Is your local health department prepared for a public health emergency? Probably more than you think! A public health emergency can take many forms. A major outbreak of a very serious disease, whether started by nature or by man, could be a public health emergency. Community Health Services of Marion County has been preparing plans and training for public health emergencies for years. Plans are in place for mass vaccination clinics, mass medication distribution clinics, isolation and quarantine. Community Health Services of Marion County has been training to work with Marion County's Emergency Management, first responders/fire/rescue/EMS, hospitals, clinics, veterinarians, and others for a variety of health related emergencies. In the past, there has been training and exercises to test these plans.

Now it is time for us to do our annual update of these plans. We are always looking for volunteers who would be willing to assist us in a public health emergency. We need medical personnel, including physicians, pharmacists, and nurses. We need clerical assistance and folks who are willing to teach people about a disease. We need people who are organized and emotionally strong. We need people with "cool heads" and who are willing to help in a community crisis. We currently have a list of volunteers who will be contacted about their continued interest, but we need new volunteers as well. All volunteers during a public health emergency will need to be authorized prior to the event. If you are able and willing to volunteer, don't wait until an emergency occurs. Call, email, or click on "contact us" and leave your contact information so we can talk to you about your interests in volunteering.

What is involved in volunteering? Credentialing, training, and of course, showing up when called for an emergency. We will credential you now, so that if a public health emergency happens, we are prepared, and we already know you and what your role will be. This is good for you, too! Training is, well, training. Learning what your role would be, and what you would do. Training also means exercising or practicing, either in a tabletop exercise or functional practice. Most training will be "just in time" training because there are so many types of public health emergencies.

We have our plans, we have some volunteers, but there is always room for more. In a public health emergency where we would need to open a mass vaccination or medication distribution clinic, we know we will need more people to help - from setting up to actually giving the vaccine or medication. Please volunteer. Click on contact us today!