

# **AmeriCorps Disaster Relief Guidance**

Please see our website to get further information on CNCS and Hurricane Katrina relief efforts: <http://www.nationalservice.gov/katrina>

This document and our web site will continue to be updated and revised as more questions emerge from the field.

## **AmeriCorps Member Activities**

### **How can my AmeriCorps program and members help with the disaster relief efforts?**

AmeriCorps programs and members can participate in disaster relief on a short-term or long-term basis. There is no cap on the amount of time programs and members may spend on disaster relief efforts. However, if your program intends to engage in disaster relief on a long-term basis, and thus, significantly change the focus of the program, you should contact your State Commission or Parent Organization and Corporation Program Officer to discuss how your redirected activities will result in changes in your program's activities and performance measures. You will need to demonstrate how you will continue to meet the needs in your community upon which you currently focus, if you change the focus of your program. For example, if you run a tutoring program and want to send tutors to work with evacuees in Houston, how will these youth tutees continue to receive tutoring? These changes must be reflected in your grant via an amendment in eGrants.

### **May our AmeriCorps members respond to needs outside the program's service area that have resulted from the disaster by serving at a distant location?**

Yes. Please see other FAQs on methods of coordination. Be sure to work with your State Commission or Parent Organization and Corporation Program Officer to ensure a smooth process.

### **How can AmeriCorps members with specialized skills and training help in the relief effort?**

If any of your AmeriCorps members are *healthcare or relief professionals*, the Office of the Surgeon General and the Office of Public Health Emergency Preparedness are in the process of mobilizing and identifying healthcare professionals and relief personnel. Healthcare professionals or relief personnel with medical or health-related expertise, please go to <https://volunteer.ccrf.hhs.gov>.

### **Will disaster relief hours served by AmeriCorps members count towards their term of service?**

Hours served by members responding may count toward their AmeriCorps term of service, as long as they are approved by the State Commission or Parent Organization and take place within the United States and recognized US territories. However, there

must be systems in place, agreed upon by both the program and the State Commission or Parent Organization, to track the AmeriCorps members' activities and hours.

### **What types of disaster relief activities are allowable for AmeriCorps members?**

*Most importantly, volunteers should not report directly to the affected areas unless directed by a voluntary agency. Self-dispatched volunteers can put themselves and others in harm's way and hamper rescue efforts.*

Depending on your community, AmeriCorps member activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating volunteers
- Collecting/processing financial donations
- Staffing evacuee reception centers
- Furnishing temporary housing/shelters
- Staffing temporary kitchens and dining facilities
- Helping evacuees find longer term housing
- Helping locate family members and friends
- Assisting evacuee children to attend local schools
- Meeting special needs of elderly evacuees
- Providing information about available services

AmeriCorps members may participate in events that advance community building objectives, including those with a fundraising aspect, but must comply with our fundraising policy (see below). It is prudent in following the above guidance that AmeriCorps members do not physically handle funds being raised. Providing information about ways to help is also acceptable as is garnering in-kind donations. Time spent donating blood is a permitted activity and may also count towards their term of service.

### **Under what circumstances may AmeriCorps members raise resources?**

An AmeriCorps member may raise resources directly in support of a program's service activities but may not engage in such activities for more than 10% of the member's originally-agreed upon term of service. Examples of fundraising activities AmeriCorps members may perform include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Seeking donations of books from companies and individuals for a program in which volunteers teach children to read
- Writing a grant proposal to a foundation to secure resources to support the training of volunteers
- Securing supplies and equipment from the community to enable volunteers to help build houses for low-income individuals
- Securing financial resources from the community to assist in launching or expanding a program that provides social services to the members of the community and is delivered, in whole or in part, through the members of a community-based organization

- Seeking donations from alumni of the program for specific service projects being performed by current members

**What types of disaster relief activities are disallowable for AmeriCorps members?**

AmeriCorps members may not participate in activities prohibited in the AmeriCorps regulations or Provisions. Such activities include: religious activities and prayer vigils, raising funds for living allowances or for an organization's general (as opposed to project) operating expenses or endowment, and writing a grant application to the Corporation or to any other Federal agency.

**What happens if an AmeriCorps member is called upon for military duty in the middle of his/her term of service?**

The AmeriCorps Provisions identify military service obligations as a compelling personal circumstance. If a member is called up for service in any of the military branches, the program will have the option of temporarily suspending the member for compelling personal circumstances and authorizing a pro-rated award. If a particular member has served less than 15% of the term of service, the member would not receive a pro-rated award and the position would be refillable, but the term does not count as a term of service.

