



# Student Conservation Association

## Crew Member and Parent/Guardian Handbook and Guide

Congratulations! You are about to embark on a life changing experience. This handbook is full of important information to help you get ready to make the most of it. Please read it carefully with your parent or guardian.

### SCA's Mission

*SCA's mission is to build the next generation of conservation leaders and inspire lifelong stewardship of our environment and communities by engaging young people in hands-on service to the land.*



#### Service

Doing valuable work that benefits other people, the natural environment, our community or the world, is the glue that binds us together as a society.



#### Diversity

Diversity provides richness and strength. Working together in service to nature unites us and builds a common future.



#### Environmental Stewardship

Our natural world must be protected. An ethic of conservation care and environmental service is fundamental to all we do.



#### Learning

SCA expands our view of the world through service learning experiences that change the way we live and behave.



#### Community

We seek to build community at all levels. Collaborating for the common good while fostering personal responsibility and compassion for others builds community and citizenship.

## SCA'S BEGINNINGS



In 1955 a student at Vassar College read an article in Harper's Magazine that described the deplorable condition of America's national parks: under-staffed, under-resourced, and increasingly being "loved to death" by post-World War II visitors.

In response, this budding conservationist, [Elizabeth \(Cushman\) Titus Putnam](#), developed an idea for a modern-day Civilian Conservation Corps that would mobilize young people to perform natural resource conservation work on public lands.



Launching an American conservation movement powered exclusively by young people would be ambitious today, but considering that Liz conceived of the idea in 1953, a woman in her early twenties in a world dominated by older men, makes it all the more remarkable.



Two years later, a concept that started as a senior thesis became a reality when the young Liz, aided by colleague and fellow Vassar alumna Martha Hayne Talbot, secured the interest and support of officials in the National Park Service and [the first SCA volunteers](#) arrived at Grand Teton and Olympic National Parks.

Liz turned her vision into action for the greater good. At SCA we believe in the potential of all young people to find that spark that ignites their passion.

*“I was brought up to believe that land is a trust and that we are all responsible for taking care of this earth. I was also taught that life itself is a privilege and that we must always give something back. As my father said, ‘If something needs to be done, pitch in and help out.’  
I believe we all can make a positive difference with our lives.”*

—Liz Putnam, Founder, SCA

## GET READY FOR YOUR CREW



Take time between now and your crew start date to get yourself ready for success. Serving on a crew is a major challenge. For some the challenge will be physical, for others, emotional or even social. Now is the time to start preparing your body and mind to take on this task.

**UNPLUG:** During your crew, you’ll be outdoors nearly all of the time, and will have limited to no access to electronic devices or social media. You can take some simple steps now to start getting mentally prepared to live without TV, internet, running water, and other things that you might be used to. For example: spend time outside; leave your phone at home for a day; talk to a friend face to face instead of sending a text...you get the idea.

**TURN ON YOUR BRAIN:** Your crew isn’t just about getting things done (though you’ll do a lot of that!). It’s also about learning more about conservation, ecology, and the unique ecosystem where you’ll be working. Be ready to engage in hands on, interactive, and reflective environmental education activities with your crew leaders and local agency staff.

**MOVE YOUR BODY:** Get your body ready for hard work by exercising at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes at a time. Have fun with it: run, dance, play basketball, Frisbee, soccer, etc. The goal is to get your muscles moving and your heart beating faster. If you haven’t done any physical activity for a while, be sure to start slowly and work your way up to more strenuous activities.

**OPEN YOUR MIND:** You are about to become part of a close-knit, hard-working, community-living team. You’ll be living and working with your teammates around the clock: sharing tents, doing chores, eating meals, and conserving the planet. It can be pretty great! But it also means that you need to be prepared to do the hard work of building community. Be ready to learn from people who are different from you, to ask for help when you need it and offer help when you can, and to acknowledge when you’re in the wrong and take steps to make things right.

**COMMIT TO BE SUBSTANCE FREE:** By joining a crew, you are committing to abstain from drugs, alcohol and sexual activity for the duration of the program. These substances and activities interfere with the health and safety of crew members, and with the dynamic of the team as a whole. Using tobacco, alcohol or illicit drugs, or engaging in exclusive relationships and/or sexual activity, are grounds for dismissal from the program.

