



INTRODUCTION

AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve programs offer participants significant opportunities for personal and professional growth through service. While these opportunities are important to everyone, they can be particularly significant in the lives of people with disabilities.

On a personal level, national service provides participants with opportunities to learn about themselves and their responsibility to their neighborhoods and communities. Through service and interaction with other national service participants, program staff, and community members, participants will discover the power each individual has to bring about positive change. Participants will also learn collaboration, communication, leadership, and other life skills. Professionally, national service can help participants prepare for future employment by providing ongoing training and practical experience in a variety of fields. For individuals with disabilities, the chance to go out into the community and serve others can change perspectives – their own and those of others.

Participation in national service has a positive impact on people of all ages. Through Learn and Serve, students build academic skills while strengthening communities through service. Benefits include improved academic achievement, increased student engagement and civic skills, and stronger communities. AmeriCorps members can gain practical work experience and training that will help them in their chosen careers. Seniors, with their vast array of knowledge and life experiences, can continue to learn and grow through participation in national service.

Increasing the participation of men and women with disabilities in national service is also important to the success of service programs. With a population of almost two million people, Michigan's disability community represents a significant pool of potential service providers with diverse talents. This resource guide provides effective methods for integrating the principles and practices of inclusion into the everyday operations of Michigan's national service programs. These aren't exceptional practices, but rather ways to build upon established recruitment and retention procedures. Inclusive programs are stronger, more vibrant, and better able to serve the diverse needs of their communities.

Just like those without disabilities, individuals with disabilities are seeking to be part of something greater while striving to make something more of themselves. They are people who are committed to strengthening communities and making an important difference in the lives of others. Committing your program to the full inclusion of people with disabilities will increase the number of compassionate, competent, and enthusiastic service providers involved in Michigan's national service programs. Together we can build a better future where all who wish to serve can and do serve—making Michigan a leader in achieving the goal of stronger citizens, stronger communities, and a stronger country.

To learn more about the Michigan Community Service Commission and our disability/inclusion initiative, visit the MCSC website at www.michigan.gov/mcsc and click on the Disability/Inclusion section on the left-hand navigation menu.



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The Corporation for National and Community Service

Created in 1993, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) engages more than 2 million Americans annually in improving communities through service. The Corporation supports service at national, state and local levels through:



- Senior Corps, a network of programs that helps Americans age 55 and older use their skills and experience in service opportunities that address the needs of their communities. Senior Corps includes RSVP, Foster Grandparents, and Senior Companions.



- AmeriCorps, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs while earning education awards to help finance college or training. AmeriCorps includes State and National programs, VISTA, and National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC).



- Learn and Serve America, which helps link community service and learning objectives for youth from kindergarten through college as well as youth in community-based organizations.

Michigan Community Service Commission

M I C H I G A N



**COMMUNITY
SERVICE**

C O M M I S S I O N

The Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC) is committed to encouraging all Michigan residents, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender, age, income, or education, to engage in service. Michigan's Statewide Inclusion Team was established to help empower national service programs to make service a part of the lives of individuals with disabilities. Through resource development, outreach, and assistance, the Statewide Inclusion Team works to bring Michigan's national service programs and disability communities together to improve the quality of life for all Michigan residents.

Michigan Community Service Commission Contact Information:

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MCSC Statewide Inclusion Team:

The MCSC Statewide Inclusion Team is used to promote and support full participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of national service programs through collaboration between individuals with disabilities, disability advocacy and service organizations, and Michigan's national service programs. The Statewide Inclusion Team is comprised of individuals from disability organizations, program directors, service participants, and MCSC staff. A list of Inclusion Team members and their affiliations can be found on the website.



MCSC Inclusion Team Strategic Plan:

The MCSC Inclusion Team has created a Strategic Plan with the following goals:

- **Goal 1:** Promote Michigan's national service programs as an opportunity and a bridge to skill-building, career development, and community inclusion.
- **Goal 2:** Develop ongoing state and local level relationships between stakeholders in the disability and service communities that promote the involvement of people with disabilities in volunteerism and national service programs.
- **Goal 3:** Identify and address local, state and federal policies and practices that present barriers to or promote inclusion in national service programs.

Reasonable Accommodation Funds:

For cases where a reasonable accommodation would prove to be an undue hardship for a program, limited funding is available through the MCSC to provide accommodations for service applicants, AmeriCorps*State and National Direct members, Senior Corps volunteers, and Learn and Serve program participants. Programs should seek alternative funding or cost-sharing resources whenever possible. All national service programs must provide reasonable accommodations where required by law regardless of their eligibility for MCSC or outside funding.

