

# **Medina County Volunteer Reception Center Standard Operating Guidelines**

**Coordinating Agencies:** Medina County Emergency Management Agency (MCEMA)  
Medina County Health Department (MCHD)

**Support Agencies:** Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)  
Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

## **I. Introduction**

- A. Purpose: Establish a group of trained individuals capable of processing large amounts of volunteers to ensure an effective and coordinated volunteer response to any large-scale incident in Medina County.
- B. Definition: The Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) is where large numbers of affiliated and unaffiliated volunteers can be efficiently processed and registered. All unaffiliated volunteers' registration will include Just-In-Time (JIT) training.
- C. Goals: The goal of the VRC is to properly place spontaneous volunteers, affiliated and unaffiliated with requesting agencies by:
  - 1. Registering and interviewing potential volunteers
  - 2. Assigning them to a volunteer opportunity that best meets their needs, skills, and capabilities.
  - 3. Providing safety training and job training as necessary
  - 4. Issuing them a temporary volunteer ID (blue wrist bands)

## **II. Concept of Operations**

### **A. Notification**

When the EOC determines that it is necessary to activate the Volunteer Reception Center, Medina County CERT, and MRC team members will be contacted members contacted through established protocols of each organization to operate the VRC. The notification will include the nature and scope of the volunteer response to include their reporting location.

### **B. Site Selection – Pre-Identified**

As stated in the Ohio Citizens Corps VRC manual “the VRC schematic is a generic flow chart, not a blueprint.” It is intended to demonstrate a reasonable flow of

activity in a logical and sequential manner. The Medina County VRC may occupy one, two or three rooms; it may have a central area for seating with three divisions; it may have one or more entrances. The design is deliberately flexible to permit the most efficient methods to integrate the registration process for all categories of response volunteers.

The EOC will determine which site will be selected to set up the Volunteer Reception Center based on the location and danger zone of the incident. The following is the list of established VRC sites:

1. Medina United Methodist Church – 4747 Foote Rd., Medina, OH
2. Cornerstone Chapel - 3636 Granger Rd. Medina, OH

In Medina County there are pre-identified VRC sites. Information regarding these sites is housed in the Medina County EMA and Medina County Health Dept.

Agreements between each pre-identified VRC site and the Medina County EMA Executive Board are in place and kept on file within the MCEMA. The agreements may include other uses in addition to VRC. In the event that none of the identified VRC sites are available at the time of an emergency the Medina County EMA EOC will determine an alternate site in Medina County to establish the VRC. The site will be pre-identified prior to the alert being disseminated to the volunteers. The volunteers will be advised to report to the VRC site for credentialing, ID, site placement, assigned a supervisor in the field and provided JIT training they may need prior to the start of their assignment.

### **C. Volunteer Activation**

#### **1. Affiliated Volunteers**

- a. Affiliated volunteers may include those from any Citizen Corps program including, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Ohio Special Response Team (OSRT), and the Medina County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) to name a few.
- b. The EOC will determine if it is necessary to activate a VRC to check in and assign affiliated volunteers.
- b. Volunteers will be assigned a specific job through the VRC. Each volunteer organization, if applicable, may manage their volunteers according to an existing organizational plan. These individuals will check-in/out from a shift using the VRC procedures, however, the tracking of their volunteer work hours will be their responsibility as it relates to their specific organization.

## 2. Spontaneous, Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUV)

- a. Spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers are not associated with any recognized disaster response agency. These volunteers may lack specific disaster training. However, they may have other training, skills and experience that may be utilized. These individuals just appear at disaster sites to offer help.
- b. These volunteers will be registered, mobilized, and demobilized through the Volunteer Reception Center. The VRC will act as a registration, administration, and records keeping clearinghouse for all unaffiliated volunteers. They may receive Just in Time (JIT) training and will be registered as a Citizen Corps Volunteers. Volunteers registered under Ohio Responds will be eligible for Limited Liability Protection as provided by ORC 3701.04 and ORC 5502.281 (See Appendix A).