**BREAK IN YOUR BOOTS:** All crew members are required to wear sturdy boots to protect their feet and ankles. New boots tend to be stiff and can cause painful blisters. Break in your boots by wearing them for a couple of hours a day a few days a week before your crew to soften the material and

get your feet used to them. To really get comfortable in them, walk or run the local bleachers with them on, wear them to school for a day, or put your heaviest text books in your backpack and go for a hike.

**CONSIDER COPING:** All crew members will experience challenge and stress at various points during their SCA service. Take time to reflect on how you currently handle stressful situations and consider what strategies you use to cope. Some people reach out for support, others write in a journal, others practice mindfulness or take time out to be alone. What are ways that you can plan to cope with some of the challenges you will face during your time in the field?

## COMPLETE YOUR ENROLLMENT FORMS



**2 weeks:** The amount of time you have to complete your forms once you receive them

**1-3 hours:** Estimated time needed to complete your enrollment forms

**Email:** The best way to get messages from SCA

**The Field Readiness Tab in your MySCA portal:** Best place to find your enrollment status

**Field Approved:** Your enrollment status when all of your paperwork is complete

**If you fail to complete your enrollment paperwork, you may forfeit your crew position.** If you have extenuating circumstances that may prevent you from completing your forms in time, please let us know right away.

[Crews@thesca.org](mailto:Crews@thesca.org)

1-888-722-9675 x1496

<http://www.thesca.org/serve/youth-programs/national-crews/welcome>

### Conditions of Acceptance Form

*Required for all crew members*

Emailed to member/parent/guardian and accessible in MySCA portal

### Medical Form

*Required for all crew members*

- Initial form located in MySCA portal
- Follow up forms sent via email
- Final signature form sent via email and accessible in MySCA portal

### Background Check Form

*Required for crew members who will be age 18 or older when their crew begins.*

Emailed to members from [HRDocs@thesca.org](mailto:HRDocs@thesca.org)

Take note: This email frequently ends up in people's spam folder.

## MAKE YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS



### TRAVEL BASICS:

- **Wait for SCA medical clearance** before booking travel
- **Arrive BEFORE 3pm** on your start date
- **Depart AFTER 1pm** on your end date
- **Enter your travel plans in your MySCA portal**

If you are planning to travel by plane and are unable to find flights within the time frames above, contact SCA at 1-888-722-9675 x1496.

**PLAN YOUR TRIP:** When you receive your crew assignment email, it will include your arrival location. This is where your crew leaders will meet you on the first day of your crew and where you'll depart from on the last day. Usually this is an airport location.

**Crew members and their parents/guardians are responsible for arranging travel to and from the arrival location on the start and end dates of the crew.**

We recommend that you wait until you receive medical clearance from SCA before booking travel. In some cases, selected candidates cannot be medically cleared for participation and there is no recourse through SCA for obtaining refunds on travel expenses.

**Plan to arrive BEFORE 3PM on the start date of your position.** Once all members have arrived, your crew will travel to your crew location, set up camp, make dinner and settle in for the evening. That can take a long time, so it's important that crew members plan to arrive before the 3pm cutoff.

**Plan to leave your crew AFTER 1PM on the last date of your position.** Your departure location will be the same as your arrival location (usually an airport). On the last day of the position, your crew will need to pack up camp, eat breakfast and travel to the airport. That all takes some time too,

so it's important to plan to leave after the 1pm cutoff.

**ENTER YOUR PLANS:** Your Crew Leaders need to know your travel plans so that they can meet you when you arrive and make sure that you are on time for your departure. Whether you're travelling by car, plane, bus or even boat, once you have your travel plans finalized, enter them into your MySCA portal.

### STEPS TO ENTER YOUR PLANS IN MYSCA:

1. [Login to your MySCA portal](#)
2. Click on the Prepare for Service tab
3. Click on your position number
4. Click the "New" button in the Logistics section
5. Select "Travel" as the type
6. Fill in all required fields
7. Click "Add"
8. Repeat the process for your return travel
9. That's it. You're done!

