



# HANDBOOK

For Members of the RESPONSE-ABILITY Dominican  
Republic Service Program

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Section **1**

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RESPONSE-ABILITY  
Handbook

Mission of  
Response-Ability

## Mission of RA

# RA Vision

Communities modeling reverence for each individual

# RA Mission

A ministry of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus grounded in Cornelia Connelly's educational philosophy, Response-Ability trains, coaches and inspires innovative volunteer teachers to provide quality education in inner city schools and international sites. Living in community, volunteers achieve spiritual, personal and professional growth.

# RA Values

Response-Ability values:

- God Among Us
- Commitment to Community
- Reverence of the Individual



# Belief Statements

## We believe in Teaching as Service

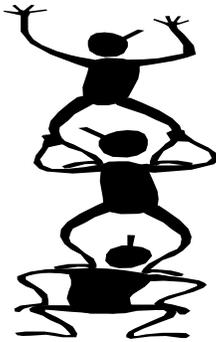
We believe....



- That we are doing work that needs to be done;
  - That we are served by those we go to serve;
  - That the power of one person to touch the life of another human being is profound;
  - That the unfolding of the service experience is a powerful tool for continuous development.
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## We believe in Learning in Community

We believe....



- That sharing our faith, ideas, and values with one another is vital to our service;
  - That the support of others on similar journeys enhances our service experience;
  - That love is at the heart of every community surrounded by joy and laughter;
  - That all members of the RESPONSE-ABILITY communities take part in the larger mission of service across the world.
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## We believe in Growing in Faith

We believe....



- That God continues to call women and men to make known God's presence in the world;
  - That taking time for prayer and reflection will help us see God at work in our lives and in the world around us;
  - That growing in faith is a life-long journey.
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# Foundations of Response-Ability

Response-Ability is a ministry of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus (SHCJ), an international community of women religious in the church founded by Cornelia Connelly in 1846. Sisters of the Holy Child live with humility, obedience, and love in relationship with God in everyday life. They engage people to believe and reverence the unique dignity of each human being as key to living lives of faith and concern for all creation. This spirit inspires the SHCJ mission: to help others believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world and to rejoice in God's presence. The connection between RESPONSE-ABILITY and the Holy Child Sisters is long-standing and remains vital to the experience of our volunteers. Below, we offer you a brief history of the life of Cornelia Connelly, the foundation of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, and the start of the RESPONSE-ABILITY program.



## Life of Cornelia Peacock Connelly

Cornelia Peacock was

an American woman whose formative years coincided with the formative years of her nation, 1809-1831. Cornelia absorbed the enthusiasm, energy, and resourcefulness of a "people on the rise" during the years of her Philadelphia girlhood. She was the courageous young bride who accompanied her husband, Reverend Pierce Connelly, to his Episcopal parish in Natchez, Mississippi in 1831. She became with him a "pilgrim in search of the truth" entering the Roman Catholic Church in 1835. She shared frontier life with Pierce, teaching in a pioneer Catholic mission school in Louisiana, and enduring the death of two of their five children. She was the generously loving wife who consented in 1845 to separation from her husband that he might become a priest in the Catholic Church. When the pope then asked Cornelia to found a religious order to meet educational needs in England, she went there with her two youngest children and three companions to begin this new mission. During the same year that she founded her congregation, she also planned teacher training colleges. Her plan, which was completed in 1856, was not implemented in the United States until the 1920's when Rosemont College began its teacher program. Cornelia was an inspiration for the Sisters and the students in the schools she founded in England, the United States, and France.

## Cornelia's Philosophy of Education

With her God-given gifts and her experience as a mother,

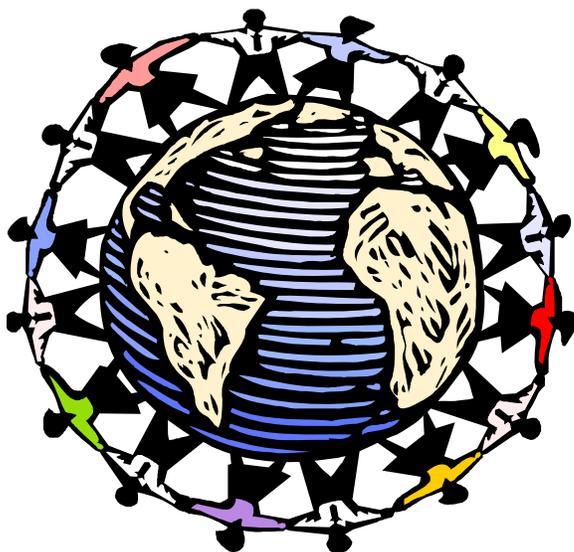
Cornelia had a rare combination of respect for the uniqueness of each individual, enthusiasm for developing human potential, and patient perseverance in guiding others through the maturation process. Her schools were marked by the happiness of the students and faculty resulting from the enormous trust she had in both. Relationships sprung from this confidence that each person would work for the shared goal of the fullest development of the students and teachers in striving to be the persons God called them to be.





