

AmeriCorps Inconsistent in Handling of Misconduct Allegations and Did Not Report Alleged Waste

Closed 05/31/2024

An AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General (AmeriCorps OIG) investigation found that AmeriCorps was inconsistent in how it handled allegations of misconduct by senior management and that AmeriCorps hired a third-party contractor to investigate allegations of financial mismanagement on the part of a senior manager without notifying OIG as required by AmeriCorps Policy 102. Based on the findings, AmeriCorps OIG issued a Report of Investigation (ROI) recommending that AmeriCorps:

1. Develop a policy or standard operating procedure that clearly delineates under what circumstances an employee should be placed on administrative leave to ensure that personnel actions taken before, during, and as a result of administrative investigations are fair and consistent.
2. Take appropriate remedial or personnel action as deemed necessary for any and all parties that failed to adhere to Policy 102.
3. Require all AmeriCorps employees, on an annual basis, to sign an acknowledgement letter indicating their understanding of Policy 102 and their pledge to adhere to the policy upon completing annual fraud, waste, and abuse awareness training.
4. Provide AmeriCorps OIG with a notification when outside/third-party firms are engaged to conduct investigations of AmeriCorps employees.

Agency/Administrative Actions

AmeriCorps responded to the ROI and agreed that performance management standards and processes would be helpful. Accordingly, AmeriCorps management will inquire whether senior executive performance management is carried out effectively and whether and how to utilize administrative leave as part of that process and in a fair and consistent manner. AmeriCorps expects this to be done as part of an ongoing process of developing and clarifying performance expectations and standards for senior agency leaders before the end of this calendar year.

AmeriCorps disagreed that the alleged financial mismanagement by the senior manager was reportable under Policy 102. It opined that its investigation of the senior manager related to mismanagement of core responsibilities but not misrepresentation, misleading omissions, or other blatantly unreasonable or gross conduct that require mandatory reporting under Policy 102. As such, AmeriCorps declined to take any remedial or personnel action regarding the non-disclosure of allegations relating to the senior manager.

Regarding mandatory training on and acknowledgment of Policy 102, AmeriCorps initiated mandatory training in June 2022 and stated it will look for ways to automate tracking and accountability to commence in 2025. Last, AmeriCorps stated it will, in appropriate circumstances, notify AmeriCorps OIG of outsourced personnel investigations of senior

executives, but it cannot in advance commit to providing notice in all cases, as it may or may not be appropriate under the particular circumstances.

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