

AmeriCorps Issued a Debt Collection After Investigation Found an AmeriCorps Member Had Been Paid to Perform Staff Duties

Closed 03/22/22

An AmeriCorps OIG investigation into Washington Service Corps (WSC) found that an AmeriCorps member had been employed by the member's service location, Peace Community Center (PCC), Tacoma, WA, during the member's term of service. The investigation found evidence that supported a finding that PCC violated 45 C.F.R. 2540.100(f) when PCC (1) hired the member PCC during the member's service term and (2) paid that member a salary in addition to the AmeriCorps living allowance. In addition, interviews of former members disclosed that PCC directed them to perform employee job functions for absent employees. AmeriCorps OIG, however, could not quantify the exact amount of service hours for this staff displacement because the members did not record these activities separately on their timesheets.

AmeriCorps OIG referred this matter to AmeriCorps and recommended that AmeriCorps coordinate with Serve Washington (Commission) to (1) ensure members are not performing the duties of staff; (2) provide training on the rules and policies regarding staff displacement; (3) disallow and collect the living allowances paid out to the member for the months that the member was also a paid employee; and (4) disallow and collect the education award paid out to the member as a result of the service hours recorded while also a paid employee.

Agency/Administrative Actions

In response to AmeriCorps OIG's recommendations, the Commission and Washington Service Corps provided details on their policies and procedures that address displacement and described trainings that they provide regarding staff displacement. The Commission partially concurred with AmeriCorps OIG's findings related to the member. The Commission agreed that the member was initially paid a living allowance and, after the conclusion of the service term, received significant backpay for employee wages as an employee of the host site. This led the Commission to believe that the member likely served as both an employee and a member for the host site organization at the same time, but the Commission found no further evidence of collusion. Based on the findings of the investigation, AmeriCorps issued a debt collection for \$15,462.50 (\$9,817.50 in living allowance and \$5,645 in Segal Education Award).

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