## The Society establishes **RESPONSE-ABILITY**

Cornelia Connelly bequeathed a rich heritage to the Holy Child Sisters; they knew her charge was to “meet the wants of the age”. Since its founding, the Society of the Holy Child Jesus has greatly diversified its ministries. In 1974, the Society established **RESPONSE-ABILITY** to provide Sisters, college students, and other interested men and women short-term opportunities to serve the needs of the poor throughout the United States and Mexico. Over the years, **RESPONSE-ABILITY** has evolved along with the Society to keep pace with the changing needs of our world. Today, **RESPONSE-ABILITY** consists of both the Teacher Service Program in the United States and the Dominican Republic Program.



## **YOUR** part as a **RESPONSE-ABILITY** member

By joining **RESPONSE-ABILITY**, you have become part of the work begun by Cornelia Connelly all those years ago and are a partner of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus as they strive to ease the suffering of the marginalized and to rejoice in God’s presence among us. You have become part of something larger than yourself. Keep the spirit of Cornelia Connelly alive in the work that you do with **RESPONSE-ABILITY**.

# SHCJ Terminology

The following are some terms that you are likely to hear during your interactions with the Sisters of the Holy Child during your experience with RESPONSE-ABILITY:

**CHARISM:** Charism comes from the Greek word meaning “gift”. The charism of a religious organization is its gift to the church at large, its particular insight into the Gospel expressed through the spirit in which the members accomplish their particular mission. *The charism of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus is often described as the experience of the Incarnation and the perception of the uniqueness of each individual as an ongoing expression of God in the world.*

**COLLABORATION:** In the context of religious ministry, the concept of collaboration rises from the belief that through Baptism, each person is called to ministry. Collaboration describes people joining their gifts with the gifts of others to fulfill Jesus’ mission. *In Response-Ability, you collaborate with others by spreading Christ’s message through your willingness to volunteer and teach.*

**FOUNDRESS:** The foundress is the person who started the community. *The foundress of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus is Cornelia Connelly.*

**MINISTRIES:** Ministries are the specific works undertaken to further the mission of the Society. *Response-Ability is one of the many ministries of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.*

**PROVINCE:** A province is a juridical entity within the Society composed of the local communities (individual households) and directed by a Province Leader and the Provincial Leadership Team (see below). *The Society of the Holy Child Jesus consists of three provinces: the African Province, the American Province, and the European Province.*

**PROVINCIAL LEADERSHIP TEAM (PLT) AND OUR LIAISON:** The PLT assists the Province Leader in provincial planning and administration. *These SHCJ are members of the PLT: Helen McDonald, Carol Ann Knight, Carroll Juliano, Jeanne Ronzani, and Anita Quigley. One member of the Provincial Leadership Team is a liaison to RA. She brings our concerns to the PLT and is an advocate for our program. Our liaison is Carol Ann Knight, SHCJ.*

**PROVINCE LEADER:** The Province Leader or simply “Provincial” governs the province. *The Province Leader is Helen McDonald, SHCJ.*

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Section **2**

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RESPONSE-ABILITY  
Handbook

Community Living  
with Response-Ability

# Community Commitment

Community requires real work and deep commitment. Each community is as unique as the individuals who create it. It is important to remember that during your year of service, the community you create will support, encourage, and challenge you. The relationships that you develop with those whom you live will have an impact on the ministry you undertake. **Upon acceptance into Response-Ability, you make a commitment to be a participating member of a faith community.** The following information and guidelines will provide a framework for you as individuals and as a community.

## General Information about Response-Ability Houses



In general, Response-Ability rents its community houses from a parish or a private owner. Because RA does not own these houses, we are under certain terms and restrictions on what we can and can't do with regards to repairs, decorating, amount of people living in the house, etc. You are invited to make our community houses your home during your service experience, but keep in mind that you are in essence a tenant in the house that RA rents. As a member of the Response-Ability program, it is your privilege to live in one of our community houses under the terms as defined by the program. Please treat the houses with respect, and be sure to contact the RA office before doing any type of painting, tacking, drilling, throwing out, etc. The maintenance and respect of the houses is vital to the program's reputation when leases come up for renewal. RA appreciates your cooperation in advance with this integral part of community life.

# ABC's of Practical Matters in Community

## **Check-Out**

All members are expected to check out of the house by June 15. Each member must complete a "Check-Out Form" and return their key upon departure.

## **Cleaning/House Chores**

The members of each community are responsible for keeping the residence clean, according to the Community Service List. Common areas should be kept neat and orderly at all times. Each resident is responsible for keeping her room clean and orderly.

## **Community Gatherings**

### ■ **COMMUNITY MEETING**

Meet usually once a week to discuss topics of importance, as well as house issues, chores, concerns, activities, etc.

### ■ **COMMUNITY DINNER**

The community usually has dinner together Monday through Friday.

### ■ **COMMUNITY REFLECTION**

The custom is to reflect on our recent experiences on Monday evenings, to use the RA Prayer Book on Wednesday evenings, and to open our house to friends and neighbors on Thursday evenings.

## **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

RA does not tolerate the use of illegal drugs of any kind while members are in the program. Alcohol is to be used in a responsible manner by those members over 21 years of age. RA money is not to be used for the purchase of liquor.

