



*R*etired and *S*enior *V*olunteer *P*rogram  
of Emmet and Charlevoix Counties  
Sponsored by:



**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**



**RSVP of Emmet and Charlevoix Counties**

Friendship Centers of Emmet County  
1322 Anderson Road  
Petoskey, MI 49770

Phone: (231)-347-3211

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Dear Volunteer,

The Friendship Centers of Emmet County are pleased that you have decided to become a member of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program of Emmet and Charlevoix Counties. We never cease to be amazed at the number of local citizens who are so willing to serve others in our communities.

This Volunteer Manual was developed to provide you with a general overview of the RSVP program and the roles and responsibilities of the RSVP staff, the organizations where RSVP volunteers serve, and the volunteers themselves.

Our pledge to you is to do everything possible to make your volunteer experience rewarding and meaningful. Please feel free to call us with any questions, problems, or suggestions you may have throughout your RSVP volunteer experience.

Again, thank you for sharing your experience and compassion for others to help tackle important issues in your community.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret Hornbaker, *RSVP* Volunteer Coordinator

and

Christy Blackall, *RSVP* Project Director

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## **What is RSVP?**

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) is part of a national network of programs called AmeriCorps Seniors, that recruits adults 55 and older to use their talents and life experience to help meet community needs through volunteer service. RSVP offers maximum flexibility and choice to its volunteers as it matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to serve in their communities. Volunteers provide thousands of community service hours across the United States.

RSVP of Emmet County, is a non-profit organization dedicated to meeting community needs in northern Michigan by placing volunteers whose wisdom can make a difference. On-going education and support for volunteers is an important component of RSVP. Through careful monitoring, data collection, and evaluation by program staff, volunteers know of the impact they are making in addressing an identified community need.

RSVP is sponsored by Friendship Centers of Emmet County (FCEC). FCEC is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of the people it serves. The mission of the FCEC is: “to ensure that all senior citizens have the opportunities, information and services necessary to live healthy, safe and active lives of dignity.”

