



WELCOME PACKET

2024-2025 Service Year

SERVE WASHINGTON



AmeriCorps
Washington

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Swearing-in ceremony	4
Basic needs resources	
SNAP and income verification letter	5-6
Childcare, dentistry and miscellaneous assistance	7
Loan forbearance	8
National Service Days	9
Professional development	
Leader Corps	10
Serve Washington sponsored and other training	11
Wellness	
Member Assistance Program (MAP)	12
Share your service story	13
Engage with us on social media	14
Safety and civil rights	15
About Serve Washington	16

INTRODUCTION

Dear Incoming AmeriCorps member,

As you start your service journey, we want to take a moment to thank you. By serving in AmeriCorps, you join more than 5,500 people of all ages and backgrounds who have committed their time and talents to help communities in the state of Washington tackle their toughest challenges and positively impact the lives of countless individuals.

We recognize transitioning into service can be both exciting and challenging. This welcome packet is intended to give you resources to help you make this transition as smooth as possible. We created this packet based on input from past AmeriCorps members, program staff and supporters about what resources new AmeriCorps members might need at the beginning of service.

In this welcome packet, you'll find information and resources related to career development, training, networking, wellness and much more. Please note that some dates in this packet may be subject to change from the initial date of publication. Serve Washington and AmeriCorps program staff will notify you directly of any changes.

Stay up-to-date on AmeriCorps WA information in our AmeriCorps WA member newsletter! Serve Washington publishes a monthly newsletter for AmeriCorps members. It has information on upcoming AmeriCorps and Serve Washington events, trainings, resources, opportunities to connect with other AmeriCorps members and more! You'll be receiving these newsletters using the email you provided when you signed up for AmeriCorps. If there's a different email you prefer to use, you can change it in our [subscribe to email updates](#).

We believe national service, volunteerism and civic engagement are key to achieving equity, strengthening communities and improving lives. We also believe service can be a pathway to education and employment. We want to make sure you have all the tools and resources you need for success your service year and beyond. If you know of a resource that could be useful to a fellow AmeriCorps member that you'd like to see in this packet, send us a note! servewa@ofm.wa.gov or call (360) 902-0656.

Sincerely,

Trish Almond
Executive Director, Serve Washington

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

Swearing-in Ceremony

All AmeriCorps members--whether new, returning or somewhere in between--are invited to attend our AmeriCorps Swearing-in Ceremony & Launch. This "launch" of the service year celebrates AmeriCorps members' commitment to service. The ceremony gives members an opportunity to learn about other AmeriCorps programs in Washington state, be inspired by a keynote speaker and gain insights by hearing personal stories from alumni.

You'll receive an email from Serve Washington with details and registration information a few weeks before the event.

Save the date

Virtual Swearing-in Ceremony & Launch



Celebrate the start of your service journey!

Get motivated by inspirational speakers | Hear stories from AmeriCorps alums |
Network with other AmeriCorps members | Afternoon workshops

Thursday, October 30, 2024

Details and a registration link will be emailed to you soon

SERVE WASHINGTON  **AmeriCorps**
Washington

Launch workshops

Afterwards, you're invited to participate in some professional development workshops in the afternoon. They cover service-related topics and offer more chances for you to meet other AmeriCorps members and professionals, share experiences and grow your network.

Many AmeriCorps members who attend the Swearing-in ceremony and launch workshops say they receive valuable information they can use during and after their service year.

BASIC NEEDS ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Serve Washington understands it can be difficult to make ends meet solely on your AmeriCorps living allowance. Depending on your household income, you may qualify for various basic needs and assistance programs. We've compiled a list on the following pages.

Income verification letter

Some programs may require proof of your status as an AmeriCorps member and monthly stipend income. In this section, we've provided a [sample income verification letter](#) you can share with your primary service site staff to customize with your specific information. Make sure to have this document with you when applying for various types of assistance.



Food assistance

Washington's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP (also called Basic Food), provides monthly benefits to low-income individuals and families to buy food. It is provided through the Department of Social and Health Services, DSHS.

You can apply for SNAP [online](#) or at a local [community services office](#). If you have questions, you can read their [FAQs](#) or call 1-877-501-2233.



Additional tips to stretch your food budget

- Many local farmer's markets offer a SNAP matching program. SNAP matching programs can match amounts of dollars spent on food at the farmer's market with your EBT card. Some may even offer independent programs that offer additional savings or vouchers to spend at the farmer's market. Some local co-ops may have SNAP matching programs, too. Make sure to reach out to them to learn about the matching programs they may offer.
- Most communities have local food banks that offer fresh produce, meat and dairy items in addition to non-perishable foods. Northwest Harvest has a [tool](#) you can use to find a food bank in your area.

