

AmeriCorps JD Application Guide 2017-2018

Equal Justice Works

1730 M Street, NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
202.466.3686
www.equaljusticeworks.org



Welcome!

We are thrilled that you are interested in applying to serve as an AmeriCorps JD member! It is our aim to make the application process and ensuing term of service as simple and rewarding as possible. Use this guide as a reference to create and submit an application for an open position. Please don't hesitate to contact AmeriCorpsJD@EqualJusticeWorks.org if any questions or concerns arise along the way – we are more than happy to answer them.

Table of Contents

Eligibility Criteria	2
Qualifying Host Organization	2
Qualifying Projects	3
Application Selection Criteria	4
Application Requirements and Process	4
Criminal History Checks	5
Questions?	6

Overview of Relevant Organizations, Programs, and Resources

Equal Justice Works

The mission of Equal Justice Works is to create a just society by mobilizing the next generation of lawyers committed to equal justice. We provide leadership to ensure a sustainable pipeline of talented and trained lawyers are involved in public service. Equal Justice Works maintains a continuum of programs that begin with incoming law school students and extend into professional careers. We administer the nation's leading public interest law Fellowship program and offer more postgraduate, full-time legal positions in public service than any other organization.

Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

CNCS is the agency that oversees AmeriCorps and grants funds to Equal Justice Works, along with hundreds of other organizations. The Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD program is a National Direct Program. CNCS offers competitive AmeriCorps National Direct grants to nonprofits operating in more than one state. The National Direct Program also grants AmeriCorps funds to state and local programs, serving as a compliance agent and manager.

Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD Program

Supported by CNCS, the Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps program was created in 1993 to address gaps in the legal aid community through direct representation and community outreach and collaboration. AmeriCorps JD Members provide legal services to thousands of people across the country. Members have worked in a variety of issue areas including veterans' assistance, foreclosure prevention, and disaster relief.

The Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps JD Program engages law students around the country to deliver critically needed legal assistance in low-income and underserved communities. AmeriCorps JD Members can earn a \$1,230 AmeriCorps Segal Education Award upon completion of 300 hours of service, which can be used to pay current educational expenses such as tuition or qualified student loans.

The Student Application Manager (SAM)

[SAM](#) is a web-based system hosted by Equal Justice Works that manages all member paperwork related to application, enrollment, Member Service Agreement, time logs, and exiting procedures. The system is secure, efficient, and nearly paperless. Equal Justice Works uses SAM to manage member files completely electronically. Unless specifically requested by staff, members should submit required documents via SAM.

Eligibility Criteria

AmeriCorps JD is comprised of three federally funded AmeriCorps programs that are administered by Equal Justice Works: Veterans Legal Corps, Elder Justice AmeriCorps, and the New York State Family Security Project. As such, Equal Justice Works requires that members meet certain eligibility requirements in order to serve.

U.S. Citizen or Lawful Permanent Resident

In order to be eligible for any AmeriCorps program, you must be a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or Lawful Permanent Resident of the United States. During the application process, all applicants will be required to provide proof of their status by submitting acceptable documentation of eligibility, such as a copy of a signed, unexpired U.S. passport, birth certificate, certificate of naturalization, or Lawful Permanent Resident card.

Law School

Applicants who are current students at an [Equal Justice Works member school](#) will be prioritized for acceptance into the AmeriCorps JD program.

Restrictions on Outside Funding

Members may receive funding in the form of a grant, stipend, or living allowance for their term of service, but this funding may not be earned as an hourly wage unless through Federal Work Study according to AmeriCorps regulations. AmeriCorps restricts the amount of funding members can receive for their service to \$4,422. As such, members will be asked to disclose the amount and method of funding they are receiving during the application, if applicable. Please note that there is no restriction on work outside of your term of service (i.e. part-time job) or outside funds you receive for activities outside of your service (i.e. general scholarship for law school).

Qualifying Host Organization

In order to be eligible for AmeriCorps JD, a student must have secured a placement with a qualifying host organization prior to submitting an application. AmeriCorps JD Members must serve in the United States at a qualifying organization. A list of sites actively recruiting AmeriCorps JD members, while not exhaustive, can be found at <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/law-school/amicorpsjd/2016-orgs>.

Qualifying host organizations include:

- Organizations that are already hosting Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellows and Equal Justice Works Fellows
- Nonprofit organizations serving veterans, military families, homeowners facing foreclosure, victims of disaster, or organizations engaged in medical-legal partnerships
- Nonprofit legal service organizations receiving funding from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC)

The following are not qualifying AmeriCorps JD host organizations:

- Internationally-focused or internationally-based organizations

- Organizations primarily engaged in lobbying or impact litigation
- For-profit entities, including private law firms of any sort

For further information on where AmeriCorps members can serve and the benefits to service, please visit AmeriCorps.gov.

Qualifying Projects

A qualifying project must propose to provide legal services aligned with one of the Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps programs listed below. Your project is not eligible if the project is focused on pure policy work or pure environmental work. A project is eligible if it includes support of direct client services to improve the community. All accepted members must complete at least 300 hours of service in order to complete an AmeriCorps service term.