**CONFIRM YOUR ARRIVAL:** All members will have the opportunity to contact their parent(s)/guardian(s) to confirm their safe arrival when they meet up with their Leaders at the beginning of the crew. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should expect to receive a call shortly after their child's scheduled arrival time.

**LEAVING EARLY:** If a crew member is dismissed or chooses to leave the crew program early, the member and their family are responsible for arranging and paying for any changes to their travel.

**VISITING THE SITE:** Interested in seeing where your child will be living and working? Want to see their accomplishments at the end of the crew? Parents/guardians are welcome to arrive early with the member to spend time in the region before the crew start date, or to stay locally after they pick up

their child on the end date of the crew. To arrange to drop off or pick up your child directly at the crew location (as opposed to the designated arrival location), please contact your child's crew leaders directly.

**TRAVEL ETIQUETTE:** Members are expected to be courteous and responsible while travelling to and from their crew position.

## PREPARE YOUR GEAR



The crew gear list includes information about all of the gear and clothing you'll need to stay warm, dry, and comfortable during your crew experience. Please review the list carefully and make sure to bring all of the required items.

SCA will provide all of the food, work tools, and group camping gear (tents, cooking equipment, water filters, etc.) for each crew. Crew members will also receive an SCA cotton T-shirt to keep!

**All crew members are required to wear sturdy boots to protect their feet and ankles. New boots tend to be stiff and can cause painful blisters. Wear them for a couple of hours a day a few days a week before your crew to soften the material and get your feet used to them.**

**Crew Gear Page:**

<http://www.thesca.org/crew-gear>

## THE CREW EXPERIENCE



The crew experience can be life changing. Crew members work hard to complete important service work on public lands, learn about career paths, explore new eco-systems, build important life skills, and meet other members with diverse life experiences and a shared interest in conservation.

### LEARN MORE AND CONNECT

Visit the webpages here to learn more about the incredible impact that these experiences can have on participants, explore the day to day experience of life on a crew, or connect with crew alum on Twitter (@the\_sca) or Instagram (@the\_sca).

necessary, parents/guardians will not be notified of these excursions in advance.

**SCA's Impact on Youth:**

<http://www.thesca.org/about/impact-on-youth#graphic>

**The Crew Experience:**

<http://www.thesca.org/serve/crew-experience>

### OFF SITE TRIPS

During the course of the SCA program, there will be opportunities for the crew to travel away from their home park or forest for recreational, educational, or logistical purposes. These excursions may include day hikes, museum visits, or even trips to the grocery store as a group. In all instances, SCA policy and procedure will be followed by Leaders and members. Except in the case of a select few activities, where separate liability forms are





## MEMBER EXPECTATIONS



Committing to an SCA crew experience involves a responsibility as well as an opportunity. As a crew member, you will have the opportunity to broaden your life experience, build new life and job skills, and contribute to an important conservation service project. You will also have the responsibility to behave in ways that support the safety and well-being of yourself and your crew.

To be sure that you will be ready to fulfill this responsibility, please review the information in this section. By committing to your SCA position, you are agreeing to live and work by these expectations.

### MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

All members are expected to:

- Build a positive community by being inclusive and respectful of other members, leaders, other SCA staff, and SCA partners
- Participate actively, stay on task, and work within the schedule of the group
- Wear required personal protective equipment
- Abstain from any exclusive relationship, romantic or fraternal
- Follow all SCA policies and procedures as laid out by your leader(s)
- Stay substance free
- Be open to giving and receiving feedback, working to resolve group conflict, setting goals, and reflecting on progress
- Balance personal needs with the needs of the group
- Practice self-care by eating well, drinking enough water, using sunscreen, communicating needs and issues, etc.

### SCA PERFORMANCE PLAN

In the event that a member breaks the Crew Commitment (agreed upon group rules) or SCA policy with words or actions, the Crew Leaders may engage in the following steps.

#### 1. Verbal Warning

This is the initial warning given to a member. The member will be informed that they are being given a verbal warning. Leaders will engage the member in discussion about why the behavior was inappropriate. Parents are not notified.

#### 2. Performance Plan

This is a written plan between the Leader/staff and the member to modify behavior that has continued after the verbal warning. It is written in collaboration with the member and signed by all parties. The goal of a Performance Plan will be to provide the member with clear instructions on how they can improve their behavior. If the member is a minor, Leaders will call parents/guardians to inform them of the Performance Plan.

