



Guide to Developing an MRC Unit Plan (Mission, Goals, and Objectives)

A Guide for Local MRC Units



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Introduction

Drafting a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) plan for your unit, inclusive of a mission statement, goals, and objectives, is not just a writing exercise. It is a planning exercise. Developing a plan for your MRC unit is an opportunity to chart a course for your program and provide a framework for the efficient use of program resources. Take your time and make sure that your mission statement, goals, and objectives are carefully considered.

Outlining a purpose (mission) and focus (goals and objectives) not only serves to explain your work to individuals inside and outside your MRC unit, but also serves as a critical point of organization for your programming. Think of it as your master plan.

Mission Statement

Effective organizations have a concise statement about the purpose or mission of their particular organization or group. This statement helps focus the decisions that develop in support of the mission. Some organizations also include a vision statement as a way to maintain the effort's focus. A mission statement should be linked to the risks or needs identified in your initial assessment. Ideally, the mission statement is not developed by a single person; instead, it is developed with the cooperation and buy-in of community partners.

Specifically, a mission statement should be a 1–2 sentence statement describing the purpose of your MRC unit; i.e., why it exists and what it hopes to accomplish. For example, the mission of the Office of the Civilian Volunteer (OCV) MRC states:

The mission of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to improve the health and safety of communities across the country by organizing and utilizing public health, medical and other volunteers.

Your mission statement will build on the mission statement of the OCV MRC, but should also reflect your unit's specific circumstances and focus.

Goals

There are many ways to fulfill a mission. Given your risk/needs assessment, you should have a rough idea of where you would like to focus your energy. This is where your goals come in.

Goals are broad statements describing the desired long-term impact of your MRC unit. An effective goal statement describes what your program ultimately wants to accomplish. Goals serve as the basis for making decisions and setting priorities. They provide the *big picture* perspective of what the MRC unit hopes to achieve.

Examples of possible goal statements include:

Example Goal #1: *The goal of the XYZ County MRC is to identify, organize, and train local health professionals and lay people to respond to local emergencies.*

The goal statement above provides a general description of what the MRC unit hopes to accomplish and states that the unit's emphasis is on local emergency response. In some cases, the unit may identify a specific role and include this in its goal statement, as in the next two examples.

Example Goal #2: *The goal of the XYZ County MRC is to ensure adequate medical care to our citizens in the event of a situation that overwhelms the community's normal ability to care for the sick and injured by providing first aid care to first responders and treating the "walking wounded."*

Example Goal #3: *The goal of the XYZ County MRC is to create a community public health and medical volunteer resource that will be pre-identified, pre-registered, and prepared to respond to an emergency primarily by staffing Points of Dispensing (PODs).*

In examples 2 and 3, the goal still focuses on local emergency response, but the scope of responsibility is narrowed to specific roles, such as caring for first responders, treating the walking wounded, or staffing PODs.

Your MRC may have multiple goals. One or two goals are manageable, but having more than four goals is probably a sign that you are mixing the desired long-term impact with short-term outcomes (such as achieving a certain number of recruits).

Objectives

How will you know that you are making progress in achieving your goals? You want to identify key outcomes that will substantially support your MRC unit's mission and goals. Objectives outline expected achievements that are specific, measurable, and derived from your goals. Ultimately, these objectives will be your measures of success.

SMART Approach

In developing objectives, consider employing the sound guidance offered by the SMART approach. Useful objectives typically have the following qualities:

- S**pecific (concrete, detailed, well defined)
- M**easurable (quantifiable)
- A**chievable (reasonable)
- R**ealistic (given available resources)
- T**ime framed

As you are creating each of your objectives, think about the SMART approach. Well-designed objectives will help guide your programming and explain your accomplishments.

Practical Examples

Setting meaningful objectives is not an easy task. Consider the example below:

Example Objective #1: *Recruit and train volunteers.*

This example falls short of a good objective for the following reasons:

1. It lacks specificity. Two issues—recruitment and training—are included in a single objective.
2. It is not measurable. There is no information about the numbers or types of volunteers that the MRC unit hopes to attract.
3. There is no specified timeframe for either activity.

The parameters of the objective must be defined. How many volunteers will be recruited and trained? Do you want to accomplish this objective in 1 year or 3 years?

Phrased slightly differently, the same objective might read:

Example Objective #2: *Recruit 400 active volunteer responders to assist in the management of a public health emergency.*

The objective is now specific to recruitment, including a target number (400) by which the unit can measure success. It still lacks a specified timeframe, however, for volunteer recruitment. It is also unclear whether the unit wants to attract an additional 400 volunteers or to have 400 total volunteers.

Example Objective #3: *Increase the number of clinical volunteers by 20 percent over current levels within the next 12 months.*

This objective remains specific to recruitment and establishes a desired outcome (a 20 percent increase). It also defines a time period, seeks recruits with clinical training, and states the intent to increase numbers over current levels. Provided that this is realistic and agreed upon, it is a well written objective.

Planning: The Next Level

Mission?...Check. Goals?...Check. Objectives?...Check.

With your mission, goals, and objectives in hand, you have undoubtedly built a strong foundation for your work. The next step is to determine the path that your MRC unit will take to achieve its goals and objectives.

Checklist for Developing an MRC Unit Plan

- Develop your MRC unit's mission statement.
- Consider the long-term outcomes that you would like to see as a result of your MRC unit's work toward the identified mission.
- Develop goals describing what you hope to achieve.
- Develop SMART objectives.

Additional Resources

Medical Reserve Corps Self Evaluation Tools (particularly the section on Strategic Planning):

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/SelfEvaluationTools>

MRC Program Planning and Evaluation Resources:

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/PromisingPracticesToolkit.asp?mode=BrowseByCategory&category=26>

Community Tool Box—Developing a Strategic Plan:

http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/chapter_1007.htm