



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore

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Volunteer Handbook

*Serving 13 Massachusetts Cities and Towns
on the North Shore and Cape Ann:*

***Beverly, Danvers, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich,
Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marblehead, Peabody, Rockport,
Salem, Topsfield & Wenham***

Sponsored by



Engaging Adults 55 and Older in Community Service

Administered by



AmeriCorps

Welcome to RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore!

SeniorCare's Volunteer Program, RSVP, is part of AmeriCorps Seniors, which is a network of national service programs for Americans 55 years and older.

AmeriCorps Seniors is made up of three national programs that each take a different approach to improving lives and fostering civic engagement. These three national programs are: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program). AmeriCorps Seniors provides service opportunities for Americans 55 and over in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, by connecting you with the people and organizations that need you most. AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers commit their time to address critical community needs including academic tutoring and mentoring, elderly care, disaster relief support, and more.

Volunteer service can enrich your life while at the same time enabling you to contribute positively to the lives of others. We will be with you every step of the way to ensure that your volunteer experience is rewarding and meaningful for you and the organizations and community you serve.

This volunteer handbook has been designed to provide volunteers with an overview of the procedures, policies, responsibilities, and benefits that apply to you as an RSVP volunteer. Please refer to the table of contents below to locate specific topics. If you have any questions about the handbook or your volunteer service, please let us know.

We encourage you to visit the AmeriCorps Seniors website, www.nationalservice.gov, as well as our own website, <http://thevolunteerlink.org> to find information about current volunteer needs, upcoming events, our sponsor, partner volunteer stations, photos, stories, and much more! You can also visit our Sponsor, SeniorCare's Website, www.seniorcareinc.org.

We look forward to working with you as you volunteer. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of help at any point during your volunteer service. Thank you for deciding to make volunteering through RSVP a part of your life!

Sincerely,
Ruth Lindsay, RSVP Director
& Theresa Dickson, RSVP Program Assistant
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RSVP offers maximum flexibility and choice to its volunteers as it matches the personal interests and skills of older Americans with opportunities to serve their communities.

RSVP MISSION AND OVERVIEW

RSVP's mission is to engage persons 55 and older in volunteer service, using their experience, wisdom and skills to meet their communities' critical needs, and in doing so, improve the quality of life for both volunteer and community.

RSVP (THE RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM)

RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore links volunteers with opportunities to serve in our communities. RSVP recruits volunteers, matching their interests, skills, availability and experience with rewarding placements at public and non-profit organizations on the North Shore and Cape Ann. RSVP volunteers are part of a network of more than 400 people age 55 and older who share their time and expertise with local organizations. RSVP is a part of AmeriCorps Seniors, a network of national service programs, and is locally sponsored by SeniorCare Inc.

SeniorCare Inc. is the local sponsor of RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore and is the Massachusetts AGE INFO Center that serves Beverly, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Rockport, Topsfield, and Wenham. It is also a designated Area Agency on Aging and a Massachusetts Aging Services Access Point (ASAP). SeniorCare's mission is to provide and coordinate services and care to elders and others, enabling them to live independently at home or in a setting of their choice while remaining part of their community

Our RSVP Chapter serves 4 additional towns in addition to SeniorCare's 9 cities and towns which include: Danvers, Marblehead, Peabody and Salem. RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore has been locally sponsored by SeniorCare Inc. since 2001, and functions as a volunteer placement agency for SeniorCare and many other area non-profit Volunteer Partner agencies.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

WHO CAN BE AN RSVP VOLUNTEER?

RSVP Volunteers must be 55 years of age or older, agree to serve on a regular basis without any compensation, and reside in or nearby the community served by RSVP. They must also agree to abide by all legal requirements of the RSVP program and to accept instruction and supervision as required. Eligibility to serve as a RSVP volunteer shall not be restricted on the basis of education, experience, race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap or political affiliation. Anyone who wants to feel useful and appreciated will profit from joining RSVP.

