



**Habitat**  
for Humanity®  
of Iowa



# Getting Started with AmeriCorps

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## Getting Started as a Host Site

Congratulations on starting an AmeriCorps member at your host site. We know the members will make an impact on your site. This guide is to help create a smooth start.

### What to expect on the member's first day? What questions should the member be asking?

Members should expect to have an orientation with your host and go through paperwork. This is not the most glamorous experience but is still necessary and normal before joining any team.

#### **Example Orientations:**

- Sitting down with supervisors to go over starting paperwork
- Touring the facilities
- Learning about the organization
- Reading through handbooks
- Attending staff meetings
- Watching or attending the Habitat AmeriCorps Orientation online

#### **Things members should consider asking on the first day:**

- Who is your direct supervisor?
- If you have issues with your supervisor or a co-worker, who can you turn to?
- Where should you park?
- Where should you check in each day of service?
- When, for how long, and where can you take breaks?
- What is my expected service schedule?

### Who's who? And What's what?

**AmeriCorps Program Director-** The person that operates and manages the AmeriCorps grant for the State Support Organization, Habitat for Humanity of Iowa.  
– Katie Sylvis [kzellmer@iowahabitat.org](mailto:kzellmer@iowahabitat.org)

**Member** – A person who has been accepted to serve a 3, 6, 9, or 12-month contract with an AmeriCorps Program – YOU!

**Supervisors** – A person in charge of guiding and mentoring AmeriCorps members through their term of service at the host site or affiliate.

**Host Site** – A nonprofit that has decided to take on AmeriCorps members for the year. Most of the time for this program it is often an affiliate located in Iowa.

**Affiliate Support Organization (ASO)** – an organization affiliated by a covenant between Habitat for Humanity International and representatives of Habitat for Humanity affiliates within their state. SSOs focus efforts at the state level and include Advocacy, disaster preparedness, capacity building – Habitat for Humanity of Iowa.

**Volunteer Iowa** – A commission devoted to promoting volunteering in the state of Iowa. One of their programs is operating the AmeriCorps grant funding for the state of Iowa.

**AmeriCorps** – a U.S. federal government agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, Senior Corps, and other national service initiatives

## Life Cycle of an AmeriCorps member

While every member's path is different, most go through some predictable phases during their year of service. For some, this will be the best year of their lives; for others, the hardest. Either way, everyone will face ups and downs, challenges and opportunities.

- **Learning: Setting Out**

- The first phase of your service year is a “**honeymoon**” of sorts. You are excited about the year ahead, but also a bit nervous or even overwhelmed. You do not know exactly what you are doing or how you will do it, but you feel committed and have hopes and expectations for the year.
- **Suggestions**
  - Write down all the things that excite you about the coming year.
  - What are you looking forward to? What dreams and ideas do you have about this year? Listing these now will help motivate and inspire you when you get stuck later.
  - Start an orientation file or binder for yourself. Keep notes about the community, the organization and its programs, and the expectations for your role. You may also find it helpful to keep a running list of questions as they occur to you.
  - If possible, set up weekly meetings with your supervisor and/or mentor during at least the first month of your service. These meetings will give you an opportunity to ask questions, get help, and ensure that you are on the right track.

- **Learning: Learning the Ropes**

- This phase is characterized **by questioning, confusion, and a sense of disillusionment**. You may question your assignment and even your choice to become an AmeriCorps member.

