OHIO's

Volunteer Management Guidelines

September 2018

Contents

Section I

Volunteer Recruitment

Affiliated Volunteer

Vs.

Spontaneous Volunteer

Volunteer Recruitment

Introduction

A properly planned recruitment program for volunteers in your community is essential before a disaster happens. Recruitment of volunteers for your program is crucial to its success and sustainability. When trying to determine who should be recruited, the following questions should be asked:

1. Who will be interested in volunteering?
2. How will I find the right type of volunteer that in needed?
3. Who will be able to meet the requirements of volunteering?
4. What would motivate people to volunteer in disasters?
5. What and where is the best way to let people know about their volunteer options?
6. When will screening, selecting, and training volunteers take place?

Successful recruitment and placement helps service programs achieve their goals more effectively and is often the result of thoughtfully considered marketing and public relations efforts. Recruiters must have a clear understanding why the organization wants to engage volunteers, then design valuable and fulfilling assignments around those specific community needs.

In the recruitment of volunteers, strategies may need to be adjusted depending on the audience, i.e. medical / healthcare, recovery organizations, service groups, etc. In the case where a highly skilled group of volunteers is required, a targeted approach is needed to obtain these volunteers. However, in cases where no special training is needed, a more broad-based recruitment by stating what needs to be done can be used.

Recruiting volunteers has elements of both employment recruitment and media campaigns. In addition, recruiting volunteers to work in public health and disaster response can be different from recruiting volunteers to work in a nonprofit agency. Assess to what degree each of the following issues exist in your community before beginning your recruitment efforts:

1. The general public may not perceive state or local government as a place to volunteer. Those interested or considering volunteering often turn to local non-profit organizations, rather than their state or local government. Some volunteer positions that may be available for disaster workers may be different from those in traditional volunteer fields.

2. While most people are familiar with volunteer opportunities available at places such as hospitals or service organizations, they may not be aware of the unique opportunities awaiting them in organizations such as the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) or Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT).

3. Establishing a culture of volunteerism is vitally important. Establishing partnerships with key local groups and resources for volunteers is necessary.

**Strategies for Recruiting Affiliated Volunteers**

An affiliated volunteer is a person who is attached to a recognized voluntary agency that has trained them for disaster response, and has a mechanism in place to manage them in an emergency. Identifying and recruiting volunteers is one of the most essential tasks of a volunteer coordinator, and creative strategies are needed to develop a volunteer base sufficient to meet the needs of the program and community they serve. There are many means for an organization to recruit needed volunteers. Success is driven by having a defined recruitment program and implementing it. The first steps should include identifying what has and has not worked for other volunteer programs, and best practice applications as defined in other successful national, state, and local initiatives.

Successful Recruiting

In August 2017, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) conducted a survey to assess the programmatic needs of local MRC Units across Ohio. This information can be used for other volunteer organizations. The two questions posed during the survey were:

- What volunteer recruitment tools do you use?
- How effective do you believe these recruitment tools to be?

As shown in the following graph, word of mouth is the most common tool used by respondents to recruit new volunteers (93%), followed by the use of brochures (80%) and social media (76%). A significant number of participants (73%) also indicated that they recruit members using a booth at community events.
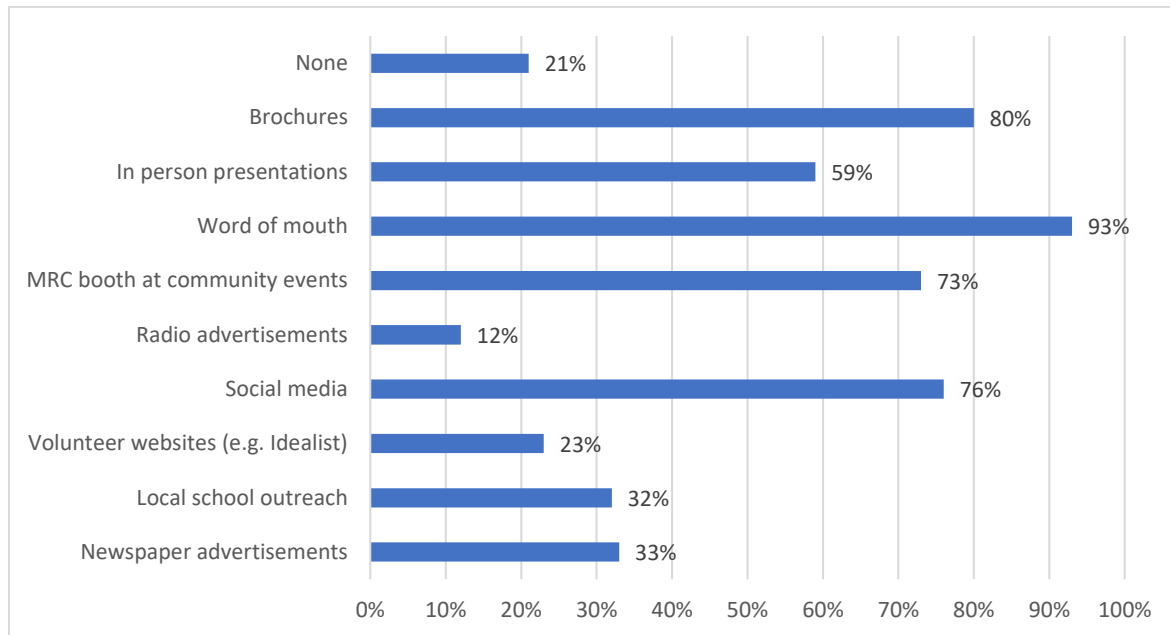
When respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of each of the identified tools, the most effective tools identified by respondents were:

- Word of mouth
- In person presentations
- Booth at community events
- Local school outreach

When asked for best practices for volunteer recruitment, engagement and/or retention, several volunteer coordinators cited regular outreach to volunteers via e-mail and/or newsletters, and several recommended "piggybacking" efforts with other volunteer organizations, community groups, or local emergency management agencies. Specific recommendations included:

- For the medical field, connect with Human Resource Managers at hospitals, nursing homes, public health departments, and schools to identify retiring nurses and other medical professionals who may be willing to join a unit.

- For a CERT program, partner with city and county governments, local veteran organizations, hardware stores (corporate or local owner), grocery store, other local businesses, civic organizations, faith-based organizations, and community center employees, to name a few. Recruit the target audience you need as a volunteer to meet the needs of your local community. The listed partners above are all areas to find certain skill sets. Remember: there is a place for everyone.

- Utilize the Workplace CERT concept when partnering with city and county governments and local businesses. City and county governments have employees of a large diverse skill base. CERT Basic Training can be conducted during work hours or after hours. The employees are vetted and have the reliability of a responsible workforce. Prepared employees are more resilient and better able to continue to come to work after a disaster. This is your key to recruiting in local governments and businesses.

- Identify community needs, training, exercises, and educational programs to involve volunteers.

- Offer trainings to include community members that are not MRC / CERT members.

- Coordinate with local high schools and/or universities. If you are in need of a one-time mission, such as sandbagging and PODs, high schools are a perfect match. The school's sports teams are a great community asset. This will give the students an opportunity to be part of their community's recovery, for physical conditioning, and possibly motivate them to become an affiliated team member.

