

It Takes a Whole Community

You may be familiar with the phrase, “practice makes perfect,” especially when it comes to physical activities such as sports or dance, but what about practicing for emergencies? For the [Macomb County Health Department Medical Reserve Corps \(MCHD MRC\)](#), in Macomb County, Michigan, practicing how to dispense vital medications at a Point of Dispensing (POD) during an emergency provided the perfect opportunity to do a whole community exercise.

In April 2014, the MCHD MRC [conducted a drive-through POD exercise](#) at Utica High School with 16 volunteers and hundreds of community members. The MCHD MRC wanted to be inclusive of families with multiple children, older adults, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. They chose a drive-through POD since it usually more accommodating for a variety of community members. In a drive-through POD, people can sit in the comfort of their car as they get their needs met. During this exercise, community members got the opportunity to go through different POD stations set-up to collect medical information in order to dispense the correct medicine to a person in need. Each station also provided resources on what to expect in a public health emergency.

The MCHD MRC accomplished all of its exercise goals:

- Demonstrated how a POD operates to the community;
- Provided volunteers an opportunity to practice drive-through POD operation;
- Raised the community’s awareness about public health and preparedness; and
- Provided resources to citizens to encourage them to take action and prepare themselves, their families and their communities.

Some of the benefits of this exercise included:

- Strengthened response capabilities;
- Built lessons learned for future PODs that was shared with other community members;
- Made connections with other organizations for collaboration on future exercises;
- Built a strong partnership with multiple agencies including fire, police and emergency management; and
- Provided insight to the school on POD operations so they could know what to expect in a real emergency.

This exercise demonstrated that combining volunteers and drive-through POD plans will allow Macomb County to better serve the whole community: not only during a public health emergency, but beforehand through preparedness education.

Looking for ideas on getting your own community to practice for an emergency? Turn to [America’s PrepareAthon!](#) There are step-by-step guides and playbooks available for multiple hazards on the America’s PrepareAthon! website.