



# Energy Express AmeriCorps Member Handbook

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**Notice of nondiscrimination:**

It is against the law for organizations that receive federal financial assistance from the Corporation for National and Community Service to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, sex, age, political affiliation, or in most cases, religion. It is also unlawful to retaliate against any person who, or organization that, files a complaint about such discrimination. In addition to filing a complaint, with local and state agencies that are responsible for resolving discrimination complaints, you may bring a complaint to the attention of the Corporation for National and Community service. If you believe that you or others have been discriminated against, or if you want more information, contact:

Energy Express

WVU Extension Service

PO Box 6602; 706 Allen Hall

Morgantown WV 26506-6602

304-293-3855 Fax 304-293-3866

or

Office of Civil Right and inclusiveness

Corporation for National and Community Service

1201 New York Ave, NW

Washington D.C. 20525

202-606-7503 (voice); 202-565-2799 (TTY)

202-565-3456 (FAX); [eo@cns.gov](mailto:eo@cns.gov)

**Acknowledgment of Support**

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# Section 1

## Organization and Programmatic Overview

### AmeriCorps Overview

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# AmeriCorps Overview

## A. What is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a national service program founded in the same spirit as the Peace Corps, VISTA, and the Armed Forces, and other forms of national service. The AmeriCorps program provides members with a full or part time service experience in exchange for a modest living allowance and an educational award.

## B. Common Goals of AmeriCorps

- Getting things done through direct service in education, human needs, environment, and public safety.
- Strengthening communities by bringing together Americans of all ages and backgrounds into service.
- Encouraging responsibility and opportunity for members through training and job experience.

## C. Equal Opportunity for All

Energy Express believes that diversity is one of our programs greatest strengths. We expect that everyone involved in Energy Express will respect and support one another regardless of our differences.

Discrimination on the basis of age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic background will not be tolerated.

## D. The AmeriCorps Pledge

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

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities;

Faced with apathy, I will take action;

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground;

Faced with adversity, I will persevere;

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond;

I am an AmeriCorps Member, and I will get things done.



# Section 2

## Member Responsibilities

Program Objectives  
Member Contract for Participation  
Attendance Policy  
Other Member Policies



# Program Objectives

## ***Needs and Services***

\_\_\_\_\_children (attending 15 days or more) will be provided breakfast and lunch for 6 weeks that will provide 58% of daily nutritional requirements.

Volunteers will provide \_\_\_\_\_ hours of service. \_\_\_\_\_volunteers will be recruited to provide one-on-one reading and writing support to \_\_\_\_\_children. \_\_\_\_% of \_\_\_\_\_ adult volunteers recruited will be in the "Baby-Boomer" generation.

AmeriCorps members will contribute \_\_\_\_\_ hours of service in providing literacy activities to children.

Seventy percent (\_\_\_\_%) of children will maintain or show an increase in reading achievement on subtests of the Woodcock Johnson Test of Individual Achievement.

\_\_\_\_% of children will maintain or increase in their positive attitude toward reading from the results of a pre/post children's reading attitude survey

## ***Member Development***

AmeriCorps members will collaborate with volunteers, community and faith-based organizations to complete \_\_\_\_\_ community service projects based on community needs.

The results of a pre/post service survey will demonstrate that 75% of members will maintain or increase in their personal efficacy.

# Member Contract for Participation ENERGY EXPRESS AMERICORPS PROGRAM (2009)

## I. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this agreement to delineate the terms, conditions, and rules of membership regarding the participation of \_\_\_\_\_ (hereinafter referred to as the AmeriCorps Member) in the Energy Express AmeriCorps Program (hereinafter referred to as the Program).

## II. MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

The AmeriCorps Member certifies that he/she is a United States citizen, a United States national, or a legal permanent resident, at least 18 years of age by June 15, 2009. The AmeriCorps member certifies that he/she has obtained a high school diploma or GED by the program start date. The AmeriCorps member serving as a mentor certifies that he/she is enrolled in a post-secondary institution for the fall 2009 semester or a December 2008 or May 2009 graduate of a post-secondary institution. Volunteer coordinators are not bound by the post secondary requirement.

## III. TERMS OF SERVICE

A. The AmeriCorps Member's term of service begins on June 15, 2009 and ends August 7, 2009.

B. The AmeriCorps Member will complete a minimum of 300 hours of service during this period. Of these 300 hours, a maximum of 20% of these hours may be training, education, or other similar approved activities.

C. The AmeriCorps Member understands that in order to successfully complete the term of service (as defined by the program and consistent with regulations of the Corporation for National Service) and to be eligible for the education award he/she must do at least 300 hours of service, satisfactorily complete assignments, tasks, projects and pre-service training, have abided by the AmeriCorps Member attendance policy and have met any other criteria that were clearly communicated both orally and in writing at the beginning of the term of service.

D. The AmeriCorps Member understands that in order to be eligible for serving any future of service, the AmeriCorps Member must have received satisfactory performance reviews for any previous term of service. The AmeriCorps Member's eligibility for another term of service will be based on an end of term evaluation of the AmeriCorps Member's performance focusing on factors such as whether the AmeriCorps Member has:

1. Completed the required number of hours;
2. Satisfactorily completed assignments, tasks, or projects; and
3. Met any other criteria that were clearly communicated both orally and in writing at the beginning of the term of service.

E. The AmeriCorps Member understands that mere eligibility for an additional term of service does not guarantee selection or placement.

F. The AmeriCorps Member grants the program consent to use his/her name, photograph and other identifying information for publicity, promotional or other purposes.

G. The AmeriCorps member shall, to the extent permitted by state and local laws, be subject to criminal record checks and sex offender checks as part of the screening process. The documentation will be maintained in a separate file in locked file cabinet in the State Energy Express office.

#### IV. **SITE SUPERVISOR**

The name of the AmeriCorps Member's direct supervisor (site supervisor) is \_\_\_\_\_.

