

# Volunteer Handbook



**RSVP of North Central Iowa**

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# Table of Contents

What is RSVP?.....	3
Director’s Message .....	4
Mission and History .....	5
Organizational and Financial Structure .....	6
Sponsorship and Advisory Council .....	7
Volunteer Information.....	8
Volunteer Stations.....	9
Policies and Procedures.....	10
Volunteer Responsibilities and Special Limitations.....	15
Terms and Acronyms .....	16

## What is RSVP?



RSVP is part of a national network of programs called Senior Corps that recruits adults 55 and older to use their talents and life experience to help meet community needs through volunteer service. RSVP offers maximum flexibility and choice to its volunteers as it matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to serve in their communities. Volunteers provide hundreds of community service hours across the United States.

RSVP of North Central Iowa is a non-profit organization dedicated to meeting community needs in North Iowa by placing volunteers who's wisdom can make a difference. On-going education and support for volunteers is an important component of RSVP. Through careful monitoring, data collection, and evaluation by program staff, volunteers know of the impact they are making in addressing an identified community need.

RSVP is sponsored by North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC). Program staff is responsible for volunteer recruitment, training, and recognition to ensure volunteers have a meaningful, purposeful, and rewarding experience.

Current programs include Breakfast Buddies, Reading Buddies, and Reading Coaches in elementary and middle schools throughout the service area. RSVP of North Central Iowa serves Cerro Gordo, Hancock, Winnebago, and Worth counties.

Dear RSVP Volunteer,

It is my pleasure to welcome you as a partner in service to your community!

There exists today, perhaps more than ever, a tremendous need for volunteers throughout North Iowa. It is because of people like you, who want to make a difference by sharing their time and talents, our communities are great places to live.

You are now part of a tradition that has a long history of helping others. Not only are you a member of the local RSVP, you are part of a movement that started in 1971 and has continued to gain momentum throughout years of success, which has grown to over 1,350 programs and 500,000 volunteers.

While volunteering, I'm certain that you will be inspired by the people you serve and gain satisfaction that only comes from serving others. It is our goal to assure that your experience with RSVP is purposeful, rewarding, and an experience of a lifetime.

Thank you for joining RSVP!

Warmly,

*Molly*

Molly Anderegg  
RSVP Director

## **Mission**

The mission of RSVP of North Central Iowa is to respond to priority community needs by providing meaningful and purposeful volunteer opportunities for persons 55 and over.

The mission of the North Iowa Area Community College is to enhance the quality of life for people of North Iowa through comprehensive educational opportunities, progressive partnerships, exemplary service, and responsive leadership.

## **National History**

The Administration on Aging launched RSVP in 1971, allowing retired persons in America to continue leading active lives while contributing to the needs of the community in a meaningful way. Eleven projects were started in the summer of 1971. By 1974 there were 666 projects nationwide. In 1988, RSVP had grown to 750 projects supported by federal funding.

