CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Senior Corps-Specific Questions
Last update 4/20/20

CNCS is closely monitoring the latest developments related to Coronavirus (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.

1. What precautions are CNCS and Senior Corps taking regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19)?
CNCS is closely monitoring information and recommendations provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) related to the COVID-19. As this is an evolving situation, the information and guidelines will continue to develop as conditions change. To help address general concerns, CNCS has released agency-wide FAQs that can be found here. [updated 3/13]

2. Can I mail my volunteers gift cards as a form of recognition?
Yes. Grantees may issue a gift cards to SCP, FGP, and RSVP volunteers as an allowable form of recognition. See 45 CFR 2551.46(e), 45 CFR 2552.46(e), and 45 CFR 2553.43(c). However, you must use a feasible mailing delivery service to help safeguard and ensure that the gift card is delivered to the intended volunteer recipient. Simply mailing a gift card to the intended recipient is not an acceptable means of delivery because it does not provide reasonable certainty that your will receive a written acknowledgment of receipt from the intended recipient.

Please be mindful that giving gift cards as a form of recognition must be done in accordance with sound business practices, which should include written proof that the intended volunteer recipient received the gift card. During this time of social distancing, we strongly encourage programs to explore effective ways that you can acquire written proof of receipt (e.g., signatures) from the intended Senior Corps volunteer that they received the gift card. While not exhaustive, some examples of potential acceptable methods of documentation of receipt are: a certified mail receipt (check cost of certified mail); an email confirmation from the intended volunteer recipient that they received the mail delivery; or provide a signed confirmation letter with a pre-stamped addressed envelope that can be mailed back to the project. [updated 4/2]

3. UPDATE: COVID-19 is impacting our organization's ability to perform basic activities such as producing required progress reports. How will this affect my upcoming Performance Progress Report (PPR)?
Senior Corps is extending the due date for the upcoming annual Performance Progress Report (PPR) by 30 days due to COVID-19. The PPR is now due May 30, 2020. There is no need to request an extension as it will automatically be reflected in eGrants. This extension is made under the authority of Administrative Relief Exception No. 10, as provided in OMB’s March 19, 2020, memorandum, Memorandum M-20-17, which allows federal grantees affected by COVID-19 to delay the submission of financial, performance, or other reports up to three months beyond the normal due date.

Here are some tips for completing the PPR. Grantees are still required to report on progress toward meeting approved performance targets. Please follow Appendix B: Performance Measure Instructions when reporting your outputs and outcome actuals. We know that state and local actions implemented to reduce COVID-19 may impact your organization’s ability to gain access to data due to closures of partner universities, schools, and county offices. Please continue to use your best judgement to report on outputs and outcomes achieved prior to COVID-19 related closures. Grantees or sponsors should identify the impact of COVID-19 on their operations within the relevant narratives section of the progress report. This includes challenges that COVID-19 has had on operations, partnership/collaboration development, and non-federal share development. You should also include a summary of any challenges faced for each Performance Measure in the Grantee Note associated with each Performance Measure. Finally, CNCS is also interested in learning more about the tremendous work that Senior Corps project sponsors are doing to address the needs of COVID-19 within their community.

Please rest assured that grantees’ inability to meet targets during this unprecedented time will not necessitate a performance improvement plan. Additionally, CNCS will not take any action that will result in funding reduction, denial of funding, or termination of grants as a result of unmet targets due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [updated 3/30]

4. COVID-19 is impacting my ability to meet match requirements. Will CNCS provide relief regarding this requirement?

CNCS is waiving all match requirements for all Senior Companion, Foster Grandparent, and RSVP grantees for FY2019 and FY2020. Senior Corps is utilizing regulatory authorities set forth in 45 CFR §2551.92(b)(2) (Senior Companion Program), 45 CFR §2552.92(b)(2) (Foster Grandparent Program), and 45 CFR §2553.72(b)(2) (RSVP), which provides CNCS the legal authority to grant exceptions, under certain specific circumstances, to the match requirements. CNCS will expect grantees to document this exception/flexibility and follow all applicable record retention requirements through a memo to the file, instructions can be found in FAQ #3: “What does a Memo to File need to include?” [updated 3/27]

