



# AmeriCorps Seniors

## Central MM Foster Grandparent Program

### Volunteer Station Handbook



Catholic Charities Central Minnesota Foster Grandparent Program  
157 Roosevelt Road Suite 200  
St. Cloud, MN 56301  
Phone (320) 229-4588 • Fax (320) 253-7464  
[www.ccstcloud.org/fgp](http://www.ccstcloud.org/fgp)

# Introduction

[www.ccstcloud.org/services/community/foster-grandparents](http://www.ccstcloud.org/services/community/foster-grandparents)

[www.americorpsseniorsmn.org](http://www.americorpsseniorsmn.org)

[www.nsca.clubexpress.com](http://www.nsca.clubexpress.com)

**Mission Statement** - The Senior volunteers of the Central MN Foster Grandparent Program, sponsored by Catholic Charities, provide meaningful, supportive relationships for children with special needs that enrich the lives of all involved.

**Program Information** - The Foster Grandparent Program is a nationally recognized intergenerational program. It provides the opportunity for persons age 55 and older to make valuable contributions to their communities. The Program brings together seniors and children to enjoy one another and learn in a positive, supportive environment. Foster Grandparents serve as volunteers and establish mentor relationships with children who have exceptional, emotional, and/or special needs. They give one-on-one unconditional care and encouragement. This supportive attention promotes positive effort in developing skills, attitudes, and motivation for change within the child. Foster Grandparents mentor academic and living skills. The sharing goes both ways. The bond of friendship fostered through the Program enriches the lives of the children as well as the lives of the Foster Grandparents, providing satisfaction and purpose.

The Foster Grandparents serve in community nonprofit agencies including: schools, early education programs, residential facilities, and social service agencies. Foster Grandparents volunteer a minimum of 260 or maximum of 2080 hours annually and receive a small tax-free stipend. Other benefits include: stipended time off (STO), paid holidays, a daily meal (where feasible), transportation assistance, accident and liability insurance while serving, recognition, social activities, education, and training.

FGP Area Supervisors manage the volunteers, assuring appropriate placements, interactions, support, training, and assignments. Each participating Volunteer Station contributes financially based upon our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement.

## **History**

The Foster Grandparent Program began on August 28, 1965, as a national demonstration effort of President Lyndon Johnson's, "War on Poverty". It established that low-income persons age 60 and older have the maturity and experience to establish a personal relationship with children having either exceptional or special needs. The number of seniors living in poverty lessened from 33% 1965 to about 10.3% in 2021 nationally. The Central MN Foster Grandparent Program was one of twenty-one pilot projects in the country with service at Catholic Charities' St. Cloud Children's Home. The Central MN Foster Grandparent Program has been a program of Catholic Charities since its inception.

Through the years the Foster Grandparent Program has expanded to cover more territory and serve

more children, with a variety of needs, from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The Central Minnesota Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) is funded by AmeriCorps Seniors, the Minnesota Board on Aging, United Way offices, and other community agencies and is sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of St. Cloud.

#### **AMERICORPS SENIORS:**

AmeriCorps Seniors is a network of federally supported and regulated programs of AmeriCorps that help older persons find service opportunities in their home communities. AmeriCorps Seniors engages seniors to volunteer in three types of community service:

- **Foster Grandparents (FGP)**, who offer support and tutoring to children with special and exceptional needs;
- **Senior Companions (SCP)**, who provide assistance to older adults with physical, emotional, or mental health limitations to live independently; and
- **RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)**, who serve the community through a variety of organizations, ranging from leading museum tours to teaching adult education classes.

#### **MINNESOTA BOARD ON AGING:**

The Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) is the foremost leader in the formulation of public policy on aging and the primary vehicle for gathering input on the status and needs of older Minnesotans.

Roles and responsibilities of the MBA include:

- Advising the Governor, state departments, and others about the status and needs of older Minnesotans
- Administering the Older Americans Act
- Acting as an advocate for the rights and dignity of older Minnesotans
- Promoting the talents and contributions of older Minnesotans

In addition to FGP, SCP, and RSVP, some activities of the MBA include Senior Dining/Meals on Wheels, Senior Linkage Line, and Insurance Counseling.

