

Upcoming Summer Workshop to Train Volunteer Medical Professionals to Strengthen State's Response to Emergencies

The Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) will be conducting a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Summer 2009 Workshop on July 18, 2009 from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at The Lexington Center, Lexington, KY (registration begins at 7:30 a.m.). This training will give an orientation to the Kentucky Health Emergency Listing of Professionals for Surge (K HELPS)/MRC program, summarize the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) program which allows for quick delivery of critical medical interventions to the public during an emergency, and allow volunteers to train for discipline specific role in a Point of Distribution (POD). Registration for the workshop is available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/mrcworkshop>.

The K HELPS program, a state-based system to register medical professionals and others interested in volunteering during public health emergencies or disasters, was established in 2005. Since that time, the program has proved invaluable for providing assistance in support of public health emergencies and natural disasters.

During Hurricane Gustav, K HELPS called upon MRC units across the state to help staff the shelter set up in Louisville at the Fair and Expo Center where 1,500 evacuees from the New Orleans area were sheltered. In total, 47 volunteers from 18 different units across the state gave over 500 hours. More recently, during the 2009 winter ice storm that affected 102 counties in Kentucky, MRC volunteers were used in a variety of ways. MRC units across the state used 204 volunteers for a total of 2,436 hours. Because local communities can subtract volunteer time from the match necessary for FEMA reimbursement, the estimated \$40,466 in time given by MRC volunteers will have a positive impact on Kentucky's recovery process.

The K HELPS program complements existing MRC programs, which are community-based organizations utilizing medical professional volunteers to supplement existing local emergency and public health resources for emergency response. Currently, all 120 counties in Kentucky are covered by MRC units. More information about the MRC units in Kentucky can be found at www.medicalreservecorps.gov.

Interested volunteers can register with K HELPS at <https://khelps.chfs.ky.gov> and will be assigned to the MRC unit in their geographical area. The local MRC unit will complete the approval process and will serve as the primary point of contact for volunteers. Upon the decision to activate volunteers, the K HELPS system has the ability to alert volunteers by e-mail and telephone. MRC volunteers should only respond after ensuring the safety of their home and family.

Kentucky's goal is to have 5,000 volunteers credentialed, trained and ready to respond to any public health emergency or disaster. All health workers and non-medical persons are invited to register. Current emphasis is on recruiting nurses, physicians, pharmacists, social workers, counselors, EMT/paramedics, respiratory therapists and clinical laboratory technicians.

Visit www.chfs.ky.gov/dph/epi/preparedness/KHELPS.htm or contact your local health department to learn more about the K HELPS program.

In times of need, Kentucky helps.