- The initial excitement has worn off and now you have to get down to work. This phase often feels uncomfortable because you are on a steep learning curve and frequently use a trial-and-error process to figure things out. You may also begin to feel that you have nothing to offer. Although Learning the Ropes can be frustrating, it is best approached with the knowledge and attitude that this phase won't last forever.
- **Suggestions**
  - Observe the values and communication styles of the community and organization so that you are familiar and comfortable enough to fit in.
  - Demonstrate that you are learning how to do things within the rules and guidelines set up by your organization and supervisor.
  - Discuss with your supervisor whether an outside class might boost your understanding of how to perform a function.
  - Put the year in perspective. Start thinking about your next steps. What do you want to do when your term of service ends?
  - Remember to maintain balance and perspective. What are you doing to take care of yourself?
  - Look for a mentor or guide in the community.
- **Doing: Cautiously Contributing**
  - You will know you are Cautiously Contributing when the **learning curve has leveled off** and you are able to perform the tasks assigned to you. At this point in your service, your supervisor should not need to describe in detail what to do and how to do it. Your conversations should be two-way discussions: you propose ideas and explain your work, and your supervisor provides feedback and sign-off.
  - **Suggestions**
    - Imagine that you are directly accountable to the community and to funders of this organization and program. What would you do to improve the quality of the program, serve more people or more effectively reach program outcomes?
    - Ask for clear and honest feedback that will spur you to improve.
    - Look for opportunities to transfer capacity and teach others what you do and what you have learned.
    - Keep planning your next steps after your term of service ends.
- **Doing: Performing at Your Best**
  - In this phase, **you are productively and meaningfully engaged**. It has been said that happiness is joyful engagement or absorption in a meaningful activity, or a sense of being “in the zone.” You know what you are doing, you feel good about

doing it, and you are getting positive feedback from others in your organization and community.

- **Suggestions**
  - Keep a file with e-mails, notes, and records of positive feedback you have been given. This will help keep you motivated.
  - Identify people to transfer capacity to; for example, other members of your organization or volunteers.
  - Begin to articulate how the work you have done as an AmeriCorps member will shape your next steps.
- **Teaching: Transferring Capacity**
  - This last phase **involves focusing exclusively on transferring capacity** and knowledge to the person or group of people who will pick up where you left off. At this point, you are more concerned about keeping the project going and making the work sustainable than on increasing your own learning or doing things yourself.
  - Work with your supervisor and others in your organization and community to identify to whom you will transfer the knowledge and skills, relationships, or products you have developed as a member. You should feel like you know what to do and that you are ready to reach closure on the year. Perhaps you are looking forward to the year ahead with a combination of excitement and nervousness.
  - **Suggestions**
    - Finalize your own personal next-step plans for the coming year. The What's Next course can help you make those plans.
    - Plan opportunities to recognize those you worked with during the year.
    - Take time to say good-bye to your colleagues and community.
- **Conclusion:**
  - No matter where you are or how you feel about the service journey, it's important to keep in mind the larger goal of the service year.
  - As President Johnson said in 1964, "Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor often will be difficult. But you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort, and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man."
  - The AmeriCorps member service year inevitably has its ups and downs. Being aware of its typical phases and what you need to balance yourself throughout the year will make the process less overwhelming and more fun and productive. Remember: In struggle, there is life.

## Starting Paperwork and the first pay

AmeriCorps is a federal program that requires **A LOT** of paperwork and electronic accounts to get started. The instructions for enrollment can be found on

[www.iwoahabitat.org/americorps-enrolling](http://www.iwoahabitat.org/americorps-enrolling)

Before the first day member member must complete all of the following. The Habitat for Humanity of Iowa Staff work with the members to get through the process before the member starts.

- Member Information Form
- TrueScreen Background Check
- Fieldprint Background Check – Fingerprinting
- Employee paperwork through Adobe Sign
- Member Service Agreement signed through Adobe Sign
- My.AmeriCorps.gov enrollment
- 

On the first day, the member needs to complete the follow documents.

- **i-9** – email to ASO
- Any missing documents

Our pay checks are distributed twice a month. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month and on the last day of the month. First pay period is 26<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> of the month and the second is the 11<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> of the month. Therefore, your first paycheck depends in what pay period you start.

If a member started service on Jan. 20. The first paycheck would be Jan 31<sup>st</sup> because the member served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> pay period, 11<sup>th</sup>- 25<sup>th</sup>.

Pay will always be the same each pay period and timesheet. Everyone also has a maximum they can receive for the entire term of service. This number is found in your Member Service Agreement and Position Descriptions.

