

**Diakon Community Services  
AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP  
Serving Clinton, Lycoming, Union, Snyder &  
Northumberland  
Volunteer Handbook**

**Sponsored by: Diakon Community Services**

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## **WELCOME TO AMERICORPS SENIORS RSVP**

Welcome to the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). You have joined a program that exists all across the United States. Members of RSVP give their time and talent to local non-profit agencies and organizations. This handbook was prepared by the Diakon staff and approved to help acquaint you with all aspects of our program. We hope you will find this manual helpful in answering your questions about RSVP. If you have any concerns or questions about your volunteer service, please feel free to contact the RSVP representative according to your location listed on the cover.

## **HISTORY**

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) began as an outgrowth by private groups and government agencies to create opportunities of engagement, activity, and growth for older Americans following the work of the Community Serve Society of New York on Staten Island beginning in 1965; the Society's success led the Older American's Act being amended to create RSVP as a nationwide program in 1969. Locally, AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP serving Clinton, Lycoming, Union, Snyder & Northumberland Counties is sponsored by Diakon Child, Family and Community Ministries.

## **MISSION**

AmeriCorps Seniors provides grants to qualified agencies and organizations for the dual purpose of engaging persons 55 and better, in volunteer service, to meet critical community needs and to provide a high-quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers.

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*“Improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.”*

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## **RSVP ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The RSVP Advisory Council is made up of members selected from the community and includes representatives from Volunteer Stations, RSVP volunteers and other individuals with knowledge of community social needs. The Council's role is to assess the RSVP Program, offer advice to the staff, assist with special events, and help promote, publicize and advocate for Diakon and AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP in the community. (Contact your RSVP representative if you're interested in joining the council)

## **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

Eligibility to be a RSVP member is not restricted on the basis of formal education, experience, race, creed, belief, color, national origin, sex, disability, or political affiliation. AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP and Diakon Community Services strives to be supportive of the needs of each RSVP member and strives to make reasonable accommodations for all volunteers.

## **RSVP VOLUNTEER POLICIES**

### **ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS**

\*\*\*Volunteers must complete and submit at least 2 hours each month or a total of 24 hours per year to remain on an active status with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP. This minimum requirement keeps you current for your supplemental insurance and the annual recognition event, at RSVP director's discretion.

### **ON LEAVE**

If you are unable to serve for any extended period of time, please contact the RSVP representative. We will place you on the temporary inactive list so that you may continue to receive mailings and RSVP information. When you are ready to serve again, please call the RSVP representative and we will be happy to change your status to active.

### **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Every new RSVP enrollment will require a PA State Criminal History clearance before any placement is made. This ensures and maximizes the safety of volunteers and those who are served. Specific Volunteer Stations may also require additional levels of clearance. This would be the responsibility of the station to conduct further background checks. All background information obtained will be shared with the Volunteer Station. Final determination may come from the Station Supervisor and/or the RSVP Director.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between Volunteers, Volunteer Stations, AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP and Diakon Community Services. Some volunteer opportunities may include knowing sensitive information about other individuals and Stations being served. Issues or concerns regarding such information should only be discussed with the Station Supervisor or the RSVP representative. It is important to never release the name, address, phone number or any other information that may identify other individuals to anyone except the Volunteer Station and/or the RSVP representative. Always respect the Station's confidentiality policy.

### **VOLUNTEER SAFETY POLICY**

Volunteer safety is important to AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP and Diakon Community Services. Concerns regarding safety at your volunteer station should be reported to the Station Supervisor and RSVP representative as soon as possible. If you are involved in an accident while on assignment, please notify the RSVP representative within 24 hours. Should your medical, physical, or other conditions change, at any time, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform the RSVP representative so that appropriate changes may be made with regard to the volunteer activity.

## **RSVP VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

All RSVP Volunteers will always act in a professional manner.

All RSVP Volunteers will wear a recognizable AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP ID BADGE.