For additional information: [www.mnaging.org](http://www.mnaging.org).

#### **CATHOLIC CHARITIES:**

Catholic Charities is the Sponsor of the Foster Grandparent Program working with your agency. Catholic Charities covers a sixteen county region within Central Minnesota.

Catholic Charities oversees all project management requirements necessary to accomplish the legislative intent of the AmeriCorps Seniors program, including program, administration, and financial responsibilities:

- Focus AmeriCorps Seniors volunteer resources on critical problems affecting the special and exceptional needs of the children the Foster Grandparents serve;
- Develop and manage a system of Volunteer Stations;

- Assume full responsibility for securing maximum and continuing financial and in-kind support to operate the project successfully;
- Establish and maintain record keeping and reporting systems that ensure quality program and fiscal operations; and
- Establish written service policies for volunteers.

For additional information visit [www.ccstcloud.org/fgp](http://www.ccstcloud.org/fgp).

## Foster Grandparent Information

To become a Foster Grandparent volunteer, an individual must:

- Be 55 years of age or older
- Be available to perform service at a minimum of 260 hours per year (averages 8 hours per week during the school year)
- Agree to abide by all requirements of the Foster Grandparent Program, the Sponsor, and the Volunteer Station

### Recruitment

Foster Grandparents are recruited primarily through the Foster Grandparent Program. However, depending on the resources of the Volunteer Station and the complexity of the assignment, the Volunteer Station Supervisor may be of great assistance in recruiting Foster Grandparent volunteers.

The Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor screens applications and conducts the initial interview with the potential Foster Grandparents. Appropriate candidates are then referred to the Volunteer Station Supervisor. The Volunteer Station Supervisor makes the final decision whether or not to accept an applicant for their Station's assignment. There may be times when the station may refer new candidates to the FGP for possible placement.

The Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisors manage the volunteers, assuring appropriate placements, interactions, support, training, and assignments. The success of the placement depends on the relationship between the Volunteer Station and the Foster Grandparent Program staff.

## Volunteer Station Information

A Volunteer Station is a public agency, private nonprofit organization or proprietary health care agency or organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of Foster Grandparents. Specific examples of Volunteer Stations include health, education, or social service setting, schools, Head Starts, hospitals, correctional facilities or treatment centers, home for

dependent and neglected children, or a similar establishment. Volunteer Stations comply with AmeriCorps regulations and other laws, Executive Orders, and policies and regulations applicable to and concerning the program. In turn they receive the Foster Grandparent's volunteer service.

Each Volunteer Station must be licensed or otherwise certified, when required, by the appropriate state or local government. It is necessary for the Volunteer Station to provide a safe working environment for the Foster Grandparent volunteers, including placement that will not be potentially harmful to the volunteers.

A Volunteer Station shall undertake the following responsibilities in support of Foster Grandparent volunteers:

- Develop volunteer assignments that meet the requirements and regularly assess those assignments for continued appropriateness
- Select eligible children for assigned volunteers
- Complete a written volunteer Assignment Plan for the children that identifies the role and activities of the Foster Grandparent and expected outcomes for the children served
- Provide orientation for the Foster Grandparent to the Station and any training necessary to enhance performance of assignments
- Provide resources required for performance of assignments including reasonable accommodations
- Provide appropriate recognition of the Foster Grandparent's service
- Designate staff member to oversee fulfillment of Station responsibilities and supervision of Foster Grandparents while on assignment
- Keep records and prepare reports required by the Program
- Complete annual Foster Grandparent performance and impact assessments
- Provide for the safety of Foster Grandparents assigned
- Comply with all applicable civil rights laws and regulations including reasonable accommodation for Foster Grandparents with disabilities
- Undertake such other responsibilities as may be necessary to the successful performance of Foster Grandparents in their assignments or as agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding.