## Member Benefits

- **Living allowance:** The contracted amount of money paid in equal amounts each pay period throughout the term of service. A member may not receive more than the total amount in their Member Service Agreements. The updated member pay and benefits are found at [www.iowahabitat.org/member-page](http://www.iowahabitat.org/member-page). These amounts change every September 1 with the new grants.
- **Education Award:** Each AmeriCorps member is eligible to receive up to two full time education awards in their lifetime. This award is determined by term of service. It can be used towards past federal student loans or towards future education expenses through Title IV schools. The education award is awarded within 60 days of your successful completion of your education term. <https://www.refugeeriseiowa.org/education-award.html>

- **National Service Forbearance:** All AmeriCorps members are eligible have qualifying federal student loans placed into forbearance. Loans must be in a repayment status. This is done through my.americorps.gov. Instructions attached.
- **Accrued Interest payments:** Any member who has qualifying student loans placed in National Service Forbearance, are eligible to have the accrued interest paid on their student loans. Instructions in the “**My.AmeriCorps.Gov Guide**” attached to the back.
- **Healthcare:** Any member serving in full-time status (40 hours per week) is eligible for the Corps Network health insurance, which is provided through Cigna. 100% of the premiums are paid by Habitat for the members. More information can be found here. <https://corpsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1-TCN-Medical-Benefit-Summary-2019-Final.pdf>
- **Childcare assistance:** Members serving in a full-time capacity (40 hours per week) may be eligible for childcare assistance. The eligibility is based on the household income and follows the state assistance program. More information and application can be found here. [www.americorpschildcare.com](http://www.americorpschildcare.com)
- **Training and professional development:** Habitat for Humanity provides training throughout the year. Members will also be providing training opportunities through the Midwest Habitat for Humanity Convention, the Nonprofit Summit and other conferences. Each member will be trained by their host sites to be successful in their service.

## Training, Resources, where to go with Questions?

As members start with the AmeriCorps term, there will be many things that they will not know. Instead of standing around, we encourage members to go out and find those questions. Look for opportunities to improve and expand their skill sets. Below are examples of where to send members.

**Do you have questions about what to do day to day?** – Speak with your supervisor and ask them. If isn’t enough to do, consider shadowing other departments to learn what they do day to day.

**Do you have questions about your service, benefits, life after AmeriCorps?** –Turn to the AmeriCorps staff. They are here to help you through your year of service.

**Are you looking for additional training outside of what your host site provides?** – AmeriCorps encourages members to better prepare themselves for their service and their time after service. AmeriCorps staff will advertise upcoming trainings such as the Iowa Nonprofit Summit or the Midwest Habitat Convention. Here is a list of excellent online resources to get you started.

- Habitat for Humanity of Iowa AmeriCorps Program Make Up Training Series – [www.iowahabitat.org/member-training](http://www.iowahabitat.org/member-training)
- Nonprofitready.org
- vistacampus.org
- wildapricot.org
- VolunteerMatch.org

## Supervisor Timesheets

For this grant period, supervisors are required to record and turn in hours spent supervising and/or participating in the AmeriCorps program. These hours are very important to the grant because they are used as in-kind match. The federal AmeriCorps grant requires a 50% match to pull down any federal funds that are used to pay the member living allowance, benefits, administration of the program, and pay of staff.

- Each supervisor must provide a letter on organizational header with their worth in the form of an hourly dollar amount. This number includes - hourly wage, FICA, and benefits. This is shared with fiscal staff only for grant purposes.
- Each pay period, supervisor will submit an electronic time tracking form through the OnCorps System. ([la.oncorpsreports.com](http://la.oncorpsreports.com)). Supervisors are given access to the account when the members start by Habitat Iowa Staff.
- Instructional videos can be found at [www.iowahabitat.org/using-oncorps](http://www.iowahabitat.org/using-oncorps)

### Common Supervisor Activities:

- Collect data and/or review data on member project/service results
- Communicate with member(s) via email/phone
- Communicate with sub-site supervisor on member progress/performance
- Create/edit position description
- Evaluate member(s) on project progress
- Meet 1:1 with member(s)
- Meet with Habitat Iowa staff about member progress/performance/hours
- Meet with other staff about member progress/performance/hours
- Plan a training session/event for member(s)
- Recruit/interview/onboard new member(s)
- Staff meeting (not regularly held but unique for member service)
- Timesheet review/approval
- Train member(s) on service-relevant topic
- Time being trained by Habitat Iowa staff
- Time doing activities for Habitat Iowa staff for the grant

