

# FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM



## Volunteer Site Information Packet



**AmeriCorps**  
Seniors

Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of Program.....	pg. 3
Program Elements	
Volunteer Sites & Special Needs Children.....	pg. 4
New Volunteer Orientation & Probation Period.....	pg. 5
Pre-Service Orientation & Training, Probationary Period	
Attendance Policies.....	pg. 6
Weather Days and Holidays	
Leave of Absence	
Retirement.....	pg. 7
Placement & Service Assignment	
Appropriate Activities	
Limitations and Inappropriate Activities.....	pg. 8
Confidentiality.....	pg. 9
Timesheets.....	pg. 10
Safety	
Site Responsibilities.....	pg. 11
Supervision	
Performance Evaluations	
Volunteer Assignment Plan/Description.....	pg. 12
Incident Report	
Miscellaneous Requests	
Contact Information.....	pg. 13

## BRIEF OVERVIEW

Since 1965, the Foster Grandparent Program has provided valuable aid to children and youth with special needs. Serving at one of thousands of local organizations—including faith-based groups, Head Start Centers, schools, and other youth facilities—Foster Grandparents help children learn to read, provide one-on-one tutoring, and guide children at a critical time in their lives. Put simply, they give the kind of comfort and love that sets a child on the path toward a successful future.

Foster Grandparents earn a tax-free, hourly stipend. They must be 55 years of age or older, meet income eligibility guidelines, be medically cleared to volunteer, and a full background check.

The Foster Grandparent Program is funded by the AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is a federal agency that engages more than 4 million Americans in service through AmeriCorps Seniors, AmeriCorps State and National, and AmeriCorps VISTA. These programs include projects in six priority areas:

disaster services, economic opportunity, education, environmental stewardship, healthy futures, and veterans and military families.

## PROGRAM ELEMENTS

**In-Services Trainings-** Volunteers must complete an average of 4 hours per month of in-service training.

**Transportation-** Transportation assistance is provided to volunteers when traveling between the volunteer's home and place of program related activity.

**Meals-** Lunch is provided by the Sites while volunteers are on volunteer duty.

Hours- Volunteers serve a minimum of 15-20 hours per week and a no more than 40 hours per week. Volunteers are entitled to at least one 15-minute break during every 4-hour period of service.

Stipend – Foster Grandparents receive a non-taxable stipend of \$3.00 per hour of volunteer service.

Insurance- The Foster Grandparent Program provides supplemental insurance through CIMA, which covers all volunteers for accidents, personal liability, and excess automobile insurance while the volunteer is working at the Site or attending Foster Grandparent Program events or related activities.

## VOLUNTEER SITES AND SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Volunteer Sites are public agencies and non-profit organizations (secular or faith-based), such as hospitals, homes for dependent and neglected children, schools, and day care centers. For the Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies, most Sites are Elementary Schools, Head Start and other Child Development Programs.

Within these Sites are the special needs children that our volunteers serve. Special needs children may have a disability (e.g. developmental, physical, and learning) or impairment (e.g. hearing, speech, emotional). The child may be in foster care, an adjudicated youth, or a victim of abuse or neglect. Other reasons children may need special attention by a Foster Grandparent include having fallen behind in reading level or difficulty focusing on their school work. Whatever the reason, these children are matched with our Foster Grandparents because they need extra attention and support that our volunteers can provide.

## NEW VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION & PROBATION PERIOD

### *Pre-Service Orientation & Training*

New Foster Grandparents must train for 20 hours before working at their placement. During orientation, the Program Staff will introduce new volunteers to program policies, procedures, and regulations. The volunteers will spend 10 of the 20 pre-service training hours at the Site shadowing an experienced Foster Grandparent, if available, and getting oriented to the Site.

### *Site Training & Shadowing*

Program Staff and the Site will coordinate with the new volunteer to assure that the volunteer has oriented for 10 hours and before the volunteer can be placed to work on their own.

The volunteer can shadow an experienced Foster Grandparent to learn the daily activities and to get familiar with the needs of the children served. If a Site does not have any current volunteers, the new Foster Grandparent will shadow a volunteer at a similar Site when possible.

Additionally, the Volunteer Site will orient the volunteer to the space, dress code, universal precautions, lunch protocols, confidentiality policies, and all other Site policies and procedures.

### *Probationary Period*

If a volunteer is struggling with a placement or assigned child, the Program Staff and Volunteer Site will decide how to provide necessary support and additional training as needed, or match the volunteer to a different Site when appropriate. If an issue has not been resolved, the Site should contact the Program Director to address the issue at hand.

## ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Our volunteers receive sick, vacation, and personal time to use for absences. They also receive paid weather days (safety comes first) and paid holidays off, listed below. The Foster Grandparent is to notify the Site, as well as Program Staff of any absences as soon as possible. If a Site has not seen or heard from a volunteer in three days, they can call the Program Director or area Project Coordinator to check in on them.

### *Holidays*

Action Resources International sponsors Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies. All Foster Grandparent volunteers enjoy their sponsor's paid holidays. However, to assure that your volunteer is part of your school community as much as possible, the Foster Grandparent is required to serve even if the Volunteer Site does not observe the same holiday; instead, they will receive double time for any sponsor holiday which is not observed by their volunteer site.

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous People's Day
- Thanksgiving Day (including the Friday after)
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

### *Leave of Absence*

If a leave of absence is needed for any reason (medical or personal), Foster Grandparents must notify the Program Director as soon as

possible. A formal request should be in writing and includes the reason and predicted length of time of the absence. Once approved, the Site will be notified as soon as possible.

### *Retirement*

Foster Grandparents may voluntarily retire at any time and can do so by providing, when possible, written notice two weeks in advance of their anticipated retirement date. In the event that circumstances dictate the non-voluntary retirement of a volunteer, the Program Director will provide written and verbal notice to the volunteer stating the reason. Reasons can include, but are not limited to, extensive or unexcused absences, misconduct, inability to perform assignments, failure to follow directions, or having income in excess of the eligibility level.

Grounds for immediate dismissal are the use or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while on Site, violating confidentiality, and subjecting a child to any form of abuse (i.e., verbal, emotional, or physical).

## PLACEMENT & SERVICE ASSIGNMENT

Volunteers and Sites are matched up according to volunteer interest, Site needs, and distance between the Site and the volunteer's home.

Foster Grandparents should be assigned to children who would most benefit from the attention and care Grandparents provide. Assign the Grandparent to a child with a problem – not a problem child.

The Foster Grandparent's first responsibility is to be with the children. They should not be given assignments that will divert them from this responsibility (such as performing errands, household tasks or bulletin boards unless these activities are part of the child's activities).

Additionally, Foster Grandparents should not be included as

“supervising adults” when calculating state-mandated adult-to-child ratios.

Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Developing a child’s self-esteem: praising and positive verbal and non-verbal interaction
- Developing a positive environment: smiling, positive language, greeting children.
- Assisting children to develop language skills by reading stories, listening, talking, encouraging, and helping with written skills.
- Developing a child’s motor skills by encouraging child to sit, crawl, stand or walk; playing; or taking walks.
- Tutoring or reinforcing academics
- Developing a child’s social interaction skills: talking, listening, playing games, and teaching skills.
- Developing a child’s learning skills: reading to a child, listening to a child read, encouraging a child to accomplish any school task.
- Modeling appropriate behaviors and skills.

### *Limitations and Inappropriate Activities*

The Foster Grandparent Program restricts Grandparents from certain duties that pose a potential danger to themselves and/or to the volunteer station clients and staff, and take the place of any site staff. Foster Grandparents are required to adhere to the following limitations and are to refuse any such requests made by the volunteer station staff or clients. Foster Grandparents are encouraged to report such requests to the program staff for discussion and clarification with the volunteer site and the Grandparent.

***Other limitations include, but are not limited to:***

- substituting or relieving volunteer station staff of their regular or routine duties.
- being left alone with a child or adolescent.
- taking a child, adolescent, or family member to their home or giving out their phone number or address.
- providing transportation for volunteer station staff, children or adolescents. They also should not drive volunteer station vehicles.
- providing maintenance or housekeeping functions.
- soliciting funds for the Program or volunteer station.
- giving any type of medication to a child or adolescent.
- subjecting any child, adolescent, other Foster Grandparents or volunteer site personnel to any verbal or physical abuse.
- supervising any other Foster Grandparent.
- taking part in any political proselytizing and/or activities associated with a candidate, faction or groups in an election for public office.
- giving religious instruction, conducting a worship service or engaging in any other religious activities during their volunteer hours.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

The names and personal information of the children (family situation, income, address, medical condition, etc.) at each Site are confidential and must be respected at all times. Foster Grandparents may not discuss, outside of with Site and Program Staff, any confidential information regarding the children they serve. To emphasize, the Site should also go over their confidentiality expectations and policies with the volunteer.

