



HANDBOOK

For Members of Response-Ability
Sites: LA, PH, DC

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Section **1**

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 Growing in Faith

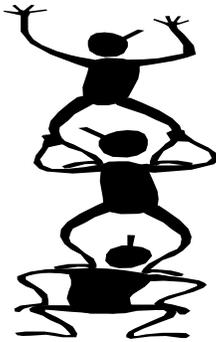
We believe....



- God is present in our lives, in our community, and at our service sites.
 - Taking time for prayer helps us recognize God's constant presence in our service experience.
 - We are called to make known God's presence in our lives and in our world.
-

We believe in Learning in Community

We believe....



- Supporting, challenging, and affirming one another is essential to our service.
 - We learn valuable life lessons from our community and those we go to serve.
 - Joys and struggles are part of the journey of faith based community.
-

We believe in Teaching as Service

We believe....



- Education involves not only what we teach but how we teach.
 - In the spirit of Cornelia Connelly, we are innovative educators who encourage each teacher and student to become her or his best self.
 - We teach each individual child as a unique learner and person.
-

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 people 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”. In 1974, the Society established Response-Ability as a vocations program to provide Sisters and lay women, including college students, short-term summer opportunities to serve the needs of the poor throughout the United States and Mexico while living in community. Over the years, Response-Ability has evolved along with the Society to keep pace with the changing needs of our world. In 1993, Response-Ability began the Teacher Service Program in Philadelphia as a full-time volunteer project for recent college graduates. Today, Response-Ability has sites in the Dominican Republic, Philadelphia, Washington, DC and Los Angeles.

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 now a partner of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. as they strive 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.*

Section **2**

RESPONSE-ABILITY
Handbook

Community Living
with Response-Ability

Community Commitment

Community is made. It does not just happen. Creating a real community requires a deep commitment of time, energy and enthusiasm. 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. **By joining RA's community, you make a commitment to be an ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING member of this community and to respecting the RA values in action.**

Response-Ability volunteers commit to be more than teachers living in the same house; they commit to be there to support, encourage and challenge each other to be their best selves- individually and collectively. RA communities should be places where all feel welcome and valued. In the midst of the demands of teaching and going to school, RA volunteers promise to keep community central to the year. The following information and guidelines will provide a framework for you as individuals and as a community.



General Information about Response-Ability Houses

Response-Ability houses are meant to be places of hospitality, prayer, support and celebration. Response-Ability rents its community houses from parishes in LA and DC, and from a realtor in PH.

Because RA does not own these houses, we ask for your cooperation in keeping these house in good condition. 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 or major work. 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

Cable

RA does not provide money for cable.

Cars, Insurance, Parking

Most TSP members use their own cars during the duration of their service. All insurance and maintenance charges are the volunteer's responsibility. LA may have a house car. Members are expected to comply with the parking regulations of the neighborhood in which they reside and the parking rules of the grad schools. You are responsible for any parking tickets you acquire. (see "Transportation" in Section 3)

Check-Out

All members are expected to check-out of the house by June 30th unless an extension is cleared by the RA Director. Each member must complete a "Check-Out Form" and return their key upon departure.

Common Space/Cleaning/House Chores

Volunteers are responsible for keeping the residence clean. Common areas should be kept neat and orderly at all times. No smoking in the house. Each community will assign chores using a chore chart or similar method. The following jobs must be done:

- ✓ Kitchen (sweep, mop, wipe down counters, scrub appliances (toaster, microwave, oven), dishes out of sink and counters, fridge cleaned)
- ✓ Living room (mop or vacuum, dust, clean windows)
- ✓ Hallways/stairs (mop or vacuum, dust as needed)
- ✓ Dining room (mop or vacuum, dust, wipe down all furniture)
- ✓ Bathrooms (mop floor, clean toilet, wipe down shower/tub, clean sink, dust, replenish soap and hand towels)
- ✓ Yard/Steps (pick up trash, shovel any snow, water plants)

Community Expectations

As committed communities of service and love, RA asks that our volunteers:

- ✓ Participate in the community planning session during summer Orientation.
- ✓ Move in and be available for community events beginning on August 12th.
- ✓ Gather once a week for prayer and community event.
- ✓ Attend monthly community gatherings including dinner, prayer and a house meeting with Community Alum and Community Guide.
- ✓ Share food and meals purchased with community funds. We recommend a bulk order at the beginning of the month with smaller orders of fresh food as needed. Post shopping schedule and list.

Community Living with RA

- ✓ Contribute to program development in one or more of the following ways:
 1. Recruiting
 - Attend a volunteer fair to represent Response-Ability.
 - Plan an info session to share about the program.
 - Write an article about RA for your college paper or RA materials.
 - Speak at a parish or university.
 2. PR and Fundraising
 - Write an article or press release for RA to share.
 - Plan or participate in a fundraising/PR event.
- ✓ Respect the values of RA in daily actions: God Among Us, Commitment to Community, Reverence of the Individual.
- ✓ Welcome RA friends and guests for events and visits.

Directory

Contact information and emergency information is located in the RA 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. **If your contact information (cell or email) changes, please notify HQ so we can update the Directory.**

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 alcoholic beverages.

Emergencies

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

Food and Household Supplies

Each community is given a monthly budget to buy food and household supplies (paper towels, dish detergent, light bulbs, etc) for the entire community. All food is brought with the intention of sharing. Food money is not to be used to buy alcohol or personal purchases of food or otherwise. A bulk order at the beginning of the month works well.

