

# Workbook

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## Senior Corps Eligibility Requirements

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## Senior Corps Eligibility Requirements

Best practices for determining eligibility for Senior Companion Program, Foster Grandparent Program, and RSVP



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Welcome to the 'Senior Corps Eligibility Requirements' workbook, where you will learn about what is required for individuals to be eligible to serve in a Senior Corps-funded grant program.

CNCS' Senior Corps grantees are required to follow specific rules and guidelines concerning who is eligible to serve in a program and how the grantee must document that the eligibility standards have been met. To effectively run a program and administer a grant, you should be aware of these rules and guidelines to maintain compliance.

## Learning Objectives

- Identify the federal eligibility requirements for Senior Companions (SCP), Foster Grandparents (FGP), and RSVP program participants
- Understand the need for records to document that the requirements have been met

This workbook highlights the basic requirements in 2015 when it was produced. Most of these rules come directly from the authorizing legislation and do not change frequently. However, the workbook is not to be relied upon as the comprehensive or most current rules. It is the responsibility of the grantee to know the applicable rules which are found in the Terms and Conditions of each Senior Corps grant.

In addition to knowing the rules, each grantee must have a system of records that demonstrates compliance with the rules. Records, also called documentation or files, are subject to monitoring and audit by CNCS. For example, during a monitoring visit, a CNCS staff member would typically review the grantee's files to verify that payments of stipends or transportation reimbursements were made to eligible program participants. Incomplete or insufficient records may cause CNCS to question the costs charged to the grant and to take corrective actions.

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Therefore, as you use this workbook, consider your system of records and your ability to demonstrate compliance with these requirements.

Through the online National Service Knowledge Network, [www.nationalservice.gov/resources](http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources), CNCS provides eCourses and other materials to assist you in understanding and applying effective practices in administering the grant. For example, there is an eCourse on effective practices in *Criminal History Checks*.

## Organization of Presentation

- **SCP and FGP**
  - Basic eligibility criteria
  - Additional eligibility criteria
  - Prohibited activities
- **RSVP**
  - Basic eligibility criteria
  - Additional eligibility criteria
- National Service Criminal History checks

This workbook is organized into two sections. First we will discuss the basic and additional eligibility criteria for all SCP and FGP participants. In addition, we will also review the activities that are deemed prohibited for SCP and FGP participants. Next, we will move into a discussion of the basic and additional eligibility criteria for RSVP participants. Finally, we will review the National Service Criminal History checks that Senior Corps members are subject to.

## Basic Eligibility: SCP and FGP

- **Age:** Be 55 years of age or older
- **Service:** Be capable of serving without detriment to either themselves or the children, frail elders or disabled adults served
- **Hours:** Be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week
- **Income:** Meet income eligibility requirements to receive a stipend
- **Background Check:** Receive criminal background check clearance
- **Physical Exams:** Consent to annual physical exam
- **Program Requirements:** Abide by all other program requirements

Eligibility to be a Foster Grandparent may not be restricted on the basis of formal education, experience, race, religion, color, national origin, including limited English proficiency, sex, age, handicap, or political affiliation. [45 CFR 2552.41(b)]

Any person seeking to serve as a Senior Companion or Foster Grandparent must be 55 years of age or older and capable of serving without detriment to either themselves or the children, frail elders, or disabled adults served as determined by an annual physical examination conducted by a qualified medical professional. He/she must be able to serve 15-40 hours per week. It is important to note here that the choice of number of hours within this range is usually determined by the member. In order to receive a stipend, he/she must meet income eligibility requirements. In addition, every SCP and FGP member must receive criminal background check clearance and abide by all other program requirements.

## Income Eligibility to Receive a Stipend

- A Senior Companion or a Foster Grandparent may or may not receive a stipend depending on the individual program's procedures and on the individual's annual income
- To be eligible to receive a stipend, the individual's maximum income from all sources must not exceed 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines applicable to that individual's circumstances (family size and location)
- The grantee must maintain records to demonstrate that the individual is eligible to receive a stipend and must document that the information is verified each year that the individual serves

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Since grant funds go directly to paying an individual's stipend, you can see how important it is to:

- Have documents in files that verify the individual's income;
- Have documents in files that demonstrate that the individual's income has been verified in each year of service;
- Have documents in the files that verify the hours served upon which the stipend was calculated and paid; and
- Maintain the access to and security of such files to protect the individual's confidential personal information.

## Additional Eligibility: SCP and FGP

**“Willing to abide by all other program requirements” generally means volunteers are willing to:**

- Accept supervision
- Work with assigned clients
- Understand what activities are prohibited while on duty
- Work collaboratively with volunteer station staff and project staff
- Undergo a criminal background check
- Record their volunteer hours
- Cooperate with annual income eligibility review
- Attend pre-service training and orientation
- Attend monthly in-service training
- Make at least a 9 month commitment to serving
- Have their performance evaluated
- Abide by all other policies of the program

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Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents are expected to meet the following requirements:

### **Performance:**

- Accept supervision and supportive oversight from a volunteer station staff supervisor
- Work one-on-one with clients assigned to them by their volunteer station supervisor
- Have their performance as a volunteer evaluated annually
- Work collaboratively with volunteer station staff and project staff in the best interests of their assigned clients
- Minimum 9 month commitment to serve
- Abide by all other policies, procedures and requirements of the FGP or SCP grantee