WHY JOIN RSVP?

- The pleasure of knowing you are making a difference
- Remaining an active member of your community
- Meeting new people and developing new skills
- Participating in recognition events and receiving awards
- Receiving supplemental insurance

WHAT DO RSVP VOLUNTEERS DO?

- Deliver noon-time meals to elders who are isolated and in need.
- Escort an elder to and from their medical appointments.
- Assist an elder with managing and organizing their monthly bills.
- Assist an elder with learning new technology
- Contribute at local senior centers by offering classes, supporting staff, providing transportation, visiting isolated elders and much more.
- Work with local non-profit organizations providing program support, research, serving on boards, and helping with special events.
- Help local non-profit organizations with projects like mailings, health fairs and fundraising.
- Help alleviate hunger by distributing groceries and assisting at local food pantries.

These are only some of the many ways our volunteers add richness to the life of our community. RSVP works with area nonprofits, matching volunteers with fulfilling and impactful placements.

RSVP volunteers serve, without pay, on a regular basis at a non-profit organization, or on an occasional basis as needed for a special or one-time event. Volunteers contribute an average of 4 hours per week, but a minimum number of service hours are not required. (However, to remain an active member, you must volunteer at least one hour once every 6 months, unless there are special personal circumstances to be considered.) You decide the hours and days you want to volunteer. We value whatever contribution of time you can spare, and we will tailor the assignment to fit your preferences and needs.

TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER

- Talk with RSVP staff and determine if you are ready to make a volunteer commitment.
- Complete an RSVP application and decide which positions interest you. Many organizations request a 1-year commitment, while other positions are flexible, episodic or short-term.
- RSVP staff will arrange a meeting with the site(s) of interest.
- Interview with the site(s) and complete any site-specific forms or background checks.
- Make your decision, let RSVP know, and begin volunteering!

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Completion of training as needed
- Acceptance of project guidelines, policies and regulations
- Acceptance of guidance and supervision
- Maintenance of confidentiality
- Dependability & professionalism
- Reporting your hours to RSVP unless your station is responsible for doing so
- Informing RSVP if you have an accident while volunteering
- Maintaining minimum auto liability coverage as required by state law and a valid and current driver's license if you drive to, from, or for your volunteer assignment
- Please let RSVP know by phone or email if your contact info or volunteer assignment changes.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM RSVP

Satisfaction, personal fulfillment, and personalized support from RSVP Staff. RSVP volunteers benefit from RSVP staff's skill with developing and supporting quality, meaningful volunteer assignments that have a positive impact on the community.

Professional development: RSVP volunteer assignments include opportunities for leadership and participation in related in-service trainings.

Insurance: RSVP provides a no-cost personal liability, accident, and excess automobile liability insurance to member volunteers (see more info under RSVP Policies & Procedures).

Social Networking: Volunteering through RSVP provides numerous opportunities to connect with a large network of like-minded peers.

Recognition: RSVP volunteers are honored at our annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon each fall, are recommended for local, state and national awards, and are acknowledged in the media and at community events.

Transportation Reimbursement: Reimbursement is available to assist with travel costs to and from your volunteer site including mileage and public transportation. ***Reimbursement funds are limited. Before requesting reimbursement, please reflect on personal need and consider those who depend on the reimbursement in order to volunteer.***

WHY WE NEED YOUR VOLUNTEER HOURS!

It is very important that RSVP knows how much time you spend volunteering at your station because:

- The federal government requires us to keep track of your time as well as specific measurements, such as the number of meals delivered by Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers. This information is reported throughout the year through our RSVP grant, as a means of showing your impact in the community and assessing our performance.
- It indicates that you are an active RSVP volunteer, allowing you to participate in recognition events.
- It provides proof that you were volunteering in case of an insurance claim.
- It allows us to share with other funders quantitative data which they require.
- It provides information to our legislators about types of volunteer work and hours of service. This information assists them in deciding the amount of federal monies appropriated for all RSVP projects in the U.S.
- Hard data helps RSVP tell the “true story” of today’s seniors. It helps promote seniors as actively contributing members of their communities.

TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Advisory Council. The role of this council is to keep abreast of what is being accomplished by RSVP, to offer advice to RSVP staff, to advocate for the program in the community at large, and to make community needs known so that they may be addressed by RSVP programming. The council can also assist with specific tasks such as program evaluation and recognition events.

Volunteer Assignment. The activities, functions or responsibilities to be performed by volunteers identified in a written outline or description.

Cost reimbursements. Reimbursements budgeted as Volunteer Expenses and provided to volunteers to cover incidental costs, meals, transportation, volunteer insurance, and recognition to enable them to serve without cost to themselves.

MOU. Memorandum of Understanding; the formal agreement between RSVP and each Station Site that identifies project requirements, working relationships and mutual responsibilities.

Performance Measures. Indicators intended to help determine the impact of an RSVP project on the community, including the volunteers.

Project. The locally planned and implemented RSVP activity or set of activities in a service area as agreed upon between a sponsor and the Corporation.

RSVP. Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, which was launched in the spring of 1971 with an appropriation of \$500,000 under the auspices of the Administration on Aging (AoA). In July of 1971, RSVP was transferred from AoA to the federal agency, ACTION, which had oversight of federal domestic volunteer programs. Eleven projects were started in the summer of 1971.

AmeriCorps Seniors. A federal, national organization which started as Senior Corps in the 1960's that provides a way for adults 55 and older to serve their communities, Includes three separate programs: The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program (FGP), and the Senior Companion Program (SCP).

Service area. The geographically defined area approved in the grant application, in which RSVP volunteers are recruited, enrolled, and placed on assignments.

Site Supervisor. A staff person or volunteer who is in charge of the volunteers at any given site.

Sponsor. The organization which agrees to fiscal and administrative responsibility for the program. SeniorCare Inc. is the sponsor for RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore.

Volunteer Station (Station Site). A public agency, secular or faith-based private non-profit organization, or proprietary health care organization that accepts the responsibility for assignment and supervision of RSVP volunteers in health, education, social service or related settings such as multi-purpose centers, home health care agencies, or similar establishments. Also referred to as Station Site or Partner Station.

VOLUNTEER STATION INFORMATION

WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER STATION?

Volunteer station is a term we use to refer to any place where RSVP volunteers serve. A volunteer station can be any public or private non-profit organization or health agency. Stations have a written agreement with RSVP regarding volunteer assignments, called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU lists responsibilities and expectations for both RSVP and the station site. The purpose of the MOU is to guarantee a positive and quality experience for RSVP, the station and the volunteer.

Each station has a site supervisor, who will provide you with training and orientation for your particular assignment, and will serve as RSVP's primary contact at the organization. The site supervisor often reports your volunteer hours to the RSVP office. You will be responsible for following all volunteer policies, regulations and codes of conduct set forth by your station.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM STATIONS

- To provide safe working conditions for volunteers.
- To provide orientation and appropriate in-service training to enhance performance on assignments.
- To provide resources required for performance of assignments including reasonable accommodations.
- To collect, approve and submit volunteer hours.
- To recognize the achievements of RSVP volunteers and identify them as RSVP volunteers.

RSVP VOLUNTEERS OF THE NORTH SHORE PARTNER VOLUNTEER STATION LISTING

Updated: October 2020

Beverly Council on Aging
Essex Council on Aging
Gloucester Council on Aging
Ipswich Council on Aging
NeedyMeds
Peabody Council on Aging

Rockport Council on Aging
Salem Council on Aging
SeniorCare Inc.
The Open Door
Topsfield Council on Aging
Wenham Council on Aging

RSVP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

CONFIDENTIALITY

In the course of volunteer activities, you may have access to confidential information. It is expected that RSVP members will safeguard and protect this confidential information at all times. Some volunteer programs will require volunteers to sign a HIPAA form (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act), and an overview will be provided prior to volunteer applicant signing. This signed statement will become part of the volunteer's file.