## **RSVP Emmet and Charlevoix Counties Mission**

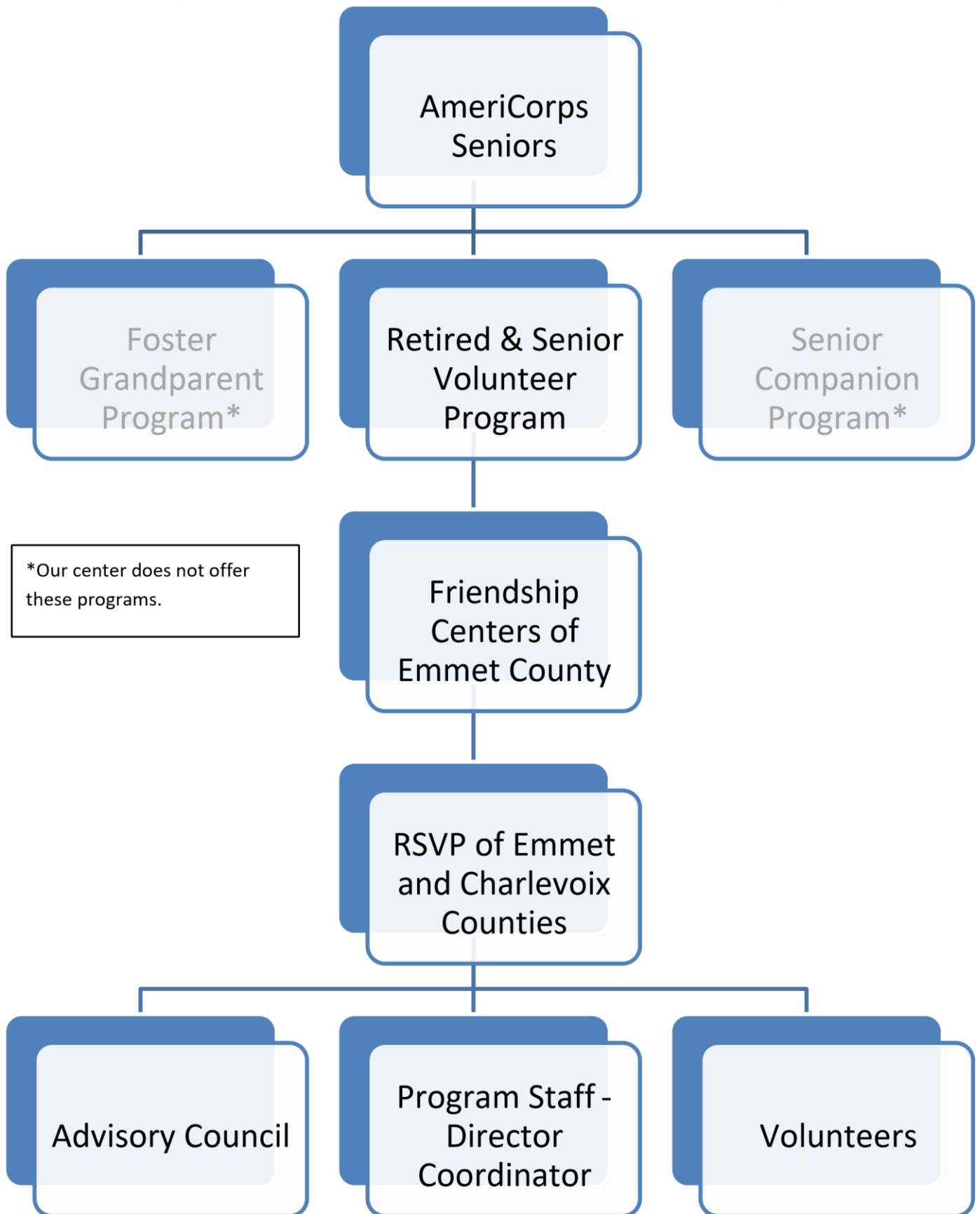
Our mission is to ensure that all senior citizens have the opportunities, information, and services necessary to live health, safe and active lives in dignity.

## **RSVP History**

The Administration on Aging launched RSVP in 1971, allowing retired persons in America to continue leading active lives while contributing to the needs of the community in a meaningful way. Eleven projects were started in the summer of 1971. By 1974 there were 666 projects nationwide. In 1988, RSVP had grown to 750 projects supported by federal funding.

In 1993, RSVP became part of the Corporation for National and Community Service (AMERICORPS SENIORS), which is a federal agency. AMERICORPS SENIORS was created to meet the personal, educational, environmental, and public safety needs of the United States, and to encourage citizens to give full or part time service regardless of age.

# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



## **Sponsorship**

RSVP of Emmet and Charlevoix Counties is sponsored by the Friendship Centers of Emmet County (FCEC). FCEC serves as the fiscal agent for the program and employs program staff.

RSVP is located within the FCEC offices at:  
1322 Anderson Road, Petoskey, MI 49770  
(231)-347-3211 ext. 129 or ext. 130

## **Advisory Council - Purpose and Function**

The primary purpose of the Advisory Council is to monitor and review program development and assessment.

The Council is made up of key individuals in the community that have a passion for volunteering and a commitment to the mission of RSVP. Members study matters related to the program, make suggestions concerning the functions of RSVP, and provide support to the program as it serves volunteers, partner agencies, and the community.

The Council meets bi-monthly. If you are interested in joining the Advisory Council or attending a meeting, please contact RSVP at (231) 347-3211.

## **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION**

### **Who can become an RSVP Volunteer?**

Anyone who is 55 and older who has a desire to be involved with their community by sharing their time, skills, and talents. There are no educational, income, experience requirements, dues or membership fees to join.

### **What can RSVP volunteers do?**

RSVP concentrates on areas of importance and priority to our communities. Currently those areas are food security, tax preparation, and improved access to medical care. As needs change, so do our focus areas.

