

Volunteer Registration

Fact Sheet

Overview

Registration systems for recruiting, cataloging, notifying, and mobilizing emergency volunteers vary among organizations as well as state and local governments. Registration systems track volunteer information, verify a volunteer's credentials, and ensure a qualified and competent group of volunteers. These systems also provide an efficient system for volunteer notification, mobilization, and deployment. Many of the laws granting liability protection, workers' compensation, and injury benefits to emergency volunteers often only apply to registered volunteers.

Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP)

Each state has established an [Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals \(ESAR-VHP\)](#)¹ program to register volunteer health professionals (VHPs), verify VHP credentials and privileges, and coordinate emergency response agencies. The state ESAR-VHP systems are part of a national network administered by the [Health and Human Services Office of the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response \(ASPR\)](#)². ASPR develops registration system policies and guidelines and helps states standardize their registration systems. A wide range of licensed and credentialed health professionals can register with ESAR-VHP. Professions include, but are not limited to: advanced practice nurses, behavioral health professionals, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, licensed practical nurses, medical and clinical laboratory technicians, pharmacists, physicians, physician assistants, and veterinarians. Check with your state coordinator for a complete list of professions that can register with your state's system. VHP registration is free and VHPs can unregister at any time. The collected VHP personal information is used for ESAR-VHP activities and accessible to authorized personnel only.

State ESAR-VHP systems vary by name (e.g., Washington State Emergency Registry of Volunteers and Kentucky Health Emergency Listing of Professionals for Surge) as well as registration process. Some states use an online, electronic registration system while others require registration via paper applications. Other states may use both.

Practice Notes

- Identify the mechanisms and requirements your state uses to register emergency response volunteers and verify the volunteers' credentials, licenses, and privileges.
- Identify state law that provides liability protections to registered volunteers.
- Understand the legal implications of being a registered volunteer rather than an unregistered volunteer.

Medical Reserve Corps

The [Medical Reserve Corps \(MRC\)](#)³ is a network of community-based units that are established by local organizations to respond to emergencies and natural disasters. MRC is sponsored by the Office of the Surgeon General and overseen by the Division of Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps. MRC units consist of both medical and non-medical volunteers. State coordinators and ten regional coordinators facilitate intrastate activities. In some states, the role of MRC units during a declared emergency and liability protections for MRC volunteers are explicitly addressed in the state's emergency authority statutes. The [Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act \(PAHPA\)](#)⁴ requires integrating the MRC registration system and other state verification systems into the national ESAR-VHP system. MRC units are encouraged to use the state ESAR-VHP programs for registering and verifying MRC volunteers' credentials.

Self-Deployed or Spontaneous Volunteers

Volunteers may show up during an emergency without prior registration and verification. It is important to distinguish between the volunteers who register and those who self-deploy. Liability protections for emergency volunteers often only apply to registered volunteers. Also, workers' compensation laws and disability benefits may only apply to volunteers who are registered or deemed employees of the state.

¹ ESAR-VHP. Available at <http://www.phe.gov/esarvhp/Pages/default.aspx>. Accessed on 8-21-2012.

² ASPR. Available at <http://www.phe.gov/preparedness/pages/default.aspx>. Accessed on 8-21-2012.

³ Medical Reserve Corps. Available at www.medicalreservecorps.gov. Accessed on 8-21-2012.

⁴ Department of Health and Human Services. "Pandemic and All Hazards Preparedness Act." webpage. Available at: www.phe.gov/Preparedness/legal/pahpa/Pages/default.aspx. Accessed on 2-11-2013.