### **Volunteer Station Supervisor**

The Volunteer Station Supervisor is designated as the primary contact person responsible for the Foster Grandparent volunteers. Having one primary person responsible for Foster Grandparents streamlines communication and promotes consistency. The Program also asks key people in the agency to be familiar with the Foster Grandparent Program and know where to direct questions and concerns as well as potential volunteers. The Volunteer Station Supervisor is also responsible for the daily supervision of the Foster Grandparents on assignment. The quality of the supervision or support is the most critical factor, after the assignment itself, in contributing to the success of the

volunteer experience for the Foster Grandparent and the Volunteer Station. Supervision needs to be ongoing and constructive.

### **Placement**

The Volunteer Station is responsible for developing volunteer assignments and for regularly assessing those assignments for continued appropriateness and effectiveness. Assignments define the scope of service. The Foster Grandparent volunteers' skills and training should be utilized. Assignments may not include administrative support services to the Volunteer Station.

### **Service Schedule**

Overall, the Foster Grandparent Program Director is responsible for balancing service flexibility with efficient administration of the stipend benefit. Please work with your Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor in developing the service schedule of Foster Grandparents, keeping these points in mind:

- Foster Grandparent volunteers serve a minimum of 260 hours per year and may not serve more than 2080 hours per year
- Foster Grandparents ensure that person to person service is provided on a constant and regular basis to meet the needs of the children served
- It is recommended that service not be performed in fewer than two days and no more than five days a week, in order to ensure that Foster Grandparent services are available to meet the needs of the children.

These factors are also considered in determining the service schedule:

- Travel time is **not** considered stipended time.
- Meal time may be part of the service schedule if it is part of the service activity with the assigned children

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is the written agreement between Catholic Charities' Executive Director, the Foster Grandparent Program Director, and the Volunteer Station. Mutually agreed upon prior to placement of Foster Grandparents and renewed every three years, the MOU identifies program requirements, working relationships, mutual responsibilities, and includes the financial participation arrangements (monetary and in-kind) of the Volunteer Station.

Background checks are conducted on all potential Foster Grandparents, staff, and volunteers before they are enrolled into the Program. A Nationwide search of the National Sex Offender Public Website, Minnesota BCA State Background Check, and a FBI Fingerprint Check are completed.

### **Financial Expectations**

The Volunteer Station agrees to provide monetary and in-kind financial contributions towards Foster Grandparent expenses. This contribution is applied to expenses including annual medical review, transportation, and annual recognition event. Please check with the Foster Grandparent Program

Area Supervisor for the current financial contribution rate.

In-kind meal or reimbursement (if available), Transportation (if available), and \$285 annually for each Foster Grandparent engaged in service at the Volunteer Station.

If the Volunteer Station's inability to provide monetary or in-kind support to the Foster Grandparent Program diminishes or jeopardizes the Foster Grandparent Program's financial capabilities to fulfill its obligations, services may be withdrawn.

### **Performance Measurement**

Performance Measurement is a method of evaluating the results that are produced by volunteers. The AmeriCorps Seniors programs use outcome-based means of testing as a way to report to our funders that the money we receive is spent wisely and efficiently and that AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are making a difference in their communities.

The activities planned using Performance Measurement help address critical community needs. Strong programming can result in positive changes for the children served at the Volunteer Station and in the community. Examples of the accomplishments that AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers have made and the impacts that have resulted are clear indicators that a difference has occurred, a problem has been mitigated, or a need has been met.

Performance Measurement is an ongoing component of the Foster Grandparent Program and Volunteer Station relationship. The Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor will work with the Volunteer Station Supervisor to measure the impact of the Foster Grandparent volunteers at the Volunteer Station.

## **Guidelines for Interaction with Children and Youth**

Foster Grandparents focus their attention on the children (with special and/or exceptional needs) assigned to them. However, there will be some social interaction on the Foster Grandparents' part with other children. It would be impossible, inappropriate, and possibly harmful to ignore the other children.

The Volunteer Station has primary responsibility for the selection of prospective children to be served by Foster Grandparent volunteers. The children with special and/or exceptional needs must be under 21 years of age.

