

CALIFORNIA HEALTH MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

The California Health Medical Reserve Corps (CHMRC) Unit formed on June 12, 2014, with the vision of catalyzing human potential to re-imagine health.

CHMRC is an organization that leverages existing networks to improve the health of communities. The CHMRC team is a multidisciplinary mix of professionals in the health, allied health, and information technology sectors and beyond.

The core philosophy of CHMRC is collaboration. We see opportunities to work together to develop communities as learning systems for health and plan to weave together local leaders, tools, and methods from Silicon Valley to bringing to reality a shared vision of health. They are a multi-disciplinary, multi-perspective group of action-oriented thinkers and doers coming together take on specific challenges like Resiliency, Fitness and Nutrition – with a whole person, whole community participatory approach.

As vaccines became available and mass vaccination sites were established, CHMRC focused its efforts on reaching the hard-to-reach and vaccination hesitant population, those who were unable or afraid to attend the mass vaccination sites. We wanted to give the same level of care by going directly to them and providing access to services that they would not otherwise receive.



The greatest challenge? ***The unknown.***

How would these services be received?

Do the groups and individuals want or need the services that we could provide?

If we build it, will they come?

Without a doubt and without exception, the answers were an overwhelming **YES!**

CHMRC, in collaboration with public health departments, community food banks, university health programs, community-based organizations, medical clinics and hospitals, established pop-up vaccination clinics. CHMRC not only gets shots in arms, but has provided food, clothing, COVID testing and enrollment in clinics for on-going medical services. CHMRC went to farms, migrant centers, community centers, factories, and churches. Over 225 volunteers donated 1500+ hours and provided just over 1700 vaccinations working together with clinical, public health and CHMRC staff.

The partnerships that CHMRC built continue to provide a coordinated end-to-end approach to the health of the community. By working to ensure that public health, local clinics and community-based organizations participate in vaccination events, a full range of services can be provided. Individuals who were otherwise unaware that these services existed at low/no cost, now have access, and have enrolled in these programs.

It was rewarding when the newly vaccinated individuals, asked to have their pictures taken with the band-aid on their arm, their CDC vaccination card, and a HUGE smile on their face, so they could send it to family and friends with the caption I'VE BEEN VACCINATED!

CHMRC volunteers were excited to participate and want to do more. In the de-brief following an event, first-time volunteers commented:

“This event was so fulfilling.”

“It was rewarding for me to see the joy on people’s faces when they got their first shot.”

“I would like to do this again, how can I sign up to help?”

The age-old adage about volunteering - that you always get more than you give - is certainly true. As an MRC volunteer, your time does make a difference and you touch not only the individual, but the entire community.

Through these pop-up clinics, CHMRC has built greater collaboration, trust, and a sense of community. Also, CHMRC has a clearer vision of what is needed to help all communities throughout California have the technical and programmatic infrastructure to deal with future emergencies and crises.



Find more information about the California Health Medical Reserve Corps at <https://www.californiahealthmrc.org/who-we-are/>.