ABSTRACT
Health care volunteers are a vital part of a community’s emergency response capability. To be truly effective, however, volunteers must be afforded greater awareness, knowledge, and understanding of current topics and challenges in public health preparedness. Working with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) of Massachusetts (MRC), the Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) has developed and coordinated an annual preparedness educational program for volunteer responders. The conference focuses on a timely and visible preparedness topic such as integrating individuals with functional needs across the state. The poster depicts the MMS’s partnership with the MDPH, state MRC networks, and other volunteer groups to enhance volunteer readiness in response through the development of a coordinated preparedness educational program. Participants will learn about the evolution of the program and the importance of collaborations when engaging volunteers in disaster health and response, thereby sharing the tools they use to further motivate their peers and their peers’ peers in their city, town, or state.

PROJECT COLLABORATORS:
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Massachusetts Medical Society
- Massachusetts Medical Reserve Corps
- Massachusetts Department of Mental Health Health-Behavior Disaster Response Group
- State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team

PROJECT GOAL:
To enhance volunteer readiness, support volunteer retention, and increase recruitment of volunteer health care professionals.

Learning is enhanced each year as the Preparedness Education Working Group assesses volunteer educational needs and predicts volunteer interest through:
- Recent public health events/concerns
- Feedback from MRC leadership
- MRC meetings
- Utilizing comments from volunteer evaluations
- Building on volunteer experiences

Evolution of Program Enhancement
Continuity assessment format > Development of Preparedness Education Working Group representing project collaborators > Expansion of program to include other volunteer groups as presenters or exhibitors > Development of Pre-Program with facilitated discussion > Development of live webinar > Increased use of social media for promotion and support