- Establish social media campaigns for recruitment by communicating certain work skills needed by the organization for community recovery by using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. Use social media showing the community involvement of the program. Members of the public will want to become a team member when they see what the program is all about, the meaningful missions and activities, along with a great learning experience.

- Give presentations about how the program can be useful by using the Teen CERT and Campus CERT concept at high schools, universities, or with active Health Occupation Student Association (HOSA) chapters, as well as technical programs and colleges with nursing and/or public health programs for recruiting students, staff, teachers, professors, dorm attendants and parents.

To help overcome the challenges the programs may face forming, developing, operating, and sustaining, with the use of best practices and the Federal MRC Program has identified 12 Factors for Success, a comprehensive set of programmatic elements, which form a path for all types of volunteer leaders, including CERT, can follow to develop their program are listed below. Factor 5 in this programmatic "toolkit" addresses volunteer recruitment.

https://mrc.hhs.gov/FactorsForSuccess#FactorsForSuccess/FactorIndex

1. Purpose and Scope
2. Establish Community Partnerships
3. Financial Need and Funding Resources
4. Structure and Unit Composition
5. Volunteer Recruitment Procedures
6. Volunteer Screening and Selection Procedures

Another health resource of volunteer recruitment information can be located in the MRC Toolbox found on the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO's) website: http://www.naccho.org/ (You must have access to the NACCHO port to access the toolbox.)

Volunteer Coordinators are encouraged to review the guidance documents available on this website under the Develop Volunteer Recruitment Plan link. The following section also presents a description of the essential components of a Volunteer Recruitment Plan, based on information in these guidance documents.[12]

Developing an Affiliated Volunteer Recruitment Plan

A plan should be developed to recruit volunteers whose training, licenses, credentials, and background support and foster the volunteer program mission and purpose, and the needs of the community. The following steps are recommended for developing a Volunteer Recruitment Plan:

1. **Determine the volunteer skills and experience needed for your program to fulfill its mission(s)**

   All local volunteer programs should have written missions, visions, and goals, and a clear picture of the types of activities in which volunteers might participate. Programs that support Points of Dispensing (PODs) for medical countermeasures, Points of Distribution (PODs) for essential commodities, or Volunteer Reception Centers (VRCs) should have "job action sheets". These job action sheets should specify the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and the required training and experience necessary to understand / operate in those activities.

   Volunteer Coordinators should work with local emergency management agencies, local health departments, other volunteer professionals, preparedness, and responder entities in determining

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[1] Center for Community Health and Development. (2017). Chapter 11, Section 2, Recruiting Volunteers. Retrieved September 5, 2017, from the Community Tool Box: http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/volunteers/recruiting/main

[2] American Hospital Association's Best Practices and Recruiting and Retention Resource Guide for Healthcare Volunteers. (2003). Retrieved September 5, 2017, from http://www.ahvrp.org/files/programs/recruitment-retention-guide-for-volunteers.pdf

and meeting community needs, supporting pre-incident recruitment of volunteers that may be needed in a response, and supporting initial and on-going emergency response training for registered volunteers. Suggested partners include, but are not limited to, the following groups:

- Healthcare community
- Universities, Colleges, High Schools, and Technical Schools
- Faith-based community organizations
- Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)
- Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD)
- Non-profit, private, and community-based volunteer groups
- Local business owners/managers (i.e. hardware and grocery stores)
- Local news media
- Non-English speaking coalitions/communities including ESOLs (English Speakers of Other Languages) and/or ethnic community organizations

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other letters of agreement regarding the services of volunteer organizations should be included in the appropriate local emergency management agency's operation plans.

2. **Determine the makeup of your community and its community sectors**

Some community sectors include schools, places of worship, neighborhoods, businesses, non-English speaking, access and functional need communities, service organizations and clubs, coalitions, youth groups, senior groups, media outlets, grassroots groups, etc. Having a thorough understanding of the sectors in your area will help you to be aware of who is available as a volunteer in your community. This is essential if you wish to target your recruiting to a specific population (e.g., nurses or interpreters, including those proficient in American Sign Language).

It is helpful to seek volunteers who reflect the diversity found in the community, and who have ties with other community groups or agencies. They bring knowledge of the cultures and circumstances of the population groups they come from and will enhance your program's ability to become relatable and have a better understanding of those groups. Furthermore, they enrich the organization with their perspectives and the variety of their experiences and backgrounds. A diverse group of volunteers also makes for possible heightened cultural sensitivity within the organization.

By encouraging diversity in the program, you also increase its appeal; diversity in volunteer organizations will encourage others to respond if they believe that the group is inclusive.

3. **Learn who is interested in volunteering in your community, who might be interested specifically in your volunteer program, and determine:**

- Volunteer's purpose for volunteering (for your program or with other organizations)

- What motivates them

- How they were recruited

- Their demographics (age, sex, culture, etc.)

You might do this by simply asking current or potential volunteers, or by looking for information from local and national studies on volunteers. Check with local researchers or a local volunteer center, if available in your community, to see what data is available on volunteers in your community.

Understanding why people may be willing to volunteer can help you identify effective marketing strategies that appeal to various people. Some reasons that people volunteer include:

- Many people respond when someone tells them they are needed, or a friend asks them to join along

- They care deeply about the mission of the program

- They are motivated by their view of the world – because of religion, ethics, politics, philosophy, etc. – to try to improve the quality of life in their communities

- They seek the external recognition and internal good feeling that may come with volunteering.

- They feel a need to "pay it forward" or repay society for help or opportunities that were extended to them.

- They have untapped skills not used in their daily occupation, or have a desire to learn and/or do something other than their regular job duties

- They want experience and/or training provided through the program

- They enjoy the social situation, and value the contacts with other volunteers, participants, and staff members

    o This is often true for people who do not work outside the home, and do not have the daily social contact that such work brings with it – seniors, stay-at-home parents, etc.

- It makes them feel needed and useful

- Sometimes people offer to volunteer because of a court-ordered community service requirement for non-violent probationers

The number one reason why people do not volunteer: "No one asked them"

4. **Identify community advocates or champions who can help you recruit volunteers, including:**

   - Credible community members you can count on to enthusiastically support recruitment efforts

   - Influential, well-known, and respected members of the community

   - Board members, advisors, and engaged community partners / stakeholders

   - Community members with talents in critical areas, i.e., fundraising, plan and policy development, and building public awareness

5. **Develop a community marketing/promotion plan to increase the visibility of your local volunteer program**

   Seek out marketing and public relations persons who may be able to volunteer some time to help you build a marketing plan and "tell the story" of your volunteer program. A local agency's Public Information Officers (PIOs) or a current program member that has know-how or experience with marketing/promotion may be able to assist as well. Activities could include:

   - Developing a recruitment messaging strategy that will be attractive to your intended audience(s) and convince them to join your program

   - Recruitment campaigns tied to specific awareness campaigns noted at https://healthfinder.gov/NHO/default.aspx or https://www.ready.gov/calendar

   - Creating a marketing / promotion committee by training volunteers to give presentations about the volunteer-program capabilities and its history

   - Providing volunteers with generic auxiliary / business cards, which state, "I am a Medical Reserve Corps / Community Emergency Response Team volunteer. Let me tell you about it," and "Here's how to sign up," for volunteers to give to people they encounter

   - Getting to know and partnering with mass media outlets including local print, television, and radio reporters and letting them know of upcoming events that are interesting to cover

   - Using program videos or creating local videos for Public Access TV, YouTube, or other video-based social media maintained by the agency

- Collaborating with local businesses, newspapers, etc. to include a flyer about the volunteer program in paper or e-mailed statements to their customers

    o Example: inserting flyers in local utility bills or posting messages on partner websites.

