

# CSU Extension 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Program



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION



## Tips and Best Practices for Coaching/Supervising Your AmeriCorps Member

Before your member begins their service, it is important to think about your expectations and ground rules. Then, as part of the member's orientation once they start, you should clearly convey these expectations and ground rules to the member. Being clear about goals and expectations up front can help prevent a lot of problems down the road and can pave the way for a positive experience for both the member and the county.

We highly recommend that you establish regular, on-going, in-person meetings with your AmeriCorps member(s). **Weekly meetings are ideal.** These meetings will give you the opportunity to:

- Build relationships and rapport with you member
- Check in with how your member is doing and feeling
- Make sure the member has adequate activities planned to meet their weekly hour goal
- Check on their time sheets and progress toward completing their hours
- Keep up with their data collection and data entry into OnCorps Reports

### Coaching your Member:

1. Implementing the member assignment: How do you help your member understand what he or she is supposed to do and how to do it?
2. Anticipating and addressing member needs: How do you consider members' needs not just at the beginning, but in month six when their enthusiasm dips, and at the end, when they leave?
3. Becoming an effective supervisor/member team: What are the conversations that you need to have with your member to establish a sense of teamwork?
4. Inspiring a life of service: What additional training might them members need that you can't provide? What can you do to inspire in members a life of service?

### A talented coach:

- Advances member skills and attitudes
- Helps members deliver high quality results to all stakeholders
- Acts as someone to confide in
- Encourages members to think for themselves
- Serves as a sounding board for ideas
- Helps members sail through tricky transitions and handle difficult situations and people
- Models behaviors that members can use with internal and external clients
- Does not play the "expert" or offer all the answers

### **Benefits of coaching:**

- When you coach members, you increase interaction with them. You listen, inquire, communicate and search for solutions.
- Coaching allows people to share their perceptions of what happened in an event or situation, and discuss the perceptions.
- A coach asks open-ended questions and guides someone to think something through, instead of giving answers.
- Coaching is performance focused and provides feedback on both strengths and weaknesses.
- Coaching requires people to slow down, listen more deeply and become less reactive. A coach could be wrong. A coach does not have all the answers.

### **Here's what two veteran AmeriCorps supervisors wish they had known when they started:**

"I wish someone told me how important informal supervision is. Because I'm not there [with my members] everyday, it's important that I sometimes say, 'Let's get a cup of coffee or go for a walk.' I almost get more out of those sessions than the formal ones." – *Melissa Burwell, Minnesota Alliance with Youth Promise Fellows, Minneapolis, MN*

"It's so much about building relationships. It's not just the time, but the emotional investment. I didn't realize [at first] how much supervising would be about establishing and maintaining communications. The flip side of that is you also have to set boundaries. Don't be so available that people take advantage and you aren't able to do some of the other work you need to get done." – *Karen Mauldin-Curtis, Peace Corps Fellows Program, Macomb, IL*