

AmeriCorps Policies Flexibility Notification

Due to the Coronavirus and COVID-19, the Corporation for National and Community Service has issued guidance allowing for broad variances from existing requirements to enable members to continue service, while protecting the health and safety of the members and the communities. The following sections of the 19-20 PD Manual may be impacted by COVID-19. Programs should maintain communication with Volunteer Iowa to ensure adequate documentation of deviations from policies/practices, etc.

The sections noted below are some areas where programs may want/need to amend or deviate from existing policies/procedures to address the impact of Coronavirus and/or COVID-19. If programs intend to deviate from their policies, they should communicate these deviations, in writing, to Volunteer Iowa as documentation.

VOLUNTEER IOWA SPECIFIC

Volunteer Iowa Monitoring

Amending monitoring plans/processes in the following ways:

- Delaying the date of monitoring to later this grant year
- Changing the monitoring from on-site to remote/desk monitoring (such as requesting certain components of member files, conducting web-based member interviews or focus groups, etc.)
- Postponing monitoring until next grant year

- Volunteer Iowa may notify programs that our response timeline may be delayed
- Volunteer Iowa may consider extensions requests from programs

Volunteer Iowa Claims Payments

Volunteer Iowa will be processing claims less frequently, however, all claims submitted by the due date (25th of each month) will have their claim processed within the week. Claims received after the due date, may be delayed by up to three weeks.

Organizations that are not set up with Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) may experience delays in receiving their checks. If you would like to set your organization up with EFT, please review the March 19 Friday message for instructions.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC

Member Teleservice Policy (p. 49)

- Member teleservice is no longer limited to “rare” occurrences.
- With permission, member “duties” may be outside of those outlined in the member service agreement or approved grant. However, any teleservice activities must be approved in advance by the program and the commission using the “Program Officer Notification” form in IowaGrants.

Alternative Service (p.50)

- Members may deviate from the anticipated service schedule as outlined on their position description
- Members may continue service, even in cases where it is not reasonable that they will complete their service, if due to the COVID-19.
- Members may exceed the alternative service hours identified

Compelling Personal Circumstances Exit/Suspension Policy (p. 51)

- Members exiting service due to COVID-19 are eligible for a CPC exit ~~and will receive a pro-rated award~~. Programs should still complete a member evaluation form for each exiting member in a way that is practicable under the circumstances. However, members that serve fewer than 15% of their hours are ineligible for an award under statute, and this limitation remains in place.
- In accordance with the CARES Act and CNCS guidance, members serving between 15 and 50% of their hours can exit for CPC and will receive a pro-rated education award. While members serving >50% of their hours can exit for CPC and receive a full education award. Added 3/31/20
- CNCS has provided instructions for how CPC exits for those serving >50% of their hours are to be handled in the eGrants system and what documentation must be retained by the program. (See question #21 on the [CNCS AmeriCorps State and National FAQ](#). QUESTION: **“What process will grantees use to exit those members who have served more than 50% of the minimum hours required for a Term of Service?”** Added 3/31/20
- Volunteer Iowa will develop a reporting process for collecting the difference between served hours and hours entered on the Exit form for members earning the full award for CPC for COVID-19 as required in the CNCS FAQ. Added 3/31/20

Performance Measures (p. 52)

- We anticipate that some programs may fall below their anticipated performance measure targets due to COVID-19. Program are expected to notify Volunteer Iowa on the mid-year Performance Measure report (which is due in May) if COVID-19 is expected to have a negative impact on performance measures.

Scope or Goals of Programs (p. 52)

- If members are expected to serve outside of the activities approved in the grant, this is considered a *Change in Scope* and programs should notify Volunteer Iowa of any deviations in member activities.

Changes in Member Supervision (p.53)

- Members moving to telework fall under this category and the program is responsible to ensure that adequate supervision continues for members, including regular check-ins, approval of member timesheets, verification that members hours are supported by sufficient work product.