- Using free local / community newspapers to highlight the volunteer program and local volunteers in action

- Identifying free community service messaging opportunities to advertise the local program, such as libraries, places of worship, and store marquees, scoreboards at sporting events, fast food restaurant marquees, grocery stores, digital board messaging (car dealerships), etc.

- Maintaining a supply of promotional materials for distribution

    o These materials can be obtained FREE from FEMA publications for CERT and other preparedness materials or HHS for MRC

    o Contact the State MRC Coordinator or the CERT/Citizen Corps State Coordinator for other materials

    o https://www.ready.gov/publications

    o https://mrc.hhs.gov/pageviewfldr/About

- Participating in your local Healthcare Coalition or Local Emergency Planning Committees

- Initiating a local / regional newsletter

- Invite local radio hosts or other news media to participate in activities, trainings, and missions. The radio host and news media will go back to work talking about their experience with your program and how they were involved, not just writing an article

    o This is free advertising

6. **Identify potential volunteers**

- Define target groups from which to recruit individuals with the skill sets, training, licensure, etc. you are looking for, and identify specific strategies to recruit these individuals

    o This might include giving a presentation at meetings attended by target individuals

- Recruit volunteers through professional licensing boards, professional organizations, other state agencies, and large private organizations with regional or statewide memberships (i.e. Honda, Proctor and Gamble, freight companies, and construction companies)

- Attend professional conferences and meetings to recruit volunteers and to increase awareness of the program

- Identify opportunities to recruit volunteers from the community at-large by:

  o Setting up booths at local health fairs, art fairs, festivals, carnivals, sporting events, fundraisers, job fairs, etc.

  o Writing letters to the editor in the local newspaper or asking if you could write a guest column

  o Broadcasting a Public Service Announcement on a local radio or television station or participating in an on-the-air interview

  o Asking current volunteers in your program to participate in a presentation to another group that they are involved with (e.g., the Rotary Club, a religious group, or a health class at a volunteer's high school)

  o Posting notices at laundromats; grocery stores; high schools; university dorms, student unions, cafeterias, and academic buildings; houses of worship; recreation centers and sports clubs; community centers; performing arts centers; post offices; drug stores; doctors' offices, hospitals, and health clinics; and libraries

  o Encouraging volunteers to bring family and friends to any social activities sponsored by your program, so they can meet other volunteers and learn more about the program

  o Holding recruitment events, similar to direct sale parties (Tupperware, Pampered Chef, Mary Kay, etc.)

7. **Establish a specific plan for recruiting healthcare volunteers, as applies to your program**

   - Determine specific needs for healthcare volunteers

   - Identify opportunities to recruit healthcare volunteers

   - Meet with county and local medical societies.

   - Meet with hospital public safety and preparedness personal, nursing leaders, medical practice office managers, etc.

8. **Determine the best times to recruit volunteers**

   Recruiting efforts should be ongoing, but not all-consuming. A way to potentially lose new volunteers is to not respond to their applications in a timely manner. Likewise, do not lose sight of sustaining current volunteers because your efforts focused on recruiting and processing new volunteers is taking too much of your time.

Consider how much time you can dedicate to recruiting, especially via in-person presentations. If possible, train existing volunteers to conduct outreach presentations. Also, quantify how many new volunteers you can process each month while maintaining your other job duties and the current members.

Develop a recruiting calendar that allows you maximum exposure to potential volunteers. The calendar should be designed to have new members recruited and processed into the program before annual incidents or events requiring volunteer support happen. This can include such things as winter storms, flooding, exercises, or seasonal immunization clinics.

One best practice for recruiting new members is empowering your members with guidance. There are always certain members that show the capabilities to be the lead person for tasks, assignments, and committees. Utilize the assets within your program. Give volunteers the opportunity to help develop the program. Remember: one person cannot do everything that's needed to have a successful program.

9. **Follow-up with potential recruits**

Once you have made contact with potential volunteers, and they have shown some interest, you have to validate what is in it for them; that volunteering will be a good return on their time and investment in the program. Some ways to accomplish this include:

- Sending them a "welcome" letter from the local volunteer coordinator

- Directing them to online or in-person training for an orientation

- Inviting potential volunteers to meet program members to get a "feel" for the organization

    - This would also provide an opportunity for volunteer staff members to "interview" potential volunteers to get to know them, identify their specific interests, and share information about the organization

- Inviting volunteers to observe an event sponsored by your program before they commit

- Writing a letter to potential volunteers – either a general letter if you are recruiting a large number of people, or a personalized note

    - Both types of communication should explain what the volunteer program does, how to volunteer, and why you need their help

    - Also, explain the benefits of volunteering

- Ask current volunteers to describe the benefits and satisfaction they get from volunteering and compile their responses to give to potential volunteers.

Characteristics of a good recruitment message.

The opening of the message should be able to catch the reader's attention, to entice the potential volunteer to continue reading or listening. The body of the message should be appealing enough to interest the potential volunteer in considering the volunteer opportunity or, at least, in contacting the agency to get more information.

The body of the message presents information in an order that psychologically matches how people will think about the offer:

- **Need**: Is there a problem?

- **Solution**: Can this volunteer opportunity help solve it?

- **Fears / Questions**: Will I be capable of helping with it?

- **Benefits**: What is in it for me?

- **Contact Point**: How do I get involved?

Spend more time on need than on logistics. People will first decide whether your program is worth volunteering for and then decide whether they can fit you into their schedule. The need you stress may be yours, your clients', or a perceived need / benefit of the volunteer.

- The message is easily understood. The message is intelligible and avoids jargon, unless it is included for a specific reason. The message has been tested for ease of comprehension by someone other than the author of the message. Remember: what can be misunderstood, will be.

- The message gives a complete picture: problem, type of work, requirements, timeframe, persons to talk with. The message does not make the potential volunteer have to do any extra work in order to understand what is going on.

- The contact information for the message includes the name of the point of contact, not just the name of the agency, so the volunteer is aware of who they are to be directly in contact with. Volunteering is a personal decision and people like to talk with other people about it. This must be balanced based on the medium used. For a radio / television spot, or a social media post, give a name as a point of contact. However, if ordering several thousand copies of materials, there is a risk of having several thousand out-of-date items if the person listed leaves that role.

Are You Ready to Volunteer?

The Medical Reserve Corps Can Do More with You!

When considering how to spend volunteer time, take a close look at the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) in your local community. Train with other medical, public health professionals, and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs. Contribute your skills and expertise throughout the year and in times of community need.

Volunteer duties with the MRC include both medical and non-medical roles. People just like you have discovered volunteering with the MRC to be a rewarding experience. MRC allows volunteers to be productive, contribute in a meaningful manner, and have fun!

Donate your talents, experience, and time to make a positive impact when most needed. Volunteer to make your community safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to an emergency.

