

Good afternoon,

We have all heard the stories and seen the devastating images of the destruction Hurricane Harvey has wrought and continues to level on Texas, and Louisiana is currently being impacted as well. Harvey hit Texas on Friday, August 25th and has continued to pummel Houston and surrounding areas with rain in the days following the initial landfall, making it the most extreme rain event in US history. While it's certainly much too soon to know the severity of the extent of damage and loss due to the floods, the needs are apparent and many, and will continue into the unforeseeable future.

Some licensed medical professionals have asked DPH what they can do to help and how they might provide their services to the impacted areas in the Houston region. Volunteering during disasters is safer and most effective when individuals are deployed through a coordinated effort. Well-meaning individuals who spontaneously present to disaster sites are often unable to be assigned because they have not enrolled with or been vetted by a recognized volunteer organization previously. Vetted disaster relief organizations coordinate with emergency managers and can connect volunteers with food, water, and safe places to sleep, all of which may be difficult for people acting on their own.

DPH is advising those individuals wishing to volunteer their time to contact the Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (Texas VOAD) through the [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster \(NVOAD\)](#). NVOAD's main webpage currently is dedicated to Hurricane Harvey and includes information on how to volunteer and how to make corporate and individual donations.

Disasters tend to bring out the very best in people and demonstrate the care and commitment they have for one another, oftentimes as complete strangers. While many of us feel compelled to help when others are in need, volunteering year round is a wonderful way to support not only your community, but potentially be a resource for other communities in times of need. If you are interested in volunteering locally consider looking at the Massachusetts [MRC](#) and [Citizen Corps](#) sites for volunteer opportunities.

As Texas and parts of Louisiana reel from the devastation afflicted by Hurricane Harvey, please continue to keep all of those impacted in your thoughts and prayers.

With warm regards,

Kerin Milesky

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