Suspending a Member (p. 53)

- Programs may elect to suspend members due to COVID-19. If this occurs, programs should notify through the Program Officer Notification. Members that are suspended may continue to receive a living allowance during the suspension or not, at the discretion of the program. However, the program must notify Volunteer Iowa of the status of pay during suspension. In addition, should a member be suspended and continue receiving a living allowance, the program is required (under CNCS guidance for this circumstance) to pay the member

through the end of their service (which may result in him/her receiving a living allowance in excess of that originally noted in their Member Service Agreement. However, in no circumstance, are payments to exceed the maximum living allowance outlined in the Notice.

Disaster Response (p. 54-55)

- Local Disaster Response: Members and staff are welcome to participate as volunteers with local organizations meeting community needs related to Coronavirus and/or COVID-19. If the activities performed by members are outside of those approved in their grant, please ensure that you notify Volunteer Iowa.
- The Governor has declared a State of Emergency and as such, AmeriCorps members may be asked to serve state disaster response upon request of Volunteer Iowa. Volunteer Iowa will work with State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).
- Because of the significant blood shortage during this COVID-19 period, Volunteer Iowa will allow blood donation as an allowable service activity. Blood donations can qualify for up to 2 hours of service. Added 3/25/20

Accompaniment (p. 63-64)

- Accompaniment is still required for members while the results of the state and/or FBI checks are pending (as defined by CNCS). During this period, Volunteer Iowa is only requiring accompaniment when the member is interacting with a vulnerable population (as defined by CNCS). If the individual is not interacting with vulnerable populations, the program should keep record that the member did not need accompaniment because the member was not interacting with vulnerable populations and amend their policies to reflect this change, if necessary.
- During this time, accompaniment may not be in the physical presence, but may be handled telephonically or through other electronic means. This is acceptable and programs should document the accompaniment practices they will be using in their policies.
- Programs are encouraged to remember that it is not necessary for an individual to complete an NSCHC check to be cleared to provide accompaniment. If you need to revise your policies to allow this flexibility, please do so. For example, a parent/guardian can provide accompaniment, as can an individual who, by the nature of their work, has been cleared for access to vulnerable populations, such as school personnel. Updated: 4/16/20

Other CNCS Information (p. 82)

- If you have members providing disaster response, please remember that these activities may be reported in CNCS demographic report. Therefore, we encourage programs to establish a data collection and reporting method. These are the collection points for your reference: a) Number of AmeriCorps members who participated in disaster service projects; b) Number of local disasters to which AmeriCorps members have responded; c) Number of individuals affected by disaster receiving assistance from members.

Site Monitoring (p. 89)

If COVID-19 impacts your ability to conduct site monitoring, please notify your program officer using the form in IowaGrants.

Amendments/Extensions to Member Service Agreements (p. 102)

Based on updated CNCS guidance, programs should have amendments in place for members whose service varies due to the impact of COVID-19. Volunteer Iowa has provided a template amendment that can be used by all programs for this purpose (or programs are welcome to create their own amendments). These amendments should be included in each member file.

Member Service Projects and Policies (p. 106)

Member service projects are not required to align with the program's identified community need and member activities outlined in the approved grant application. However, the program should review and provide approval for member service project to ensure that they are not unallowable or prohibited. Members participating in these projects should have ways to document and report their service hours to the program.

Make sure you review your organization's liability to ensure that members are adequately covered if you are approving them to serve with other organizations, teleserve, or serve in another state.

No Hours Served in a Pay Period (p. 110)

Programs are encouraged to find ways that members can serve during the COVID-19 situation, including teleservice, serving at an alternate location, serving virtually, etc. However, if a member is unable to serve for a pay period, this is allowable during this period, but the program should document their awareness and the zero-hour pay period should be approved in advance. Also, programs should ensure ongoing communication to ensure that they do not continue paying a member that has abandoned their service site. Member suspension rules are not applicable during this period.

Childcare (p. 113)

Eligible members may continue to receive childcare for up to 12 weeks through the CNCS program during a suspension, however, the program must notify GAP Solutions (the childcare payment company) to ensure continued service.