The MRC commits to providing:

- Regular opportunities to team up with other medical professionals to build an effective emergency response organization
- Meaningful, structured training opportunities, and on-going emergency response training
- Opportunities to work with other pre-identified partner groups / organizations
- Recognition for your volunteer efforts
- Support in maintaining your status as an MRC professional

Join us by contacting your local health department for more details.

(INSERT LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION HERE)

To: Volunteers Interested in Joining the

(Unit name) Medical Reserve Corps

Thank you for your interest in volunteering for the (Unit name) Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a national network of volunteers organized locally to enhance response to natural disasters and human-caused events, and to provide surge capacity during public health emergencies. MRC volunteers are fully engaged in improving the overall wellness of individuals and their communities. Through their service, gaps in public health are filled, emergency preparedness capabilities are strengthened, responses are quicker, and recovery is smoother. By reducing vulnerabilities locally, the MRC is lessening the need for federal level involvement while making the communities in which they serve healthier and stronger.

As the host organization for your local MRC Unit, the (name of host agency) is actively recruiting new members/volunteers to assist during public health emergencies and in times of community need. The MRC seeks volunteers from various professional and non-professional backgrounds, including medical and non-medical, behavioral health, public health, and support staff. The MRC offers flexibility and allows volunteers to choose their desired level of participation and commitment. *A desire to serve combined with skills and capabilities that can be used to benefit your neighbors are the main criteria shared by MRC volunteers.*

MRC volunteers may be asked to staff mass dispensing clinics (e.g., dispensing antibiotics or vaccines) and respond to threats ranging from pandemic influenza to bioterrorist attacks. However, MRC volunteers could be activated for a wide range of public health support services needed such as health fairs, seasonal influenza clinics, and health and disease prevention screenings.

All volunteers receive training specific to their role, as defined by national guidance and recommendations. Properly registered and trained volunteers have limited liability protection during local, state, or federally declared emergencies, disasters, drills, and trainings.

If you are 18 years old or older, please join thousands of Ohio citizens who are already making a difference in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters. Go to (agency website or phone number) to register today.

Again, on behalf of the (name of host agency), thank you for your interest in becoming an MRC volunteer. If you have questions, contact: _____.

Sincerely,
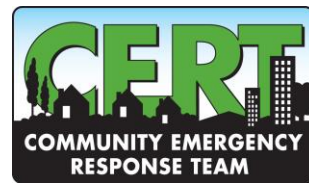
Community Emergency Response Team Volunteering

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.[3] CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks. Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters will be built and enhanced.

At the same time, the CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and specifically structured so that the local program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities. CERT volunteers are trained to respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations, but they can also support their communities during non-emergency events as well. There are over 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with a number of them in Ohio. More than 600,000+ individuals trained since CERT became a national program.

FEMA's CERT Program trains volunteers to prepare for the types of disasters that their community may face. Through hands-on practice and realistic exercises, CERT members:

- Learn how to take care of yourself and family members, so you are ready to respond as a CERT member.

- Learn how to safely respond to manmade and natural hazards.

- Help organize basic disaster response.

- Promote preparedness by hosting and participating in community events.

- To learn how you can register for CERT or find a program near you, please contact your local emergency management agency or FEMA at **https://community.fema.gov/Register/**

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[3] https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team

Section II

Volunteer Sustainability

Volunteer Sustainability

Ohio Volunteer Sustainability Strategies

Introduction

Maintaining an active, engaged, and trained volunteer program is essential. Once recruited, a volunteer becomes an advocate, champion, ambassador, and in times of disaster a valued team member. It will be necessary to dedicate a significant amount of effort to sustain volunteers. Volunteers will fill many roles in different capacities that bring a diverse skill set.

According to past feedback, volunteer motives vary, but generally, people become involved for one or more of the following reasons:

1. They want to contribute to a cause in which they believe

2. They feel they need to fulfill moral, business, and/or social expectations

3. They are motivated by a desire for change; to make a difference

4. They want to have a sense of ownership and control that they have participated in the recovery of their own community

5. They want to learn new preparedness and response skills

6. They want to have fun and enjoy themselves

7. They were asked to volunteer

General Guidelines to Consider in Sustaining Volunteers

1. **Value their time** – Volunteers are donating their time and energy to your group. Do not waste their time by creating unnecessary work, meetings, and training. When assigning tasks, be respectful and make sure to use each volunteer wisely. Volunteers that do not feel valued will quickly lose interest. Holding volunteer meetings can be an important support tool, which communicates value to the volunteer. By creating agendas, staying for meetings, and being mindful of distractions, volunteers remain engaged. Encourage working meetings but do not go too far off track. Avoid scheduling or conducting meetings without a full agenda and ensure the content is important and relevant.

2. **Utilize their strengths** – Volunteers enjoy using their expertise for a good cause. Allow them to apply their strengths to better your group, and ensure the task is challenging and stimulating. Not all volunteers want to exercise their occupational expertise; some would prefer to diversify their actions. This can get tricky but do your best to utilize their skill set while ensuring that each

task or assigned job is fulfilling. An example could be if a volunteer is an accountant, suggest their designation be related to finance, or if they are a certified diver, consider assigning them to a related field. However, if a volunteer would rather work in a clerical duty, allow them to go through any training or process required, and assign them to that area. Remember: a happy volunteer is a loyal volunteer.

3. **Listen to volunteer feedback** – Make every effort to listen to what your volunteers say. Volunteers who feel ignored will not be volunteers for long. Ask their opinions, listen to their suggestions, and always follow up. When a volunteer approaches with an idea, listen and ask questions. If it can be accommodated, let them know when it is put into effect, or task them with championing the effort to put it into effect. However, if it is one that is not actionable, follow-up with a timely explanation. Understand what the volunteer wants, learn what their expectations are, and communicate regularly. The level of your volunteers' engagement reflects your ability to listen to their wants, needs, and suggestions. A useful tip would be to create a comment box either electronically or in a place of meeting. Some people will not be comfortable giving constructive feedback in a group setting or during one-on-one meetings. The volunteer comment box would be an anonymous way for a volunteer to raise their concerns without singling themselves out, and it will guarantee honest feedback.

4. **Offer tools and support** – Volunteers deserve the utmost respect. Provide them with the resources and tools they need to be successful. They have busy lives outside of volunteering, and it is your job to understand their commitments. Conducting annual performance evaluations will show them you support their efforts and want to see them succeed. Respect them enough to spend time talking about their work and increase their responsibility when appropriate. It is often useful to ask their peers to rate their performance and share this information during their review. Peer-to-peer feedback is extremely effective, and it will offer insight.

5. **Provide crisis counseling and spiritual support** – There are many things that a volunteer might encounter while on missions. They will be seeing a lot of devastation and/or speaking to survivors that have lost everything or someone. Being in this type of environment for long periods of time, or, for the first time, for some that have never had to experience a disaster, might take an emotional toll on the volunteer. It is essential to have a plan and resources available before a disaster happens.

6. **Show your appreciation** – Treat your volunteers like major donors. They give their time, energy and sometimes funding. Show your appreciation with stewardship. Volunteers are diverse, and each one requires custom interaction that will, in turn strengthen your relationship. Utilize an awards program to recognize your volunteers for their efforts. Have an annual gathering, such as a potluck or cook out, with an awards ceremony for family and friends.