Definition of special and/or exceptional needs for children and youth include:

- Abused and/or neglected
- HIV/Aids
- Developmentally Delayed/Disability
- Emotional Impaired
- Hearing Impaired
- Homeless
- Juvenile Delinquents
- Language Barrier
- Physically Disabled
- Runaway Youth
- Significantly Medically Impaired
- Substance Abuse
- Teen Pregnancy/Parents
- Terminally Ill
- Visually Impaired
- Early Intervention
- Sexual Offenders
- At Risk

While the Foster Grandparent Program maintains on-going policies of carefully screening volunteers, it is in the best interest of all concerned that contact between Foster Grandparents and children served be on a professional basis in the context of the site programming. Therefore, the Foster Grandparent Program discourages the establishment of personal, off-site relationships between Foster Grandparents and children served. Failure to adhere to this policy is reason for dismissal from the Foster Grandparent Program.

### **Appropriate Service Activities**

This is a partial list of activities that will help you develop relationships with children. Foster Grandparents may work with one child or a small group of children and should be with children 95% of the time. As you will see, they are activities that you do **with** children rather than doing things **for** them.

Foster Grandparents assist children by:

- Providing understanding and support



- Conversing and sharing stories
- Showing interest and concern
- Reading with or listening to a child read
- Tutoring, encouraging, and praising
- Being a mentor by modeling appropriate behaviors and skills and encouraging socialization
- Reinforcing self-help skills
- Participating in group activities and playing games
- Helping a child to follow directions, stay focused, and accomplish assigned work
- Providing comfort, understanding, and encouragement
- Assisting children at mealtime
- Joining the group for field trips
- Assisting with learning activities and developmental therapy
- Preparing and serving food with the children

### **Inappropriate Service Activities**

This is also a partial list. If you are unsure whether an activity is inappropriate, please discuss it with your FGP Area Supervisor and/or Volunteer Site. It is always better to ask than to do something that makes you or the child uncomfortable or is contrary to missions of the Foster Grandparent Program and/or the Volunteer Site.

Inappropriate service activities include:

- Involvement in discipline or physical intervention
- Being with a child without Volunteer Site staff
- Assisting children in restrooms or changing diapers
- Coming in contact with blood-borne pathogens or body fluids
- Participating in activities that are detrimental to children
- Promoting personal religious and political beliefs
- Give religious instruction or conduct worship services
- Developing a relationship with a child outside of the Volunteer Site
- Taking part in any financial or banking activities, such as giving, or borrowing money
- Giving gifts of monetary value
- Receive a fee for service from a child or member of their family
- Performing paid staff duties, such as: secretary, custodian, cook, librarian, nurse, etc.
- Transporting children or staff
- Cleaning, copying, or prep-work, unless children are involved in these tasks
- Taking projects home to complete for the site.
- Not following Volunteer Site policies regarding bringing in outside food for others
- Personal use of electronics, such as cell phones or computers while at the Volunteer Site or at Inservice.
- Influence the outcome of any election to public office, or any voter registration activity

- Finance labor or anti-labor organization or related activity

**Foster Grandparent assignments must:**

- Provide for Foster Grandparents to give direct services to one or more children with special or exceptional needs
- Result in person to person supportive relationships with each child served
- Be meaningful to the Foster Grandparent
- Show direct and demonstrable impact to the child
- Be supported by necessary orientation, training, and supervision

## **Resignation or Dismissal**

The Volunteer Station Supervisor and Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor need to be alerted to changes or problems, which may lead to reassignment or dismissal such as:

- Functional difficulties develop
- Services are no longer needed
- Relationship is no longer meaningful or satisfying
- Health impairments

The Foster Grandparent Program wishes to promote harmonious and productive working relationships. Foster Grandparents frequently have excellent service records. Unfortunately, on occasion, a difficult situation may arise that makes it necessary to dismiss a current Foster Grandparent. To clarify these situations, the following are examples of causes for dismissal. While the list is extensive, it is not all-inclusive. Other circumstances may occur which require correction and discipline, up to and including immediate termination of volunteer service.

