



Volunteers
of America®

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA



AmeriCorps
Seniors



RSVP of ST. TAMMANY PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2022

823 Carroll Street, Suite B
Mandeville, LA 70448
Phone 985-612-1057
Fax 985-674-0336

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to St. Tammany Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, sponsored by Volunteers of America. This program is funded by a grant from AmeriCorps Seniors. As a volunteer in this program, you are joining one of the largest volunteer efforts in the nation. In St. Tammany volunteers offer their time and talents through this program each year.

Volunteers in RSVP can make a difference in the lives of people in their community by participating in human service activities. RSVP offers a variety of different opportunities to match each volunteer's personal interests and talents.

As a member of RSVP, you will be rewarded with many exciting opportunities to meet new people as well as help your community.

Please use this handbook to find important information regarding this program.

Sincerely,
Kristen Punch
kpunch@voasela.org
RSVP Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mission and Values	4
What is RSVP.....	5
Who is Eligible.....	6
Benefits	
Newsletter	6
Insurance	6
Recognition	6
Mileage Reimbursements	7
Volunteer Assignments	7
Responsibility of Volunteer Station.....	8
Responsibility of Volunteer	8
Confidentiality	9
Nepotism Statement.....	9
Responsibility of RSVP Office	10
Assignment Termination	10
Financial Activities	11
Grievance Policy.....	11
Prohibited Activities.....	11
Policy for Volunteer Hours	12
Policy for Tracking Hours	13
Discrimination Policy.....	13
Primary Source Verification	14

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA MISSION AND VALUES

Volunteers of America is an organization founded on Christian values.

Our work of “touching lives and building community” reflects our century-old mission.

- *Volunteers of America is a movement organized to reach and uplift all people and bring them to the knowledge and active service of God.*
- *Volunteers of America, illustrating the presence of God through all that we do, serves people and communities in need and creates opportunities for people to experience the joy of serving others.*
- *Volunteers of America measures its success in positive change in the lives of individuals and communities we serve.*



**Volunteers
of America®**

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA

WHAT IS RSVP?

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program started in 1969 when the Older Americans Act was amended to create this program under the auspices of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The Corporation for National and Community Service administers the federal funds, under AmeriCorps Seniors, that support the efforts of the St. Tammany RSVP program. This program is sponsored locally by Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana.

The RSVP Program promotes the concept of productive aging, providing individuals, age 55 and older, with meaningful work, while utilizing them as community builders. RSVP Volunteers, through a wide variety of volunteer opportunities, provide major cost saving to agencies and municipalities and make a significant impact on critical community needs.

The purpose of RSVP is to enrich retirement for adults through significant volunteer work at non-profit agencies and organizations throughout St. Tammany Parish. RSVP encourages seniors to bring a lifetime of talents and experience, skills and hobbies to the community projects and organizations needing volunteer assistance. With the help of an RSVP Program Director, interests and skills of potential volunteers are assessed and matched with requests for service in community agencies and organizations.

Without the assistance and dedication of RSVP volunteers, these agencies and organizations would be unable to continue many of their services, and the needs of thousands of people in our parish would go unmet.

The Mission of the St. Tammany RSVP Program is to provide a variety of volunteer opportunities for those 55 years of age and older to remain active by addressing community needs across our Parish.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for enrollment as an RSVP volunteer, a person must be 55 years of age or over, willing to serve on a regular basis, willing to accept instructions and supervision as required, and live in St. Tammany Parish. Eligibility to be an RSVP volunteer is not based on education, income, experience, citizenship, race, creed, belief, color, national origin, sex, handicap, or political affiliation.

BENEFITS OF RSVP

RSVP volunteers accrue a variety of personal benefits that include greater community awareness, a widened social circle, improved health, morale and self esteem and a new knowledge of existing services when they serve others. The following are tangible benefits that RSVP offers:

Newsletter:

RSVP publishes newsletters for its volunteers containing items of interest including notices for available and upcoming volunteer opportunities, volunteer and station spotlights and information about our sponsor organization.

Insurance:

Volunteers are provided a free package of excess coverage for personal liability, accident and auto that provides an extra measure of protection for volunteers (beyond the insurance that you already have) during the part of the day that you are serving. A Volunteer Guide to Accident and Liability Insurance will be distributed to each volunteer.