7. **Create a volunteer engagement policy** – Remember that your volunteers are very valuable. Ideally, you should have a volunteer engagement policy that is developed by management, key

volunteers, and other leaders. If you do not have a volunteer engagement policy, take the steps necessary to plan and implement a policy.

8. Numerous pieces of literature cite what is termed the "Volunteer Bill of Rights" which helps you to develop a policy and guide.

   The following has been identified as the Volunteer Bill of Rights:

   o The right to work in a safe environment

   o The right to be treated with respect by all members

   o The right to receive training for specific missions

   o The right to engaged in meaningful work and to be actively included regardless of any physical limitation

   o The right to be informed the impact your work has had on the community

   o The right to ask about the program's work

   o The right to provide feedback about their experiences with the program.

Best practices for sustainability

- Involve your program in local educational efforts in preparedness. Conducting local school preparedness assemblies on "how to make you own preparedness kit for your family and pets" at the end of the school year. Other potential audiences include: nursing homes, assisted living facilities, supported living centers, summer camps, or bible schools, as examples. Remember to tailor the material to fit the needs of the audience.

- You can have your program do several specialized trainings, such as damage assessment, traffic control, etc. Do not forget that it is not a complete cycle until you exercise what is learned. Exercising new skills presents an opportunity to perfect them, integrate them into existing skills, and learn that there might be other ways or processes that may be better.

- Exercise with other programs. This gives an opportunity to build partnerships.

- Partner with neighboring programs. You can even look to other programs outside of your county to build partnerships that will multiply the capabilities and resources of each.

- Ask to join an exercise that is already planned that could integrate your program's skills into it. If it is a required / evaluated exercise, not all components have to be evaluated. This gives an opportunity to show the program's capabilities to partners.

- There are several other opportunities for programs to give back to the community. Some suggestions include:

  - Traffic control for staging sites and shelters during a disaster

  - Traffic control for parking at Volunteer Reception Centers (VRCs), Family Assistance Centers (FACs), or shot clinics

  - Traffic control for local football games, county fairs, and local events

  - Assist in staffing first aid stations and local events

  - Assist in staffing at emergency shelters for both, humans and pets

  - Assist in staffing a POD (Point of Distribution for commodities or a Point of Dispensing for medical countermeasures)

  - Firefighter rehab

  - Conduct damage assessment in coordination with the local EMA

Key principles to remember

1. A positive experience encourages volunteers to continue to provide support for current and future operations.[4] A poor volunteer experience could lead to disruptive and/or unsafe behavior.

   Disaster and emergency volunteer management "volunteer leadership" is not a linear process. Just as emergency preparedness is a cycle linked by overlapping phases including prevention, response, recovery, and mitigation; so is volunteer management. Strong and sustainable volunteer programs are founded and grounded upon people with passion and programs with policies and principles.

2. Volunteer recruitment, reception, training, and retention are interwoven. Therefore, it is useful to conceptualize spontaneous volunteers' retention in terms of a paradigm in which the process is continuous and cyclic with opportunities for outreach, reception, engagement, and interaction with a prospective or registered volunteer. Every interaction is an opportunity to build the relationships, interests, skills, sense of purpose and connectedness that build upon the individual's desire to be useful and of service.

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[4] http://wmmrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Whole-Plan-in-PDF.pdf Pg. 30

3. Citizens Corps groups have a unique opportunity to be the conduit to attracting, receiving, assessing, training, and managing spontaneous volunteers. The fact that there are existing disaster volunteer infrastructures such as MRC / CERT makes it evident to the spontaneous volunteer that the world they have "walked into" is not completely alien. When evidence of organizational structure is perceived, particularly in the time of chaos, spontaneous volunteers frequently feel a sense of security and affirmation that their decision to help is validated. Evidence of organizational structure may be seen, heard, and psychologically and/or emotionally experienced. These factors are generated through means that are already in motion within the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System throughout the year.

4. All volunteers want to make a difference. Allow your volunteers to grow, and together your work will create change that supports the mission. Do not forget to have fun with your volunteers; they are phenomenal people that share your same desire for disaster relief.

5. Suggestions for spontaneous volunteers:

   o Spontaneous volunteers will be contacted for follow-up post-incident to convey appreciation for services rendered and recruitment into an affiliated group. Issues to consider monitoring include potential physical / medical issues related to job assignments. If needed, volunteers should be offered critical incident stress management (CISM) assistance.

Section III

Training and Exercising

Volunteers

Training and Exercising Volunteers

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

The MRC has a Volunteer Training Program that guide MRC volunteers at the local level. It provides unit leaders and volunteers with trainings that align with the Competencies for Disaster Medicine and Public Health (DMPH). The competencies establish a minimum standard baseline level of knowledge and skills that all MRC volunteers should have, regardless of their roles within the MRC unit.   Units may choose to expand on the competencies in order to train volunteers at a more advanced level using the MRC Volunteer Training Matrix. The trainings are accessible through MRC-TRAIN. The matrix has four categories:

- Learning Paths: Preparedness, Response, Leadership, and Support for Community Resiliency
- Disaster Medicine and Public Health Competencies
- MRC Performance Qualifications
- Suggested Trainings / Tools

MRC Unit Coordinators should encourage volunteers to complete the training courses. The courses can accessed directly on MRC TRAIN. https://oh.train.org/DesktopShell.aspx

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

The CERT program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their community and trains them in basic disaster response skills such as: fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.

CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks. Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters is built and enhanced.

- FEMA 20-hour CERT Basic Training

Recommended training

It is recommended that volunteers undergo some form of orientation to the volunteer program as a whole, and in the context of their local program's mission, whether related to emergency response, public health, or both.   It is also important for all volunteers take the loyalty oath to affirm their commitment.

As volunteering does not have a prescriptive one-size-fits-all approach, and each program has their own individualized mission, suggested trainings are intended to help fill the need for service in each program's jurisdiction. Your program can be a source of specialized capabilities to become very proficient at them instead of having multiple skills that are not refined. It is highly encouraged for each program to have their own individualized training plan in their volunteer handbooks / plans in accordance with their program's specific mission and needs.

Developing a local training and exercise plan

It is essential to train and exercise volunteers. This helps to teach, reinforce, and practice the skills they need to function effectively as part of a disaster response organization. You should understand and answer the four following items:

1. Why should you have training plan for volunteers?
2. Who should train new volunteers?
3. How do you develop training programs for volunteers?
4. What are the principles of adult learning?

Many volunteers are charged with complicated tasks that take a lot of understanding and knowledge to do properly. Sometimes, you may be fortunate and someone with the perfect combination of training and experience will show up and be ready to offer their talents for the exact position you need: an accountant offers their services to help with financial issues; a social worker offers to help talk to people who just lost their homes in a flood.

Unfortunately, this is not always the case, nor is it even often the case. Many times, well-meaning people will offer to help in times of disaster, but are lacking many of the skills that you need the most. In many occasions, your program will want to have a formal training program because, while enthusiasm for the cause of disaster relief in response is motivating, it needs to be gathered and focused to truly meet objectives.

Why should your organization have training and exercise program for volunteers?