#### V. **POSITION DESCRIPTION**

- Serve the entire term of service and complete a minimum of 300 hours of service.
- Attend and participate in the Energy Express AmeriCorps training at West Virginia Wesleyan College with site team. Lodging and meals will be paid during training.
- Attend and participate in the AmeriCorps Swearing-in Ceremony held at West Virginia Wesleyan College.
- Attend and participate in all program meetings and activities, including open house.
- Complete a visible community project with the site team.
- Be a positive role model for children and youth volunteers in the program.
- Attend and participate in a regional end of year celebration of service held the last week of the program.
- Participate as a team to select, plan, implement, and evaluate community service projects conducted by the children and the other AmeriCorps members.
- Engage in community outreach to children's parents through family visits, follow-up communications and support of parent volunteers.
- Submit complete and accurate paperwork on time, including time sheets.
- Facilitate one guided reflection activity.
- Assist with the completion and submission of the final site report.
- Be actively involved in developing, evaluating, and improving personal performance through training and discussion.

#### **Mentors:**

- Enhance children's interest and skills through reading-related activities based on weekly themes.
- Promote the nutritional well being of children.
- Be actively involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating activities that support children's learning.
- Perform other related activities as needed.

#### **Volunteer Coordinators:**

- Identify, recruit, orient, train, schedule, and supervise a cadre of volunteers who will commit to serve at the Energy Express site on a regular basis.
- Assist with public relations, including developing and issuing press releases regarding volunteer opportunities.
- Develop and implement a plan for volunteer recognition, including coordination of the site open house.
- Monitor accuracy and completeness of daily volunteer logs, information sheets and other related volunteer paperwork and data and assume responsibility for submitting data to the Energy Express office and archiving information.
- Perform other related activities as needed.

#### VI. **BENEFITS**

The AmeriCorps Member will receive from the Program the following benefits:

1. A taxable living allowance of \$1,600
  - a. The living allowance is taxable, and taxes will be deducted directly from the living allowance.
  - b. Distributed in four payments (July 16, July 31, August 17 and August 31) with the checks directly deposited into an approved bank account.
2. Worker's compensation coverage for injuries sustained while performing authorized service activities. Accidents should be reported immediately to the site supervisor.

Upon successful completion of the AmeriCorps Member's term of service and in accordance with the attendance policy, the AmeriCorps Member will receive an education award of a value of \$1000 from the National Service Trust. The AmeriCorps Member understands that his/her failure to disclose to the Program any history of having been released for cause from another AmeriCorps program will render the AmeriCorps Member ineligible to receive the education award.

Members are disqualified from earning an education award by the following:

- Missing any part of statewide training.
- Failing to represent the program appropriately.
- Dismissal as a result of progressive discipline.
- Serving less than the required 300 hours of service.
- Having an unexcused absence.
- Leaving the program prior to the end of term of service (date varies from year to year).
- Failing to attend the reflection and celebration event.
- Failing to attend community service project or open house.
- Failing to attend any scheduled Energy Express activity.

The AmeriCorps member understands that reimbursement for travel is not provided.

## VII. RULES OF CONDUCT

A. At **no** time may the AmeriCorps Member:

1. Engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state or federal law.
2. Engage in activities that pose a significant safety risk to self and/or others.

B. The AmeriCorps Member is expected to, at all times while acting in an official capacity as an AmeriCorps Member

1. Demonstrate respect toward others.
2. Follow directions.
3. Direct concerns, problems, and suggestions to the appropriate Program official (immediate Site Supervisor)

C. At no time while acting as an AmeriCorps member, may the AmeriCorps member engage in any AmeriCorps prohibited activities. These include:

- any activity involving attempting to influence legislation or an election or aid a partisan political organization;
- planning, organizing or engaging in voter registration drives;
- organizing a letter-writing campaign to Congress;
- helping or hindering union activity;
- engaging in religious instruction;
- conducting worship services;
- providing instruction as part of a Program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship;
- constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship;
- maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship;
- engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- planning, organizing and engaging in fundraising;
- organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political candidates, political platforms, proposed legislation, or elected officials; or

- providing a direct benefit to a for-profit entity, a labor union, a partisan political organization, a religious organization, or a non-profit that engages in lobbying.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the above activities on their own initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time and using non-Corporation funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn while doing so.

D. The AmeriCorps Member understands that the following acts will also constitute a violation of the Program's rules of conduct:

1. Unauthorized tardiness.
2. Unauthorized absences. (See the attendance policy located in the AmeriCorps member handbook)
3. Use of inappropriate language (e.g. profanity) while performing AmeriCorps responsibilities.
4. Failure to wear appropriate clothing to service assignments.
5. Failure to complete and submit time sheets accurately and timely.
6. Stealing or lying.
7. Failure to comply with the electronic device policy. (Located in the AmeriCorps member handbook)
8. Smoking at the Energy Express site and at times and places prohibited by local and state ordinances.
9. Failure to comply with the communication systems policy (Located in the AmeriCorps member handbook)

E. Under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, you must notify the Program Director if you are convicted under any criminal drug statute. Your participation in the program is conditioned upon compliance with this notice requirement and the program will take action for violation of this.

### **VIII. ATTENDANCE POLICY**

- A. Members are required to attend and actively participate in Energy Express statewide training. Members cannot miss any part of training. Drinking alcoholic beverages will not be tolerated during training—any member involved in this behavior will be released from service. Members are strongly discouraged from using tobacco products at training.
- B. Members may be excused for the following:
  - A death in the immediate family
  - A serious illness of the member (a doctor's excuse must be presented to the site supervisor the following day. Otherwise the absence will be counted as unexcused.)
  - College orientation for incoming freshman or transferring students (no more than two days) Documentation of attendance at the event must be presented to the site supervisor.
  - Job interviews—only for those who recently graduated from college or technical school, (Dec. 08 and May 09) no more than two days.

- C. Absences for other reasons or not pre-approved by the state office will be considered unexcused and result in the loss of the education award
- D. Members must make up the hours missed for excused absences (listed in 1.3 above)  
These hours must be pre-approved by the site supervisor. Any community service make-up hours that have not been pre-approved by the site supervisor will not be counted.
- E. The site supervisor must alert the Energy Express state office of a member's absence, excused or unexcused. Documentation of the absence, make-up hours, and make-up activities must be included on the member's time sheet. Unexcused absences will also be documented in the member's personnel file.
- F. Members are disqualified from earning an education award by the following:
  - Missing any part of statewide training.
  - Failing to represent the program appropriately.
  - Dismissal as a result of progressive discipline.
  - Serving less than the required 300 hours of service.
  - Having an unexcused absence.
  - Leaving the program prior to the end date (date varies from year to year).
  - Failing to attend the reflection and celebration event.
  - Failing to attend community service project or open house.
  - Failing to attend any scheduled Energy Express activity.

