



Iowa AmeriCorps State of Promise

The Iowa AmeriCorps State of Promise (IASOP) Program is a unique partnership between AmeriCorps and Iowa's Promise. The vision of Iowa's Promise is that "all Iowa youth have safe and supportive families, schools and communities and that they are healthy, socially competent, successful in school and prepared for a productive adulthood."

In order to achieve this vision, Iowa's Promise's mission is to "ensure that state agencies with a compelling interest in the well-being of children and youth in Iowa will integrate the following Iowa Youth Development Results Framework into the work of their respective agencies. It is our hope that, as a collaborative body working together with youth in their communities, these agencies will achieve collective goals, participate in joint decision making, and foster mutual accountability for positive results."

Research shows that if the Five Promises, as defined by America's Promise, are consistently fulfilled, they can significantly advance the health and well-being of the next generation – increasing the chances of youth becoming successful adults. The five promises are:

1. **Caring Adults:** Ongoing relationships with caring adults — parents, mentors, tutors or coaches — offer youth support, care and guidance.
2. **Safe Places:** Safe places with structured activities during nonschool hours provide both physical and emotional safety for youth.
3. **A Healthy Start:** Adequate nutrition, exercise, and health care pave the way for healthy bodies, healthy minds, and smart habits for adulthood.
4. **Marketable Skills:** Marketable skills through effective education help youth navigate the transition from school to work successfully.
5. **Opportunities to Serve:** Opportunities to give back through community service enhance self-esteem, boost confidence and heighten a sense of responsibility to the community.

On December 13, 2004, then Governor Vilsack accepted recognition from America's Promise designating Iowa as a State of Promise for children and youth. Consequently, starting in 2005, in collaboration with Iowa's Promise, Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, and the Iowa Collaborative for Youth Development (IOYD), Iowa State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development program began hosting the IASOP program. ISU Extension coordinates the activities of the AmeriCorps members serving in communities across the state.

The AmeriCorps members lead efforts to recruit and mobilize volunteers for a variety of educational activities and programs, coordinate community youth leadership initiatives, develop new partnerships between private organizations and youth-serving programs, and design and develop community service projects. The AmeriCorps members are placed in various programs, organizations, and sites (government, faith-based, non-profits, and community-based) that focus on providing at least two of the Five Promises of the Iowa's Promise framework.

AmeriCorps members are currently spearheading community and organizational efforts to provide youth with the Five Promises. AmeriCorps members' work plans focus on project leadership and organization as well as some direct service. Rather than mentor a child, AmeriCorps Promise Members help organizations develop mentoring programs. Rather than tutor a child, AmeriCorps Promise Members develop training institutes and recruit and teach volunteers how to tutor students.

AmeriCorps Promise Members are currently:

- Providing youth leadership training to groups of youth who then take those skills to design and implement community service-learning projects.
- Enhancing out-of-school programs by developing enrichment programming to reach larger audiences.
- Educating youth on healthy lifestyle choices and creating youth recreational programs.
- Educating youth on work readiness skills and job skills.
- Developing or expanding youth philanthropy programs at volunteer centers and community foundations.

The AmeriCorps members are the heart of this partnership as they link the sites in:

- Recruiting, training, and managing volunteers.
- Establishing alliances and partnerships with local government, faith based, and community-based organizations and initiatives.
- Helping local host-sites acquire the resources and volunteers needed to achieve long-term sustainability.
- Building local capacity by providing information on Iowa's Promise to local individuals, groups, and organizations.

In exchange for their year of service, AmeriCorps members develop skills that build a strong, leadership-packed résumé, earn an annual living allowance and receive a post-service educational award to finance higher education or pay towards qualified student loans. Additionally, AmeriCorps members may apply for education loan forbearance during their term of service.

Program Partners

The following organizations play an important role in the life of the program as funders, visionaries, and support providers.

- **The Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service (ICVS)** promotes volunteerism and community service throughout the state of Iowa and provides technical assistance and training to the IASOP program coordinator.
- **The Corporation for National and Community Service** contributes to each state commission an amount of money for operating AmeriCorps programs in that state. Then, with oversight of the Corporation, each state commission administers their own AmeriCorps programs. ICVS administers the AmeriCorps State programs operating in Iowa.
- **The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD)** has adopted the Iowa's Promise framework to communicate a common and powerful message to Iowans about the importance and value of providing children and youth with the services, opportunities, and supports young people need to succeed.
- **Iowa's Promise** mobilizes people from throughout Iowa to contribute to the positive development of all Iowa's youth by fulfilling the Five Promises.

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