

Frequently Asked Questions: Lapse in Federal Appropriations AmeriCorps VISTA

1. What if I have issues or questions about service benefits (e.g., health care, child care, life insurance, worker compensation) during a lapse in federal appropriations?

Contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677 with questions or issues.

2. What if I have questions or issues about my Segal Education Award?

AmeriCorps Trust technicians will be available to answer questions and to process education award requests. The Trust technicians can be reached via the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

3. Will I continue to receive living allowance payments during a funding lapse?

Living allowance payments will cease during a funding lapse for the majority of VISTAs. Those VISTAs will be paid retroactively once the funding lapse has ended. However, if you are serving at a VISTA grant-supported project or your position is funded via a cost share agreement, you will continue to receive your living allowance during the funding lapse. To clarify how your VISTA position is funded, ask your supervisor whether you will continue to receive your living allowance.

4. Can my sponsor provide me an advance of emergency funds to assist with an emergency, as stated in the Memorandum of Agreement?

Yes. An advance of emergency funds up to \$500 is available from your sponsoring organization for emergencies as described in the VISTA Member Handbook. Once the funding lapse has ended the sponsor will work with the Corporation State Office to be reimbursed for the advanced funds.

However, asking the sponsor for funds during the funding lapse to cover rent, utilities, or daily expenses is a loan made between individuals whose conditions would be agreed upon by you and the sponsor. You and the sponsor would be responsible for complying with those conditions; the Corporation and VISTA are not party to such an agreement.

5. In the event of an emergency, whom do I contact?

In the event of an emergency, contact your supervisor and the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

6. May I still access My.AmeriCorps.gov?

Yes. The My AmeriCorps portal (my.americorps.gov) will be accessible during a funding lapse. For technical assistance with the portal, contact the National Service Hotline toll-free at 1-800-942-2677.

7. If I choose to terminate my VISTA service early during a funding lapse due to serving without a living allowance, is that considered a compelling reason for early termination?

Yes, but only if you are not receiving a living allowance during a funding lapse. If you are serving in a grant-supported or cost share project, and are therefore receiving a living allowance, the criteria set forth in VISTA policy to determine compelling reasons for early termination will be applied.

8. If there is an appropriation lapse, but the government reopens prior to the next pay period, will the VISTAs be paid during the next pay period?

When the lapse in appropriated funds ends, living allowance payments will be made as soon as possible, allowing time for the administrative process.

9. Can VISTAs take a job during the appropriation lapse?

Yes. According to VISTA Policy # 2015-15-001, VISTA members and VISTA Leaders are allowed to take lawful part-time employment that is approved by their supervisor, and does not interfere with their VISTA service or service hours.

10. Will CNCS be contacting VISTAs directly regarding the appropriation lapse?

Yes, CNCS may send email messages, if necessary, to inform VISTA members of new relevant information using the email address in the member's My AmeriCorps account.

11. If there is a lapse, and a VISTA decides to terminate for economic hardship, how do sponsors communicate this to CNCS if CNCS staff is furloughed?

Sponsors should send email communication to the appropriate state office staff as soon as possible, and indicate the termination in the sponsor verification form in My AmeriCorps. CNCS staff will process terminations and other actions as soon as funding is appropriated and staff return to work.