Healthcare

- For those of you using the CorpsNetwork's member healthcare plan, please note that their plan allows for members that have been suspended to continue coverage (as long as the program is willing to pay the premium) **through May 31st**. For a member exited, the member has coverage through end of the month exited. Members that leave service may enroll in the Exchange within 60 days of the end of their service. **Updated 4/16/20**
- **If you are using another healthcare vendor, be sure and check with them about continued coverage during a suspension. Updated 4/16/20**
- America's Service Commissions (ASC) is waiving the \$250 membership fee for the [AmeriCorps Member Assistance Program \(MAP\)](#). You will only be charged the per member fee (\$5 or \$10/member) based on the package selected. The program may begin as soon as possible and runs through 8/31/2020. Currently participating programs may also add additional members or staff during this period. MAP provides 24/7 telephonic support services, including counseling, coaching, and referrals. Check the 3/20/20 Friday message for more details.

Timekeeping (p. 119)

For the first pay period after March 13, programs may have members verify service via email or text (without completing OnCorps). However, they will need to complete their OnCorps timesheet with the next due date, unless they coordinate alternate arrangements with their program. Any variances from

use of electronic timekeeping should be approved by Volunteer Iowa through the Program Officer notification form.

While it is preferable to have individuals overseeing the member service approving the timesheets, this will not always be possible in these circumstances. Therefore, Program Directors will be allowed to approve timesheets and should review back-up documentation (such as work product, sign in sheets from alternate service sites, conference call discussion of hours/service, etc.) to verify service hours.

Members serving zero hours in a pay period may not be “rare” during the COVID-19 outbreak. (p. 119).

Hours served may not align with the anticipated service schedule in the Member Service Agreement (p. 121).

Member Performance Evaluation (p. 122)

Programs should conduct performance evaluations as planned. If a member is behind on their service due to COVID-19, please make sure that you document this on the evaluation form itself.

Member Suspension (p. 125)

Members may be suspended for compelling personal circumstances related to COVID-19. Suspended members may continue to receive a living allowance at the program’s discretion. Members may continue to receive childcare benefits upon notification to GAP Solutions and they may continue to receive healthcare from CorpsNetwork **through May 31st** during suspension. [If you use an alternate healthcare vendor, be sure you check with them for coverage limitations.] **Updated 4/16/20.**

Member Safety (p. 144)

Member safety is paramount. Please provide all members with information about safety precautions they should take related to COVID-19 to protect themselves, the program participants, other staff, their families, and the community at-large.

Member Supervision (p. 147)

Program directors may be filling in the roles of site supervisors due to closures or extended absences. Should this occur, make sure you note that as you complete mid-term evaluations, timesheets, etc.

Matching (p. 159-160, various)

On April 9th, CNCS announced, in its Covid-19 ASN FAQ document, that it “is waiving all match requirements” for AmeriCorps cost reimbursement grants for FY19 and FY20. At this time, CNCS indicates that no action is needed and that additional details outlining the implementation process for the waiver will be forthcoming. When these details become available, Volunteer Iowa will be issuing further guidance. Iowa programs should expect a grant amendment related to this waiver in the next few weeks. Updated 4/16/20

Volunteer Iowa Financial Reports (p. 171)

Full-Time Fixed Amount Grant Programs – Final program claims may be based on the MSY value of regular enrolled member service positions multiplied by the awarded cost/MSY up to the total Awarded Amount. Updated 3/31/20

Documents (general)

Scanned documents are acceptable. To the extent possible, we will want to see the originals in the files (as required), so please make plans to ensure files are complete by grant closeout.

Electronic Signature Requirements

Electronic signatures are allowed when three conditions are met:

1. A written policy is in effect establishing the use of electronic signatures; and,
2. A secure, verifiable electronic signature system
 - (a) identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic signature; and
 - (b) indicates such person's approval of the information contained in the electronic message.
3. Once appropriate electronic signatures have been applied, no changes may be made unless there is a clear, auditable record of the revision. Updated 4/6/20