### **Examples:**

- Volunteer at congregate meal sites
- Volunteer at food pantries.
- Volunteer with Meals on Wheels program (Charlevoix County only).
- Volunteer to tutor a child during school or provide classroom assistance.
- Support environmental concerns by volunteering for Little Traverse Conservancy, or other agencies supporting wildlife and nature preservation.
- Provide companionship and help with activities at retirement, nursing and care facilities.

Volunteers are matched with opportunities based on personal preference and the nature of the position. Each volunteer opportunity is provided a description of specific duties, required training, location of the station, etc. Additional opportunities are always being explored.



## **What does RSVP offer active volunteers?**

### **Volunteer Mileage Reimbursement**

- Mileage reimbursement is made available to member volunteers who would otherwise not be able to volunteer due to out of pocket expenses incurred while volunteering.
- Mileage is reimbursed to a volunteer when volunteer submits a mileage request with their supervisor's signature and has submitted the time sheet to RSVP no later than the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month.
- Mileage reimbursement is 65.5 cents per mile with a cap of thirty five (\$35.00) dollars per month. No checks will be issued under the amount of \$5.00; balance will be carried to the following month.

### **Volunteer Recognition**

It is our goal to coordinate recognition events annually. These events provide an opportunity to connect with friends and hear about the work that other volunteers are doing. It is also an opportunity to recognize those who have been working so hard and spreading good cheer.

**The opportunity to learn new skills or enhance current skills.** You may have skills you would like to learn and just never got around to it and we may have a volunteer opportunity that would be a good match. Or perhaps, you have a hobby that is a good match for a volunteer opportunity.

### **Receive the RSVP Newsletter.**

Receive the monthly newsletter and stay informed about upcoming volunteer opportunities as well as things going on in our community.

### **What are the benefits of volunteering?**

- A way to give back to your community
- On-going follow-up and support

- Supplemental accidental insurance while you volunteer
- A way of staying mentally and physically young
- Social interaction and a chance to meet new people
- An opportunity to learn new skills
- A variety of volunteer opportunities
- Flexibility to try new things

### **Where can someone volunteer?**

Requests for volunteers are accepted by registered non-profit stations.

### **What is a Volunteer Station?**

A Volunteer Station is a public or non-profit entity, or a proprietary health care organization located in Emmet or Charlevoix counties, that has a written agreement with RSVP to provide volunteer opportunities. RSVP volunteers help volunteer stations fulfill their mission of serving seniors, students, the disabled and veterans in the community who are experiencing a need. Volunteer Stations agree to provide a safe environment for RSVP volunteers and accept the responsibility of volunteer supervision. Key individuals from Volunteer Stations assist with volunteer training.

### **Fitting in at your Volunteer Station**

Volunteer Stations appreciate and value the time and talent you offer. When volunteering, don't be shy... ask questions about the organization. Below is a list of details you may want to know about the Volunteer Station:

- Know and understand your role at the Volunteer Station
- Understand what change you are working to create, or the problem you are working to address
- Understand the mission or purpose of the Station
- Know your supervisor and the station staff you work with. They will answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.
- Know what policies and procedures you are subject to as a volunteer, including the check-in procedure for your station

- Learn the little things such as the location of the restrooms, coat racks, workspace, parking area, the lounge or lunch area, etc.

## **Background Checks**

Criminal background and sex offender registry checks are conducted for RSVP volunteers by RSVP staff. These checks are to ensure and maximize the safety of volunteers and clients served.

## **Conduct**

Volunteers are expected to be professional. When volunteering, an RSVP volunteer must act in accordance with the Volunteer Station's guidelines for staff and/or volunteers. Any concerns regarding the guidelines should be taken to the station supervisor. If concerns are not resolved, please contact the RSVP Director or Coordinator.

Timeliness is essential, please be on time. If you are unable to arrive at your scheduled time, please notify the station supervisor. If you are going to be absent, please follow the process outlined by either the RSVP staff or the station staff for your volunteer assignment.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is the cornerstone of a trusting relationship between volunteers, clients, Volunteer Stations, and RSVP. Some volunteer opportunities involve knowing sensitive information about the individuals being served. Issues or concerns regarding clients should only be discussed with the station supervisor. It is important to never release the name, address, phone number or any other information that may identify the client to anyone except the Volunteer Station. For your own safety, it is also important to only release your personal details to RSVP and volunteer station staff.

