

MRC units are community based and function as a way to locally organize and utilize volunteers who want to donate their time and expertise to prepare for and respond to emergencies and promote healthy living throughout the year. MRC volunteers supplement existing emergency and public health resources. The mission of the Big Country Medical Reserve Corps (BCMRC) is to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response and community resiliency.

The BCMRC functions through the Sweetwater-Nolan County Health Department. It is partnered with the Nolan County Community Response Team (CERT), Rolling Plains Memorial Hospital, Rolling Plains Rural Health Clinic, Texas State Technical College of Nursing, Sweetwater-Nolan County Health Department, Sweetwater Police and Fire departments, Nolan County Sheriff's Office, City of Sweetwater and Nolan County local governments. The focus of the organization is to provide medical support to these entities during times of medical surge, pandemic disease outbreaks and disaster emergencies. Recent opportunities for training exercise and response by BCMRC include setting up and operating a drive-through vaccination point of distribution and remote stand alone sites for vaccination to simulate pandemic response, evacuation of local nursing home and shelter setup and operation during wild fire response and ice storms. The unit meets monthly for training including first aid and CPR, radio communications, nuclear chemical and biological response, sheltering, self defense, verbal judo for conflict resolution and personal preparedness to name a few.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians and epidemiologists. Community members including interpreters, chaplains, office workers, legal advisors and others are needed to fill key support positions. There is an opportunity and a need for anyone who has the desire to volunteer.

MRC units are provided specific areas to target that strengthen the public health infrastructure of their communities by the U.S. Surgeon General. These are outlined priorities for the health of individuals and the nation as a whole, which also serve as a guide to the MRC. The overarching goal is to improve health literacy and in support of this, work towards increasing disease prevention, eliminating health disparities and improve public health preparedness. MRC volunteers can choose to support communities in need nationwide.

For more information on volunteering or getting involved with the BCMRC, call Ray Browning at 325-235-5463 ext. 13. For more information on the Medical Reserve Corps on a national level, or to find out how to establish an MRC in your area visit www.medicalreservecorps.gov.