Upon arrival at a worksite, assigned and badged unaffiliated volunteers will check-in and report to the on-scene Incident Commander (IC), volunteer liaison, volunteer supervisor, or designee as appropriate. The on-scene IC, Volunteer Supervisor, Volunteer Liaison, or designee will be responsible for the efficient on-scene application of volunteer efforts.

All volunteers will be required to check in/out, from their assigned job, at the work site and the VRC using the supplied ICS 211 forms (Appendix E) as this procedure will not only help to track all volunteers, but may help each organization track overall volunteer hours.

## 3. Unregistered Volunteer Management

- a. Unregistered volunteers are volunteers that have not registered with the Medina County Emergency Management Agency through the VRC as these individuals show up within minutes of an emergency. The Medina County Emergency Management Agency is not responsible for the actions of unregistered volunteers. Local law enforcement may be requested to facilitate management of unregistered volunteers.

## 4. Volunteer Risk Management

- a. Volunteers will not serve in a volunteer capacity for any longer than twelve (12) hours in any twenty-four (24) hour period, and they shall take all meal and rest breaks that are provided.
- b. The Volunteer Coordination Team will provide a trained safety officer that will oversee the activities that volunteers are involved in and will regulate participation, shift length, and any other issues related to the safety of the volunteers.

- c. Volunteers should only accept assignments/roles that are within their scope, practice, skill level, and licensure, as appropriate.
- d. Volunteers will be expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner, obeying all rules and laws and promptly following any instruction given to them by a superior. Volunteers must operate in a capacity appropriate to response and recovery activities understanding and respecting the difficult situations that will arise in time of disaster. Under the Limited Liability Protection, ORC 5502.281, any volunteer found to constitute willful or wanton misconduct will be removed and immediately unregistered through the VRC.
- e. Volunteers must inform their superiors about any conditions (health, mental health, injuries, etc.) that may affect their functioning as a volunteer. Accidents and injuries must be reported within 24 hours of the incident (Accident/Injury form, Appendix B).

### **III. Assignment of Responsibilities and Volunteer Agencies**

*See VRC Organizational Chart – Appendix N*

#### **A. VRC Management**

The VRC will be managed by at least (3) individuals: the VRC Coordinator, VRC Supervisor, an MRC representative, and if possible a VRC Station Leader. The VRC Coordinator will oversee the operations, the VRC Supervisor will oversee the flow of volunteer traffic, the MRC/CERT representatives will manage the MRC/CERT volunteers within the VRC, and the VRC Station Manager will monitor the (5) stations or areas volunteers will need to complete before being released to the work site.

- a. VRC Coordinator  
This position will be 2 or 3 deep and function under direction from the Medina County EMA and the Medina County Health Dept. this position will oversee the entire VRC and will be the liaison between the VRC and the EMA EOC. This person should have administrator privileges on Ohio Responds.
- b. VRC Supervisor  
This position will also be 2 or 3 deep and will oversee the flow of traffic in the VRC making sure all operations are maintained. They will manage all VRC volunteers. This position will report to the VRC Coordinator.
- c. VRC Station Manager  
All VRC volunteers will be trained to take on this position as they will monitor all station activity making sure each station has the equipment needed to maintain operations. This position will report to the VRC Supervisor.
- d. MRC/CERT Representatives

This position could be held by any member of these teams capable of managing and monitoring their respective volunteers within the VRC.

- e. VRC Public Information Officer (PIO)  
The VRC will need an established PIO to interact with the media. This individual should be trained in media relations, well spoken, and understand the chain of command within the ICS.

## **B. Staffing and Training of the VRC**

The VRC may be staffed with Citizen Corps, CERT, MRC volunteers who have been trained in the VRC process and have attended the VRC training and exercises conducted by the Medina County Health Dept. (MCHD) and Medina County EMA (MCEMA). The MCHD and MCEMA will make every effort to train all VRC volunteers to be able to assume any management position and station job within the VRC, except the PIO. Any volunteer that has not been through the VRC training will receive Just In Time (JIT) training to perform the specific job functions of the VRC.