The use of volunteers in emergency and disaster response is often guided by policies and rules established at the federal, state or local level. In addition, training and exercise programs are necessary to provide for the safety of volunteers. Some issues to consider when deciding upon the elements of a volunteer training and exercise program include:

1. The number one reason for training is safety, for both the member and the team

2. Training builds confidence among team members and within the team, as a whole

3. Training and exercising helps new volunteers get to know their fellow team members, the program, and the job, quickly and efficiently

4. Training and exercising your volunteers establishes that there is a minimum competency that all volunteers are expected to obtain

    a. Exercising gives the volunteer an opportunity to perfect that newly learned skill to become more confident in their performance

5. Many volunteers see training and exercising as a benefit of being part of an organization

    a. Training teaches them skills that may be helpful to them elsewhere and may even help them in their professional lives or careers

6. Training and exercising publicly acknowledges a necessary level of proficiency

    a. By training and exercising your volunteers, you are stating that the organization is professional and capable of doing important work

7. Some organizations use training and exercising as a "weeding out" technique, to make sure that volunteers who have signed up will be likely to keep their commitments

Who should train and exercise new volunteers?

Once the decision has been made to train and exercise volunteers in a certain program area, you will need to decide who will oversee the training and exercise program. Of course, this will depend greatly upon the situation: how many volunteers need to be trained, how much training is needed, and what resources are available to be applied to training and exercising.

Some volunteer programs have a lead role for training and exercising delegated to a team member to relieve the burden of these tasks from the coordinator.

A volunteer coordinator typically plays a key role in training and exercising and should assist with the trainings and exercises to ensure consistency and accomplishment of stated objectives. This can be done by serving as an instructor, evaluator, controller, or other relevant role.

Other volunteers are often an integral part of training and exercising, although they rarely run the programs. In smaller programs, the entirety of training and exercising might take place by one volunteer shadowing another for a few days; for larger groups or more formal trainings, volunteers can give trainees an important perspective on "what it's really like" while exercising.

How do you develop training and exercise programs?

The following sections are useful steps in developing a training and exercise program for volunteers:

Decide what to teach volunteers
- Why are you training volunteers?
- When new volunteers finish training, what should they know?
- What do they want to know?

Both the trainer and the trainees will have goals for the training and exercise program; it is important that a training program be developed with both in mind. If the trainer does not have clear ideas of what the volunteers should leave understanding, chances are the volunteers will leave the training or exercise session confused.

Decide how you will teach and exercise them

What kind of training and exercise program do you want to give new volunteers? Simpler programs are good for smaller groups, simpler tasks, and groups that do not have sufficient resources for a full training and exercise program. Common solutions for small groups include using a buddy system or mentoring opportunities.

When larger groups of people are to be trained or exercised, or there is more challenging work associated with specialized resources, a more extensive training and exercise plan is often more appropriate. This could take a few hours, a few months, or anywhere in between. The amount of material to be covered and the resources available should be your guide.

The following steps are applicable to any size group and useful in developing a formal training and exercise plan:

1. Identify the objectives, or goals, of a training and exercise program

2. Establish what training and exercises are necessary to meet those objectives or goals

3. Write a budget for your training and exercise program

4. Decide what materials you would like to use that will fit into your requirements and/or budget

5. Distribute information about the availability of training and exercises

6. Be certain that all elements of logistics have been worked out before each training and exercise session
7. Pay attention to the physical comfort of trainees
8. Set people at ease
9. Begin your training program!

Principles of adult learning

Adults must feel a need to learn. It is important that they understand the relevance of what is being taught to what they will be doing. For example, if the trainer is explaining group dynamics to a group of people who will be working in the local program, they will probably have a better audience if the trainees know that they will be talking to groups, and not just participating in one-on-one dynamics. If trainees understand that, the information automatically becomes useful, not just another lecture they need to sit through before they can dive in to the work.

Allow adults to share their previous experiences and relate them to the present situation. Everyone likes to feel that they have something to bring to the discussion; by relating past experiences to the current topic, your trainees will not only feel that they have something to add, but will also have a better understanding of the subjects being discussed. It is no longer academic to them, it is something they have experienced, something they know.

People learn better when the lessons are centered on solving problems. Instead of a lecture, presenting a problem and helping trainees find the answer is a much more effective way of teaching. People like to work things through. By presenting a problem, you ask people to think, not just passively accept what they are being told. Training should be interactive; balance support with challenging the learner and urge volunteers to use their creativity.

Remember that people are not the same. People learn in different ways, and may respond better to different approaches. The volunteer trainer should pay attention to how people are responding and try to modify the training accordingly.

Available training resources for all disaster volunteers:

1. https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/MRC-Core-Competencies-Training-Plan-with-Course-IDs-updated-3-April-2018_180403_174327.pdf
2. https://oh.train.org/DesktopShell.aspx
3. http://ready.ohio.gov/occ.stm
4. https://training.fema.gov/is/

Program-Specific Training and Exercises

Ohio MRC and CERT programs offer other training and exercise opportunities throughout the year that are not required but are accessible to those members who have completed the required training as described above. Training and exercises are usually held in conjunction with the local health department, local emergency management agency, fire department, and/or partner agencies. The trainings are also consistent with the mission of the local program. Examples of recommended MRC and CERT training courses include, but are not limited to:

MRC	CERT
- Public Health 101 - G489 - Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters (VRC operations) - IS-244 - Developing and Managing Volunteers - CPR / AED - Basic First Aid - Psychological First Aid and Self-Care - Cultural Competency - Family Emergency Planning - Access and Functional Needs Training - Standard Precautions and Respiratory Hygiene - Special Needs Shelter Management and Operations - Blood borne Pathogens - Points of Distribution (POD) - Disaster Behavioral Health - Radiological Disaster Response - You are the Help Until Help Arrives	- IS-100.b – Introduction to Incident Command - IS-200.b – ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents - IS-700.a – National Incident Management System (NIMS) - IS-800.c – National Response Framework (NRF) - IS-230 – Fundamentals of Emergency Management - IS-120 – Introduction to Exercises - IS-244 – Developing and Managing Volunteers - IS-288 – Role of Volunteer Organizations in Emergency Management - IS-317 – Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams - CERT animal Response Module I and II - CERT Traffic and Crowd Control - Points of Distribution (POD) - CPR/AED - FEMA IA Damage Assessment - American Red Cross Shelter Operations & Management - G489 Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters (VRC)

Two Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) courses that are required at a minimum by all local programs, per NIMS training guidelines, include:

IS-100.c – Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS): This course introduces ICS and provides the foundation for higher level ICS training. This course describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System. It also explains the relationship between ICS and the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

IS-700.b – National Incident Management System (NIMS): This course introduces and provides an overview of NIMS, which provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during domestic incidents.

Additionally, it is strongly recommended, and often required by local programs, that the following two courses are taken:

IS-200.b – ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents: IS-200 is designed to enable personnel to operate efficiently during an incident or event within the Incident Command System (ICS). IS-200 provides training on and resources for personnel who are likely to assume a supervisory position within the ICS.

IS-800.c – National Response Framework (NRF): This course introduces participants to the concepts and principles of the National Response Framework. The goal of this course is to familiarize participants with the National Response Framework and the ways it is applied in actual response situations.

These four courses can be accessed through the Ohio TRAIN or FEMA's Independent Study Program websites.

