



## EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS SUMMER CORPS PROGRAM

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**1. What is the application deadline?**

The application period opened on **March 1, 2012**. Completed applications must be submitted by the deadline: **11:59 p.m. PDT on Tuesday, April 10, 2012**. All parts of the application, including documents and an electronic signature from staff at your host site, are required by this deadline. Late or incomplete applications will **not** be accepted.

**2. Am I eligible to serve as a Summer Corps member?**

- (i) You must be a current student at an [Equal Justice Works member law school](#). To see if your school is a member, please visit our website at: <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school/membership/law-school-members>.
- (ii) You must obtain a placement at a [qualifying nonprofit organization](#) or county or state public defender office. Equal Justice Works will not find a placement for you. To find a placement, we suggest consulting with your law school's career office, looking at postings on [PSLawNet](#), or directly contacting offices you are interested in working for to ask if they need help for the summer.

**3. Do we make any exceptions to any deadlines?**

No.

**4. What are my chances for being selected?**

We receive approximately 2000 applications for approximately 700 slots.

**5. When does the Summer Corps 2012 program start and end?**

- You may start on May 1, 2012.
- You must start **no later** than May 31, 2012.
- Your term of service must end, complete the minimum 300 hours of service, no later than August 31, 2012.
- You must provide a start and end date for your term of service in your application. You must inform us immediately if these dates changes.
- Accurate start and end dates are AmeriCorps requirements.

**6. What is the criminal background check procedure?**

AmeriCorps requires that all applicants must consent in writing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check. In accordance with federal law, Summer Corps applicants will be required to undergo the following criminal history checks:

- FBI fingerprint-based criminal history check;
- State criminal registry checks in the state of service and state of residence at time of application; and
- National Sex Offender Public Registry search.

Equal Justice Works will conduct and review the results of each National Service Criminal History Check. Selection in the Summer Corps program is contingent upon Equal Justice Works' review of the background check results.

Having a criminal conviction is not an automatic bar to service. Each application is reviewed on a case by case basis.

**7. Why do I have to sign the Summer Corps contract before I have been accepted?**

Acceptance of the terms of the contract is a prerequisite for being considered for the program. If the applicant is not selected to participate in the Summer Corps program, the contract shall be void. If you are selected to participate in the program, we will enroll you in the AmeriCorps database as a Summer Corps member based on the information you provide in your application and contract.

**8. How and when do I find out if I have been accepted into the Summer Corps program?**

We start informing students in mid-April. Waitlisted applicants will be accepted on a rolling basis until May 1, 2012, the start date of the program. You must accept or decline your offer to participate through the Summer Corps Application Manager (SAM) database by the deadline indicated in your offer email. If you miss the deadline to accept, your slot will be reassigned to an applicant on the waitlist.

**9. Do I have to find a host organization before applying to Summer Corps, or can Equal Justice Works help me find a placement?**

Yes, you must find your own placement at a [qualifying host organization](#). Equal Justice Works does **not** find placements for Summer Corps members. To find a placement, we suggest consulting with your law school's career office, looking at postings on [PSLawNet](#) or directly contacting offices you are interested in working for to ask if they need help for the summer.

**10. Geographically, where can I serve?**

Qualifying host organizations in the United States, U.S. territories and tribal reservations.

**11. What is a qualifying host organization?**

- Nonprofit organizations serving low-income and underserved communities;
- State, county and nonprofit public defender offices;
- Nonprofit legal service organizations; and
- Nonprofit civil rights organizations.

**The following do not qualify as Summer Corps host organizations:**

- Federal government agencies (such as federal defender offices, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Justice);
- Government agencies (such as district attorney's offices, offices of the attorney general);
- Internationally-focused or internationally-based organizations;
- Judicial clerkships; and
- Private law firms of any sort.

**12. Is my project eligible for Summer Corps funding?**

Your service project must adhere to the following guidelines:

- You must provide direct legal services to low-income and underserved individuals. This includes conducting intake, performing client and witness interviews, assisting with courtroom representation, and carrying out legal research and writing.
- You are strongly encouraged, but not required, to engage in community education and outreach efforts as a part of your service. This includes creating, updating or translating educational and outreach materials and conducting "know your rights" presentations.
- Your project is not eligible if you do pure policy work.
- If you are performing indigent defense work, you are only eligible if your organization is a state, county or nonprofit public defender. Offices such as the Federal Public Defender do not qualify.

