

Team Tennessee AmeriCorps Staff › Message Board

## CNCS COVID-19 FAQ

---



🔔 Announcement by Monica Hodges  
Mar 9 [Notified 44 people](#)

---

Hello All,

I hope all are doing well. With the recent coverage and spread of the Coronavirus or COVID-19, CNCS has released an FAQ addressing potential programmatic impacts. Please find that FAQ here: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/about-cnccs/frequently-asked-questions/covid-19-faqs>

As always, if there are any questions, please reach out to Volunteer Tennessee.

Thank You,  
Monica Hodges  
AmeriCorps Program Manager

## Comments

---



**Sha Fanion**  
Hi Monica,

Mar 12

I read through this guidance, and thanks for sending this out. How should we proceed if members are unable to accumulate service hours for AmeriCorps due to their locations being closed? How will this impact their Segal Award?

Mar 12

**Rachel Davis**

Great question. This was asked of me this morning by our executive team.

Rachel Davis

Human Resources Manager

[Emerald Youth Foundation]<<https://www.emeraldyouth.org/>>

1014 Heiskell Ave. | Knoxville, TN 37921<<https://maps.google.com/?q=1014+Heiskell+Ave.+Knoxville,+TN+37921%3e%3cfont%20color=>>

Phone: (865) 637-3227 ext. <tel:8656373227> 190

Fax: (865) 637-7399<tel:8656377399>

[emeraldyouth.org](https://www.emeraldyouth.org/)<<https://www.emeraldyouth.org/>>

Mar 12



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

Hello All,

In the case of sites being closed due to the virus, per the FAQ, the members can still receive their living allowance and benefits.

Regarding service hours and education awards – if the member is unable to complete their service hours due to the site closure, this would be a compelling circumstance to allow the member to receive a partial education award. Programs should document the closures and missed time in the member files.

Programs do have the option of allowing members to serve with different organizations while sites are closed as long as they do not take part in any unallowable activities, and programs are able to verify hours with the organization (i.e. a signed log of the hours served).

Keep the questions coming as you have them – this is a new and very different situation for all of us!

Thanks,

Monica

Mar 12



**Ethan Porter**

Monica,

Thank you for the information. I know the AmeriCorps members were wondering about this possibility and how it would be handled.

Ethan

Mar 12



**Jason Scott**, Program Director

All,

From a performance standpoint, our program has a K-12 focus for our Environmental Ed metric (which I'm sure many ed programs do) and I suspect, if schools get shutdown in our region, that may impact our performance. I'm sure how VTN responds to this. It is probably tough to determine fully until the situation happens, but I did want to throw performance considerations out there.

Our office is canceling our big National Service Recognition Day event and many of our partner sites are cancelling events that they are putting on (ie. neighborhood conferences, etc.) In some of these cases, these members' performance was tied to these events.

In addition, we are looking to shift a number of our gathering oriented operations to 'optional' or 'video conferencing based.' At least through April as we reassess things as they evolve in real time. We were looking to start developing web based training and meetups next year anyways so this situation is just pushing us to move on this a little early.

I've handled a number of curve balls in my time, but this one is really quite unique and difficult to totally pin down.

Jason

Mar 12



**Tonya Reece**, Bridge Builders CONNECT & AmeriCorps Coordinator

Our members serve directly with students in schools and the Shelby County School district is closing schools for 2 weeks till March 30th.

Thankfully one of those weeks is Spring Break week. This has moved our team to look at creative ways for members to serve. We are using this time to pull projects from the parking lot and using google drive to track and share service assignments. I agree with Jason that thinking through how meet performance measures during this time is requiring new and innovative online access to programming. It definitely poses a challenge to our program. I am curious as how CNCS will support programs impacted by shutdowns and mandated quarantine strategies.

Mar 13



**Trena Brown**, Program Director

Our program is also experiencing shut-downs and delays in programming that will impact performance.

Mar 13



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

*Good Morning All,*

*Please see the following update from AmeriCorps State and National, and please also read through the updated COVID-19 FAQ.*

Dear State Commissions and Grantees,

Protecting the health and safety of our employees, members, volunteers, partners, grantees, and sponsors is our top priority. We are continuing to closely monitor the situation and follow the latest guidance from federal, state, and local health departments.