<Insert logo or type organization name here>

DATE: <Date of Letter>

TO: <Requestor>

FROM: <Sponsoring Organization>

SUBJECT Letter of Introduction for AmeriCorps Member – <Member Name>
Verification of income

To Whom It May Concern:

<Member Name> is an AmeriCorps member serving with our organization in partnership with Serve Washington. This member began their service on <Member Service Start Date> and the estimated date of completion is <Member Service End Date>. Please be advised that AmeriCorps members are stipended volunteers under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. Our AmeriCorps members receive a living allowance of \$<amount> (pre-tax) per month. The living allowance is dispersed twice a month on the 5th and 20th.

Because this AmeriCorps program is funded under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, income that the volunteer receives as a stipend is excluded as income for all DSHS cash, food assistance, and medical programs. Department rules on how to treat this source of income can be found under Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 388-450-0045.

Please note that AmeriCorps members shall not be denied assistance or services because of such volunteer's failure or refusal to register for, seek, or accept employment or training during the period of such service. This protection of benefits, provided at 42 U.S.C. § 5044, applies to any governmental program, including federal, state, and local programs.

Sincerely,

<Project Site Staff Name>

<Title>

<Contact Info>

cc: AmeriCorps Member's File

SERVE WASHINGTON



BASIC NEEDS ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Dentistry

Health insurance coverage for AmeriCorps does not include dentistry. However, there are clinics across the state that offer low-cost dentistry to low-income individuals. If you have a preferred provider, ask them about the type of low-cost services they may provide. You can also use the following websites to locate a dental service provider. Participation and amount of discounting will vary. It's a good idea to talk with multiple providers to find the one that's best for you.

Search providers by city: [Free Dental Care](#)

Search providers by county: [WA Free Clinics](#)

Childcare for AmeriCorps members

The AmeriCorps Childcare Benefit Program is available for qualified, active, full-time AmeriCorps VISTA, NCCC, state and national members who need the benefit to serve. Childcare benefits are paid directly to qualified providers for all or part of the AmeriCorps member's childcare costs during their active time of service.

Visit the AmeriCorps [Childcare Benefit Program website](#) to learn more.

Internet

The federal Affordable Connectivity Program, ACP, offers qualifying households \$30 off their monthly internet service bill. Visit the [ACP website](#) to see if you qualify and view a list of participating internet service providers.

Miscellaneous reduced costs and services

The Washington Department of Social and Health Services' Economic Services Administration publishes an annual [Reduced Cost Services Guide](#) for various products and services in local communities. This includes internet, utilities, food, telephone, transportation, prescription drugs and various recreational activities.

LOAN FORBEARANCE

One of the benefits you have as an AmeriCorps member is the ability to defer payments on qualified existing student loans while you are serving. This is called forbearance. To get started, you will need to log in to your [MyAmeriCorps](#) account.

Request forbearance on your qualified loans

Requesting forbearance on your student loan is a very simple process. Just follow the steps below:

1. From the member's homepage on *My AmeriCorps*, click on "Create Forbearance Request."
2. Verify that all of the pre-populated information on your request form is correct.
3. If you served more than one term of service, select the dates of service for which you are requesting forbearance.
4. Search for and select your financial institution.
5. Once you click the "Submit" button, your forbearance request will be sent to your financial institution for them to process.

Please note that it may take up to *two weeks* after you have started service for the "Create Forbearance Request" link to appear.

If you need to have a forbearance request processed and the option is not yet appearing, please place a request using the "Contact My AmeriCorps" link at the top of the "My AmeriCorps" screen.

For more information on loan forbearance, please visit the [MyAmeriCorps](#) website.

NATIONAL SERVICE DAYS & SPECIAL INITIATIVES

As an AmeriCorps member you're invited to participate in service projects to commemorate National Days of Service and other special initiatives. [AmeriCorps](#) regularly has webinars and toolkits to help prepare AmeriCorps members for these special initiatives about a month in advance. AmeriCorps will send you notices of these special service days in the email you provided when you signed up for AmeriCorps. They also post recordings of the webinars on [YouTube](#).

National Service Days are also great opportunities to invite outside media, Serve Washington [commissioners](#) and elected officials to "tour" your program. Your program staff or host organization's communications coordinator should be able to help you with media outreach. If you or your service site need additional help, please contact [Serve Washington](#). And if a VIP does tour your site, let us know!



National Days of Service

September 11 - National Day of Service: In the years following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, AmeriCorps joined families who lost loved ones during the attacks to get Congress to designate Sept. 11 as a National Day of Service in their memory.

Martin Luther King Day of Service - January 20, 2025: This National Day of Service commemorates the life and legacy of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by encouraging everyone to volunteer in their communities.

AmeriCorps Week - March 9-15, 2025: This week celebrates the service of all AmeriCorps members! Many programs will have special AmeriCorps-themed activities and recognition events.