Examples of causes for dismissal are:

- Any breach of confidentiality (This includes confidentiality with regard to the children and families served, Volunteer Site, and other Foster Grandparents)
- Failure to accept guidance from and follow suggestions of your FGP Area Supervisor or Volunteer Site supervisor, to comply with standards of service
- Failure to submit timesheets when due or submitting false time, meal, and/or travel records
- Failure to submit required paperwork in a timely fashion, including income review, performance assessment, and/or medical review
- Unexcused or excessive absences, including absences from Volunteer Site, in-services, or other training sessions
- Tardiness of a repeated nature or a pattern of leaving early
- Physical, mental, or emotional inability to serve
- Refusal to accept volunteer placement

- Disrespectful behavior, which may include: gossiping, profane language, threatening or argumentative behavior
- Volunteer Site dissatisfaction
- Failure to comply with Volunteer Site and Foster Grandparent Program policies and/or procedures, including policy on boundaries, inappropriate touch, and contact with the children outside of the Volunteer Site
- Failure to comply with accepted standards of personal presentation and hygiene
- Incompatibility with Volunteer Site or Foster Grandparent Program staff
- Possession, attempted sale, use and/or distribution of narcotics, alcoholic beverages, or intoxicating substances while on assignment
- Possessing knives, guns or other weapons at the Volunteer Site or Inservice.
- The promotion of personal religious beliefs and/or materials while on assignment
- Conviction of a felony
- Inappropriate service activities or contact

## Reporting

The Volunteer Station is not required to generate reports regarding Foster Grandparent volunteers. The Foster Grandparent Program is responsible for all reports required by regulations. However, some reports involve minimal input from the Volunteer Station. Occasionally, the Foster Grandparent Program may ask the assistance of the Volunteer Station Supervisor in completing additional evaluations.

### **Time Sheets**

AmeriCorps requires that the Volunteer Station Supervisor verify and sign and date the Foster Grandparent's monthly time sheets. The time sheet cannot be signed by the Foster Grandparent or Site Supervisor prior to the last recorded date of service.

### **In-kind Contribution Report**

AmeriCorps requires that programs file quarterly in-kind reports that reflect a minimum of a ten-percent local contribution to the Program. These reports account for contributions made by the Volunteer Station. In-kind contributions include meals, transportation, and MOU contributions that were made during the previous quarter. The Foster Grandparent Program Coordinator will complete the in-kind Contribution Report and mail to the Volunteer Station for their verification and signature.

### **Accident and Injury Report**

AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers are covered by an excess accident insurance that extends coverage after all other collectible insurances. This insurance is in effect whenever a Foster Grandparent volunteer is serving under the supervision of the Volunteer Station.

In the case of an accident that occurs during service hours, please notify the Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor or Director IMMEDIATELY. The Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor will coordinate all matters dealing with insurance claims. Remember Foster Grandparents are NOT covered by Worker's Compensation.

If you are unable to get ahold of the Area Supervisor, please contact the Program Director at (320) 229-4587.

### **Assignment Plans**

Volunteer assignment plans are required for all AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers. Assignment plans are developed by the Foster Grandparent Program. Assignment plans are completed in the fall by the classroom teacher. The assignment plan is approved and signed by the classroom teacher, volunteer, and FGP Director. The assignment plans are returned to the teacher to assess the progress of the students in the Spring.

### **Performance Assessment and Development**

A formal performance evaluation is completed annually. It is important to evaluate the Foster Grandparent's performance as accurately and honestly as possible. This is an opportunity for the Foster Grandparent to discuss with the Volunteer Station Supervisor and Foster Grandparent Program Area Supervisor regarding their assignment, needs, successes, and relationships with children, and bring up any other questions or concerns. This is also an opportunity for the Volunteer Station Supervisor to reinforce the successes of the Foster Grandparent or to bring up areas in need of development. The general outline is to assess current performance, establish objectives for the future, and develop recommendations for individual development.

### **Program Evaluation**

According to AmeriCorps regulations the Foster Grandparent Program is required to complete an annual evaluation. Assignment Plans include evaluation of student progress and are completed in the spring. Foster Grandparent Performance Assessments are completed in the spring as well. Your feedback, opinions, and ideas are critical in continuing to improve the quality of the Program.