## **C. Volunteer Agencies**

The following volunteer groups will be involved in the operation of the VRC:

- a. Registered Citizen Corps Volunteers are those that are registered at [www.ohioresponds.gov](http://www.ohioresponds.gov) and their credentials can be verified by an administrator of the system.
- b. Ohio/Medina County Medical Reserve Corps are registered and trained by the Medina County Health Dept. Professional medical and non-medical personnel, recruited to become members of the OMRC, must participate in specialized disaster response training. They are a significant resource responding to public health and safety crises, whether natural or manmade. The OMRC, in partnership with local public health entities, is open to professional licensed medical personnel in the fields of medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, social work, mental health, veterinary medicine, and their allied disciplines as well as non-medical volunteers. Upon completion of authorized disaster training, OMRC members are credentialed as critical responders, and registered in the Ohio Responds volunteer registry.
- c. Medina County Community Emergency Response Volunteers (CERT) functions under the authority of Medina County EMA. The mission of MCCERT is to foster community preparedness and resiliency by recruiting, organizing, training and preparing volunteers to support local response to disasters and other emergency situations in Medina County; and to promote community disaster preparedness through public education and community outreach. The tasks provided by MCCERT will fill gaps in local capabilities and capacity. MCCERT will promote and facilitate effective use of volunteer resources during disasters. MCCERT will collaborate with first responders, agencies, and organizations to maximize the

effectiveness of overall response efforts, and to act in the best interest of the victims of disasters.

- d. Ohio Special Response Team (OSRT) is a broad-based response unit able to respond to a variety of emergencies and disasters in support of civil authorities. This team possesses a range of skills to increase their value and versatility with all members being trained and certified. This team may be utilized in conjunction with the Medina County Sheriff's Office to assist in the safety and security of the VRC.
- e. Spontaneous, Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUV) are not associated with any recognized disaster response agency. These volunteers may lack specific disaster training such as that offered by Ohio Community Service Council (OCSC) the American Red Cross or other voluntary agencies active in disaster efforts. However, they may have other training, skills and experience and appear at a disaster site to offer help. Through the statewide volunteer database process at the VRC, these unaffiliated volunteers become registered volunteers. They receive approved Just in Time (JIT) training and perform needed services. They move from an unaffiliated volunteer status to the registered Citizen Corps Volunteer status and are eligible for the limited liability protection as provided by ORC 3701.04 and 5502.281.
- f. Other Agencies may include the United Way for the management of financial donations, The American Red Cross and Salvation Army may be able to help coordinate volunteer activities, and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) will staff and assist in the operation of the VRC.

#### **IV. Risk Management**

##### **A. Establishment and Limited Liability Coverage for Volunteers**

ORC 3701.04 and 5502.281 grants registered volunteers' limited liability protection for any tort or other civil action while providing services within the scope of the volunteer's official duties during a declared emergency or during approved training and exercises. (Civil action may include medical, dental, chiropractic, optometric, veterinary or other health claims.) Limited liability protection also covers property damage that may arise from an unintentional act or omission of a registered volunteer. Limited liability protection will not extend to the willful, wanton, malicious, or criminal misconduct of any registered volunteer.

Information related to a registered volunteer's specific responsibilities, assignments, deployment, and readiness status and a registered volunteer's personal contact information, medical information, and family information is considered a security record and therefore exempt from Ohio's Public Records Act.

There are several laws that offer volunteers protection from liability. First as the Volunteer Protection Act of 1977, (Public Law 105-19, 42 United States Code Section 14501, et seq.)

Second, there are a variety of Good Samaritan laws in Ohio that provide limited immunity for persons offering emergency medical care at the scene of an accident or emergency. Some provisions apply to specific volunteer groups and may provide additional protection for specific types of volunteers. See ORC Sections 2305.23-2305.23.5.

## **B. Background Checks**

### Rational

Volunteers who have any criminal record other than a minor misdemeanor are not permitted to volunteer under the auspices of the Medina County Citizen Corps (CC). Individuals whose name is contained on compulsory registration lists may also not be permitted to volunteer under the auspices of the Medina County CERT and/or the Medina County MRC programs.

