

# SCA Conservation Corps

## Member Handbook



*The Student Conservation Association*

*SCA is a nonprofit educational organization that considers all qualified applicants without regard to race, creed, sex, color, national origin, or age (subject to age eligibility)*

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## THE SCA MISSION:

*To build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land.*

### 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.



*SCA Conservation Corps programs operate in partnership with federal, state and local agencies, and non-profit organizations.*

<i>SCA Mission and AmeriCorps Pledge</i> .....	iii
Conservation Corps National Staff.....	6
<b>Introduction</b> .....	7
SCA Conservation Corps Mission and Objectives.....	7
<b>SCA Conservation Corps Policies and Guidelines</b> .....	9-16
Advisory on Workplace Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy .....	9
Reasonable Accommodation .....	10
Full Involvement .....	10
Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs, Drug Free Workplace .....	11
Attire .....	12
Community Living Standards.....	12
General Safety and Emergency Action.....	13
Grievance Procedure .....	13
Personal Behavior.....	14
Standard of Service .....	14
Required Personal Protective Equipment Disclosure .....	14
Vehicle Use, Insurance, Safety.....	15
Weapons .....	15
<b>Risk Management at the SCA</b> .....	<b>16-17</b>
<b>Member Benefit Information</b> .....	<b>18-25</b>
Service Schedules.....	18
US Bank Focus Card and WebPay by Paylocity (Online Statements) .....	18-21
Travel Policy .....	22-23
Time Off.....	24
Worker’s Compensation Insurance.....	25
<b>SCA AmeriCorps Programs</b> .....	<b>26-30</b>
Eligibility .....	26
Requirements.....	27
Prohibited Activities.....	28
Suspension and Termination from Service.....	29
Resources .....	30
<b>Serious Points to Ponder</b> .....	<b>31</b>





## ***CONSERVATION CORPS NATIONAL STAFF***

**Definition of Staff:** “Staff” refers to those people who are paid employees of the organization. Though many people contribute to SCA programming, below is a list of national staff members with whom you may be in contact. For a list of staff directly overseeing your specific program, please speak to your SCA supervisor.

### **Vice President of Program**

**Laura Herrin**  
(Arlington, VA)

The National Director has overall responsibility for the direction of SCA’s Conservation Corps and Conservation Internship programs. This includes financial and programmatic sustainability, leadership staff supervision and strategic planning.

### **Regional Program Directors:**

**Jarrold Ball (Seattle, WA)**  
**Colin Taylor (Chicago, IL)**  
**Rachel Lettre (Arlington, VA)**

The Regional Program Director has overall responsibility for the operations of all programs in their respective region. Regional Program Directors primarily focus on risk management, program quality, training, evaluation and field excellence for all programs.

### **Regional Program Managers:**

**Kathy Baugh - Northeast (New Paltz, NY)**  
**Ted Miller –Midwest (Pittsburgh, PA)**  
**Tobias Bokum-Fauth - Southeast/Mid-Atlantic (Arlington, VA)**  
**Tom Moutsos – Northwest/Southwest (Oakland, CA)**

The Regional Program Managers (RPMs) oversee all programming in their respective regions and provide support and direction to program staff, including, Coordinators and Project Leaders.

## INTRODUCTION

**SCA** is the nation's oldest and largest provider of conservation service opportunities for young people. Each year SCA provides the opportunity for approximately 4,000 people to serve public lands in all 50 states. We accomplish these service projects through a wide variety of settings and program models, including our **Conservation Corps** program, which places teams of young adults in specialized projects managed directly by SCA field staff.

*This handbook is an important part of each SCA Conservation Corps program. It defines the overarching role of the SCA as well as program policies and guidelines. It is an integral part of the responsibility you have with SCA and for some, AmeriCorps. It is, however, an overview and the policies and benefits stated herein are subject to change. At all times, local policies and the most currently adopted Field Operations Standards will set forth the current policies for your program. Both are to be referred to and followed.*

### **CONSERVATION CORPS PROGRAM MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

*The SCA Conservation Corps program mission is to serve the communities and land throughout the nation by accomplishing significant conservation service projects that enhance and protect natural areas and by providing educational opportunities to promote the understanding, protection and stewardship of these natural areas.*

Conservation Corps programs have three broad goals: Fulfilling significant unmet needs through Direct Service, Strengthening Communities, and Developing Members. Each program further outlines objectives within these goals in conjunction with its partner agencies. In meeting these objectives, members partake in a variety of activities during the course of their service, many of which are listed in your position description. We encourage each member to become familiar with specific program goals and objectives, as well as take part in measuring and evaluating their success. Across the country, conservation members achieve a number of important objectives through a variety of activities. To provide a scope of what your fellow members are doing, we have listed some of their activities below:

- Involve and educate community members through development of learning resources and active participation in volunteer opportunities
- Identify, monitor, and map flora and fauna species and human-made structures using GPS and GIS
- Develop and deliver environmental education and stewardship lessons
- Develop and lead conservation and community service learning activities
- Collect seeds of native plant species
- Construct and maintain trails and trail structures
- Engage in conservation efforts on community and state public lands.
- Assist teaching environmental education, tutoring, and running community service programs in schools; mentoring local youth and providing positive role models.
- Serve collaboratively with other programs and community partners.
- Restore habitats
- Remove exotic invasive plant species
- Provide reports and recommendations on program efforts
- Develop personal responsibility, citizenship, environmental stewardship, interpersonal skills, and leadership effectiveness

## SCA CONSERVATION CORPS POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

In your agreement to participate in a SCA Conservation Corps program, you have made a choice that requires you to take on added responsibilities which affect you and your community. These policies and guidelines were written with the consideration of your safety and wellbeing. It is important that you know and respect these policies, and adhere to them. Infractions can lead to disciplinary action and may mean possible dismissal from the program as outlined in this handbook. You are encouraged to ask questions about these policies so that you may understand their justifications.

In addition to SCA's policies and guidelines, you may also be required to follow the policies and guidelines of the program and/or agency with whom you are working.

Being a member of an SCA Corps program requires a degree of sacrifice on the part of all members and staff. You will not be able to think solely of yourself during the course of the program. Your actions will affect everyone else in the program as well as the future standing of the program and the program's reputation in the community. The following policies have been developed to maintain the integrity of the program and many of the policies are non-negotiable. If, after reading through these policies, you feel that you will be unable to abide by the policies set forth, perhaps you may want to reconsider being a member of a Conservation Corps program. Please inform the staff if you think that this program may not be a good match for you.

**Remember:** Your goals, values, and beliefs brought you to this program and those same goals, values, and beliefs are reflected in what we do as an organization and how we make it happen on the ground. It is a much more appropriate response to say, "We don't..." or "We do..." rather than "We can't..." or "We have to..."

### ***ADVISORY ON WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT***

We are confident that in your upcoming term of service, you will meet resource management and conservation professionals of the highest personal and professional integrity. Some of these people will inspire you, serve as mentors, and have a lasting effect on the rest of your life. You will come to value and treasure your opportunity to work side by side with these experienced professionals.

In the workplace (even one as professional as those of our cooperating agencies), discrimination can occur. It is the policy of all of our partner agencies to maintain a workplace environment free from any type of discriminatory conduct, including making statements or jokes, or committing acts regarding a person's race, color, national origin, religion, gender, physical condition, age, marital status or sexual orientation that are offensive, derogatory, or harassing.

Sexual harassment can consist of but is not limited to verbal comments, gestures and/or physical contact which are based on sex, repeated, unwanted and unsolicited.

Sexual harassment can take the form of unwelcome verbal comments, jokes, suggestions or derogatory remarks based on sex; unwelcome physical touching, pats, squeezes, repeated brushing against or the impeding or blocking of one's movement; unwelcome visual harassment, sexually suggestive or derogatory pictures, comments about appearance, drawings or cartoons; unwelcome communications, notes, phone calls or electronic mail. This may include words or actions the initiator intends to be "harmless," benign or playful, but which may not be so perceived by the recipient or an onlooker.