New York State Family Security Project

AmeriCorps JD law students working on the New York State Family Security Project will foster family stability and community education through the provision of high-quality legal services in the state of New York. Law student members serving at organizations that host Equal Justice Works New York State Family Security Project Legal Fellows will focus specifically on assisting the Fellows with representing clients in immigration court and before U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS); providing screenings and intake; preparing applications; providing brief legal advice and legal aid; educating the community on the impact of evolving immigration law and policy; and engaging pro bono attorneys to provide legal assistance to immigrants and their families.

Law student members serving at organizations that are not hosting Legal Fellows will serve immigrants in the state of New York through direct immigration legal services or by providing general civil legal services to members of immigrant communities throughout the state of New York related to issues such as family law, housing, public benefits, and other areas of legal need.

Veterans Legal Corps

Veterans Legal Corps JD students work towards improving the lives of low-income and homeless veterans by providing legal assistance that ultimately leads to higher incomes, better health, safer and more secure housing, and family stability. JD members will support licensed attorneys in securing benefits for veterans and their families, and eliminate legal barriers to their housing and employment, among other services.

Elder Justice AmeriCorps

Elder Justice AmeriCorps JD students will improve the lives of victims of elder abuse by providing legal assistance to older adult victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Law students will focus specifically on assisting attorneys with responding to instances of elder abuse through legal research, drafting briefs, outreach and intake screenings.

As a member, you may not engage in any activities prohibited by AmeriCorps during service hours, including but not limited to:

- Attempting to influence legislation;
- Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytization;
- Providing a direct benefit to-
 - A business organized for profit;
 - A labor union;
 - A partisan political organization;
 - A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and
 - An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities;
- Conducting a voter registration drive or using Corporation funds to conduct a voter registration drive; and
- Providing abortion services or referrals for receipt of such services.

As a member, you are welcome to do any of these activities on your own time as long as you are not counting AmeriCorps service hours or wearing AmeriCorps identifying logos. All AmeriCorps JD Members must sign a document certifying that they will not partake in any prohibited activities throughout the course of their project.

Application Selection Criteria

Equal Justice Works evaluates AmeriCorps JD applications and selects members using a number of criteria, such as:

- the quality of the application
- the eligibility of the applicant and applicant's host site
- geographic diversity
- law school diversity (preference given to applicants who attend an [Equal Justice Works member law school](#))
- preference for projects with host organizations that are current AmeriCorps Legal Fellow host sites, Equal Justice Works Fellowship host sites, Veteran Treatment Courts, and/or are funded by the Legal Services Corporation

Application Requirements and Process

Once you have secured a position with a host organization, you can initiate an application. It should take approximately thirty minutes to complete the candidate portion of the application. The host site will need to review and submit the Project Description section in order to complete the application. A completed application consists of the following:

- Member Profile
- Demographic “AmeriCorps Information”
- Project and Host Site information
- Signed Member Service Agreement (By Host Site and Applicant)
- Signed criminal background check release form
- Proof of U.S. Citizenship or Resident status
- Resume
- Applicant snapshot (optional)

Application Process:

1. Create an account in the Student Application Manager (SAM). A message will immediately be sent to your email account with login information and application instructions. Be sure to check the email account you used to register in [SAM](#).
2. If you do not receive a message from AmeriCorpsJD@EqualJusticeWorks.org, check your spam filters. Please also add AmeriCorpsJD@EqualJusticeWorks.org to your safe sender list.
3. Return to SAM to complete the project and host site information and to upload the proper documentation.
4. Lock-in your application. The individual designated as your host signing authority must review and edit your project description, if needed. Your host signing authority must submit the completed application.
5. If Equal Justice Works selects your application, the person designated as the Host Signing Authority at your host site will receive the Member Service Agreement to review and sign.
6. Once your host site has signed the Member Service Agreement, accept the offer by reviewing and signing the Member Service Agreement. At that point, **the mandatory criminal history check process must be initiated before you can begin AmeriCorps service.**

Only complete applications, including all required documentation, will be considered. Equal Justice Works will use the information in your application to evaluate you for AmeriCorps JD Membership and, if selected, register you with AmeriCorps. All information will be kept confidential and secure. If you don't receive an acceptance or rejection email within seven days of locking-in your application, please inquire about the status of your application by sending an email to AmeriCorpsJD@equaljusticeworks.org.

Criminal History Checks

As an AmeriCorps-funded national service program, all AmeriCorps JD applicants must consent in writing to undergo a National Service Criminal History Check. This check includes state criminal registry checks in the state of service and state of residence at time of application, a National Sex Offender Public Registry search, and a fingerprint-based search

of the national FBI database. Accepted applicants must follow all steps necessary to undergo the required criminal background checks.

Equal Justice Works will review the results of each National Service Criminal History Check after applicants have applied to AmeriCorps JD, but prior to enrolling those who are selected as AmeriCorps JD Members. Selection for AmeriCorps JD is contingent upon Equal Justice Works' review of the background check results. Having a criminal conviction is not an automatic bar to service. Each application is reviewed on an individual basis. The AmeriCorps JD application provides further details about the criminal background check process.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the application process for AmeriCorps, please contact us at americorpsjd@equaljusticeworks.org.

Equal Justice Works
AmeriCorps JD
1730 M St. NW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 466-3686
americorpsjd@equaljusticeworks.org
<http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/americorpsjd>

AmeriCorps JD is an [AmeriCorps](#) program administered by [Equal Justice Works](#)