MEMO
To: AmeriCorps Kansas Programs
From: Jessica Noble, KVC Executive Director
Date: March 18, 2020
Re: COVID-19 Guidance

SUMMARY
This memo related to COVID-19 restates in one place as clearly as possible Kansas Volunteer Commission (KVC) guidance and policy for AmeriCorps grant management in response to the pandemic. Look for bolded statements on alternative service hours, compelling circumstances, and expenditures that empower you to act to support AmeriCorps members and serve Kansas. Keep a copy of this Memo for your grant records.

HEALTH AND SAFETY
The health of staff and AmeriCorps members is everyone's shared priority. KVC directs programs to comply with evolving guidelines from Kansas Governor Laura Kelly and to take responsibility for communicating up-to-date information on preventing the spread of COVID-19 to AmeriCorps members, staff, and the public. The best sources of COVID-19 information are:

- Kansas Department of Health and Environment:
  https://govstatus.egov.com/coronavirus
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

KVC strongly encourages all AmeriCorps members to wash their hands while reciting the entire AmeriCorps pledge:
Reasonable Accommodations
If an AmeriCorps member notifies their program that they have a comprised immune system or are high risk to infection, the program should follow their reasonable accommodations procedures and determine an appropriate alternative service for the member.

Member Assistance Program
All AmeriCorps Kansas members are enrolled in the Member Assistance Program, an online mental health resource organized by America’s Service Commissions. Unlimited in the moment, 24/7 telephonic counseling services with master’s degree-level counselors are available by dialing 1-800-451-1834. Callers will be asked to identify their program name. There is also an app available by searching “AllOne Health Employee Assistance Program” on your mobile device.

Members will be connected with a professional, licensed counselor with AllOne Health. In-the- moment support is provided for topics such as substance abuse, stress, depression, anxiety, grief counseling and many other areas. Whatever the question or challenge, please do not hesitate to call - anytime of day. You may be provided information or referrals for in-person counseling, childcare, housing, and other local information that may be useful to you

Discrimination and Confidentiality
KVC directs all programs to guard against discrimination in our response to COVID-19. 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, ensure that you maintain confidentiality of any member(s) and volunteer(s) who are confirmed to have COVID-19 or other illnesses as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

LIVING ALLOWANCE AND BENEFITS
As a matter of member safety, KVC urges programs to continue living allowance and program benefits to members regardless of their activities or hours completed. Those minimal funds support housing and food needs, and it is likely that shift jobs or alternative incomes will be impacted by COVID-19. Whereas KVC normally recommends that programs develop a policy to not pay living allowance during a payment period in which a member records zero hours of service, we strongly encourage programs to pay living allowance even in this scenario. Any change in policy should be documented with the effective dates in
a Memo to File.

**Suspension and Living Allowance**
Suspension of service is a tool available to all programs for individual, case by case, member management. Programs considering Suspension status due to COVID-19 are asked to consult with the KVC. Due to the long-term impact on your grant management, KVC would most likely recommend against the Suspension of a member at this time, but each situation is unique.

In order to provide programs the maximum flexibility as a result of COVID-19, CNCS has determined that AmeriCorps members may be paid living allowances and benefits while they are in a Suspended from Service status, if the reason for suspension is due to COVID-19. This is an exception to the regular policy that suspended members are to receive no living allowance. Programs can also elect not to pay living allowances if they suspend their AmeriCorps members. If a program organization decides to continue to pay members while they are in a Suspended status, they must be prepared to obtain additional funding to cover living allowance and benefit expenses once members are reinstated.

If an individual is suspended for any other reason than COVID-19, the living allowance and other benefits are also to be suspended.

Likewise, a member suspended due to COVID-19 activities may continue to receive the child care benefit (for up to 12 weeks) and health care benefit provided by the grant recipient. To ensure no lapse in child care coverage, the AmeriCorps program must notify GAP Solutions in writing within five business days after a member’s status changes. Costs incurred due to the program’s failure to keep GAP Solutions immediately informed of changes in a member’s status may be charged to the program’s organization.

**ALTERNATIVE SERVICE ACTIVITIES**
KVC asks you to consider the intended purpose of AmeriCorps over and beyond immediate concerns – to Get Things Done for America. Individuals who stay in AmeriCorps have a special character - they want to help and you can mobilize AmeriCorps members to make a significant difference in this time of national crisis. Your AmeriCorps grant commits to a specific program design and performance measures. In response to COVID-19, however, AmeriCorps members may be unable to perform planned activities, and you may simply determine that the community has new priorities. KVC urges programs to plan
alternative service for members that allows them to complete their terms, earning a full education award, and supports communities in these uncertain times. Where members are safe and willing to do so, they should be volunteering. Please utilize the Decision-Making Chart for Allowable Member Activities as a tool.