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**Timekeeping:**

- Record their volunteer hours for each day in a timekeeping system, such as by using a timesheet
- Approval of service hours in accordance with grantee policy, such as signature by the supervisor and/or the FGP/SCP Project Director

**Training:**

- Attend pre-service training and orientation
- Actively participate in monthly in-service training

**Prohibited Activities:**

- Understand what activities are prohibited while on duty as a FGP/SCP volunteer and not engage in them

## Prohibited Activities

- Political activities
- Religious activities
- Displacement of paid staff
- Clerical work
- Non-program services such as heavy housework or financial management of client funds
- Acceptance of compensation other than that provided from the grant
- Discrimination

As participants in a federally funded program serving individuals and the community, program participants have special responsibilities as representatives of the grantee organization, of the federal program, and as stewards for the expenditure of funds for the intended purposes. All Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents and RSVP volunteers should receive training in what activities to avoid while on duty and how to do so. For example, it might be difficult to avoid straying into doing more housework than is allowed or to decline a financial gift from a client's grateful family. It is an effective practice to periodically discuss such topics during pre-service and in-service training and to provide the policy in writing.

You can find learning materials on prohibited activities at [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).

## Basic Eligibility: RSVP

- **Age:** Be 55 years of age or older
- **Compensation:** Volunteer on a regular basis without compensation
- **Residence:** Reside in or nearby the community served by RSVP
- **Background Check:** If required, receive criminal background check clearance

Eligibility to be an RSVP volunteer may not be restricted on the basis of race, color, national origin, including limited English proficiency, sex, age, religion, or political affiliation, or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer with a disability is qualified to serve. [45 CFR 2553.41(b)]

RSVP volunteers must be 55 years of age or older, residing in or near the community served by RSVP [As stipulated in 45 CFR 2553.41(a)] and serve as a volunteer on a regular basis without compensation. If required, RSVP volunteers must receive National Service Criminal History checks.

## Additional Eligibility: RSVP

**“Willing to abide by all other program requirements” means RSVP volunteers are willing to:**

- Accept supervision and supportive oversight
- Understand what activities are prohibited while on duty
- Work collaboratively with volunteer station staff and project staff
- Record their volunteer hours on a monthly time sheet
- Abide by all other requirements of a RSVP program

There are some additional program requirements to which RSVP volunteers must adhere to, such as:

- Accept supervision and supportive oversight from a volunteer station staff supervisor
- Understand what activities are prohibited while on duty as an RSVP volunteer and not engage in them (e.g. political, religious, clerical activities, heavy housework for client, financial management of client funds, displacement of paid staff, etc.)
- Work collaboratively with volunteer station staff and project staff in the best interest of their assigned clients or towards a common service goal if clients are not the focus of the service (e.g. the environment, capacity building activities)
- Record their volunteer hours on a monthly time sheet that is signed by them, their supervisor and the RSVP Project Director
- Abide by all other requirements of a RSVP program

## Criminal Background Check

- The requirements vary between employees and service participants and by type of program and service activity.
- CNCS expects every grantee to be fully compliant with all the requirements to protect all of the individuals and the communities involved in national service.

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Under the Serve America Act (SAA), all Foster Grandparent, Senior Companion and RSVP grantees must conduct National Service Criminal History checks. The requirements vary between employees and service participants and by type of program and service activity. CNCS expects every grantee to be fully compliant with all the requirements to protect all of the individuals and the communities involved in national service.

CNCS provides extensive materials on the requirements and how to comply on the National Service Knowledge Network under Criminal History Checks.

## Conclusion

### Additional resources and support

- Your CNCS grant officer
- Your CNCS program officer
- The learning aid on the National Service Knowledge Network
- Other complementary e-courses accessible on the National Service Knowledge Network

This concludes the workbook on Senior Corps eligibility requirements.

## Knowledge Check #1: Question

**Identify the basic eligibility requirements for SCP and FGP.**

- Consent to annual physical exam
- Be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week
- Be 55 years of age or older
- Volunteer on a regular basis without compensation

Take a moment to examine the question and the answer options. When you're ready, turn to the next page for the correct answers.

## Knowledge Check #1: Answer

**Identify the basic eligibility requirements for SCP and FGP.**

- ✓ Consent to annual physical exam
- ✓ Be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week
- ✓ Be 55 years of age or older
- X Volunteer on a regular basis without compensation

All SCP and FGP members must be 55 years older, be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week, and also consent to an annual physical exam. SCP and FGP members may receive a stipend, if they meet the income eligibility requirements.

## Knowledge Check #2: Question

**Identify the basic eligibility requirements for RSVP.**

- Reside in or nearby the community served by RSVP
- Be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week
- Be 55 years of age or older
- Volunteer on a regular basis without compensation

Take a moment to examine the question and the answer options. When you're ready, turn to the next page for the correct answers.

## Knowledge Check #2: Answer

**Identify the basic eligibility requirements for RSVP.**

- ✓ Reside in or nearby the community served by RSVP
- X Be willing to serve 15-40 hours per week
- ✓ Be 55 years of age or older
- ✓ Volunteer on a regular basis without compensation

All RSVP volunteers must be 55 years older, reside in or nearby the community served by RSVP, and volunteer on a regular basis without compensation.