### Unallowable AmeriCorps Supervisor Activities to count as hours

- Work alongside member
- Hold regularly scheduled staff meeting where AmeriCorps members attend alongside regular staff
- Make fundraising calls



- Non-AmeriCorps activities/responsibilities
- AmeriCorps prohibited activities such as advocacy and religious instruction

## Reporting- Supervisors

Like every program, AmeriCorps has reporting requirements are the turned in quarterly. An example report is attached at the end. But here is more explanation about reporting. It is designed to align with the quarterly reports turned in Habitat for Humanity International.

### How to report?:

- Fill out the form attached to the back of this manual or use the online form from the Habitat Iowa website.
- <https://www.iowahabitat.org/supervisor-resource>

### Timeline and Reporting periods:

- **QUARTER 1:** Due Jan 20 -> September - Nov 30
- **QUARTER 2:** Due April 20 -> December 1- March 31
- **QUARTER 3:** Due September 20 -> April - August 30
- **QUARTER 4:** Due December 1 -> September 1 - Nov. 30 (for members serving on this grant not the future grant)

### Performance Measures:

- # of individuals **transitioned into housing** (purchased a home: new and rehab)
- # of individuals assisted through **housing repairs** UNDER 50% AMI
- # of individuals who received **financial education**
- # of **volunteers utilized**
- # of **AmeriCorps applications** received (not sent by AmeriCorps staff)

### Additional Questions:

- Do you need additional Support in any area of this program? If so, please describe in detail.
- Could you talk about a challenge or success of the program this quarter?
- Is there a link to a story from your affiliate this quarter you would like to share?
- Any additional comments?

### Definitions:

“AMI” is Area Median Income for the county as defined by HUD

“New House” is a housing unit that:

- Is 100% newly constructed
- Has been sold to a family/ individual approved in accordance with the affiliate’s selection process

“Rehabilitated house” is a housing unit that:

- Is acquired by the affiliate, then reconstructed or renovated by the affiliate.

- Has been sold to a family/ individual approved in accordance with the affiliate’s selection

“Repair” is the repair or renovation of an existing housing unit that is not owned by the affiliate:

- The housing unit is owned and inhabited by an individual/family approved in accordance with the affiliate’s board-approved selection process.
- Repairs fall under three subcategories: home preservation, critical home repairs, and weatherization.

## Reporting- Members

### Great Story Reporting

AmeriCorps Members need to share service experiences with Habitat for Humanity of Iowa Volunteer Iowa by submitting Great Stories on OnCorps. [www.ia.oncorpsreports.com](http://www.ia.oncorpsreports.com). Great Stories can be written essays, photos, or videos.

- Full-Time members must submit at least 2
- Half-Time Members must submit at least 1-2
- Quarter-Time Members must submit at least 1

These stories can be about ***your service, volunteers, or community members.***

The screenshot displays the OnCorps Reports interface. At the top left is the logo with the tagline "On task. On time. Online." Below the logo is a navigation menu with options: HOME, REPORTING, TIME TRACKING, CALENDAR, and HELP. Under the REPORTING menu, there are sub-options for "Submit Reports" and "Great Stories". A user greeting "Welcome Nicole" and a notification "Your next time sheet is due Sep 27, 2019" are visible. The main form area contains:
 

- A text input field for "Great Story Title:"
- A "Date:" input field
- A "Reporting Period:" dropdown menu set to "Select One"
- A prompt: "Please describe your great story here..."
- A large text area with the instruction: "TYPE YOUR GREAT STORY HERE or JUST ATTACHED A DOCUMENT AT THE BOT..."
- A character count: "7930 characters left"
- Three buttons at the bottom: "Save and Attach File" (blue), "Save" (blue with a green checkmark icon), and "Cancel" (red).

## Evaluation materials

Each member is required to evaluate their supervisor two times per year. Half-way through and at the end. Supervisors also evaluate the members during those times. The members submit their evaluation anonymously. Supervisor must discuss their evaluation with the member. The evaluations are used only for training self-development only. They do not affect your service.