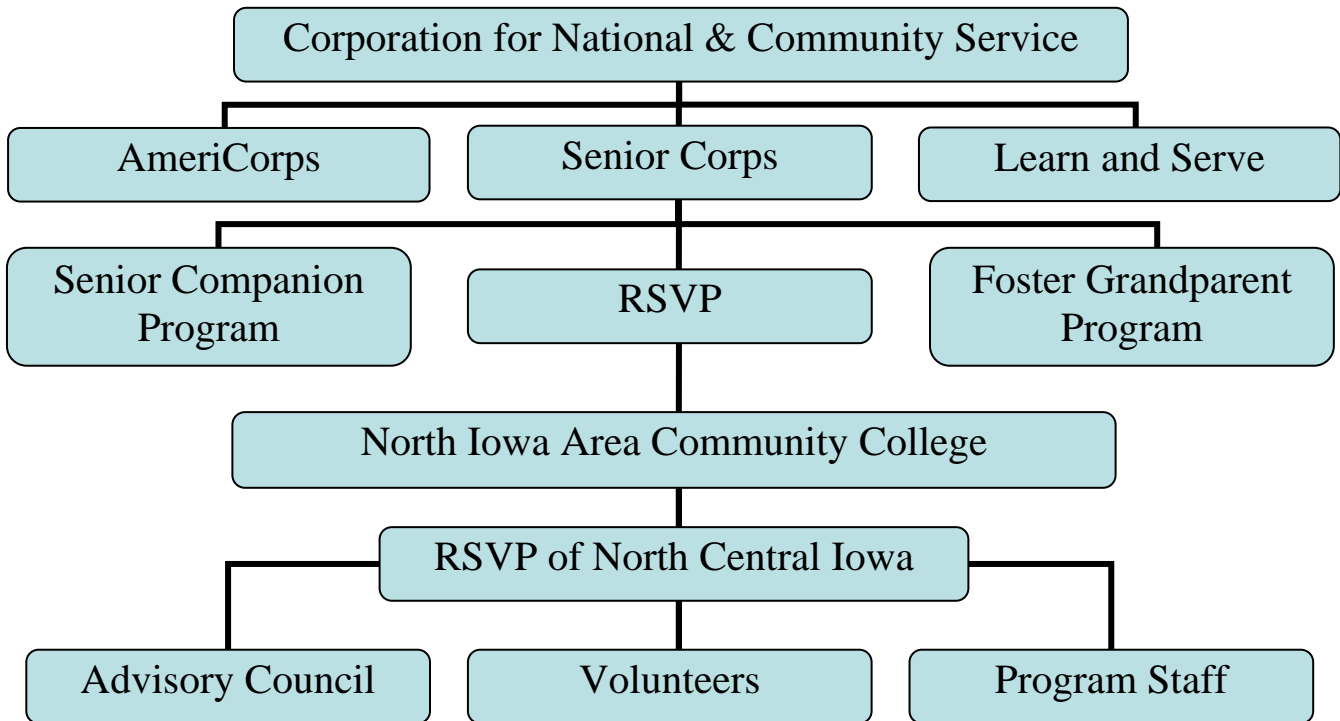
In 1993, RSVP became part of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which is a federal agency. CNCS was created to meet the personal, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States, and to encourage citizens to give full- or part-time service regardless of age.

## **Local History**

North Iowa Area Community College sponsored RSVP from 1974 until 1987 when Northern Trails Area Education Agency became the sponsor until 1997. Waldorf College assumed sponsorship of RSVP in the fall of 1997 where it remained until 2009 when Waldorf became a for-profit institution and was no longer eligible to serve as the sponsor.

In June 2009, NIACC once again became the sponsor of RSVP of North Central Iowa. The College has a long history of serving adults and is committed to growing an established cohort of volunteers with a passion for learning and serving.

## Organizational Structure



## Financial Structure

RSVP is funded by:



As well as County Governments, local foundations, and businesses.

## **Sponsorship**

RSVP of North Central Iowa is sponsored by North Iowa Area Community College. NIACC serves as the fiscal agent for the program and employs program staff.

The RSVP office is located on the NIACC campus in the Activity Center.

## **Advisory Council - Purpose and Function**

The primary purpose of the Advisory Council is to monitor and review program development and assessment.

The Council is made up of key individuals from the community who have a passion for volunteering and a commitment to the mission of RSVP. Members study matters related to the program, make suggestions concerning the functions of RSVP, and provide support to the program as it serves volunteers, partner agencies, and the community.

The Council meets quarterly on the NIACC campus.

## **Volunteer Information**

### **Who can become an RSVP Volunteer?**

Anyone who is 55 and older with a desire to be involved with their community by sharing their skills and talents. There are no educational, income or experience requirements, nor dues or membership fees to join.

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

In North Central Iowa the focus of RSVP has been literacy and mentoring. Volunteers can mentor a child during school or help a child struggling with reading. Volunteers are matched with opportunities based on personal preference and the nature of the position. Each opportunity has a description to clarify specific duties, the training required, location of the station, etc. Additional opportunities are always being explored.

