

# *RSVP of the Pioneer Valley*

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# *Volunteer Handbook*

RSVP of the Pioneer Valley  
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An AmeriCorps Seniors program sponsored by Community Action Pioneer Valley



# Welcome to RSVP of the Pioneer Valley!

We're so glad you have decided to become an RSVP volunteer. Volunteer service can enrich your life while at the same time enabling you to contribute positively to the lives of others. RSVP's staff will be with you every step of the way to ensure that your volunteer experience is rewarding and meaningful for you and the organizations and community you serve.

This volunteer handbook is designed to give you an overview of the policies, responsibilities, and benefits that apply to you as an RSVP volunteer. Please refer to the table of contents below to locate specific topics. If you have any questions about the handbook or other details of your volunteer service, let us know.

All of us at RSVP look forward to working with you as you volunteer. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of help at any point during your volunteer service. Thank you for deciding to make volunteering through RSVP a part of your life!

Sincerely,

Lindsay, Pat, Ginger, Danielle, and Sandra

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### RSVP Overview

RSVP is the volunteer center for people 55 and over in the Pioneer Valley. RSVP recruits volunteers, matching their interests, skills, availability and experience with rewarding placements at public and non-profit organizations in Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. RSVP volunteers are part of a network of more than 400 people 55 and older who share their time and expertise with local organizations. RSVP is funded by AmeriCorps Seniors and is locally sponsored by Community Action Pioneer Valley.

## **RSVP Volunteers:**

- Lead weekly Healthy Bones & Balance classes for seniors.
- Alleviate hunger by distributing “brown bags” of groceries and Meals on Wheels for elders or assisting at local food pantries.
- Contribute to senior centers by offering classes, leading programs, supporting staff, providing transportation, visiting isolated elders, and advising seniors on health insurance and money management.
- Work with local non-profit organizations providing program support, researching, staffing thrift and gift shops, serving on boards and friends groups, and helping with special events.
- Help with one-time projects like large mailings, fairs and fundraising events.
- Support education through ESL programs, tutoring, and classroom support.

These are only some of the many ways that our volunteers add richness to the life of our community. RSVP works with each volunteer to create a fulfilling placement with a positive impact.

## **To Become a Volunteer**

- Talk with RSVP staff and determine if you are ready to make a volunteer commitment.
- Complete an RSVP information form and decide which positions interest you. Many organizations request a year’s commitment, while other positions are episodic or short-term.
- RSVP staff will arrange a meeting with the site(s) of interest.
- Interview with the site(s) and complete any site-specific forms or background checks.
- Make your decision, let RSVP know, and begin volunteering!

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

- You or your site supervisor must report your monthly service hours by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the next month.
- Let RSVP know by phone or email if your contact or volunteer placement information changes.

## **Volunteer Benefits**

***Satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and personalized support from RSVP Staff.*** RSVP volunteers benefit from RSVP staff’s skill with developing and supporting quality, meaningful volunteer assignments that have a positive impact on the community.

***Professional development:*** RSVP volunteer assignments include opportunities for leadership and participation in related trainings.

***Social Networking:*** Volunteering through RSVP provides numerous opportunities to connect with a large network of like-minded peers.

***Recognition:*** RSVP volunteers who have 50 or more annual service hours are honored at our annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon each fall, are recommended for local, state and national awards, and are acknowledged in the media and at community events.

***Insurance:*** RSVP provides a no-cost personal liability, accident, and excess automobile liability insurance to member volunteers. Personal liability and accident insurance applies during your volunteer assignment and while on your way to and from your volunteer station. Excess automobile liability insurance applies for those volunteers who drive as part of their volunteer service. This insurance offers some help in the event of an accident but is not a substitute for any insurance you may now carry. Benefits include up to \$25,000 in

excess accident medical coverage, up to \$1,000,000 in personal liability insurance, and up to \$500,000 in excess automobile liability insurance. Coverage requires that you provide RSVP with an emergency contact and, if you drive to and from your volunteer site or for your volunteer position, a valid driver's license number and current expiration date.

For accidents which result in personal injury:

- Call the RSVP office as soon as possible following the incident. The RSVP Director will work with you to complete a claim form. Details needed include your primary insurance information and the time, place and circumstances of the incident, including the names and addresses of witnesses.
- RSVP will submit the form to the insurance company along with copies of your insurance card(s) and any itemized bills.

**Transportation Reimbursement:** Reimbursement is available to assist with travel costs to and from your volunteer site including mileage and PVRTA/FRTA bus and van tickets.

***Reimbursement funds are limited. Before requesting reimbursement, please reflect on personal need and consider those who depend on the reimbursement in order to volunteer.***

To be reimbursed for travel:

1. Keep a current, valid drivers' license number and expiration date on file with RSVP.
2. Use the approved RSVP Transportation Reimbursement Request Form. Reimbursement requires your signature and a supervisor signature. You must include dates of volunteer service and actual miles driven or cost of bus/van tickets to and from your RSVP Volunteer Site.
3. Travel expenses incurred *while performing volunteer assignments* are not reimbursable by RSVP. If a volunteer transports other volunteers, reimbursement is only provided to the vehicle's owner.
4. Completed reimbursement request forms are due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the following month.
5. Reimbursement checks will be sent out quarterly. Volunteers who need monthly reimbursement should contact the RSVP office to make those arrangements.

