



Prevention Resource Center

AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

VISTA On-Site Orientation & Training (OSOT) Packet

The VISTA Supervisor for any project receiving VISTA Members will need to prepare a one to two week orientation for each new VISTA. The plan should include, but not be limited to, orientation to the Sponsoring Organization, the community served by that organization, and the project in which the VISTA will be engaged.

A BRIEF RATIONALE FOR ON-SITE ORIENTATION & TRAINING

The purpose of orientation is the successful establishment of an effective working relationship between the new VISTA, the Site Supervisor, the organization staff, and the community. The purpose of this packet is to assist you in developing an effective, well-planned orientation which will set expectations in the mind of the VISTA as to the seriousness of the task of the project and demonstrate your willingness to provide support and direction to the Member.

There are two additional benefits to an effective OSOT that should not be overlooked. The structure of the orientation can very much assist you in more accurately assessing the individual training needs of each new Member. This assessment will help you plan for future training necessary to increase skills, competence and expertise of the VISTA. Secondly, the OSOT, without the pressure of formal “work”, should help both you and the member to begin negotiating the job tasks, and the degree of responsibility granted in relation to both the project needs and the VISTAs needs and interests.

SPECIFICS ABOUT OSOT PLANS

Scheduling: Though it is required that all VISTA receive five-ten days of orientation, we recognize the need for flexibility in the scheduling of that orientation. However, we do expect that all Members will have completed their OSOT no later than three weeks after arriving on site. The schedule you decide upon should be clearly indicated in your plan.

Content: The orientation should contain, at a minimum, the following:

- 1) Time to meet and relate to key people in your organization and in your community.
- 2) Information and exposure to the services and philosophies of the Sponsoring Organization
- 3) Work policies and procedures (supplies, transportation reimbursement, answering the phones, etc.) and definition of work place.

The Community: Understanding the Community

- 1) What are the basic problems of the community in economic development, education, employment, housing and health?

- 2) What are the political structures operating in the community?
- 3) Who are some of the groups working in the community?
- 4) What are the needs and what are the issues of concern?
- 5) What are the strengths of this community?

Locating Community Resources (human, material, financial)

- 1) What resources are known to the sponsor?
- 2) How does one locate resources?
- 3) Who in the community are allies of the project sponsor? Personal introductions and meetings are valuable parts of O.J.O
- 4) How does one gain community support?
- 5) Who in the community may be opposed to the project/sponsor? Why?

The Organization/Sponsor

- 1) What was the original purpose of the organization or agency?
- 2) Who organized it? When?
- 3) What program areas is it concerned with? Why?
- 4) What are the organization's future goals and objectives?
- 5) How do the goals and objectives of the volunteer project complement the overall organization goals and objectives?

What is the specific goal of the volunteer assignment?

- 1) How is the goal integrated into the rest of the VISTA project?
- 2) How will one know when the goal is reached?
- 3) What conditions will exist at the end of the year of service?

What are the specific objectives needed to achieve the goal?

- 1) List the objectives
- 2) What is the overall strategy to accomplish these objectives?
- 3) How was the strategy arrived at, and who participated in the formation of the strategy?
- 4) What are the things to be done by the volunteer in the first month?

What skills are needed by the volunteer to be effective? What arrangements have been made to obtain those skills?

For umbrella projects: What is the relationship between the sub-sponsor/supervisor to the overall sponsoring organization?