



# Volunteer Tennessee



## Tennessee AmeriCorps Subgrantee Guidance from Volunteer Tennessee

The Question is in **BLACK**

The Guidance Response is in **RED**

Updated  
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New Questions and Guidance Responses are *above* the **GREEN** line

## Tennessee AmeriCorps Subgrantee Guidance from Program Officers at Volunteer Tennessee

*Visit the Corporation's page for answers to most of your questions - <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/managing-ameri-corps-grants>*

1. How do I exit a 3<sup>rd</sup> AmeriCorps member if they say they have already earned two education awards?

The member should be exited **with** education award as having completed all requirements (if that is the case). The Trust will know the history of the member and will not grant an education award if she has already maxed out her education award limit. (Programs won't always know the member's education award history, so this way, the Trust makes the right determination about actually granting an education award.)

2. Where can I find information regarding if the Living Allowance affects a potential member's Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits?

The best possible resource is at the bottom of the Hidden website in the [AmeriCorps Member Documents for Assistance](#) section.

3. What are the steps necessary to convert a slot in MyAmeriCorps?

You are able perform a slot conversion at any time you deem necessary to support your program goals in MyAmeriCorps. However, keep in mind that you still have to meet or exceed your performance measure targets that were approved in your application.

In the case of a slot conversion, the budget should not change. The slot conversion can just be done in the slots section of the MyAmeriCorps portal, and does not require a change in budget. The budget / awarded amount will remain the same since the grant is not being amended. For example, let's say that you want to convert a Full-Time (1 MSY) slot into a two (2) Reduced-Time (.381 MSY x 2) and one (1)



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Minimum-Time (.2117 MSY). Since this only equal to roughly .97 MSY, there will be a small balance that “disappears” once you make the conversion. So, in this example, if the new slot types add up to .97, the .03 will not show up in the slots table and will be gone. Note, that if this is done, it will not be possible later to go back in and add the .03 back in; once it is removed it is gone. But the budget does not change.

In theory, this technically means that the cost/MSY is slightly different since the awarded dollar amount stays the same and the MSY level has decreased slightly, but we don’t actually go back and change the cost/MSY since the budget is not being amended.

You can go to the National Service Knowledge Network and watch this video starting on slide 42 - <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/videos/program-management-tutorial-state>

Or by viewing the PowerPoint - <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/Program-Management-State.ppt>

#### 4. What are the steps necessary in order to enter in Service Locations for my members in MyAmeriCorps?

The video explains that entering in Service Locations for each member is options. That is no longer applicable. **All members must have a service location entered within 30 days from their first day of service/day of enrollment.**

You can go to the National Service Knowledge Network and watch this video starting on slide 29 - <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/videos/program-management-tutorial-state>

Or by viewing the PowerPoint - <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/files/Program-Management-State.ppt>

#### 5. Who do we contact for child care assistance for AmeriCorps Members?

GAP Solutions Inc. is the childcare provider. You can access the provider’s website here: <http://www.americorpschildcare.com/>

#### 6. Can a member waiver any portion of their living allowance?

**Yes - (5) Waiver or reduction of living allowance by participants.** A participant may waive all or part of the receipt of a living allowance. The participant may revoke this waiver at any time during the participant’s term of service. If the participant revokes the living allowance waiver, the participant may begin receiving his or her living allowance prospective from the date of the revocation; a participant may not receive any portion of the living allowance that may have accrued during the waiver period.

See 2522.240 on page 666 here-



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<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title45-vol4/pdf/CFR-2012-title45-vol4-subtitleB-chapXXV.pdf>

**7. We have a member that needs verification of employment and that their income is a “stipend” and not a wage. What do we provide them so that they can apply for assistance?**

You will need to provide them with the [AmeriCorps Garnishment Ruling 1996](#) and [CNCS guidance SSI VISTA Income Disregard](#). Also, Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation (TCAC) provides this [document](#) (feel free to download and adjust for your programs - thanks TCAC!) to their members and prints off a copy of the member's eGrants/My AmeriCorps Portal screen by performing these steps: 1. Go into eGrants and go to your portal workbasket. 2. Click on manage members, enter the members name and then print the screen.