Reimbursement rate is \$0.20 per mile, with a minimum of 25 miles driven per month, and a maximum reimbursement of \$15.00 per month. It is not paid for less than one hour of volunteer service and is subject to change. The transportation reimbursement program shall continue as long as there are available funds. All volunteers who regularly claim transportation reimbursement will be notified of any change.

### **How Volunteer Site Partners Work with RSVP**

Volunteer Site Partners are public agencies, private non-profit organizations, or proprietary health-care agencies or organizations that assign, train, supervise and benefit from the assistance of RSVP volunteers. A signed Memorandum of Understanding with RSVP outlines the responsibilities of each party including orientation, in-service instruction, and special training as needed. You and your volunteer supervisor are responsible for the monthly reporting of your hours of service to RSVP.

### **Prohibition of Discrimination**

RSVP and its site partners do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, including individuals with limited English proficiency, sex, age, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or on the basis of disability, if the volunteer is a qualified individual with a disability. Programs and activities to which RSVP volunteers are assigned will be accessible to persons with disabilities and will provide reasonable accommodation to allow persons with disabilities to participate.

## **Incident Reporting**

Each Site Partner will familiarize its volunteers with its emergency protocol. Volunteers should follow the site's protocol at all times. Volunteers and/or staff should complete and sign an RSVP Incident Report following any incident and submit it to the RSVP director within 24 hours of the incident. The RSVP Director will consult with the Site Supervisor to determine what, if any, follow up is needed in accordance with that site's protocol. Types of reportable incidents might include injury, illness, or harassment.

## **Fair Labor Policy**

RSVP volunteers may not engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by an employed worker or which would supplant the hiring of or result in the displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for service.

## **Fee for Service**

RSVP volunteers may not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, or members of their family or friends. No site may request or receive compensation from the beneficiaries of RSVP volunteers.

## **Engagement in Religious, Sectarian or Political Activities While Volunteering**

Volunteer Sites may not assign RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in religious activities, including religious instruction, conducting worship services, or proselytizing as part of their duties. Volunteer Sites may not assign RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in any political or electoral activities, including voter registration, transportation to polls, or efforts to influence legislation. AmeriCorps Seniors grant funds may not be used for any of the aforementioned activities or to finance labor or anti-labor organizations or related activity.

## **Ending Volunteer Status**

### **Report to RSVP staff if you:**

- Become temporarily inactive due to illness, travel, or other needs.
- Choose to end your status at any time for any reason.

### **RSVP may end your status:**

- If you have not reported hours of service for 6 months.
- For cause, including, but not limited to, extensive or unauthorized absences, misconduct, or inability to perform assignments or accept supervision.

Confidential discussion among RSVP staff, Volunteer Site Partner staff, and the volunteer may be used to resolve conflicts or arrange placement with another Volunteer Site. Volunteers wishing to appeal the ending of a placement or their status as a volunteer should contact the RSVP Volunteer Manager for guidance. The termination and appeal process at each Site Partner governs how individual cases can be resolved. RSVP staff are available for support and consultation to volunteers and site staff as needed.

## PARTNER AGENCIES

Agawam Council on Aging  
Amherst Senior Center  
Amherst Survival Center  
Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary  
Baystate Franklin Medical Center  
Baystate Noble Hospital  
Belchertown Senior Center  
Bernardston Senior Center  
Cancer Connection, Inc.  
Community Action Pioneer Valley  
Conway Council on Aging  
Cooley Dickinson Hospital  
Cummington Council on Aging  
Easthampton Community Center  
Easthampton Council on Aging  
Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art  
Food Bank of Western Massachusetts  
Granby Senior Center  
Greater Springfield Senior Services  
Greenfield Community College  
Hadley Senior Community Center  
Hatfield Senior Center  
Heath Senior Center  
Highland Valley Elder Services  
Homework House

Hospice of the Fisher Home  
Hospice Shop of Northampton  
Jones Library - ESL Center  
Lathrop Communities  
LifePath, Inc.  
Northampton Senior Center  
Northampton Survival Center  
Northfield Senior Center  
Palmer Senior Center  
Rachel's Table  
RiverMills Chicopee Senior Center  
Shelburne Senior Center  
South County Senior Center  
South Hadley Senior Center  
Southampton Senior Center  
Trustees of Reservations, NW Region  
Ware Senior Center  
Warwick Council on Aging  
Wendell Free Library  
West Springfield Senior Center  
Westhampton Council on Aging  
WestMass ElderCare Inc.  
Williamsburg Senior Center  
Worthington Council on Aging  
YMCA in Greenfield

### **RSVP Contact Information**

Lindsay Bennett-Jacobs, Director	387-1283	<a href="mailto:lbennettjacobs@communityaction.us">lbennettjacobs@communityaction.us</a>
Pat Sicard, Volunteer Manager	387-1286	<a href="mailto:psicard@communityaction.us">psicard@communityaction.us</a>
Ginger Elliott, Volunteer Coord.	387-1296	<a href="mailto:gelliott@communityaction.us">gelliott@communityaction.us</a>
Danielle Costa, HBB Coordinator	387-1297	<a href="mailto:dcosta@communityaction.us">dcosta@communityaction.us</a>
Sandra Mongeon, Program Assistant	387-1298	<a href="mailto:smongeon@communityaction.us">smongeon@communityaction.us</a>
General Messages	387-4558 x6	<a href="mailto:rsvp@communityaction.us">rsvp@communityaction.us</a>