## **Volunteer Status**

A volunteer will remain active throughout the program year as long as he/she reports at least one hour of volunteer service every six months.

At the end of the program year, volunteers will be asked if they want to continue their volunteer service. At that time, they will choose to remain active, go on a temporary leave of absence, or terminate their assignment. Volunteers may also terminate their volunteer assignment at any time by notifying RSVP staff.

Once a volunteer is terminated, he/she is no longer covered by our insurance or eligible to participate in recognition events.

### **Reporting Volunteer Hours**

It is very important that RSVP knows how much time you spend volunteering. RSVP requires programs to keep track of volunteer hours as a means of assessing the program's performance. Volunteer hours indicate that you are an active volunteer, which allows you to participate in recognition events and remain eligible for volunteer liability coverage. Volunteer Stations will collect and report hours to RSVP staff based on sign-in sheets. Volunteers are required to sign the time sheet and indicate the number of hours served.

### **Volunteer Safety Policy**

Volunteer safety is important to RSVP. Concerns regarding safety at your volunteer station should be reported to the station supervisor and RSVP Coordinator as soon as possible. If you are involved in an accident while on assignment, please notify the RSVP office within 24 hours. Should your medical, physical, or other conditions change at any time, please inform the RSVP Coordinator.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the case of inclement weather or poor road conditions, please exercise caution. Use your best judgment in deciding to travel to the volunteer assignment. Please notify the Volunteer Station if you will be absent due to weather.

## **Volunteer Insurance Service – CIMA**

All active volunteers are provided with accident, medical, volunteer liability, and auto liability insurance, which supplements existing insurance policies at no cost to the volunteer. The coverage protects an RSVP volunteer during volunteer assignment (travel to and from the station, and while you are performing duties at the station). For volunteers using a personal auto, minimum levels of liability vehicle insurance are required as mandated by the State of Michigan.

In case of an accident, auto or otherwise, the volunteer should:

- Report the incident immediately to the RSVP Coordinator, who will notify our insurance carrier, CIMA.
- File appropriate claim forms with his or her own primary insurance provider including Medicare or Medicaid.
- Keep insurance statement and itemized bills, as they will be needed to file a claim.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

No persons, regardless of race, religion, color, creed, gender, national origin, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or political affiliation shall be excluded from participating in RSVP.

## **Drug and Alcohol Policy**

The use of illegal drugs or alcohol, or being under the influence of the same, while performing hours of service is strictly prohibited and shall be cause for termination of all volunteer placements through the RSVP of Emmet and Charlevoix counties.

## **Volunteer Termination**

Volunteers may be terminated at any time by agency partners and/or RSVP. Grounds for termination may include, but are not limited to:

- Breach of confidentiality

- Physical, mental, or emotional inability to serve
- Incompatibility with agency partners and/or RSVP staff
- Offensive behavior, sexual harassment, or workplace violence
- Consumption of illegal drugs or alcohol immediately prior to or during volunteer assignments.
- Lack of expected professional standards, such as hygiene and dress.

## **Appeal Process**

All appeals to action affecting an RSVP volunteer must be made in writing to the RSVP Director with a copy sent to the Chairperson of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will review the complaint and, if necessary, conduct an investigation with the appropriate individuals, including the RSVP Director and the volunteer making the appeal. Additional persons may be involved such as other volunteers, stations and/or RSVP staff. The Council will determine what action should be taken to correct the situation. The Chairperson will respond in writing to the appealing volunteer explaining the Council's decision and necessary action.

## **Policy Changes**

Policies in this handbook are subject to change without notice.