**8. I have a question about the stipend/living allowance distribution. If we have a member that completes her hours early, even though she successfully completed the hours, she will not receive the entire stipend? Is this correct?**

That is correct. The member's should receive the same amount each pay period. If the member exits early, then they are not able to receive the remainder of their living allowance and no lump sum can be paid.

See 2522.245 on page 668 here-

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2012-title45-vol4/pdf/CFR-2012-title45-vol4-subtitleB-chapXXV.pdf>

The inverse is also true - if the member serves longer than expected and the allowance is scheduled to be paid out by their original end date, the program can't adjust the amount to go through the revised end date.

**9. Questions regarding returning 2nd year members:**

A. I do not need new fingerprints, or do I?

No, not as long as they were done in the previous term of service.

I will exit these members on 12/31/2011 and the returning member will begin 1/4/2012, the Center's policy is to run fingerprints on the employee if they have gone for longer than 6 months, these people will be away for 3 days, do I still have to do the fingerprinting checks?

The regulations state that as long as the member does not have a break of service that is more than 120 days, you do not have to fingerprint them again.

Find all the criminal history check requirements here - <http://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/criminal-background-check-requirements>

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B. With returning members do I have to do the following again?

1. Re-Interview:

There is no requirement for this. Your internal policies should state whether this is required.

2. Complete the application for a 2nd time:

There is no requirement for this. You must present the member with a new member service agreement for the new term of service and enroll them as you would any other member.

**10. A returning member from suspension needs to complete their hours. How does this work?**

Since the member's term was suspended for compelling personal circumstances (as approved from Volunteer Tennessee), from the AmeriCorps perspective, this member was not granted an extension to the maximum time allowed for a member to complete a full-time position; 12 months, total, of active service.

The way the suspension works is that once a member returns from a suspension, that member, technically, has the same time remaining to complete their term as was remaining when the suspension began. The caveat is that the program must make certain considerations when determining the member's end date for completion of their hours and act in the best interest of the program.

*In very rare and compelling cases, we can request permission, from the Corporation, to extend the term of service for a member that has had compelling personal circumstances. Since a partial education award for compelling personal circumstances is based on the number of hours the member completes, the more hours completed, the higher their partial education award. In order to exit the member with a partial education award, you will need to ensure that you have documented the personal compelling circumstance appropriately.*

When requesting an extension to the program end date, in order to allow a member to complete their service, some of the things that must be considered are contract end date, the start date of the next program year, and programmatic and fiscal management of program years operating concurrently. One of the things that Volunteer Tennessee must consider is grant expiration.

**11. A member stops accruing hours of service in November; but their contract doesn't end until December. Do we keep paying their living allowance?**

**I have a question about a member that was exited on December 8, 2011. The member was excited on December 8<sup>th</sup> but to my understanding has not accrued service hours since the beginning of November. If she was not excited until December 8<sup>th</sup>, should she receive her stipend on December 15<sup>th</sup> since she was still an active member?**



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Living allowance is not based on number of hours they serve; however, the position description included in the member service agreement will specify approximate number of hours required per week. If this member was not serving as stated in the position description; the member should have been suspended/terminated as soon as this problem was noted. The member would not receive the living allowance or other benefits during the suspension.

The living allowance is designed to help members while serving the community. If the member completed the required service hours in early November and just wanted to stay in the program to get the living allowance, then this scenario would reflect that this member completed service hours on an abbreviated schedule and provided very little service to the community in the last month of his service, and that defeats the purpose of living allowance. If this is the case, the subgrantee would likely be required to pay back the living allowance for the period where the member was not actually accruing service hours.

## 12. I wanted to know is it acceptable for AmeriCorps files to be electronic?

It is OK to go paperless and a program may store member files electronically if the program can ensure that the validity and integrity of the records is not compromised.

From monitoring perspective, we will accept electronically stored files if the electronic storage procedures and system provide for the safe-keeping and security of records. For example, a member can submit the birth certificate via email and the agency can store it in a particular folder, they do not necessarily need to keep a copy of it in the member file; however, when needed, it should be easily accessible and retrievable; timesheets can be done electronically as well but must have the image of original signature.

## 13. Are members now allowed to only track time electronically as well as use an electronic signature (not scanned in timesheets), no longer being available in their member file? Or, must members still sign the hard/printed original timesheets and these timesheets still be available in their member file?