### **What does RSVP offer active volunteers?**

- The opportunity to learn new skills or enhance current skills
- Free supplemental insurance
- RSVP Newsletter
- Ongoing recognition

### **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

- Social interaction and the chance to meet new people
- Staying active and mentally engaged
- Positively impacting the individuals you work with
- Giving back to your community
- Live a purposeful life

# **Volunteer Stations**

## **What is a Volunteer Station?**

A Volunteer Station is a public or non-profit entity that has a written agreement with RSVP to provide volunteer opportunities. RSVP volunteers help volunteer stations fulfill their mission and serve their clients whether it be students, residents, or community members with a need.

Volunteer Stations agree to provide a safe environment for RSVP volunteers and accept the responsibility of volunteer supervision. Key individuals from Volunteer Stations assist with volunteer training and recognition.

## **Fitting in at your Volunteer Station**

Volunteer Stations appreciate and value the time and talent you offer. When volunteering, don't be shy...ask questions about the organization.

Below is a list of details you will want to know about the Volunteer Station:

- Know and understand your role at the Volunteer Station.
- Know what change you are working to create or the problem you are working to address.
- Understand the mission or purpose of the Volunteer Station.
- Know your supervisor and the station staff you work with. They will answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.
- Know what policies and procedures you are subject to as a volunteer, including the check-in procedure for your station.
- Learn the little things such as the location of the restrooms, coat racks, workspace, parking area, the lounge or lunch area, etc.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Background Checks**

Federal regulations provided by CNCS strongly encourage background checks be conducted on RSVP volunteers. Volunteer Stations will conduct any background checks they deem necessary. RSVP will conduct a search of the National Sex Offender Registry. These checks are to ensure and maximize the safety of volunteers and clients served.

### **Orientation and Training**

RSVP staff will provide an orientation for new volunteers, which will cover an overview of NIACC and an introduction to RSVP. Before serving at a Volunteer Station, volunteers will receive training appropriate to their position. Training opportunities will also be provided throughout the year. All volunteers are strongly encouraged to attend all trainings.

### **Conduct**

When volunteering, an RSVP volunteer must be in accordance with the Volunteer Station's guidelines for staff and/or volunteers. Any concerns regarding the guidelines should be taken to the station supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, please contact the RSVP Director.

Please be on time. If you are unable to arrive at your scheduled time, please notify your station supervisor. If you are going to be absent, please follow the process outlined by RSVP staff for your volunteer assignment.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between volunteers, clients, Volunteer Stations, and RSVP. Some volunteer opportunities involve knowing sensitive information about the individuals being served. Issues or concerns regarding clients should only be discussed with the station supervisor or RSVP staff. It is important to never release the name, address, phone number or any other information that may identify the client to anyone except the Volunteer Station and/or RSVP staff. For your own safety, it is also important to only release personal details to RSVP and volunteer station staff.

## **Volunteer Status**

A volunteer will remain active throughout the program year as long as he/she reports at least one hour of volunteer service. At the end of the program year, volunteers will be asked if they want to continue their volunteer service. At that time, they will choose to remain active, go on a temporary leave of absence, or terminate their assignment. Volunteers may also terminate their volunteer assignment at any time by notifying RSVP staff.

Once a volunteer is terminated, he/she is no longer covered by CIMA insurance or eligible to participate in recognition events.

## **Reporting Volunteer Hours**

It is very important that RSVP knows how much time you spend volunteering at your station. The Federal Government requires programs to keep track of volunteer hours as a means of assessing the program's performance.

Volunteer hours indicate that you are an active volunteer, which allows you to participate in recognition events and remain eligible for the excess insurance coverage. Volunteer Stations will collect and report hours to RSVP staff based on sign-in sheets in a timely manner. Volunteers are required to sign the time sheet and indicate the number of hours served.

## **Recognition and Publicity**

The RSVP staff sincerely appreciates the tremendous donation of time and talent by RSVP volunteers in North Iowa. Recognition efforts for volunteers will be conducted throughout the year. Once a year, RSVP will sponsor a Volunteer Recognition Event to acknowledge volunteers and their efforts.

In addition, RSVP of North Central Iowa will track and monitor service hours in order to recognize volunteers with the Presidential Volunteer Award, which is designed to thank and honor Americans. The award recognizes individuals that have achieved a certain standard, which is measured by the number of cumulative hours earned over the course of a lifetime. Award levels are as follows:

Bronze	100 to 249 lifetime service hours
Silver	250 to 499 lifetime service hours
Gold	500 or more lifetime service hours

Pins and certificates will be awarded at the Volunteer Recognition event in the spring.