From your perspective, you should take seriously and not tolerate any conduct that makes you feel uncomfortable, degraded or intimidated. Also, do not ignore offensive behavior because it occurs outside of

work hours. Members are encouraged to take action when they believe sexual or other harassment has occurred. Where appropriate, members should express their discomfort to the harasser. Members should also report instances of harassment to their crew leader. Members should always feel free to bypass crew leader and report instances of harassment to SCA's Human Resources Department or through the 1-800-YO-SOGGY .

*Please see Reporting Employee Sensitive Issues section for more information.*

It is the purpose of this policy to provide a communication channel for members to report instances of sexual or other harassment. Retaliation against an individual for reporting an instance of sexual or other harassment is prohibited and may be grounds for dismissal. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and promptly. Information related to the complaint will be held in confidence to the extent consistent with a full and fair investigation. If an investigation reveals that harassment has occurred, disciplinary action will be taken to stop the harassment and to prevent harassment in the future.

No action will be taken against any individual who makes a good faith complaint or against any individual participating in the investigation or enforcement of this policy. However, any individual who knowingly makes a false claim of harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action including possible termination.

Harassment negatively affects job performance, productivity, morale, and future employment opportunities. Harassment is offensive, inappropriate and illegal. Violators of SCA's harassment policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

### ***REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION***

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, members have the right to reasonable accommodations to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability, unless the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service activity. Members may request reasonable accommodations by submitting a request to their SCA program staff.

### ***FULL INVOLVEMENT***

- Members are expected to participate in all program activities and to be physically present and mentally ready to begin at designated times. You are responsible for communicating with your supervisor if you will be late or absent, or if you are ill. Failure to notify your supervisors will result in an unauthorized absence and may result in disciplinary action being taken.
- Agency partners and SCA rely on members to be fully motivated and able to take initiative independently.
- Members are expected to act in conformance with, and abide by, all current and future rules and procedures established by SCA, as well as verbal and written warnings, probation, suspension, and/or dismissal from the program. This includes wearing appropriate clothing and conforming to Agency standards for personal appearance.

## ***ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUGS***

SCA understands that adults of legal drinking age may choose to consume alcohol after work hours and off program time during their term of service with SCA. Instead of prohibiting this activity, SCA strives to foster a culture of personal and professional responsibility where the consumption of alcohol by legal adults may be done in a responsible manner. With this in mind, alcohol consumption while an SCA member is a privilege and not a right. If the consumption of alcohol becomes a management or safety issue, SCA may revoke this privilege. Please note that some SCA programs cannot permit consumption or storage of alcohol in their housing facilities due to specific regulations made by each partner with whom we work.

### **Alcohol is sometimes permitted in SCA rented/leased/donated housing, with the following caveats:**

- **Every SCA program has different regulations based on location, state laws, and partner requests.**
- Where alcohol consumption is prohibited by the SCA partner or facility, it will necessarily be prohibited by SCA. Alcohol consumption must be done in accordance with all local, state and federal laws. See your supervisor for more specific rules and regulations regarding your site.
- There may be no partying in SCA housing (e.g., coolers, kegs of beer).
- The consumption of alcohol may not infringe on the SCA experience of other members in the dwelling.
- It is unlawful for minors to be offered or to consume alcohol.
- No driver of an SCA vehicle may consume alcohol.
- Alcohol consumption may not negatively influence a member's performance during their service.
- Alcohol consumption is not permitted on a field-based hitch.
- It is prohibited to either consume or be under the influence of alcohol during service hours.
- Per SCA vehicle standards, alcohol is not permitted in SCA vehicles (see *SCA Field Operation Standards 1.2.3*).
- Corps members must recognize that they are functioning as part of a team and must conduct themselves so as to increase the efficacy of the team. Alcohol consumption which negatively affects the team is not permitted.
- Any behavior occurring off-time that is unbecoming of an SCA member or that negatively impacts SCA's partners or the communities in which we work is grounds for dismissal.

### **Tobacco**

- The use of tobacco products is prohibited within or near any SCA facility, including housing provided to members. Tobacco use is permitted when it is both legal and approved by program management, during break time (including breaks during the workday), and only in designated areas. SCA-branded clothing, patches, stickers, etc. must either be removed or covered when using tobacco (including chewing and smoking) and we expect cigarettes and other tobacco products to be disposed of in a way that is consistent with our environmentally-responsible values.

### **Drugs**

- Use of illegal drugs or improper use of prescription drugs is expressly prohibited. Any violation may be cause for dismissal.

## ***DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE***

SCA Conservation Corps programs support a philosophy that strives to eliminate all use of illegal drugs as well as the misuse of legal drugs. **It is unlawful to manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use a non-prescribed controlled substance on the program site.** Your supervisor can provide you with information on a drug-free workplace, including any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and member assistance programs.

## ***ATTIRE***

- SCA and agency partners may provide uniform items for use during service hours. Your direct supervisor will determine the specific uniform requirements for your program. Uniforms should be respected and therefore not physically altered (i.e. sleeves removed, collars ripped off).
- In general, clothing should be clean, neat, and language appropriate. Members are not permitted to wear any type of garment that has drug, alcohol or profane language or imagery while providing service.

## ***COMMUNITY LIVING STANDARDS***

When a group of people live together in close proximity, it is important to establish guidelines that promote shared responsibility and to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. In Conservation Corps programs, you are not only responsible *for yourself*; you are also responsible *for your fellow members, Coordinators and Staff* who are looking out for your safety and wellbeing. It is essential to follow these guidelines to maintain *everyone's* physical health and wellbeing. Your actions will affect everyone else on your team as well as the future standing of the project and the program's reputation in the community. These guidelines are not restrictions, but rather, responsibilities, which we depend on you to follow.

- You are strongly encouraged to let someone know your whereabouts at all times whether out on a hike, on a trip to town, or sitting by the lake – it is a common sense action that can prevent tragedies.
- Safety guidelines for the program site will be established as a team and must be observed at all times.
- Chores will be arranged by the team and rotate daily and weekly. You are responsible for knowing the schedule.
- The team will establish quiet times and policies for the living quarters.
- Respectful behavior: Any request made by a participant regarding behavior in the living space will be heard, and all involved parties will work to meet a resolution that each considers fair.
- Personal Hygiene: It is important to maintain high personal hygiene standards not only for your health and wellbeing, but also for the health and safety of the people you live with.
- Living quarters of members must be kept neat and well organized and should be cleaned on a regular basis.
- The kitchen area, as well as food and supply areas, must be carefully organized and kept clean for sanitary reasons. Dishes should be cleaned immediately after meals and not left out.
- Exclusive and/or sexual relations between members are discouraged. The program provides an incredible opportunity to learn about yourself and others through active participation in all components and there are many things to take advantage of. Being in an exclusive relationship can deny you these opportunities. A relationship in this program affects everyone in the program and will be an issue of group discussion if it should come up.
- SCA provides housing for many programs. If you reside at such a residence, you are held accountable for any deliberate damage that may occur. The program expects that you respect the housing which it provides.
- If dismissal occurs, the member has, on average, 24 hours to vacate the premises, depending on circumstances.
- In the event of an early departure or dismissal, the circumstances of the event will be reviewed by Member Services and Corps leadership staff. A determination will be made as to whether the member will remain eligible for future opportunities or placed on "inactive" status for up to one year. The member will be notified of their ineligibility status and subsequent steps by email.

