

Request for Proposals for Obtaining an AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America)

**Prevention Resource Center
PO Box 4210, Helena, MT 59604**

Please contact Abby Zent at 406-444-9654 or azent@mt.gov with any questions

Background:

The Prevention Resource Center (PRC), located in the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, assists Montana communities in identifying, developing, implementing, sustaining, and evaluating prevention programs. The PRC's partnership with AmeriCorps*VISTA is to eradicate poverty and the priority area of the PRC VISTA project is to:

- Reduce teen pregnancy rates, school dropout rates, and teen violence and crime to include youth substance use and abuse.
- Ensure a healthy future for all people, specifically, but not limited to, veterans, disadvantaged children, homeless, people at risk of becoming homeless, and those affected by drug and alcohol use/abuse and/or mental illness.

The community need in our state:

The PRC VISTA Project addresses the following CNCS focus areas: Healthy Futures, Education, and Veterans. These focus areas are deeply intertwined so by addressing one, we address the others. For example: substance abuse is closely tied to mental health problems, among both the general population and Veterans.

Struggles with behavioral health are very common among service members and Veterans. Alcohol and drug use disorders are also extremely common among individuals diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depressive disorder (MDD), and traumatic brain injury (TBI). The ultimate consequence of a prolonged struggle with behavioral health is often suicide. Service members and Veterans are particularly susceptible to suicidal ideation and to suicide itself (Points of Light Community Blueprint, Behavioral Health).

Addressing substance abuse prevention also leads to addressing school drop-out rates and vice-versa. However, substance abuse isn't the only cause of academic failure. Nearly one-third of teen girls who have dropped out of high school cite early pregnancy or parenthood as a key reason and only 40 percent of teen moms finish high school. Childhood hunger also plays a role in school performance. Children who go to school hungry have problems learning, show reduced comprehension ability, and have lower-than-average math and reading test scores.

The baseline data for this project is measured from the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Data indicates the following among Montana High School students:

- During the past 12 months, high school students who felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities: 26.4%
- During the past 12 months, high school students who attempted suicide: 7.9%
- High school students who tried cigarette smoking: 41.1%
- High school students who have had at least one drink of alcohol: 70.5%

- High school students who have used marijuana: 37.6%
- High school students who have taken a prescription drug without a prescription: 16.2%

Additional youth risk data relative to this VISTA project and the work stations seeking assistance by the way of a VISTA member include:

- High school drop-out rate (OPI, academic year 2011-12): 4.1%
- Teen pregnancy rate (Montana Teen Birth & Pregnancy Report 2012): 4.2%
- Children enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who are enrolled in the free/reduced price lunch program: 41%

Data regarding Veterans relative to this VISTA project and the work stations seeking assistance by the way of a VISTA member include:

- PTSD among OEF/OIF Veterans receiving VA health care FY2002-2012: 29%
- Prevalence of affective psychosis among OEF/OIF Veterans receiving VA health care FY2002-2012: 14%
- Alcohol dependence among OEF/OIF Veterans receiving VA health care FY2002-2012: 6%
- Drug abuse among OEF/OIF Veterans receiving VA health care FY2002-2012: 5%

In alignment with other prevention efforts in Montana, this VISTA project will work in concert toward reducing the above rates by an overall average of 10% by 2019, using the 2013 YRBS data as the baseline.

Best estimates indicate that approximately 50% of all children and families served throughout this project will be low-income. These estimates are based on research conducted by the Kids Count 2012 State Profiles by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

- In the year 2011, 20% of Montana children lived in poverty, or 44,471 children;
- In the year 2011, 8% of Montana children lived in extreme poverty, or 17,788 children with the national rate at 9%; and,
- In the year 2011, 46% of Montana children lived in moderate poverty, or 102,283 children.

AmeriCorps*VISTA:

AmeriCorps*VISTA is a federally funded program that places members in community-based agencies, full-time for one year, to help implement goals and objectives identified by the community and sponsoring agency. The role of the VISTA in the poverty problem-solving process is focused on mobilizing human and other resources to increase the capacity of low-income communities.

