

CNCS/TNCC ASD & K-12 VISTA PROJECT SITE SUPERVISOR MANUAL



Tennessee | **Campus Compact**

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TNCC VISTA SERVICE TIMELINE

VISTA Attends PSO & Service Year Begins

Pre-Service Orientation is a regional training for VISTA members where they learn about poverty and VISTA on a broader scale. The service year begins immediately after PSO, even if it is a Saturday. Orientation by ASD should then be provided to orient VISTAs to the ASD culture and the project goals.

VISTA Monthly Timesheets & Check-Ins

VISTA members will be responsible for emailing completed monthly timesheets with supervisor approval to TNCC. VISTA members will be asked to complete a monthly report during at least the first three months of their service year. This is to ensure that any problems or needs are addressed early in the term.

VISTA Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs)

Every three months, VISTAs and Site Supervisors will turn in a report to TNCC. Consistent reports and data collection should be conducted for ongoing assessment of impact and to assist in the completion of QPRs.

VISTA Close of Service

Prior to the end of service, the VISTA & Site Supervisor will both be responsible for various forms and a Completed VAD which details activity accomplishments at the close of service.

VISTA Systems of Processing

- i. Future Plans Form: Available in the VISTA portal approx. 3 months prior to end of service. The VISTA will fill out this form and indicate if he/she would like to reenroll or to end service.
- ii. Return Home Form for Relocated VISTAs: After the Future Plans form is submitted for final approval, the VISTA may fill out a Return Home form.
- iii. Completed VAD: Each VISTA is required to submit a completed VAD which details their activity accomplishments for the full year of service.

Site Supervisor Systems of Processing

- i. VISTA Performance Evaluation: Supervisors receive this evaluation form from TNCC prior to the end of service and will summarize the accomplishments & rate the VISTA's performance.
- ii. Completed VAD: Supervisors should assist the VISTA member with the submission of a Completed VAD detailing the year's accomplishments.

Reenrollments, Resignations, and Removals (Optional)

- a. **VISTA Reenrollment:** If funding is available, ASD may choose to submit a new Concept Paper and VAD for a VISTA reenrollment. The second or third year must reflect new activities and goals. The same goals as the first year will not be approved.
- **VISTA Resignation:** In the event that a VISTA resigns, several steps must be taken to ensure proper exiting. Ideally, the VISTA should provide a notice at least two weeks in advance, at which time the site supervisor will report the notice to resign to the TNCC. An official resignation letter from the VISTA is helpful for TNCC records. TNCC will then inform CNCS of the situation and the "Close of Service" steps above will need to be completed by the VISTA and Site Supervisor, specifying the reason for resignation and the resignation date on the online Future Plans Form.
- b. **VISTA Removal:** If ASD feels that a VISTA is not performing assigned responsibilities, they should notify TNCC immediately. If the issue(s) cannot be resolved, TNCC can advise the CNCS State Office of the recommendation for the VISTA's removal. The State Office will require documented evidence from ASD and TNCC on why the removal request is being made. The VISTA member's benefits may continue for a period of time until s/he can find a more suitable assignment. The CNCS State Office will inform the VISTA of the alternatives and provide directions on ending the current assignment.

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORTING

Every quarter during the year of VISTA service, VISTAs and Site Supervisors will turn in an official report to TNCC following the template provided. Reporting information is compiled and used to track the project's progress toward the outlined goals and to update CNCS on project challenges and successes.

Before submitting the Quarterly Progress Report to TNCC, each VISTA must have their report approved by both their site supervisor and the ASD VISTA Project Leader (Teddy King). This should be sent via email.

Some best practices for the narratives section of the quarterly report:

1. Include as much impact data as possible. Track important dates, the number of attendees at meetings/events, the numbers/names of new community partnerships forged, number of sustainable documents created, etc.
2. Record appropriate milestones, challenges, and accomplishments throughout the quarter in order to be better prepared for the Quarterly Progress Reports.

DIRECT VS. INDIRECT SERVICE

The role of the VISTA is to build the capacity and sustainability of the project and community. The chart below lists some examples of the natural progression in the types of service performed by a VISTA. Except for training purposes, VISTAs should not perform direct services, such as tutoring, teaching, counseling, driving clients, painting, manual labor, or clerical work. (Vista Campus Site Supervisor Manual, 2010)

| Service | Capacity Building | Sustainable Endeavors |
|---|---|---|
| Train direct-service providers | Write training curriculum or manual; train trainers | Develop “train the trainer” curriculum |
| Coordinate project | Develop procedure and system | Develop volunteer management system |
| Public speaking | Develop speakers' bureau | Develop community partnerships |
| Write press releases | Develop press kits, media database | Secure media partners |
| Organize fundraising events | Grant writing, develop database | Secure project staffing |
| Organize task forces & develop coalitions | Develop leadership structure of task force or coalition | Create infrastructure |
| Conduct outreach | Design brochures, posters | Create mechanism for project evaluation |
| Recruit volunteers | Develop volunteer assignments | Develop volunteer handbook |

An AmeriCorps VISTA is not an employee, and thus cannot perform many of the administrative and clerical tasks expected of staff members. A good rule of thumb is to always think about who will do the proposed activities and duties after the VISTA is gone. VISTAs should not engage in any activities if it means temporarily filling the space of a full-time staff member. Everything they do should be with an eye towards increasing overall program capacity rather than meeting short-term needs.