Day of the "A" - March 12: Wear your AmeriCorps gear and share photos of your AmeriCorps "A"s.

César Chávez Day of Service: March 31, 2025: This National Day of Service honors Chávez's legacy of fighting for farmworker and worker rights and economic justice of the poor and disenfranchised.

Earth Day - April 22, 2025: Many programs do service projects on this day that relate to preserving and protecting the planet's natural resources for future generations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Leader Corps



One of the benefits of national service is the ability to gain new skills and sharpen existing ones. Each service year, Serve Washington hosts a Leader Corps training for all AmeriCorps members interested in deepening their leadership skills.

Leader Corps makes it easy for participants to get a deeper understanding of effective leadership. In this training, you'll explore frameworks and tools to develop awareness and skills such in:

- critical leadership theory
- understanding leadership styles
- effective facilitation skills
- giving and receiving feedback
- practicing pro-equity and anti-racism in service and leadership

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Consultant, educator and experienced trainer Jeff Birdsall and Executive Director for the University of Washington's Community Engagement, and Leadership Education Center (CELE), Francesca Lo, facilitate the course.

Leader Corps' sessions take place in February and March. Space is limited and we recommend registering as soon as registration opens. You'll receive an email from Serve Washington staff with registration information a few weeks prior to the start of Leader Corps.

Serve WA training and technical assistance workshops

Serve Washington offers free training and technical assistance workshops to the public throughout the year that often feature topics AmeriCorps members may find useful. Topics vary from year to year. Past workshop subjects include using a people-centered approach to volunteering, volunteer supervision fundamentals, volunteer retention, fund development, nonprofit storytelling and more. Notices for these events will be posted on Serve Washington's calendar of events page on our [website](#) as well as in your AmeriCorps WA member newsletter. Your program director is also responsible for forwarding notices about Serve Washington AmeriCorps-related training to members with registration instructions.

Other workshops

Many organizations like the [Nonprofit Association of Washington](#), [Philanthropy Northwest](#) and the [Washington Emergency Management Division](#) host various trainings throughout the year. These trainings are not affiliated with Serve Washington, but we share some of them in your AmeriCorps Washington member newsletter because they may feature topics related to your service. Some are free, while others have various costs associated with them. If you are interested in attending any of these trainings, consult your program staff.

Free college-level classes at your local library

Most libraries have have subscriptions to platforms such as LinkedIn Learning, Coursera and others that offer free college-level courses on hundreds of topics like non-profit management, software applications, job interviewing and more! All you need is internet access and a library card. Visit your local library's website to learn more.

WELLNESS

Member Assistance Program (MAP)



During your service year, you may experience various levels of stress. It's not uncommon to be exposed to secondary trauma or feel pressure. We understand that too much stress can impact your ability to serve.

Many AmeriCorps programs offer a Member Assistance Program, MAP. The MAP provides accessible, quality mental health care services. Serve Washington has made MAP available to AmeriCorps members serving in programs funded through Serve Washington.

MAP services include:

- A toll-free telephonic mental health counseling services with master's degree-level counselors available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- A mobile app that lets you chat with a professional, take part in video counseling, and browse through a web portal of resources
- Medical advocacy
- Life coaching
- Legal/financial resources (30-minute free consultations)
- Three face-to-face counseling sessions (To request, call the 1-800 number and request face-to-face counseling)
- Work/life resources and referrals

Orientation webinar: Check out this [webinar](#) that gives an overview of the MAP.

Accessing MAP: Call **1-800-451-1834**. When you call in, be ready to provide the AmeriCorps program name or organization you are serving with. For example, when asked what organization you are with, respond with, "I am an AmeriCorps member with Serve Washington at [ORGANIZATION NAME]". You can also access the MAP program [online](#). When creating your profile, enter "AmeriCorps" in the "company code" section.

SHARE YOUR SERVICE STORY

Share your Great Service Story!

We love to hear from AmeriCorps members about their service experiences. Sharing your stories can often inspire others to serve.

We accept stories on a rolling basis. Stories are shared to our [Volunteer Story Blog](#), social media and in your AmeriCorps WA member newsletter.

Sharing your story is easy! You can upload text, photos and videos with the click of a button on our [Great Stories form](#).



Story Ideas

Use some of these prompts for your story or come up with your own!

Program in the spotlight: Is there something compelling your program is doing to strengthen your community? How has your program supported you during your service journey?

Why I serve: Tell us what it's like to serve. What's does service mean to you? Did something happen while you were serving that made you smile? How has your service helped you grow? Take readers along on a "Day in the life of Service," or share something unique about your service you think others would enjoy learning about.

Service tips: What's a challenge you've overcome? What's something you've done that has helped you succeed that you think might be useful advice to other AmeriCorps members?

Other ideas: If your service ties into any of these themes, let them inspire a story!