**IX. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE**

- A. In general, for violating the above stated rules in Section VII (A, B, C, D), the Program will do the following, (except in cases where, during the term of service, the AmeriCorps Member has been charged with or convicted of a violent felony, child abuse, sex related offenses, possession, sale or distribution of a controlled substance).
  1. For the AmeriCorps Member's first offense, the Site Supervisor will issue a verbal warning to the AmeriCorps Member.
  2. For the AmeriCorps Member's second offense, the Site Supervisor will issue a written warning and reprimand to the AmeriCorps Member.
  3. For the third offense, the Program may release the AmeriCorps Member for cause.
- B. The AmeriCorps Member understands that he/she will be released for cause in accordance with paragraphs (B.), (D.), and (E.) of Section X of this agreement for committing certain acts during the term of service including but not limited to being convicted or charged with a violent felony, child abuse, sex related offences, and possession, sale or distribution of a controlled substance, consuming and/or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs during the performance of service activities or stealing or lying.
- C. Repeated offenses of the rules of conduct jeopardize the AmeriCorps Member's standing in the program, even if the progressive disciplinary procedures described in subsection (E.) have not reached the level of release for cause. The AmeriCorps Member understands that three disciplinary warnings of any combination of offences can result in release for cause.

**X. RELEASE FROM SERVICE**

- A. The AmeriCorps Member understands that he/she may be released for the following two reasons:
  1. For cause, as explained in paragraph (B.) of this section; or
  2. Compelling personal circumstances as defined in paragraph (C.) of this section.
- B. The Program will release the AmeriCorps Member for cause for the following reasons:

1. The AmeriCorps Member has dropped out of the Program without obtaining a release for compelling personal circumstances from the Program Director.
2. During the term of service the AmeriCorps Member has been charged or convicted of a violent felony, child abuse, sex related offences, or the possession, sale or distribution of a controlled substance.
3. The AmeriCorps Member has reached the third step of progressive discipline
4. The AmeriCorps Member has consumed a alcohol and/or an illegal substance during statewide training.
5. During the term of service, the AmeriCorps Member has engaged in an activity that is physically or emotionally damaging to other members of the program , participants of the program, or members of the community, including but not limited to child abuse and sex related offenses.
6. The AmeriCorps Member has stolen or lied.
7. During the term of service, the AmeriCorps Member has possessed or used any illegal drugs.
8. The AmeriCorps Member has consumed alcoholic beverages during the performance of service activities.
9. The AmeriCorps Member had been under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs during the performance of service activities.
10. The AmeriCorps Member failed to notify the Site Supervisor or other appropriate official within 2 working days of any criminal arrest or conviction that occurs during the term of service.
11. Any other serious breach that in the judgment of the director of the Program would undermine the effectiveness  
Of the program.

C. The Program may release the AmeriCorps Member from the term of service, due to compelling personal circumstances if:

1. The AmeriCorps Member has a disability, serious injury or illness that makes completing the term impossible;
2. There is a serious injury, illness or death of an immediate family member and the AmeriCorps Member is needed to care for that family member or take over the duties of the family member;
3. The AmeriCorps Member has military service obligations; or
4. Some other unforeseeable circumstance beyond the AmeriCorps Member's control makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for the AmeriCorps Member to complete the term of service , such as a natural disaster, a strike, relocation of a spouse, or the nonrenewal or premature closing of a project or the program and the Program deems that circumstance to be compelling.

D. Compelling personal circumstances do not include leaving the Program:

1. To enroll in school;

2. To obtain employment, other than in moving from welfare to work; or
3. Because of dissatisfaction with the Program.

E. If the AmeriCorps Member discontinues his/her term of service for any reason other than a release for compelling personal circumstances as described in paragraph (B.) and (D.), the AmeriCorps Member will cease to receive the benefits described in paragraph (A.) of Section VI and will receive no portion of the education award or interest payments.

F. If the AmeriCorps Member discontinues his/her term of service due to personal compelling circumstances as described in paragraph (C) of Section X of this agreement, the AmeriCorps Member will cease to receive benefits described in paragraphs (A) and (B) of Section VI. The AmeriCorps Member may, however, receive a prorated version of the education award if he/she has completed at least 15% of the hours indicated in Section III, paragraph (B).

G. A term that ends early, either for cause, or for compelling personal circumstances, is still considered a term and the education award that the AmeriCorps Member receives, or would have been eligible to receive, will count towards that total of two education awards an individual may receive through service with AmeriCorps.

### III.

## IV. XI. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- A. The AmeriCorps Member understands that the Program has a grievance procedure to resolve disputes concerning the AmeriCorps Member's suspension, dismissal, service evaluation or proposed service assignment.
- B. The AmeriCorps Member understands that, as a participant of the program, he/she may file a grievance in accordance with the Program's grievance procedure, which is set forth below.
- C. The AmeriCorps Member must file the grievance within one year of the alleged improper event. The grievance procedure is a four-step process.

Step 1: Upon the alleged improper incident, the AmeriCorps Member will first attempt to resolve the issue with the other staff member involved.

Step 2: If the AmeriCorps Member is unable to resolve the issue informally, as described in Step 1, he/she has the right to request facilitation of conflict resolution from the Site Supervisor. The request for conflict resolution must be submitted to the Site Supervisor within two (2) working days after the attempt for resolution in Step 1. The Site Supervisor will attempt to resolve the grievance after consultation with all concerned parties and upon request will submit in writing to concerned parties the outcome of the process.

Step 3: Option A: If the AmeriCorps Member is dissatisfied with the outcome of Step 2 or if the alleged improper act involves the Site Supervisor directly, the AmeriCorps Member has the right of appeal to the Program Director in the State Energy Express Office. The aggrieved AmeriCorps Member must request this appeal by written notice to the Program Director within five (5) working days of the conclusion of Step 2. A written grievance must include a summary of the event in question and the complainant's position.

Every AmeriCorps Member who files a written grievance to the Program Director has the right to request a hearing. The hearing must be held within 30 days of the written grievance and decision must be made within 60 days of the written grievance.

The Program Director shall convene a Grievance Panel, who shall have the authority to hear grievances and act on behalf of the Program. The Grievance Panel shall consist of the Program Director and two (2) neutral West Virginia University employees who shall render a decision within 60 days of the written grievance.

