

Prescription 5: Civic Engagement

Facilitator Overview

Competency:	<i>Civic Engagement</i>
Content:	Supports the site coordinator in the use of CNCS materials available for download from the Web: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Active Citizens 101</i>
Lessons:	See curriculum
Estimated Total Time:	See curriculum
Methods / Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small-group activity• Brainstorming• Team discussion• Brief lecture• Self-assessment
Assessment Method:	See curriculum

Facilitator Preparation



What You Will Need for All Lessons in this Module:

- easel
- flip pad
- large colored markers

Introduction to the Competency – 5 minutes

The Competency



Present the definition of this competency:

- Civic engagement is a set of skills that enables you to participate fully in “the body politic” from the neighborhood all the way to the nation’s capital. You will come to understand from many new angles how to engage the community in order to **Get Things Done!**

Note to the Coordinator

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) offers a variety of excellent materials on citizenship and civic engagement through several Web sites. Therefore, we will steer you to those resources and make a few points about how they might be used.

We should clarify at the beginning why HealthCorps is using the term *civic engagement* while CNCS is using the term *citizenship*. The answer lies close to the heart of HealthCorps' goals and those of the community health care movement: Our members and their host sites serve the residents of their communities no matter what their legal status in this country, be they citizens, “resident aliens” with approval to work in the United States, or undocumented residents — sometimes called illegal immigrants. Our site coordinators feel strongly that the term *citizenship* implies that one is talking about either (a) training non-citizens to become citizens or (b) treating non-citizens in a derogatory way.

As the Prescription for Success: Community HealthCorps Member Training does not do or intend to do either of those things, it was agreed among the field staff that *civic engagement* better captures what this curriculum should be about. Further, they clarified the main principles they look for in training about *civic engagement*:

- Fostering within members positive attitudes regarding the value of life-long service for the common good;
- Enhancing the ability of members to discuss and explore their community and the people, processes, and institutions that are most effective in improving community conditions; and
- Developing the ability of members to plan effective service projects that respond to real community needs.

CNCS Expectations and Resources

During the past few program years, the Corporation expanded both its emphasis on the subject of citizenship and its support for program directors and coordinators in training the subject. Their guidance gives AmeriCorps programs the freedom to decide what aspects of the topic they train, what materials they use, and who conducts the training. They have stated clearly that they are interested in having programs address the aspects of the subject that relate best to the service they do and to the nature of their member population.

Attached to the Prescription for Success: Community HealthCorps Member Training is the CNCS-approved curriculum, *Active Citizens 101*. You will find related Power Point presentations located on the HealthCorps website.

Following are the online resources available from CNCS and where to find them:

- *A Guide to Effective Citizenship through AmeriCorps* is “a handbook divided into ten 2-hour modules based on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and action essential to active citizenship.”
- A Facilitator’s Guide for *By the People* “introduces citizenship skills and concepts that AmeriCorps members can apply to their own projects in the field.” This curriculum employs the principle that one best learns about citizenship through the major historical documents of our democracy.
- *Citizenship Toolkit* provides Corporation guidance on training in this subject area along with scenarios for effective use of the two curricula named above; it also includes a resource directory.

All three of these documents are available for downloading at

<http://nationalserviceresources.org/search/etr/citizenship>. The Resource Center is sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service and administered by ETR Associates.

A Few Suggestions from HealthCorps

HealthCorps coordinators and staff offer the following thoughts about the materials described:

Different AmeriCorps staff prefers one or the other of the two curricula named above, for varying reasons. For example, some believe that *By the People* is “too much history” and “too much like public school.” At the same time, several HealthCorps coordinators strongly recommend using particular sections of it (i.e., sections three through eight). There is no right or wrong involved in choosing one over the other, or choosing something else entirely.

Because it was developed after the two curricula and seeks to present the best uses of each, it seems sensible to start with the *Citizenship Toolkit*. Its scenarios are detailed and appear very realistic. One focuses on a state program (whose service is tutoring in the public schools), while the other is on a national direct program with multiple sites (whose service is a groundwater project). They each include a thumbnail sketch of the program, the overall member development strategy and program goals, as well as an example training activity, its output, intermediate outcome, and end outcome.

In order to provide you with a lesson within our own curriculum, which you can train directly without having to do any research, we have adapted Module One from *A Guide to Effective Citizenship through AmeriCorps*, formatting it to match the rest of our lessons. Delivering this lesson to your team will fulfill the minimum guideline from NACHC, that you either train Lesson A of each module or have a speaker on the topic.

We look forward to learning some tried-and-true best practices for training civic engagement as we gain experience with the subject.