September - Preparedness month, 9/11 Day of Service, Back to School, Public Lands Day (28)

October - Indigenous People's Day (14) Make a Difference Day (24), LGBTQIA+ History Month

November - Veterans & Military Families Month, Native American Heritage Month

January - MLK Day of Service (20), National Mentoring Month

February - Black History Month, Invasive Species Awareness Week (24-28)

March - AmeriCorps Week (9-15), Women's History Month

April - Volunteer Appreciation Month, Drop Everything and Read Day (12) Earth Day (22)

May - Older Americans Month, Asia Pacific Heritage Month, Public Service Recognition Week (4-10)

June - LGBTQIA+ Pride Month, Juneteenth (19), Great Outdoors Month

July - Disability Independence Day (26)

August - Women's Equality Day (26)

ENGAGE WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

An easy way to share information about your program and learn about other AmeriCorps programs is through social media.

Serve Washington regularly shares photos and news about AmeriCorps programs on Facebook, social media platform X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. We also post information about the state Community Emergency Response Team, CERT, programs and other news and initiatives about volunteering in Washington.

Feel free to tag us in your service stories and photos!



Additional Tips:

- Tag your service site's social media accounts, if they have them, in your posts. If they have a communications coordinator, work with them to share your content on their official accounts.
- If anyone in your picture is not an AmeriCorps member or program staff, make sure to get their permission before taking and posting the picture.
- Be creative! People standing and smiling are great, but showing people performing acts of service are particularly impactful. Ask yourself: If there was an image that *shows* what it's like to serve, what would that be?
- When adding hashtags, it's helpful to use "camel case", capitalizing the first letter of each word. Example: #WeServeWA. It improves accessibility. Screen readers can't identify individual words without camel case.
- Wear your AmeriCorps gear if you have it!

SAFETY & CIVIL RIGHTS

Safety

All AmeriCorps members have the right to serve in a safe environment and be treated with dignity and respect. All programs must provide a safe service environment for all AmeriCorps members and volunteers.

If you are experiencing a threat to your safety or security, and you are not comfortable talking about it with your program leaders, sponsor supervisors or local law enforcement, call the **AmeriCorps National Service Hotline** at **1-800-942-2677**. Phones are open weekdays between 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time. You may also leave a message during non-business hours, and your call will be returned as soon as possible during business hours. AmeriCorps also has a [live chat and webform](#) if you prefer to talk online.

Discrimination

To report discrimination in AmeriCorps programs, call **202-606-3461** or eo@cns.gov.

Sexual Harassment

The National Sexual Harassment Hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call **1-800-656 HOPE (4673)**

For all other safety or security issues or if you believe your service environment is not safe or secure you can share your concerns and questions directly with AmeriCorps by calling **202-606-3999** or email healthandsafety@cns.gov

Civil Rights

AmeriCorps has a zero tolerance for unlawful harassment of anyone engaged in national service. Our agency prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, national origin, gender, age (40 and over), religion, sexual orientation, disability (mental or physical), gender identity or expression, political affiliation, marital or parental status, pregnancy, reprisal, genetic information (including family medical history), or military service. All programs administered by or receiving federal financial assistance from AmeriCorps must be free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

Service members, volunteers, employees, and applicants for Federal employment who wish to file a discrimination complaint may do so by sending an email message to eo@cns.gov or by leaving a voice message on the **Civil Rights Hotline at 1-202-606-3461**. Calls to the hotline will be returned within 24 hours.

ABOUT SERVE WASHINGTON

Mission

Serve Washington advances national service, volunteerism and civic engagement to improve lives; expands opportunity to meet the local critical needs of residents of Washington; and strengthens community capacity while creating healthy and resilient communities.

Vision

National service, volunteerism, and civic engagement are the foundation for caring communities and a thriving Washington.

What We Do:

Serve Washington promotes and grows volunteer efforts in the state of Washington. These include the AmeriCorps, Washington Climate Corps Network and Community Emergency Response Team, CERT, programs.

We are the state commission on service and volunteerism. We are also a grantmaking partner of the AmeriCorps agency. A group of governor-appointed commissioners guides our work.

Our work helps organizations develop, launch and maintain AmeriCorps programs. We do this by providing programs training, technical assistance and monitoring. We also give AmeriCorps staff and AmeriCorps members the chance to learn and celebrate volunteerism together. Read our latest [State Service Plan here](#).

For questions about our programs and opportunities, please contact us.

Mailing Address | Serve Washington PO Box 43113 Olympia, WA 98504-3113

Physical Address | 302 Sid Snyder Ave. SW Room 140 Olympia, WA 98501-1324

Phone Number | 360-902-0656

Email | servewa@ofm.wa.gov

Fax | 360-902-7315

Website | servewashington.wa.gov