CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
General Program Questions
Last update 4/16/20

CNCS is closely monitoring the latest developments related to COVID-19. As America responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have concerns about the potential impacts on your program. The below FAQs address questions posed by the outbreak. Check back as they are updated regularly.

*These FAQs do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. You should refer to CNCS’s statute and regulations for applicable requirements.*

Information for Members and Volunteers:

1. **May I leave my site for a compelling health reason, such as I have a compromised immune system?**
   Yes, members and volunteers who are unable to serve at their assigned service location should work individually with their project sponsor and program to determine an appropriate alternative. Members/volunteers must notify their project sponsor/program about their risk to potential exposure. See CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure. **[updated 3/12]**

2. **If I am serving in AmeriCorps NCCC or AmeriCorps VISTA, will CNCS pay for the return to my Home of Record (HOR)?**
   If you are unable to complete your service term, we will follow normal VISTA and NCCC program protocols for returning members to their Home of Records, where appropriate. **[updated 3/12]**

3. **Can we teleserve?**
   For AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members, please refer to the teleservice policies [AmeriCorps State and National Teleservice Guidance](#) and [AmeriCorps VISTA Teleservice Guidance](#). For Senior Corps sponsors, please follow the appropriate guidance as outlined in the Senior Corps Operations Handbook. **[updated 3/12]**

4. **Will I still qualify for forbearance if my term of service is in a Suspended Status, or if I am in an Administrative Hold status or on emergency leave, due to COVID-19?**
   Per CNCS regulations 45 CFR § 2529.20, your lender is responsible for approving or denying your forbearance request. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)—the federal agency that oversees AmeriCorps—provides verification that you are serving in an approved AmeriCorps position (which includes...
positions in the AmeriCorps State and National Program (ASN), the AmeriCorps NCCC Program, and the AmeriCorps VISTA Program).

Once you are enrolled in the National Service Trust, you can submit a request online through My AmeriCorps to verify your involvement in AmeriCorps and request that your qualified loans be put in forbearance during your service period. Generally, your loan remains in forbearance until you exit from the program. Exiting from the program includes both exiting at the scheduled end of your service term and exiting early from the program, before the scheduled end. After you exit from the program, you are responsible for repaying your loan according to its terms. For more information, visit our website. [updated 4/10]

5. Will I still qualify for interest accrual benefits if I was prevented from completing my full term of service due to COVID-19?

Individuals who have successfully completed a term of service in an AmeriCorps program are eligible to have the National Service Trust (Trust) pay up to 100% of the interest that accrued on their qualified student loan during their service. These are the conditions that apply:

- An interest payment can only be made after you have exited the program and have earned a full, partial, or pro-rated education award.
- The percentage of interest accrual benefit that you are eligible to receive is based upon your total service hours accrued, or the amount of time (in days) you were enrolled when you exited.
- If you qualify for additional hours/time under the CARES Act, such hours/time will be provided to the Trust and be considered “hours/time served.”
- The Trust will only pay interest on qualified student loans, as described on the Using Your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award web page.

For the AmeriCorps State and National Program, the portion of interest that the Trust will pay is determined by the type of service (full or part-time) and how many national service hours were certified by your program. If you are exited for CPC, you may be eligible for a pro-rated education award, and therefore some payment of the interest accrued on your loan. If you are serving in the AmeriCorps State and National program, it is up to your individual program to determine CPC. Circumstances related to COVID-19 could reasonably justify a CPC exit. Please see the ASN FAQs regarding your eligibility for additional hours under the CARES Act. If you exited your ASN program early, and your exit was not for a CPC, you are not eligible to have the Trust pay the interest that accrued while you served.

For the AmeriCorps VISTA Program, if you successfully completed your term of service, the Trust will pay the interest accrued for the entire term of service. If you exited early from the VISTA program due to CPC, the Trust will pay the interest accrued during the days you were enrolled in the VISTA program before your early exit. If you exited the VISTA program early, and your exit was not for a CPC, you are not eligible to have the Trust pay the interest that accrued while you served.

