

2022-2023 AmeriCorps Member Position Description



Partner Organization Name: Saul's Light Foundation

Corps Member Position Title: Program Development Coordinator

Supervisor: Kimberly Novod

Days/Hours of Service: M-F, 9-5

Physical Location: Remote and 601 Seguin St, New Orleans, LA 70114

Organization Mission and/or Goals:

The mission of Saul's Light is to help New Orleans families navigate the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) journey and support them through the trauma of infant loss.

Program Mission and/ or Goals:

We want to become a Service Louisiana Partner organization to increase our ability to assist the families that we provide services to and to benefit from the knowledge and enthusiasm of the Serve Louisiana member and network. Moreover, we hope that the corps member will have a positive experience that will impact their future career development.

Saul's Light offers vital services to families who are facing uncertain outcomes or grieving the loss of their infants. At partner hospitals, Saul's Light establishes NICU family funds that provide families with nonmedical financial assistance, as well as a Little Library and other resources. The comprehensive range of services Saul's Light offers help ease the emotional trauma of having a baby in the NICU and/or experiencing infant death by reducing out-of-pocket "non-medical" costs that can become barriers to care, providing education, and offering peer support to families.

Saul's Light is dedicated to helping members of our community grapple with and overcome the obstacles that they are confronted with in the face of traumatic birth outcomes. Unfortunately, far too many families experience these hardships. Nearly 15% of babies born in the United States are admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Common causes for a NICU stay include preterm birth, low birth weight, complications during labor and delivery, and birth defects or genetic conditions. NICU families experience unimaginable stress. Most families are

unprepared for the heartache and economic burden that result from having a newborn admitted to the NICU or, in worst case scenarios, infant death. Research has shown that the trauma of having a child in the NICU has an adverse impact on the mental health of parents, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, acute stress disorder (ASD), and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The significant emotional and financial burden does not stop when the NICU journey ends, but can last for years, even decades, after the infant's discharge or death. Louisiana has a high preterm birth rate and infant mortality rate. Louisiana received a grade of F on the 2021 March of Dimes Report Card due to a preterm birth rate of 12.9% and an infant mortality rate of nearly 8 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. According to this report, the preterm birth rate has increased over the past ten years. Preterm birth and its complications are the second largest contributor to infant death in the United States. The situation is particularly critical in New Orleans; Orleans Parish also received an F grade, and its current preterm birth rate of 13.8% is higher than the rate the previous year.

Maternal and infant health outcomes vary significantly by socioeconomic status and race, and Black families and poor families are more likely to experience traumatic birth outcomes. Research shows that women in poverty and people of color face stark disparities in maternal and infant health. In Louisiana, the preterm birth rate among Black women is 16.4%, 55% higher than the rate among all other women.

Saul's Light responds to the complex challenges' families of premature and low birth weight infants face by using an interdisciplinary approach that improves population health and achieves equity through education, empowerment, and support. Our efforts include financial assistance, individual and group peer support, promoting reading with culturally relevant children's books, and community education that includes learning how to communicate with healthcare providers, the importance of breastfeeding, and how to access community resources upon discharge. Saul's Light serves any family who is dealing with a NICU admission or an infant loss, although we focus on assisting minority families and families in poverty, as these families are more likely to experience traumatic birth outcomes and to face obstacles during their NICU stay.

Family involvement is a major factor in the long-lasting positive effects on physical and mental health of NICU babies and families. Family-centered care that is both culturally responsive and respectful recognizes the family unit as a vital member of the NICU health-care team. As a Black-led, community-based organization, Saul's Light is uniquely positioned to serve as an advocacy bridge between healthcare systems and the people they serve. Saul's Light also participates in advocacy efforts for NICU and bereaved families.

Member Position Summary:

Program Design and Evaluation Coordinator. The corps member will be responsible for maintaining and growing Saul's Light's existing programming. The position will include regular

interaction with service providers, NICU families, and community partners. The corps member will be in regular communication with supervisor Kimberly Novod.

Essential Functions of Position:

Administer and coordinate Saul's Light's programs, which are described above. Work independently, with regular supervision. None of the tasks for this position necessitate specific physical activities.

Ideal Candidate Qualifications

Ability to listen, learn, empathize with others undergoing traumatic experiences, familiar with and able to use computer programs as such as Word, Excel, and Powerpoint. Qualifications related to trauma and/or to maternal and child health is preferred

Required Transportation Requirements (ex: own vehicle or able bike to site)

None, though access to a vehicle is preferred