It is also the intent of the program to make the general public aware of RSVP volunteer service through an on-going publicity program. This will include newspaper stories and photographs, feature articles on volunteers and service, as well as radio spots. We ask that all volunteers sign a release form so we can use pictures in these efforts.

## **Volunteer Reimbursement Policy**

Due to limited resources, RSVP of North Central Iowa does not reimburse for transportation or meals associated with volunteer assignments. Exceptions may be made depending on the availability of funds. If a volunteer wishes to be reimbursed for mileage or meals associated with volunteering, please submit a written request to the RSVP Director.

## **Volunteer Safety Policy**

Volunteer safety is important to RSVP. Concerns regarding safety at your volunteer station should be reported to the station supervisor and RSVP Director as soon as possible. If you are involved in an accident while on assignment, please notify the RSVP office within 24 hours. Should your medical, physical, or other conditions change, at any time, it is the duty of the volunteer to inform the RSVP Director so that appropriate changes may be made with regard to volunteer activities.

## **Inclement Weather**

In the case of inclement weather or poor road conditions, please exercise caution. Use your best judgment in making a decision to travel to the volunteer assignment. Please notify the Volunteer Station if you will be absent due to weather.

## **Volunteer Insurance Service - CIMA**

All active volunteers are provided with excess accident medical, volunteer liability, and auto liability insurance, which supplements existing insurance policies at no cost to the volunteer. The coverage protects an RSVP volunteer during volunteer assignment (travel to and from the station, and while you are performing duties at the station). For volunteers using a personal auto, it is required to keep up-to-date the minimum levels of liability insurance by the State of Iowa. See CIMA pamphlet for details.

In case of an accident, auto or otherwise, the volunteer should:

- Report the incident immediately to the RSVP Director, who will in turn, notify CIMA.
- File appropriate claim forms with their own primary insurance provider including Medicare or Medicaid.
- Keep insurance statement and itemized bills, as they will be needed to file claim.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

No persons, regardless of race, religion, color, creed, gender, national origin, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or political affiliation shall be excluded from participating in RSVP.

## **Limited-English Speaking Volunteer Policy**

RSVP of North Central Iowa will make reasonable efforts to assist limited-English speaking individuals who want to become RSVP volunteers. Program staff will utilize recourses on the NIACC campus, such as Spanish instructors to assist with translation. If available, additional community resources will be utilized for individuals with native languages other than Spanish. If all local options have been exhausted, program staff will utilize additional resources such as the Personal Interpreter program through Language Line Services an over-the-phone interpretation service.

## **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

The use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence of the same, while performing hours of service is strictly prohibited and shall be cause for termination of all volunteer placements through the North Central Iowa RSVP.

## **Volunteer Dismissal Policy**

RSVP may dismiss an RSVP volunteer for cause including but not limited to failure to perform assigned duties, excessive or unapproved absence, a breach in confidentiality, misconduct, or working under the influence of illegal drugs and alcohol. All decisions regarding dismissal of a volunteer will be agreed upon by the RSVP Director, the Dean of Continuing Education, and the RSVP Volunteer Station Supervisor.

## **Appeal Process**

All appeals to action affecting an RSVP volunteer must be made in writing to the RSVP Director with a copy sent to the Chairperson of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will review the complaint and if necessary, conduct an investigation with the appropriate individuals, including the RSVP Director and the volunteer making the appeal. Additional persons may be involved such as other volunteers, station and/or RSVP staff. The Council will determine what action should be taken to correct the situation. The Chairperson will respond in writing to the appealing volunteer explaining the Council's decision and necessary action.

## **Policy Changes**

Policies in this handbook are subject to change without notice. The most recent volunteer handbook is posted on the website: [www.niacc.edu/rsvp](http://www.niacc.edu/rsvp).