OR

Option B: After completion of Step 2, The AmeriCorps Member may opt to request mediation. The mediation must occur within 45 days of the occurrence of the alleged improper act. Mediation is a candid, confidential, nonbinding process facilitated by a neutral party agreeable to both parties involved. If mediation is selected by the AmeriCorps Member and it does not resolve the issue, or the AmeriCorps Member is dissatisfied with the outcome, the AmeriCorps Member must revert to Step 3 Option A. Thus, the AmeriCorps Member requests a formal hearing before the Grievance Panel.

Step 4: If Step 3 results in an adverse decision against the AmeriCorps Member, or if no decision has been reached within 60 days of the written filing of the grievance, the AmeriCorps Member may request binding arbitration in writing within five (5) working days of the hearing decision or the end of the 60 day decision period. The arbitration must occur within 45 days of the arbitration request, and the arbitrator must render a decision to resolve the matter within 30 calendar days of the arbitration. If the AmeriCorps Member prevails in the binding arbitration, expenses for the process (including AmeriCorps Member's attorney fees and damages, if any) will be paid by Energy Express AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps Member must be reinstated immediately, paid any living allowance that has been withheld, and credited with any missed service hours. If the Program prevails, the expenses for the arbitration will be divided equally between the AmeriCorps Member and the Program.

**XII. VOTING**

The program encourages eligible members to register to vote. With prior arrangements approved by the site supervisor, members may register to vote and/or vote during service hours, and the time can be counted as Member Development.

A voter registration drive is considered an AmeriCorps prohibited activity.

**XIII. AMENDMENTS TO THIS AGREEMENT**

This agreement may be changed or revised by written consent by both parties.

**XIV. AUTHORIZATION**

The AmeriCorps Member and Program hereby acknowledge by their signatures that they have read, understand, and agree to all terms and conditions of this agreement.

Energy Express AmeriCorps Member

Energy Express AmeriCorps Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Site: \_\_\_\_\_

As the site supervisor, I \_\_\_\_\_, certify that I have witnessed the AmeriCorps member read, sign and date this document.

Site Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# AmeriCorps Member Attendance Policy

- 1.1 Members are to serve a minimum of 300 hours between the program start date and end date (dates vary year to year). Service activities are outlined in the member contract for participation

Pre-service training (Members are allotted a specified number of hours plus travel time)

Maintaining contact with parents—including family visits, written notes home, and phone calls to parents.

Building strong relationships with small groups of children through the creation of a print-rich environment and other program activities. (Mentors)

Recruiting, training and supporting a cadre of volunteers (volunteer coordinators)

Completing a site team community project.

Participating in reflection and on-site training.

Attending and participating in the open house.

Attending and participating in the reflection celebration event.

- 1.2 Members are required to attend and actively participate in Energy Express training.

Members cannot miss any part of training.

Drinking alcoholic beverages will not be tolerated during training—any member involved in this behavior will be released from service. Members are strongly discouraged from using tobacco products.

The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, or possession of a controlled substance is prohibited. Reporting for service activities while under the influence of a controlled substance is also prohibited.

- 1.3 Members may be excused for the following:

A death in the immediate family.

A serious illness of the member (a doctor's excuse must be presented to the site supervisor the following day. Otherwise the absence will be counted as unexcused.)

College orientation for incoming freshman or transferring students (no more than two days)

Documentation of attendance at the event must be presented to the site supervisor.

Job interviews—only for those who recently graduated from college or technical school, (Dec 08 and May 09) no more than two days.

- 1.4 Excused absences must be pre-approved in writing by the state office (for college orientation or job interviews).

- 1.5 Absences for other reasons or not pre-approved by the state office will be considered unexcused and result in the loss of the education award.

- 1.6 Members must make up the hours missed for excused absences (listed in 1.3 above) by making family visits, having additional contacts with parents, or engaging in additional community service as pre-approved by the site supervisor. Any community service make-up hours that have not been pre-approved by the site supervisor will not be counted.

- 1.7 The site supervisor must alert the Energy Express state office of a member's absence, excused or unexcused. Documentation of the absence, make-up hours, and make-up activities must be included on the member's time sheet. Unexcused absences will also be documented in the member's personnel file.

- 1.8 Members are disqualified from earning an education award by the following:

Missing any part of statewide training.

Failing to represent the program appropriately.

Dismissal as a result of progressive discipline.

Serving less than the required 300 hours of service.

Having an unexcused absence.

Leaving the program prior to the end date (date varies from year to year).

Failing to attend the reflection and celebration event.

Failing to attend community service project or open house.

Failing to attend any scheduled Energy Express activity.

# AmeriCorps Member Policies and Procedures

## ***Criminal Record Check Policy***

All criminal record checks are secured in locked files at the state Energy Express office. Only the Program Director and the Coordinator have access to criminal records. These records will be retained for 7 years and then destroyed.

## ***Prohibited AmeriCorps Activities (while acting in an official capacity)***

There are certain activities that AmeriCorps members and staff members of AmeriCorps programs should not engage in as part of their service with AmeriCorps or while representing AmeriCorps. These activities are called the Prohibited Activities. The activities include:

- Attempting to influence legislation.
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.  
*(i.e. crossing a picket line, joining a picket line.)*
- Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements.
- Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.  
*(i.e. campaigning for a specific candidate)*
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials.  
*(i.e. participating in any rally; sending politically motivated chain emails on your organizational email account)*
- Engaging in religious instruction; conducting worship services; providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship; constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship; maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship; or engaging in any form of religious proselytization.  
*(i.e. you may serve in a soup kitchen at a church, but you may not build a church or teach Sunday school)*
- Organizing or participating in voter registration drives
- Fundraising
- Providing a direct benefit to:
  - A for-profit entity *(i.e. babysitting for a corporate sponsor during a holiday party as “service”; renovating grounds or buildings of a for-profit company);*
  - A labor union;
  - A partisan political organization; *(i.e. working on a political campaign as “service”);*
  - An organization engaged in the religious activities described above unless the activity is not religious in nature, and is available to the community.
  - A nonprofit entity that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of U.S. Code Title 26.

***Any perceived association with Energy Express AmeriCorps while engaged in any of these activities should be avoided – this includes any time you are wearing your AmeriCorps uniform and/or the AmeriCorps logo.***

***Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the above activities on non-AmeriCorps time. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn while doing so.***

At no time while the member is engaged in service activities may he/she:

1. Engage in any activity that is illegal under local, state, or federal law.
2. Engage in activities that pose a significant safety risk to others.