For AmeriCorps NCCC, if your graduation date was advanced and you were exited from the program earlier than planned due to COVID-19, the Trust will pay 100 percent of the interest that accrued on your qualified student loan for 1,700 hours of service. If you decided to exit the AmeriCorps NCCC program early and your exit was a resignation from the program, you are not eligible to have the Trust pay the interest that accrued. [updated 4/10]
6. AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers (SCP, FGP and RSVP volunteers) are not normally covered by state or federal unemployment benefits. Are AmeriCorps members or Senior Corps volunteers whose service ends due to COVID-19 covered by the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefit created by the CARES Act?
Eligibility for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance is not determined by CNCS. Please contact the government agency in your state that administers the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance benefit with any questions you may have regarding the benefit or contact the US Department of Labor. [updated 4/16]

7. As an AmeriCorps member or Senior Corps volunteer whose service site has closed or who had to discontinue service due to COVID-19, can I get unemployment?
As a general matter, AmeriCorps members and Senior Corps volunteers (SCP, FGP, and RSVP volunteers) are not eligible for unemployment because they are not employees. See 42 U.S.C. §§ 5055 (a), 5058, 12511 (30), and 12620 (a). To determine whether you qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance, please contact the agency in your state administering the benefit. [updated 4/16]

Information for Grantees and Sponsors:

1. What should we share with our members/volunteers about Coronavirus/COVID-19?
All of us can take measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Everyone can do their part to help respond to this emerging public health issue. The best source of COVID-19 resources is the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The CDC with the Department of Health and Human Services is the lead government agency on the management of the Coronavirus outbreak. They have created resource guides on preventing the spread of COVID-19 in specific communities. This includes specific guidance for childcare centers and schools, colleges and universities, community events, and first responders, among many others. These guides, along with additional resources and up-to-date information from the CDC, can be found at the following links. [updated 3/12]
   - CDC Coronavirus Hub
   - Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities

2. I am an AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps VISTA, or Senior Corps grantee or project sponsor. Who should I contact with questions?
AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, or Senior Corps Project Sponsors should contact their Portfolio Manager or Program Officer. [updated 3/12]

3. I am an AmeriCorps NCCC Project Sponsor. Who should I contact with questions?
NCCC Project Sponsors should contact their NCCC Region campus staff with questions. [updated 3/12]

4. What if a volunteer is showing symptoms of illness or respiratory problems? Should they stay home?
Yes. Grantees and project sponsors should instruct volunteers to stay home, seek medical attention, and not return to their service sites. If a volunteer feels ill, is showing symptoms of illness, or thinks they may have COVID-19, they should be directed to consult with their health care providers. For further guidance, they should be directed to the CDC guidelines. The decision whether to discontinue isolation should be made in
consultation with their health care providers and federal, state, and local health departments. Grantees and sponsors should consistently apply and clearly communicate their policies regarding under what conditions they will instruct volunteers to self-quarantine. Grantees and project sponsors should also document when they have instructed a volunteer to stay home due to illness.

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. Also, grantees and sponsors must ensure that they maintain confidentiality of any member(s) and volunteer(s) who are believed, or confirmed, to have COVID-19, or other illnesses, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA). [updated 4/10]

5. What if a member or volunteer lives with or has been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19? What should grantees and project sponsors do?
Service members and volunteers who are well but live with, or have been in close contact with, someone who is known to have COVID-19 should promptly notify their respective program/project director. More importantly, the individual should self-report to their physician, and in consultation with their physician, to the state health department responsible for the local management of COVID-19 issues.

The grantees or project sponsor should also refer to CDC guidance for how to conduct a risk assessment of their potential exposure. While maintaining confidentiality, the grantees or project sponsor should inform fellow service members and volunteers of their possible exposure to COVID-19 at the service site. [updated 3/12]

6. Should my organization cancel planned congregate events (e.g.: training, recognition ceremonies or other special events)?
Each organization should make the decision on whether to proceed with upcoming congregate events by consulting information from the Centers for Disease Control and other relevant state and local agencies. A list of state and territorial health organizations can be found at the CDC State Health Department Portal. [updated 3/12]

7. Will CNCS be cancelling upcoming trainings and convenings such as the Senior Corps Convening or upcoming AmeriCorps VISTA Sponsor Events?
Yes, the agency has cancelled and/or postponed all meetings, convenings and events through May 15. The agency is monitoring the situation in locations where events after May 15 are are planned and will make a determination on whether to proceed with the advice and counsel of federal and local health officials for each jurisdiction. Grantees or project sponsors should continue to monitor the CNCS website and other communication for updates. [updated 3/12]

8. What if our organization has paid for staff, member, and/or volunteer travel that is canceled by the host organization or it is otherwise imprudent for the travel to happen as planned?
Due to safety concerns, CNCS would treat these scenarios like a weather-related travel cancellation and would allow the costs if they are otherwise reasonable and necessary. You should clearly document the reasons for the cancellation as they relate to the specific costs incurred.