Reports of volunteer misconduct will be the cause for immediate suspension from volunteer activities. Confirmation of misconduct shall be cause for removal of the volunteer involved. The Director may be required to report all incidents to state or federal funding agencies.

If RSVP receives complaints regarding any volunteer and it is determined that the volunteer is not performing services in a reliable and responsible manner, corrective action may be taken. If corrective action does not result in improved performance, the RSVP representative will remove the volunteer from service activities.

Volunteers are not allowed to receive donations.

Volunteers shall perform the following minimum levels of service:

### **An RSVP Volunteer shall:**

- a. Confirm, prior to any visit, with the Station Supervisor, when a visit will be taking place.
- b. Maintain a clean and neat appearance at all times.
- c. Be polite and courteous to station's staff. All persons shall be treated with respect. The Director or his/her agent will notify the RSVP Volunteer of any known cultural issues or health issue significant to providing services.
- d. Respect the station's right to confidentiality.

### **An RSVP volunteer shall not:**

- a. Make sexually explicit comments, or solicit sexual favors, or otherwise engage in sexual activity
- b. Solicit or accept money from anyone.
- c. Use alcohol, narcotics or controlled substances, or be under their influence while on assignment. Prescribed medication may be used by a volunteer as long as the medication does not cause impairment and his/her responsibilities can still be performed in a safe manner.
- d. Wear any type of headphones while on assignment.
- e. Be responsible for another person's personal items

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY**

The use of or possession of illegal drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence of the same, while performing hours of service is strictly prohibited and shall be cause for termination of all volunteer placements through RSVP.

RSVP volunteers are prohibited from the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance at any RSVP facilities, events, assignment locations and/or that of any affiliate site.

Any violation of the prohibitions will be considered to be "Just Cause" for suspension and/or discharge under the procedures of RSVP.

As a condition of registration as a volunteer each volunteer will:

- a. Abide by the terms above and;
- b. Notify the RSVP in writing of any criminal drug violation or conviction no later than five calendar days after such violation or conviction.
- c. Understand that appropriate personnel action will be taken against such volunteer, up to and including discharge.

## **VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES**

When accepting a volunteer assignment you are responsible:

- To attend any orientation or trainings held by RSVP or the Volunteer Station
- To know all policies and procedures of RSVP and the Volunteer Station
- To record your hours and submit monthly timesheets to the RSVP representative or Volunteer Station.
- To call your station in a timely fashion, if you are unable to volunteer on a certain day
- To notify your station and the RSVP representative if you expect to be away from your volunteer job for an extended amount of time
- To report all accidents. Secondary Insurance claims may be filed when appropriate to call the RSVP representative if there are any problems that arise during a volunteer assignment or with a Volunteer Station as soon as possible
- To notify the RSVP representative if there is a change in contact information or status
- To be respectful, maintain confidentiality as necessary and conduct yourself in an appropriate businesslike manner
- To conduct yourself in accordance with the Volunteer Station's guidelines for staff and/or volunteers. Any concerns regarding the guidelines should be taken to the station supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, please contact the RSVP representative as soon as possible.

## **PROHIBITED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES**

Due to Federal grant guidelines, RSVP members may not perform the following activities as an RSVP volunteer:

- Give religious instruction, conduct worship services or engage in proselytizing
- Assist with electoral activities, voter registration, transportation to polls or efforts that may influence legislation
- Engage in activities performed that displace paid workers
- Accept money or donations for their service

## **VOLUNTEER HOURS**

- Hours served by RSVP Volunteers, at all approved RSVP stations and projects need to be submitted to the RSVP representative for grant reporting purposes.
- Arrangements for recording volunteer hours vary between stations. Be sure that you check to see what is required in terms of signing in when you begin an assignment.
- Notify RSVP representative of all volunteer assignments so that we can make sure you are credited for all volunteer work.
- Notify all agencies where you volunteer that you are an AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP volunteer. Wear your ID badge when possible.