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

When accepting a volunteer assignment with RSVP, responsibilities include:

1. Attend the volunteer orientation and trainings.
2. Be on time.
3. Sign the RSVP time sheet so your hours can be properly recorded.
4. Notify your station if you will be absent.
5. Arrange for a substitute volunteer if you know you will be absent.
6. Ask questions at your volunteer station if you do not understand or are not sure about something. If you still have questions, please call the RSVP office.
7. If you are in an accident, notify the RSVP office and your station.
8. Keep station business and client information confidential.
9. Notify the RSVP office if you are having problems at your volunteer station.
10. Notify the RSVP office if there are changes in your contact information.

## **Special Limitations for RSVP Volunteers**

1. Volunteers should not engage in nor grant funds be used for, any of the following activities:
  - Electoral activities
  - Voter registration
  - Voter transportation to polls
  - Efforts to influence legislation
2. Volunteers should not engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by any employee or result in the displacement of any employee.
3. Volunteers do not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardians, members of their family, or friends.
4. Volunteers do not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or attempt to convert others to another opinion or religion.

**Questions and concerns are always welcome! Please feel free to call the RSVP office and/or visit with an RSVP staff member at anytime.**

## Terms and Acronyms

**Advisory Council:** A diverse group of people that the RSVP Sponsor formally organizes to assure community participation in the project. The council meets quarterly to assess, evaluate, and promote RSVP.

**AmeriCorps:** A program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, whose members serve with local and national organizations to meet community needs, and, after their service, receive educational awards to help finance education and training.

**CNCS:** Corporation for National and Community Service is the federal agency that provides federal funding. CNCS oversees AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and the National Senior Service Corps.

**Community Need:** The problem within the community that the project intends to address.

**Evaluation:** Process of systematically looking at how a project works and what affect it has for reporting and continuous improvement.

**eGrants:** The website utilized by CNCS to electronically submit and monitor grant proposals and activity.

**Foster Grandparent Program (FGP):** One of three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps sponsored by the Corporation for National Community Service. FGP is a program in which stipend volunteers serve 20 hours a week providing services to children with special and exceptional needs.

**FSR:** Financial Status Report is a financial report required by CNCS that may be quarterly, semi-annual, or annual.

**Impact:** The difference or improvement in beneficiaries as the result of the investment of our volunteer's time, wisdom, and skills.

**Indicator:** Specific and observable ways to define impacts. Concrete evidence of change.

**In-Kind Contributions:** Non-cash donations.

**Input:** The resources the project applies to create or sustain service effort.

**Instrument or Measurement Tool:** Specific tools to collect information (e.g. behavior checklist, tally sheet, questionnaire, survey).

**Learn and Serve America:** A program that helps link service and education for students from kindergarten through college. Learn and Serve gives young people opportunities to connect community service experiences with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility.

**MOU:** Memorandum of Understanding is a written agreement signed by the RSVP Director and the volunteer station representative which identifies project requirement, working relationships, and mutual responsibilities.

**National Community Service Trust Act:** The act of Congress which established the Corporation for National and Community Service and its programs including RSVP.

**National Senior Service Corps (NSSC):** The collective name for three programs: Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent program (FGP), and Senior Companion Program (SCP), also referred to as Senior Corps. NSSC falls under the umbrella of Corporation of National and Community Service.

**Outcome/Result:** A general statement of what happens immediately (within a year or less) as a result of project activities.

**PFI:** Programming for Impact is an outcome-based volunteer management tool. It provides a framework for planning service activities to meet the needs of the community through developing measurable objectives and reporting instruments.

**PNS:** Programs of National Significance is a federal grant to expand programming.

**Pre/Post-Test:** A pre-test collects baseline data before the service is implemented, which can be directly compared to data collected on a post-test after the service has been completed.

**RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program):** One of the three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Volunteers must be 55 years of age and serve where there is an identified need.

**Senior Companion Program (SCP):** One of the three programs that make up the National Senior Service Corps. Volunteers provide assistance to frail and homebound individuals, receive a stipend, must be income eligible, and be at least 55 years of age.

**Sponsor:** The public agency or non-profit organization that is responsible for the operation of the local RSVP program. The sponsor is the grantee and is the fiscal agent for the CNCS grant.

**Stations:** Nonprofit private or public organizations that accept the responsibility for assigning, supervising, and training of RSVP volunteers.

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