Should there be a breach of confidentiality, the RSVP Director will decide among the following course of action according to the severity of the breach:

- The volunteer may continue in the RSVP position, but will not be privy to confidential information.
- The volunteer may be asked to leave the volunteer position.
- The volunteer may be asked to leave RSVP.
- A written account of the breach of confidentiality and outcome will be kept in the volunteer's file.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

RSVP receives assistance from a federal agency, The Corporation for National and Community Service. RSVP will not discriminate in the selection of volunteers or those to receive services based upon race, color, creed, belief, religion, sex, national origin, age, political affiliation or past participation in the discrimination complaint process.

Any person who believes that he/she has been discriminated against for any of the above reason may receive information regarding how to file a grievance by contacting the RSVP Program Director. Reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities will be made available upon advance notice for placements, meetings or conferences.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

1. Engagement In Religious or Political Activities while Volunteering

Volunteer Stations may not assign RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in religious activities, including religious instruction, conducting worship services, or proselytizing as part of their duties. Volunteer Stations may not assign RSVP volunteers to conduct or engage in political or electoral activities, including voter registration, transportation to polls, or efforts to influence legislation.

Prohibited Activities: Volunteers and grantee staff will not engage in prohibited activities applicable under program regulations: political activities, religious activities, non-discrimination, labor or anti-labor activity, non-displacement of employed workers, compensation for service, fair labor standards, and nepotism.

A. Political Activities:

- 1) No part of any grant may be used to finance, directly or indirectly, any activity to influence the outcome of any election to public office, or any voter registration activity.
- 2) No project may be conducted in a manner involving the use of funds; the provision of services, space, or facilities; or the employment or assignment of personnel in a manner that identifies the project with:
 - a) Any partisan or nonpartisan political activity associated with a candidate, or contending faction or group, in an election; or

- b) Any activity to provide voters or prospective voters with transportation to the polls or similar assistance in connection with any such election; or
 - c) Any voter registration activity except that voter registration applications and nonpartisan voter registration information may be made available to the public at the premises of the sponsor. But in making registration applications and nonpartisan voter registration information available, employees of the sponsor and volunteers may not express preferences or seek to influence decisions concerning any candidate, political party, election issue, or voting decision.
- 3) No RSVP volunteer or employee of a sponsor or volunteer station may take any action, when serving in such capacity, with respect to a partisan or nonpartisan political activity that would result in the identification or apparent identification of RSVP with such activity.
 - 4) The sponsor may not use grant funds for any activity that influences the passage or defeat of legislation or proposals by initiative petition. In other words, there is a prohibition against using RSVP grant funds for lobbying activities.

B. Religious Activities:

- 1) RSVP volunteers and project staff funded by AmeriCorps may not give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in any form of proselytization as part of their duties.
- 2) A sponsor or volunteer station may retain its independence and may continue to carry out its mission, including the definition, development, practice, and expression of its religious beliefs, provided that it does not use AmeriCorps funds to support any inherently religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization, as part of the programs or services funded. If an organization conducts such activities, the activities must be offered separately, in time or location, from the programs or services funded under RSVP.

2. FAIR LABOR POLICY

RSVP volunteers may not engage in any activity which would otherwise be performed by an employed worker or which would supplant the hiring of or result in the displacement of employed workers or impair existing contracts for service.

3. FEE FOR SERVICE

RSVP Volunteers may not receive a fee for service from service recipients, their legal guardian, or members of their family or friends. RSVP and its volunteer partner stations may not request or receive compensation from the beneficiaries of RSVP Volunteers. Financial support of RSVP is not a precondition for a volunteer partner station to obtain volunteer service from RSVP.

4. NEPOTISM

RSVP's Advisory Council must provide written concurrence, with notification to AmeriCorps, for anyone selected for RSVP staff who is related by blood or marriage to other RSVP Staff or SeniorCare staff.

5. PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION

RSVP and its volunteer stations do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin including individuals with limited English proficiency, sex, age, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or on the basis of disability. If the volunteer is a qualified individual with a disability. Programs and activities to which RSVP Volunteers are assigned will be accessible to persons with disabilities whenever possible and will provide reasonable accommodations to allow persons with disabilities to participate.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Each Volunteer Station will familiarize its volunteers with its emergency protocol. Volunteers should follow the Volunteer Station Site's protocol at all times. Volunteers and/or staff should complete and sign an RSVP Incident Report following any incident and submit it to the RSVP Director within 24 hours of the incident. The RSVP Director will consult with the Station's site supervisor to determine what, if any, follow up is needed in accordance with that site's protocol. Types of reportable incidents might include injury, illness, or harassment.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the case of inclement weather or poor road conditions, please exercise caution. Volunteers should follow the Volunteer Station's inclement weather protocol at all times, as well as use your best judgment in making a decision to travel to the volunteer assignment. Please notify the Volunteer Station if you will be absent due to weather.

INSURANCE PROVIDED BY RSVP

RSVP provides a no-cost personal liability, accident, and excess automobile liability insurance to member volunteers. Personal liability and accident insurance applies during your volunteer assignment and while on your way to and from your volunteer station. Excess automobile liability insurance applies to those volunteers who drive as part of their volunteer service. This secondary insurance offers some help in the event of an accident but is not a substitute for any insurance you may now carry. Coverage requires that you provide RSVP with an emergency contact and, if you drive to and from your volunteer site or for your volunteer position, a valid driver's license number and current expiration date. ***This policy does not take the place of your private insurance policy and does not provide benefits for physical damage to your vehicle.***

Insurance. An RSVP volunteer is provided with the Corporation-specified minimum levels of insurance as follows:

(1) *Accident insurance.* Accident insurance covers RSVP volunteers for personal injury during travel between their homes and places of assignment, during their volunteer service, during meal periods while serving as a volunteer, and while attending project sponsored activities. Protection shall be provided against claims in excess of any benefits or services for medical care or treatment available to the volunteer from other sources.

(2) *Personal liability insurance.* Protection is provided against claims in excess of protection provided by other insurance. It does not include professional liability coverage.

(3) *Excess automobile liability insurance.* (i) For RSVP volunteers who drive in connection with their service, protection is provided against claims in excess of the greater of either:

(A) Liability insurance the volunteers carry on their own automobiles; or

(B) The limits of applicable state financial responsibility law, or in its absence, levels of protection to be determined by the Corporation for each person, each accident, and for property damage.

RSVP volunteers who drive their personal vehicles to or on assignments or project-related activities shall maintain personal automobile liability insurance equal to or exceeding the levels established by the Corporation.

VOLUNTEER REIMBURSEMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE

RSVP offers mileage reimbursement for volunteers during their travel to and from their volunteer assignment. If a volunteer wishes to be reimbursed for mileage associated with volunteering, please request reimbursement forms from the RSVP Staff, to be submitted monthly and paid quarterly. Due to limited resources, RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore does not reimburse for meals associated with volunteer assignments.

TO BE REIMBURSED FOR TRAVEL:

1. Keep a current, valid drivers' license number and expiration date on file with RSVP, as well as current proof of insurance including name of carrier, policy # and expiration date.
2. Use the approved RSVP Reimbursement Request Form. Reimbursement requires your signature and a supervisor signature. You must include dates of volunteer service and actual miles driven or cost of public transportation to and from your RSVP Volunteer Site.
3. If a volunteer transports other volunteers, reimbursement is only provided to the vehicle's owner.
4. Completed reimbursement request forms are due by the 10th of the following month.
5. Reimbursement checks are sent out quarterly.
6. Volunteers who drive as part of their volunteer service receive mileage reimbursement from the Volunteer Station for which they are volunteering.

RSVP's Reimbursement rate is \$0.14 per mile, with a maximum reimbursement of \$15.00 per month. Transportation reimbursement shall continue as long as there are available funds.