### Process

Volunteers who report to the VRC, including CERT, MRC, and SUVs, as part of the registration process, will be required to fill out the Volunteer Background Check form (Appendix C). This form will be submitted to the law enforcement officer that is stationed at the VRC to conduct volunteer background checks prior to deployment. If the volunteer has passed the background check, the officer will check the pass box and sign and date the Background Check Form and send it back to the registration staff in the VRC. At that time the volunteer will continue to be processed. If the volunteer has any criminal record other than minor misdemeanors, the officer will check the box on the form indicating “fail”. The volunteer will then be told they are no longer eligible to volunteer for the Medina County CC programs. Any outstanding warrants may be cause for arrest at the officer(s) discretion.

Background check refusals render the volunteer ineligible. Refusal to submit to the background check does not preclude the volunteer from future volunteer background checks.

### Responsibility for Removal

If available, we would use local law enforcement agencies to conduct background checks on individuals who are willing to volunteer. However, regardless of the local law enforcement participation, the VRC registration staff will be responsible for having the volunteer complete the background check form during the registration process. The VRC staff will also make the potential volunteers aware of the background check process. If present at the VRC, the law enforcement officer(s) will notify the volunteer if they pass or fail the background check. Upon verification, the VRC Coordinator will be responsible for removing any volunteers from the state

sponsored volunteer registry for Medina County CC volunteers who fail the background check. Local Law Enforcement or the OSRT will be responsible for ensuring that the volunteer has been removed from the premises.

### **C. VRC Operations**

#### Supplies and Equipment

VRC supplies will be safely stored and easily accessible. Supplies/equipment include signage, forms (specific to the VRC as well as volunteers), and designated equipment. These items will be stored in portable containers within the Medina County EMA. At the VRC training, volunteers will be instructed to prepare a “Go Box” that would have 72 hours of personal supplies, emergency food and water, and safety equipment available to “grab and go” in the event of rapid deployment.

#### Identification

All VRC volunteers will be identified by a plastic wrist band once they complete the VRC process and are ready for deployment. It is the Medina County EMA and the Medina County Health Depts. intention to have all affiliated volunteers identified by a badge with their photos and qualifications as both agencies have a badge system. All spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers will have only the wrist bands to identify them.

VRC Job Descriptions are available in Appendix D of these SOGs.

### **V. Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) Process**

The VRC process follows the accepted principles of professional volunteer management that have been advocated by national volunteer organizations. The VRC process is arranged in a sequential manner, designed to handle the general and specific registration needs for each of the categories of response volunteers. These stations can be expanded or condensed based on the size and function of the VRC.

As each disaster situation is different, this manual does not define or pre-determine the minimum number of volunteers to staff a VRC. Certain functions require either more time than others and/or more personnel to accomplish the tasks. Cross-training VRC staff and volunteers will enable the VRC managers to move their staff to areas that need additional assistance.

#### **VRC Stations**

*VRC Floor Plan* – See Appendix M

#### *Situational Briefing Area*

- Provide information on the incident/event underway
- Provide information on the role of response volunteers
- Provide opportunity to answer questions



- The current situation will be displayed on a white board or verbalized by an Orientation Station volunteer so those wishing to volunteer will gain an understanding of the level of response as well as the specific type of response volunteers that are needed.

#### *Registration Area*

- Ensure that volunteers sign in/sign out on the ICS 211 form (Appendix E)
- Verify registration of each volunteer in the [www.ohioresponds.gov](http://www.ohioresponds.gov) in the state volunteer registry
- Review credentials of each volunteer (paper copy or at <https://license.ohio.gov>)
- Check Picture ID and age (must be 18 years of age or older)
- Submit volunteer background check form for background check if available (Appendix C)
- Ensure complete registration application from each volunteer
- Ensure completion of the confidentiality statement (Appendix L), release and waiver of liability form (Appendix I), background check form (Appendix C), Agreement to provide volunteer services (Appendix K) and volunteer registration form (Appendix F) by each volunteer.
- The registration area is responsible for completing the Incident/Injury Report Form when an incident/injury occurs in the VRC (Appendix B).

#### *Waiting Area*

- Designated areas where volunteers can sit and wait to be processed throughout the VRC and if needed complete registration forms (if overcrowding in registration area occurs)
- SUVs and CC volunteers may be separated if space allows

#### *Interview Area*

- To determine suitability
- To ascertain skills
- To determine appropriate placement in the field
- To determine any physical limitations
- To match volunteer with appropriate task
- To ensure volunteer reporting schedule
- To assign the volunteer a field supervisor under the ICS
- Complete Volunteer Referral forms (duplicate form) with information regarding the volunteer assignment (Appendix G).