Recognition:

Recognition of RSVP volunteers and their activities is viewed as an important element of the program. RSVP of St. Tammany holds an annual luncheon and other volunteer celebrations. The purpose of such events, and other forms of recognition, is to remind all RSVP volunteers that what they contribute to their community is extremely appreciated by the citizens and agencies they serve.

Mileage Reimbursement Guidelines:

Due to limited funding, mileage reimbursement is available to those volunteers who need financial assistance with their gasoline expenses incurred when driving to volunteer stations. Those volunteers will receive a Request for Travel Reimbursement Sheet. Mileage is reimbursed monthly at \$.35 per mile to a maximum of 100 miles per month. Reimbursement for mileage is only allowable for the trip from home to the volunteer site and back. Each volunteer will have to provide the RSVP office with an odometer reading for each trip that he/she makes. Volunteers must provide a copy of their current driver's license and auto insurance cards. Reimbursements are based on availability of funds. When volunteers carpool with other volunteers, only the driver may claim reimbursement. Travel Reimbursement Sheets must be signed by the volunteer, station manager, and the RSVP Director.

**VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS
AND STATIONS**

A variety of assignments have been developed by the RSVP staff at stations throughout St. Tammany Parish which includes opportunities that respond to significant community needs. Volunteers are matched to assignments and stations according to their interests, abilities, preferences, and availability. A volunteer position can be tailored to the volunteer's talents.

Some Stations for volunteers are:

- Schools
- Food banks
- Senior transportation
- ReSale shops
- Coaching
- Hospitals
- Non-profit agencies
- Assisted living facilities/nursing homes
- Special events throughout St. Tammany

After a discussion with RSVP staff, a formal referral to the volunteer station will be made by RSVP, introducing the volunteer to the station.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER STATION

1. Supervise volunteers and provide them with pre-service orientation and in-service training.
2. Provide for volunteer safety.
3. Report all accidents or insurance-related problems of volunteers to the RSVP office.
4. When stations require special uniforms or smocks, the uniforms and laundering will be provided by the station at no cost to the volunteer.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VOLUNTEER

1. Participate in orientation and attend training provided by volunteer stations.
2. Be on time at the assigned volunteer sites.
3. Volunteers time can be uploaded electronically, directly to the Volunteers of America SELA website, at voasela.org/rsvp. Stations and individual volunteers can upload hours using the upgraded Web Assistant software. All hours are entered via specific usernames and passwords, with the RSVP Director having to review and accept all uploaded hours. Written timesheets can still be submitted, if necessary, to the RSVP Director via mail or email.
4. Give as much notice as possible to his/her Station Supervisor if he/she is going to be absent.
5. Call the RSVP office when you change your home address, wish to resign from the Volunteer Station, wish to move on to do volunteer work somewhere else, or become ill and cannot volunteer for an extended period.
6. Any occurrence or problem at the Volunteer Station that causes the volunteer to feel uncomfortable or uneasy should be brought to the Project Director's attention immediately. Always discuss problems or complaints with the Station Supervisor or RSVP Project Director rather than other volunteers or station staff.

AT YOUR STATION SITE

When at the Station, the volunteer will:

- Be responsible, dependable, and punctual.
- Wear any uniform required by the station.
- Inform station supervisor of your arrival.
- Follow all procedures and policies at your chosen site.
- Represent RSVP and VOASELA in a professional and courteous manner.
- ENJOY your volunteer service!

CONFIDENTIALITY

Volunteers may at times come into knowledge of personal matters or agency matters that must be kept confidential. Confidential matters must not be repeated even if names are not used in the conversation.

NEPOTISM STATEMENT

Should any RSVP staff be related by blood or marriage to other project staff, sponsor staff, or officers, or members of the sponsor Board of Directors, written concurrence from the community advisory council, with notification to CNCS, will be required.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RSVP OFFICE

1. Provide a variety of volunteer opportunities.
2. Be available to the volunteer to assist with any problems the volunteer might have regarding his/her volunteer assignment.
3. Make necessary arrangements with Volunteer Station Supervisor for placement of volunteers.
4. Be available for conference with volunteer and Station Supervisor when deemed necessary.
5. Work with Station Supervisors and each volunteer to assure hours contributed by volunteer are received and recorded via Web Assistant/webpage or mail/email monthly.
6. Conduct orientation and recognition events to create a spirit of community among RSVP volunteers and stations.