## ***GENERAL SAFETY AND EMERGENCY ACTION***

- First aid kits must always be close at hand within the site facilities, at all program sites, in camp, and in program vehicles. Everyone is responsible for knowing the locations of the kits.
- Medical release forms, emergency contact cards, the Emergency Response Plan and copies of medical records must be kept accessible, and copies should be in each vehicle and trail first aid kits. Everyone must be familiar with emergency procedures.
- You are strongly encouraged to let someone know where you have gone when away from the program site in case you need to be contacted for an emergency.
- You must report every near miss, minor and (of course) major injury or illness to program staff. Incident reports must be filed by staff with names, dates, times, locations, conditions, numbers, decisions, and actions. In the course of the workday, injuries covered by Workers' Compensation must be reported as such to staff immediately and to hospital personnel upon admittance.
- Any illness or medical situation which may impact personal or group safety or service performance must be immediately reported to program staff.
- A seriously ill person should never be left alone.
- While cooking at an SCA facility or house, during a service event, or while in spike camp, closed toed shoes must be worn at all times in the kitchen and cooking areas for safety purposes.
- All on-time rock climbing, horseback riding, and caving activities must be led by an SCA approved outfitter.
- The National Director of Risk Management must approve any whitewater activity during program time. Any whitewater activity during program time must be led by an SCA approved outfitter.
- Your supervisor must be informed of any visitor who is staying for prolonged periods of time at SCA housing or who may be volunteering.
- Members are not allowed to have pets at any project facility or work site. Permanent staff may have pets on site if an exemption request has been approved by the National Director of Risk Management. Members who are not comfortable with, feel threatened by, or have allergies to staff pets should express their concerns to program staff immediately.

## ***GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE***

If an issue arises, please follow the grievance procedure, which asks members or other aggrieved parties to first attempt to settle the problem with each other on a one-on-one basis, then involve SCA staff or the host site supervisor. If these attempts are unsuccessful, SCA will facilitate a conversation to move the issue to resolution and include other management staff as necessary. If the resolution is unsatisfactory, members have the right to write to the Operations Director for the program outlining the issue and requested resolution within 30 days of the initial issue.

If the issue cannot be solved by this series of informal methods, SCA has a formal grievance procedure, which consists of:

- First, alternative dispute resolution facilitated by a neutral party.
- If the matter is not resolved, the aggrieved party has the right to file a formal grievance.
- The program staff may arrange one or more pre-hearing conferences to facilitate a mutually agreeable resolution or narrow the issues to be decided at a hearing.
- If the matter is still unresolved, the formal hearing will be held.
- If the decision of the hearing is adverse to the grievant, the filing party may submit the grievance to binding arbitration.

## ***PERSONAL BEHAVIOR***

- Violent and aggressive behavior will not be tolerated and may be considered grounds for dismissal.
- Religious customs must be respected.
- Sexism and racism will not be tolerated and may be considered grounds for dismissal.
- Members are expected to be respectful and considerate of each other, the staff, agency partners, and the public at all times.
- During those times when not engaged in officially sanctioned program activities, members are neither under the supervision of SCA, nor is SCA responsible or liable for a member's personal actions or safety. However, off duty conduct is of concern if it reflects adversely upon the dignity, integrity, or prestige of SCA or the Agency for which you serve.
- Members in a team/residential placement are expected to complete their share of chores and work duties, as established by the team.
- Members are not allowed to engage in any type of relationship with students of any school in which they provide service. Relationships between members and staff are unprofessional and inappropriate and may be cause for dismissal.

## ***STANDARD OF SERVICE***

The SCA Conservation Corps programs began service in 1994. Over time a high quality standard of service has been set and the reputation of each program is very strong. High expectations prevail and they are deserved. The character, experiences, and skills of the members of these programs have succeeded in making a real impact in communities across the country and many people have invested a great deal of effort and resources in building the projects. As a member, you will be following in these footsteps. Your own personal standard of service must be set high and maintained. You are expected to carry out the duties prescribed to you in all the various elements of your program, to provide the highest quality of service possible, and perform at the peak of your capabilities. It is a lot of hard work, but the rewards are tremendous.

## ***REQUIRED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT DISCLOSURE***

Because the health and safety of all of SCA's members, interns and staff is a top priority, you may be required to use various forms of personal protective equipment (PPE). The PPE that you may be required to use includes, but is not limited to the following: hard hats, sturdy boots, long sleeve clothing, eye protection, hearing protection, chainsaw chaps, gloves, chemical barriers/insect repellents and sunscreen. Depending on the environment in which you will be working and the job in which you will be engaged, the specific PPE requirements will vary; however, the use of whatever PPE that SCA determines to be necessary will be a condition of your service or employment.

## ***VEHICLE USE, INSURANCE, AND SAFETY***

### SCA rented, leased or owned vehicles:

- Seat belts must be worn while riding in or driving any SCA or personal vehicle during all program related activities. **Riding in the bed of a moving pick-up truck is prohibited.**
- SCA vehicles must always be equipped with the appropriate emergency gear, including a first aid kit, flashlight, jumper cables, fire extinguisher, emergency cash, and cell phone (with charger).
- When transporting tools or other sharp or heavy objects, you must follow SCA tool transportation guidelines.
- When traveling more than an hour from the host site, or when staying overnight for work purposes, an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) must be completed and approved by the SCA project staff.
- Members over age 21 who have completed the SCA defensive driving course may be allowed to drive project vehicles or vans if approved by your supervisor.
- No hitchhikers may be given rides. Only SCA staff and members are permitted to be in an SCA vehicle, unless otherwise approved ahead of time by the SCA program staff.
- Posted speed limits and state driving laws must be adhered to at all times.
- Any SCA staff has full authority to deny SCA driving privileges to any member at any given time.
- SCA vehicles are to be used primarily for official work purposes. Any use of an SCA vehicle for personal purposes must be approved by a program staff member, and in most instances, a Personal Release of Liability may need to be completed by the participants and approved by program staff.
- If you are working with any of the federal agencies, you may need an Operator's Permit before you may drive any government vehicle. If so, you should not drive a government vehicle without it. Before driving any government vehicle, you must learn all the rules, regulations and operator maintenance procedures applicable to that vehicle and in your area. Whether you are driver or passenger, all the above continue to apply at any time you are in a government vehicle.
- You may **never** use a government vehicle for personal use. To do so exposes you to the entire liability for any accident, damage or injury.

### Insurance

- SCA does not insure members against theft of personal property. It is recommended that members purchase personal property insurance for the duration of the program.

### Personal Vehicles:

- Members are allowed to have their own vehicles which may be used if a certificate of insurance has been filed with SCA, a driving record check has been completed, the driver has been approved for the insurance coverage *and their supervisor has provided permission*. **SCA members or staff under 21 MAY NOT transport other members or staff.**
- SCA's insurance will not provide coverage for personal vehicles for any vehicle accidents occurring on or off duty. The only exception is when personal liability limits have been exceeded, in which case SCA's insurance may respond on an excess basis.
- When transporting participants in personal vehicles, members are required to have the following insurance coverage: 1) \$100,000 for bodily injury per person; 2) \$300,000 for bodily injury per accident; 3) a minimum of \$50,000 for property damage per accident. Members will be required to submit a Certificate of Insurance to their SCA supervisor prior to transporting members in their personal vehicle. The Certificate must outline the limits of the policy in regards to bodily injury, property damage, and medical payments.

## ***WEAPONS***

Weapons, including guns, hunting knives and other similar objects are strictly prohibited from SCA vehicles and housing. Violation of the weapon policy may be grounds for dismissal.

## ***RISK MANAGEMENT AT SCA***

Contrary to popular assumptions, managing risk does not mean avoiding or eliminating risk – in fact, it requires that we understand and embrace a certain amount of risk in order to then manage it to an acceptable level. If we wanted to eliminate risk altogether, we would not be running programs in the environments in which we operate – and more importantly, we would not be achieving our mission. SCA’s mission *demands* that we accept a certain amount of risk (or uncertainty). But how do we know how much to accept? What potential consequences are acceptable, and which are unacceptable? The answer to this question – balancing mission with risk tolerance – is at the heart of our approach, which we call “**Mission-Driven Risk Management.**”

### ***SCA’S RISK MANAGEMENT GOAL***

SCA’s risk management goal is to “**fulfill our mission in potentially hazardous environments without personal or organizational loss.**” This means that we will take the risks necessary to fulfill our mission, but not to the point where people, property, or SCA as an organization is accepting damage or injury. Getting injured or damaging equipment is not a necessary part of the SCA experience – in fact, we actively attempt to identify hazards and minimize them to whatever extent possible while still achieving our goals.

### **Hazards vs. Risks**

- A **hazard** is anything that can be a source of damage or injury (for example, lightning).
- A **risk** occurs when we choose to expose ourselves to that hazard (for example, choosing to camp atop a mountain during a lightning storm).

