

# Becoming a Better Supervisor

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Created in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service engages more than a million Americans in service designed to solve community problems. The Corporation oversees three main initiatives—AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national programs and earn education awards that help pay for college or training; Learn and Serve America, which helps link service and education for students from kindergarten through college; and Senior Corps, through which Americans fifty-five and older contribute their skills and experience.

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The National Crime Prevention Council's principal mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safe, more caring communities. NCPC produces a variety of publications; offers training and technical assistance; and acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, approximately 4,000 national, state, and local organizations. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign, which is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

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This document was developed by the National Crime Prevention Council's AmeriCorps Supervisory Training and Technical Assistance Project and is based upon work funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service under Cooperative Agreement No. CA95-30.

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Printed in the United States of America  
October 1996, second printing July 1998

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**M**any people were involved in developing this Resource Guide, demonstrating their care, concern, and commitment to hard working national and community service supervisors around the United States. Although this resource guide was developed for AmeriCorps\* state and national programs, the concepts and tools apply across all national service programs — AmeriCorps\*VISTA, AmeriCorps\*NCCC, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America.

The guide was prepared by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) with the support of the Corporation for National and Community Service. Jim Ekstrom, Director of Training and Technical Assistance, and Gina Fulbright-Powell, Senior Training Officer at the Corporation, provided leadership in the development of this publication. Marsha Slater served as the principal author, with the involvement of NCPC staff and consultants. The following AmeriCorps supervisors and program staff reviewed drafts and provided feedback:

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# PREFACE

The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that works to enable people to reduce crime and build safer, more vital communities. NCPC's relationship with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) began in 1993. Working with CNCS and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, NCPC produced *National Service and Public Safety*, a guide for community service programs on meeting local public safety needs and creating safer, more caring neighborhoods. In 1994, NCPC provided technical assistance to more than 90 Summer of Safety sites working to promote public safety through community service. NCPC's support to CNCS and AmeriCorps public safety programs continues today. NCPC's CNCS-funded Public Safety Skills Development Center offers training, technical assistance, and information to AmeriCorps programs with a public safety focus.

Through in-depth work with Summer of Safety sites and other service programs, NCPC sought to identify the essential characteristics that effective community programs share. We found that a significant factor in successful service programs is the presence of a skilled and committed supervisor. During site visits to AmeriCorps projects, NCPC responded to requests for assistance with both public safety issues and

supervisory concerns such as communication, performance feedback, teambuilding, and time management.

In early 1995, CNCS recognized NCPC's efforts to develop community service supervision with a grant to design and deliver training and technical assistance to front-line supervisors in all kinds of programs. In the first year of the Supervisory Training and Technical Assistance Project, NCPC conducted a major needs assessment; designed and conducted over 20 supervisory workshops for more than 700 participants around the country; and provided technical assistance to numerous programs. NCPC also developed this guide—in collaboration with supervisors around the country—as a part of supervisory training and technical assistance. It is designed to support the work and increase the effectiveness of supervisors involved in any kind of community service activities.

As a National Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Provider under contract with CNCS, NCPC may be available to work with your program by telephone consultation or site visits and can offer training for supervisors and staff. For more information about NCPC community service publications and resources, please refer to Appendix A. For a brief description of how National T/TA

Providers are available to programs, see Appendix B.

## How This Resource Guide Was Developed

NCPC drew from three major sources of information in developing this guide:

- a comprehensive needs assessment, including focus group discussions, site visits, and interviews with AmeriCorps supervisors;
- views of AmeriCorps supervisors who participated in the Supervisory Skills Workshops; and
- literature of respected specialists in the fields of supervision, management, and community participation.

In response to requests from the field for “hands-on” material, this guide is designed to be practical, skill-based, and grounded in the realities of National Service and community service.

## Who Should Use This Guide?

Nearly everyone involved in supervising people working in community service will find something useful among the concepts, vignettes, and tools in this guide.

- If you are a new supervisor, you will find the basics you need to understand and perform major supervisory functions. Try reading through the whole guide at least once; then begin using the individual chapters to support your skill development.
- If you are an experienced supervisor but new to National Service, the guide will help you gain a better understanding of the uniqueness of the program and how you might apply your past experiences toward achieving the best possible results.
- If you already have experience with both supervision and National Service, then use this guide as a refresher course and a reality check. You may find some new insights to enrich your techniques.

## How Useful Is This Guide for You?

Please give us your comments on the content, style, and user-friendliness of this guide. We welcome your suggestions, and will be pleased to respond to any questions you may have. See the title page of the guide for information on how to contact NCPC.

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