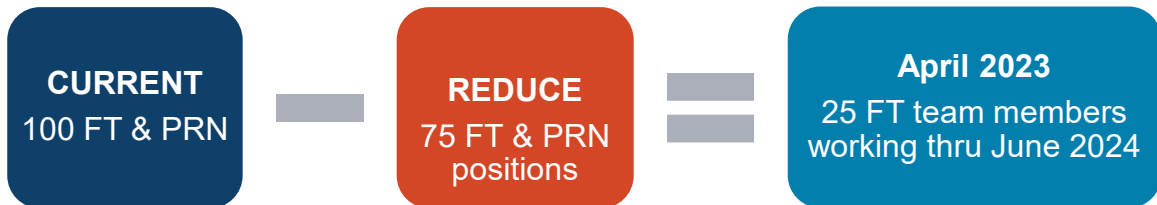




Public Health Crisis Response Grant Workforce February 2023

BACKGROUND

Currently, there are 49 full-time and 51 part-time/as-needed (PRN) team members serving in emergency response across North Dakota. Utilizing federal funding to support ongoing response needs the Public Health Division proposes reducing personnel, effective April 1, 2023, from 100 to 25 full-time hourly positions. The new team includes 10 medical support credentialed staff (i.e., RN and LPN, CNA, EMT); 12 couriers (transporting vaccine, monoclonal antibodies, lab specimens, setting up, taking down, cleaning, repairing, replacing medical equipment such as trailers, tents, supply stations, defibrillators, iv pumps), and 3 HHS Department Operations Center (DOC) team members (scheduling testing, vaccination and other public health/medical events, scheduling staff, receiving requests for assistance). This team would end concurrently with the federal funding, expected June 30, 2024.



The 25 team members are paid only for hours worked and are actively engaged daily to assist local public health units, hospitals, long-term care facilities and other medical facilities in the provision of services to the public, medical facility residents and patients. They also contribute to a state of improved readiness for future emergencies by documenting lessons learned from the COVID response, creating and conducting training and returning medical equipment and supplies to operational levels.

This is 100% federal COVID grant funded. This is an opportunity to leverage federal funding to ensure statewide readiness.

BENEFITS FOR NORTH DAKOTA

The team of nurses, EMTs, and paramedics assists in schools, medical facilities, long-term care facilities, local public health agencies or other health and medical facilities in North Dakota. The team provides critical support for daily and emergency operations.

The centralized team allows resources to be dispatched to emerging and changing needs across the state. These services include providing gap staffing for long-term care facilities and partnering with local public health to assist with testing and vaccination, coordinating fit testing for emergency response, and improving public health and medical disaster readiness.

SERVICES PROVIDED - DETAILS

Gap Staffing

- Staff shortages at long-term care facilities is a challenge. The team provides critical support for these facilities which serve vulnerable North Dakotans. Since the start of the pandemic, the Public Health Division has assisted multiple long-term care facilities with staffing shortages. In 2022, more than 1,000 direct patient care shifts were filled by Department staff, these shifts would otherwise have gone without staff.

Testing & Vaccination

- The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have ongoing mandates for testing in long-term care facilities. The team assists, statewide, with efforts for testing onsite and eases burdens for facility compliance.
- The team also assists statewide to meet demands for COVID-19 vaccine and can expand to support need for routine wellness, influenza and school-age vaccinations. In 2021, the Department hosted more than 2,200 clinics.

Respirator Fit Testing

- A fit test is a test protocol conducted to verify that a respirator is both comfortable and provides the wearer with the expected protection.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (29 CFR 1910.134) requires an annual fit test to confirm the fit of any respirator that forms a tight seal on the wearer's face before it is used in the workplace. Once a fit test has been done to determine the best respirator model and size for a particular user, a user seal check should be done every time the respirator is to be worn to ensure an adequate seal is achieved.
- The team helps facilities statewide conduct and maintain fit test standards.

Improving Public Health and Medical Disaster Readiness

- Lessons were learned from the almost three-year COVID response that must be documented in writing and incorporated into our response systems for future emergencies
- The team will develop and revise public health and medical disaster response procedures and protocols.
- Training and exercises will be delivered (through distance learning, in-person room and hands-on at medical facility locations such as hospitals and long-term care facilities). Training topics will include but are not limited to operating mass vaccination sites, conducting mass testing sites, long-term care and hospital disease outbreak control, tiered hospital surge, handling increased death rates, providing pharmaceutical, and medical material supply and distribution including cold chain operations.
- The team will work on efforts to repair, replace and replenish medical supplies and equipment including but not limited to fit testing machines, cold chain refrigerators and freezers, durable medical equipment such as defibrillators and ventilators, medical tents, heaters and air conditioners, mobile medical units, and disposable medical supplies such as masks, gowns and syringes.