## TIMESHEETS

It is the Foster Grandparent's responsibility to complete his/her timesheet daily. This document collects information about the time they volunteered, if they ate lunch, any reason for an absence, and if they drove themselves to the Site.

At the end of a one month pay period, each Foster Grandparent must sign and date the timesheet in order for it to be processed. Site Staff must also sign and date the timesheet to approve and verify the hours. Sites should only approve timesheets that accurately reflect the time the volunteer served (e.g., If a volunteer leaves early, this should be reflected on their timesheet).

Once completed, the timesheet must be submitted to the Laramie office for processing. In some cases, the volunteer may need the help of site staff to scan and email the timesheet. Timesheets are due generally on the last working day of the month by noon in order to get paid. Foster Grandparents are given a TS schedule every August.

## ACCIDENT AND LIABILITY INSURANCE

Foster Grandparents are covered when volunteering by accident insurance through The Foster Grandparent Program. They are NOT covered by Workman's Compensation. Please call the Foster Grandparent Program office immediately if a volunteer has an accident. Volunteers are also covered by liability insurance while on duty.

### *Safety*

Foster Grandparents are responsible for the promotion of safety for self and others. They are also required to adhere to the health and safety policies and procedures of both their volunteer station, their sponsoring agency, and the Foster Grandparent Program. Protection of self is accomplished by wearing appropriate clothing, limiting the amount of

weight lifted, keeping last names and phone numbers confidential from clients, and driving cars covered by adequate insurance.

Protection of others on the part of the volunteer is accomplished by smoking only in designated areas at the volunteer station, not drinking hot liquids in the presences of clients and not wearing clothing or jewelry that could harm an infant or child. The volunteer will also need to know any special site policies: children who are at risk of breathing difficulties due to allergies to certain foods and/or perfumes.

## SITE RESPONSIBILITIES

### *Supervision*

Volunteer Sites are responsible for the daily supervision of Foster Grandparents on assignments. The quality of supervision is one of the most critical factors in contributing to the success of the Foster Grandparent experience and the support given to the assigned child. Supervision should be ongoing and constructive. It is the responsibility of the Site to provide the volunteer with meaningful tasks.

### *Performance Evaluation*

A Performance Evaluation is completed by the Site Supervisor mid-year. The Site Supervisor then reviews the evaluation with the Foster Grandparent to give them feedback about what they are doing well and what they can improve on. Where it has been observed that a volunteer is unable to perform her/his duties in a satisfactory manner, the Site Supervisor can work with the Program Staff to provide the volunteer with steps to be taken to resolve the difficulties. If an ongoing issue is not resolved after repeated attempts to address it, the Program Director should be notified.

### *Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD))*

Federal guidelines require each Foster Grandparent to have Volunteer Assignment Description for each child that the Foster Grandparent is assigned. The document must give clear goals including pre-test scores on standardized tests and /or teacher observation with measurable results. These VADs should indicate an identified need of the child that the Foster Grandparent will be working with as well as the mechanism to measure change as a result of the work a Foster Grandparent has done with the child.

This FORM includes the following and will be given at the start of the year, or at the start of a Foster Grandparents service. A follow up document will be mailed to each site in April/May:

- a. Child served (initials or other identifier and demographics)
- b. Roles and activities the volunteer will perform
- c. Expected outcome(s) for the child
- d. Period of time the child will receive support

### *Incident Reports*

In the event of an accident or injury during volunteer duty, the Site should contact the Program Director as soon as possible.

## MISCELLANEOUS REQUESTS

Please offer your volunteer a little bit of space to call their own. Additionally, everyone benefits from instruction, praise and constructive suggestions. As meaningful members of your organization, also include them in special events such as annual dinners and volunteer recognition events as well as ordinary staff meetings, school concerts and assemblies. Our volunteers are lifelong learners

and would also benefit from attending Teacher Inservice, when appropriate.

Final decisions regarding personnel action are the responsibility of the Foster Grandparent Program staff. Please address any concerns regarding your volunteers and their performance with Program staff before taking any action. It is our intention to work with you and the Foster Grandparent to resolve any troubling issues, should they occur. Foster Grandparents are volunteers with Action Resources International's Foster Grandparents of the Wyoming Rockies Foster Grandparent Program.

Please feel free to call, write or email the Foster Grandparent Program if you have any questions or suggestions.

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