#### 3. Member Dismissal

If the Performance Plan has been breached by the member, dismissal from the program may be warranted, as decided by SCA in its sole discretion. Parents/guardians will be contacted to be informed of the dismissal and to make travel arrangements.

In addition, there are instances where certain behaviors and actions by a member will lead to immediate dismissal from the program.

## MEMBER DISMISSAL

Crew Members may be dismissed for any of the reasons listed below. This is NOT an all-inclusive list.

- Compromising the physical or emotional safety of another individual or group
- Bullying behaviors, both in person and online
- Endangering self or others through disregard of established policies and procedures
- Engaging in illegal acts including the possession and/or use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco

- Engaging in sexual activity
- Breaching behavioral contracts
- Participating in exclusive relationships
- Having an undisclosed medical/mental health condition and/or medications

When a crew member is dismissed, the member and their family are responsible for arranging and paying for any changes to their travel. Members participating in crew positions that receive a living allowance will forfeit their allowance if dismissed from the crew.

## PROGRAM SAFETY



Wilderness, wildlife, and the work we do come with inherent risks. While we strive to mitigate these risks, we cannot eliminate them or guarantee the safety of SCA participants.

**SETTING THE STAGE:** SCA begins preparing for member safety long before crew members arrive at their program sites. Leaders take part in trainings to prepare for their positions, including driver and vehicle safety, safe tool usage, and proper body mechanics. All crew leaders are trained in first aid, with most holding advanced certifications in Wilderness First Aid, Wilderness First Responder, or Wilderness EMT. Before the crew begins, leaders work with agency partners to identify any hazards associated with the work or the location. The Crew leaders use this information to develop mitigation strategies to reduce the risks associated with the identified hazards.

**IN THE FIELD:** Once in the field, the crew utilizes a variety of resources to maintain the safety of the group. Members are trained to “Take 5 for Safety”. Using this tool, members and leaders pause to assess hazards and plan for safety any time that the crew begins a new project or experiences a change in the work environment (such as a change in weather or location). Members receive training in tool use, body mechanics and the proper use of personal protective equipment.

All crews carry an Emergency Response Plan (ERP) that outlines the steps to take in case of an

emergency. The ERP includes contact information for park staff, directions to the nearest medical facility, SCA’s emergency response number and immediate action steps.

Crew leaders carry the communication devices most appropriate to the crew location. If cell service is good, they may carry a cell phone. If not, they may carry park-radios or emergency locator beacons.

SCA provides a 24-hour emergency hotline: 1-800-YO-SOGGY (1-800-967-6449) for leaders to use for support in any emergency.

## MEMBER ALERTS

In situations when weather events, national disasters or other large scale emergencies have the potential to affect a whole crew, SCA will coordinate a response to ensure that affected members (and families of minor members) receive important information in a timely manner. SCA will contact the families of potentially affected minor members by phone or email and may post notifications on our website, [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org).

## PREVENTION OF TICK-BORNE ILLNESSES

Since ticks are a common hazard in many areas where SCA crew members serve, SCA has developed the following guidelines to help prevent the spread of tick-borne illnesses.

1. In high tick areas, participants should wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, hats, and often gaiters to

prevent ticks from reaching bare skin, and to keep ticks outside of clothing where they can be seen and brushed off.

2. Participants should practice a twice-daily tick check (visual inspection) to find and remove any present ticks.
3. Participants may apply Picaridin or DEET directly to skin to repel ticks at the point where they would bite.
4. Participants may treat clothing and equipment (hats, gaiter, boots, etc.) with Permethrin to repel

and disable ticks (optional, but strongly recommended). Permethrin is an insecticide that is extremely effective in preventing ticks from travelling over skin and clothing.