*We can’t eliminate all hazards – but we can try to accurately assess and identify them, and manage them to an acceptable level (as defined above).*



### ***WAYS IN WHICH RISK CAN BE MANAGED:***

**Policies and Systems** include our Field Operating Standards, 24-Hour Phone Support, Emergency Response Plans, Job Hazard Assessments, Personal Locator Beacons, Incident Reporting, etc.

**Trainings** are designed to give you the skills and experience you need to achieve your goals as safely as possible.

**Culture of Safety** includes reporting and discussing incidents and near-misses, Take-5 For Safety, asking questions and engaging with support systems whenever needed.

## **BEWARE OF COMPOUNDING RISKS!**

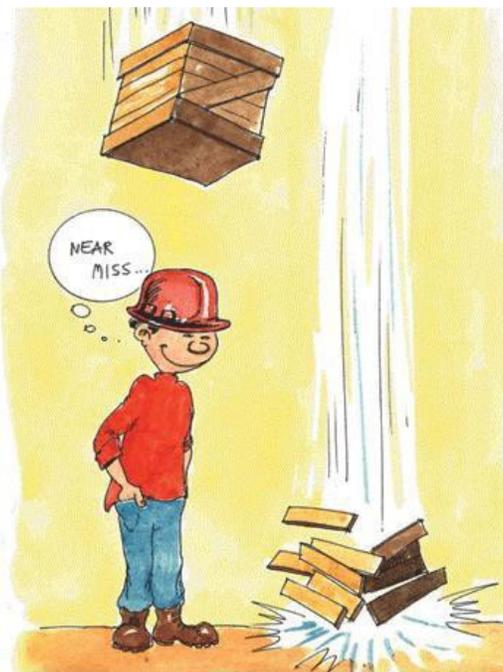
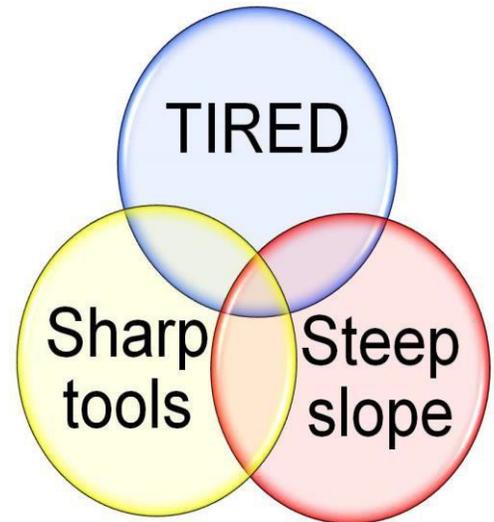
It *may* be possible to work safely when tired.

It *may* be possible to work safely on a steep slope.

It *may* be possible to work safely with sharp tools.

But when you are tired, on a steep slope using sharp tools, you have compounded (or multiplied) the risk of each of those hazards.

Learn to recognize when you are compounding your risk, and take steps to reduce that risk back to an acceptable level.



## **Reporting and Responding to Incidents and Near Misses**

SCA has a culture of teamwork and assessment that promotes not only prevention of incidents, but also of debriefing and evaluating both incidents and near misses.

You can assist us by promptly and accurately reporting when incidents or significant near-misses take place, in cooperation with your leader. This allows SCA to track what's happening in the field and organizationally respond. If there is a trend of chainsaw near-misses, or minor driving accidents, it gives us all a chance to recognize that trend, learn from it, and prevent it from recurring – **BUT ONLY IF YOU DO YOUR PART BY REPORTING IT.**

SCA near-miss reporting tripled between 2011 and 2012, thanks in part to members like you who understand the value of learning from our close calls. Please help us continue to do so by being diligent in reporting (and committing to learning from) near-misses and incidents in the field.

### **Resources:**

Project Leaders receive a copy of our Field Operations Standards, as well as risk management training that you can review with them. You can also reach out to other SCA staff, such as the Program Managers or Risk Management staff if you need additional resources.

### **Questions or Concerns?**

The Risk Management Department wants your feedback, questions, and suggestions for policies, training, and cultivating our culture of safety. Please contact us at [riskman@thesca.org](mailto:riskman@thesca.org) or call us directly with your questions.

# SCA CORPS MEMBER BENEFIT INFORMATION

## ***SERVICE SCHEDULES***

SCA Corps members are expected to have similar service schedules as those of the host site and are generally expected to serve an average of 40 to 45 hours per week. **Daily and weekly schedules are managed by the agency or SCA coordinator.** It is important to remember that if a Corps member has been selected into a fully-funded AmeriCorps program (if available and eligible) or has elected the AmeriCorps Education Award option (if available and eligible), he/she must meet a minimum hour requirement in order to receive the award. The minimum hour requirement varies from 300 to 1700 hours, and is dependent upon award availability and length of service.

### **Long-term Positions (17 weeks or greater - exceptions may apply):**

You will receive: a weekly subsistence allowance for each week of service (including training, but not including vacation time), less applicable taxes; free housing or a housing allowance; health insurance; General Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance; AmeriCorps Education Award, if available.

### **Short-term Positions (16 weeks or less - exceptions may apply):**

You will receive: a weekly living allowance for each week you serve, less applicable taxes; free housing or a housing allowance; General Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance; AmeriCorps Education Award, if available. Please note: members in the States of New Hampshire, New York, and Massachusetts are NOT entitled to receive unemployment compensation at the completion of their service.

## ***MEDICAL INSURANCE***

**AmeriCorps members serving 17 weeks or greater** - Medical insurance is available to AmeriCorps members serving 17 weeks or greater who are not covered by another medical insurance policy. All members who are eligible will receive an email providing their insurance information. Any questions relating to your eligibility should be referred to your supervisor.

## ***WEBPAY BY PAYLOCITY: ONLINE STATEMENTS***

To help in our conservation objective, we provide information regarding your subsistence allowance online. Through Paylocity's **WebPay** system, we are able to offer you access to your statements 24 hours per day. 7 days a week. These online statements are made available to you for up to 180 days from the date your last deposit. When your first deposit is made onto your declining balance card, you will receive an email with all the information you need to register and access this site: [www.paylocity.com](http://www.paylocity.com). Members who are not enrolled in AmeriCorps are not normally taxed on their weekly subsistence allowance, unless otherwise requested.

## ***US BANK FOCUS CARDS***

SCA will be sending your bi-weekly subsistence allowance via a US Bank Declining Balance Card. We are offering the cards in partnership with US Bank. Provided that you complete and return your paperwork on schedule, SCA will process your card to ensure you receive it promptly. SCA will automatically "re-load" your card with your subsistence allowance every two weeks during your service. You will also receive your travel allowance (if eligible) through your debit card. This is SCA's process for sending your subsistence allowance, so please fill out the online application form and complete your Sertifi documents as soon as possible so that your deposits can be scheduled and processed quickly.

# US Bank Focus Card™



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Focus Card?

The Focus Card is a reloadable, prepaid debit card issued by U.S. Bank. It provides an electronic option for receiving your pay. It is not a credit card, but works similarly to other debit cards.

### How does the Focus Card work?

Once funds are added to the card account, it can be used to make purchases, pay bills, and make online, phone or mail-order purchases. You can also get cash back with purchases at participating merchants or withdraw cash at ATMs, banks or credit unions. The amounts of purchases, bill payments or cash withdrawals are automatically deducted from the available balance on the card.

## The Focus Card

### What are the advantages of having a Focus Card?



**Fast** – Your money is automatically deposited to your card account



**Save Time** – Easy and quick access to your funds without waiting in line to cash or deposit a check



**Convenient** – Make purchases anywhere debit cards are accepted, including retail stores, grocery stores, restaurants and pharmacies and withdraw cash at ATMs



**Secure** – No need to carry large amounts of cash



**Save Money** – No more going to the check casher



**Track Spending** – Account information and customer service 24 hours a day



**Extensive Benefits** – Enjoy the prestige and purchase protection given to Visa®-branded cardholders, without a credit check<sup>1</sup>



**Reliable** – Receive your money on time. No more lost or stolen checks



**Safe** – Funds are FDIC insured and are protected by Visa Zero Liability<sup>2</sup>

### How do I check my balance?

Online – View account online at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) Text/Email

– Sign up to receive free email or text alerts when funds have been deposited to your account or when your balance gets low<sup>3</sup>

Mobile Banking App – Search for “U.S. Bank Focus” in the App Store or Google Play<sup>3</sup>

Phone – Call Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010

ATM – Perform a balance inquiry at an ATM<sup>4</sup>





## Getting the Card

### ***When the card is sent in the mail, what does the envelope look like?***

For security reasons, your card comes in a plain white windowed envelope.