ASSIGNMENT TERMINATION

The Project Staff and Volunteer Stations will be alert to changes or problems that may lead to assignment termination, such as when the relationship is no longer meaningful or satisfying to the RSVP volunteer or the Volunteer Station.

Regardless of the cause of termination of an assignment, the decision must be made jointly by the Project Director and Volunteer Station Coordinator, with full consideration given to the volunteer, including placement with another volunteer station, as appropriate.

An Appeal can be made to the Volunteers of America who can then decide to reinstate the volunteer with permission from the Station Manager, place the volunteer at a different Station, or uphold the termination.

FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

1. Any volunteer station financial support of AmeriCorps Senior is not a precondition for that station to obtain volunteer service.
2. An AmeriCorps Senior Volunteer should not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, or members of their family, or friends.
3. Grant funds should not be used to finance labor or anti-labor organizations, political races or elections, or related activity.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

RSVP Recognizes that not all volunteer assignments are without problems. At times, problems may arise that can not be resolved by talking. The grievance procedure provides an RSVP volunteer with a means of presenting grievances without fear of reprisals. A volunteer can request a grievance meeting with the RSVP Director after discussing the problem without satisfactory resolution with the volunteer station supervisor. The Director will try to find an acceptable

resolution. If an acceptable resolution is not reached at this level, the volunteer may request, in writing, a meeting with Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

1. RSVP Volunteers and grantee staff should not engage in, and grantee funds should not be used for, any of the following activities, to the extent that they are prohibited in the applicable program regulations:
 - a. Electoral Activities
 - b. Voter Registration
 - c. Voter Transportation to Polls
 - d. And Efforts to Influence Legislation
2. The following was updated from the AmeriCorps Seniors in July of 2022:

2.3 SPECIAL LIMITATIONS INCLUDING PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

The following are special limitations, including prohibited activities, to which AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP sponsors and projects are subject. Project sponsors must have written policies in place to ensure compliance with the list below. In the event of a question as to the application of the following limitations, contact the appropriate AmeriCorps portfolio manager.

*2.3.1 Political Activities [45 CFR 2553.91(a) and **45 CFR 1226**]*

- 1) No part of any grant may be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity to influence the outcome of any election to public office, or any voter registration activity.*
- 2) No project may be conducted in a manner involving the use of funds; the provision of services, space, or facilities; or the employment or assignment of personnel in a manner that identifies the project with: a) Any partisan or nonpartisan political activity associated with a candidate, or contending faction or group, in an election; or b) Any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or similar assistance in connection with any such election; or c) Any voter registration activity except that voter registration applications and nonpartisan voter registration information may be made available to the public at the premises of the sponsor. But in making registration applications and nonpartisan voter registration information available, employees of the sponsor and volunteers may not express preferences or seek to*

influence decisions concerning any candidate, political party, election issue, or voting decision.

3) No AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer or employee of a sponsor or volunteer station may take any action, when serving in such capacity, with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP with such activity.

4) The sponsor may not use grant funds for any activity that influences the passage or defeat of legislation or proposals by initiative petition. In other words, there is a prohibition against using AmeriCorps grant funds for lobbying activities.

5) Prohibitions on Electoral and Lobbying Activities are fully set forth in 45 CFR 1226. See AmeriCorps's Frequently Asked Questions on Lobbying and Partisan Political Activity for more information. "

3. RSVP Volunteers should 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.
4. Neither the grantee nor any volunteer station should request or receive compensation from the beneficiaries of AmeriCorps Senior volunteers.
5. Project Staff or volunteers should not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in proselytization as part of their duties and, if the sponsor is an organization that conducts inherently religious activities, those activities are offered separately, in time and location, from the programs or services funded under the Corporation grant.

POLICY FOR VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteers or Station Supervisors should turn in their hours by the 7th of each month in one of the following ways:

1. *Preferred: Upload all hours at voasela.org/rsvp
2. Sign in at assigned station and have station report hours.
3. Email hours to kpunch@voasela.org
4. Mail hours to the RSVP Office at:
Volunteers of America
Attn: RSVP
823 Carroll St., Ste. B.
Mandeville, LA 70448

POLICY FOR TRACKING HOURS

1. RSVP will use the program, Volunteer Reporter to keep information on volunteers and their hours.
2. Only the Administrative Assistant or the Director will have access to this program.
3. Volunteer applications will be scanned and uploaded to Volunteer Reporter under “documents” per volunteer. This includes copies of transportation information needed for program drivers. Any hard copies will be shredded and destroyed after scanning and uploading. Any computer databases containing volunteer records will be password protected.
4. Volunteer timesheet and tracking will be done electronically via Volunteer Reporter/Web Assistant, accessible on the VOASELA website. Hardcopies will no longer be kept in office.
5. Electronic timesheets can be e-mailed by the station supervisor to the RSVP Director. Emailed hours will be saved as a PDF file, and uploaded to Volunteer Reporter, per station, under documents.
6. Group timesheets shall be uploaded directly to website or emailed to RSVP Director.