Members can do their timesheets electronically but **not the electronic signature**. Members and their supervisors have to manually sign them and then the timesheets can be scanned and stored electronically. Electronic storage procedures are mentioned below:

A program can store member records including member timesheets electronically as long as they can ensure that the validity and integrity of the record is not compromised, and the electronic storage system provides for the safety/security of the records including;

- Sufficient prevention of unauthorized alterations or erasures of records;
- Effective security measures to ensure that only authorized persons have access to records;
- Adequate measures designed to prevent physical damage to records; and
- A system providing for back-up and recovery of records;
- Easy retrieval of records in a timely fashion



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- f. Clear and accurate labeling of all records; and
- c. Storage of the records in a usable, readable format.

Where there is a requirement for a signature on a record, electronically stored records **must include an image of the original signature**; records without signatures, when required, are considered incomplete.

**14. The guidance for this specific question is related to Fixed-Amount budgets only:**

During a recent review, our Audit Manager advised a Fixed-Amount grantee not to submit member hours past the number of hours required as stated in the Member Service Agreement. For instance, if a member is to serve 1,700 hours as per the Member Service Agreement, then, the grantee will only submit hours up until that point. The budget is based on the total number of hours as per that slot type.

Yes, as a Fixed-Amount grantee, you will only enter in the member hours for reimbursement into the PER for the time served up to the maximum hours per that slot type. We are working to develop a solution to this issue as pertaining to the PER/FSR.

Full Time (1700 hrs)
Half Time (900 hrs)
Reduced Half Time (675 hrs)
Quarter Time (450 hrs)
Minimum Time (300 hrs)

**Once the member reaches 1,700 hours, do they still accrue hours or do I have to exit them immediately?**

The member can still accrue hours until the exit date as determined by the Member Service Agreement. It is always ok for members to go over 1700 hours, but never less than that. You should however, discontinue the living allowance and other benefits once a member reaches the agreed upon amount in the Member Service Agreement.

**15. We do have members who weren't enrolled until 9/30/2011 so, we would like for them to be able to still submit hours in June and July of 2012. Their contract end dates in eGrants reflects 9/29/2012 exit date. So, I want to make sure we are okay to continue submitting hours for them through the end of July 2012. This would also mean we will be submitting PERs through July 2012 and that; I wouldn't exit them until they reach their 1,700 hours, correct?**

That is correct. According to CNCS regulations, a member has 12 months to complete a Full-Time term of service; however it is up to a program to decide what program year dates make sense for the program and that should be made clear to members upfront in the member service agreements. You also have



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the option to extend that (if within the 12-month requirement), like in this case, to allow members to complete. So, having members serve through July is fine as long as it works for your program and the members will continue to provide services within the scope of your program model.

**16. We have one member who stepped in another member who exited early. Is my understanding that those two members hours will combine to total 1,700, and at the point they do so I will need to stop submitting hours for the second member, correct?**

No, you will not combine their hours. The second member is considered a newly enrolled member and must complete a full 1,700 hours to complete a Full-Time term of service. The term "refill" can be somewhat misleading. While the slot is still available for another member to step in, the hours are completely separate. You need to be aware that the living allowance to be offered should be the same total amount that the other members were offered, AND the refill member should receive the same amount in each pay check. If the member completes their term of service at the same time as current members or even before the set end date, then that member will not receive the full living allowance. However, if the member does continue to the set end date and earns the full living allowance, be aware that the additional living allowance expenses (living allowance paid to member who left and refill member) must be from cash match once CNCS funds for the living allowance has been expended.

**17. Do I have to conduct a mid-term evaluation for every member?**

No. Programs are not required to conduct mid-term evaluations for members that serve less than half-time.

## **AND**

(c) *Participant evaluation.* For the purposes of determining a participant's eligibility for an educational award as described in § 2522.240(a) and eligibility to serve a second or additional term of service as described in paragraph (c) of this section, each AmeriCorps grantee is responsible for conducting a mid-term and end-of-term evaluation. A mid-term evaluation is not required for a participant who is released early from a term of service or in other circumstances as approved by the Corporation (As long as the mid-term/halfway point has not yet been reached).