## **PURPOSE FOR SUBMITTING HOURS AND OTHER IMPACT INFORMATION**

The Federal Government requires Diakon Community Services to track all time spent volunteering as a means of assessing performance and continued funding. Overall, it helps RSVP demonstrate older adults as active and contributing members of the community. Beginning with the month in which a volunteer signs up with RSVP, a cumulative record of time contributed to all approved RSVP stations and projects is kept on file in our office. Internally, it also helps us determine who is active and can be used to verify your status for insurance purposes.

## **SUBMITTING HOURS**

Either the station or the volunteer may submit hours to the RSVP representative. Please check with your service agency for clarification on this. Each volunteer is responsible for making sure that each activity, impact measurement, number of hours and activity description is accurate. Your signature on each time sheet indicates your authorization and should be co-signed by the station supervisor whenever possible. Volunteer Time Sheets should be received by the RSVP representative no later than the 7th business day of the following month. There are multiple ways to submit the information, please check with your RSVP representative.

## **RECORDING MILEAGE**

There are a limited number of volunteer opportunities where mileage may be reimbursed, when funding is available. RSVP members may require mileage reimbursement if they use their own vehicles from their home to and from the volunteer station round trip. The volunteer must submit a mileage reimbursement form no later than the 7th business day of the following month. Other eligibility requirements may be needed. Late submissions will have to wait until the following month for reimbursement.

## **VOLUNTEER STATIONS**

Volunteer Stations are public agencies, private non-profit organizations or proprietary health-care agencies that accept the responsibility for assignments and supervision of RSVP volunteers. Volunteer Stations sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Diakon Community Services, outlining the responsibilities of each party. These agreements are valid for 3 years and may be renewed. Volunteer Stations provide orientation, training, in-service instruction, and other education as needed. Diakon Community Services welcomes conversations with local organizations that are interested in becoming RSVP Volunteer Stations. Volunteer Stations will be approved based on program goals, funding guidelines and community needs. Information to measure the impact of the RSVP Program and its volunteers have on the community and those served may be provided by the Volunteer Station as required by Diakon Community Services for funding purposes. Volunteer Stations agree to abide by all current federal non-discriminatory regulations and be handicapped accessible or provide reasonable accommodations for volunteers.

## **VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS**

A wide variety of opportunities are available to utilize your talents and explore new interests. Some volunteer opportunities include, but are not limited to, stream monitoring/testing/remediation, clean-up (debris removal), live stake harvesting and buffer zones. Volunteering can be done once a week, once a month or as needed, according to your schedule and flexibility.

## **VOLUNTEER SEPARATION**

The RSVP representative and/or Volunteer Station may separate a volunteer from the assignment for cause, including but not limited to:

- Misconduct
- Unsatisfactory performance
- Breach of confidentiality
- Inappropriate behavior
- Disregard of policies and procedures
- Health issues that may be a hazard to self or those being served
- Extensive/unauthorized absences
- Inability to perform assignment or accept supervision
- Suitable assignment not available at the time

Separation may also be based on termination of volunteer assignment or when the volunteer assignment is no longer meaningful or satisfying to the RSVP Volunteer.

## **APPEAL PROCESS**

Any appeal of an adverse action affecting a RSVP volunteer must be in writing to the RSVP representative. The RSVP representative will consult with the Chair of the Advisory Council and the local Sponsor to pursue an investigation with the necessary individuals making the appeal. A response in writing will be sent by the RSVP representative, The Advisory Council Chair, or the Local Sponsor within one month. The letter will state an agreement or disagreement with the findings for termination. In case of disagreement, a course of corrective action will be taken to correct the situation or to find a suitable and satisfactory solution.



## Appendix A

### The Mystery of the Time Sheet

- **Who** must complete timesheets?

All RSVP volunteers.

- **What** assignments require a timesheet?