**What should a program do if an AmeriCorps member wants to leave the program to volunteer for disaster relief efforts for a period of time longer than the program thinks is reasonable?**

The grantee is responsible for making judgments about how to balance the program's commitment to the community service and the desire to accommodate those who want to participate in the disaster response. The grantee should document its decisions in the member file.

**May our AmeriCorps members who have been evacuated from their original state temporarily serve with a local project where they are located and receive a living allowance?**

Yes, provided the local project where the AmeriCorps members have relocated is able to accept them. The local project should obtain copies of the original project's documentation of the members' eligibility kept at the local project where the individual was serving, or re-qualify the member as eligible. The receiving project must have sufficient AmeriCorps member expense funds available and be able to find an assignment appropriate for the particular member.

**AmeriCorps Programmatic Considerations**

**What specific considerations does the AmeriCorps program need to address before deploying members?**

Before an AmeriCorps member is deployed, considerations include:

- Health coverage of person deployed to disaster relief activities (specifically ensuring that the member is covered while out of the program's state)
- Occupational accidental death and dismemberment coverage
- Worker's compensation policies and coverage
- Other health and safety considerations (such as vaccinations, supplies, safety equipment, etc.)

### **How will liability be handled for AmeriCorps members serving out of state?**

Programs are responsible for ensuring that their AmeriCorps members have liability coverage. If there is a question about coverage, you should verify it with your insurance provider.

### **Are there specific forms (such as liability forms) the AmeriCorps members or programs must complete to perform disaster relief activities?**

Each program considering such a deployment should undertake a risk assessment and management process to ensure the safety of members as well as appropriate insurance coverage. There are no formal CNCS forms that an AmeriCorps member must complete before performing disaster relief activities. However, if there are forms required by the AmeriCorps member's state where serving, then the member must fill these out.

### **Are programs responsible for paying for member's travel and lodging outside of their normal service activities?**

There are three options for AmeriCorps programs to pay for member's travel and lodging outside of their normal service activities:

1. Programs can apply for reimbursement of disaster response-related expenses through the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement (see below).
2. Programs can seek a budget amendment to rework their current funds to accommodate the new activities, supplies, etc related to disaster relief.
3. If additional disaster relief funds become available (separate from the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement), programs can apply for an amendment requesting additional funds and MSYs to support additional disaster relief efforts.

### **Can slots be transferred between programs to help with the disaster relief efforts?**

Neither funds nor slots may be transferred between competitive programs, competitive and formula programs, or state and national programs for disaster relief efforts. However, the individual state Commission or Parent Organization is responsible for managing the transfer of funds and slots between formula programs within a state.

If this policy hinders your program from fully responding to the disaster, please notify your Corporation Program Officer.

**What should AmeriCorps programs do if an AmeriCorps member is ready to enroll but his/her proof of citizenship has been lost due to the disaster?**

AmeriCorps will be issuing guidance and a template for AmeriCorps members to use in order to certify their age, citizenship, etc. Look for updates on this.

**Can my program get reimbursed for our disaster response deployments with FEMA or another agency?**

Yes, under certain conditions. Complete the CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement and, if eligible, your program could be chosen for deployment by FEMA (or another federal agency through the National Response Plan) and CNCS and be eligible for reimbursement. Please see the attachments for further details.

CNCS is working on identifying additional funding that could be reprogrammed to support local response activities.

**Must I have a Cooperative Agreement in place to respond to disasters?**

If you are a CNCS program and you do not have a CNCS Disaster Response Cooperative Agreement in place, you are free to participate in disaster response directly with a host organization, through Red Cross or through another intermediary. This process will not limit your opportunity or capacity to participate in disaster response – but without a Cooperative Agreement in place, reimbursement for expenses through the Corporation is not possible.

**Due to the impact of the disaster, we cannot deliver the required in-service training for our AmeriCorps members for at least the next month or two. May we defer this training and deliver it at a later time?**

Yes. This must be documented and approved by the State Commission or Parent Organization and Corporation Program Officer. The approval will be for a specific period of time that can be extended upon approval.

**Our project office has had to close and we see no way to carry on normal project activities for several weeks, if not longer. What should we do?**

Please communicate this to your State Commission or Parent Organization and Corporation Program Officer. Offices will work together on a case-by-case basis to help develop a plan of action.

**What steps should we take if we have lost all or a great many of our project files and other records as a result of the disaster?**

Please advise your State Commission or Parent Organization and Corporation Program Officer of the extent of the damage. Offices will work together on a case-by-case basis to help develop a plan of action.

**Some of our AmeriCorps members are unable to serve due to personal or logistical circumstances. May they continue to receive their living allowances until they are able to return to service?**

Depending on the program's service policies, AmeriCorps members may be paid living allowances while on sick leave, annual leave, administrative leave, etc. If a program determines that the length of a member's absence will preclude that member from finishing his or her term of service, the program should suspend the member, and the member may not receive a living allowance for the period of suspension.

