



## **Nevada Volunteers Guidance Re: COVID-19**

In light of Governor Sisolak's decision to close all nonessential businesses effective today, Nevada Volunteer provides the following guidance and blanket approvals in response to the pandemic. This guidance is inline with what other commission are providing in their states. Please keep a copy of this guidance for your grant records. Do not hesitate to reach out to Nevada Volunteers' staff directly if you have any questions or need any support during this time.

### **Health and Safety**

The health of personnel and AmeriCorps members is everyone's shared priority. Please comply with evolving guidelines from the Nevada Governor's Office, <https://nvhealthresponse.nv.gov/>, and the CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

If an AmeriCorps member notifies their program that they have a comprised immune system or are high risk to infection, the program should follow their reasonable accommodations procedures and determine an appropriate alternative service for the member.

### **Member Assistance Program**

Remind your members to make use of the Member Assistance Program, an online mental health resource organized by America's Service Commissions if you are enrolled in it. All Nevada programs should be enrolled. Unlimited in the moment, 24/7 telephonic counseling services with master's degree-level counselors are available by dialing 1-800-451-1834. Callers will be asked to identify their program name. There is also an app available by searching "AllOne Health Employee Assistance Program" on your mobile device. Members will be connected with a professional, licensed counselor with AllOne Health. In-the- moment support is provided for topics such as substance abuse, stress, depression, anxiety, grief counseling and many other areas. Whatever the question or challenge, please do not hesitate to call - anytime of day. If your program is not enrolled, ASC has reopened the enrollment. Please contact your AmeriCorps program contact at Nevada Volunteers to enroll your members.

### **Discrimination and Confidentiality**

Nevada Volunteers asks all programs to guard against discrimination in our response to COVID-19. To prevent stigma and discrimination during service, do not make a determination to send a member or volunteer home based on race or country of origin. We know that you share our concern at early reports of Asian individuals in our communities being shunned or scapegoated.

Also, ensure that you maintain confidentiality of any member(s) and volunteer(s) who are confirmed to have COVID-19 or other illnesses as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

### Living Allowance and Benefits

As a matter of member safety, Nevada Volunteers urges grantees to continue living allowance and program benefits to members regardless of their activities or hours completed. Those minimal funds support housing and food needs, and it is likely that shift jobs or alternative incomes will be impacted by COVID-19. Nevada Volunteers normally recommends that grantees develop a policy to not pay living allowance during a payment period in which a member records zero hours of service, we strongly encourage grantees to pay living allowance even in this scenario. We know that this means a change in your policies and procedures. Please document this change in policy with the effective dates in a Memo to File for any members you pay while not serving hours.

### Suspension and Living Allowance

Suspension of service is a tool available to all grantees for individual, case by case, member management. Due to the long-term impact on your grant management, Nevada Volunteers is recommending against the Suspension of a large number of member at this time, but each situation is unique. You can review the procedures for Suspension in section 4.s. of the [Nevada Volunteers Program Director Handbook](#). Please make sure to use the Member Change of Status Form, linked in the handbook. In order to provide grantees the maximum flexibility as a result of COVID-19, CNCS has determined that AmeriCorps State and National members may be paid living allowances and benefits while they are in a Suspended from Service status, if the reason for suspension is due to COVID-19. This is an exception to the regular policy that suspended members are to receive no living allowance. Programs can also elect not to pay living allowances if they suspend their AmeriCorps State and National members. If a grantee organization decides to continue to pay members while they are in a Suspended status, they must be prepared to obtain additional funding to cover living allowance and benefit expenses once members are reinstated. If an individual is suspended for any other reason than COVID-19, the living allowance and other benefits are also to be suspended. Likewise, a member suspended due to COVID-19 activities may continue to receive the child care benefit (for up to 12 weeks) and health care benefit provided by the grant recipient.

### Alternative Service Activities

Nevada Volunteers believes that the intent of AmeriCorps is to help communities where help is most needed. Your AmeriCorps grant commits to a specific program design and performance measures, but in response to COVID-19, AmeriCorps members are likely unable to perform planned activities and you may simply determine that your community has new priorities. If opportunities to help the community are available for your members during this time of crisis, Nevada Volunteers will work to get these new activities approved by CNCS. All programs are required to submit a telework policy (see attached sample) and revised activity plan (form attached) to Nevada Volunteers by next Wednesday, March 25, 2020, so that we can get these activities formally approved. In the meantime, please respond as needed to community needs and we will provide retroactive approval. If possible, Nevada Volunteers hopes that members will be able to complete their terms, earning full education awards, and support their communities in these uncertain times. New activities must not be otherwise prohibited or

unallowable. Do not neglect to document alternative service activities. Nevada Volunteers will provide amendments to your grants next week if needed, but you must provide an amendment, signed by both program staff and AmeriCorps member, to the Member Service Agreement describing the new assignments, if members are serving outside of the scope of your current grant activities.