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### ***What information or instructions come with the card?***

The card comes with:

- Instructions on how to activate the card
  - The cardholder agreement, which discloses terms and conditions and the fee schedule
  - A usage guide detailing where and how the card can be used
  - The U.S. Bank Privacy Pledge
- 

### ***What do I do after I receive the card?***

You must call Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 or visit [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) to activate the card and choose your PIN. You cannot use the card until it has been activated. Be sure to sign your name on the back of your card in ink. Your card is not valid unless it's signed.

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### ***Do I receive a new card every time a payment is made?***

No. Future payments will be deposited automatically onto the initial card.

## Using the Card

### ***How do I make a purchase with my card?***

The card works much like other prepaid or debit cards. You can use it online, over the phone, at grocery stores, retail stores, restaurants, medical offices, etc. It is important to know your account balance before making purchases.

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### ***When making a purchase, on the authorization machine, which selection (credit or debit) do I choose?***

Select "Credit" or "Debit" to make a purchase. Select "Debit" to get 'cash back' with your purchase. (You will have to enter your PIN.)



### ***How can I get cash with my card?***

- Cash Back With Purchases—at participating merchants such as grocery or convenience stores
  - ATM Withdrawal<sup>4</sup>—at any ATM
  - Teller Withdrawal<sup>4</sup>—at any bank or credit union
- 



### ***How do I withdraw cash at an ATM?***

- Insert or swipe your card and enter your 4-digit PIN
  - Select "Withdrawal from Checking"
  - Enter the amount to be withdrawn
- 



### ***How do I get cash back with a purchase?***

- When the authorization machine asks for credit or debit, select "Debit"
- Enter the 4-digit PIN
- Select "Yes" for cash back
- Enter the amount, press "OK"

## Using the Card

### **How do I get cash at a bank or credit union teller?**

You must know your available balance (the teller will not have access to this information) and ask for a cash withdrawal in the amount you wish to withdraw. Note: you may need to provide your driver's license to verify your identity.

### **Do I have to go to a U.S. Bank ATM or U.S. Bank branch to get cash?**

No. You can get cash back with purchases at merchants throughout the United States such as grocery and convenience stores. Cash can also be obtained from any ATM or over the counter at any Visa bank or credit union.

### **Do I need to know my PIN to use the card?**

Yes & No. The card can be used to make signature-based purchases without a PIN. However, a PIN must be used for PIN-based purchases and for cash withdrawals at ATMs. You must choose your own PIN by calling Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 or visiting [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) after you receive your card. For security reasons it is important that you pick a PIN that only you would know, and not share the PIN or the card with anyone.

### **What should I do if I forget my PIN?**

You must contact Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 or visit [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) to reset your PIN.

### **Can I still get cash if I forget my PIN?**

Yes. You can go to any bank or credit union and ask the teller for a cash withdrawal.



### **How can Focus help me build my money management skills?**

Visa's Practical Money Skills for Life™ website is a free resource available with your Focus Card that helps you take your money management skills to the next level. Practical Money Skills for Life™ provides you with everything you need from savings calculators and budget journals to games and in-depth articles geared towards helping you effectively manage your finances. To learn more log in to your account at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com).



### **Can I earn rewards by using my Focus Card?**

Yes. The cash back rewards program is a free service available to all Focus cardholders. You can earn rewards simply by using your card at certain stores and restaurants, after activating the offers that you want. To learn more log into your account at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com).



### **How can I be notified when funds are deposited to my card?**

You have the option of signing up for optional text or email alerts when money is added or your card balance gets low at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com). You can also use our two way text alert feature by texting a short code to receive the following updates:

alert Type	Instructions
<b>Balance Alert</b>	Text <b>BAL</b> to <b>90831</b>
<b>Recent Transactions</b>	Text <b>TRANS</b> to <b>90831</b>
<b>Direct Deposit Routing &amp; Account Numbers</b>	Text <b>DD</b> to <b>90831</b>
<b>Savings Account Balance</b>	Text <b>SAVE</b> to <b>90831</b>
<b>Customer Service Number</b>	Text <b>HELP</b> to <b>90831</b>



### **Can I manage my account with my smart phone?**

Yes. You can use the Focus Mobile Banking app to check your account balance, enroll in and manage text alerts, view your most recent transactions or search for the nearest in-network ATM location. Search for "U.S. Bank Focus" in the App Store or Google Play.

## Using the Card



### Can I pay bills with my card?

Yes. You can visit your billers' websites and provide your 16-digit card number and expiration date or log on to [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) and select the "Pay Bills" option. The online bill management service includes a biller directory that helps you log onto your billers' websites and complete payment information with just a few clicks.



### Does my Focus Card come with a savings account?

Yes. The savings account feature that comes with your Focus Card is free to use and easy to set up. It's a great way to effectively manage your finances and set aside funds for things like vacations, holidays and unexpected expenses. There are no monthly fees and your funds are FDIC insured. To learn more visit [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com).

## Limits

### *Can I make a purchase for more than the amount on my card?*

If you need to make a purchase for more than the amount you have on your card, you will need to use two forms of payment. Tell the cashier how much you want taken from the balance on your card – the cashier cannot determine your available balance. Then, pay the remaining balance with cash, check, credit card or check card.



### Can I use my Focus Card at the gas pump?

Yes. However, if you use your card to pay at the pump, a maximum hold of \$75 will be placed on your account to initiate your transaction. This amount will be held until the actual transaction amount clears. If you do not want funds held while waiting for the transaction to clear, please pay the cashier inside for your gasoline purchase. Payments made inside clear for the actual transaction amount immediately.

### *Can anyone else view or track my transactions?*

No. For privacy reasons, U.S. Bank does not share card account numbers or transaction details. However, for reconciliation purposes, your employer does have access to the amount and date of each payroll deposit.



### Can the Focus Card be overdrawn?

Usually a purchase that exceeds the available balance will not be approved. In very limited circumstances, if you do not have sufficient funds when the final amount clears, it may result in a negative balance; however you will not be charged an overdraft fee. You can check your balance online, using the Focus Mobile App or by calling Cardholder Services 24/7.

### *How do I obtain information about fees for my Focus Card?*

Fees are located on the Fee Schedule sent to you with your card. You may also view your fee schedule online or call Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 to request fee information.

# Customer Service

## **Can I view my account online?**

Yes, at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com). The following functions can be performed online:

- PIN Change
- Balance inquiry
- View card transactions
- View previous statements
- Set up alerts
- Pay bills
- Open a Savings Account

## **How do I view my monthly statement?**

Monthly statements can be viewed online 24/7 at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com).

## **What should I do if I change addresses?**

Contact Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 or visit [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) to report an address change. Also contact your employer to report an address change so that your mail may also be sent to the correct address.

## **Who do I contact if I have questions about my card?**

For questions about your deposit, such as when you will receive the next deposit to the card, or the amount of a deposit to the card, contact your employer. For all other questions about the card, you may log into your account at [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com) or contact Cardholder Services 24 hours a day, toll-free at 877-474-0010.

## **What happens if my card gets lost or stolen?**

You may contact your Manager or the Payroll/Human Resources Department to request a new card and call Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010 to report your card lost/stolen. Or you may call Cardholder Services to report your card lost/stolen and have a replacement card sent to you within 5-7 business days. You may not be responsible for any fraudulent activity that occurs on your card provided that you report the card missing in a timely manner, and have not shared your card or PIN number with anyone<sup>2</sup>.

## **Can I contact a retail U.S. Bank location or my local bank for customer service on my Focus Card account?**

No. You must direct all Focus questions to Cardholder Services at 877-474-0010, or utilize the website, [www.usbankfocus.com](http://www.usbankfocus.com), for inquiries.

