

Chapter One. Introduction to the Toolkit

Why was this Toolkit developed?

Despite substantial investments in public health preparedness, validated measures to ensure accountability and to enable systems improvement and the advancement of knowledge are lacking. The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) partnered with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Harvard School of Public Health and Georgetown University to develop a Toolkit that MRC units can use to assess the effectiveness of engaging volunteers in public health activities, specifically flu clinics.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval

This study was approved by the Harvard School of Public Health and Georgetown University Institutional Review Boards.

What does this Toolkit contain?

This Toolkit includes:

A. Three questionnaires:

1. A questionnaire for MRC volunteers who participate in public health activities (Volunteer Self Assessment Questionnaire),
2. A questionnaire for volunteers that have been recruited to participate but were unable to attend (Barriers to Volunteering Questionnaire),

3. A questionnaire for the local health department (LHD) staff who supervised the public health activity (LHD Staff Questionnaire on MRC Volunteers).
- B. Information on how the questionnaires were developed and validated
- C. Instructions on how to implement the questionnaires
- D. A website to enter the data into the website www.mrctoolkit.com and get a report with the analysis of results
- E. Information on how to use the instrument in the context of quality improvement efforts.

Who should use this Toolkit and why?

These surveys will help local MRC leadership identify the strengths of engaging volunteers in public health activities as well as understand barriers experienced by the volunteers in participating in such activities. Such information can be used to improve the process in future deployment (as is further discussed in chapter three).

How was the Toolkit validated?

As described below, the instruments were tested and revised based on structured observations performed by a group of researchers from Harvard School of Public Health and Georgetown University who implemented the questionnaires in fifteen different locations throughout the country. In addition, feed-back on the practicality of the instruments and on the interpretability of the results was gathered during two face-to-face meetings with MRC coordinators and LHD staff that had the opportunity to use the instruments. Finally, statistical analysis was performed to assess the psychometric properties of the instruments.

The following chapters explain in detail the tools contained in the Toolkit and how MRC coordinators can use this Toolkit to assess the effectiveness of engaging volunteers during public health activities. The reliability and validity of the instruments included in the Toolkit have been tested in the context of flu clinics and can provide the MRC unit leaders and local health departments with insight into how to monitor and improve the recruitment and engagement of volunteers in public health activities.

When should an MRC unit use the Toolkit?

The Toolkit can be used every time a MRC unit participates in a public health activity. Specific suggestions on the use of the Toolkit in the context of system improvement efforts are presented in chapter three.

How long does it take to implement the Toolkit and get the results?

It takes between ten and twenty minutes to collect the questionnaires after a given activity. More details on how to conduct this process are given in chapter two. An online data entry program is available at www.mrctoolkit.com to enter and analyze the data. It should take about two minutes to enter each questionnaire and a couple of minutes to get the results from the online program. After all of the surveys are entered, the MRC Coordinator can click on the link “View Survey Results” to see their MRC unit’s survey results in the context of other sites.