3. Breach confidentiality of a family or child enrolled in the program.
4. Engage in any prohibited activities.
5. Falsify reports or records, including AmeriCorps applications, personnel records, expense accounts, time sheets, medical reports, and/or agency records.
6. Prepare any part of a grant proposal or perform fundraising functions to help achieve the match requirement, or provide fund-raising assistance that does not provide immediate and direct support to the program objectives.

***Policy on Confidentiality and Mandated Reporting – See Mentor Manual and Policy Manuals***

In the course of a year of service, AmeriCorps members are exposed to a wide range of information from student progress in school to family financial status. All such information which is shared with AmeriCorps members is to be maintained as confidential. Members are to discuss this information only with their supervisor. It is imperative that families we serve can trust us to maintain confidentiality.

**Additionally, members cannot post photos of children or under-age volunteers on MySpace or Facebook or other web sites.**

If an AmeriCorps member is made aware of any potential abuse or neglect situation, the member is to share it IMMEDIATELY with his/her supervisor. The information will be discussed with school administration and the school protocol will be followed. The local Department of Health and Human Resources will be contacted as mandated by law.

Energy Express is committed to the immediate health and welfare of children and to providing a safe and secure environment for children.

When abuse or neglect is suspected:

1. AmeriCorps member and Site Supervisor discuss and document situation.
2. Site Supervisor reports documented information to County Contact
3. Locate local DHHR office.  
(LOCATE LOCAL DHHR OFFICE PHONE NUMBER:  
<http://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>)
4. Report abuse following DHHR procedure.
5. Report actions to State Office in Morgantown, Ruthellen Phillips, 304-293-3855.

**For Additional Information:**

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

(National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information)

Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/general/legal/statues.define.cfm>

Recognizing Child Abuse and neglect: Signs and Symptoms

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/factsheets/canstate.cfm>

Child Maltreatment 2003: Summary of Key Findings

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov/general/statespecific/results.cfm>

State-Specific Information Search Results

## ***Drug Free Work Policy***

Energy Express is a drug free program. It is prohibited to manufacture, distribute, dispense, be in possession of, or use any illegal controlled substance and/or alcohol during participation in any Energy Express activity including training, family visits, working with children, travel to and from any of these activities, and any other activities related to Energy Express.

Energy Express members in violation of this policy will be suspended from the Program. Energy Express MAINTAINS A NO TOLERANCE POLICY.

## ***Member Time and Time Sheet Policy***

All Energy Express members are required to complete and submit weekly time sheets. Members are ultimately responsible for the accuracy of their timesheets. Members must be on site for 6hrs each scheduled day.

## ***Dress Code***

At statewide training, 1<sup>st</sup> year members will be given 3 AmeriCorps t-shirts and 2<sup>nd</sup> year members will be given 2 t-shirts. These t-shirts will serve as the AmeriCorps uniform for the summer. Only AmeriCorps members are permitted to wear the AmeriCorps shirt.

Clothing that allows you to actively participate is required. As a role model it is important that your dress not distract from the mission of Energy Express.

Dress Code Requirements:

- ❖ AmeriCorps t-shirt with logo visible must be worn while earning service hours (except at the year end celebration)
- ❖ At a minimum Shorts and skirts should reach fingertips
- ❖ For safety reasons, tennis shoes or closed toe shoes are required

What is not appropriate:

- ❖ Pajama pants, pants with holes or low-rise pants or shorts
- ❖ Rolling up AmeriCorps shirt sleeves or tying shirt up in the front or back
- ❖ Altering the AmeriCorps t-shirt in any way

Sometimes body piercing or tattoos may not fit with norms of the community. Please use good judgment if you have body piercings or tattoos.

## ***Travel***

Members receive service hours for their travel time from the site to:

- WV Wesleyan for statewide training
- end of year celebration event location
- family visits
- site approved activities

**Energy Express does not reimburse for travel expenses.**

***Sexual Harassment Policy (See mentor and volunteer coordinator manual for policy)***

In order to ensure a safe and secure environment for everyone involved in the program, Energy Express has a zero tolerance for any form of sexual harassment.

## **WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that:

- (a) is used as a basis for decisions for employment or service assignments including performance assessments; or
- (b) creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

## **WHO CAN BE INVOLVED IN SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

1. The harasser's conduct must be unwelcome. However, keep in mind that any harassment directed toward a child is unwelcome, because children are not of an age to consent. This includes any site team member or adult volunteer dating underage volunteers.
2. The victim as well as the harasser may be a male or female, child or adult. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex. Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals at an Energy Express site, including but not limited to child to child, volunteer to child, Site Supervisor to mentor, mentor to mentor, Volunteer Coordinator to volunteer.
3. The harasser can be a Site Supervisor, a Volunteer Coordinator, a Mentor, a Volunteer, a child, or another person working on site (i.e., custodian, kitchen worker, bus driver).
4. The victim does not have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

## ***Equal Opportunity Policy***

As a grantee of the Energy Express AmeriCorps program, each site sponsor receiving the services of an AmeriCorps member agrees that they will abide by federal laws and Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) policy on Equal Opportunity. An environment free of discrimination for all AmeriCorps members will be provided by both Energy Express AmeriCorps and the site sponsor. Recognizing that the fabric of our society is strengthened by the diversity of its citizens, the policy of CNCS is to ensure mutual respect for all differences among us. Participation in AmeriCorps will be based on merit and equal opportunity for all, without regard to factors such as race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, marital or parental status, military service, or religious, community or social affiliations.

The Energy Express AmeriCorps program and its site sponsors agree to provide an environment free from sexual, racial, national origin or religious harassment. Harassment includes unwelcome verbal, physical or graphic conduct and has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work or service performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or service environment.

Any volunteer, service participant, client, employee or beneficiary who believes they have been subjected to discrimination in violation of nondiscrimination provisions of applicable laws, regulations of this policy may raise his or her concerns with the Corporation's Equal Opportunity Office. However, discrimination claims not brought to the attention of the CNCS Equal Opportunity Office within 45 days of their occurrence may not be accepted in a formal complaint of discrimination. The Equal Opportunity Office may be reached at (202) 606-5000, extension 312 (voice), (202) 565-2799 (TDD), [eo@cns.gov](mailto:eo@cns.gov). The Corporation's Equal Opportunity Office attempts to resolve concerns about discrimination promptly and when possible use an informal conciliation process to do so. CNCS

encourages, but does not require, volunteers, service participants, and other beneficiaries to first bring concerns about discrimination to the director or appropriate personnel of the program. CNCS encourages directors of programs and sites to facilitate prompt resolution of these concerns.

