

# FiftyForward RSVP

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## Volunteer Handbook

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FiftyForward RSVP is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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## **Introduction**

Thank you so much for your willingness to share your lifetime of experience to meet critical needs in your community. Both RSVP and the volunteer station where you serve share the responsibility of providing policies and procedures that will make your volunteer experience a positive and enjoyable one. This handbook addresses RSVP's policies and procedures as well as basic questions you might have about serving as an RSVP volunteer.

This handbook also serves as a guide for adults under age 55 who volunteer at FiftyForward Centers and Programs. Please note that underage volunteers (individuals under age 55) may not be eligible for all receive RSVP benefits.

## **What is RSVP?**

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is a Senior Corps project of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). With more than 450,000 members, RSVP is one of the largest volunteer organizations for older adults in the nation. RSVP encourages its volunteers to bring a lifetime of talent, experience, skills, and hobbies to community projects and organizations needing volunteer talent. RSVP projects and volunteers serve nearly every county of the United States.

Since 1982, FiftyForward (formerly Senior Citizens Inc.) has hosted RSVP of Davidson and Williamson counties locally by providing a 50 percent match to the Corporation's grant.

FiftyForward RSVP provides adults 55 and older with opportunities for meaningful volunteer service in nonprofits, senior high-rise communities, and public and private schools in Davidson and Williamson counties. These organizations serve our community by focusing on economic opportunity, education, veterans and military families, environmental issues, food distribution and collection, human service needs, and public safety.

## **Who can be an RSVP volunteer?**

Any person age 55 or older who lives in Davidson or Williamson County, or is willing to serve in Davidson or Williamson County, is

eligible to join FiftyForward RSVP. There is no restriction based on education, income, or skills. Anyone who wants to share their lifetime of experience will profit from becoming a part of the RSVP network.

## **What do RSVP volunteers do?**

RSVP enables potential volunteers to choose the opportunity that fits their interests, skills, and life experience. RSVP volunteers serve, without pay, in a variety of ways including delivering meals, working in offices, instructing classes, leading advisory boards, and working with children.

RSVP's goal is to provide an atmosphere in which volunteers feel comfortable sharing their passions, abilities, and experiences on a schedule that fits their busy lifestyles.

We value whatever contribution of time you can offer, and we will tailor the assignment to fit your needs and preferences. If you later find that your volunteer work is conflicting with other commitments, simply contact the RSVP office and make arrangements to alter your assignment or schedule.

## **What is an RSVP volunteer station?**

Any place where RSVP members volunteer is called a volunteer station. FiftyForward RSVP has three categories of volunteer stations:

- ◆ Community Placements – Volunteer assignments at local community agencies. This includes placement for National Days of Service, Senior Corps Week, etc.
- ◆ FiftyForward placements – FiftyForward Centers and Programs
- ◆ Friends Learning in Pairs (FLIP) – an intergenerational tutoring program

Our current focus is to place volunteers in the following areas that align with the CNCS strategic plan:

- ◆ Food Distribution/Collection
- ◆ Veterans and Military Families
- ◆ Economic Opportunity
- ◆ Independent Living

- ◆ Education (primary focus area)

## **How do I become an RSVP volunteer?**

RSVP uses the following procedure to match potential volunteers to an appropriate opportunity:

- 1.** Potential volunteers contact the RSVP office to schedule an interview/orientation.
- 2.** Potential volunteers complete a registration form, including an interest assessment.
- 3.** During the interview/orientation, an RSVP staff member provides an overview of RSVP and describes the benefits of becoming an RSVP volunteer.
- 4.** To provide an effective match, the RSVP staff member assesses the potential volunteer's interests, skills, and schedule.
- 5.** The RSVP staff member suggests one or more possible matches, and the potential volunteer decides which one he or she would like to pursue.
- 6.** The RSVP staff member sends an email to the volunteer station, introducing the volunteer and including his or her contact information.
- 7.** RSVP staff follows up with the volunteer periodically (approximately weekly/bi-weekly) until the start of actual volunteer service.
- 8.** The RSVP staff member checks in with the volunteer after three months to see how the placement is working out.

## **Can I volunteer according to my schedule?**

RSVP strives to maintain flexibility in the scheduling of assignments. There is no minimum number of service hours required; however, you must serve at least four hours per year to be considered an active member of RSVP. Assignment hours vary according to the needs of the volunteer stations, but you can select an assignment that suits your schedule.

## How do I report my volunteer hours?

RSVP must track hours for all the volunteers it places. Those hours are then documented in grant applications and reports to the Corporation for National and Community Service and other grantors.

