

**Disaster Healthcare Volunteers of California:
Let us know you're willing to help BEFORE the disaster happens**

In the wake of disasters or public health emergencies with multiple casualties, many health professionals are eager and willing to volunteer their services. And in these times of crisis, hospitals, clinics, temporary medical sites or shelters are dependent upon the services of volunteer health professionals. However, there are major challenges to effectively utilizing volunteers' time and capabilities on short notice.

Hospitals, health departments, and other facilities must be able to verify basic licensing or credentialing information, including training, skills, competencies, and employment. Furthermore, the loss of telecommunications may prevent contact with sources that normally provide this information. For example, immediately after the attacks on September 11, 2001, tens of thousands of people traveled to ground zero in New York City to volunteer and provide medical assistance. In most cases, authorities were unable to verify qualifications.

California has developed the Disaster Healthcare Volunteers (DHV) System to pre-register, verify licensure and credentials, manage, and mobilize healthcare professional volunteers to help in responding to all types of disasters. DHV registrants represent more than 47 professional license types including physicians, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists, dentists, mental health practitioners, and a range of clinical technicians. DHV system is connected to the various professional boards to verify current licensure status.

The DHV system is developed and is managed at the state level by the California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) in partnership with the California Department of Public Health. The system serves all counties, response regions, or state health agencies as the means to register, search, and notify licensed health professionals within their jurisdiction who are willing to volunteer in an emergency. For example, it is used by local jurisdictions to register and mobilize 42 Medical Reserve Corps Units. MRC is a community-based network of volunteers that are organized and train together assists public health efforts in times of disaster or special need such as during a major communicable disease outbreak.

In addition to being a registry that notifies potential volunteers, DHV provides a robust "Mission Manager" platform which is used to deploy, schedule and provide real-time support for healthcare volunteers. Deployment is accomplished by searching the DHV database for volunteer health professionals that match the specific needs of a given emergency. Those volunteers found in the database search are notified via phone, email, text message, or pager as indicated by the volunteer when they register—a 15 minute process.

In 2011, DHV was used in the deployment of healthcare volunteers for 151 medical and public health emergencies and 102 local exercises/drills. During the

Influenza A H1N1 outbreak in 2009, nurses, physicians, and other healthcare volunteers provided hundreds of hours of volunteer service to their local health departments, including mass vaccination clinics.

Registering with DHV is not an obligation to serve. It is always at the individual's discretion. Volunteers are typically not compensated; however some DHV registrants are also members of state or federal Disaster Medical Assistance Teams and may be compensated for their participation during a declared emergency. The program does not provide malpractice coverage. When deployed for a declared emergency, all volunteers will be registered as Disaster Service Workers (DSW) as set forth by California law. Under the DSW program, volunteers are given limited immunity from liability as well as worker's compensation coverage.

Funds for DHV are provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The DHV program is based upon national standards and a mandate set by the US Department of Health and Human Services to create a nationwide internet-based program for the Emergency System for the Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP).

For more information about becoming a Disaster Healthcare Volunteer please go to www.healthcarevolunteers.ca.gov and register today or contact the California Emergency Medical Services Authority at (916) 322-4336. DHV is managed by the California Emergency Medical Services Authority in partnership with the California Department of Public Health.