



MEMBER FORUM REPORT

Revision Date: November 28, 2011

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Established in 2003, MRC Los Angeles is about to embark on its ninth year of existence under the sponsorship of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health – Emergency Preparedness and Response Program. Guided by a public health mission, the volunteer unit’s purpose is to assist in county-wide public health emergencies as well as promote community health education and awareness. After a period of immense internal growth during the past three years and a notably higher, more acute recognition in the public’s mind to be prepared for a disaster or emergency, the staff of MRC Los Angeles invited all of its members to a MRC Los Angeles Member Forum to assess and explore MRC Los Angeles’:

- 1) Progress in fulfilling its vision, mission, and goals and objectives, as outlined in its 2010-2013 Strategic Plan;
- 2) Successes in fulfilling the expectations and interests of its volunteer members; and
- 3) Members’ goals and activity interests that may have not yet been addressed.

METHODOLOGY OF MEMBER FORUM

The MRC Los Angeles Member Forum was on Saturday, July 30, 2011, in Commerce, CA. A total of 67 members participated in the forum. Members answered ten (10) questions and brainstormed on and discussed ideas and suggestions for the 6 priorities outlined in the 2010-2013 Strategic Plan (Recruitment, Retention & Recognition, Community Engagement, Communication, Mobilization & Deployment, and Evaluation). After a combination of small and big group discussions and individual written feedback, the member forum concluded with an activity in which members worked together to prioritize the various comments and ideas gathered at the forum.

This report is a summary of the key themes and results of the various feedback activities from the Member Forum.

RESULTS

Ten (10) Questions - Consolidation of Comments & Feedback.

There were 10 questions crafted by Staff and Advisory Council to facilitate feedback on areas of interest. The following summarizes the feedback for the ten (10) questions consolidated based on popularity and frequency.

Q1. Why did you become a member of MRC Los Angeles and how did you hear about us?

- *To learn skills to assist my community in case of an emergency*
- *To train and help others.*
- *To network*
- *To learn and be prepared in case of an emergency*
- *Utilize my skills and knowledge*
- *Work*
- *Recruitment event*
- *Family and Friends*

Q2. What expectations do you have from MRC Los Angeles?

- *More "hands on" preparedness training*
- *To make a difference*
- *Organized and efficient leadership*
- *Build stronger relationships with community*
- *Standardize communications protocol*
- *More drills, exercises, and deployment*
- *Leadership opportunities*

Q3. What would you like to accomplish as a MRC Los Angeles member?

- *More community involvement*
- *Increase personal preparedness*
- *Use of professional training and skill in disaster*
- *Build teams that work well together. Interagency coordination.*
- *Apply what I have learned in a real emergency situation*
- *Leadership opportunities*

Q4. What does it mean to be a MRC Los Angeles member?

- *Volunteerism*
- *Willing to help in emergencies*
- *Trained and deployable*
- *Proud and happy for helping the community*
- *Being better prepared in case of an emergency*
- *Give back to your community*

Q5. What opportunities would you like to see in the future from MRC Los Angeles?

- *More involvement in community events*
- *Deployment exercises/"rehearsals"*
- *Local training for local groups*
- *Opportunities for national training and deployment*
- *Training on special populations and all areas of disaster needs*
- *Respond to more kinds of emergencies not defined as disasters (less serious)*

Q6. What topics would you like more training on?

- *Psychological first aid*
- *What actual deployment looks like*
- *How to get the community involved*
- *Leadership training*
- *Bioterrorism/earthquake emergency*
- *Special populations (homeless, veterans, bilingual)*

Q7. In which activities would you like to participate as a MRC Los Angeles member?

- *"Actual disaster" training/simulation*
- *Help as a volunteer in routine MRC work*
- *Drills/exercises/county level events with other agencies*
- *Community outreach events – health fairs, churches, chambers of commerce*

Q8. How can we get members more involved?

- *Better communication – telephone, email*
- *Have more meeting days other than Saturdays available*
- *More hands on training with actual scenarios*
- *Give them something of real value to do - outside of public health emergencies – community clinics, health fairs, church and community meeting representation*
- *Give responsibilities to members*
- *Reinvent the format of our training (indoor, outdoor, topics, hands on, social)*

Q9. How can we recruit more members?

- *Members' involvement with the community bringing awareness*
- *Call friends/associates/co-workers/students*
- *Recruitment committee*
- *Allied medical conventions (regional) and groups (APIC, ASSE, ASHE)*
- *Advertise in community events (i.e. fairs, farmers' markets, etc)*

Q10. What can we do to make MRC Los Angeles a stronger and more sustainable unit?

- *More recruitment with stronger advertisement*
- *Increase community awareness of MRC through more visible community involvement*
- *More trainings, simulations, drills, and exercises*
- *Stable leadership with more leaders and volunteers*
- *Agency collaborative relationships (local cities)*
- *Being its own 501c3*
- *More communication and commitment from members and staff*

Six (6) Strategic Priorities - Prioritization of Comments & Feedback.

Facilitated group discussions were organized by the six (6) strategic priorities (Recruitment, Retention & Recognition, Community Engagement, Communication, Mobilization & Deployment, and Evaluation). Listed below are the top bullet points for each of the six (6) strategic priorities based on popularity and frequency.