VISTA MANAGEMENT TIPS

VISTAs are under the management of a Site Supervisor as a capacity-building volunteer dedicated to serving community needs, not as an employee. However, VISTAs are expected to act in a professional manner and conduct themselves in accordance with the workplace norms of their host site.

The most important competency in supervising a VISTA project is communication with your VISTAs. Do not assume they understand the big picture regarding the project. Supervising a VISTA is different from supervising a local, paid employee. VISTAs are volunteers, and commit themselves to serving the goals of the project and the community for a full year. Therefore, they have a community development and capacity-building focus to their project assignment. Other staff in your organization may not recognize the difference. One of the challenges of having VISTAs is ensuring that everyone who interacts with them understands they are with your organization for a very specific purpose and not as “general help.” At the same time, VISTAs are subject to the same or similar working conditions as their colleagues and should not be exempted from following the rules of conduct that everyone else has to follow. As a supervisor one must support the integration of VISTAs into the workplace and the community, while at the same time giving appropriate feedback on the VISTA's service performance and community involvement.

In addition, you should:

- Share the project plan with the VISTA
- Introduce the VISTA to the community
- Identify potential resources in the community that VISTAs may need to mobilize.
- Provide structure, advice, and guidance for the VISTA's assignment
- Clarify internal policies for requesting leave, and obtaining reimbursements and obtaining supplies
- Understand and refer, as needed, to the full set of policies in the VISTA Member Handbook (<http://vistacampus.org/mod/book/view.php?id=2223>).
- Ensure that your organization has a fund (up to \$500 per emergency) available for VISTA emergencies (to be reimbursed by the VISTA or Corporation).
- Assess assignment performance with the VISTA
- Give the VISTA feedback on their project activities
- Work with the VISTA on meeting personal and professional goals
- Partner with the VISTA in developing community activities
- Provide office space, phone, and other supplies needed by VISTAs to perform their assignments.
- Ensure that the rules, regulations, and guidelines of the VISTA program are met
- Ensure that the health and safety of VISTAs are not jeopardized during their assignments.
- Report immediately (within 24 hours) to TNCC any change in the status of VISTAs, such as leaving the project early, arrest, absence without leave, hospitalization, and other extended absences

The Corporation's National Service Resource Center created a general publication for supervisors of all service programs entitled *Becoming a Better Supervisor: A Resource Guide for Community Service Supervisors* (<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/becoming-supervisor>).

VISTA LEAVE & HOLIDAY POLICIES

All hours served and leave days taken must be reported to the TNCC via the monthly timesheet document.

Personal Leave: VISTAs are entitled to 10 workdays of personal leave during their year of service, but must request and receive approval from the site supervisor a minimum of one week in advance.

Medical Leave: VISTAs are entitled to 10 days of medical leave during the one-year service term. As with personal leave, the VISTA must request time off for medical leave from the site supervisor a week in advance.

Holiday Leave: VISTAs are only given official time off for national and federal holidays recognized by their sponsoring organization. Any holidays that are not recognized by the sponsoring institution, such as religious holidays, must be requested off as personal leave.

Other Policies: As service volunteers rather than employees, VISTAs do not adhere to holiday breaks typical of K-12 schools. Spring Break, Winter Holiday, Summer Recess, and other “floating holidays” extended to staff members are not extended to VISTA members. VISTAs are expected to serve on assignment during these times unless the VISTA requests off for personal leave. If the school limits access to service site buildings, arrangements must be made for the VISTA to continue to serve from an alternative site during the break.

VISTA MEMBER SUPPORT SYSTEM

As a Volunteer In Service To America (VISTA) dedicated to fighting poverty with a passion, all AmeriCorps VISTAs operate with minimal financial means. This can be a difficult shift for many VISTA members, but all AmeriCorps VISTA members have numerous forms of support systems available to them.

Tennessee Campus Compact (TNCC) has many resources available to connect with and support individuals entering VISTA service. Staff members are on hand to assist with support and as advisors on matters such as navigating the financial challenges, choosing between end of service award/stipend options, and as a resource to connect VISTAs directly with other TNCC VISTA members, campuses, or site supervisors.

The Corporation for National Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that engages more than five million Americans in service through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. The CNCS Tennessee State Office is responsible for providing monitoring and oversight to support the sponsoring organization during VISTA service. VISTA support from CNCS is available through <http://www.nationalservice.gov/> and the state office.

VISTA Campus is a comprehensive website that provides limitless resources, including the VISTA member handbook, a VISTA alumni page, and tips on building capacity during VISTA service.

VISTA Member Support Unit (VMSU) is a fully staffed toll-free hotline with an AmeriCorps Help Desk that addresses VISTA health care, child care, and educational award questions and concerns, as well as general inquiries. The number is 1-800-942-2677.