House Jobs

■ House Chores

Everyone helps with chores! (See “Cleaning/House Chores”)

■ House Maintenance Person

This person reports any maintenance needs to the Community Alum. This person helps the Community Alum to oversee and guarantee general routine maintenance is

Community Living with RA

done including pulling down screens in the spring/pulling down storm windows in winter in DC and PH, testing fire alarms, thorough cleaning of refrigerators, replacing light bulbs, and completing other tasks that may not be covered in weekly chore list.

For cases which require immediate outside attention:

Philadelphia: contact Joe Dixon

Los Angeles: contact Ilegra Evans, Ascension Parish Office Manager

Washington, DC: contact Pastor Fr. Karl at St. Francis de Sales Rectory

Let the Program Director know when the landlord has been contacted.

■ RA RAP Reporter

This person submits community updates to be included in the newsletter and website.

■ Yard Person

This person makes sure the yard and outside of the house is in order. This includes have to do all the work but needs to make it gets done. Yard work includes mowing lawns, cleaning debris, trimming hedges and bushes, shoveling snow, and care of outdoor equipment such as grills and tables.

DC: keeps front and back yard and driveway clean, neat, and safe

LA: oversees that courtyard is clean, notifies Ascension Parish office if it needs work

PH: keeps front and back yard clean, neat, and safe

Community Living with RA

Message Board

Each community has a place where messages can be posted for the entire group. Please check the message board on a daily basis.

Personal Space

Each resident is responsible for keeping his or her room clean and orderly. Upon departure, your room should be left as it was found or in better condition.

Pets

Response-Ability does not normally allow pets in RA houses. In certain circumstances this policy may be waived. Contact RA HQ for details and approval.

Phone

Response-Ability will pay for phone installation and initial activation fees. Basic charges will be paid from the house account. Long distance charges are paid by each volunteer. The community will decide if they wish to use an answering machine or voicemail. We recommend using a “call manager” system which divides the bill automatically by assigning each person a long distance code. Each volunteer should check their phone messages on a daily basis (both house phone and cell phone if applicable).

Retreats

Two retreats will be planned by the Community Guide and Community Alum. Each retreat will occur over a weekend as scheduled on the calendar. Your school contract specifies that retreats begin on Friday and end on Sunday; as such, you are given the day off on Friday. This day is intended to be used for the retreat, and to accomplish any work and planning necessary in order for you to be fully present to your community on the retreat. You are responsible for following your school’s substitute policy.

Visitors/Overnight Guests

Family, friends, boyfriends and girlfriends are welcome at our community residences as visitors but should not interfere with the residents fulfilling their commitment to community. 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 of the group may be asked to leave with a group consensus or at the request of an RA Staff Member. In order to protect the privacy and comfort of all residents as well as to protect the reputation and integrity of the RA Program, we ask that all overnight guests use guest rooms. Any visits over two nights must be approved by RA Headquarters.

Section **3**

RESPONSE-ABILITY
Handbook

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 coaching volunteers in their classrooms. They attend Orientation and plan Professional Development Days and Night Meetings.

RA COMMUNITY GUIDE

The Community Guide focuses on planning annual events such as retreats with the Event 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 Site Alum focuses on enhancing the program by planning events with alumni, recruiting, acting as a graduate school contact, and offering other on-site support. The Site Alum 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.

ABC's of Practical Matters of the Program

AmeriCorps

As a member of Response-Ability, you have the option to enroll in the AmeriCorps Education Awards Program (AEAP), offered through the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS). If you choose to enroll in the program, you are also considered an AmeriCorps Member and are bound by the terms of the AEAP Handbook.

Background Checks

RA requires all new volunteers to have a background check/child abuse clearance done as part of the application process. Applicants are responsible for this expense. Specific checks are required for graduate school and some Archdiocese. Copies of these checks may be sent to RA. Checks may also be done by NBI.

Contracts

All RA members will sign a contract with the program and with their schools.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

LA, DC, and PH volunteers will have access to FirstCALL Employee Assistance Program that offers confidential consultation with professional counselors who can help you find a way to deal with your concerns. RA may ask you to use this service.

Graduate School

LA, DC, and PH members have the option of attending graduate school at a college or university designated by RA. RA schools pay for a designated number of classes as outlined in the current Program of Study for that site. All books, fees, tests, and additional coursework are the responsibility of the volunteer.

Health Insurance

All volunteers will be covered by health insurance provided by his or her school during the duration of their term of service.

Professional Development Days

Three Professional Development Days are offered during the year. RA volunteers are expected to attend.

Program Information

Loan Deferment/Forbearance

Most loans can be deferred or put in forbearance during your term of service in RA. See the Program Director for more information.

Night Meetings with Classroom Supervisor

Volunteers meet as a group with their classroom supervisor at the volunteer house four times throughout the year. All volunteers are expected to attend. Dates are on the RA calendar.

Orientation/Teacher Training

All new RA volunteers are required to attend a summer Orientation program in PA in July.

Part Time Jobs

Part time work is not permitted during the academic year unless approved by RA. During the summer, Response-Ability members are permitted to hold another job.

Stipends

Teachers receive a stipend from their school of \$150 per month for 10 months issued according to each schools pay schedule. This money is intended for your personal use.

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 or the volunteer may elect to terminate the service commitment acting in the best interest of the volunteer or whole community. Written notice is to be given to the volunteer, school, and program. In such circumstances, volunteers will be expected to leave the residence within two weeks of their last day of teaching. 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 reimbursed by the program at a rate of \$0.405 per mile. Those members taking public transportation are given money for a monthly pass. Transportation checks are issued at the beginning of the month for September through June. RA HQ should be notified if mileage or public transportation changes occur.