VOLUNTEER SAFETY POLICY

Volunteer safety is important to RSVP. Concerns regarding safety at your volunteer station should be reported to the station supervisor and RSVP Director as soon as possible. If you are involved in an accident while on assignment, please notify the RSVP office within 24 hours. Should your medical, physical, or other conditions change, at any time, it is the duty of the volunteer to inform the RSVP Director so that appropriate changes may be made with regard to volunteer activities

VOLUNTEER STATUS

A volunteer will remain active throughout the program year as long as he/she reports at least one hour of volunteer service. Volunteers may terminate their volunteer assignment at any time by notifying RSVP staff. Once a volunteer is terminated, he/she is no longer covered by RSVP personal liability, accident, and excess automobile liability insurance.

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU:

1. Become temporarily inactive due to illness, travel or other needs
2. Choose to stop volunteering at any time for any reason.
3. Want to learn about expanding or changing your volunteer activities.
4. If you change your contact information including address, phone, email or emergency contact
5. With your updated license # and current expiration date if you wish to receive mileage reimbursement and/or you drive during your volunteer assignment
6. If you wish to change or add a new assignment or if you have a problem at your assignment.
7. Within 24 hours about any incidents or accidents connected with your volunteer assignment, or with your automobile while you are on assignment.
8. If you wish to share a meaningful volunteer story with our staff, we'd love to hear from you!

VOLUNTEER SEPARATION FROM SERVICE

RSVP MAY END YOUR STATUS:

1. If you have not reported hours of service for 6 months.
2. For cause: Volunteers can be dismissed for reasons listed in the Federal Code of Regulations:
 - Misconduct or Breach of confidentiality
 - Unsatisfactory performance, extensive absences or disregard for policies and procedures
 - Health unacceptable to the point of being a hazard to self or others
 - Suitable assignment not available or likely to become available

Any site station supervisor, RSVP or SeniorCare executive staff may find just cause to dismiss a volunteer from his/her volunteer assignment and/or the RSVP program. Volunteer dismissal may be immediate if it relates to an urgent threat to the physical and/or psychological safety of self or others, or is deemed a gross misconduct to station policies.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

It is our intention that every RSVP volunteer has a rewarding and satisfying experience. If any volunteer has a complaint about his/her volunteer work, the following guidelines should be applied:

If a volunteer has a complaint regarding his/her site station:

1. Speak with your station site supervisor for guidance as promptly as possible.
2. If not resolved, or if the volunteer is not comfortable speaking directly to the site supervisor, contact the RSVP Director who will communicate to the site supervisor and seek a resolution.
3. If this is not satisfactory, contact SeniorCare's Director of Community Programs, and every attempt to resolve the issue will be made.

If a volunteer has a complaint regarding RSVP Volunteers of the North Shore:

1. Contact the RSVP Director. If not resolved, or the volunteer is not comfortable speaking directly with the RSVP Director, contact SeniorCare's Director of Community Programs, and every attempt to resolve the issue will be made.
2. If this is not satisfactory, contact the Chief Executive Director (CEO) of SeniorCare to discuss grievance. Any and all decisions by the CEO will be final.

If a Volunteer Station dismisses a volunteer:

1. If the dismissal is from a Volunteer Station other than SeniorCare, you may contact the RSVP Director to discuss. The RSVP Director will communicate with the Partner Station's supervisor. Every attempt to resolve the issue will be made. Any and all decisions made jointly by the Partner Station's Supervisor and the RSVP Director will be final.
2. If the dismissal is from SeniorCare or the RSVP Program, you may contact SeniorCare's Director of Community Programs to discuss the issue. If the resolution is that the volunteer's dismissal stands and you are not satisfied with the decision, you may contact SeniorCare's CEO. The CEO will discuss with all appropriate persons and make a decision. Any decisions by the CEO will be final.

RSVP CONTACT INFORMATION

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USEFUL WEBSITES

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