### ***Electronic Device Policy***

During Service Members who have cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices are to have them **turned off** and placed out of sight while earning service hours, attending training sessions, planning sessions, and meetings. Electronic devices are a major distraction that is disruptive and keeps the owner of the device and other participants from being actively engaged.

**Additionally, members cannot post photos of children or under-age volunteers on MySpace or Facebook or other web sites.**

### ***Voting Policy***

**Voting:** The program encourages eligible members to register to vote. Sites may allow members to register and/or to vote during service hours, and the time can be counted as Member Development hours for the Citizenship training. The program may not require members to register to vote, or attempt to influence how members vote.

**Voter Registration:** Program funds may not be used to conduct voter registration drives. This is not an authorized service activity for AmeriCorps members. Non-partisan voter registration efforts are also prohibited.

### ***E-mail and Internet Use***

Each site provides telecommunication technology equipment for their AmeriCorps members to assist in the performance of their official duties. The equipment shall be used only for business purposes and AmeriCorps members must adhere to the policies provided by the sponsor agency. Improper or illegal use of e-mail or Internet resources poses serious risk and liability to the AmeriCorps member, host site and the Energy Express program.

### ***Tobacco-Free:***

Smoking at the Energy Express sites is prohibited and at times and places prohibited by local and state ordinances. Use of tobacco products is strongly discouraged at Energy Express statewide training.

# Section 4 Benefits

Minimum Eligibility Requirements  
AmeriCorps Member Benefits  
Segal Education Award Benefits  
How to Use Your Segal Education Award



# Minimum Eligibility Requirements

## Minimum Eligibility

- At least 18 years of age by program start date
- U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident alien.
- High school diploma or equivalency.

## AmeriCorps Member Benefits

### Living allowance of \$1,600

- Subject to federal and state taxes, FICA withholdings, and workers compensation.
- Unemployment compensation not withheld (members are not employees.)
- Dispensed by direct deposit on July 16<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> as well as August 15<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>

### Education Award of \$1,000

- Granted only upon successful completion of the program and is good for seven years.
- Can be applied to cost of attendance at accredited colleges, universities, vo-tech schools.
- Can be used to repay federally insured student loans.
- Taxable in year that it is used.

## Segal Education Award Benefits

- Members qualify for the Education Award after successfully completing ALL of their service time: 300 hours.
- The Educational Award is \$1,000.
- Educational Awards may be used to cover the costs of attending institutions of higher learning (tuition, books, etc.) Only accredited institutions can access the award monies.
- It must be used for members' education expenses, not those of a relative.
- Educational Awards may be used to pay back qualified student loans.
- Educational Awards cannot be accessed until 8-12 weeks after the term is completed. The member must have all time sheets and appropriate documentation into Energy Express in order for the proper paperwork to be completed.
- Members have seven (7) years from the end of their term of service to draw down their Educational Awards.
- Members released for cause are not eligible for Education Awards.
- Members released for compelling personal circumstances may receive a pro-rated Educational Awards.
- Educational Awards will be taxed as income in the year they are used.
- Members are welcome to call the CNS office for information on educational awards:  
1-888-507-5962 or 1-202-606-5000 ext. 347

## ▪ Using Your Segal Education Award

When a member successfully completes the term of national service, Energy Express will notify the National Service Trust that the members are eligible for an education award. (The Trust is the office at the Corporation for National and Community Service that administers the education award program).

A MyAmeriCorps account is established to serve as the method in which to access the education award.

A member can use your education award in the following ways: 1. To repay "qualified student loans"; 2. To pay for CURRENT educational expenses a "qualified institution of higher education"; and 3. To pay expenses incurred while participating

in an approved school-to-work opportunities system program.

## What is My AmeriCorps?

*My AmeriCorps* is an online space designed to help members manage their AmeriCorps experience. It provides an easy way for individuals to get and give important information – before, during and after their service.

This site makes it easy to search and apply for AmeriCorps service opportunities in all three AmeriCorps programs. After registering and creating a profile, potential applicants can apply and allow programs to offer service opportunities to them as well.

For those who apply to a program, *My AmeriCorps* makes frequently used and requested forms available online. Examples include the application, reference forms, tax forms, earnings statements, and Segal AmeriCorps Education Award requests. The site is tailored to members and alumni from all three AmeriCorps programs, showing them what they need, when they need it.

In addition, *My AmeriCorps* includes comprehensive online help, frequently asked questions and an enhanced customer service feature, “Contact My AmeriCorps,” to get you the answers you need about the programs or the system.

## How is My AmeriCorps different from the AmeriCorps website?

While the AmeriCorps website provides information to the general public, *My AmeriCorps* is a space just for those who serve or have served. *My AmeriCorps* provides interactive tools and customized information for every point in the AmeriCorps experience.

- Visit *My AmeriCorps* now!

## How do I access My AmeriCorps for the first time?

For those who wish to use *My AmeriCorps* to search for service opportunities or apply online, click here.

A current member or alumni, and this is your first time using the *My AmeriCorps* system, you will need to complete a simple registration process in order to be granted access. From the AmeriCorps website ([www.AmeriCorps.gov](http://www.AmeriCorps.gov)), click on the “*My AmeriCorps*” link on the homepage. Members can also access a link to *My AmeriCorps* by going to [my.americorps.gov](http://my.americorps.gov). Follow the instructions provided on the log-in page to create a new account. Simply enter in the required information to register and you are ready to begin.

## I’m already registered for the AmeriCorps Online Payment System. Can I use my same user name and password?

Yes. The Online Payment System is now part of the *My AmeriCorps* portal. Existing users and participating institutions will log into *My AmeriCorps* and access the Online Payment System features as they did before using the same user name and password. Only now, members and alumni will be able to access additional features available to *My AmeriCorps* users. Everything will be in one place, in one portal.