5. Participants should remove ticks as soon as they are discovered and report found ticks to their leaders.
6. Participants and staff monitor for signs and symptoms of tick borne illnesses and seek medical attention as needed.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS



### CHANGES TO YOUR MEDICAL CONDITION PRIOR TO YOUR CREW

If anything about your medical condition changes between the time that you complete your medical form and the beginning of your crew, you must update your medical form before you arrive for your crew. Some examples of changes in medical condition include sustaining an injury, changes to mental health, changing a medication or dosage, being diagnosed with new allergies, having your wisdom teeth pulled, etc. **All changes in medical condition need to be reported via an updated medical form to SCA before the start date of the position.**

**Contact SCA at [SCAmedical@thesca.org](mailto:SCAmedical@thesca.org) to make updates to your medical form.**

If you arrive at your position with an undisclosed medical condition, you will no longer be medically cleared to participate. SCA must conduct a new full review of your medical form to determine your continued eligibility for participation. Depending on the nature of the undisclosed condition, it may not be possible for you to be medically cleared, and you may be dismissed from the program.

### MEDICATION MANAGEMENT ON THE CREW

All prescription and non-prescription medications that you will bring to the program need to be listed on your medical form. If you will be bringing any medications that are not currently listed on your medical form, you must notify SCA before your position begins.

**Contact SCA at [SCAmedical@thesca.org](mailto:SCAmedical@thesca.org) to notify SCA of any medications that you will be bringing that are not on your medical form.**

Crew leaders will conduct a medication check with you when you arrive at the crew meetup location. If you arrive without two sets of all prescribed medications, including Epi-pens and inhalers, the crew leaders will call your parents/guardians right away to put in a new prescription.

If you arrive at your position with a medication not listed on your medical form, you are no longer medically cleared to participate. As a result, in SCA's sole discretion, you may be suspended from participating in the program (including being required to return home) while you update the medical form and while SCA conducts a full review of your revised medical form to determine your continued eligibility for participation. Depending on the nature of the medication and the condition that



it is used to treat, it may not be possible for you to be medically cleared, and you may be dismissed from the program.

All medications that you bring on your crew should be in their original containers with your name and the prescribed dosage and intake schedule. You should bring two sets of all prescribed medications to avoid a break in treatment if any of the medication is lost or damaged.

SCA leaders will gather and keep all medications safe and secure, will know the prescribed intake schedule and will make meds available at the appropriate times. You will be required to administer/take your own medication and SCA Leaders will record observed medication intake in the Field Log.

## **FIELD LOGS**

SCA Crew Leaders use a tool known as the Field Log to track the physical and emotional wellness of their crew members. They take time each day to note things like food/water intake, energy, attitude, injuries, and illnesses. The Field Log is also where Leaders will mark that they provided daily medications to members at the appropriate times. The information recorded in the Field Log will be available to any SCA Staff responsible for safety management.

## **EPI PENS AND INHALERS**

If you have a history of allergic reactions or asthma, you are required by SCA to bring TWO epinephrine devices or inhalers on the program. SCA staff will ensure that required medications are present at all times. One Epi-Pen/inhaler will be placed in the crew First Aid Kit and the other will be carried by you at all times.

## **ASTHMA TREATMENT ON THE CREW**

If you have a prescribed emergency inhaler, you will carry it with you at all times. SCA leaders will carry your second inhaler in the crew first aid kit at all times. SCA staff will use the Field Log to keep track of the number of times you use your inhaler.

Leaders will seek professional medical attention if your condition does not improve after using a rescue inhaler. SCA staff and your parent/guardian will be notified as soon as possible if this occurs.

If you leave the field due to asthma, you will need to be cleared by your doctor and SCA staff before re-entering the field.

## **USE OF EPI-PENS ON THE CREW**

If you have a prescribed Epi-pen, you will carry the Epi-pen with you at all times. SCA leaders will carry your second Epi-pen in the crew first aid kit at all times. If you exhibit signs of a severe allergic reaction, the SCA crew leaders will observe your use of the Epi-pen as prescribed.

In the event that a member uses an Epi-pen, they will be taken to a medical facility for professional medical support. SCA staff and the member's parent/guardian will be notified as soon as possible. The member must be cleared by their doctor and SCA before re-entering the field.

## **FIRST AID KIT MANAGEMENT**

On an SCA program, crew leaders will carry or have in their possession first aid kits. The leaders will dispense first aid supplies, over the counter medications, and prescription medications as indicated by written directions on the product. Members are not permitted access to the first aid kits.

## **VISITS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES**

If a member experiences an injury or illness in the field that necessitates professional medical help, the crew leaders will bring them to the nearest available medical facility. SCA staff and the member's parent/guardian will be notified of the visit as soon as possible.