You may not engage in any activities prohibited by AmeriCorps during your service hours, including but not limited to:

- proselytizing or engaging in religious instruction;
- attempting to influence legislation;
- assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing;
- engaging in partisan political activities; and/or
- providing a direct benefit to a for-profit entity.

You are welcome to do any of these things on your own time and while not wearing the AmeriCorps logo. All Summer Corps members must sign a document certifying they do not partake in any prohibited activities throughout the course of their project.

**13. Can I receive compensation as a Summer Corps member?**

Yes. You may earn up to \$4,300, but it may not be earned as an hourly wage unless through Federal Work Study. Because Summer Corps is an AmeriCorps program, members cannot receive an hourly wage from the host organization for their service. A member may receive a "living allowance" of up to \$4,300, which is not a wage and not paid on an hourly basis.

Host organizations must distribute a living allowance at regular intervals and in regular increments. Living allowances are only distributed during the member's term of service, they must cease when the participant successfully concludes the term of service.

If you are receiving funds through a [Federal Work Study](#) Award, you can receive an hourly wage. **You must disclose this amount to Equal Justice Works** and, if applicable, ensure that the host organization reduces your living allowance, if any, by the amount of the work-study award. If you are not sure if your additional source of funding will affect your eligibility for Summer Corps, please contact us at [Summercorps@equaljusticeworks.org](mailto:Summercorps@equaljusticeworks.org).

There are many sources of funding for summer service, including law schools, bar association and public interest fellowship awards. Contact your school's career office, check [PSLawNet.org](http://PSLawNet.org) and ask your host organization for additional funding opportunities.

Remember you cannot be paid an hourly wage and be a Summer Corps member; however, most summer funding programs are not paid as hourly wages.

**14. Is Summer Corps an AmeriCorps funded program?**

Yes. For more information on AmeriCorps, its benefits and rules, please visit [www.AmeriCorps.gov](http://www.AmeriCorps.gov) and view the information [for individuals](#).

**15. What if I have previously served in an AmeriCorps program, including Summer Corps?**

You can probably still participate. Under current AmeriCorps rules, individuals can serve a maximum of four terms of service, no matter the length of each term. However, an individual is limited to earning up to the aggregate sum in dollar value of two full-time (usually 1,700-hours) education awards. Summer Corps is a minimum-time (300-hours) program. So, a previous term of service will not necessarily cause you to reach the limit on education awards or terms of service. To find out if how many terms of service or education awards you have received in the past, please contact AmeriCorps at 1-800-942-2677 or create an account at [myamericorps.gov](http://myamericorps.gov).

**16. What are the AmeriCorps prohibited activities?**

Pursuant to Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) regulation 45 CFR 2520.65, members of AmeriCorps programs, including Summer Corps, are prohibited from performing certain activities in the course of their duties, at the request of program staff or in a manner that would be associated with the activities of the AmeriCorps program or CNCS.

These activities include:

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in or endorsing events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;

- Providing a direct benefit to:
  - A business organized for profit;
  - A labor union;
  - A partisan political organization;
  - A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
  - An organization engaged in the religious activities described in the bullet above of this section, unless CNCS assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using CNCS funds to conduct a voter registration drive;
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services; and
- Such other activities CNCS may prohibit.

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the above prohibited activities on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time and using non-CNCS funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn while doing so.

**17. Can I participate in AmeriCorps prohibited activities during non-AmeriCorps time?**

Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the above prohibited activities on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time and using non-CNCS funds. The AmeriCorps logo should not be worn while doing so.

**18. Do I have to track my hours in the Summer Corps Application Manager (SAM) if I am already tracking my hours at the host organization?**

Yes, you should be tracking your daily hours in SAM and through your host site's time tracking system. Also, you will receive notices from Equal Justice Works if we discover that you are not entering hours regularly. This is an AmeriCorps requirement and we will assume that you have unsuccessfully left the program if you fail to enter your daily hours and have not responded to our reminders. An unsuccessful exit from the program can affect your ability to serve in other AmeriCorps programs in the future as well as other Equal Justice Works programs such as our Fellowships programs.