

## New York State Department of Health Volunteer Program

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001 licensed practitioners from across the state volunteered their services to respond to the crisis. Respiratory care practitioners were especially important in providing their skills to patients and volunteers experiencing breathing difficulties from the large amounts of air-borne contaminants, from the exacerbation of chronic respiratory diseases and from coronary pulmonary events triggered by the disaster. However, it became apparent to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) that most practitioners could not be effectively mobilized unless they were already a member of a local or state public health preparedness team that were trained and prepared to respond.

To this end, the NYSDOH developed a statewide Public Health Preparedness Volunteer Program of licensed professionals who would be willing to volunteer their services in the event of a public health emergency. The purpose of this Volunteer Practitioner Program is to assure that the entire State has adequate resources to prepare for and respond to any public health emergency, whether it is a declared disaster or other non-declared emergency affecting public health. Volunteers could be needed to respond to natural disasters, accidents, or terrorist attacks, and during events where operations are compromised by physical damage, loss of electrical power, or other causes. Emergencies might range from single- jurisdictional events such as a single anthrax letter to regional events such as a multi-county ice storm, to statewide events such as a severe hurricane.

The types of skills that would be needed in preparation for or during an emergency would depend on the event. The skills that may be needed include, but are not limited to, pediatric medicine, surgery, dermatology, mass trauma or infectious disease, the provision of clinical diagnosis and treatment of patients, or the sharing of knowledge with other health professionals about such topics as organization of emergency medical services, veterinarian medicine, vaccination, diagnosis, prophylaxis, diagnosis or decontamination. Similarly, the duration of service needed will depend on the situation.

By enrolling in the NYSDOH Volunteer Program a practitioner would be indicating their willingness to volunteer their time and professional skill in an emergency in their county and/or possibly in another location where their assistance is needed. Enrolling places a practitioner under no legal obligation to volunteer.

To enroll in the NYSDOH Volunteer Program, you will need a Health Provider Network (HPN) account. Obtaining a HPN account will also offer you the following advantages:

- Access to specific activation and deployment instructions in the event of an emergency;
- Access to the Health Alert Network (HAN) which contains information about disaster preparedness and electronically delivers the latest notifications from NYSDOH and CDC to your email, fax or phone; and
- Access to day-to-day information exchange between clinical and public health community.

To apply for an HPN account as well as complete the NYSDOH Volunteer Application, please access <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/pub/>. After completing the HPN application a pop up screen will appear asking “If you would like to volunteer?” Upon clicking “yes” you will be

prompted to complete the volunteer questionnaire. Upon submission of your application you will receive an email with a PDF application attached. The application must be signed, notarized, and returned to NYSDOH before your account will be activated. But in the meantime, you are enrolled as a volunteer.

If you currently have a HPN account, please access <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us/hpn/cgi-bin/applinks/mpvols/VolunteerQuestionnaire> and you will be prompted to complete the volunteer application.

New York State thanks you for considering volunteering your services in the event of a future emergency.