

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS
SPECIAL REPORT ON COVID-19
PANDEMIC RESPONSE**

2020-2022



University of Minnesota
Health Emergency Response Office

INTRODUCTION

This special report on COVID-19 response activities by the University of Minnesota Health Emergency Response Office (HERO) and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) comes three years after the global pandemic started in the United States. Indeed, HERO first began monitoring and mobilizing around the then-unknown SARS-CoV-2 virus on January 2, 2020 following [concern from the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy](#) about an unusual viral pneumonia outbreak in Wuhan, China. In mid-January, HERO convened a Health Operations Team to monitor the situation and coordinate “boots on the ground” response operations. By mid-March, the University of Minnesota MRC received its first deployment request. In the end, there would be 32 deployments in support of COVID response efforts on our campus and in the community.

Between those early, uncertain days to the end of our final University of Minnesota MRC COVID-19 deployment in May 2022 and the conclusion of Health Operations Team work in August of 2022, the world moved through mitigation strategies, testing, and vaccine deployment to full integration of COVID-19 into our “new normal.” Not to mention innumerable other adjustments to daily life, work, school, and play. Along the way, HERO and our campus partners mobilized unprecedented resources and adapted long standing processes (or formulated new ones), to meet our community’s basic living needs, educational, work and research goals, and overall health and safety—all from a safe social distance.

How did we do this?

Despite the unparalleled nature and impact of COVID-19, the fundamental response skills, expertise, and commitment that public health agencies and offices used to meet those challenges are nothing new. Here at the University, HERO was founded in 2004 to ensure health emergencies affecting the University community are addressed in a timely, efficient, and effective manner. Behind this seemingly simple mission is decades of public health and infectious disease expertise, coordinated systems for response and communications, emergency management best-practices, trusted and effective partnerships, and one of the oldest and most robust Medical Reserve Corps units in the country.

Also founded in 2004, the University of Minnesota MRC is the largest MRC in Minnesota, with more than 2,200 members, including the unique aspect of including both graduate and undergraduate students. The University of Minnesota MRC has deployed almost every year of its nearly 20 year history, sometimes multiple times per year. This includes state and national deployments like Hurricane Katrina, the 35W Bridge Collapse and deployments in support of University of Minnesota system campuses.

COVID-19 DEPLOYMENTS BY THE NUMBERS



 **22,904**

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS

 **32**

DEPLOYMENTS



PUBLIC HEALTH SUPPORT

 **7**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **3651**
HOURS



HEALTHCARE SUPPORT

 **7**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **11,636**
HOURS



HEALTH SCIENCES SCHOOLS

 **3**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **547**
HOURS


TESTING

 **6**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **1,421**
HOURS

VACCINATION

 **7**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **5,330**
HOURS

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

 **2**
DEPLOYMENTS
 **319**
HOURS



3

STAFF ADDED
TO SUPPORT
DEPLOYMENTS



5

COUNTIES
SERVED



28

MONTHS
DEPLOYED



BEYOND MRC: HERO'S BROADER ROLE IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Consistent with its public health mission, HERO reassigned all team members to work on the pandemic in support of university communities. Our efforts included:

- Partnering with the Campus Public Health Officer to ensure information sharing and response actions were based on the best available medical and public health information throughout the evolving pandemic.
- Sharing public health expertise with senior leaders, shared governance partners, and campus colleagues in most areas of campus operations.
- Convening COVID-19 Health Operations Team weekly to ensure operations level coordination on the Twin Cities campus. Membership evolved over time, with representation from Boynton Health, Housing and Residential Life, M Dining, GPS Alliance, Office of Human Resources, University Relations, Department of Environmental Health, and HERO.
- Providing technical assistance and support to Chancellors of Crookston, Duluth, Morris, and Rochester campuses and convening regular coordination and information sharing meetings with health partners from all campuses.
- Leading the creation of multi-level public health response plans adjusted over time to best address the changing pandemic landscape. Plans included strategies for vaccination, masking, testing, exposure notification, isolation and quarantine, cluster response, and situational awareness.
- Serving as liaison to the Minnesota Department of Health with weekly, sometimes daily, interactions during the height of the pandemic to ensure the unique challenges and opportunities present in higher education communities were understood at the state level.



