

AMERICORPS*VISTA FACT SHEET

This information is designed to answer questions for people who are considering volunteering with VISTA.

Established by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Volunteers in Service to America is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (C.N.C.S.), an umbrella agency for a number of federally funded volunteer programs, including the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (R.S.V.P.), Foster Grandparents (F.G.P.), and Senior Companion Program (S.C.P.). There are approximately 7,000 VISTA volunteers serving nationwide.

VISTA is founded on three basic assumptions:

- That private citizens can, on a voluntary basis, contribute to the solution of the nation's poverty-related problems; and
- That the full-time presence and personal involvement of volunteers brings an added dimension to public and private institutions working to alleviate poverty; and
- That the skills and energies of volunteers are used most effectively when the volunteers live and work with the low income community they serve.

The role of the VISTA volunteer in the poverty problem-solving process is focused on mobilizing community resources and increasing the capability of low income people to solve their own problems.

VISTA volunteers work for local organizations, usually private non-profit or public agencies, in assignments determined and defined by that Sponsoring Organization and the low income community where they work. VISTA volunteers are supervised by and responsible to the local sponsoring agency.

VISTA volunteers commit themselves to serve on a full-time basis (generally an average 40 hour work week) for at least one year, and it is expected that this commitment will be honored. In certain circumstances, volunteers may be invited to serve longer than one year.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Potential volunteers must . . .

- be at least 18 years of age or older
- be U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents
- meet volunteer additional qualifying standards or skill requirements specified by the sponsoring organization for a particular VISTA position

RESTRICTIONS:

- may be enrolled in education programs subject to VISTA supervisor approval. School enrollment must not interfere with full time VISTA duties.
- cannot be employed outside their VISTA work
- cannot be involved in lobbying or partisan political activity subject to the Hatch Act provisions.

Should you decide to volunteer with VISTA, and you are selected by the Sponsor, your application will have to be approved by C.N.C.S. Orientation will be provided by CNSC and the VISTA Sponsor. In-service-training will be provided by the Sponsor.

INSURANCE: VISTA volunteers are provided health benefits at no cost to the volunteer for injuries and illness. The purpose of the health benefits program is to provide essential health care services. Pre-existing medical conditions are NOT covered and coverage cannot be extended to dependents. Optional life insurance coverage is available for a cost of \$2.07 bi-weekly, paid by the volunteer.

LIVING ALLOWANCE: All VISTA volunteers receive a subsistence allowance every other week to pay for food, housing, and personal expenses. This allowance is subject to Federal & Idaho State income tax. All Idaho VISTAs receive a monthly living allowance of \$892.00 (approximately \$410.00 **gross** pay every two weeks over 26 pay periods per year). VISTAs net (take home) pay should be about \$375 each two week pay period depending on withholding rates (W-4 withholding information & life insurance option).

*** IN ADDITION, VISTA VOLUNTEERS HAVE A CHOICE BETWEEN THE STIPEND OR EDUCATION AWARD.**

STIPEND: Volunteers who choose to receive the stipend are credited with \$125.00 per month of service to assist them when they complete their service. This stipend is maintained as a "savings account" and paid to the volunteer in the last two allowance checks upon completion of service. This allowance is subject to Federal and Idaho State income and Social Security taxes. Volunteers must complete full 12 months of service to receive this Stipend payment at end of service. Once you select STIPEND, you will not be allowed to switch to Education Award. The STIPEND selection is irrevocable.

OR:

***EDUCATION AWARD:** VISTA volunteers may choose to receive an Education Award voucher in the amount of \$5,550.00 per year of VISTA service – effective for members beginning service on or after September 11, 2011. The Education Award is earned upon successful completion of one year of VISTA service. This award, if elected, replaces the stipend accrual of \$1500.00 paid at end of service. You complete the Benefit Election Form and provide to your sponsoring organization at the time you apply and are selected for VISTA service. The Education Award is subject to Federal and Idaho State income tax the year in which the award is used.

STUDENT LOANS: Student Loan payments may be deferred while VISTA member is in VISTA service. Interest accrued while in service MAY be paid on “qualifying student loans” if you select the Education Award. Specific details on loan deferrment/forebarance will need to be discussed with lender. Your active VISTA service status will be certified by CNCS to your lender upon your request to CNCS.

CHILD CARE: VISTA volunteers who qualify (very low family income)are eligible to receive up to \$400.00 per month per child for child care voucher reimbursement, which is paid directly to the child care provider.

PERSONAL & SICK LEAVE: All VISTA volunteers are entitled to 10 working days of personal leave during each full year of service. VISTA members are also entitled to 10 days of sick leaver during each full year of VISTA service.

For more information, contact the Idaho State Office at:

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The Corporation for National and Community Service, VISTA and sponsoring organizations must ensure that no person shall be excluded from participation in VISTA on grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, age or handicap.

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