



Guide to Developing a Code of Conduct for MRC Volunteers

A Guide for Local MRC Units



Guide to Developing a Code of Conduct for MRC Volunteers

Introduction

Each Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteer should understand his or her responsibilities as well as the unit's definition of appropriate behavior. By documenting policies and procedures you communicate your commitment to protecting your volunteers and those you serve. The documentation also provides a resource that volunteers can refer to when needed.

Considerations

As volunteers perform their roles and responsibilities, they need to know what is considered unacceptable conduct. Consider the following questions:

- In your MRC unit, which behaviors will be considered categorically unacceptable?
- Which behaviors will merit a warning or some form of probationary period?
- Which behaviors will require a neutral third-party mediator to determine their severity?

Document your answers to these questions and include them in your training so that everyone understands the rules and knows which behaviors are unacceptable.

Expectations

In general, it is expected that MRC members will comply with the following standards of behavior:

- Adherence to all local, state, and Federal laws at all times
- Adherence to applicable safety standards
- Professional conduct and appearance while participating in any MRC-related activity
- Adherence to the chain of command, both within the local MRC unit and in an Incident Command System established in an emergency
- Clear display of current identification and unit affiliation while on duty

Dismissal

Dismissing a potential volunteer is rarely pleasant, but it may be necessary for the MRC unit's well-being. It is particularly important that a volunteer's behavior does not compromise the safety of volunteers, response partners, or community members. To dismiss a volunteer from service, the grounds for dismissal must be clearly communicated in advance of the behavior. Sometimes volunteers make mistakes because they were unaware of rules and codes of conduct. It is unfair to penalize them without first allowing them to demonstrate their willingness to follow clear rules and codes of conduct.

Each MRC unit should establish its own policies and procedures related to conduct, and identify the types of behavior that are considered unacceptable to the unit. The following are examples of behavior that MRC units may wish to highlight in their codes of conduct:

-
- Consumption of alcoholic beverages while on duty or any display of public drunkenness
 - Possession, use, or selling of any illegal drugs or substances
 - Misuse or selling of any prescription drugs
 - Violation of any local, state, or Federal law
 - Public outbursts, derogatory remarks, or profane language
 - Physical violence or intimidation of others
 - Possession of a firearm
 - Sexual harassment
 - Theft of property or misuse of equipment and supplies
 - Gambling
 - Gross negligence, inattention to duty, carelessness, insubordination, refusal to follow orders or directives, dishonesty, or willful misconduct in the performance of one's duties
 - Entering into unauthorized contracts for goods or services in the name of the MRC or any agency
 - Adherence to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap
 - Adherence to all laws protecting the privacy of personal information
 - Adherence to the local MRC's Standard Operating Guidelines
 - Access to cache and requests for supplies shall be granted only through the MRC chain of command. Volunteers must return all procured equipment prior to demobilization.
 - While representing MRC, a volunteer will not participate in activities that promote personal gain or ideologies.
 - Taking unauthorized photographs, audio, or videotapes is prohibited in order to maintain the privacy of the individuals being served.
 - Discussions with any media source during activation are prohibited, unless previously authorized by the team leader or coordinator.

Additional Resources

Developing a Volunteer Code of Conduct:

<http://www.sph.umn.edu/ce/tools/volunteer.asp>

Sample MRC Code of Conduct documents:

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/PromisingPracticesToolkit.asp?mode=ResourceDetails&ResID=205&RefID=Category&Category=22>