Since stipend payments are hourly based (i.e., based on FGP and SCP volunteers’ service hours), FGP and SCP program have discretion to determine the stipend payments made to the volunteers. [updated 3/12]
9. May members be exited for Compelling Personal Circumstances if they are unable to serve?
Within AmeriCorps State and National, grantees determine compelling personal circumstances. Extended site closures and sustained disruptions could reasonably justify a compelling personal circumstances exit under 45 CFR § 2522.230 (a) Release for compelling personal circumstances. [updated 3/12]

For AmeriCorps VISTA and AmeriCorps NCCC members, the agency will follow established protocols. Grantees and project sponsors should direct specific questions to their Portfolio Manager, Program Officer, or NCCC campus staff.

10. If an AmeriCorps State and National program allows members to do additional training at a time that they cannot serve at their sites, will they be allowed to exceed the maximum 20 percent aggregate training hours?
No, per 45 CFR § 2520.50 How much time may AmeriCorps members in my program spend in education and training activities?, “No more than 20 percent of the aggregate of all AmeriCorps member service hours in your program, as reflected in the member enrollments in the National Service Trust, may be spent in education and training activities.” [updated 3/12]

11. If we have a member or volunteer who is exposed to or diagnosed with COVID-19, do we need to notify CNCS?
Yes, on a voluntary basis, please notify your Program Officer or Portfolio Manager if you have a member or volunteer who is diagnosed with COVID-19. Share the project name, city location and number of members or volunteers diagnosed. In order to protect the privacy of the individual, please do not share their name or other personally identifiable information. You should follow guidance provided by the CDC and your local health department. [updated 3/17]

12. I understand that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently granted relief to some provisions in 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Does this apply to my organization?
OMB released guidance on March 9, 2020 granting “…class exceptions in instances where the agency has determined that the purpose of the Federal awards is to support the continued research and services necessary to carry out the emergency response related to COVID-19.” The federal awarding agency makes this determination. If you receive non-CNCS awards that meet this criteria, please contact OGAInformation@cns.gov, as the extension to submit single audits and possibly other relief may be applicable to your CNCS award(s) as well. [updated 3/17]

13. What is the impact of COVID-19 on access to national service criminal history check (NSCHC) vendors Truescreen and Fieldprint, and how should programs handle Livescan location closures?
As of March 18, 2020, CNCS-contracted national service criminal history check (NSCHC) vendors Fieldprint and Truescreen are operating. However, certain Livescan fingerprint locations may be closed due to business-specific reasons and/or local government requirements. To see which Livescan sites are closed, you may check site availability on https://fieldprintcncs.com/.

CNCS communicates closely with Truescreen and Fieldprint and will issue further notice and guidance if closures become nationwide and/or the sources (FBI/states/NSOPW) become unable to provide results to grant recipients.
Livescan locations closed due to Covid-19 are allowing appointments to be scheduled for future dates. Grant recipients may elect to order fingerprint cards or schedule Livescan appointments for a future time when a local site expects to reopen. Scheduling an appointment or having documentation showing that the individual completed their fingerprint card satisfies the requirement to “initiate” the background check (i.e., the requirement that programs initiate the check before member/volunteer/staff begins work or service in a covered position).

The results of the NSOPW must be reviewed and documented prior to the person beginning work or starting service (before work, service, or training hours are charged to the grant, federal or match). A person may not accrue hours towards their work or service without first having cleared the NSOPW component of the NSCHC. Checks that are not within these time frames are noncompliant.

Please note: Grant recipients who use Truescreen need to refer to the Truescreen pre-approved ASP (https://www.nationalservice.gov/CHCFAQs). The criminal history information components (state of service check, state of residence check, and FBI checks) of the NSCHC must be initiated no later than the first day of the start of service or work. Checks that are not within these time frames are noncompliant.

Initiating state and FBI checks is going one step further than getting permission to conduct an NSCHC. This could include, for example, fingerprinting, sending requests to a state repository to get checks, or having candidates fill out official forms for getting the required checks. You must be able to document how and when checks were initiated. You must have policies and procedures outlining how you initiate checks and apply them consistently.