## **What services does the Focus 24-hour Cardholder Services Line provide?**

The following can be done through customer service:

- Activate the card
- Choose/change PIN (Personal Identification Number)
- Balance inquiry
- Enroll in text alerts
- Review recent transaction history
- Report card lost or stolen and have it reissued
- Speak to a live customer service representative if additional assistance is needed

<sup>1</sup>Successful identity verification required. To help the government fight the funding of terrorism and money laundering activities, Federal law requires all financial institutions to obtain, verify, and record information that identifies each person who opens an account. If necessary, we may also ask to see your driver's license or other identifying documents.

<sup>2</sup>The Visa Zero Liability Policy protects you against unauthorized purchases. U.S.-issued cards only. This does not apply to ATM transactions or to PIN transactions not processed by Visa. You must immediately report any unauthorized use.

<sup>3</sup>U.S. Bank does not charge a fee for mobile banking. Standard messaging and data rates may apply.

<sup>4</sup>Some fees may apply. See card packet for full list of fees.

The Focus Card is issued by U.S. Bank National Association pursuant to a license from Visa U.S.A. Inc. Member FDIC. © 2014 U.S. Bank.



## ***TRAVEL GRANT POLICY***

**Travel Grants are not available for all members. Refer to your Confirmation of Acceptance for eligibility. Members entering the following Corps programs are not eligible for travel reimbursement: SCA NY Hudson Valley AmeriCorps, SCA NY Adirondack AmeriCorps, SCA NH AmeriCorps, and SCA MA AmeriCorps.**

In participating SCA programs, a travel grant is provided to you. This travel grant assists you with roundtrip travel from your place of origin to the training or program destination. This policy applies to eligible members only.

- **Who is responsible for booking the travel?**

You are responsible for your own travel. If you drive, fly, bus, train or walk, you can choose the method of travel that fits your situation best. The dates, locations and times for your travel will be coordinated with your Project Leader, Coordinator or Manager.

- **How is the amount of the grant determined?**

The SCA Travel Policy provides a flat amount\* for you to apply towards your travel arrangements (car, bus, train, tent, hotel, airplane, etc.). Travel Allowances are as follows:

Basic Travel Allowance: \$650

Basic Travel Allowance for HI, AK, and US Territories: \$1,115

Travel Allowance if your own vehicle is required: \$1,100

For programs with special circumstances such as a more remote location, your program may provide a different amount. To verify your travel allowance, please see your COA for more details.

\*less any applicable tax withholdings

- **Who covers other travel expenses?**

All lodging and food expenses while traveling are your responsibility.

- **Who is responsible for change fees, or if I go over my allowance?**

Any monetary charges incurred from a change in travel arrangements, or travel costs exceeding the amount of the travel grant are your responsibility.

- **How and when do I receive my travel grant?**

Your travel and living allowance will be disbursed to a Declining Balance Card. The card will be sent to the address you indicate within 2 weeks of completing your enrollment paperwork loaded with your travel allowance.

- **What dates do I use to arrange my travel?**

Please refer to the COA Form. You **must** be at the training location on the date stated “Arrive at Training Location.” The departure date can be any time after the date stated “last program day.” The “last program day” date concludes your service with the SCA program for the current field season. At that time, any housing, food, or other needs are your responsibility.

- **What if there is training and it isn't at the program site?**  
Think of it this way: you arrange for the travel from your home at the start, and back to your home at the end. Depending upon the program, SCA program staff will determine the best location for you to start. Often, you will travel to your program site to meet up with your team, then travel as a group to the training. In this case, SCA will arrange and pay in full for the cost of travel to and from the training site. Sometimes, you travel directly to the training. In this case, you would pay for the travel to the training, and SCA would arrange and pay for the travel from training to the program site.
  - **You will not be allowed to use SCA vehicles beyond the "last program day".**
  - **Who will arrange my travel from/to the training location and my site (if applicable)?**  
General rule: The Project Leader or SCA staff member. You should coordinate all of your travel with your supervisor.
  - **What is the earliest arrival date to the program?**  
We prefer that you arrive to the program on the "Arrive at Training Location" date before 3:00 PM. If you arrive earlier than the "Arrive at Training Location" date, we will not be able to provide you with accommodations, and you will have to find lodging on your own.
  - **Can I have a personal vehicle during my service term?**  
Yes, you may have a personal vehicle during the service term for use on time off. If you are driving a vehicle, you **MUST** contact the SCA staff to determine whether the initial destination point will be the service site or training site. You must be able to safely drive to the destination(s) and arrive "on time".  
**NOTE:** SCA does not assume the risk for damages that may occur to personal vehicles or repairs or maintenance that may be necessary while in route or during the duration of the position.
  - **What if I change my mind, or what if I leave the program early?**  
If you do not start your position, you will be **required to return the entire Travel Allowance.** If you decide to leave your position early for any reason, you may be **required to return half the Travel Allowance**
- If there are any further travel questions please contact your supervisor -

## ***TIME OFF***

There are many community groups, and agencies that depend on the service we provide, and it is difficult to fulfill our obligations when the program is shorthanded. Please be mindful of your commitment, and work within the policies for time off.

Personal Leave is at the discretion of the agency coordinator or your SCA coordinator, whoever is your direct supervisor in the field. This may include time off for personal illness or injury, vacation, family illness or injury, appointments that cannot be made outside of work hours, wellness, federal holidays and observance of personal, religious, or ethnic holidays not covered by the host site regular holiday schedule, as well as for Jury duty and firefighting activities.

SCA's Liability Insurance does not cover firefighting activities, and therefore, SCA members are not allowed to engage in such activities while on service time with SCA. With agency coordinator approval, an SCA member may take unpaid leave in order to participate in firefighting duties. Be aware that as an AmeriCorps member, you must also be suspended from service during this time, and may not have sufficient service hours in the program to earn the education award.

Personal Leave must be approved by your supervisor and then conveyed to the appropriate SCA Manager/Director in writing (email will suffice). The approval notice must include time-off dates and any plans for making up missed service. It is important that SCA receives this information for Risk Management and administrative purposes (emergencies and payroll). Additional HR paperwork may be required for members who are enrolled in additional benefit programs such as college credit programs.

SCA does not monitor member activities during their time off. SCA is not responsible for any incidents, accidents or near misses that occur during employee or volunteer time off (paid or unpaid) and workers compensation benefits are not available during off time. Personal Leave hours cannot be logged as service time, unless you are an AmeriCorps member serving on jury duty (see below).

### AmeriCorps Members and Jury Duty:

If a member is called to Jury duty, he or she must notify the appropriate SCA Manager/Director. If you are enrolled in AmeriCorps, you cannot be penalized for missed service time due to jury duty. During the time you serve as a juror, you should complete time logs reporting your normal service hours (the hours that you would have served, had you not been on jury duty) and will continue to receive your normal living allowance, health care coverage and other benefits regardless of any reimbursements for incidental expenses received from the court.

## ***WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE***

All SCA members are covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance while performing service duties. If a member is injured during service hours, he/she can file a claim either through the partner Agency or through SCA. Workers Compensation does not cover illnesses such as viral or bacterial infections. This includes, but is not limited to, the common cold, the flu, ear infections, sore throats and/or illnesses such as appendicitis. Members are not covered by Workers' Compensation while on off time.

The following agencies are responsible for managing Workers' Compensation claims for SCA members.

- NPS – National Parks Service
- FWS – Fish and Wildlife Service
- BIA – Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Army, Army Corps of Engineers, Air Force, Marine Corps Base Quantico

SCA is responsible for managing the claims for members serving with the following agencies or organizations however, the information provided can change without notice due to agreement renewals:

- USFS – US Forest Service
- USGS – US Geological Survey
- BLM – Bureau of Land Management
- Navy and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejuene
- All State and Local Partners (unless otherwise agreed)
- All Non Profit Partners (unless otherwise agreed)

Claims managed through SCA: In the event that an SCA member is injured while performing tasks on the job, he/she must immediately document the injury and notify SCA staff **within 24 hours**. In the case of medical treatment at a hospital, clinic or doctor's office, the medical personnel should be informed that the SCA member is serving with the Student Conservation Association, PO Box 550, Charlestown, NH 03603. All paperwork should be copied and sent to the SCA National Office in Charlestown, NH. If an SCA member sustains an injury and does not report this at the time of the injury, a claim may not be covered under the Workers' Compensation plan. In order to ensure prompt filing of your workers compensation claim, please alert your SCA supervisor of your injury immediately.

