

April 3, 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR AMERICORPS*STATE/NATIONAL

FROM: Frank R. Trinity, Acting General Counsel

SUBJECT: Changes in Supplemental Security Income (SSI) rules affecting AmeriCorps members.

We recently learned that the Social Security Administration has made two changes in policy that may be beneficial to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who serve as AmeriCorps members.

1. SSI recipients who serve in AmeriCorps State/National automatically qualify for the Student Child Earned Income Exclusion if they meet applicable age and marital status requirements.

The first change applies to SSI recipients who are (1) under the age of 22 and (2) neither married nor the head of a household. Their service in AmeriCorps makes them eligible for the student earned income exclusion, which excludes from countable earned income \$1,290 per month and up to \$5,200 per year (amounts as of January 1, 2001). This exclusion may be combined with existing SSI work incentives and other "income disregard" rules, which should encourage more young people with disabilities to participate in AmeriCorps State/National.

Note that the Student Child Earned Income Exclusion policy change does not affect AmeriCorps VISTA members, whose benefits are already fully excluded from income under section 404 of the [Domestic Volunteer Service Act](#).

2. Any portion of an education award used by an SSI recipient to pay for tuition, fees, and other necessary education expenses (not including room and board, or repaying student loans) will not count as income.

The second change applies to the treatment of the AmeriCorps education award. Under the new policy, any portion of the education award that is used for paying tuition, fees, or other necessary educational expenses is excluded from countable income. Note that this exclusion does not cover amounts used or set aside for room and board or to repay qualified student loans. Any portion of the education award that is not used for tuition, fees, or other necessary educational expenses counts as income in the month that it is used.

Note that the change in treatment of the education award for SSI eligibility affects all AmeriCorps members.

Both changes apply retroactively, potentially up to two years back. If you have general questions about SSI or the terms used in this memorandum, you may go to <http://www.ssa.gov/notices/supplemental-security-income/>. These changes are also described in

SSA's DISABILITY NOTES newsletter, Office of Disability Pub. No. 64-040 Issue I-2001 (No. 28), which is available online at <http://www.ssa.gov/odhome>.