CNCS is taking steps recommended by the Office of Personnel and Management and the White House Coronavirus Task Force to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

- Effective immediately, we are canceling all official staff travel through April 15. We will revisit this date regularly and may extend it as necessary.
- Out of an abundance of caution, we are postponing, cancelling or developing virtual alternatives for all CNCS sponsored grantee training events or convenings through May 15.
- We have updated our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and added new, program-specific FAQs which can be found at <https://www.NationalService.gov/coronavirus>.

If you have any questions, please contact Chester Spellman at 202-606-6991 or [CSpellman@cns.gov](mailto:CSpellman@cns.gov).

As a reminder, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is the best source for information on COVID-19 and what you can do to protect yourself and others.

Thanks,  
AmeriCorps State and National

Mar 13



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

Regarding performance: we fully expect that program performance will be affected by closures. At this point our only direction is to make notes that unmet performance measures are related to closures on progress reports.

Mar 16



**Jann Seymour**

Is there a member-facing version of the FAQ?

Mar 16



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

Hi Jann - I do not see a different member version, however it is located on the [Nationalservice.gov](https://www.nationalservice.gov) website in the "About CNCS" section, so it is available publicly.

Team Tennessee AmeriCorps Staff › Message Board

# COVID-19 FAQ Updated



Announcement by Monica Hodges  
Mar 13 [Notified 44 people](#)

Hello All,

Wanted to let you know that the FAQ (<https://www.NationalService.gov/coronavirus>) was updated yet again this afternoon.

**The ASN specific FAQ that is edited is:**

***In light of the FAQ related to payment of stipends during service interruptions, should programs suspend members from the program if service locations are closed?***

*Programs may decide to suspend AmeriCorps members during a service interruption because COVID-19 temporarily halts the member's service period. Grant recipients may develop alternative activities for the members. ~~However, suspended members may not continue to earn a stipend or other benefits.~~*

**The four ASN specific FAQs that are added are:**

**May AmeriCorps State and National members be paid living allowances while Suspended from service due to program closures related to the COVID-19?**

In order to provide grantees the maximum flexibility as a result of COVID-19, CNCS has determined that AmeriCorps State and National 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. Programs can also elect not to pay living allowances if they suspend their AmeriCorps State and National members.

If an individual is suspended for any other reason, the living allowance and other benefits are also to be suspended. If a grantee 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.

Programs should keep in mind that if or when they re-start the program and take



members off suspension, they will have to continue paying the living allowance and benefits as members accrue hours. This may necessitate some programs raising additional funds for those costs as they are unlikely to have budgeted for living allowances and benefits beyond their initial program duration.

**I have a fixed amount grant. If the members don't serve hours, may I draw down and retain more than what is supported by the hours served?**

The statute requires fixed amount grant recipients to return a pro-rata share of the funds that are not supported by service hours for the position. 42 USC 12481(l)(3)(A) (i). That is, if a grant recipient is awarded \$10,000 per MSY and a member is exited for CPC having completed 50% of the term, the statute currently authorizes the grant recipient to keep \$5,000.

**How can Full Cost Fixed Amount Grant recipients cover the cost of continuing to pay living allowances and benefits to AmeriCorps members if the members are not able to perform service hours? Can Full Cost Fixed Amount grant recipients draw funding amounts based on the total award value for filled member positions?**

CNCS does not have the authority to alter the method for calculating the amount of funding a program may claim as a Full Cost Fixed Amount Award. The basis for calculating the amount of award funds that can be retained by a program is based on the proportion of hours served by members in relation to the number of hours required for each member's term of service. CNCS recognizes the financial challenge that Full Cost Fixed Amount grant recipients may face in administering their program while program activities are disrupted.

Four alternatives available to grantees with Full Cost Fixed Amount awards, include:

1. Identify alternative service activities that members can perform to earn service hours so programs may continue drawing funds;

2. Continue to pay member living allowance but Suspend members because service activities have been disrupted by COVID-19;
3. Let members remain in In-Service status and continue paying the living allowance and benefits; or
4. Exit the member for Compelling Personal Circumstances due to the disruption of service activities related to COVID-19.