Examples Located in this binder

## Using OnCorps

OnCorps is the timekeeping system for Iowa AmeriCorps programs. Timesheets need to be submitted and approved two times per month (every 12th and 27th of the month, supervisors have 2 days to approve the sheets). Pay dates are on the 15th and 30th of each month.

[ia.uncorpsreports.com](http://ia.uncorpsreports.com)

### **Accessing your account**

- Go to [ia.uncorpsreports.com](http://ia.uncorpsreports.com), scroll down to “Habitat for Humanity of Iowa”, select “Member” or “Supervisor”.
- Usernames and Passwords:
  - Usernames are your first letter of your first name and your last name. Example: Katie Zellmer is ***kzellmer***
  - Passwords are all temporarily set to “***Building1***”

### **Submitting a timesheet- members**

- You must submit your hours to the nearest 15 minutes.
  - 45 Minutes = 0.75; 30 Minutes = 0.5; 15 Minutes = 0.25
- Types of hours (Service, Training, and Fundraising)
  - Service hours: majority of the hours served
  - Training hours: time when being trained on something, cannot exceed 20% of your total maximum hours
  - Fundraising hours: allowable in only rare circumstances and require prior AmeriCorps Approval
- Sign into OnCorps using the links at the top of the page.
- Select a current timesheet
- Enter your hours served into each date. Separate training hours from direct service hours.
- Leave the comment selection “BLANK”
- Click "Authorize and Submit"

### **Supervisors Approving a timesheet- supervisors**

- Each time a member submits a timesheet, a supervisor will receive an email with a link for approving
- Sign into OnCorps using the correct link above

- Select: Time Tracking > Member Service Hours > Approve Member Timesheets

### **Supervisors Rejecting a timesheet - supervisors**

If a timesheet needs to be rejected due to errors, a supervisor must take action first.

- Click “Time Tracking Tab”
- Click “Member Service Hours”
- Click “Filter Member service Hours”
- On Next screen select “your member”
- After that, supervisors will see all the timesheets and have the ability to “reject” them.
- Members must fix and resubmit their timesheets
- Supervisors must re-approve.

### **Checking Hours on OnCorps**

In Order to stay on track with member hours, members and supervisors should regularly check the member accounts on OnCorps, which displays the required number of hours per week, number of hours served on average, and number of hours required for successful completion.

- Log into OnCorps
- Click the "+" symbol next your name to expand the panel
  - Avg/ WK Target (What you need to be successful based on your contract with no days off)
  - Avg/wk Current (What you have served based on turned in timesheets)
  - Avg/wk needed: (What you need to be successful by the end of the service term)

Enrolled: 900 | Hours Left: 900 | Expected End Date: 11/04/2020

**Member Details for** [Redacted]

Days Served: 0

Avg/Wk Target: 17.26 Hours/Week  
 Avg/Wk Current: 0 Hours/Week  
 Weeks Left: 52.29  
 Avg/Wk Needed: 17.21

**Service Sites**

Primary Site: Marshalltown MRT | Joshua Dank

### **Taking time off**

Members must inform their site supervisor in advance of any absence from their regular service schedule. If the absence is greater than 1 week, program staff must be notified. Members should make every effort to maintain a regular service schedule found in their member service agreement (40, 20, or 10 hours per week). Personal appointments and time off should be scheduled around set service schedule and holiday breaks. Members will be encouraged to stay on track to meet the minimum hours required per their service agreement (1700, 1200, 900, or 450). This should be checked each pay period on

OnCorps. If the member fails to meet established service hour benchmarks, member supervisors and AmeriCorps program staff will meet with the member to provide support and guidance on ways to successfully complete their service hours. If the member continues to fail to meet established service hour benchmarks, they could be subject to progressive discipline, up to and including termination from service.

It is the member's responsibility to review and submit their time sheet to their site supervisor twice monthly. Timesheets must be submitted after all service hours for the pay period are recorded and are due no later than two (2) working day after the 15th and final day of each month. A member's site supervisor is responsible for verifying the accuracy of, and approving, the member's time sheet.