

MONTEREY BAY



RSVP

AmeriCorps Seniors

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

November 2022

RSVP Volunteer Handbook for Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties
MONTEREY BAY RSVP VOLUNTEER

HANDBOOK



Dear RSVP Volunteer,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the RSVP program. Your volunteer service is an important contribution to your community, and I thank you for choosing to partner with RSVP.

In this RSVP Volunteer Handbook, you will find information about the RSVP Program, the benefits it offers you, what is expected of you, and numerous other topics that will help you to have an enjoyable experience as an RSVP Volunteer.

If at any time, you desire a change in assignment or additional volunteer work, we will be happy to assist you. Our goal is to make sure you're happy with your volunteer service.

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WHAT IS RSVP?

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) is part of AmeriCorps Seniors, the federal agency for volunteer service. It has the dual purpose of engaging persons 55 and older in volunteer service to meet critical community needs and to provide a high quality experience that will enrich the lives of volunteers.

The Monterey Bay RSVP program is administered by an AmeriCorps Seniors Director under the auspices of the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County and serves the three county area of Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties in California.

History:

Congressional interest in establishing a program to address the needs of senior and retired persons began in 1965. In 1969, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) was created as an amendment to the Older Americans Act with eleven Retired and Senior Volunteer Projects receiving funding in 1971.

Since that time, RSVP has expanded throughout the United States. There are now well over one-half million RSVP volunteers in cities all around the country giving more than six million hours of time in service to their communities. Authorized and funded by Congress, the program is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service which monitors and advises local projects.

The Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County has been the sponsor of RSVP in Northern California since 1985 covering Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties.

Focus:

AmeriCorps Seniors has 7 focus areas and directed its grantees to dedicate the majority of their time and energy in one or more of these areas:

- Capacity Building
- Disaster Preparedness

- Economic Opportunities
- Environmental Stewardship
- Education
- Healthy Futures
- Veterans and Military Families

The Monterey Bay RSVP Program has adopted Healthy Futures as our focus area. Each local community has some priorities that fall outside of this area, however the majority of our time and outreach is directed toward this focus area.

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Energy is spent developing relationships with partner agencies in this area and addressing the most pressing needs through volunteer engagement. Some examples of the volunteer opportunities are:

- **Healthy Futures and Other:**

Volunteers will deliver home-delivered meals such as Meals on Wheels, assist food banks with providing emergency food to people in need, and provide companionship services to in-care individuals.

Volunteers will work in Transportation and Helping Hands Programs which allow seniors to maintain independence and engagement in the community. Transportation provides access to free rides, and Helping Hands provides minor safety related home repairs for senior homeowners.

Volunteers will work within a Matter of Balance Program, which helps seniors increase confidence and safety by improving their health and balance as well as through learning fall prevention skills.

Volunteers will also work with Literacy Programs, in our California State Parks, in our local Wetlands Areas in conservation efforts, with our local Sheriff Offices, and with other worthwhile community service non-profits in the community.

WHO CAN BE A MONTEREY BAY RSVP VOLUNTEER?

Anyone aged 55 and over who resides in Santa Cruz, Monterey, or San Benito counties regardless of formal education, experience, race, color, national origin (including limited English proficiency), sex, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

A qualified individual with a disability may be an RSVP volunteer. To serve as an RSVP volunteer, an individual must agree to serve without compensation and meet other requirements in this handbook. There are no membership fees to join.

WHERE DO VOLUNTEERS SERVE?

RSVP Volunteers are placed with nonprofit and governmental agencies located in our service area that have signed memorandums of understanding. Each Partner Agency meets a community need and offers ways for you to utilize your experience, knowledge, talents, and skills.

The Partner Agency accepts responsibility for supervising its assigned volunteers. It is the organization to which you will report, and it may require you to complete its own background checks and paperwork in addition to that required by RSVP.

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF BEING AN RSVP VOLUNTEER?

- **Personalized Assistance**

RSVP staff will work with you to identify a volunteer opportunity that will meet your individual needs. We will match your skills, interests, schedule, and geographic availability with a volunteer position that is right for you. We will continue to be available to provide ongoing information and support as your volunteer needs evolve.

- **Be Part of a National Movement**

Mature adults 55 years and older are giving thousands of hours daily to positively impact the communities they live in. Your hours will be counted with those of your peers to demonstrate to policy makers and the community the impact of senior volunteerism on a local and national level. This will help send the message that mature adults are making meaningful contributions, solving problems, and bringing our communities together.