MRC COVID-19 DEPLOYMENT SNAPSHOT

The University of Minnesota MRC members served a critical role in both the campus and the State's COVID – 19 response efforts. Members were deployed to events such as testing, case investigation/contact tracing, vaccine administration, subject matter expertise/support to the state epidemiologist, community outreach, and medication reconciliation. The MRC also provided a linkage between students who needed to fill academic requirements with opportunities related to the COVID-19 response. The following section provides just a snapshot of the **32 COVID-19 deployments** completed by the University of Minnesota MRC across 7 primary areas:

- M Health Fairview Support
- Boynton Health Support
- Minnesota Department of Health Support
- Health Sciences School Support
- Testing
- Vaccination
- Community Outreach

SUPPORTING LOCAL SYSTEMS

BOYNTON HEALTH

SYMPTOM SCREENING

 **9 MEMBERS**  **43 HOURS**

School of Nursing students provided COVID-19 symptom screening at Boynton. (September to December 2020)

HEALTH SCIENCES SCHOOLS

DENTAL SCHOOL PPE DISTRIBUTION

 **5 MEMBERS**  **20 HOURS**

Dental students staffed the distribution of PPE to dentists in the metro area. (June 2020)

N95 RESPIRATOR FIT TESTING

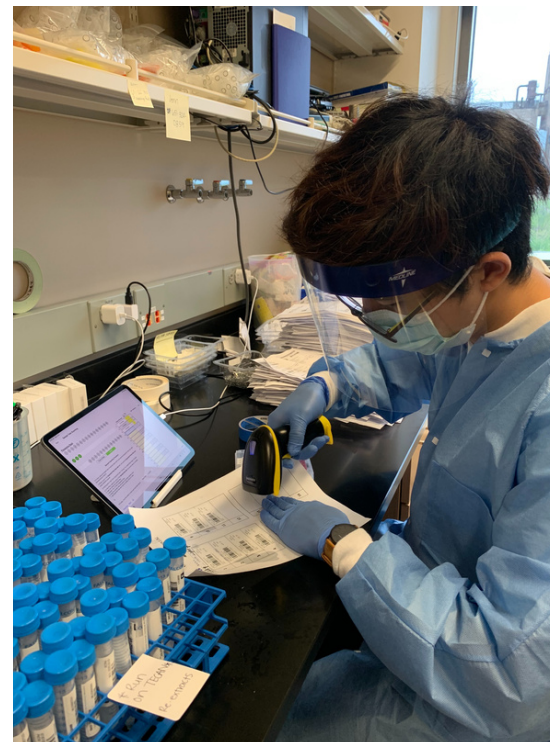
 **3 MEMBERS**  **12 HOURS**

N95 Respirator Fit-Testing Strike Team members assisted with fit testing for U of M staff and students. (June 2020)

TESTING LABORATORY

 **7 MEMBERS**  **515 HOURS**

MRC members assisted the Medical School in creation and support of a new laboratory for COVID testing. (May to August 2020)



SUPPORTING LOCAL SYSTEMS

MHEALTH FAIRVIEW

MEDICATION RECONCILIATION

 **25 MEMBERS**  **3083 HOURS**

Pharmacy students and faculty assisted MHealth Fairview with post-discharge medication reconciliation under the direct supervision of a preceptor. (March to August 2020)

TELEHEALTH

 **34 MEMBERS**  **2305 HOURS**

Medical students assisted MHealth Fairview with telehealth support under direct supervision of a preceptor. (March to June 2020)

MEDICAL TRIAGE

 **131 MEMBERS**  **5391 HOURS**

Medical students assisted with triage at MHealth Fairview Midway in 2-4 week rotations. (March to June 2020)

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

CASE INVESTIGATION & CONTACT TRACING

 **80 MEMBERS**  **3120 HOURS**

MRC members assisted with COVID case investigation and contract tracing with MDH and with Boynton Health. (May to December 2020)

MEDICAL CHART REVIEW

 **3 MEMBERS**  **98 HOURS**

Members reviewed medical charts from patients at two long-term care facilities to understand more about signs and symptoms that come before and after a COVID diagnosis. (July to August 2020)


COMMUNITY OUTREACH

GOPHER GROCERY ASSISTANCE

 **15 MEMBERS**  **194 HOURS**

MRC members provided learning materials and direct telephone assistance to those learning to use online grocery ordering. (May to December 2020)



SMILEY'S PHONE-BASED OUTREACH

 **8 MEMBERS**  **125 HOURS**

MRC members provided phone-based education and outreach to Somali seniors to provide education about the COVID-19 pandemic. (May to August 2020)




COVID-19 TESTING

 **40**
MEMBERS
 **233**
HOURS

RAMSEY COUNTY
Testing at demonstrations, vigils and neighborhood cleanup in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. In partnership with Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health.

 **26**
MEMBERS
 **110**
HOURS

CUHCC
Testing in partnership with Community-University Health Care Center (CUHCC) in the Cedar-Riverside area.

 **17**
MEMBERS
 **171**
HOURS

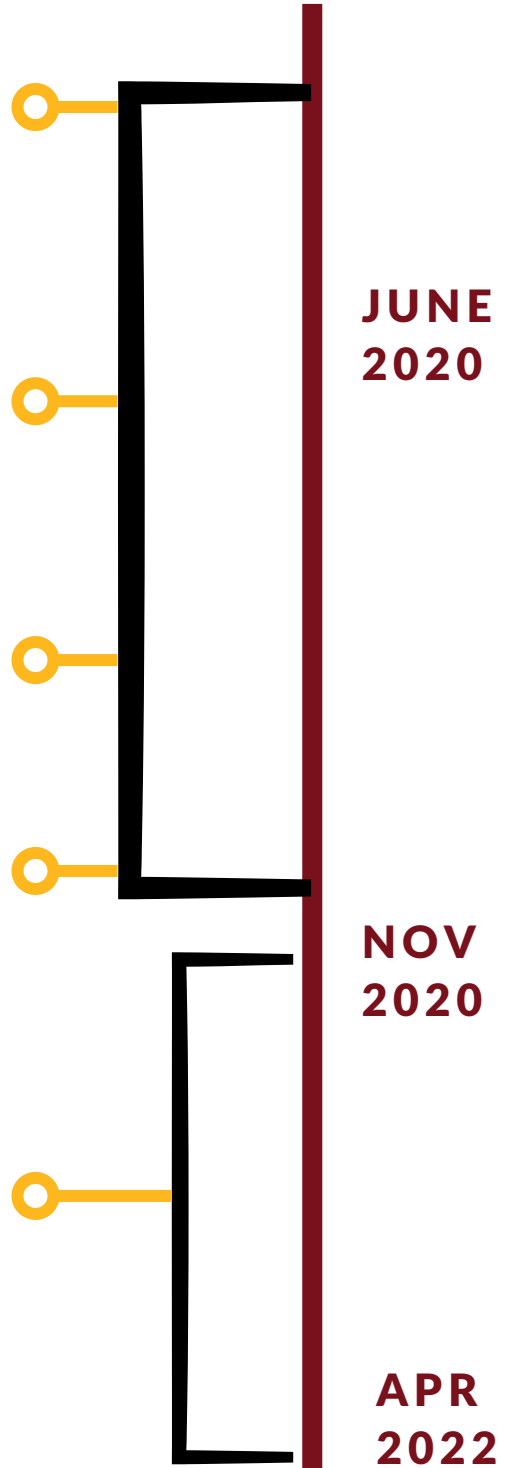
MOWER COUNTY
Mower County testing event at the Mower County Fairgrounds in Austin, MN.

 **19**
MEMBERS
 **106**
HOURS

RAMSEY COUNTY
Supported pop-up testing sites in Ramsey County.

 **20**
MEMBERS
 **398**
HOURS

BOYNTON HEALTH MTEST
Supported Boynton Health's MTest site at the Twin Cities RecWell Center.



VACCINATION

CAMPUS

 **245+**
MEMBERS
 **2073**
HOURS

In partnership with Boynton Health, members volunteered at vaccination clinics at the RecWell and TCF Bank Stadium in injector and support roles.

