

## **K HELPS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

In the event of a large-scale public health emergency, health and medical systems would be overwhelmed with individuals seeking treatment. The need to meet this demand would be critical.

In preparation to respond to this call, the Kentucky Department for Public Health has created K HELPS, the Kentucky Health Emergency Listing of Professionals for Surge program. We hope you will take this opportunity to learn about the program and decide to join us in our quest to be prepared to serve Kentuckians and citizens across the United States who will desperately need our help when disaster strikes. We want both our fellow Kentuckians and citizens throughout the U.S. to know — without a doubt — that in times of need, Kentucky helps.

### **What is K HELPS?**

K HELPS is a state-based system to register medical professionals interested in volunteering to offer assistance during public health emergencies or disasters.

### **What is the Medical Reserve Corps?**

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units are community-based and function as a way to locally organize and utilize volunteers — medical professionals and others — who want to donate their time and expertise to promote healthy living throughout the year and to prepare for and respond to emergencies. MRC volunteers supplement existing local emergency and public health resources.

### **How is K HELPS different from the Medical Reserve Corps?**

K HELPS is a state program designed to complement the existing local MRC. Under the new system, K HELPS and local MRC units will work together closely. MRCs cover nearly all counties in Kentucky.

### **How will MRC and K HELPS work together?**

Volunteers will register with K HELPS online and will automatically be assigned to the MRC unit associated with the volunteer's geographical area. The local MRC unit will verify credentials of the volunteer (if applicable) and complete the approval process. The local MRC unit will then provide orientation, training and issue an identification badge for the volunteer.

### **Who can volunteer?**

Anyone can volunteer. However, K HELPS is currently placing emphasis on the recruitment of:

- physicians
- nurses
- pharmacists
- social workers

- radiological technologists
- respiratory therapists
- clinical laboratory technologists

To meet behavioral health surge capacity needs, K HELPS is partnering with the Kentucky Community Crisis Response Board (KCCRB) to allow psychologists, counselors and therapists to participate.

### **How would I know if I was needed during a disaster?**

The K HELPS system has the ability to contact volunteers by e-mail, telephone or both. Local MRC units will also have administrative rights to alert and activate volunteers when needed.

### **How do I sign up?**

Volunteers can register with K HELPS online at <https://khelps.chfs.ky.gov>. You may also visit your local health department to fill out a hard copy application. You will be asked to create your own user account. All information provided will be kept confidential. Volunteer information will only be available to the volunteer and the approving organization.

### **How will I be credentialed?**

Personal information will only be utilized to credential applicants and to notify the applicant of volunteer opportunities. Credentialing includes obtaining, verifying, and assessing the qualifications of a health care professional to provide patient care, treatment, and services in or for a healthcare organization. All K HELPS volunteers will have a minimum of a criminal background check and license verification (if applicable).

### **What will be required of me?**

Volunteers must complete a minimal amount of training that includes an orientation and a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) course on the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Each course should take about an hour. All training may be completed online via the Training Finder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN.) TRAIN is the nation's premier learning resource for professionals who protect the public's health and may be accessed at <http://ky.train.org>.

K HELPS training is available on different levels. Level 1 training is mandatory. Additional trainings are recommended, but not required. K HELPS courses will also be offered on a regular basis in your area. See training matrix on Web site for more information.

### **How will my personal information be protected?**

All information will be kept confidential. Volunteer information will only be available to the volunteer and the approving organization. Volunteer information will only be utilized to verify the qualifications of an applicant and to notify the applicant of volunteer opportunities. The online system uses industry standard security protocols to protect your personal data. Software security includes SSL (secure socket layer) technology to

provide authenticated and encrypted communication between clients and servers as well as multiple firewalls between the internet and the actual data storage. The K HELPS system resides at the Kentucky Commonwealth Data Center where 24x7 controlled entry and physical security are maintained and monitored.

**If I register, am I committed to respond when called?**

Registration in K HELPS in no way commits a volunteer to response. The goal is to have at least 2,000 approved volunteers in the system so that there are plenty to call upon.

**I have a retired or inactive license. Am I still eligible to register in K HELPS?**

K HELPS also targets professionals with an inactive or retired license because they are more likely to be available during a public health emergency. Many medical professionals currently working in hospitals or other health care settings are likely to be called in to work during a disaster.

**I have an out-of-state license. Am I still eligible to register in K HELPS?**

Yes, out-of-state volunteers are accepted in the system. However, K HELPS is currently only verifying in-state licenses. Because K HELPS is unable to verify your medical license, you may be approved as a non-medical group member. Out-of-state volunteers living in counties contiguous to Kentucky will be automatically assigned to a nearby Kentucky MRC unit. Others will be assigned on a case-by-case basis.