- o https://oh.train.org/DesktopShell.aspx
- o https://training.fema.gov/is/

Federal guidelines for NIMS compliance can be found at:
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/nims_training_program.pdf

Additional guidance specific to Ohio can be found at:
https://ema.ohio.gov/Documents/pdfs/NIMS/Ohio_NIMS_Implementation_Guidance_FFY2012_(April%202012).pdf

It should be noted that these are just minimum guidelines, and the training necessary will depend on the type of the incident, complexity, number of responders, role of the volunteers, and other factors unique to each incident.

Section IV

Spontaneous Volunteers

Spontaneous Volunteers

Spontaneous Volunteers

In the event of a disaster, volunteers are often needed to aid disaster survivors, rebuild communities, educate the public, provide medical care, and to participate in preparations for future disasters. Ideally, volunteers would affiliate with some sort of organization prior to disaster and be able to fill needed roles as necessary. Affiliation brings many advantages to volunteers, including training and the ability to fill vital roles quickly and effectively when needed. However, not all volunteers affiliate prior to a disaster.

Tens of thousands of volunteers, who come can be local or come from outside the impacted area. They have skills and sometimes are trained, but are not currently affiliated with a recognized disaster relief organization, or have no disaster training or experience, are referred to as spontaneous volunteers. Many of these volunteers are referred to a Volunteer Reception Center. They often present themselves in the aftermath of a disaster. Coordination between volunteer centers, local authorities, and community organizations before a disaster occurs will enable to effectively utilize spontaneous volunteers in the disaster response and recovery efforts.

A commonly asked question is who will spontaneously converge on or volunteer in disasters? Researchers have identified six different groups of people that tend to converge and volunteer.[5] The groups differ most notably in the motivating factor behind their convergence:

1. **Helpers** – people who have come to help survivors or responders in some way

2. **Returnees** – people who lived in the disaster impacted area but were evacuated

3. **The anxious** – people from outside the impacted area who are attempting to obtain information about family and friends

4. **The curious** – people who are motivated primarily to view the destruction left in the wake of the disaster

5. **Fans or supporters** – people who gather to display flags and banners encouraging or expressing gratitude to emergency responders

6. **Exploiters** – people who try to use a disaster for personal gain or profit

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[5] Corporation for National and Community Service. Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disaster. https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/olc/moodle/ds_managing_volunteers_in_time/viewbfff.html?id= 3198&chapterid=1924

Of these groups, the helpers must be identified from among the larger population of individuals who converge on a disaster. They are the only group likely to offer any tangible support to the response and recovery effort.

Benefits of spontaneous volunteers

Volunteers are a great benefit when they supplement existing government and organizational efforts to help communities prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. Volunteers can be a tangible economic benefit to the community through the work they perform, which may count as the local community's match for FEMA benefits if accurate records are maintained. Benefits of effective spontaneous volunteer management:

- Survivors benefit from volunteer's help
- Agencies get help to provide services
- Communities recover more quickly
- First responders are free of managing spontaneous volunteers
- Volunteers may become affiliated

Burdens of spontaneous volunteers

However, volunteers can also be a burden when they distract local resources from disaster response and recovery efforts by overwhelming the limited resources of the disaster-stricken community. Alternatively, they may undermine or duplicate existing efforts by not coordinating with their other stakeholders. Some may lack training, lack supervision, need background checks, and can cause negative publicity if not well managed.

There are disaster situations where volunteers are not appropriate. In terrorist attacks, the disaster area is also considered a crime scene, so spontaneous volunteers will not be allowed in the area. In addition, volunteers should not work in areas that present a significant risk to their health and welfare since first responders may have to abandon their response and recovery efforts for disaster survivors to assist volunteers who have become injured, trapped, or overwhelmed. Volunteering is a valuable activity that all walks of life can participate in; however, volunteers unable to protect and sustain themselves in a disaster area should stay out of the disaster areas and find different ways to volunteer.

Key point: disaster volunteers are priceless, but disaster survivors are the purpose

Critical planning elements for spontaneous volunteers

Spontaneous volunteers must be managed efficiently and effectively. These five critical elements to managing volunteers should be considered:

1. **Create a plan for spontaneous volunteers** – Conduct regular needs assessments. Stay current on the trends in volunteering. Assess volunteer positions on a regular basis. Write job action sheets for all volunteer positions. Build a team of staff and volunteers to guide the program volunteer leaders. The plan should include information for the Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) on spontaneous volunteers including information such as position descriptions. The plan should also include the use of technology, communications, and media messaging.

2. **Communicate with and place spontaneous volunteers** – Create a screening process for spontaneous volunteers. Place spontaneous volunteers in appropriate positions.

    a. Spontaneous volunteers by definition do not need to be recruited; however, it is vital that the process be managed effectively so that volunteers can be effectively placed in needed roles.

    b. Public messaging describing what type of positions and duties that need performed. (i.e. human and pet sheltering help, PODs for distributing essential items, canteen and rehab services for the first responders).

    c. Planning for spontaneous volunteer management starts with building an effective network of government and non-governmental organizations. An "agency orientation packet" is very effective with obtaining the needs of an organization and educates the purpose and processes of a VRC for the organization when requesting volunteers.

    d. During a disaster, volunteers must still fill out an application form and be interviewed. Interviews should be conducted to help best match spontaneous volunteers with appropriate and available volunteer needs. The interviews should explore the spontaneous volunteer's motivation for volunteering, skills, interests, training, availability, work preferences, limitations, background (e.g., criminal history), and other information. Interviews should be brief; they are intended to meet critical and immediate volunteer needs.

3. **Orient and train spontaneous volunteers** – Determine the needs of volunteers related to their position. Determine the needs of the organization related to the volunteer's position. Provide volunteers with written position descriptions. Organize orientation training for spontaneous volunteers. Organize in-service training to prepare for spontaneous volunteers or have the receiving organization responsible for the just-in-time training along with providing background checks if required of the volunteer.

a. All volunteers should receive safety training. The amount and type of training provided should be based on:
   i. Volunteer's level of experience
   ii. Physical or health demands of the work
   iii. Job to be performed and the equipment required for the task
   iv. General review of policies, regulations, and laws related to the work or situation

b. The orientation should also include a general disaster orientation discussing the scope and extent of the event, mental health issues of both volunteers and survivors, referral information, and contact lists.

4. **Supervise spontaneous volunteers** – Organize supervision activities to support the work of spontaneous volunteers. In most cases, supervision is the responsibility of the receiving organization.

5. **Evaluate the utilization of spontaneous volunteers** – Develop a plan to evaluate all aspects of the spontaneous volunteer. Use known standards to assess their use. Use the results of the evaluation to plan for future spontaneous volunteer use. Develop a plan to recruit spontaneous volunteers who contributed efficiently and effectively.

6. **Provide Leadership Contact Information** – Spontaneous volunteers shall be given the volunteer coordinator's or other affiliated program leader's contact information. When volunteers are released, they will be asked to consider registering with a Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD) or another recognized volunteer organization such as the MRC or CERT program.

Best practices for effective management of spontaneous volunteers in disasters

1. Develop a plan applicable to your county or agency
2. Pre-establish a VRC team and identify partners
3. Identify community needs for volunteers
4. VRC operations and logistics should be pre-planned
5. Ensure coordination of hotlines and technology within the VRC
6. Ensure VRC staffing is adequate
7. Have a process to reimburse expenses incurred
8. Pre- and post- disaster coordination with local government agencies and non-government organizations
9. Coordination with local information and referral provider (i.e. 2-1-1)
10. Roles for spontaneous volunteers are pre-identified
11. Non-government organizations with roles in spontaneous volunteer management are included to provide input

Sample model for processing spontaneous volunteers using a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC).