FQHC SUPPORT

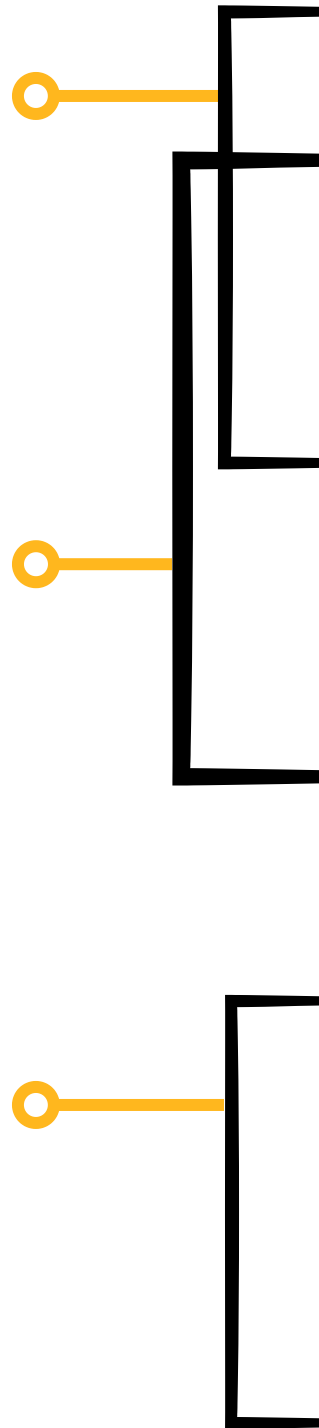
 **114**
MEMBERS
 **3104**
HOURS

In response to requests received from metro area Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), members volunteered at 7 FQHCs in the metro area in injector and support roles. Learn more on Deployment Spotlight page.

AFGHAN ARRIVALS

 **8**
MEMBERS
 **71**
HOURS

In partnership with MHealth Fairview and CUHCC, MRC members filled registration and vaccine administration roles at three clinics for Afghan evacuees arriving in Minnesota.



**FEB
2021**

**MAY
2021**

**JULY
2021**

**NOV
2021**

**FEB
2022**

DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

MASS TESTING EVENT

As the first major travel holiday of the pandemic, Thanksgiving 2020 raised fears about COVID surges as students prepared to leave campus to see family and loved ones. With the promise of a vaccine still months away, testing remained an important tool for stopping the spread of the virus during holiday social gatherings. On November 16 and 17th, the University of Minnesota MRC partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health and Vault Health to conduct a COVID-19 testing clinic in the University Fieldhouse. Over the course of two days, 82 MRC members were deployed for a total of 403 hours to fill roles such as usher, registration clerk, supply runner, testing observer, first aid attendant and others. Ultimately, **3,991 students, staff and faculty were tested**, providing them important information about their COVID risk to help keep them and their communities safe.



"This is what true public health response looks like. Students, staff and faculty from all health science disciplines working side by side. Tenured professors next to undergraduates, graduate students working with staff. All united by the goal of easy testing access. No rank, no status, no affiliation with this school or that program, just a sense of service - service to our campus community."

*- Jill DeBoer, Founder. University of Minnesota MRC
Director, Health Emergency Response Office*

DEPLOYMENT SPOTLIGHT

FQHC VACCINATION SUPPORT

From February through July 2021, over 100 MRC members served in COVID 19 vaccination clinics at seven metro area Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers (FQHC). These members, who represented every University of Minnesota health sciences school and numerous other programs, filled roles such as logistics support, registration, vaccine administration, data entry, and others. Together, these members gave over 3000 hours to support vaccination clinics at Community-University Health Care Center (CUHCC), Minnesota Community Care, Southside Community Health Services, United Family Medicine, People's Center Clinics & Services, Neighborhood HealthSource, and Open Cities clinic.

Read more: ["A shot in the arm for those who need it most"](#)



"Getting the COVID vaccine into the arms of the most at-risk and most exposed populations in Minnesota is a critical step in the fight against COVID, and we are happy to have partners like the Medical Reserve Corps ramp up our vaccination efforts."

