

Youth Program Leader Overview and FAQ

Montana Conservation Corps Youth Program is committed to providing meaningful learning experiences for AmeriCorps members and youth participants ages 14–18. We offer safe, hands-on, work-based learning opportunities that foster personal growth, build professional skills, and prepare participants for success now and in the future.

To best support youth participants and crew leaders, the Youth Program is staffed by dedicated seasonal and year-round employees. In addition, an AmeriCorps Field Support Technician will be assisting with leader training, providing field visitation and logistical support, act as a peer mentor, and help ensure projects and regional operations run smoothly.

The Youth Program is one part of MCC’s broader programmatic structure. To learn more about MCC’s mission and the full range of programs we offer, please visit the About Us page on our website.



Our youth programs operate out of our Northern Branch office in Kalispell, Montana, and our Southern Branch office in Bozeman, Montana. These locations serve as our “base camps.” Crews typically travel one to three hours from these offices during their multi-day hitches (the periods when crews are camping together) or day projects.

YOUTH CREW TYPES

The Youth Program offers two main crew types. Each of the following crews will be led by two co-leaders. These leaders will be the main sources of supervision while the crews are out in the field. During the day, leaders guide crews through conservation service projects, facilitate team-building, and lead lessons from our curriculum. For overnight programs, leaders will also supervise youth during camp chores, meals, and morning/evening routines.

Detailed program schedules will be provided once leaders are assigned to a specific crew.

- **National Park Service Expedition:** Montana youth ages 14–18 can sign up to join a volunteer conservation crew based out of Glacier or Yellowstone National Park. Each leader pair meets their crew members near their regional office, departs together for a multi-day overnight hitch, and returns to that same meeting location for a group celebration. Throughout the season, leaders guide four separate service expedition crews. Between hitches, leaders enjoy a multi-day break before heading back into the field with a new group of crew members.
- **Youth Corps:** In collaboration with land management agencies, two MCC leaders guide a crew of 4–6 youth AmeriCorps members (ages 17–18) from surrounding communities on four conservation-focused hitches. Most projects take place in a new location each hitch, providing opportunities to work with different project partners and explore new areas. Youth participants commit to the entire summer season, allowing the group to build strong relationships, deepen their learning, explore career pathways, gain employability skills, and grow as leaders.

This year, we are offering two Youth AmeriCorps crew formats:

- **Flathead Youth Corps (Day-Based Program):** The Flathead Youth Corps is a day-based program located in the Kalispell region. Leaders work with the same group of youth members, ages 17–18, for the duration of the summer on a four-day, 10-hour-per-day schedule. At the end of each workday, leaders and members return home. Following each work week, leaders and members enjoy a three-day weekend.
- **Youth Corps (Overnight Program):** Overnight Youth Corps programs are based out of the regional offices in Kalispell and Bozeman. Leaders work with the same group of youth members, ages 17–18, throughout the summer on four multi-day hitches. For each hitch, leaders pick up youth members at a designated location, complete grocery shopping, travel to the project site, and spend approximately 10 days in the field. Leaders then de-rig with members, return them to the designated drop-off location, and travel back to the regional office for a debrief. After each hitch, leaders and members enjoy a multi-day break before beginning their next hitch.

Each crew's daily work is guided by the needs of our project partners. Typical conservation projects may include: trail construction and maintenance, fencing, campsite and cabin maintenance, sign installation and removal, invasive species removal, biological surveys, and other land management or restoration work.

Note: Youth participants do not use power tools, and leaders will not be operating chainsaws or crosscut saws.

YOUTH CREW LEADER TRAINING

All Youth Crew Leaders will begin their season going through our Leaderships Development Program (LDP). This 5-week training is designed to provide you with the basic foundations in leadership and technical skills that will help you learn to lead your crews. Participants are often surprised by how heavily we emphasize the interpersonal skills, like self-awareness, communication, feedback, emotional intelligence and behavioral health.

While you will spend most of your time in the woods doing hard conservation service, the most difficult aspect of your role will actually be serving with and leading others, so that is where we put a lot of our focus. While we will not have time to train you on every type of project or support scenario that you will experience throughout your season, we will provide you with the foundations needed to problem solve and critically assess situations. In addition to our leadership, youth development, sexual abuse awareness training, field & technical skills, youth leaders will receive a Wilderness First Aid (WFA) and Youth Mental Health First Aid certificates.



BENEFITS

Living Stipend: The living stipend is meant to cover your basic needs during your term of service, and is different than an hourly wage. This amount is taxed, and the amount you're taxed will vary based on your home state and the withholdings selected on your W-4. Your living stipend will be deposited into your account every two weeks and will follow MCC's pay period schedule. Your first stipend will be deposited around May 22nd and the final stipend will be deposited around August 28th.