The goals of the PRC VISTA Project are:

Goal 1 (Community Building/Performance Measure): To address community poverty related needs by strengthening community and the development of community infrastructure through a community building process. The process will engage individual citizens, citizen groups, and agencies to address community needs. The process will enable the community to develop and implement a strategic plan resulting in sustainable activities resulting in the meeting of community needs.

Goal 2 (Prevention): To develop opportunities for youth by increasing protective and resiliency

factors and decreasing risk factors so that there is overall decrease in youth risk behaviors, particularly substance abuse/use, violence & crime, teen pregnancy, and school dropout rates.

VISTA members do not provide direct service. VISTAs are system builders by involving local people in planning and implementation of strategies and programs. The goal is for the community to operate and sustain the strategies and programs on their own without the assistance of the VISTA. PRC VISTAs particularly help with prevention strategies. The PRC VISTAs together with their host community, use a community building process to design and implement solutions to a community problem; not a specific agency problem. Specifically, PRC VISTAs can help with community analysis and needs assessments, prevention coalition building and partnership development, strategic planning, education and outreach, human and financial resource development, and impact evaluation. VISTA placements through the PRC can last a maximum of three years. PRC VISTAs are required to have a four year degree, work full time, and cannot have outside employment. VISTAs are allowed to take college level courses as long as they have permission from both the site and project supervisor.

Who Can Apply:

The Prevention Resource Center is looking for community agencies in Montana, either non-profit, school, or government, to sponsor one or more full-time AmeriCorps*VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) for one year. In order to qualify for a VISTA, communities should:

- address the community need in local data terms (contact your school district superintendent for local YRBS data regarding alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and prescription drug use rates);
- have an active prevention coalition that is committed to carrying on the work of the VISTA,
- identify a sponsoring agency for the VISTA within the community, and,
- provide direction, guidance and adequate supervision to the VISTA placed.

Cost Share Agreement:

The Corporation for National & Community Service requires the Prevention Resource Center to pay a cost-share portion of the VISTA's subsistence and stipend expenses through a community cost-share mechanism by the way of a signed Memorandum of Understanding. Costs for sites will be according to the following scale:

| | |
|------------|-----------------|
| Year One | \$ 4,000/VISTA* |
| Year Two | \$ 6,000/VISTA* |
| Year Three | \$ 7,500/VISTA* |
| Year Four | \$13,500/VISTA* |

*These non-refundable costs may vary from year to year based upon the cost of living increase provided to the VISTAs from the Corporation for National & Community Service. Payment is due 90 days following the VISTA start date. The PRC and the federal government administer the VISTA living stipend and a supplemental health benefit. Should a VISTA begin with your site, and prematurely end their service commitment for any reason, the position cannot be replaced for any reason once the service year has begun.

Tips for Completing the PRC VISTA Site Application:

1. Read the entire application packet before you begin. If you have questions or need technical assistance contact the Prevention Resource Center at (406) 444-9654. We are happy to review draft proposals and provide feedback.
2. As you complete the application, it is only necessary to say something once. Use clear and concise language, and be sure to answer each section as best you can.
3. Keep in mind that VISTAs are community capacity/infrastructure builders, and **cannot** supplant staff roles, duties and responsibilities.
4. An ambitious work plan demonstrating a desire to engage the community to solve social problems and move people permanently out of poverty can always be scaled back.
5. The deadline for submission is the **real** deadline! If sending the site application electronically is not feasible, please submit a hard copy.

Additional Information:

1. All applications are reviewed by the Prevention Resource Center and the Corporation for National & Community Service to ensure projects are in alignment of the goals of CNCS and the PRC, and the work is VISTA appropriate.
2. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed until all required elements are submitted.
3. Submitting an application does not guarantee selection or approval as a VISTA site.
4. Receiving approval as a VISTA site does not guarantee VISTA placement.

H:\VISTA\LEADER\Sites\VISTA Site RFP.rtf