## If I’ve elected to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, what can My AmeriCorps do for me?

By logging into *My AmeriCorps* and clicking on “My Education Award,” Members and Alumni can use *My AmeriCorps* to:

- Update your contact information
- Access, create, and submit forms to:
  - Have your student loans deferred during your term of service (Forbearance Request)
  - Request payment of the interest that accrued on your student loans during your term of service (Interest Accrual Benefit Request)
  - Request payment of qualified student loans (Education Award Payment Request)
  - Request payment of current Educational Expenses (Education Award Payment Request)
  - Extend the date of expiration of your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award (Award Extension Request)
- View the status of your pending requests

- Check your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award balance
- View your account history

## How does the automated payment process work?



(click here to download larger version of diagram - PDF)

## Why use My AmeriCorps to manage your Segal AmeriCorps Education Award account?

- **No more paper.**  
The new system eliminates the current paper forms required by the Trust, as well as enhance traceability through use of the online site.
- **Track the status of your requests.**  
You can track the status of your requests, eliminating the worry of whether your request got lost or misplaced.
- **Receive payments in less time.**  
The new online system will allow for quicker turn-around of payments. Your Education or Financial Institution will receive your money much sooner than with a paper-based process.
- **Easy access to help and information.**  
The system reduces the need to call the Trust because most questions can be answered by visiting the online site. FAQ's and online help are available throughout the system.
- **Manage your account online.**  
You can view up to date account balance and information from your homepage. You also have the capability to update your contact information.

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You can use your education award in the following ways: 1. To repay “qualified student loans”; 2. To pay for CURRENT educational expenses a “qualified institution of higher education”; and 3. To pay expenses incurred while participating in an approved school-to-work opportunities system program.

You must use your education award within seven years of the completion of your term of national service. It can be divided up and used any way you choose, as long as it is for authorized expenditures. For example, a portion of the award could be applied to repay existing qualified student loans and the remainder saved to pay for authorized college costs in the future.

### WHAT ARE QUALIFIED LOANS?

You can use your education award to pay qualified student loans you have or may acquire. The original legislation governing the education award defined “qualified student loans” basically as student loans backed by the federal

government, except for loans in your parents' names. Later legislation expanded the types of loans considered to be qualified to include loans made directly to AmeriCorps members by the Alaska Commission on Higher Education and loans made directly to members by a "state agency" which cover all or part of their cost of attendance.

For purposes of the AmeriCorps education award, the term "state agency" includes state institutions of higher education. For example, any loan, including short-term loans, made directly to you by a state institution of higher education to cover all or part of the your Cost of Attendance is a qualified loan and you may repay such a loan with your AmeriCorps education award.

\* \* \*

The legal language that defines "qualified student loans" is stated here:

**any loan made, insured, or guaranteed pursuant to Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.), other than a loan made to a parent of a student pursuant to section 428B of the Act, and any loan made pursuant to Title VII or VIII of the Public Service Act (42 U.S.C. 292a et seq.);**

**loans made directly to students by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education; and**

**any loan determined by an institution of higher education to be necessary to cover a student's cost of attendance at such institution and made directly to a student by a State agency.**

\* \* \*

If you do not know if your loans are qualified, you should ask your lenders. For federally-backed student loans, there should be a citation on the loan papers referring to Title IV of the Higher Education Act. For loans made by a state agency, the state agency should be listed as the "maker" of the loan on the Promissory Note. The "maker" of every loan is the entity that originally issued the loan to the borrower. The maker of the loan does not change, even if another loan company purchases the loan. Thus, a promissory note is the best evidence of who originally made the loan.

When a loan is refinanced or consolidated, the new loan must meet the definition of "qualified student loan" in order for a payment to be made using an education award. The original loan no longer exists.

There may be student loan programs offered by organizations that are not qualified. You must be sure to confirm with your loan holders that the loans are qualified and meet these definitions. A debt resulting from charging tuition on your credit card is not a qualified student loan.

### **Examples of Some Common Qualified Student Loans**

**Federal Student Loans: Subsidized And Unsubsidized Stafford Loans - Supplemental Loans To Students (SLS) - Federal Consolidated Loans - Guaranteed Student Loans (former name for Staffords) - Federally Insured Student Loans (FISL) - Direct Subsidized & Unsubsidized Stafford - Direct Subsidized & Unsubsidized Ford Loans - Direct Consolidation Loans - National Defense Student Loan - National Direct Student Loans - Perkins Loans - Health Education Assistance Loans (HEAL) - Health Professions Student Loans (HPSL) - Loans For Disadvantaged Students (LDS) - Nursing Student Loans (NSL) - Primary Care Loans (PCL)**

**Loans made directly to students by the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education**

**Loans made directly to students in degree programs by a state college or university**

### **WHAT ARE QUALIFIED INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION?**

You can use your education awards to pay for current educational expenses at qualified institutions of higher education. For purposes of the education award, a "qualified" institution is one that participates in the U.S. Department of Education's student assistance program--i.e., it has an agreement with the U.S. Department of Education whereby students at the school are eligible to receive at least some type of federal financial assistance to attend the school. These are sometimes called Title IV schools. This assistance can be in the form of a Pell Grant or one of the loans listed in the "qualified student loan" section. You do not have to apply for financial aid to use your education award, but the school must be one that participates in the federal student aid program.

A school may be accredited and even offer graduate degrees. However, unless it is a Title IV school the education award, by law, cannot be used there. ("Title IV" refers to the section of the Higher Education Act that authorizes the federal student aid program).

It is not possible to tell if a school is Title IV merely by the name of the school. Most post-secondary educational institutions in the United States are Title IV schools. Thousands of technical and trade schools are Title IV as well. Art schools, beauty schools, and truck driving schools may be Title IV. In order to become a Title IV school, an institution has to meet certain requirements and obtain an agreement with the US Department of Education. This agreement is called a Title IV Program Participation Agreement.

### **To Find Out if a School is Qualified . . .**

#### US Schools

You can ask your financial aid office if the school is a Title IV institution. If it is Title IV, you can use your education award there. If the financial aid or admissions office says they are not sure or they do not know, it is likely that the school is not Title IV. Another way to find out if the school is Title IV is to see if students who attend the school are able to get Pell grants, Perkins Loans or Stafford Loans to attend the school. (These are examples of some of the most common types of Title IV assistance). If they are, it is a Title IV school.

Another way to find out if a school is a Title IV institution is to call the toll-free number at the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Information Center between 9:00 am and 8:00 pm (Eastern time), Monday through Friday. That number is 1-800-433-3243. Finally, you can conduct an on-line search using the Department of Education's web page at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/fotw0304/fslookup.htm>.