1. Every incident is unique and volunteer management will be scaled to meet current needs. The primary method for coordinating volunteers employs the concept of a VRC. VRCs can be structured as:

   - Part of a response facility, like an emergency dispensing site, shelter, or reception center
   - Sand-alone walk-in center referred to as a volunteer reception center
   - Phone bank
   - Virtual online process
   - Combination of two or more of these strategies

2. The choice of the VRC site, including style, size, accessibility, and location is determined by a needs assessment by command staff and the local emergency management agency. Initial operational periods may not require any volunteer response. Continued situational awareness and needs assessment will determine whether to incorporate affiliated volunteers and/or spontaneous volunteers.

   Criteria for choosing a location for Volunteer Reception Center

   - Adequate space for all VRC functions
   - Multiple rooms / areas available
   - Safety / security for the volunteers and VRC workers
   - Availability of secure parking
   - Availability of food, sanitary facilities and rest areas for staff
   - Internet access including Wi-Fi or "hot spot"
   - Communication capabilities and accommodations for amateur radio operators
   - Accessible and in close proximity to the affected area
   - The facility for the VRC should have a back-up generator
   - The facility must have adequate restroom facilities the surge of volunteers

3. Various emergency management agencies' and public health organizations' management plans utilize a VRC as a framework for processing spontaneous volunteers. Plans often reference or refer to the concept of utilizing stations in the VRC. A suggested model of this type of useful structure may include:

   - Station #1: **Registration** – Volunteers will receive the volunteer registration form and are directed to complete the registration form. They will be shown where the sitting area is located in preparation for the volunteer's interview.   This station needs to be located near the main entrance to the VRC.

- Station #2: **Interviews** – Volunteers go through a three- to five-minute interview and discuss volunteer opportunities that match their skills, knowledge, and/or experience level. If a match is found to be appropriate and available, the interviewer will make a referral to the requesting agency. This referral will either direct them to the agency-specific station, if one is used, or provide the volunteer with information about where to go to be referred to the agency and move on to the next station.

- Station #3: **Data Collection** – The volunteer will submit their registration and referral forms for final approval. This station collects and checks the registration and referral forms and maintains the database of a complete listing of volunteers and assignments, along with entering volunteer information into Ohio Responds Registry in the incident specific category to be accepted to obtain limited liability before the volunteer reports to the assigned organization. It will be necessary to contact the Ohio EMA State Ohio Responds Coordinator to activate the incident specific category.

  - This station is optional for the volunteer to visit but needed for administrative purposes within the process. The application can be kept by Station #2: Interviews and delivered to the data collection location. It is recommended that the Data Collection station is not in the same room as the other volunteer stations.

- Station #4: **Safety Briefing** – Volunteers will go through a safety training on what to expect on the job sites while volunteering, how to be safe on the job, and how to take care of themselves during and after assignments. All VRC agencies requesting / receiving volunteers are responsible for providing detailed training for their specific tasks. Depending on the position and number of volunteers requested, it is recommended that a safety briefing facilitated by the requesting / receiving organization.

- Station #5: **Volunteer ID** – Volunteers will receive a means of identification that they are cleared to enter into the disaster area. This can be indicated by colored wristbands, with a different color every day, or through another credentialing system in use locally.

- Station #6: Transportation** – Volunteers will obtain their transportation assignment to arrive at the job site. (i.e. bus number and time of departure and return to the VRC.)

  - This station is optional to have in the process. When a large amount of volunteers that need to report to a job site, it is recommended bus service be provided for the volunteers. Job sites are normally limited on parking space. It is more efficient to check in a bus then several cars into the disaster area. It is better to limit the number of non-resident vehicles entering the impacted area.

- Station #7: **Exit Station** – The volunteers will have the chance to get answers to any additional questions or concerns they have. Additionally, volunteers may complete a short survey. All

volunteers, both those who have been referred and those who have not been placed with an agency, will process through this station.

- o This station is optional for the VRC process. If staffing allows, an exit person will be at this area thanking the volunteers for the time and help with the recovery.

- **Additional positions:**
  - o **Greeters** – This is the first point in the process that the spontaneous volunteers will interact with. Individuals are greeted, oriented to the VRC's purpose and process, provided an information fact sheet on how the process will proceed and directed accordingly.

  - o **Amateur Radio Operator** – It is essential to have an amateur radio operator at the VRC. They may be more efficient than using phones to communicate with the local emergency management agency. Due to a lack of electricity or back-up generators at the facility, the amateur radio operator may offer the only way to communicate if other options are down. It is essential that the operator be prepared to run on battery, or other emergency power.

  - o **Agency Specific Station** (if on site) – Volunteers are confirmed as an appropriate match for the organization's missions and given more detailed information on their specific position assignment.

4. **VRC Equipment Needs**
   - The VRC will need specific equipment and forms to ensure proper volunteer intake, registration, data collection, assignment safety, and demobilization. If all possible, have a back-up generator for the facility.
   - Resource availability should have been covered during plan development. It is recommended to have a "Go Kit" with all the essentials needed to set-up and conduct a VRC.
   - A basic "Go Kit" will vary based on operational needs, but a basic kit might include the following:
     - o Office furniture, including space dividers
     - o Office supplies
     - o Dry-erase or chalk boards
     - o Communications equipment (radios, computers, telephones, fax machines, etc.)
     - o Appropriate software, applications, and web access
     - o Maps
     - o Easels / easel pads
     - o Directional signals / signs / wayfinding items
     - o Hygiene supplies
     - o Vehicles
     - o Other equipment suggested by the local emergency management agency, based on operational needs

5. **Demobilizing the VRC**
   - When the influx of spontaneous volunteers subsides and remaining volunteers can be managed by the organization receiving the volunteer directly, the VRC can be demobilized. The decision to demobilize should be made among key stakeholders, and a date should be determined several days in advance of beginning the closure, if possible. The steps required to demobilize the VRC usually include:

     o Arranging for document storage to ensure analysis and retention
     o Returning of borrowed property
     o Cleaning and restoring the VRC facility to its original condition
     o Ensure all VRC personnel have access to disaster stress management assistance if needed
     o Conducting a "hot wash" to discuss forms, procedures, partners, and operating hours to determine whether changes need to be made to improve future operations

Acronyms

CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COAD	Community Organization Active in Disasters
EMA	Emergency Management Agency
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
FAC	Family Assistance Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Command
ICS	Incident Command System
IM	Incident Management
MRC	Medical Reserve Corps
NACCHO	National Association of County & City Health Officials
NIMS	National Incident Management System
NGO	Non-Government Organization
VMS	Volunteer Management System
ODH	Ohio Department of Health
Ohio EMA	Ohio Emergency Management Agency
PIO	Public Information Officer
POD	Points of Distribution (commodities) / Points of Dispensing (medical countermeasures)
SV	Spontaneous Volunteer
VMS	Volunteer Management System
VOAD	Volunteer Organization Active in Disasters
VRC	Volunteer Reception Center