If you volunteer at a FiftyForward center or program, you report your volunteer hours to your station supervisor, who in turn reports those hours to RSVP at the end of each month.

RSVP non-profit partners also report volunteer hours to our office. If you are participating in a one-time opportunity the RSVP Coordinator will have a sign-in sheet to record your hours.

## What are the benefits of becoming an RSVP volunteer?

- ◆ Free supplemental accident and liability insurance while volunteering\*
- ◆ Thorough orientation and quality volunteer placement\*
- ◆ Chance to use your experience and skills or learn something new
- ◆ Opportunity for community involvement
- ◆ Satisfaction of knowing you are making a difference
- ◆ RSVP recognition and celebration of your volunteer service\*
- ◆ Biweekly e-newsletter that describes new volunteer opportunities\*
- ◆ RSVP volunteers are also eligible for the benefits provided by their volunteer stations.

## What are an RSVP volunteer's responsibilities?

- ◆ Attend all required orientation and training.
- ◆ Perform your duties to the best of your ability, ask questions, cooperate with staff and other volunteers, and follow the volunteer station's policies.
- ◆ Be dependable and follow through on commitments.

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\* Underage volunteers at FiftyForward centers and programs are not eligible for this benefit.

- ◆ Notify your station supervisor if you will be absent, late, or must leave early. If you will be away for an extended period of time, or if you choose to discontinue service, notify the station supervisor and the RSVP office in advance.
- ◆ Maintain the confidentiality of any information you receive about the volunteer station, its employees, or its clients.
- ◆ Make sure that any information you give out is correct. When in doubt, ask your supervisor for the correct information.
- ◆ Notify the station supervisor and the RSVP office of any problems you encounter during your assignment.
- ◆ Notify the RSVP office of any changes in your phone number, address, and ability to serve as a volunteer.

## **What are an RSVP volunteer's rights?**

- ◆ Receive training and guidance; be informed of the station's policies and any changes in your assignment.
- ◆ Have a suitable and worthwhile assignment; receive responses to your questions and concerns.
- ◆ Be treated with fairness and respect.
- ◆ Receive appreciation for your service.
- ◆ Change or discontinue an assignment at any time.

## **What are a volunteer station's responsibilities?**

Each volunteer station has specific guidelines that your station supervisor will explain to you before you begin your assignment. If you have any questions or need additional information about your volunteer assignment, please contact your supervisor.

The volunteer station has these responsibilities:

- ◆ Discuss and provide an appropriate assignment and schedule.
- ◆ Provide relevant orientation, training, and supervision; clearly define expectations.
- ◆ Communicate openly; provide ideas and guidance; be available to answer questions.
- ◆ Motivate and celebrate achievements; provide opportunities for growth.

- ◆ Notify the RSVP office of any problems or if an RSVP volunteer discontinues service.

## **What is the RSVP Advisory Council?**

The RSVP Advisory Council meets quarterly to advise and assist the RSVP operation. Its functions include marketing and public relations, planning volunteer recognition events, and providing ideas for financial support, evaluation, and future direction of the program. If you would like to serve on the RSVP Advisory Council, please call the RSVP office.

## **Can an RSVP volunteer be terminated?**

The following practices, though not all-inclusive, are grounds for termination of assignment:

- ◆ Violation of confidentiality
- ◆ Exploitation or disrespect of client
- ◆ Noncompliance with job description; inability to fulfill the responsibilities of the volunteer assignment.
- ◆ Misrepresentation of volunteer role
- ◆ Continued absence without notice

In addition, RSVP referral services will be placed on hold for six months, at the discretion of the RSVP Director, if a potential volunteer repeatedly cancels appointments or fails to follow through on volunteer placements.

## **Does RSVP have a grievance procedure?**

If you feel aggrieved by situation, an action or an RSVP staff decision, you may appeal for reconsideration by following these steps:

1. Discuss your complaint with the RSVP staff member responsible for the action.
2. If the issue is not resolved, put your complaint in writing and submit it to the RSVP Director, who will follow-up with you to address the complaint.
3. If the issue is still not resolved, you have the option of requesting a meeting to include the appropriate RSVP staff, RSVP Director and the Director of Active Aging Centers and Programs.

4. Following thorough review of the written complaint and presentation of the grievance during a scheduled meeting you will be sent a written recommendation specifying the course of action to be taken and if merited, may include termination.

## **How do I contact RSVP staff?**

If you need to change your assignment or schedule or if you encounter problems at your volunteer station, please inform the RSVP office right away.

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