

MA MRC Units & the COVID-19 Response Group

Frequently Asked Questions

(April 24, 2020)

WHAT IS THE COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE GROUP?

To support ongoing COVID-19 emergency response efforts, the Baker-Polito Administration has partnered with the Massachusetts Medical Society to match health and medical volunteers with our communities and health care providers based on skillsets and need. This is a **statewide** response group.

WHAT IS THE MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS?

The [Medical Reserve Corps \(MRC\)](#) is a national network of volunteers, organized locally to improve the health and safety of their communities. In Massachusetts, the MRC network is comprised of [36 units](#). Each unit is organized to best suit the unique challenges of its area. In all cases, MRC units are local assets and are deployed at the discretion of **local** MRC unit protocols. Massachusetts MRC units are currently providing local responses to COVID-19 in their communities.

WHAT IS MA RESPONDS?

MA Responds is an online registration system for health and non-health volunteers. This system is a partnership between the MDPH, local Medical Reserve Corps units, and other volunteer organizations in Massachusetts. Registering with MA Responds allows people to volunteer for a variety of public health events. The MA Responds system is maintained by MDPH and supported through a contact with the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS).

Many (though not all) MRC units are part of the MA Responds system. (A complete list can be found [here](#).) The COVID-19 response group is also part of the MA Responds system.

CAN SOMEONE BE A MEMBER OF THE BOTH THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND A LOCAL MRC UNIT?

Yes, it is possible for a volunteer to be a member of both groups. Some volunteers may want to volunteer locally through their MRC units, others may want to be part of a statewide response, and others may want to be kept apprised of both opportunities.

If a MRC volunteer is a fully-credentialed volunteer on the MA Responds platform, he/she should contact their MRC unit leader who can assist them in joining the COVID-19 group. The existing background check will be carried over.

If a MRC volunteer's unit is not already on MA Responds, he/she can sign up for the COVID-19 response group directly. We encourage all volunteers to let their unit leaders know if they plan to cross-affiliate.

WILL A VOLUNTEER LOOKING TO REGISTER FOR THE MRC PROGRAM ACCIDENTALLY REGISTER FOR THE COVID-19 RESPONSE GROUP?

It is not likely that this will happen. Most individuals who are looking to register for a Massachusetts MRC unit will visit the state website at mamedicalreservecorps.org. In the last 30 days, the state website has seen an increase of unique visitors to site by **551.8%**. Individuals can find their local MRC unit through the site directly or send an inquiry through the site and be connected with his/her local unit leader.

Individuals who are looking to volunteer for the COVID-19 response group are given a direct link to a [volunteer form](#).

It is possible that some individuals are visiting the maresponds.org site without a direct link. If they visit the site and chose to begin the registration process, they are prompted to choose organizations to affiliate with: COVID-19 Response Group, MRC, and the State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team (SMART). All organizations listed on the site are clearly defined, and volunteers could choose to affiliate with multiple organizations.

HAS THE PROCESS FOR PROCESSING CORI CHECKS FOR MRC VOLUNTEERS CHANGED DURING THIS STATE OF EMERGENCY?

Yes. While volunteers still must submit a CORI acknowledgement form with a wet signature to their unit leader, this form no longer needs to be notarized (by [Order of the Commissioner of Public Health](#)). **Unit coordinators do need to verify volunteer's licenses (either virtually or through the submission of a government ID with the form submission) before submitting the CORI Acknowledgement Forms to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management (MDPH OPEM).** Once verified (virtually or through the submission of a gov't ID along with the submission of a signed CORI acknowledgement form).

To submit the volunteers for a background check, unit leaders should provide MDPH OPEM with a completed CORI spreadsheet along with the acknowledgement forms so they can be batch uploaded to the CORI system.

WHO IS PROCESSING CORI CHECKS FOR THE COVID-19 GROUP?

MDPH OPEM is conducting CORI checks on prospective volunteers, which is the same process for MRC units that are part of the MA Responds system. CORI checks for both groups are being processed on a first-come, first-served basis. No group is given priority.

HOW DOES THE COVID-19 RESPONSE GROUP FIT IN TO THE EXISTING [PROCESS FOR VOLUNTEER REQUESTS DURING A CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL EVENT](#)?

If local MRC unit leaders want to request additional MRC support, they should follow their existing processes (i.e. first look regionally, then push to DPH)). The request will then be shared with other MRC units and where appropriate, with the COVID-19 response group.

Requests coming from entities outside of the MRC system to the COVID-19 Response Command Center may be shared with the COVID-19 response group or the MRC network, or both, depending on the nature of the request.