weekly to check e-mails, and accept or reject pending affiliated volunteer applications. Acceptances will be made contingent on clearance by DPH after a nationwide sex offender registry check and a Massachusetts CORI check.
- ✓ Notify DPH or send requests through DPH when additional volunteers are requested from other units or agencies to provide health services during an emergency or public health event. When making such requests, the local administrator will provide DPH or other assisting agencies with information about the type and quantity of personnel needed, as well as the assignment location.
- ✓ Upon receipt of a request for volunteers from DPH, a system administrator from the local unit will, to the best of his or her ability: 1) query the MA Responds system for affiliated volunteers within two hours; 2) within 12 hours provide an initial list of willing volunteers that includes the names, qualifications, credentials, and credential levels of volunteers; and 3) within 24 hours provide a final list of available volunteers.
- ✓ Within six months of obtaining a signed MOU, provide a DPH program representative a list of all trainings required by the local unit for affiliated volunteers.
- ✓ Adhere to all confidentiality requirements contained in the MA Responds Volunteer Terms of Service, even after this agreement is terminated.

Both parties agree that no other methods and/or documents, including correspondence, acts, and oral communication by or from any person, shall be construed as an amendment to this MOU. Any change to this MOU must be accomplished by a written amendment to the MOU signed and approved by both parties with a minimum of (30) days prior notice.

This agreement begins on the signature date and shall remain in effect for one year, with automatic renewals for succeeding years unless either party decides to opt out and so notifies the other party in writing, at least 30 days prior to the anniversary date. If this agreement is terminated, Unit and its related administrative account(s) will be removed from the MA Responds registry.

The parties agree to meet as necessary to update contacts, plans, and operational procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: DPH representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature: Unit Administrator for MA Responds

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

To reach a MA Responds representative, contact the DPH Emergency Preparedness Bureau at 617-624-5712. If you need to reach a MA Responds representative after hours, contact the EPB 24/7 pager at 617-647-0343. During an emergency when the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is activated, DPH will disseminate contact information for the ESF-8 Desk.

## **SECTION H: NOTIFICATION GUIDANCE**

### **Guidance for Using Notification Features of the MA Responds System**

The MA Responds system features an integrated two-way notification system that can be used to contact volunteers via phone (including extensions), SMS, pager, fax, email and TTD/TTY. *While emails can be sent through the system at no cost, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is charged for all other types of communication on a per use basis.* Due to budget limitations, DPH has decided only to use these features in emergency situations. DPH has pre-paid for a pool of minutes that can be requested by local units in an emergency (at no cost the individual unit).

To request permission to use the non-email notification features of MA Responds, a unit administrator should contact Lindsay Tallon, Health Volunteer Program Manager, ([Lindsay.tallon@state.ma.us](mailto:Lindsay.tallon@state.ma.us), 617-994-9836) or Michael Coughlin, State MRC Coordinator, ([Michael.coughlin@state.ma.us](mailto:Michael.coughlin@state.ma.us), 617-624-5091) at DPH. If the request occurs during an emergency, and DPH staff cannot be reached by the unit administrator, the below criteria must be followed.

#### **Criteria for Emergency Use of Telephony Minutes**

1. An emergency is defined as any occasion or instance in which determination is made by the local unit administrator that assistance is needed to supplement local efforts and capabilities to save lives and protect property and public health or safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe. Emergency use is defined as use of telephony minutes during an emergency.
2. If the emergency requires immediate assistance that must be available before DPH staff can be reached (during the next 12 hours or within the next available working hours, whichever is less), emergency use is authorized.
3. A determination will be made by DPH staff after the emergency that emergency use was indeed necessary.
4. Unit administrators assume responsibility and costs associated with use of minutes that are determined to have been used in a non-emergency situation.

If units wish to use the non-email notification features of the system in non-emergencies (without obtaining prior permission to DPH), they may set up separate accounts with Collaborative Fusion, Inc. to pay for this usage directly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> DPH has paid for all the associated administrative costs to set up this split billing system. Units would only be required to pay for the actual minutes used.