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Cancels: WSC Policy #7
See Also: Member Service Agreement

POLICY

Approved by:
Mark Duncan

POL – 160

MANAGING MEMBER DEPLOYMENT FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

This Policy applies to all Washington Service Corps (WSC) AmeriCorps members being deployed for disaster response or recovery efforts.

WSC members may be deployed to help support disaster response and/or recovery efforts. Sponsor organizations must agree to release Members for short term duration to assist with these efforts. Deployment may be waived if it presents undue hardship for an individual member. All deployments would be requested by the WSC unless your host organization is a disaster response organization where any requests for deployment would require initial approval by the WSC.

1. WSC Forwards Deployment Opportunities to Sponsoring Organizations

- Upon request from CNCS or Serve Washington for assistance, determine what skills would be beneficial for the deployment and how many members are needed.
- Determine which members would be most suitable for deployment.
- Contact supervisors of suitable members with details about the deployment situation (where, when, how long members would be gone, etc.).
- If no specific skills are requested, issue a general call for deployment to supervisors.

2. Sponsoring Organization Communicates Opportunities to Eligible Members

If the deployment would not adversely affect the service site, then contact members who are eligible to deploy. Discuss the deployment request with eligible members.

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Eligibility Criteria

- Supervisor agrees to make the member available for training and possible deployment
- Member understands the difficult conditions of deployment
- Member is in physical condition appropriate for specified tasks
- Member can deploy within 24 to 48 hours of confirmation of deployment status

Conditions of Deployment

It is important that Sponsoring Organizations and their members understand that disaster deployments are considered hardship assignments. Members should not volunteer for this unless they understand that they are likely to face unfavorable conditions, which may include:

- Extreme weather conditions such as high heat and humidity; sustained exposure to freezing temperatures or unmitigated heat from direct sunlight; rain, snow or other forms of precipitation; lightning; and dangerous flooding situations.
- Possible exposure to infections and diseases, including West Nile virus; H1N1 (swine flu)
(Disaster responders should be current on their vaccinations)
- Potential dangerous working situations such as handling broken glass and twisted metal, climbing on roofs, and wading through flood waters
- Unfavorable living conditions:
 - May sleep on gymnasium floors, at campgrounds, in church halls, or in college dorms
 - Possibility of no heat, air conditioning, or hot water
- Limited food choices:
 - Often, responders are fed by the mobile operations of other responding voluntary organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, or by churches in the community.
 - The selection of food at these sites is extremely limited, so there is no guarantee that special dietary requirements can be reasonably accommodated.
 - While vegetarian meals are becoming more accessible, many times responders have had nothing else to eat except Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) from FEMA.

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- Long work hours:
 - In the days and weeks immediately following a disaster, work must get done as quickly as possible
 - May be required to work from sunrise to sunset to meet immediate needs
 - In shelters, may have to serve 24 hours a day
 - WSC tries to ensure one day off a week, but there are no guarantees
- Chaotic work environment:
 - Most deployments do not work out exactly as anticipated
 - A “hurry up and wait” scenario is possible – participants rush to deploy, only to spend several days on site with very little to do as the operation is organized.
 - Responders may end up doing something totally different than what they had deployed to do
 - There may be no need for the responders once they arrive and they may be sent home immediately (expenses incurred will be reimbursed)
 - **Flexibility** is the most important requirement for responding volunteers

3. Member, Sponsoring Organization, and WSC Coordinate Participation

During deployment, all WSC policies are in place and applicable. Depending on the size and duration of the deployment, a WSC staff person (or more) will be designated to be in charge of the mission. A Project Supervisor may be recruited to act as a second in charge. Staff and members should understand their roles and responsibilities during the disaster recovery mission. Staff is responsible for on-the-ground supervision of the members while they are serving on their assigned task and also at the camp or hotel where they are staying. Members should take their duties seriously and be held accountable for their service duties. Members should be willing to support their fellow team members and provide a positive atmosphere of support and tolerance; fully participating in service duties and team meetings.

A briefing would be held with members, supervisors and staff prior to deploying. At least one group meeting will be held for each week on deployment, with a conference call to WSC Program Coordinator following the meeting. Upon return from deployment, time will be set aside for debriefing, reflection and counseling (if

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requested) prior to returning to service. Each deployed member is required to submit at least one Story of Service within one week after return from deployment.

Safety is the most important item to be emphasized during all projects and especially during disaster deployment missions. Members will be instructed on the proper use of Personal Protection Equipment, proper hydration, sun protection, fatigue and use of project equipment and tools. These safety topics will be addressed with members in regular safety briefings and by proper supervision from staff.

Should a Sponsoring Organization request deployment of a member, prior approval needs to be obtained. The project supervisor will need to submit a request to the WSC/WRC Program Coordinator that includes the following:

- Location where the member will be deployed; specific location with contact information
- Name of Supervisor (when known) while on deployment
- How long the member will be gone for deployment; expected return
- Proof of liability insurance coverage by the Sponsoring Organization (filed with WSC)
- Justification as to why the member is needed
 - What special skills the member possesses that warrants his/her assistance
 - What the member will be doing
 - How it relates to the member's service at their site
- The member must acknowledge, through an electronic message to the WSC Program Coordinator, their understanding of deployment and the conditions they are deploying to and the area to which they will report. In addition, they understand this is an addition to the responsibilities outlined in their position description

The WSC Program Coordinator will then forward the request for deployment to the Director of Programs and Operations. The Director of Programs and Operations will approve or disapprove and send back to the program coordinator for notification to Sponsoring Organization.

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Any member deployed without prior approval will not be able to count their hours on deployment as service hours and will be considered to be on administrative leave.