- **Training Opportunities**

Learn new skills in areas related to your volunteer service and other areas of interest to you.

- **Community Involvement**

Through volunteering you will learn much more about your community, service providers, and other non-profit agencies.

- **Volunteer Recognition**

RSVP celebrates your accomplishments and honors the work that you

do. This takes a variety of forms, including special events, trainings, and opportunities offered to RSVP members.

- **Mileage and Supplemental Insurance**

As an RSVP member you will be eligible for mileage reimbursement for mileage to and from your volunteer position if you so wish. Please submit a signed Monterey Bay RSVP Volunteer Time Sheet and Reimbursement Request by the 10th of the month following your service if you do wish to be reimbursed.

In addition, you are covered by supplemental insurance (personal liability, excess automobile liability, and accident) when you volunteer. In the unfortunate event that something happens to you while volunteering, or while traveling to and from your volunteer position, the insurance will help cover deductions and out-of-pocket expenses related to the accident (see Appendix A).

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WHAT ARE A VOLUNTEER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

- **Attend the Volunteer Orientation and Trainings**

RSVP and its Partner Agencies conduct volunteer orientations and trainings to help make your volunteer experience enriching and of high quality. RSVP Volunteers must take advantage of these mandatory meetings and trainings and are encouraged to participate in optional events.

- **Follow Partner Agency Policies and Guidelines**

When volunteering you must follow the Partner Agency's policies and guidelines for volunteers. Any concerns regarding the policies and guidelines should be taken to the Partner Agency supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, contact the RSVP Program Coordinator.

Partner Agencies should orient you with the following information. If they do not, ask them for the information:

- o The history and purpose of the agency.
- o Your role at the agency, including a written 'job' description.
- o The impact your service has on the clients and/or community.
- o The kinds of clients the agency serves.
- o Who your supervisor(s) are.
- o The policies and procedures of the agency for a volunteer (i.e., attendance, dress code, check-in procedure for your job site, etc.).
- o What you can and cannot do while volunteering.
- o The location of restrooms, coat racks, workspace, parking areas, the lounge or lunch areas, etc.

o Who to go to with your questions and concerns.

- **Be On Time**

If you are unable to arrive at your scheduled time, or cannot serve at a designated time, please notify your Partner Agency supervisor with as much advance notice as possible.

- **Maintain Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between volunteers, clients, Partner Agencies, and RSVP. Some volunteer opportunities involve knowing sensitive information about the individuals being served. Issues or concerns regarding clients should only be discussed with the Partner Agency supervisor.

It is important never to release the name, address, phone number, or any other information that may identify the client to anyone outside the agency. Breach of confidentiality is cause for termination of all volunteer placements. For your own safety, it is also important to only release your personal details to RSVP and agency-designated staff.

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- **Report Volunteer Hours to Your Partner Agency**

It is important that RSVP knows how much time you spend volunteering at your assigned partner agency. It provides us with a record to validate dates of service when a supplemental insurance claim is necessary, and hours are used in progress reports to demonstrate RSVP's effectiveness to our funding sources. Volunteer hours indicate that you are an active volunteer, which allows you to participate in recognition events and remain eligible for the excess insurance coverage.

Your Partner Agency will report your hours to RSVP electronically on a monthly basis through our website, through email, or through phone contact. If for any reason your Partner Agency is not reporting your hours, please contact your Program Coordinator. Alternatively, we will follow up with you directly to obtain your hours and to touch base regarding your experiences.

- **Refrain from the Use of Drugs, including Alcohol**

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

- **Demonstrate Respect Toward Others**

RSVP and the Partner Agencies are committed to providing a safe environment for volunteers as well as an environment in which people are treated with dignity,

decency, and respect. You are expected to demonstrate these commitments while performing your hours of service. Failure to do so is cause for termination of all volunteer placements.

- **Report Accidents**

If you are involved in an accident while volunteering, report it immediately to both your Partner Agency supervisor and the RSVP Program Coordinator, even if you do not feel you need medical attention at the time.

- **Notify Us of Changes in Contact Information**

Notify your RSVP Program Coordinator if there are any changes in your contact information.

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER'S LEGAL STATUS?

RSVP Volunteers are NOT employees of the Partner Agency, the AmeriCorps Seniors, the Civic Service Institute, the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, the Corporation for National and Community Service, or the Federal Government.

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WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE PROHIBITED FOR VOLUNTEERS?

