



# MD Responds Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2012

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The MD Responds Newsletter is brought to you by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Preparedness and Response.

For more information, please contact the MD Responds program office:

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## New MD Responds Staff Member



### Welcome Stephanie!

Please join us in welcoming Stephanie Parsons to the MD Response Team! Stephanie received her MSPH from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and has worked for a number of years in the public health field. Her work has primarily focused on unintentional injury prevention in the Baltimore Metropolitan area.

She is also an active member of the American Public Health Association, Public Health Education and Health Promotion.

Stephanie will work closely with other program staff to help coordinate the MD Responds program. We're very happy to have her on board!

Stephanie can be reached by email at [Stephanie.Parsons@Maryland.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Parsons@Maryland.gov) or by phone at 410-767-7772. As a reminder, the general MD Responds program contact information is [MDResponds.dhnh@Maryland.gov](mailto:MDResponds.dhnh@Maryland.gov) or 410-767-8461.

## CDC Highlights MRC Program

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is the focus of this week's CDC Public Health Matters Blog. As we recognize September as National Preparedness Month, it is important to highlight the significant and powerful role of the volunteer in prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The MRC was founded in 2002, in response to the attacks of September 11th and the anthrax attacks that followed. Currently, there are close to 1,000 MRC units across the United States and its territories with more than 204,000 volunteers. This national network of community-based volunteers is committed to improving the health and safety of all communities through the action of volunteers from medical and public health professions, as well as that of other community members dedi-

cated to strengthening local public health systems, improving response capabilities, and building community resilience.

Within Maryland, MD Responds is the statewide MRC program. There are also local MRCs in Harford County, Prince Georges County, Howard County, and Baltimore County, as well as a unit specifically for Johns Hopkins employees.

If you know someone who wants to give back, share this blog entry with them which can be found at <http://go.usa.gov/remA>. They may be your next volunteer, partner, or advocate, helping your community before AND after a disaster. Spread the word of your invaluable work and let others know how to get involved.

## Text First. Talk Second.



Almost every large scale emergency and natural disaster in the last 10 years shares something in common: massive mobile phone service disruption for millions of Americans. Those of you in the Baltimore area during the earthquake last summer probably recall that trying to make a phone call afterwards was practically impossible.

Mobile call volume overwhelms the network capacity during these incidents, as everyone attempts to contact friends and family. Preparedness experts universally agree that during an emergency and its immediate aftermath, communicating via SMS text message should be your first choice. This is because non-essential calls often shut down wireless phone service and prevent 911 calls from getting through. In fact, just a single one-minute phone call takes up the same bandwidth as 800 short SMS text messages.

Unlike phone calls, your text messages don't get "busy signals" - the

text system will keep trying to deliver your message until its sent. This makes text messaging perfect for sending non-emergency messages like "R U OK" and "IM OK".

It is important to create an emergency communication plan and to review it with your family so that everyone knows how get in touch (see article on page 3 for tips on how to create an emergency communication plan).

### So, in an emergency:

- Let your friends and family know you're okay with a text message, not a phone call.
- Keep your text message short.
- Don't use your phone unless you absolutely need to.

### Texting to 911—An innovation coming soon to a phone near you.

Several wireless carriers have been leading the way in developing technology which will allow individuals to send text messages to 911 emer-

gency dispatchers. By mid-2013, in many parts of the country, texting 911 will become available.

### Texting to 911 is ideal for:

- Allowing people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate more effectively with first responders.
- Getting an emergency message out in an area with weak wireless coverage.
- Helping people communicate with emergency dispatchers when a noisy phone conversation might create danger.
- Providing victims of domestic abuse a discreet way to ask for help.

SafeAmerica has been a leader in developing this functionality, and is currently in the testing stages of rolling text to 911 capability in several areas around the United States.

To learn more, go to [www.safeamerica.org](http://www.safeamerica.org)

Don't forget to check us out on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MDResponds](http://www.facebook.com/MDResponds).

## The Benefits of Volunteering

The immediate benefits of volunteering are well known—the satisfaction of helping those in need and a sense of pride in efforts made to improve the lives of others. There are also many social benefits to volunteering such as forming new relationships and strengthening ties to the community.

According to a recent report published by the Corporation for National & Community Service, vol-

unteers may be getting more of a benefit than previously thought.

*The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research* reports the findings of over 30 studies that looked at the relationship between volunteering and overall health. After controlling for other factors, researchers found a significant connection between volunteering and improved physical and mental health. The studies found that, volunteering leads to lower rates

of depression, greater longevity, higher functional ability, and lower incidence of heart disease. The report suggests that volunteering is especially beneficial to older adults and those who volunteer 100 hours or more annually. In other words, good things do happen to good people!

The full report can be found at [www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf)

# Make an Emergency Communication Plan for Your Family



Disasters can happen at any time of the day—worst of all, during a time when you are separated from your family. How will you get in contact with your loved ones in an emergency? What if the phone lines are down? Where will they go? How will I know if they are safe? These are very important questions to consider. Make a communication plan with your family so you will know how to contact one another in different emergency situations.

### Try Texting First

As mentioned in the article on page 2, during an emergency and its immediate aftermath, communicating via SMS text message

should be your first choice. Only use the phone if you absolutely need to. Remember, to give your message the best chance of delivery, keep it short. Pre-determined codes or short messages can convey the needed information.

### In Case of Emergency (ICE) Contact

Since it may be impossible to make a local phone call or text message in the wake of a disaster, a family member or close friend who lives out-of-town may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members. Choose an ICE contact that is well known by all family members for everyone to notify they are safe. Make sure to tell your ICE contact that you've listed them as your emergency contact.

Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has a cell phone, coins or a prepaid phone card to call the ICE contact. Program the ICE contacts phone number as "ICE" in your phone and in each

of your family members phones. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know.

### Family Contact Card

Create a family contact card for every member of your family. Make sure all adult family members keep the cards on them at all times in a wallet, purse, briefcase, etc. Place the cards in your child's book bag and explain to them that its import for them to keep it there at all times so that they know who to call in an emergency.

### Alert Services

Subscribe to alert services to receive the latest updates on emergency situations. Many communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or e-mails to let you know about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc. Sign up by visiting your local Office of Emergency Management web site.

## Staff Spotlight

Some of the feedback we've received since started our monthly newsletters in July was that you'd like to see what we, the MD Responds staff, looks like so that you can put a face to the name that you've seen time and again over the past few years. Stephanie was lucky enough to draw the first page since we are welcoming her to the program, but I'd be remiss if I didn't include my picture as well.

*Jason Holderness—MD Responds Program Specialist*



## Feedback

What can we do better? What topics interest you? Do you have any suggestions about the newsletter, the program, or anything else? If so, please send us an E-mail at:

MDResponds.dhnh@Maryland.gov or MD Responds on Facebook.

## Volunteer Counts (as of 9/18/2012)

Nursing	1023	Dentistry	21
Physician	282	Psychologists	19
Pharmacy	138	Respiratory Therapists	19
Social Work	107	Morticians/F.D.'s	14
Counselors	46	Other	472
Veterinary	40		
Faith-based Volunteers	35	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2245</b>
Physician Assistants	29		