

AmeriCorps Disallowed Over \$19,000 in Education Awards After Grantee Used Members to Displace Staff

Closed 02/16/2024

The AmeriCorps Office of Inspector General (AmeriCorps OIG) investigated an allegation that the Perry County School District (PCSD) in New Augusta, Mississippi enrolled PCSD employees in its Grow Your Own Teacher AmeriCorps program as full-time AmeriCorps members (members) and had them perform the same duties as members that they performed as PCSD employees. The investigation confirmed that at least four paraprofessionals employed by PCSD partially displaced staff in violation of 45 C.F.R. § 2540.100(f)(1). In addition to staff displacement, members' inked signatures appeared to be forged on initial member service agreements (MSAs) and were later replaced by MSAs with their names electronically typed on the document. Further, members were not properly exited. AmeriCorps OIG issued a Report of Investigation (ROI) to AmeriCorps State and National and recommended it take several specific actions, including disallowing education awards for PCSD members who did not meet program requirements due to displacement, providing remedial training to PCSD on the rules and regulations governing ASN service, requiring that PCSD put in place appropriate controls to prevent the forging of members' signatures on timesheets, and coordinating with Volunteer Mississippi to properly close PCSD's grant.

Agency/Administrative Actions

AmeriCorps' response stated that it directed Volunteer Mississippi to act on AmeriCorps OIG's recommendations. Volunteer Mississippi found that, due to the displacement and MSA forgery, no PCSD member legally satisfied program requirements. As a result, AmeriCorps suspended five education awards valued at over \$8,000 in total and issued a debt for an additional \$11,587.45 of education awards that had already been paid out. Volunteer Mississippi did not provide additional training to PCSD as PCSD had no further AmeriCorps funding. Volunteer Mississippi stated that it would continue to coordinate with AmeriCorps to properly close out PCSD's grant.

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