DISCRIMINATION POLICY

RSVP of St. Tammany Parish follows applicable federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination as embodied in the program regulations prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race; color; national origin; including individuals with limited English proficiency; sex; age; political affiliation; sexual orientation; religion or the basis of disability.

All Stations are accessible for people who have limited English proficiency.

All Stations are accessible to persons with mobility, hearing, vision, mental, and cognitive impairments or addictions and diseases.

Please notify the RSVP Director if special conditions are needed to accommodate you.

PRIMARY SOURCE VERIFICATION

Prior to hiring staff, the Agency will investigate and/or verify:

- Relevant work experience
- Criminal background
- Motor vehicle report and driver's license
- Per rules set forth in 2020, any employee (a person receiving salary from funds under AmeriCorps Seniors grant) **MUST** have a full criminal background check done **PRIOR** to their first day of work. It is strongly suggested that either Field Print and Truescreen are used to do these background checks, as both organizations are compliant with federal guidelines and regulations. As of November 2021, there is no longer a grace period for this to be completed before beginning employment.
- RSVP Volunteers who tutor or mentor children will have to have background checks including the Nationwide Sex Offender check, prior to volunteering, per AmeriCorps Seniors

- RSVP Volunteers to the transportation program must have Criminal, NSO and Motor Vehicle background checks prior to start of service, per Volunteers of America Southeast Louisiana.

PROCEDURES:

1. Agency will offer all jobs contingent upon favorable investigative reports.
2. At the time of job offer, candidate will sign authorizations allowing the Agency to perform background investigations.
3. Program will pay cost to perform background investigations.
4. The Agency will verify relevant work history, utilizing the *Reference Check* form (Exhibit A). Results will be forwarded to the Human Resources Department.
5. If work history is favorable, Human Resources will conduct criminal and motor vehicle investigations through a licensed, on-line reporting agency. Certifications and/or licenses will be verified with the appropriate licensing authority:
 - a. Criminal background results will be applied in compliance with Louisiana statute R.S. 40:1300.52, which addresses personnel providing direct services to children, adolescents, people who are infirmed, and/or people with physical or mental disabilities.
 - i. For staff hired in the RSVP program, an Alternative Search Procedure was submitted requesting FBI Fingerprint Checks being done directly through the FBI. New hires will be required to undergo the following (the cost will be covered by the RSVP program) – employment is contingent upon results of the Criminal Background Checks:

- ii. An FBI Fingerprint Background Check that will be submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, CJIS Division, Attention: Record Request, 1000 Custer Hollow Road, Clarksburg, WV 26306 – this shall be initiated no later than the first day the individual begins working – fingerprints will be obtained through the Mandeville Police Department.
 - 1. A National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) Nationwide Check prior to first day the individual begins working – documented by a printout of the screenshot with a date showing the results;
 - a. Subsequent NSOPW checks will be done for any state(s) not reporting when the initial check is completed.
 - b. Should any hits result on a name, each hit will be resolved and documented before clearing the individual to begin working.
 - i. Individual will have an opportunity to review their own results and to correct as needed.
 - ii. Results will be maintained in secured files.
 - b. Motor vehicle reports that indicate an adverse driving history will be scored, utilizing insurance industry standards, to minimize risk to Agency employees, consumers and assets. If driving is an essential function of the job position, an adverse report may prevent a candidate from being hired.

- c. The Human Resources office will verify the credentials of professional staff members directly from the institution that awarded the degree or license/certification. Annually, or as required by regulatory agencies, all licenses/certifications will be re-verified.
6. Training and/or employment will commence ONLY after Human Resources has completed all background investigations and has determined that the candidate is eligible for hire.

A copy of all results required for program files will be forwarded to the program office.



**Volunteers
of America®**

SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA

