

Polk County Health Department Medical Volunteer Pool
Frequently Asked Questions

1. If I am not available now or for the next 60 days, should I apply?

Yes. Every 30 days you will be asked (via email) to update your availability status. If you are not currently available but believe you might be available in the future please sign up now.

2. How many medical volunteers will be needed?

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of medical volunteers we would need, but it would be a lot. In the case of a smallpox outbreak our goal would be to vaccinate all Polk County residents (approximately 400,000) in 4 days. To respond to an anthrax outbreak we would distribute oral medication to our community in two days. Polk County Health Department employs 13 nurses.

3. What does “available” mean?

It means you would be included on our active call list. In case of an outbreak we would call those who were available and ask them to help. Being available does not commit you to working. You can make that decision when we specifically ask you to respond to a specific event.

4. What is the expected response time?

24 hours.

5. What would make me unavailable?

Any circumstances that would prohibit you from being able to respond (e.g., being out of town).

6. Who would I report to?

You would receive a call from the Polk County Volunteer Coordinator. He/she would identify the role you would play, where to report and who you should report to.

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8. How will I know if I should respond?

At the time of an outbreak or other public health disaster we will identify the resources we need to respond. We will review our data base to see who is available and can help us meet our needs. We will contact these people.

9. What if I become unavailable during my 60- day commitment?

Every 30 days you will be asked (via email) to update you are availability status. In addition, you will have access to secure web site. Through this web site you will be able to make any changes in your availability status.

10. Would my family get immunized along with me?

If you are mobilized and called to action, you and your immediate family would be eligible to be immunized.

11. Would my liability be covered by the Good Samaritan law?

As a volunteer for Polk County Health Department you would be covered by Polk County.

12. What would constitute being called upon for a “public health emergency”?

You may be called upon to respond to a large community outbreak of any “normal” communicable disease such as seasonal influenza, hepatitis, pertussis, etc. You may also be called upon for pandemics such as SARS or influenza. You may be called upon in a terrorist event such as smallpox, anthrax, etc. You may be called upon during a natural disaster such as the 1993 floods or receiving the Katrina evacuees.

13. Is there any special training that I will receive?

The Polk County Health Department will provide training based on volunteer roles and incident command systems. There will be an initial training and opportunities for additional training as well as exercise opportunities. You will also be offered training opportunities provided through the State or web-based along with our regular staff.

14. Would nurse practitioners and physician assistants be expected to write prescriptions?

The only time you would be involved in writing a prescription would be if it was for off label use. All other treatments are covered by standing orders. An example would be in the case of anthrax. There are two antibiotics approved for use with anthrax exposure. If a client cannot take either of these medications, they would need a written prescription for a compatible antibiotic.