## Teleservice

During this time, Nevada Volunteers recommends the use of teleservice. If you do not already have a teleservice policy, please create one in compliance with the CNCS guidance, <https://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ASN%20006%20Teleservice%20Guidance.pdf>. All teleservice policies must be submitted to Nevada Volunteers for approval by next Wednesday, March 25, 2020. Please see the attached sample and feel free to use it if your policy still needs to be developed. During this time programs may permit members to complete their service outside Nevada. Prior to any such program approval, grantees must consult with Nevada Volunteers. Such rare cases will be treated as a teleservice activity and follow a program's teleservice policy. In all instances, the member remains under the management of the grantee.

## Compelling Personal Circumstances

COVID-19 is likely to cause extended site closures and sustained disruptions to AmeriCorps members' service that can reasonably justify a compelling personal circumstances exit under 45 CFR § 2522.230 (a) Release for compelling personal circumstances. While Nevada Volunteers will work with programs to provide options whenever possible for members to complete their term of service this year, it is reasonable to expect that will not happen. Nevada Volunteers approves all grantee requests to exit members who enrolled prior to March 18th and exit before August 30, 2020 with the designation compelling personal circumstances due to a disruption of service from COVID-19. To be eligible for CPC, a member must first have completed at least 15% of the hours in their term of service. A CPC exit means that a member can receive a prorated education award and serve in AmeriCorps again. Please do complete a Member Change of Status Form and document that the reason was "disruption of service due to COVID-19" and place in the member file. Do not include medical documentation. The CDC has asked that such paperwork requests be avoided so as to allow medical professionals to prioritize care.

## Training Limitations

In addition to alternative service, grantees may conduct training with members, including online learning. It is important to note, however, that members still cannot exceed the maximum 20 percent aggregate training hours. Programs are to monitor this closely and provide instruction to members what activities are defined as training. Nevada Volunteers encourages you to conduct virtual training for your members when relevant. There are many Civic Reflection Resources available on our website, <https://nevadavolunteers.org/civic-reflections/>. This is a potential virtual training that may be useful at this time.

## Timesheet in OnCorps

Any service activities outside the scope of your approved program design, should be documented appropriately in OnCorps. We recommend having a system to monitor member activities internally, particularly if they are teleserving, to ensure no activities are later disallowed. For Nevada Volunteers, please have members record any hours doing activities

outside the scope of your approved program design in OnCorps under Other Service Activities and have the member put COVID-19 in the description.

### AmeriCorps Grant Expenditures

In a dynamic environment, grantees may see a need to spend grant funds on safety supplies, training, cellphones/Chromebooks for communication, or other AmeriCorps member support costs not currently approved in the submitted budget. Additional personnel may need to support the AmeriCorps program. Nevada Volunteers authorizes all reasonable grant expenditures in support of the AmeriCorps program effective March 2, 2020 through the end of the grant period provided you do not exceed the 10% transfer threshold between budget categories and all staff added have an approved National Service Criminal History Check. Nevada Volunteers will still disallow costs on the basis that they do not pertain to the AmeriCorps program, demonstrate a lack of fiscal prudence, or disregard prohibited activities. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions about the allowability of expenses. If you expect to exceed the 10% threshold, please contact us and we can consider a budget amendment.

At this time, Nevada Volunteers and grantees must adhere to the grantee match requirements. We recognize that grantees face a difficult fundraising environment and will continue to explore flexibility with this AmeriCorps grant structure. If there is a significant change to a source of funds, grantees are encouraged to contact Nevada Volunteers immediately. As you know Nevada Volunteers retains 1.5% of the CNCS grant share as an administrative expense. If this is an undue hardship to your program during this time, you may submit a request for Nevada Volunteers to waive this.

### Continuation of Funding and Status of the Commission

Your AmeriCorps Nevada Grant is secured and already appropriated through 8/31/2020. Please do not be concerned about anything happening to the current year's funding. Nevada Volunteers' funding is secured through this time as well. We will be working remotely but available to support you. We do not foresee any reason why this would change.

Thank you so much for your work during this time to support your members and your community. We know this has been challenging for everyone. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support you, your program, and your members during this time.