-Reuben Moore, president and executive officer of Minnesota Community Care pictured with School of Nursing faculty Sarah Hoffman (left)



VACCINE EQUITY INITIATIVE

The COVID Vaccine Equity Initiative (VEI) was a cross-campus and community effort to improve vaccine access and uptake among populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and experiencing lower rates of vaccination. The initiative was housed in the University's Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) and led by then-Vice President of Equity and Diversity Michael Goh. Along with HERO, other departmental partners in this initiative included Boynton Health, Community-University Health Care Center, the Medical School and others. The initiative focused on communities defined by the Minnesota Department of Health for enhanced COVID mitigation and protection measures. These communities include black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQIA+, and those with disabilities.

The VEI sought to address various drivers of low vaccination uptake, from accessibility to vaccine hesitancy. To improve access, OED, MRC members and Community-University Health Care Center hosted a special clinic and lunch for third shift facilities management staff to make vaccine available to them adjacent to their normal working hours. The VEI also held information tabling sessions during an event for the Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence to answer questions and assist students and visitors with vaccine registration.



COVID 19 Saliva Testing

NEW MRC STRIKE TEAMS

RAPID RESPONSE SALIVA TESTING

As part of the University's multifaceted approach to COVID-19 testing, the University of Minnesota MRC developed a COVID-19 Rapid Response Saliva Testing Team. This team was responsible for conducting COVID-19 saliva testing in the event of a newly identified cluster of cases on campus and/or an outbreak of cases related to an identifiable group or location on campus.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

COVID Vaccination Team: Activated: February 1st, 2021- February 9th, 2022. Vaccination team members supported several components related to vaccine clinic operations, including but not limited to: registration & check-in, supplies & logistics support, clinic flow management, and vaccine administration. This team was called on to deploy to support several types of vaccination clinics, including:

- Boynton Health mass [COVID-19 vaccination clinics](#) on the Twin Cities campus and at system campuses
- Off-campus [vaccination clinics at Federally Qualified Health Centers \(FQHCs\)](#) in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area
- Vaccine events initiated by the COVID Vaccine Equity Initiative, whose goal was to improve vaccination rates among University communities disproportionately impacted by COVID.

OUR PARTNERS

University of Minnesota Partners

- Boynton Health
- School of Public Health
- School of Nursing
- Medical School
- College of Pharmacy
- School of Dentistry
- Allied Health Programs
- College of Veterinary Medicine
- Office of Academic and Clinical Affairs
- Office of Equity and Diversity
- MHealth Fairview
- International Student and Scholar Services
- Facilities Management
- University Spaces (TCF Bank Stadium, RecWell, Jean K. Freeman Aquatic Center)
- University Relations
- University of Minnesota-Crookston
- University of Minnesota-Rochester
- University of Minnesota-Duluth
- University of Minnesota-Morris
- Office of Human Relations
- University Health and Safety
- Finance
- MDining
- Parking and Transportation Services
- Youth Safety and Compliance
- U Market
- Printing Services
- Housing and Residential Life
- Office of General Counsel
- GPS Alliance

External Partners

- Metro Health and Medical Preparedness Coalition
- Statewide Healthcare Coordination Center
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Local Public Health Agencies in the Metro and across Minnesota
- Public Health Emergency Coordinators
- Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC)
- Vault Health
- And more!



ABOUT US

HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSE OFFICE

The Health Emergency Response Office (HERO) is charged with ensuring health incidents and emergencies affecting the University community are addressed in a timely, efficient, and effective manner utilizing resources and expertise available both internal and external to the University in partnership with the Campus Public Health Officer.

HERO is also charged with coordinating and organizing the university's diverse and extensive health resources to assist community partners during local, state, or national health emergencies.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

The University of Minnesota Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is the largest and most visible activity within HERO and is designed to coordinate and organize campus resources to assist campus and community partners during local, state, and national health emergencies. The University of Minnesota MRC is part of a national initiative to mobilize and coordinate volunteers at the local level to assist in response to public health crises or large-scale disasters.

The University of Minnesota MRC provides a structure to pre- identify, train, credential and organize medical and public health professionals, as well as non-clinical personnel to supplement and support health emergency response systems.

In addition to the dual mission of response support on the campus and in the community, the University of Minnesota MRC provides unique, interdisciplinary educational and experiential opportunities for students, staff, and faculty.



THANK YOU



medicalreserve@umn.edu



Mayo Building C386, 420 Delaware St. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455



<https://uhs.umn.edu/health-emergency-response-office/>