SP1. Recruitment

- Have “Open House” meeting for MRC Los Angeles
- More local recruitment and outreach
- Strategic recruitment among diverse cultural groups, public health professional organizations and special/relevant populations
- Look for free public advertising and company newsletters
- Seek support and sponsorship for MRC Los Angeles from community leaders, private industry and chambers of commerce
- Have materials available for members to distribute

SP2. Retention & Recognition

- Use members’ training and expertise in public health projects
- Provide personal and meaningful recognition of members’ efforts
- Local member leadership and training and partnership with other organizations
- Social events and other fun activities for members
- Create MRC Los Angeles membership cards
- Post online and notify members of outcomes/information (synopsis of PPT) of meetings

SP3. Community Engagement

- Local MRC Los Angeles participation in related action-oriented programs (i.e. KidneyWise, LA Marathon)
- Create action plan and form committee as soon as possible
- Partnership with community agencies and neighborhood groups
- Provide courses in community and individual disaster preparedness for public
- MRC Los Angeles’s presence in schools, churches, clubs, etc
- Match members’ expertise and available time to MRC Los Angeles-relevant projects

SP4. Communication

- Train and use diverse communication methods (i.e. email, text, automated voicemail, interactive website, ham radio, social media, surveys)
- Develops skills database
- Instruction on MRC-TRAIN online programs
- Coordinate with local agencies
- Local group meetings
- Use checklist for clear communication

SP5. Mobilization & Deployment

- Drill for and test existing mobilization notification system
- Emphasize adherence to ICS
- Identify MRC Los Angeles's partners in mobilization and deployment
- Assess the needs and existing resources
- Getting information out accurately!!
- Back-up communication systems (i.e. EAS, radio, ham radio)

SP6. Evaluation

- Use quantitative (i.e. Survey Monkey) and qualitative (i.e. questionnaire) methods
- After event with community/members, does community/members provide feedback
- Measure how well we match competencies against needs
- Evaluate MRC Los Angeles meetings
- Follow up on comments, online feedback after and respond to questions
- Need criteria, then evaluate against it (i.e. numeric targets, timeline targets, stretch goals)

DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

Common themes and ideas clearly begin to emerge from the feedback collected at the Member Forum. Many of the members' answers to the ten (10) questions and their ideas to fulfill the objectives of the six (6) strategic priorities outlined in the 2010-2013 MRC Los Angeles Strategic Plan auspiciously correlate with each other. Furthermore, a great number of members' ideas coincide with activities that MRC Los Angeles is already conducting for the unit and initiatives that the unit leadership is currently in the process of planning, launching and engaging its members in. Thirdly, members have proposed suggestions that are new and innovative and that the unit leadership will evaluate and seek to implement and incorporate, when and wherever possible.

The most prolific themes that transpired from the member forum are that volunteer members have an overwhelming desire to be utilized and have more opportunities to be involved, especially in the area of community engagement. This request is explicitly articulated when members asserted that they want to "learn skills to assist the community in case of an emergency" and "provide courses in community and individual disaster preparedness for the public" as well as when they requested "more community involvement" and "community outreach events." In reviewing the information gathered during the small and big group discussions and individually written feedback, ideas gravitated towards engaging with various community and local organizations, such as schools, retirement homes, places of faith, chambers of commerce; participating in community and local events, such as health fairs, farmers' markets, community group meetings; and partnering up with community and local groups, such as CERT, professional associations and emergency response agencies. Certainly the most compelling strategic priority for most of the members who attended the forum was **Community Engagement**.

Fortunately, the unit leadership has already been implementing many activities that directly relate to members' desire to be utilized and be more involved, especially in the community at-large. Such endeavors have included participating at Walk KidneyWise and the 2010 and 2011 LA Marathons, taking part as *Ambassadors* to represent the Department's new campaign ("Connect, Prepare, Respond") to encourage community preparedness and resilience, and fulfilling local and partner agencies' requests to provide skilled MRC Los Angeles volunteers who can assist at community health and wellness events. As for initiatives currently in the pipeline, unit leadership is in the process of forming a committee that will consist of dedicated members who may complete potential "Train-the Trainer" trainings which will then allow them to go out into the community and give presentations on preparedness, resiliency and other relevant topics. As members become trained, this committee may then seek to establish a

speakers' bureau. This proposal would also provide specific leadership opportunities that members stated they are seeking and, by building leaders from within, augment the capacity of the two staff.

Another strategic priority that emerged was **Mobilization & Deployment**. The feedback that speaks to this theme include members asking for more simulated exercises and trainings – “more ‘hands on’ preparedness training” and “being able to apply what I have learned in a real emergency situation,” – and also more utilization of their skills and training, especially when the willingness to serve and volunteer is high – “actual deployment” and “use of professional training and skills in a disaster.” Essentially, members are curious to know “what actual deployment looks” and want to be given “something of real value to do” even outside of public health emergencies. They are also seeking to do drills and exercises alongside other agencies and groups and receive trainings on special populations and psychological first aid.

Overall, the members' shared ideas and concepts are tying in with the common themes highlighted in this section and interweave throughout the other strategic priorities as well. Getting more involved, being utilized more, and being more prepared for emergencies – focus and strength on these elements points to meeting recruitment, retention, communication, and evaluation objectives too. The viability of the unit, its members and the community as a whole can be strengthened by engaging with each other and with local and partnering agencies. Raising more awareness and elevating the profile of MRC Los Angeles brings it closer to achieving its vision and mission of the unit. The outcomes of this member forum clearly point to this: the members care deeply about the direction and success of MRC Los Angeles and the unit can attributes its success and viability to its members.

of Members interesting in getting more involved in each strategic priority:

Recruitment: *9 members*

Retention & Recognition: *6 members*

Community Engagement: *20 members*

Communication: *15 members*

Mobilization & Deployment: *20 members*

Evaluation: *5 members*