After a member has been treated at a hospital or clinic they will obtain a doctor's note and will need to be cleared by SCA before returning to crew activities. If the member cannot be cleared to return to crew activities, SCA in its sole discretion

will make the determination about whether the member should stay in the field or return home.

## MANDATORY REPORTING

All States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have statutes identifying persons who are required to report suspected child maltreatment to an

appropriate agency, such as child protective services, a law enforcement agency, or a State's toll-free child abuse reporting hotline. All employees with the SCA (including Crew Leaders) are considered mandatory reporters; therefore, any disclosure of maltreatment, abuse or neglect while actively involved with the SCA will be reported immediately with full compliance in accordance with state and federal laws.

## CREW LEADERS



SCA leaders are caring and dedicated outdoor professionals who have experience conducting youth programs and outdoor activities. They come from a wide range of backgrounds. Some are attending graduate school, while others are school teachers or year-round outdoor leaders. They are all 21 years of age or older and hold current first aid certifications, with the majority of leaders holding certifications in Wilderness First Aid, Wilderness First Responder or Wilderness EMT.

Prior to the crew start date, leaders will contact the members of their crew with information specific to their position.

This initial contact generally includes:

- A description of the area where the crew will be working

- An outline of the living and working conditions members should expect
- Complete travel information, including the specific location for meeting up with the crew
- The mailing address of the crew
- Brief crew leader biographies

SCA Crew Leaders are hired from March to mid-May, and go through crew leader training in either May or June. Once they are assigned to your crew, you will be able to find their contact information in the Prepare for Service tab in your MySCA portal.

Until then, all crew questions can be directed to [crews@thesca.org](mailto:crews@thesca.org) or the crew phone line: 1-888-722-9675 x1496

## EVALUATIONS AND SERVICE HOUR CERTIFICATES



Members of SCA crews will receive mid and end of program performance evaluations from their crew Leaders. Leaders will review and discuss these evaluations with members in the field, and electronic copies will be kept on file with SCA. Members will also have an opportunity to evaluate their leaders and their SCA experience through an email survey after they complete their crew.

Members who successfully complete their SCA service will receive a certificate of service hours for the time that they served. Certificates will be sent to members via email within 6 weeks of the end date of their crew.

## COMMUNICATING DURING THE PROGRAM



**PHONE:** All crew members will have the opportunity to check in with their family once they arrive at the crew meet-up location. Crew leaders will also alert SCA program staff when all crew members have arrived and been accounted for.

After the arrival check-in, crew members will be expected to leave their cell phones and all other electronic devices (except cameras and watches) with their crew leaders. Depending on the location and schedule of the crew, members may have an opportunity to check messages and make calls on non-service days. This is not guaranteed, so members (and parents and guardians) should be prepared to be out of voice contact for the duration of the crew.

Parents/guardians needing to relay urgent messages to their child can do so by contacting the crew leaders directly or by using SCA's 24-hour emergency contact line: 1-800-YO-SOGGY (1-800-967-6449).

**MAIL:** Most crews have access to postal service, though often not on a daily basis. Families are welcome to send letters and small care packages. If you choose to send food items, we encourage you to send enough for your child to share, and to keep in mind that some crew participants may have significant food allergies. If a crew is located in active bear habitat, the Crew Leaders may require that any care packages be food-free. Please also avoid sending electronics and valuables.

You can find the crew mailing address in the offer letter, by contacting [crews@thesca.org](mailto:crews@thesca.org) or by communicating directly with the crew leaders.

**VISITS:** Parents/guardians are welcome to visit crew members with prior authorization from the crew leaders. Crew members will have the opportunity to show visitors around, but will still be required to participate fully in crew activities. Visiting parents/guardians should be prepared to spend some time observing if they visit during the work day. Meals are a great time to engage more fully with the crew during a visit. Overnight visits are not allowed. Please contact your child's crew

leader directly if you are interested in visiting during the crew program.

### CONTACT SCA:

**Urgent 1-800-YO-SOGGY  
1-800-967-6449**

**Non- 1-888-722-9675  
Urgent x1496  
Crews@thesca.org**