Inclusion Mini-Grants:

The MCSC is pleased to offer supplemental inclusion funds for Michigan's AmeriCorps*State and National, Senior Corps (RSVP, Senior Companions, Foster Grandparents), and Learn and Serve programs to engage people with disabilities in service. Funds will be granted through an application process and will support service projects and "service shadow" opportunities that include people with disabilities. Inclusion mini-grant requests may range from \$100-\$500. Programs will also be required to submit a final report detailing the project/event outcomes. The application is available on the MCSC website at www.michigan.gov/mcsc.

Inclusion Training for National Service Program Participants:

Members of Michigan's Statewide Inclusion Team are available to provide disability/inclusion training to national service programs at little or no cost. For more information on scheduling training for your national service program, contact Megan Sargent at sargentm1@michigan.gov or 517-241-3494.



What We Mean When We Talk About Inclusion National Service Inclusion Project

www.serviceandinclusion.org
nsip@umb.edu * 888-491-0326 (voice/TTY)



Inclusion means that all people, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or health care needs, have the right to:

- Be respected and appreciated as valuable members of their communities
- Participate in recreational activities in neighborhood settings
- Serve as a member or volunteer in Senior Corps, AmeriCorps or Learn and Serve America programs
- Work at jobs in the community that pay a competitive wage and have careers that use their capacities to the fullest
- Participate in service learning opportunities with peers from elementary school through college and continuing education

Inclusion applies to all parts of life:

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 mandate that people with disabilities have freedom, equality, and opportunity to participate fully in public life.

Support:

- People with disabilities may need support to participate fully in their communities and in national and community service programs. This support can range from alterations (called “accommodations”) to make a space accessible for a person with physical or sensory limitations, to training and technical assistance for programs, to assistance from others to succeed in a service program, job or a recreational activity. Support should respect the wants, needs, and choices of the person with a disability.

Inclusion is not...

- Clustering people with disabilities into one home, classroom, workplace, or social center.
- Giving “special privileges” to people with disabilities.
- Feeling sorry for people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities as recipients of volunteer service only.

Inclusion can look like...

- Martina, a woman who is blind, sings in her church choir.
- Andrea, a woman with cerebral palsy, tutors neighborhood children in a local volunteer center three times each week.
- Tyrone became interested in politics through his city’s Independent Living Center (ILC), a resource center for people with disabilities. He now advocates for his own rights and teaches other people about disability rights issues.
- Adam, who has Down syndrome, is a full-time service member in a local AmeriCorps program.
- Lee, an eight year-old girl with significant health care needs, participates in service learning activities in elementary school, with help from her school nurse and a portable ventilator.



EVERYONE Can Be a Part of Their Community!

Learning about and understanding inclusion has many components. To begin with understanding how a disability is defined by law is important to being able to build inclusive environments in national service. Below is information on two of the major federal laws that govern defining what a disability is and apply to all streams of national service: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This information has been adapted from the National Service Inclusion Project Handbook at www.serviceandinclusion.org.

What is the definition of disability?

There are many definitions of a disability. Some definitions focus on medical conditions, while others focus on the functional limitations that result from disability. Different federal and state laws and programs use different definitions. There are many people who have medical conditions that are disabling, but that does not necessarily mean that they meet the definition of "disability" that is laid out in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and in the Americans with Disabilities Act. To be protected by these federal laws, an individual must meet the definition described in the law.

Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, a person with a disability is one who:

1. Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. Has a history of such an impairment; or
3. Is perceived or "regarded as" having such an impairment, even when the impairment does not exist.

There are some important components to this three-part definition. The phrase *major life activities* means functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

Example – Major Life Activity:

Janice, an RSVP participant, is paralyzed from the waist down and is *substantially limited* in the major life activity of walking. She is considered to have a disability. Michael, a VISTA volunteer who has a bad knee that hurts when he plays soccer, does not meet the definition. He is not *substantially limited* in the major life activity of walking, and soccer is not considered a major life activity.

Substantially limits means unable to perform a major life activity, or significantly restricted in the condition, manner, or duration it can be performed, when compared to most people in the general population. The determination that a disability *substantially limits* an individual in performing major life activities is made on a case-by-case basis. It is not based merely on the existence of a condition (a physical or psychiatric disability), but on the impact of that disability on an individual's ability to perform major life activities.

Example – History of Impairment:

Clarice, a Foster Grandparent, has an addiction to alcohol and is in recovery. She may not



have a disability now, but she is protected against discrimination based on her history of addiction.

The definition of disability considers the impact of the impairment. There is no comprehensive list of protected disabilities because there are so many conditions that can result in disability. Also, an impairment for one person may substantially limit a major life activity, while someone else may not be substantially limited. Determinations must be made on a case-by-case-basis.

Example – Perception of Disability:

Wendy's behavior seems "strange" to the program supervisor, and the supervisor thinks that she has a psychiatric disability. If the supervisor takes action against her based on her misperception that Wendy has a disability Wendy is protected against discrimination under the "perception of disability" part of the definition.