## SCA AMERICORPS PROGRAMS

Every year thousands of Americans serve their country as AmeriCorps members with organizations like SCA. All AmeriCorps members have two identities:

- On the one hand, they serve as members of unique organizations like Habitat for Humanity or the Red Cross or City Year or SCA; *and*
- On the other hand, they also serve as members of AmeriCorps, which links them to a larger family of Americans engaged in national service.

Your members, too, are these members: They are SCA. They are AmeriCorps. Every day they serve, they will be part of both families. After their service they will always be part of these two alumni networks of people who made a commitment to service and to making our country a better place.

### ***HOW AMERICORPS WORKS AT SCA***

Some SCA Corps programs are required AmeriCorps positions. Examples include SCA Massachusetts, SCA Hudson Valley, SCA Adirondacks, SCA New Hampshire, SCA Idaho, and National Direct program. Members in these programs must choose to accept AmeriCorps when accepting the position. For other Corps programs members have the option of choosing to serve as an AmeriCorps member, if spots are available.

Your Corps team may include some members who are serving in AmeriCorps and some who are not. The information in this section is applicable only to members who are serving in AmeriCorps while at SCA.

AmeriCorps members have additional responsibilities during their SCA position. Most of the information here is also readily available in the *SCA AmeriCorps Member Agreement*, which Members complete as part of their enrollment paperwork.

### ***ELIGIBILITY FOR AMERICORPS***

In order to serve in AmeriCorps, members must meet the following **eligibility requirements**:

- Be selected into an SCA position that is eligible for AmeriCorps.
- Be a **US Citizen**, National, or Lawful Permanent Resident Alien (in other words, a green card holder)
- Be at least **17** years of age.
- Have a high school **diploma** or equivalent or agree to obtain one before using their award
- Pass a **criminal history review**.
- Members must not have served in AmeriCorps no more than 3 times already. Members can serve in AmeriCorps **up to 4 terms**, and during your terms of service you can earn up to the **equivalent of 2 year-long** (or 2 – 1700 hr.) education awards.

## ***AMERICORPS REQUIREMENTS***

There are a few elements of the SCA AmeriCorps experience that are required for all members, including:

- SCA AmeriCorps orientation
- Activity and Output Logs.
- AmeriCorps Exit form
- Midterm and End of Term Evaluations
- Serve full-time for the full length of their service. Members are required to serve through the scheduled end date of their internship, even if they complete the minimum AmeriCorps hours before the end date. If they leave the internship before their scheduled end date, they risk losing their entire AmeriCorps Education Award. If you have any concerns about their ability to serve through the scheduled end date, contact your SCA Manager immediately.
- Complete the minimum AmeriCorps service hours. This number can be found on the COA and SCA AmeriCorps Member Agreement forms that your Members signed.
- Adhere to all rules and procedures in their SCA AmeriCorps Member Agreement and in the SCA AmeriCorps orientation.

Requirements must be complete within a week after the end of service. AmeriCorps Education Awards cannot be processed until all requirements are met.

## ***YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS OF AMERICORPS***

### **Receive AmeriCorps enrollment confirmation email**

It can take the SCA up to 30 days after the start date to process AmeriCorps enrollment. Once Members are fully enrolled, they will receive a confirmation email from the SCA. Members will not be able to put student loans into forbearance or view award details in My AmeriCorps until after they receive this email.

### **Register with My.AmeriCorps.gov**

My AmeriCorps is your one stop shop for all things AmeriCorps. Through this website, members will be able to view award details, put student loans into forbearance, and use their Education Award. Members will not be able to register with My AmeriCorps until after they receive their AmeriCorps enrollment confirmation email.

### **Put Eligible Student Loans into Forbearance**

Qualified student loans can be placed into forbearance during AmeriCorps service. In addition, members are eligible to have the accrued interest paid at the end of their service. To put student loans into forbearance, login to **My.AmeriCorps.gov** and follow the instructions. Members will not be able to put student loans into forbearance until after they receive the AmeriCorps enrollment confirmation email.

### **Connect with a State Service Commission**

State Service Commissions are charged with coordinating AmeriCorps service and encouraging volunteering in their states. They often administer special training and events for AmeriCorps members.

To find the State Service Commission in the state where you're serving, go to <http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions>. "Like" your State Service Commission page on Facebook to stay in touch with your State Service Commission about opportunities to join service days or attend professional development workshops with other AmeriCorps members.

## ***PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES***

In addition to the above code of conduct, the federal Corporation for National and Community Service has prohibited the following activities for AmeriCorps members while they are accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities associated with the program:

- a. Attempting to influence legislation.
- b. Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes.
- c. Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing.
- d. Impairing existing contracts for services of collective bargaining agreements.
- e. Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office.
- f. 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.
- g. 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;
- h. Providing a direct benefit for
  - (i) A business organized for profit;
  - (ii) A labor union;
  - (iii) A partisan political organization;
  - (iv) A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
  - (v) An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
- i. Voter registration drives held by AmeriCorps members.
- j. Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.
- k. Writing grants or raising funds for an organization's general operating expenses or endowment. The only kind of fundraising that members are allowed to do is fundraising directly in support of their particular project. Examples of allowable activities: Seeking donations (in the form of in-kind materials or dollars) for a specific project they are carrying out as an AmeriCorps member; Writing a grant to a foundation for funds for a specific project they're carrying out, such as a community clean-up. Allowable fundraising activities must add up to no more than 10% of the member's total hours; and
- k. Other activities that the Corporation determines will be prohibited.

You may exercise your rights as a private citizen and may participate in the activities listed above on your initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. You should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

## ***SAVE THE DATE – AMERICORPS DAYS OF SERVICE:***

Look for ways to broaden your experience by connecting with other AmeriCorps and SCA members. State Service Commissions can be great resources for connect your team with opportunities on these days of service.

January — Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service	March — AmeriCorps Week
September – 9/11 Day of Service	November – Veterans Day

## ***SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION FROM SERVICE:***

When Members sign the *SCA AmeriCorps Member Agreement* they agree not only to adhere to the rules of the program and complete the required paperwork, they also agree to complete **both**:

- The full term of your service, *and*
- The minimum number of service hours, as outlined in their agreement

There are only two ways to be released from the AmeriCorps service agreement:

1. For Compelling Personal Circumstances.
2. For Cause.

Release for **Compelling Personal Circumstances**: Members can be released for compelling personal circumstances *only* if the reason for leaving is completely out of their control. Some examples of compelling personal circumstances:

- You break your leg and can't continue your service.
- There is a death in your immediate family and you need to return home.
- Wildfires close the park where you're serving and your position can no longer continue.

SCA will determine whether your situation can be defined as compelling personal circumstances.

How compelling personal circumstances works:

- If a member leaves because of a reason that could be considered "compelling personal circumstances", SCA will request they submit a letter, asking for release from the service agreement, for reasons outside of their control.
- Once SCA receives that letter (and all other end-of-service paperwork) SCA will confirm that the circumstances are sufficiently compelling.
- If a Member leaves for compelling personal circumstances AND they have completed 15% of their hours and all other requirements of the program, they may be eligible for a pro-rated award (a smaller award based on the number of hours completed).

**Release for Cause:** If members leave service for any reason other than for compelling personal circumstances, it is called being released from the AmeriCorps agreement *for cause*, and they are not eligible for a pro-rated award under any circumstances.

Some examples of being released "for cause" (i.e. no award, pro-rated or otherwise):

- You leave your SCA position early because you are hired by your site.
- Leave to go back to grad school.
- Terminated by your site.
- Unhappy with the position.
- Leave early for any other reason than circumstances completed outside of their control.