When at a Partner Agency providing services, you shall not:

- give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytizing
- participate in any activity that may be construed to influence the outcome of any election or engage in voter registration or lobbying activity
- perform any service or duty or engage in any activity which would supplant the hiring of, result in the displacement of, or impair existing contracts for service by paid providers of such activities

You also shall not perform any of the above activities while representing RSVP (including, but not limited to, wearing your RSVP name badge or other AmeriCorps Seniors identification).

REPORTING VOLUNTEER HOURS AND MILEAGE FOR REIMBURSEMENT

It is very important for RSVP, the Partner Agency, and the volunteer to record the volunteer's hours of service. For the volunteer, it is vital to ensuring receipt of the program benefits of secondary insurance. Recording hours documents the contribution RSVP volunteers are making in communities throughout our service areas and is a requirement

by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Volunteer hours will be reported on a monthly basis by the partner agency where you volunteer, or we will connect with you directly to obtain that information. Volunteers requesting mileage reimbursement will need to send in their signed RSVP Volunteer Time Sheet and Reimbursement Request. Both hours and mileage are due to RSVP by the 10th of the month for the preceding month.

HOW MAY VOLUNTEERS BE SEPARATED FROM RSVP?

Circumstances (e.g., move out of the area, extended illness) sometimes make it necessary for a volunteer to stop volunteering. If your circumstances change or you feel you need to make a change in your volunteer activities, please contact your local RSVP Program Coordinator. Sometimes it is necessary for RSVP to terminate a volunteer from RSVP volunteer service. RSVP may terminate an RSVP volunteer for cause including, but not limited to, extensive and unauthorized absences; misconduct; inability to perform assignments; a breach of confidentiality; working under the influence of illegal drugs or under the influence of alcohol; sexual harassment while volunteering; or workplace violence.

Any volunteer who is terminated is entitled to an appeal. The volunteer shall notify the AmeriCorps Seniors Director in writing of his/her desire to appeal within five (5) days of the date of the termination notice and may submit a written statement of explanation with the request. All appeals will be investigated by the AmeriCorps Seniors Director who will advise the appealing volunteer in writing of the decision within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal request. If this decision is unsatisfactory, the volunteer may appeal in writing within five (5) business days to the AmeriCorps Seniors Director, who will

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investigate and respond within thirty (30) days of receipt of appeal. The decision of the AmeriCorps Seniors Director is final.

AmeriCorps Seniors REQUIRED INFORMATION

It is our responsibility to make you, as an RSVP volunteer, aware of the following information:

Volunteers and grantee staff do not engage in, and grantee funds are not used for, any of the following activities, to the extent they are prohibited in the applicable program regulations: electoral activities, voter registration, voter transportation to polls, or efforts to influence legislation.

Volunteers do not engage in any activity which an employed worker would otherwise perform, or which would supplant the hiring of, or result in the displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for service.

Any volunteer station financial support of the AmeriCorps Seniors project

is not a precondition for that station to obtain volunteer service.

An AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer does not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, or members of their family or friends.

Grant funds are not used to finance labor or anti-labor organizations or related activity.

Laborers and mechanics employed for construction, alteration, or repair of facilities are paid prevailing rates as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with the Davis-Bacon Act, as amended.

Project staff or volunteers do not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in proselytization as part of their duties, and if the sponsor is an organization that conducts inherently religious activities, those activities are offered separately in time and location from the programs or services funded under the AmeriCorps Seniors grant.

CHANGES TO THE HANDBOOK

The Monterey Bay RSVP Program and its sponsor, the Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County, reserve the right to change this handbook at any time.

The Monterey Bay RSVP Program thanks you for your time and for your service!

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Appendix A

RSVP Supplemental Insurance

IMPORTANT! The following is secondary coverage. Any insurance the RSVP Volunteer has, such as Medicare, supplemental health insurance, or auto insurance shall be billed first.

ACCIDENT INSURANCE

Accident insurance covers RSVP Volunteers for personal injury during travel between their home and their volunteer station, while at the volunteer station, during meal periods, when a volunteer is providing services, and while attending training, recognition activities, and other Monterey Bay RSVP meetings.

PERSONAL LIABILITY

Personal liability protects the RSVP volunteer if sued for personal injury or property damage while doing your volunteer activity.

EXCESS AUTOMOBILE LIABILITY INSURANCE

Excess automobile liability insurance protects the RSVP Volunteer for both bodily injury or property damage if an automobile liability claim occurs while doing your volunteer activities, including driving from your home to the volunteer job site. This is liability insurance and does not include collision insurance.