



Getting to Know Jade Gershen, Multnomah County MRC Unit Coordinator | *Jacqueline Felix**

Jade Gershen has been the current Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Unit Coordinator at Multnomah County since July 2026. In this position, Jade manages the volunteer program, which includes volunteer onboarding, tracking of initial training, and annual recertifications. Maintaining communication with the volunteer pool, coordination with Tri-county partners (which includes Clackamas and Washington Counties), and participation in regional, state, and federal MRC meetings are also part of Jade's duties as the MRC Unit Coordinator. Additionally, during emergency declarations, Jade coordinates the activation and deployment of the MRC volunteers.

For Jade, some of the primary goals of focus for the remainder of the year are to “strengthen and clarify MRC activation procedures” as well as getting to “know our current MRC volunteers and the skills and experience they bring to the unit.”

Jade is kept busy performing double duty as the current Continuity of Operations Program (COOP) Coordinator at the Multnomah County Health Department. As the COOP Coordinator since 2022, Jade oversees Multnomah County Health Department’s continuity program, which incorporates 25 continuity plans across the department. One of the many tasks performed as the COOP Coordinator is to provide guidance and support to each continuity planner with document templates and worksheets, as well as training, meetings, and one-on-one support. Designing and conducting department-wide continuity exercises and supporting countywide emergency activations in an Incident Command System (ICS) is also part of her role.

According to Jade, some of the challenges of the COOP Coordinator role are, “Time and capacity! Staff have had a lot on their plates over the past six years, and while everyone understands the importance of continuity planning—especially now—finding the time to dedicate to it is always a challenge. One of the biggest parts of my role is finding ways to make continuity planning practical and manageable for busy programs while still ensuring we are meaningfully prepared for disruptions.”

When asked what initially interested Jade in the COOP Coordinator role, Jade stated, “During COVID-19, I was working in Multnomah County Emergency Management. As the pandemic response began to wind down, the Health Department wanted to prioritize continuity planning and created my current role. It felt like a natural transition given how closely I had worked with the Health Department throughout the pandemic.”

Prior to Jade’s COOP continuity role, she worked with Multnomah County Emergency Management Planning and Liaison units. But before making the shift into the emergency management space,

Jade worked with nonprofits and in the events industry. Jade said, “Those experiences gave me a strong foundation in planning, coordination, logistics, and working with a wide range of partners—all skills that have translated well into emergency management.”

Jade’s career path in emergency management began with experiencing a natural disaster overseas. “After living through a catastrophic earthquake in Nepal in 2015..., I became interested in disaster response and ultimately earned my master’s degree in Disaster Management. I graduated just six months before COVID-19 began, which turned out to be quite the introduction to the field!”

One of Jade’s most memorable experiences that shaped her professional development was the Nepal earthquake. “Seeing responders and aid organizations flood into the country and establish large-scale command centers, field hospitals, and search-and-rescue operations had a profound impact on me and ultimately led me to pursue a career in emergency management. I also came away with a lasting appreciation for the role of volunteers and local communities in disasters. Emergent volunteers and local survivors are often among the first people responding in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. It reinforced for me how important it is to have trained, prepared volunteers who can support their communities before professional response resources arrive or are stretched thin.”

As for the value and importance of volunteerism during a response, Jade stated, “Volunteerism is incredibly important during emergency response. There simply aren’t enough emergency response and public health personnel to meet every need during a large-scale event. Trained volunteers expand our capacity and allow us to support our communities in ways we couldn’t otherwise. Just as importantly, volunteers bring a tremendous range of skills, experience, and community connections that strengthen the overall response.”

* [Jacqueline Felix](#) is a SERV-OR volunteer and a member of the Bulletin Development Team.