#### *Safety Briefing/ Just In Time Training*

- To promote security
- To provide job specific trainings before volunteers are deployed
- To ensure safety of personnel & property
- Assure volunteers have the proper clothing and equipment to perform assigned duties

#### *Identification (ID)*

- Retrieve volunteer referral form from volunteer (Appendix G)

- The volunteer at this station will be responsible for initialing Safety/Exit on the bottom of the form and maintaining the forms as permanent records of the VRC
- Based on the volunteer assignment form, clearly write the name of volunteer, the designated assignment, designated supervisor and designated operational period on the wristband and apply to the volunteer's wrist
- Explain to volunteer that the ID will only be valid for the dates written on the band. Authorities will not permit them to enter an work site on any other day without a current ID wristband.
- This is the final station prior to deployment. Ensure that all questions from the volunteers have been answered before they leave the ID station. If they have unanswered questions please call over a runner to locate and provide the needed answers

#### *Public Information Officer (PIO)*

- The VRC PIO station will be located by the door. This will provide a mechanism to gather media/press in order to maintain the security of the VRC.
- The PIO is the **ONLY** VRC staff member cleared to respond to any media inquiries about the VRC operation.
- **Tasks:** In a declared emergency, all information will be handled through the Medina County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), with the PIO as the official contact for the VRC. All media personnel arriving at the VRC are to be escorted to and accompanied by the PIO at all times. No official communications are issued without express permission from Incident Command. The press will be directed to the PIO station by the greeters once they arrive at the VRC.

#### *Demobilization/Debriefing*

- Volunteers will report to the VRC after serving in the field after each shift.
- Volunteers will turn in their wristbands each shift.
- Have volunteers sign out on the ICS 211 forms before they are released
- Medical and mental health resources may be made available in the VRC.
- Answer volunteer questions regarding their assignment

## **VI. VRC Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) Updates**

These SOG's will be updated on an annual basis by the collaboration of the Medina County EMA and Medina County Health Dept. The SOG's will be updated based on recommendations from volunteers, Medina County EMA staff, and After Action Reports/Improvement Plans (AAR-IPs). The Record of Change Document follows the Table of Contents of this document.

May 2019

**References**

Ohio Revised Code 3701.04 (B) and 5502.281 (A)

Summit County Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) SOG – October 2011

Ohio Citizen Corps – Volunteer Reception Center – January 2011

Citizen Corps Programs, About CERT, Citizen Corps – July 2011

**ACRONYMS**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| CC        | Citizen Corps                                    |
| CCV       | Citizen Corps Volunteer                          |
| CERT      | Community Emergency Response Team                |
| EMA       | Emergency Management Agency                      |
| EOC       | Emergency Operations Center                      |
| EOP       | Emergency Operations Plan                        |
| FEMA      | Federal Emergency Management Agency              |
| IC        | Incident Command                                 |
| ICS       | Incident Command System                          |
| ID        | Identification                                   |
| IP        | Improvement Plan                                 |
| JIC       | Joint Information Center                         |
| JIT       | Just In Time Training                            |
| MCEMA     | Medina County Emergency Management Agency        |
| MCHD      | Medina County Health Department                  |
| MOU       | Memorandum of Understanding                      |
| MRC       | Medical Reserve Corps                            |
| NIMS      | National Incident Management System              |
| OCSC      | Ohio Community Service Council                   |
| ODH       | Ohio Department of Health                        |
| OEMA      | Ohio Emergency Management Agency                 |
| Ohio VOAD | Ohio Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters |
| OMRC      | Ohio Medical Reserve Corps                       |
| OSRT      | Ohio Special Response Team                       |
| PIO       | Public Information Officer                       |
| RSVP      | Retired and Senior Volunteer Program             |
| SOG       | Standard Operating Guideline                     |
| SUV       | Spontaneous, Unaffiliated Volunteers             |
| VRC       | Volunteer Reception Center                       |