**General Information**

**What is the Corporation/AmeriCorps doing to help victims of Hurricane Katrina?**

Please view the Corporation's website at:  
<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/katrina.asp> for continually updated information. This web page provides information concerning the response of the Corporation and grantees.

As time permits, projects should keep your Corporation Program Officers posted on their activities.

Corporation Program Officers for Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Florida, as well as in neighboring states that are receiving evacuees, are getting in touch with projects to take stock of the impact on their operations. Commissions in Louisiana and Mississippi are currently experiencing problems with phones. E-mail is currently the most reliable mode of communication at this point.

At headquarters, we are working on identifying funding that could be reprogrammed to support local response activities.

**What is the contact information for the impacted State Commissions and CNCS State Offices? (Please be aware that they are operating at a limited capacity and should only be contacted if absolutely necessary)**

**Alabama Governor's Office on National Community Service**  
RSA Union Building, Suite 134

100 North Union Street  
Montgomery, AL 36130  
Fax: 334-242-2885

Terri Hasdorff  
Executive Director  
334-353-7110  
thasdorff@governor.state.al.us

Lisa Castaldo  
Program Officer  
334-242-7990  
lisa.castaldo@servealabama.gov

**Alabama CNCS State Office**

Medical Forum  
950 22<sup>nd</sup> Street North, Suite 428  
Birmingham, AL 35203-3120

Betty Platt, State  
Program Director  
P: 205-731-0030  
F: 205-731-0031  
[Bplatt@cns.gov](mailto:Bplatt@cns.gov)

**Louisiana Serve Commission**

State National Life Building  
263 Third Street  
Suite 610-B  
Baton Rouge, LA 70801  
F: 225-342-0106

Orlando Watkins  
Executive Director  
225-342-6289  
owatkins@crt.state.la.us

Pam Davis  
Program Officer  
225-342-0280  
pdavis@crt.state.la.us

**Louisiana CNCS State Office**

707 Florida Street  
Suite 316  
Baton Rouge, LA 70801

Labrie Willard  
State Program Director  
P: 225-389-2038  
F: 225-389-0510  
lwillard@cns.gov

**Mississippi Commission for Volunteer Service**

3825 Ridgewood Road, Ste. 601  
Jackson, MS 39211

F: 601-432-6790

Marsha Meeks Kelly  
Executive Director  
601-432-6738  
mkelly@ihl.state.ms.us

Judy Stein  
AmeriCorps Director  
601-432-6224  
jstein@ihl.state.ms.us

**Mississippi CNCS State Office**

Federal Building, Room 1005-A  
100 West Capitol Street  
Jackson, MS 39269-1092

R. Abdul-Azeez  
State Program Director  
P: 601-965-5664  
F: 601-965-4617  
rabdulaz@cns.gov

***What are some examples of organizations to which our community can send donations?***

People or organizations who want to donate money to help Hurricane Katrina victims should visit [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov) for a list of legitimate charitable organizations, including the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund, the American Red Cross, and relief funds that state governments in the disaster area have established.

**State-Specific Emergency Relief Funds**

- **Alabama Governor's Emergency Relief Fund:** [www.servealabama.gov](http://www.servealabama.gov) 1-877-273-5018
- **Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation,** [www.louisianahelp.org](http://www.louisianahelp.org), 1-877-HELPLA1 (1-877-435-7521)
- **Mississippi Hurricane Relief Fund,** [www.mississippirecovery.com](http://www.mississippirecovery.com), 1-866-230-8903

**Hurricane Katrina Volunteer Support Fund**

The Corporation for National and Community Service has established a fund to support the coordination of volunteers to assist with repair and relief efforts in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Your donation will support volunteers in providing food and shelter, managing donations, helping victims get necessary assistance, and long-term rebuilding efforts. Donations to the Corporation's Disaster Relief Fund will be directed toward the Hurricane Katrina Volunteer Support Fund to support relief and rebuilding efforts in the impacted areas.

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/donations/index.asp>

***Where can my organizations donate goods and services?***

Federal, state and local emergency responders in the hurricane-affected area are currently using the National Emergency Resource Center system to locate the supplies and services to help those



most in need. If you or your organization, agency, or corporation has resources to offer, such as: housing; services; construction equipment; transportation; food; and / or personal items, please register with the National Emergency Resource Center by visiting [https://www.swern.gov/emergency/asset\\_index.php](https://www.swern.gov/emergency/asset_index.php)

For further questions or concerns, please contact your Corporation Program Officer.

**Rosie K. Mauk**  
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