## **Emergencies**

Members should follow the Emergency Plan as outlined in the House Directory.

## **Food**

Each community is given a monthly food budget to buy food for the entire community. This amount is \$100 per month per person. The community will determine shoppers and budget the food money. No community member is permitted to buy liquor with house food money.

# Community Living with RA

## House Directory

Contact information and emergency information is located in the House Directory. All members of the community should know where the House Directory is located. Important phone numbers and addresses, medical forms for each member of the community, and the emergency plan are included in the House Directory.

## House Jobs

### ■ Electric/Gas/Sewer/Water Bills

These bills are paid with house money as managed by the community's treasurer.

### ■ House Chores

See "Cleaning/House Chores"

### ■ Phone Bill

One person should manage the account on behalf of the community. See "Phone" for details.

## Personal Space

Every effort will be made to give members their own bedroom. Upon departure, walls and original furnishings should be left as they were found.

## Pets

Pets are not permitted in community residences.

## Phone

Basic service and local charges are paid for from the House Budget. Each member of the community is responsible for her long distance calls or other toll charges.

## Visitors/Overnight Guests

Family and friends are most welcome at our community residences. Community residents should be notified of visitors' arrival and length of stay. Any particular visitor or group of visitors that infringes upon the privacy or integrity of an individual or the group may be asked to leave with a group consensus or at the request of the RA Coordinators. The presence of visitors should not take a volunteer away from community life and activities for any protracted length of time.

In order to protect the privacy and comfort of all residents and the cohesion of the community, as well as to protect the reputation and integrity of the RA Program, we ask that all overnight guests use guest rooms. Any exceptions must be granted by the Coordinators.

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Section **3**

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RESPONSE-ABILITY  
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Program  
Information

## Program Information

# RA Staff Members

### **RA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Executive Director focuses on development, public relations, the budget, board development, alumni relations and staff management.

### **RA PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

The Program Director focuses on recruitment, Orientation, volunteer support, community development, principal relations and AmeriCorps.

### **RA TEACHER SUPERVISORS**

The Teacher Supervisors focus on observing volunteers in their classrooms and providing feedback on strengths and areas for improvement. They also attend Orientation and plan In-Service Programs.

### **RA COMMUNITY GUIDE**

The Community Guide focuses on guiding the community by planning annual events with the resident alum, attending monthly community gatherings and being available for additional support.

### **RA COMMUNITY ALUM**

The Community Alum focuses on enhancing the community by encouraging spiritual growth, serving as a resource for prayer and reflection, organizing community gatherings and being in the house for additional support. The Resident Alum lives in the house and is there as an extra support for YOU as YOU develop YOUR community.

### **RA EVENT ALUM**

The Event Alum works with the Community Guide to plan retreats and community events, develops the network of RA alums and friends, works with the Community Alum to develop the spiritual growth of the community, and helps recruit new volunteers and grow interest in the program. The Event Alum lives in the house and is there as an extra support for THE PROGRAM as well as the COMMUNITY.

### **RA SITE ALUM**

The Alum Site Coordinator focuses on enhancing the program by planning events with alumni, recruiting, acting as a graduate school contact and offering other on-site support. The Alum Site Coordinator lives in the house and is there as an extra support for THE PROGRAM.

### **RA DR PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

Dominican Republic Program Coordinators focus on Orientation in the Dominican Republic, volunteer support, community development and contact with RA HQ. The DR Program Coordinators live with the volunteers in community.

## Program Information

# ABC's of Practical Matters of the Program

### **Health Insurance**

All volunteers will be covered by health insurance during the duration of their term of service.

### **Loan Deferment**

Most loans can be deferred during your term of service. Contact RA Office for details.

### **Part Time Jobs**

Part time work is not permitted during the academic year.

### **Scheduled Program Events**

- **RETREATS** **Two per year**  
Two retreats will be planned by the Program Coordinator. Each retreat will occur over a weekend as scheduled on the calendar.
- **IN-SERVICES** **as needed**  
Program coordinators will provide in-service opportunities as needed.
- **PLANNED GATHERINGS as scheduled on your site's calendar**  
RA Members are expected to attend all planned gatherings (meetings, Community Nights, dinners, etc.)

### **Security Deposit**

Each Response-Ability member is required to give a security deposit of \$50. At the end of the year, this money will be used to cover any outstanding bills or expenses incurred by that member or will be returned in full if there are no outstanding bills or expenses.

### **Stipends**

Members receive a stipend of about \$100 per month. This money is intended for your personal use while in Response-Ability.

**Termination**

Though it is our expectation that all volunteers will complete their year of service, we recognize that this is not always possible. Response-Ability may find it necessary, acting on the best interest of the whole community, to ask a volunteer to leave or a volunteer may leave before the completion of service for personal reasons. In such circumstances, volunteers will be expected to leave the residence within two weeks of the termination date. The RA Staff will help to assist in the transition as much as is reasonable and possible under the circumstances presented.

**Transportation**

Transportation costs to and from your school are paid for by the program.