5. What does a “Memo to File” need to include?

CNCS’s Office of Monitoring recognizes that due to COVID-19, grant recipients may experience challenges related to documenting grant program activities and expenditures changes due to COVID-19. In these occurrences, grant recipients are encouraged to include a memo to the file that clearly describes the compliance limitations related to documentation, including applicable dates and references to OMB Memo M-20-17 or Agency specific guidance (i.e. FAQs) that support the grant recipient’s approach to documentation during this period. To assist in development of the memo to file, CNCS recommends that the following details are provided in your memo to the file, if applicable:

- Information, if available, from the sponsoring agency regarding restrictions of program operations. Include specific dates.
• Information regarding any local government orders, such as shelter in place, stay-at-home, or non-essential business closures. Include specific dates or local orders.
• Statement regarding what polices or procedures have been temporarily modified and a description of the changes.
  • For example, a statement may address that Senior Corps FGP/SCP volunteer timesheets were unable to be signed by each volunteer, due to the fact that local COVID-19 orders prohibited volunteers from attending their volunteer stations. Project staff reviewed timesheets, verified the volunteer hours served with the volunteer, and certified the completion and accuracy of timesheets during this period of time.
• Indicate the timeframe for the change in policy or procedure.
• Project Director signature (may be electronic) and date signed. [updated 3/27]

6. Are FGP and SCP volunteers still able to get their meal reimbursements if they are on emergency leave? Senior Corps programs should follow existing internal policies and procedures when determining if volunteers can still receive meal reimbursements while on leave or while receiving their temporary allowance. [updated 3/25]

7. We have upcoming Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), letters of agreement, and other documents that need to be signed related to our Senior Corps grant. What happens if we are unable to get them completed and signed before the expiration of the current agreement? Senior Corps encourages the use of electronic signatures. If unable to implement electronic signatures on new upcoming documents due to the impact of COVID-19, Senior Corps will extend the due date for those new documents to be signed and executed until Wednesday, June 17, 2020. Senior Corps will re-evaluate, before June 17, 2020, whether a further extension will be necessary. Grantees should document their inability to secure signatures due to COVID-19 through a memo to file. [updated 3/25]

8. Project Directors have asked grantees whether they can reduce their full-time status to part-time or change their status to a temporary suspension status due to the impact of COVID-19. Are these status changes allowable? Yes, under certain conditions these status changes are allowable. First, a full-time Project Director can reduce their full-time hours to part-time or a temporary suspension status due to the loss of operational capacity due to COVID-19. In accordance with Senior Corps regulations (45 CFR §§ 2551.25(c), 2552.25(c), and 2553.25(c), respectively), an SCP, FGP or RSVP sponsor “may negotiate the employment of a part-time project director with CNCS when the sponsor can demonstrate that such an arrangement will not adversely affect the size, scope, or quality of project operations.” Also, grantees may temporarily suspend their Project Directors’ full or part-time status due to the impact of COVID-19. See OMB Memorandum M-20-17.

If you are interested in modifying the Project Director’s full-time status to a part-time status, or to a temporary suspension status arrangement, please send a written request (email is acceptable) to AmendmentRequest@cns.gov.

The written request should include: the CNCS grant number found on the notice of grant award, a description of the specific changes to the staffing plan, including the time (e.g., hours per week, if any) the individual project director would be scheduled to devote to the project, if applicable the anticipated end date for the
reduced hours, if applicable; and any additional changes in specific personnel. The arrangement cannot adversely affect the size, scope, or quality of project operations. Every effort will be made to review your request within two business days. [updated 4/3]

9. If our Project Director or other staff members who are paid through the Senior Corps grant want to reduce their work hours (e.g., go from full-time to part-time status) because of COVID-19, or need to take leave because of COVID-19, is it allowable to continue to pay them their salary under the grant?

Yes, under certain conditions, it is allowable to continue to pay Senior Corps grant-funded staff members their hourly pay or salaries under the grant. If a Senior Corps grant recipient’s policies allow for the charging of the continuation of hourly pay or salaries during a period when no work is performed due to unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, regardless of the funding source, including Federal and non-Federal sources, then such charges to the Senior Corps grant award will be allowable. These pay policies must be applicable to the grant recipient’s entire workforce.

This pay action is valid only for a 90-day period and is consistent with the March 19, 2020 memorandum issued by the Office of Management and Budget that provides federal grant awarding agencies, such as CNCS, the authority to provide short term administrative relief to grant recipients affected by the loss of operational capacity and increase costs due to COVID-19. The 90-day period expires on June 17, 2020. OMB will re-evaluate, before the expiration of the 90-day period, whether an extension is necessary. See OMB Memorandum M-20-17.

Finally, the grant recipient is required to maintain appropriate records and documentation to support the hourly pay or salary charges that it made against the grant. This complies with OMB’s cost principle requirements that require grant recipients to maintain appropriate records and cost documentation to substantiate charging hourly pay or salaries or other project activity costs related to the interruption of operations or services. 2 CFR §§ 200.302, 200.333. [updated 3/25]

10. If our Project Director or other staff members who are paid through the Senior Corps grant cannot report to work or telework because of COVID-19 (e.g., the project site temporarily shuts down because of COVID-19), is it allowable to continue to pay them their hourly pay or salary under the grant?

Yes, under certain conditions, it is allowable to continue to pay Senior Corps grant-funded staff members their hourly pay or salaries under the grant. If a Senior Corps grant recipient’s policies allow for the charging of the continuation of hourly pay or salaries during a period when no work is performed due to unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, regardless of the funding source, including Federal and non-Federal sources, then such charges to the Senior Corps grant award will be allowable. These pay policies must be applicable to the grant recipient’s entire workforce.

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Finally, the grant recipient is required to maintain appropriate records and documentation to support the charges against the grant related to the salary. This complies with OMB cost principle requirements that require grant recipients to maintain appropriate records and cost documentation to substantiate the charging of any salaries or other project activity costs related to the interruption of operations or services. 2 CFR §§200.302, 200.333. [updated 3/25]

11. My organization does not currently have a pay policy that addresses continuation of pay under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances. May we prepare and implement a policy now?
Yes. If your grantee organization does not currently have continuation of pay policies that address unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, it is important that you prepare and implement such policies immediately.

Moreover, the policies must provide for continuation of hourly pay or salaries under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances, even when the funding source of an employee’s pay is from another source other than the grant, such as a federal funding source. The policy must be applicable to the grant recipient’s entire workforce.

If you are updating your organization’s continuation of pay policies, or you are preparing new policies now, the policies should include at least:

- The policies are applicable to the entire workforce in your organization;
- The policies’ effective dates;
- The policies address continuation of pay for staff members in instances when they are unable to work for reasons beyond their control (e.g., your grantee organization temporarily shuts down operations, nationally declared disaster or emergency); and
- The policy addresses continuation of pay for staff members in instances when they are temporarily unable to work in their hired duty status (e.g., cannot work in a full-time status) due to unexpected or extraordinary circumstances (e.g., due to COVID-19).

[updated 4/3]

12. My organization’s response to COVID-19 may require changes to our budget. What should I do?
All Senior Corps grant recipients must follow the requirements in their “Budgetary Changes” section as prescribed in the terms and conditions in the grant award supporting documents. Please note, if the federal share of a grant is greater than the “Simplified Acquisition Threshold” amount of $250,000 and the grantee’s cumulative changes exceed 10% of the total budget, the grantee must request prior approval to submit an amendment. If the change is below 10%, the grantee does not need to seek prior approval. All costs must be allowable, reasonable, and allocable as stated in 2 CFR §§ 200.403 – 200.405. [updated 3/25]

13. Will the Payment Management System (PMS) continue to operate, so that programs continue to request funds as normal?
The Payment Management System will continue to operate, and programs can expect to continue to request funds as normal. [update 3/23]

14. I have volunteers who are serving through telework, but I am unable to get them to sign their timesheets due to COVID-19.
We recognize that these are exceptional circumstances and acquiring timesheet signatures may not be feasible, especially in light of the CDC guidance relating to older Americans, and guidance to numerous states and locales across the country to shelter-in-place. In order to maintain written records that comply with CNCS and OMB recordkeeping requirements, volunteers who serve through telework are still required to submit a record of the hours they have served on a weekly or biweekly basis, and your grantee organization is still required to approve those hours in writing.

If your organization has a policy for validating timesheets when a volunteer or employee is not available to sign their timesheet, you should follow your policy. If you do not have a policy in place, there are alternative ways to create those records. Volunteers who serve through telework may submit alternative written submissions to your organizations noting hours they have served. Rather than using a timesheet, their submissions may be sent, for example, via email to you, or via a note by text or smartphone photo. You may in turn approve each submission by sending a response back to the volunteer with a notation such as “Hours submitted approved.” You must maintain a record of these communications. In addition, Senior Corps recommends that you write a “Memo to File” for your records to appropriately document why timesheets were not signed and the process you used to verify the hours served. This should not impact your ability to pay a volunteer for the hours served during this time. [updated 3/23]

15. We know that volunteers who have accrued service hours or have completed orientation and were scheduled to serve can receive a temporary allowance. What about applicants who have begun or completed the National Service Criminal History Check (NSCHC) process but have not begun orientation? As those individuals have not completed orientation or their NSCHC process, they would not be eligible to receive a temporary allowance. [updated 3/20]

16. Can volunteer accumulate sick and vacation leave during the time they are not serving?  
An organization should follow their own internal policies and procedures as it related to sick and vacation leave. [updated 3/20]

17. Will the hours calculated to identify a volunteer’s temporary allowance during COVID-19 count towards VSY hours?  
Senior Corps recognizes the disruption that COVID-19 may have in regard to Volunteer Service Year (VSY) production. Grantees should follow existing tracking methods. The calculated hours to identify a volunteer’s temporary allowance during COVID-19 should be counted as service and be counted toward VSYs. [updated 3/25]

18. What is the impact of COVID-19 on access to national service criminal history check (NSCHC) vendors Truescreen and Fieldprint?  
As of March 18, 2020, CNCS-contracted national service criminal history check (NSCHC) vendors Fieldprint and Truescreen are operating as normal. However, please note that 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 fieldprintcnscs.com/.

CNCS is staying in close communication with Truescreen and Fieldprint and will issue further notice and guidance if closures become nationwide and/or the sources (FBI/state repository/NSOPW) become unable to provide results to grant recipients.
19. In the event that Senior Corps service locations are closed (e.g., schools, etc.), or the grantee cannot continue its funded service activity because of disruption at one or more service sites due to COVID-19, will CNCS permit service activities that are not included in approved notice of grant agreement, such as food delivery to families under quarantine?
If a service activity is disrupted due to COVID-19, grant recipients may develop other types of service activities that are not specifically defined in the grant and should obtain written (email) approval from their Program Officer/Portfolio Manager as soon as practicable.

New activities must not be otherwise prohibited or unallowable (e.g., lobbying). The new approved service activity can begin immediately, and the grant recipient should expect to take steps to amend the grant. In the meantime, the grantee should carefully document all the costs associated with the new service activities. [updated 3/20]

20. Though the service site is still open, I have a volunteer who is concerned about serving. Can a volunteer refuse to serve because they fear contracting COVID-19 but still be paid their stipend?
The Director of Senior Corps has authorized Foster Grandparent (FGP) and Senior Companion (SCP) grantees and sponsors to pay volunteers a temporary allowance if the program or the volunteer or a volunteer’s family member is directly impacted by COVID-19. If a project sponsor deems a volunteer is unable to serve due to the impact of COVID-19, then the volunteer should still receive a temporary pay allowance, as appropriate, and follow the steps provided in the guidance issued on March 13, 2020. Senior Corps encourages all project sponsors to follow guidelines from their local, state, and federal authorities. [updated 3/18]

21. If the COVID-19 outbreak results in a break in service beyond 120 days, would volunteers need to re-do their National Service Criminal History Checks?
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 4/3]

22. We are experiencing some difficulties securing signatures and, in some cases, timesheets. Many of our volunteer stations closed so quickly there was no time to pick up timesheets or to get them signed. How should we proceed?
We recognize that these are exceptional circumstances. Senior Corps recommends that you write a “Memo to File” for your records to appropriately document why timesheets were not signed. This should not impact your ability to pay a volunteer for the hours served during this time. [updated 3/18]

23. Is it allowable for staff to work at home (telework) if the umbrella sponsor organization where the RSVP program resides does not have a telework policy and/or may not allow telework?
All organizations should follow internal policies and procedures relating to staff’s ability to telework. We encourage all organizations to follow the guidelines of local, state, and federal health authorities. [updated 3/18]
24. We are cancelling our upcoming recognition event that takes up a significant portion of our budget. Will there be some type of guidance on what to do should there be difficulty in expending funds due to COVID-19?

Due to COVID-19, Senior Corps grantees may want to consider other ways to recognize volunteers such as mailing gifts to them or other options instead of in-person events. When thinking about spending federal funds for recognition, grantees should always ensure that funds are reasonable, allocable, and allowable.

We recognize that COVID-19 may also impact expenses. A grantee may have unexpended funds from a previous budget year and use them within the same performance period. The full impact of COVID-19 is not yet known, and Senior Corps is monitoring the situation and will address it at the appropriate time. [updated 3/18]

25. If an FGP/SCP project already has a written policy in place for paid administrative leave in emergency situations, are they still required to go through the procedure to request a temporary pay allowance?

Senior Corps is committed to holding volunteers harmless during these exceptional circumstances and should take steps to ensure volunteers receive their stipend allowance, or in lieu of that, a temporary allowance, if they are unable to serve due to COVID-19. [updated 3/18]

26. If a new FGP/SCP volunteer has recently completed orientation to serve, but has not been placed on site yet, are the volunteers eligible for the temporary pay allowance? If so, how would their average amount of hours be calculated?

The grantee and sponsor may use their own discretion to determine the appropriate number of weekly service hours for each volunteer. For instance, in this circumstance, a sponsor may calculate the appropriate number of hours by looking at the proposed schedule of volunteers who have completed orientation but have not yet started serving. Senior Corps grantees and sponsors should be reasonable, fair, and consistent in their methodology for calculating hours, and document how they arrived at the average weekly service hours for each volunteer and ensure that they have documented their decisions. [updated 3/18]

27. I have questions regarding the mandatory training requirements for FGP and SCP volunteers as I am concerned about holding in-person trainings for my volunteers due to the impact of COVID-19.

Grantees’, sponsors’, and volunteers’ health and safety are our top priority during this global health crisis. We recognize that COVID-19 may impact planned in-person trainings. Project sponsors are encouraged to think broadly and creatively when considering how to structure in-service training that are not in-person during this time. For example, projects might institute virtual trainings or send out articles or recommend an appropriate movie watch list, then ask volunteers to do a brief write-up. Or possibly, conference calls could be scheduled to discuss a topic or have a Q&A session. Please note that per our regulations, each FGP and SCP volunteer must receive a minimum of 20 hours of pre-service orientation and 24 hours of in-service orientation annually. Please refer to your program’s Operations Handbook for more information on training. [updated 3/12]

28. Are stipended volunteers able to receive their stipend if their volunteer station is closed?

Senior Corps recognizes that under these exceptional circumstances an FGP or SCP volunteer may be unable to serve due to the impact of COVID-19. The Director of Senior Corps authorizes FGP and SCP grantees to pay volunteers a temporary allowance and has outlined the payment process below. While this allowance is separate and distinct from the stipend that is normally paid to FGP and SCP volunteers, the Director of Senior Corps authorizes the allowance to help preserve the volunteer workforce and to minimize potential service disruptions. Rather than risk the eventual loss of valuable Senior Corps volunteers because of their inability to
serve during a shutdown period of a program sponsor or volunteer station, Senior Corps leadership determined that it is in the best interest to CNCS’s respective Senior Corps programs, as well as to the individual program sponsors and volunteer stations, to provide a temporary pay allowance. More guidance information can be found here on the steps you must take to pay your volunteers an allowance.

The temporary pay allowance should be paid at the rate of $2.65 per hour through March 31, 2020, and then at $3.00 per hour starting April 1, 2020. Grantees shall calculate each individual volunteer’s temporary allowance amount at $2.65 per hour through March 31, 2020, and at $3.00 an hour starting April 1, 2020, and multiply this amount with the average weekly service hours for each individual volunteer. [updated 3/17]

29. How should I determine the appropriate number of weekly service hours for each volunteer?
The grantee and sponsor may use their own discretion to determine the appropriate number of weekly service hours for each volunteer. Senior Corps grantees and sponsors should be reasonable, fair, and consistent in their methodology for calculating hours, demonstrate in writing how they arrived at the average weekly service hours for each volunteer, and ensure that they have documented their decisions. [updated 3/17]

30. If Senior Corps volunteers were already on leave, can they still be included in the stipend allowance?
Senior Corps grantees should follow their internal policies and procedures in regard to paying volunteers who are on leave and normally receive a stipend. For instance, a grantee may require volunteers on pre-approved leave to first utilize that leave. Once their approved leave ends, if they are still unable to serve due to COVID-19, then they should receive the temporary pay allowance and should be paid following the process outlined in the guidance issued on March 13. [updated 3/17]

31. If a Senior Corps in-service event has been cancelled and the costs has already been expended and cannot be recovered, will these costs be allowable under the grant?
If any in-service events are cancelled, we recommend that you document that your events were cancelled due to COVID-19 and obtain copies of and document any city, local, and/or state mandates related to the COVID-19, if they exist. [updated 3/17]

32. What should grantees and sponsors do if they are unable to continue administering their Senior Corps programs when they are required to keep their office closed for an extended period of time because of COVID-19?
Each organization shall make its own decision on whether to proceed with administering their program. In such a case, volunteers should still be paid their allowance following the guidance issued on March 13. Grantees and sponsors should follow their own internal existing suspension of operations policy and procedures. Senior Corps recommend all project sponsors to follow the guidelines from their local, state, and federal authorities. [updated 3/20]

33. There has been an outbreak of a disease other than COVID-19 (such as influenza) in my community. Can the same guidance allowing payment of volunteer allowances be allowable?
All guidance issued through the office of the Director of Senior Corps is strictly for volunteers, grantees, and sponsors affected by COVID-19. [updated 3/17]

34. Our volunteer sites are trying to minimize the risk of the COVID-19 exposure to the children and staff by suspending any non-essential personnel coming onto their sites until April. To protect their health as
well as the health of the children they see while volunteering, should we suspend their volunteering activities for a few weeks?

All programs should follow applicable local, state, and federal guidance and requirements regarding public gatherings and congregate events by consulting information and guidance 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 3/17]

35. I have an upcoming continuation/renewal application due on April 20, 2020. Is Senior Corps providing an extension for upcoming funding applications?

Yes. Senior Corps is extending the application deadline for continuations/renewals to April 30, 2020. Please note the deadline in eGrants will not be updated. If any grantee does not believe they will be able to adhere to this deadline, please contact your Program Officer/Portfolio Manager to determine what other flexibilities may be available and what justification will be required. [updated 4/10]

36. We are cancelling our upcoming recognition event due to COVID-19. In order to still provide recognition to our volunteers can we recognize their achievements through other activities such as mailing gifts? Will this be allowable?

