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Opening Doors Newsletter

A publication to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities within AmeriCorps programs.

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Reasonable Accommodation

The Montana Commission on Community Service makes funds available for reasonable accommodation requests to AmeriCorps programs for members with disabilities that require an accommodation to fulfill their service. Funds for reasonable accommodation(s) are available for use by members with disabilities, who have been offered a position with an AmeriCorps program, and require an accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of their service. Note: You do not have to provide an accommodation for an individual with a disability if the individual does not ask for one.

Requirement for Disability Inclusion Funds:

The accommodation must be essential to allow the member to perform his/her service successfully. The accommodation cannot be withheld without significantly altering the mission of the program and the responsibilities of the member. The requested cost of the accommodation, and the cost of any future supports, must be within budget guidelines. Disability inclusion funds will not be made available until all other sources of funding have been explored.

Programs will be able to apply for disability inclusion funds when:

The program has identified the accommodation request in cooperation with the member. The program has determined it can not reasonably afford the accommodation. AmeriCorps staff has determined that the program budget cannot support the accommodation and outside resources such as Vocational Rehabilitation Centers, Developmental Disabilities Service,

Independent Living Centers, etc. cannot assist. If the program cannot reasonably afford the accommodation, and an outside resource cannot assist; a request must be sent in writing to, Opening Doors to Community Service.

Request forms are available at <http://mt.gov/mcsn/opendoors/DisabilityInc.pdf>. I will be meeting with Program directors to answer questions or listen to concerns about reasonable accommodation issues. Please write or call if you require more direct attention to this matter.

Media Happenings

Disability grant monies were used in 2006 for producing a 30 second "public service announcement" in video format. This recruiting tool exemplifies two individuals who appear on the video sharing their AmeriCorps experience and the reality of successful service. Final editing is being completed and hopefully the video will be airing by the end of January.

Possible Partnership with the Rural Institute

The University of Montana Rural Institute mini-grant proposal was declined by the National Corporation on Community Service. It is hoped that at a later date a partnership will be funded to offer: assistance with outreach opportunities, enhancement of service training, collaborative presentations and direct involvement with the Montana Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Editor's Notes

The idea of inclusion and diversity is the message I send for the New Year. I look forward to working with all of you and thank you for your efforts in promoting disability inclusion.