Ordering fingerprint cards or scheduling a Livescan appointment may be considered initiation of a check. [updated 3/27]

14. Are members or volunteers or staff who are suspended for over 120 days, but not exited from service or employment, required to conduct a new National Service Criminal History Check?
A break in service means that a person is no longer providing service through or receiving salary from a recipient or subrecipient. Temporary interruption of work or service without termination of employment or expiration of the agreement under which service is being provided is not a break in service.

With regard to members, volunteers, or staff suspended or not serving due to COVID-19, such temporary interruption is not a break in service and no new criminal history check needs to be conducted when the members or staff resume service. [updated 3/19]

15. How is the requirement to accompany those for whom State and/or FBI check components are pending affected by COVID-19?
Covid-19 has not changed the requirement to accompany those who are serving when State and/or FBI check components of the NSCHC are pending.

Individuals in covered positions are required to be accompanied during service or work while state check(s) or FBI check components are pending. A person is accompanied when he or she is in the physical presence of a person who is cleared for access to a vulnerable population.

One possible way to document accompaniment is to indicate on the covered person’s timesheet.
1. who accompanied during the covered individual’s access to a person in a vulnerable population,
2. on what dates and hours the accompaniment took place, and
3. have the person who performed the accompaniment incrementally sign off and attest to the accuracy of the documentation.

You should have policies and procedures that clearly describe your accompaniment guidelines and documentation procedures. The documentation should show the day, times, accompanier and individual accompanied. If you need to amend the policy to reflect necessary adjustments due to the COVID-19 pandemic, your organization should document the change, and the organizational approval of the change.

For individuals who will be teleserving as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, programs must ensure that communication with vulnerable populations includes accompaniment. This may be done via conference call, carbon copy on emails, or other means specific to the teleservice.

Please direct questions regarding NSCHC vendors or NSCHC access to CHC@cns.gov. [updated 3/27]

16. COVID-19 is impacting my organization’s ability to prepare and submit a Federal Financial Report (FFR) due April 30, 2020, for the report period ending March 31, 2020. Can I have an extension to submit my FFR?
CNCS recognizes that COVID-19 is significantly impacting operations for a number of our grantees and sponsors. As a result, CNCS is extending the due date for semi-annual FFRs. The FFRs that were due April 30, 2020, are now due May 30, 2020. We are in the process of updating the due date in eGrants for all applicable awards. The reporting period for these FFRs remains the same. Grantees and sponsors who can submit their semi-annual FFRs sooner are encouraged to do so. This flexibility is only for FFRs submitted to CNCS. At this time, all recipients must still submit their 272 reports to the Payment Management System on the required schedule or funds will be placed on hold.

CNCS may consider extending the due date for final FFRs in the future, if needed. However, as recipients have 90 days to submit their final FFRs following the end of the performance period, this deadline should not impose an undue hardship on the majority of our recipients.

CNCS is offering this relief pursuant to the Office of Management and Budget memo M-20-17: Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to Loss of Operations. [updated 4/13]

17. How should grantees manage subrecipient oversight monitoring given the impact of COVID-19 on scheduled monitoring compliance reviews?
CNCS recognizes the impact COVID-19 has had on grantee operations but grant recipients should continue their oversight of subawards to the extent possible. In fact, monitoring is particularly important during this time of disruption and uncertainty. Please monitor to the extent possible.

CNCS’s on-site monitoring visits are currently postponed. CNCS monitoring plans are being modified to conduct virtual and remote monitoring activities. We recognize that grant recipients may also have to modify existing monitoring plans and procedures or postpone monitoring activities, due to circumstances that inhibit abilities to travel or conduct compliance assessments on-site.
Similar to documenting adopted grant program exemptions or justifications due to COVID-19, grant recipients should document any internal decisions to modify monitoring plans. We can’t stress enough how important it is that grantees document any and all deviations due to COVID-19. This documentation is particularly important given the fact that grantees’ usual means of documentation and document retention is being disrupted. We appreciate all your efforts and recognize that you are dealing with many unique challenges. Please note, CNCS has provided FAQs as a resource for exemptions and/or modified requirements during this time. [updated 4/16]

For more information, please visit:

- CDC Coronavirus
- U.S. Government Response to Coronavirus