Effective March 2, 2020 through the remainder of the 2019-2020 grant period, Kansas Volunteer Commission permits programs and their members to perform service activities in response to COVID-19 community needs that are not specifically defined in their approved grant. New activities must not be otherwise prohibited or unallowable.

Do not neglect to document alternative service activities. Where activities are repeated or ongoing, programs should provide an amendment, signed by both program staff and AmeriCorps member, to the Member Service Agreement describing the new assignment(s).

TELESERVICE
Please reference the KVC Teleservice Guide for information regarding member teleservice. Programs interested in allowing their members to teleserve must submit their Teleservice Policy and Procedures for approval.

Teleservice Outside Kansas
In response to COVID-19, the KVC may permit members to complete their service outside Kansas. Prior to any such program approval, programs must consult with the KVC. Such rare cases will be treated as a teleservice activity and follow a program’s teleservice policy. The AmeriCorps members must be relocating due to circumstances beyond their control, such as lost housing due to the closure of college dormitories, or be deploying to a disaster volunteer assignment. In all instances, the member remains under the management of the program.

COMPELLING PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
COVID-19 will cause extended site closures and sustained disruptions to AmeriCorps members’ service that can reasonably justify a compelling personal circumstances exit under 45 CFR § 2522.230 (a) Release for compelling personal circumstances. While KVC intends that all members shall complete their term of service this year, it is reasonable to expect that will not happen.
Kansas Volunteer Commission approves all program requests to exit members who enrolled prior to March 2nd and exit before August 30, 2020 with the designation compelling personal circumstances due to a disruption of service from COVID-19.

To be eligible for CPC, a member must first have completed at least 15% of the hours in their term of service. A CPC exit means that a member can receive a prorated education award and serve in AmeriCorps again. Programs should submit the AmeriCorps Kansas Change of Status Worksheet and document that the reason was “disruption of service due to COVID-19” and submit to jnoble@ksde.org. Do not include medical documentation. The CDC has asked that such paperwork requests be avoided so as to allow medical professionals to prioritize care. For documentation instead, retain a copy of the relevant executive order from the Governor ordering social distancing measures and/or announcement of school closures:


**TRAINING LIMITATIONS**

In addition to alternative service, programs may conduct training with members, including online learning. It is important to note, however, that members cannot exceed the maximum 20 percent aggregate training hours. This is a federal rule that the KVC has no authority to waive - 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.”

Programs are to monitor this closely and provide instruction to members what activities are defined as training. Planning time, program meetings, data collection and review, briefings on COVID-19, program feedback and reflection, as well as team development activities are reasonably tracked as part of members’ community service hours. Please contact KVC if you need further information on the 20% training threshold.
Online Training Resources

1. On3Learn. Our favorite, and prepaid by KVC, visit to see AmeriCorps specific trainings available to volunteers: http://on3learn.com/course-offerings/member-courses/. If you need instructions for accessing these online classes, contact KVC
2. EdWEB.net: Resource to find free webinars for educators. These are live and on a calendar: https://home.edweb.net/
3. ASCD Webinars: These are pre-recorded so you can watch them on your own after hours: http://www.ascd.org/professional-development/webinars/ascd-webinar-archive.aspx

EVENTS AND TRAVEL
All in-person KVC meetings are cancelled through April. We do not anticipate that any program would charge out of state travel in March or April. Please notify KVC if you are planning travel.

AMERICORPS GRANT EXPENDITURES
In a dynamic environment, programs may see a need to spend grant funds on safety supplies, training, cellphones/Chromebooks for communication, or other AmeriCorps member support costs not currently approved in the submitted budget. Additional personnel may need to support the AmeriCorps program.

Kansas Volunteer Commission authorizes all reasonable grant expenditures in support of the AmeriCorps program effective March 2, 2020 through the end of the grant period.

If a program incurs a cost not approved in the budget, please document the expense by providing a comment in the OnCorps Periodic Expense Report. Programs are not required to receive prior approval during this time. KVC does not relinquish authority to disallow costs on the basis that they do not pertain to the AmeriCorps program, demonstrate a lack of fiscal prudence, or disregard prohibited activities.

At this time, KVC and programs must adhere to the program match requirements. We recognize that programs face a difficult fundraising environment and will continue to explore flexibility with this AmeriCorps grant
structure. If there is a significant change to a source of funds, programs are encouraged to contact KVC immediately.

COMMUNICATION
Communication is the last word. Consider daily check-ins by phone or video to allow members to ask questions and feel less isolated. Send KVC unsolicited updates and let us know how we can support you.