All assignments require a timesheet:



- **When** are timesheets submitted?

At the end of each month or by the 7th of the following month. (This is noted on the top of the timesheet.) For those who request travel reimbursement, your timesheet must be in the office by the 7th or your reimbursement check will be delayed until the next month.

- **Why** submit a timesheet?

In order to be covered by the excess liability insurance provided to you as a benefit, you submit timesheets. In addition, RSVP holds an annual recognition event for all volunteers. In order to be eligible, a volunteer must have a record of service hours. Timesheets are the official record of service hours. Volunteers who do not submit timesheets are not active RSVP volunteers. Our federal grant requires that timesheets contain two signatures: the volunteer's and the supervisor's.

- Is **mileage** to be recorded?

All miles driven should be recorded even if mileage reimbursement is not requested. It is required for our reports. However, if mileage reimbursement is requested, it must be recorded on timesheets.

- **Where** do I get timesheets?

Supervisors at volunteer stations provide RSVP timesheets to Volunteers. Stations needing additional timesheets may contact the RSVP representative.

## **Appendix B**

### **RSVP VOLUNTEER BENEFITS**

#### **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

As an RSVP Volunteer, you may choose from a wide variety of volunteer opportunities. Volunteering must be completed at an approved RSVP Volunteer Station or as approved by the RSVP representative. Please contact the RSVP representative if you wish to change your assignment.

#### **MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT**

RSVP Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of mileage when using their own cars for pre-approved assignments, when funding permits. This policy may change at any time. Volunteers may request reimbursement as described herein. Reimbursement rates may change as funding permits.

#### **RECOGNITION**

It is our policy to make the general public aware of RSVP volunteer service through an on-going publicity program, including newspaper stories and photographs, featured articles in local magazines and newspapers and other media sources. Additionally, as funding permits, RSVP traditionally holds an Annual Volunteer Recognition event sometime during the year. Volunteers who have maintained a current and active status will receive an invitation to the event, at the director's discretion.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INSURANCE**

In order to minimize risks associated with volunteering, all non-profit agencies that utilize RSVP volunteers have signed an agreement to be a RSVP station. While volunteering at these designated stations, your RSVP insurance is in effect. At times, you may want to take on additional volunteer work at non-RSVP locations. Under these circumstances, you will NOT be covered by RSVP insurance. All insurance provided by RSVP is secondary to your current provider.

#### **ANNUAL CHECK-IN AND INFORMATION UPDATES**

RSVP maintains the right to contact you throughout the year to keep an open communication between the staff and the volunteers. Around your birthday, we will check in to see if our information is current and what your satisfaction is with the program. Your assistance, help and suggestions help keep RSVP meaningful, timely and relevant.

## Appendix C

### *AmeriCorps Seniors Pledge*

I will get things done for America-to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

When faced with a pressing challenge, I will bring Americans of all generations together to strengthen our communities.

When faced with children at risk, I will help them stay in school and on track for a brighter future.

When faced with older adults in need, I will provide support and compassion so they may age with grace and dignity.

Working for the greatest good, I will use my lifetime of experiences to improve my country, my community, and myself through service.

I am an AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer, and I will get things done.

**Appendix D**

**RECEIPT OF HANDBOOK  
AND VERIFICATION OF  
ALL INFORMATION THEREIN**

*Please be sure to read, sign and date this statement  
Return to the RSVP representative.*

*This form must be on file before any assignments may begin.  
Thank you for your understanding and assistance.*

- I hereby acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Volunteer Handbook.
- I hereby understand the need for confidentiality and safe surroundings.
- Therefore, I will submit to a PA State Criminal Clearance before I can be placed at any assignment.
- I hereby acknowledge that I have received the AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP Volunteer Monthly Time sheet and will submit one in every month served within 7 business days of the following month authorized by a station supervisor whenever possible.
- I understand the prohibited activities of AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP and will not include them in my submitted hours on the monthly time sheet.

Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Name (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_