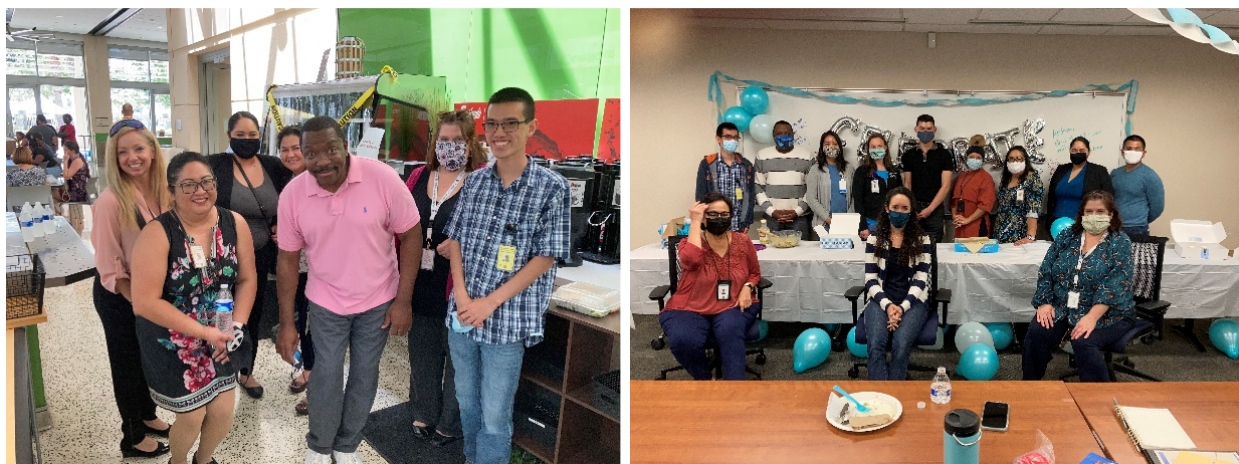


# San Diego Medical Reserve Corps



## 1. What were some of the greatest challenges your MRC unit has experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The main challenges our Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) unit has experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic consisted of:

- **Sufficient Staffing for Volunteer Management:** Communication between the volunteers in the field and the Medical Branch staff in the Medical Operations Center was challenging due largely to the size and scope of the response. Once volunteers were cleared, they were referred to the vaccine branch for training and scheduling. It was difficult to maintain communications to support volunteers in the field.
- **Coordination of Communication:** Another challenge was maintaining timely communication to volunteers. Volunteers requested that “communications about site changes can be rolled out to MRC volunteers in the same real-time that they go out to county staffers.”

With the addition of staffing for the Medical Volunteer Branch, there was constant coordination between the MRC administration and volunteers to obtain information from the vaccination sites or via other departments with the MOC operation. MRC OAs were ensuring the MRC volunteers had everything they required to perform their job and acted as a direct line back to the MRC unit.

- **Unpredictable vaccine supply:** Many last-minute shift cancellations and site changes occurred due to lack of vaccine supply. The lack of vaccine due to supply decreased the number of 4 hour and 8 hour shifts available. 4-hour shifts were then cancelled moving forward, causing many volunteers to lose interest in vaccinating at County run sites.

## 2. What are some of your unit's greatest strengths that have come out during the pandemic?

Some of our unit's greatest strengths that have come out during the pandemic include a team culture that was established from the very top – down, nourishing a family unit. These efforts supported the team in providing excellent customer service to our internal and external customers.

Emergency response work in a non-COVID-19 environment can be stressful. Adding in a virtual environment can increase the stress. Implementing an inclusive team and supportive environment

as a unit on day one was part of the created culture that members describe as the “MRC Machine Team” family. For example, under the leadership of our Medical Volunteer Branch Director, Angeline Soto who is a Staff Development Specialist on temporary reassignment from Human Resources, The Knowledge Center, these activities added to the supportive environment:

- Conducting regular Microsoft Teams calls to stay up to date on priority projects and limitations with each other.
- Encouraging participation in the ‘Fri-YAY’ and ‘Hump Day’ question of the day. This is a question of the week that allowed the team to further connect showing how similar we are and simultaneously celebrating our differences, further increasing team trust.
- Surveying staff to ensure we hosted birthday celebrations in a way they appreciated, allowed them to feel valued and loved.

**3. What other agencies did you partner with and for what purpose(s)? Please explain. (i.e., local, state, federal, medical, non-profit, home health/skill nursing; for testing, vaccine administration, patient care, etc.**

The County partnered with community such as the San Diego County Medical Society and San Diego County Dental Society. Healthcare staff and community partners signed up as MRC volunteers and promoted the program, increasing the number of vaccinators available, especially in areas of the county hardest hit by COVID supporting efforts to increase vaccine equity.

During the time vaccine supply was low and volunteer shifts were unpredictable, the Medical Volunteer Branch partnered with local partners in the healthcare systems Sharp, Scripps, UCSD and Champions for Health to share volunteer opportunities with current MRC volunteers who had time to continue assisting with vaccinations. Although we were happy to share volunteer opportunities, we found that cancelling additional 4 hours shifts had a negative impact to volunteers returning to our sites for 8-hour shifts.

EMSA are great partners and continue to provide our staff with direction on best practices and assisting with DHV system navigation. We know they are a phone call or email away and appreciate their quick question-to-answer turn around.

**4. How did those partnerships help to deliver timely and appropriate care to California's citizens?**

As soon as approved vaccine was available, the need for vaccinators increased tremendously. Partnering with community partner agencies where vaccine was most in need was a collaboration that made sense. EMSA assisted with getting the right information to our staff and volunteers, better directing us in a path to take control of this deadly virus.

**5. Can you tell us a brief story of something that your MRC unit was involved in that was a unique or noteworthy experience?**

Something that our MRC unit was involved in that was a unique or noteworthy experience were the MRC *Selfie Challenge* and *Recording the MRC Journey* projects. These still and moving images help to immortalize and appreciate the work of our MRC volunteers through the COVID-19 response. The *Selfie Challenge* allowed us to capture vaccination site moments for the MRC volunteer in a fun way. The images showcased the very heart of what was occurring on the front lines of the COVID-19 response, including the hard work that did not go unnoticed. In addition, volunteers were able to participate in *Recording the MRC Journey* by starring in an “on-camera” interview of their experience at the vaccination site.



A Midoro



D Lorenz



S Faron



L Schlitt



P Wojdowski



T Chow

### What would you say to someone who is interested in joining their Local Medical Reserve Corps?

Here is what some of the volunteers are saying:

- *"I would absolutely recommend it! Being part of this team has been a great experience. It truly has been mind-opening to see the call for volunteers filled by the medical community."*
- *"Being part of this organization allows you to humble yourself and practice your passion through volunteer service, meet new people, work in the community, and continue to learn some new skills and gain knowledge of how the MOC/MRC functions as a unit."*
- *"All the people with whom I've worked are lovely and help me feel like we are moving the needle in the right direction to fight the pandemic. That's a terrific feeling. I'm really proud of being part of the team."*
- *Another volunteer said, "It's a good way for a retiree like me to help out using my medical training."*

For more information about the San Diego Medical Reserve Corps, visit  
<https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/hhsa/programs/phs/PublicHealthPreparednesandResponse/SanDiegoMedicalReserveCorps.html>.