How Release for Cause Works:

- If a Member leaves early (or are terminated) for any reason other than "compelling personal circumstances", they are required to submit all signed timesheets and other end-of-service paperwork.
- Members will not receive the education award.
- This AmeriCorps term will still count against the total number of allowed AmeriCorps terms.

The language "released for cause" can sound like a punishment, but it doesn't have to be. While Members released for cause can't receive an award, one reason Members could be released is that they happened to find a paid position in their field. It can be a positive reason; it just disqualifies them from receiving an award.

## ***AVAILABLE AMERICORPS RESOURCES***

[www.nationalserviceresources.org/edaward](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/edaward) -- Members can use this site to learn more about the award, form a strategy on how to use it, and discover other post-service opportunities related to school and student loans..

[www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions](http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/contact-us/state-service-commissions) -- Contact information for State Service Commissions, who coordinate AmeriCorps service within states and administer special training and events for AmeriCorps members.

[www.americorpsalums.org](http://www.americorpsalums.org) – Stay involved with service and connect with other AmeriCorps alumni.

### **Questions?**

For questions about an AmeriCorps Education Award payment or issues with the My AmeriCorps portal, Members can contact the National Service Hotline directly: <https://questions.nationalservice.gov>

# Reporting Employee Sensitive Issues

## Introduction

All sensitive concerns or complaints that are either brought to the attention of management or observed by management, require prompt involvement by the Human Resources Manager in order that the issue is effectively and promptly addressed.

Examples of sensitive workplace and field incidents include but are not limited to the following:

- Sexual Harassment
- Hostile or Offensive Behavior (including offensive jokes, comments, emails)
- Discriminatory comments or practices that relate to sex, age, race, gender identity, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, marital status, or sexual orientation, and any other discriminatory categories
- Workplace conflicts and escalations
- Suspicion of unethical and/or unlawful behaviors

*A complete Harassment/Discrimination Policy can be found in the Standards of Conduct section of the Employee Handbook on the SCA Intranet site.*

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## Confidentiality

It is important that all sensitive employee issues are kept confidential in order to protect all employees and members from any embarrassment, retaliation, and/or wrongful accusations. Therefore, when documenting within MySCA's Incident Reporting, specific names and details of the incident should never be recorded. Rather, the incident should be recorded as follows: *"Confidential matter reported to HR."*

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## Roles & Responsibilities

For orientation training purposes, the following should be communicated to SCA employees.

**For Members:**

If you are the target of, or a witness to, any derogatory language, harassment, etc., report it to your leader.

If the incident is involving your leader, contact the 24 hour program support line.

**For Leaders:**

If you are the target of, or witness to, any derogatory language, harassment, etc. report it to your manager.

If the incident is involving your manager, contact the 24 hour program support line or [humanresources@thesca.org](mailto:humanresources@thesca.org).

**For Staff:**

If you are the target of, or witness to, any derogatory language, harassment, etc., report it to your manager.

If the incident is involving your manager, contact the 24 hour program support line or [humanresources@thesca.org](mailto:humanresources@thesca.org).

Process

Below is the process for escalating, addressing, and resolving sensitive employee issues.

Stage	Description
1.	<p>Manager/Crew Leader observes, or is made aware of the incident. Manager/Crew Leader reports incident to 24 Program Support Line or <a href="mailto:humanresources@thesca.org">humanresources@thesca.org</a>.</p> <p>When reported to Program Responder, the Program Responder takes down information on Word version of Incident Reporting and sends to <a href="mailto:humanresources@thesca.org">humanresources@thesca.org</a>.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> For more serious incidents involving a direct threat to another person’s safety, Managers /Crew Leaders are advised to involve local law enforcement first and report afterwards.</p>
2.	<p>Manager / Crew Leader documents incident in MYSCA as follows:  <i>“Confidential matter reported to HR.”</i></p>
3.	<p>Human Resource Manager reviews <a href="mailto:HumanResources@thesca.org">HumanResources@thesca.org</a> email and contacts Manager/Crew Leader and Program Quality to discuss.</p>
4.	<p>Human Resource Manager contacts the person(s) involved to determine facts surrounding the incident.</p>
5.	<p>Human Resource Manager documents the investigation and makes a recommendation for next steps to Manager/Crew Leader &amp; Chief Counsel.</p> <p>If members/staff report only to SCA management, proceed to stage 7. If not, proceed to stage 6.</p>

Process, cont'd

Stage	Description						
6.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="414 331 852 369">If...</th> <th data-bbox="852 331 1284 369">Then,</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 369 852 590">either of the parties involved also report to non-SCA personnel (for example, program interns),</td> <td data-bbox="852 369 1284 590">the Manager/Crew Leader contacts the appropriate site or agency lead and notifies him/her of incident and decision for subsequent plan of action.</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="414 590 852 848">the person who is exhibiting the harassing/hostile behavior does not work for SCA,</td> <td data-bbox="852 590 1284 848">the HR&amp; Manager/Crew Leader conference call with the site/partner lead to resolve the issue, determine plan of action, and agree upon roles &amp; responsibilities associated with carrying out plan of action.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	If...	Then,	either of the parties involved also report to non-SCA personnel (for example, program interns),	the Manager/Crew Leader contacts the appropriate site or agency lead and notifies him/her of incident and decision for subsequent plan of action.	the person who is exhibiting the harassing/hostile behavior does not work for SCA,	the HR& Manager/Crew Leader conference call with the site/partner lead to resolve the issue, determine plan of action, and agree upon roles & responsibilities associated with carrying out plan of action.
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7.	If disciplinary action is warranted, HR works with the Manager/Crew Leader in order to document and address the issue.						
8.	Manager/Crew Leader meets with employee to address issue and reinforce intolerance for any 'real or perceived' retaliation towards any employee involved in the investigation.						

## SERIOUS POINTS TO PONDER

Lastly, we want you to consider the following points carefully before participating in our program. (Read this slowly and several times over.) What we do and what we represent are important to the communities and partners we serve. There are lots of people interested and involved, high expectations, and limited resources – it can be extremely rewarding, but sometimes difficult to always be “on” as a member of the program.

**If you question your desire or ability to serve and live with the conditions below, you should reconsider whether or not this particular program is for you.**

- If serving in a team environment, you will need to practice and experience compromise, the ability and willingness to listen, open-mindedness, sensitivity and patience.
- Many of the program sites are in rural areas, and could be hours away from a major city. You may spend a good portion of your time outdoors in various weather and environmental conditions, including extreme heat and/or cold, humidity, rain, wind, snow and tremendous amounts of biting insects. Additionally, there may be occasions when you will camp overnight for up to 10 days at a time. During the duration of your service, you may be without many of the conveniences of modern society, such as services and social venues.
- Your ability to use alcohol and tobacco will be restricted or prohibited. For all members, the policies for use of these substances are:
  - Use during service-time is prohibited;
  - Use during program gatherings is prohibited 24 hours/day;
  - members are prohibited from transporting alcohol in any SCA rented, leased or owned vehicle.Please review your Corps member Handbook for other alcohol and drug related policies- some programs prohibit the use of these substances in the provided housing and on the living site location. In choosing to participate in the program you make a serious commitment to serving the community. You are a role model and a representative of SCA at all times.
- At many of our program sites, we live simply and earth friendly. We share our home with each other and the natural environment around us and attempt to be responsible to our community. We strive to limit our resource use (water, energy, materials) and live without many of the luxuries of typical American life. Often that means extra work and effort, frustration, and compromise. It is a way of life that must come from values and attitudes, not simply an agreement to policies – you must believe in it to make it happen.
- For those of you who have been accepted to an AmeriCorps Residential program, you may have a cook, but he/she will be feeding many people, all with different tastes, desires, and attitudes – it is not easy! Dietary needs are accommodated, dietary desires are considered, but openness and compromise are necessary. The meals are nutritious, aplenty, and ecologically conscientious. Vegetarians/vegans will be accommodated. However, there is limited meat and “junk” food, lots of fresh ingredients, and always plenty to go round. If you are a serious and uncompromising carnivore or an extremely picky eater you may be frustrated.