- Field Support Technician: \$1,440 biweekly before taxes are taken out
- All Youth Crew Leaders: \$1,360 biweekly before taxes are taken out.

Segal AmeriCorps Award: The amount of your education award is determined by the length of your term of service. Your education award is distributed through AmeriCorps via your AmeriCorps portal, not through MCC, and can take 6-8 weeks to be available to access after your term of service. In order to receive your education award, you must complete your service hours and serve through the final day of your service contract.

- Field Support Technician: \$3,697.50 upon completion of the program
- NPS Expedition Leaders and overnight Youth Corps Leaders: \$2,817.14 upon completion of the program
- Flathead Youth Corps Leaders: \$1,956.35 upon completion of the program

Learn more here about [Loan forbearance](#) for QUALIFIED student loans while in a term of service.



Health Insurance: Field Support Technician, NPS Expedition Leaders, and overnight Youth Corps Leaders: Health insurance is provided at no cost. Coverage begins on your first day of service, though your insurance cards may arrive later. MCC health insurance ends on the last day of the month in which you complete your service. For example, if your term ends on August 13, you will remain covered through August 31. All AmeriCorps members are also covered by Workers' Compensation while on projects and will be enrolled in the AmeriCorps Member Assistance Program. This program offers FREE 24/7 behavioral health resources, as well as financial planning, legal assistance, and life coaching.

- Flathead Youth Corps leaders are not eligible for MCC health insurance; however, all leaders are covered by Workers' Compensation while on projects and will be enrolled in the AmeriCorps Member Assistance Program. This program offers FREE 24/7 behavioral health resources, as well as financial planning, legal assistance, and life coaching.



Food: Food will be provided for all Youth Program Leaders during overnight training. Youth Program Leaders and their crews will receive per diem for meals when they are on hitch for the overnight-based programming. Some participants will qualify for food assistance through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, though this is not guaranteed. Participants will receive a letter during the onboarding phase with detailed instructions. It is important to start this process as soon as possible and can be done before you officially move to your regional branch.

Vacation Days: Youth Program AmeriCorps members will receive no time off from scheduled activities during the term of service. Extenuating circumstances can be discussed with regional staff. If time off is approved, it may be unpaid. If you have a special circumstance that you know will conflict with these guidelines or your term of service please speak with the Youth Program Manager ASAP.

First Aid Requirements: MCC has scheduled a Wilderness First Aid and CPR course to occur during your training period. This course is free of charge. Hotel rooms and meal per diem will be provided for the duration of the training.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

Driving an MCC Vehicle: All Youth Crew Leaders are expected to drive MCC vehicles to transport crews and gear to and from project sites. In order to drive an MCC vehicle, you:

- Must be 21 years of age
- May not have more than 2 moving violations or accidents within the past three years (including cell phone violations)
- May not have any major violations within the past five years, or have any history of a DWI/DUI/OWI/OUI
- Must go through MCC's driver training and road test

Driver training is taken seriously, and your ability to drive an MCC vehicle can be revoked at any time.

Housing: MCC will provide lodging accommodations during overnight training sessions and while crews are camping during the field season. Leaders are responsible for securing their own lodging during non-overnight training sessions, day projects, and on weekends. For more information about region-specific housing resources, [please visit the Housing at MCC Overview page on our website](#) and/or contact the Youth Program Manager.

Uniforms and Gear: All MCC AmeriCorps members are required to wear the MCC uniform while completing service hours. MCC provides uniform shirts, and you will need to provide work boots and work pants. There is a [gear list on our website](#), but it is recommended that you speak with staff once you are hired to determine what you need to have for your unique crew type. Rental gear is available for Crew Leaders during LDP, and ProDeals for discounted gear will also be available once you have begun your term of service with MCC.

Work Pant Color Chart:



ADDITIONAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

MCC is a Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace, and possession or use of any illegal substances while on hitch is against policy. According to the Medical Marijuana Act, “Employers are not required to accommodate the medical use of marijuana in the workplace,” and thus it is against policy to use or possess while on hitch or while on the clock with MCC.

Additional Resources:

- [Youth Program Overview](#)
- [Youth Program: In the Field](#)
- [Youth Crew Leader Gear List](#)
- [What is AmeriCorps?](#)
- [What are the benefits of service?](#)
- [Support We Provide](#)
- [Youth Recruitment Video](#)
- [Youth Program Blog](#)
- [MCC Community](#)

*Please note, Adult and Youth Programs are represented in MCC videos. You will not be using chainsaws or crosscut saws in the Youth Program.