**When a member is suspended for COVID-19 reasons, can they continue to receive child care and health care?**

Yes – 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 State and National grantee must notify GAP Solutions in writing within five business days after a member's status changes. Costs incurred due to the grantee's failure to keep GAP Solutions immediately informed of changes in a member's status may be charged to the grantee's organization.

As always, please reach out with questions!

Thanks,  
Monica Hodges

## Comments

---

Mar 16

**Trena Brown**, Program Director

Monica - Can you please clarify the following?

If I have members that are suspended from service due to COVID-19 and I decide to continue their living allowance during the suspension, can I exit them for compelling personal circumstances at the end of their contracts instead of extending (MT, QT, and HT) their contracts? This would eliminate the need for programs to raise additional funds to cover the extra weeks. I understand they would be issued a prorated education award in this case. I just want to make sure we are prepared to support our members through this crisis as many of them have already made financial sacrifices to serve and would be placed in heightened economic hardship.

Mar 16

**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

Hi Trena,

Yes - if a member is suspended with living allowance due to COVID-19, and this suspension prevents the member from being able to complete their service hours by the end of their contract term, then they would be eligible for an exit for compelling personal circumstances which would allow for a prorated education award.

While a suspension automatically extends the member's terms of service in eGrants, that doesn't compel the program to extend their contracts if the project scope or funds do not support it.

Mar 16

**Trena Brown**, Program Director

Perfect, thank you.



download.jpg

Mar 17



**Trena Brown**, Program Director

I have a few more questions that pertain to my previous.

1. Can a program establish a policy to allow a member to complete the extension period with no living allowance if the member chooses to do so to earn the full education award with the understanding the living allowance was dispersed during the suspension/inactive period?

2. Can a program establish a policy to handle these on a case by case basis or do they have to be the same across the roster? For example: If you have a FT / 12-month contract member in their eighth month of service and you are required to suspend them for service interruptions due to COVID-19, it sounds reasonable to continue to issue a living allowance. However, if you have a MT / 3-month member in their first month of service and you are required to suspend them for service interruptions due to COVID-19, it sounds unreasonable (and unfair to longer-term members) to continue to issue a living allowance because they most likely would only serve that one month. The more reasonable answer to the shorter-term member would be no living allowance during suspension and a contract extension. The longer-term member would receive the living allowance during suspension and be released on their original date for compelling personal circumstances. Neither is clean and clean as I prefer. I can see the pros and cons of each.

I apologize for all the questions, but we would like to be prepared and confident in our policies when these arise.

Mar 17



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager  
Hi Trena,

Sorry for the delay, as I wanted to double check my responses.

For your first question, yes, as long as program and member agree (with a signed addendum to the MSA) to extend service without a living allowance, it would be allowable. The program can also opt to continue pay the member during the extension if the program has unspent federal or cash match from the current year.

For your second question, rather than a case by case policy, we would suggest a policy based on slot type or based on a ratio of hours served to hours required (e.g. members who have served 1-20% of hours, members who have served 21-40% of hours, etc.).

Thank You,  
Monica Hodges

Mar 17



**Trena Brown**, Program Director  
Thank you.



download.jpg

9:55am



**Trena Brown**, Program Director  
I was just informed that TBI would be closing many of its fingerprinting locations. Has CNCS issued any guidance on how to deal with criminal history checks during this time?

10:14am



**Monica Hodges**, AmeriCorps Program Manager

Hi Trena,

CNCS has not given any different guidance on criminal history checks at this time, and because the elements of the checks are required by federal regulations, we do not anticipate any changes to those requirements. We can pass along specific issues that programs are having with NSCHC processes and enrollment related to COVID-19 as you let us know.

Thanks,

Monica Hodges

10:16am



**Sha Fanion**

Hi Monica,

Is it possible for you all to host a webinar to address the impact of COVID on members and programs? It's challenging to follow the number of email threads.

Thanks,

L. Sha Fanion, Ed.D