#### Foreign Schools

The education award may be used to attend many schools outside the United States. If you're interested in using your education award to attend a foreign school, you should always check to see if the school qualifies before enrolling

If a foreign school participates in the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program, the AmeriCorps education award can be used there. You can find out if a particular school participates in the FFEL Program by calling the Department of Education's toll-free number given above. If you call this number you should ask if the school "participates in the FFEL Program." This number is not for questions concerning using the education award because they will not be able to answer those questions. It is to see if a foreign school participates in the FFEL program, which therefore makes it a "qualified" school for the purposes of the education award. You should have the name and location of the school before making the call.

Another way to approach attending schools overseas is to obtain a qualified student loan to attend the foreign school and use the education award to repay the loan. The loan would be paid like any other qualified student loan.

Finally, many qualified U.S. post-secondary institutions offer educational opportunities abroad. As long as you are considered by the qualified U.S. school to be a student at the school and the payment goes to the U.S. school, this is an allowable use of the education award.

### **QUALIFIED EXPENSES TO ATTEND SCHOOLS**

The AmeriCorps education award can be used to pay "current educational expenses." "Current educational expenses" are expenses that were incurred by you after you first enrolled in an AmeriCorps term of service. The award cannot be used to pay for expenses that pre-date your involvement with AmeriCorps.

#### **Degree or Certificate Program**

If you want to use your award in a degree or certificate program, it can be used to pay some or all of your Cost of Attendance. The term "Cost of Attendance" (COA) was developed by the U.S. Department of Education for use by Title IV schools. It is the school's estimate of what it will cost for a student to attend that school for a specific period of time (usually a school year), using regulations established by Congress and the U.S. Department of Education. For a full-time student, it can include tuition and fees and allowances for books & supplies, room & board, transportation, and other expenses. The COA is utilized by schools to calculate the amount of the education award that each AmeriCorps member is eligible to use. It is important to note that every Title IV school determines the COA for its students--this is not an amount determined by you or by the Trust.

The AmeriCorps education award can be used for that portion of the COA that has not already been covered by other sources of financial assistance, such as scholarships, loans, grants, and tuition or fee waivers. For example, if

a school has determined that the COA for an academic year is \$12,000 and the student is receiving \$8,000 worth of scholarships and loans, the student would be eligible to use up to \$4,000 of his or her education award to pay the remaining COA. In other words, \$8,000 of the \$12,000 of expenses has already been covered, leaving \$4,000 not covered. You can find out from the school's financial aid office your Cost of Attendance.

Schools are allowed to include the cost of a computer in determining the COA for some students. The school's financial aid office will know if, following the U. S. Department of Education's regulations, the cost of a computer can be included in a student's COA. It may depend upon the course of study and the number of credits the student is taking.

The education award is subject to the same general rules that the school has regarding reimbursing students for other financial aid they receive for non-institutional expenses.

### **Non-degree and Non-certificate Courses**

You are not limited to using your education award only for courses that are part of a degree, certificate or other credentialed program. You can use your education award to pay for all courses at the school in which you are enrolled as a student, such as an adult education course, as long as the school is a Title IV school. Tuition, books, and fees for continuing education courses offered by a Title IV university, for example, are eligible for payment from the National Service Trust.

### **The Education Award and its Effect on Financial Aid**

Figuring out when to use your education award and how it will affect your financial aid (for degree and certificate programs) can be complicated.

Currently, for some student loans the education award is considered in determining the amount of student aid for which the student is eligible and for other loans it is not taken into consideration. The U.S. Department of Education has developed guidance for financial aid officers on how the AmeriCorps education award should be handled.

This guidance is included in the most recent Student Financial Aid Handbook for financial aid administrators. Financial aid officers should be familiar with how the education award is to be treated when determining the eligibility for and the amount of any financial aid for which an AmeriCorps member qualifies.

**The Trust strongly encourages members to alert the financial aid office of the qualified school they wish to attend** about using the education award. That office is responsible for developing students' financial aid packages and for providing guidance and expertise regarding student aid. The financial aid office is able to determine how much of a student's award he or she is eligible to use and whether a student's COA has been met by other sources.

Remember to let your financial aid office know that the education award is considered by the IRS to be income and is taxable in the year that the payment is sent to the school. Since income from one year can affect eligibility for certain student aid in the following year, this fact might help you and your financial aid officer plan when and how you might best use your award.

### **Book Stores and the Education Award**

The Trust cannot make payments to bookstores based upon a *Voucher and Payment Request* form being completed solely by the bookstore. By law, a payment for current educational expenses must be made to a qualified school. School bookstores are unable to monitor the amount of financial assistance a student is receiving and cannot determine if the education award will cause a student to exceed the COA. Therefore, the Trust will not pay vouchers that are completed by bookstores unless the school's financial aid office has verified that the information is accurate (i.e., that the COA will not be exceeded with this payment).

### **Income Taxes**

Both payments from education award accounts have been determined to be taxable income. They are included as income in the tax year the payment is mailed to the school or loan company.

The Trust will report to the IRS the total of all payments that were made on your behalf. An IRS form 1099 (Miscellaneous Income) will be mailed to you in January following each year in which a portion of your award was used. This form will let you know the total amount of your payments from the previous year. Your tax burden may be mitigated somewhat by federal income tax laws regarding educational credits and deductions for student loan interest payments. You should contact the IRS or your tax advisors for additional information.

# Section 5

## Forms

Request for Leave Form



# ENERGY EXPRESS AMERICORPS LEAVE REQUEST

Please refer to the Energy Express Attendance Policy or contact the state office.

The site supervisor must alert the Energy Express state office of a member's absence, excused or unexcused. Documentation of the absence, make-up hours, and make-up activities must be included on the member's time sheet.

All absences are unexcused unless approved by the State Energy Express Office and a leave request has been filed with the Site Supervisor.

Members may be excused for the following:

A death in the immediate family.

A serious illness of the member (A doctor's excuse must be presented to the site supervisor the following day otherwise the absence will be counted as unexcused.)

College orientation for incoming freshman or transferring students (no more than two days)

Documentation of attendance at the event must be presented to the site supervisor.

One unexcused absence, which is cause for forfeit of the education award, will be documented in the member's personnel file.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for leave: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE TIME (AM-PM) DATE TIME (AM-PM)

Total Number of service hours missed: \_\_\_\_\_ hrs

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will outstanding service hours be completed?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Site Supervisor's Signature Date

State Office Notification Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach the leave request to the time sheet that covers this leave period.