## **Volunteer Responsibilities**

When accepting a volunteer assignment with RSVP, responsibilities include:

- Attend the volunteer orientation and trainings.
- Report to your assignment on time.
- Sign the RSVP time sheet monthly so your hours can be properly recorded.
- Notify your station if you will be absent.
- Arrange for a substitute volunteer if you know you will be absent.
- Ask questions at your volunteer station if you do not understand or are not sure about something. If you still have questions, please call the RSVP office.

- If you are in an accident, notify the RSVP office and your station, asap.
- Keep station business and client information confidential.
- Notify the RSVP office if you are having problems at your volunteer station.
- Notify the RSVP office if there are changes in your contact information.
- Notify the RSVP office if there are changes in your station personnel or contact information.

### **Prohibitions for RSVP Volunteers**

- Volunteers are not permitted to engage in any of the following activities:
  - Electoral activities
  - Voter registration
  - Voter transportation to polls
  - Efforts to influence legislation
- Volunteers should not engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by any employee or result in the displacement of any employee.
- Volunteers do not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardians, members of their family, or friends.
- Volunteers do not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or attempt to convert others to another opinion or religion while volunteering.
- Volunteers should report any “in-kind” gratuities given to them by the station. This includes:
  - Value of food or beverage while on duty.
  - Value of any tokens of appreciation *from the station*. Gifts from clients are not permitted.
  - Value of any other contributions that were paid for by the station and given to the volunteer.

Your questions concerns and/or comments are always appreciated by FCEC/RSVP. Please don't hesitate to call for a private, confidential meeting with your RSVP Program Director any time.

## **Frequently Asked Questions about RSVP**

**Q:** What if I am already volunteering in the community?

**A:** People who are already volunteering in the community are welcome to join RSVP. There are numerous benefits to joining your local RSVP program including:

- Group activities and opportunities to meet new people
- Mileage reimbursement to and back from your volunteer station
- Accident & Liability, and excess auto insurance while you are “on the job”
- Recognition activities
- Opportunity for mileage reimbursement
- Monthly newsletter
- Belonging to a nationwide group of over 500,000 RSVP Volunteers

**Q:** What is a Volunteer “Station”?

**A:** A volunteer station is a public agency, private nonprofit organization, or proprietary health-care organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of RSVP volunteers. It is the organization where you will perform your volunteer service.

**Q:** What if the organization I currently volunteer for *is not* an “RSVP Volunteer Station”?

**A:** If you are currently volunteering with an organization that is not an RSVP Volunteer Station, encourage them to sign up. The process is simple and there are no financial commitments for stations to join. Most “Stations” that sign



up with RSVP get referrals from RSVP for additional volunteer support, so it benefits them to join!

**Q:** What kinds of stations are available?

**A:** RSVP stations offer a variety of roles throughout the communities. A list of partnering stations will be available for your review. Below are a few of the many roles that RSVP volunteers play:

- Tutoring students
- Assisting in classrooms
- Food Pantry support
- Assistance with the Meals on Wheels program – Charlevoix County only
- Community Priorities (Highway cleanup; Community Gardens, Medicare Counseling)

**Q:** How will I know what station is right for me?

**A:** Volunteers are matched with stations according to interests, abilities, preferences, and availability. A list of available stations and job descriptions will be provided. Special consideration is given to developing assignments that allow volunteers with limited mobility or disabilities to engage in service.

**Q:** Are there any hidden costs to being an RSVP volunteer?

**A:** No. RSVP values the time you spend volunteering. There will be no direct cost to you. There are no membership fees or dues to join RSVP.

**Q:** Will I be reimbursed for my gas to drive to my station?

**A:** Yes, at a rate of 65.5 cents per mile, up to a maximum of \$35 each month provided you are carrying the State of Michigan minimum coverage on your vehicle on the dates of your service. If you will require a report on your annual miles driven for tax purposes, be sure to include your mileage on your timesheets (round trip).

You are beginning a journey with a program that has a long tradition of helping others and building strong and healthy communities. Not only are you a member of a local program serving local communities, you are part of a national movement that started in 1971 and has continued to gain momentum throughout its many years of success.

**Welcome to RSVP!**