Due to COVID-19, Senior Corps grantees can mail gifts to volunteers and should think about ways to provide volunteer recognition other than in-person events. When thinking about spending federal funds for recognition, grantees should always ensure that funds are reasonable, allocable, and allowable. [updated 3/17]

37. Should my organization cancel planned events (i.e. training, recognition, or other special events)?

Each organization should make their own assessment and decision on whether to proceed with upcoming congregant events by consulting information and guidance 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]

38. Can Senior Companion Program and Foster Grandparent Program volunteers teleserve?

Teleservice is appropriate when the activity can be meaningfully supervised, and the hours verified independently. It is important for any project that chooses to include an element of teleservice, that the program has a teleservice policy in place to guide volunteers. Further guidance can be found in each Program’s Operations Handbook. [updated 3/12]

39. Can Senior Corps Grantees and Sponsors ask volunteers if they have traveled to one of the affected areas?

Yes. Given the ongoing travel advisories and the recommendations of the CDC and other federal agencies regarding travel to affected areas and self-quarantining to limit the spread of the Coronavirus, you can require volunteers to disclose their recent travel destinations. [updated 3/12]

40. 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 4/8]

41. What if a volunteer lives with or has been in close contact with someone known to have COVID-19? 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 and follow their guidance and instructions.

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

42. I am a volunteer with a compromised immune system. May I leave my volunteer worksite for a compelling health reason? Yes, volunteers who are unable to serve at their assigned service location because of a compromised immune system or other chronic medical condition should notify their project sponsor’s director about their medical condition and potential health risk should they have Coronavirus exposure. They should work individually with their project sponsor to determine an appropriate alternative accommodation or measure related to their volunteer service. [updated 3/12]

43. I am a Senior Corps grantee. Who should I contact if I have any further questions? All Senior Corps project sponsors should contact their; Portfolio Manager or Program Officer with any questions about the program’s management in regard to the Coronavirus pandemic. [updated 3/18]

44. 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 4/15]

45. Can I mail telephone cards to FGP/SCP volunteers so that they are able to use them to call their clients during this pandemic, and to call into in-service meetings?

Yes. Grantees may issue telephone cards to SCP, FGP, and RSVP volunteers as an allowable cost if the phone cards are used to support volunteers in approved project-related activities. However, you should use a tracking-based mail delivery service to help safeguard and ensure that the phone cards are delivered to the intended volunteer recipients. Simply mailing, via regular mail, a phone card to the intended recipient is not recommended because it does not provide reasonable certainty that you will be able to track receipt from the intended recipient.

When providing telephone cards to facilitate service, grantees should have policies in place that provide clear instructions for volunteers to use the telephone card in providing an allowable service activity. The use of the telephone cards must be tied to service, must support an allowable activity and must be necessary for the performance of the grant outputs and outcomes. The instructions should make clear that using the telephone card for personal purposes, or purposes unrelated to an allowable service activity, is strictly prohibited.

With regard to volunteers’ use of telephone cards, grantees must have certain policies in effect and have retain the following internal documentation:

1. Policies and procedures for allowance of this activity in the case of a national emergency; if a grantee does not currently have a specific policy with regard to phone card usage in place, grantees should promptly update or implement a new policy accordingly.
2. Documentation of a volunteer’s time served while using the phone card to engage in allowable service activity; documentation should include a phone log with start time – end time, person called, number called, etc.
3. The cost of the cards [updated 4/20]

46. Is using grant funds to purchase masks and gloves for volunteer use an allowable cost?

All costs must be allowable, reasonable, and allocable per 2 CFR §§200.403 - 405. Masks and gloves, which enable volunteers to engage in service during the COVID-19 pandemic, are necessary and reasonable for the performance of the Federal award. These costs can be attributed to a “Other Volunteer Support Costs” line item and should reference other volunteer expenses to avoid the need for an amendment. As a reminder, any costs charged should be reasonable and prudent, properly valued, and consistent with the sponsoring organization’s account practices. [updated 4/17]

NOTE: For all actions taken related to COVID-19, please ensure you have written documentation, such as a memo to file, that address steps taken in response to COVID-19.