

TIP SHEET

CNVS - A National Service Training and Technical Assistance Provider

MEMBER SUPPORT AND MOTIVATION THROUGHOUT THE SERVICE YEAR

From idealistic, energetic new members looking forward to changing the world...to volunteers realizing that the problems others face are bigger than what they expected ... through mid-winter blahs ... to experience service providers taking joy in the small successes .. now life-long advocates for people in need. This is the emotional cycle of the full-time AmeriCorps members. In order to create a successful program, not to mention a positive learning experience for your members, you must be prepared to address the members' changing needs.

Time	Possible Member Feelings	Program Response
August	Enthusiasm Idealism	comprehensive orientation set clear expectations
September	Frightened of newness	begin to develop one-to-one relationship Channel energy into your mission
October		
November	Disappointment Familiar with routine	visit site, problem solve offer opportunities for reflection
December	Frustration	begin broadening their perspective on pertinent issues
January	Winter blahs Desire to leave	reflect on successful moments so far re-view/re-new goal-setting Retreats and reflection
February		
March		
April	Spring enthusiasm Connection to people served	challenge members to incorporate Acorps experience into future choices prepare for member & program transition
May	Sense of accomplishment	
June	Curiosity about the future	
July	Fond memories Saying goodbye Transition	get addresses have them commit to recruit or donate in the future honor them for their year of service

KEY PROGRAM STEPS FOR MEMBER RETENTION

SETTING THE STAGE...

Before your members arrive, consider the following ...

- Needs Assessment or "why do you want an AmeriCorps member anyway?"
 - Where? Geography
 - What? Skills needed
 - Areas of possible development
 - Resources and staff available to support members' work
 - When?
- Prepare a service description
 - Service must be meaningful to both the member and agency
 - Must have a "goal" or "purpose" member can accomplish
 - Member should feel some ownership/responsibility for job
 - Member should have some input and control over his/her work
 - Include member in flow of information and decision-making in agency
 - Work must fit the time allotted (full or part-time, individual or team work, etc.)
 - Members must be assigned to capable supervisors
 - Clarify rights, responsibilities and benefits of the job
- Recruitment/Screening
 - Match the needs of your program with the interest and skill of the applicant
 - What are the skills/attitudes/traits needed to do the work?
 - Where can we find these people?
 - To what motivations can we appeal in our recruitment?

GETTING STARTED...

If you have done well recruiting and screening your applicants, your new members will arrive full of enthusiasm and ready to work hard, but also a little scared of the new environment they are entering. Your job is to direct their energy into your mission, getting them to begin to identify themselves as key players in your organization's success.

- Orientation
 - Articulate expectations
 - Encourage member to identify with program mission
 - Begin skills development
 - Introduce reflection models
 - Build relationships among members and with staff
- Training
 - Introduction to program organizational structure and procedures
 - Review job description
 - Assess skills that members may need assistance in developing

SETTLING IN...

With time, your members will start to feel a little jaded and probably somewhat disappointed. They are realizing that "saving the world" is not a part of their job description. The glamour of "Making a difference" has been replaced by obstinate clients, overwhelming needs, or less-than-perfect organizational structure. Your task is now to set your members to focus on what they can and are "getting done," rather than despairing over all that is beyond their power. Reflection is a key ingredient in convincing the members that the real gift of their year will be the lessons and growth they experience

- Site Visit
 - Meet with member's immediate supervisor to evaluate performance

Provide opportunity for individual and one-on-one reflection
Problem-solve with member to clear up any program kinks
If necessary, make adjustments to job description
Be an encouraging presence, emphasize your program's gratefulness for the member's service

- Additional Resources
 - Provide members with mentor to assist them in processing their experiences
 - Pass along reading material, and other information which will enable members to learn more about the issues their service addresses

RE-CHARGING - "I SHOULD HAVE STAYED HOME"...

The blahs tend to hit hard after members return from their holiday vacation. Still feeling the weight of the social problems in which they are submerged, member may be looking for a way to escape. A listening ear and some encouraging words go a long way in keeping folks' spirits up!

- Re-Commitment
 - Reflect on member's initial goals
 - Ask member to recall "success" moments/achievements
 - Ask member to set new goals for the remaining months in the program
- Stress Relief
 - Provide opportunities for members to see and encourage one another
 - Offer days for retreat/reflection so they can share their experiences
 - Plan some fun activities
 - Be an encouraging presence

WHAT'S NEXT...

- Member's Transition
 - Be available for consultation
 - If possible, use your network to help members find a full-time job
 - Be ready to write letters of recommendation
 - Talk with those interested in extending their service commitment
 - Challenge the member to integrate the lesson of their AmeriCorps experience into their future choices
- Program's Transition
 - Is someone else ready to take over the workload of the departing member?
 - What loose ends need to be tied up before the member leaves?
 - Who will train the new person?

SAYING GOOD-BYE...

Many members will look back fondly at their AmeriCorps experience as one of the most significant events of their lives. If they have been well-integrated into the staff, if they feel that they have made a difference, it will be difficult to say goodbye.

- Honoring member's contribution
- Provide ways to stay connected
 - Make sure you have members on our newsletter mailing lists
 - Ask them to sign up to help you recruit, interview, or mentor new members

THE VOLUNTEER RETENTION CYCLE

