

July 29, 2010

To: Area Managers
State Program Directors
VMSU
VISTA Sponsors

From: Paul Davis, Acting Director, AmeriCorps VISTA



Re: Eligibility Requirements for AmeriCorps VISTA Documentation of U.S.
Citizenship/National or Lawful Permanent Resident Alien status

The majority of AmeriCorps VISTA members elect to receive an education award rather than an end of service cash stipend after the successful completion of a year of service. The eligibility requirements are more stringent for the education award. To qualify for an education award, an individual must be a U.S. citizen, a U.S. national or a lawful permanent resident alien. To qualify for a post service cash stipend, an individual need only be a legal resident of a state.

Since the majority of AmeriCorps VISTA members can demonstrate that they are U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or lawful permanent resident aliens, and may therefore choose between receiving an education award or an end of service cash stipend, the Corporation is changing the focus of our documentation collection to prioritize documents that meet the more stringent education award criteria. This memo lays out the process and documentation required. It supersedes all previous memos, guidance and policies on allowable member eligibility documentation.

I. A. Required Documentation for a U.S. Citizen or U.S. National (education award-eligible)

The following are acceptable forms of certifying status as a U.S. citizen or U.S. national:

1. A birth certificate showing that the individual was born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands, OR
2. A United States passport, OR
3. A report of birth abroad of a U.S. Citizen (FS-240) issued by the State Department
4. A certificate of birth-foreign service (FS 545) issued by the State Department
5. A certification of report of birth (DS-1350) issued by the State Department
6. A certificate of naturalization (Form N-550 or N-570) issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, OR
7. A certificate of citizenship (Form N-560 or N-561) issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.



I. B. Required Documentation for a Lawful Permanent Resident Alien (education award-eligible)

The following are acceptable forms of certifying status as a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States:

1. Permanent Resident Card, INS Form I-551 (“Green Card”); OR
2. Alien Registration Receipt Card, INS Form I-551
3. A passport indicating that the Immigration and Naturalization Service has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence.
4. A Departure Record (INS Form I-94) indicating that the Immigration and Naturalization Service has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence.

II. Required Documentation for Persons Legally Residing in a State (cash stipend-eligible)

An individual who does not provide documentation of eligibility for the education award as stated above may still demonstrate eligibility to serve in AmeriCorps VISTA by providing proof of legal residency in a state. Previously this was satisfied by providing a copy of a Government issued photo ID (e.g, drivers license) and a social security card. On the effective date of this procedure change, an individual must provide a government-issued photo identification and an immigration document demonstrating legal residency in a state. Examples include refugee status, asylum status, and temporary protected status. Consult with the State Office to ensure appropriate documentation for such individuals.

***Important note: The portal currently list 31 documents in the eligibility drop-down menus. Of the 31 documents, only those listed in this procedure are sufficient to establish eligibility for an education award, and eligibility for a cash stipend on the basis of legal residency in a state must be determined on a case by case basis by the State Office in consultation with the Office of General Counsel.

The following process for reviewing and approving AmeriCorps VISTA applicants is effective as of Monday, August 2, 2010.

Process for Review of Documentation

1. Applicant: Each applicant shares documentation with the sponsor (original documentation is preferred) to show citizenship or residency status. An appropriate time when an applicant shares the documentation may be during the interview process.

Sponsor Reviews Documentation: The sponsor reviews the list of documents which establish eligibility for the education award and finds

- a. The applicant is able to provide one of the 11 types of eligibility documents listed above. The sponsor enters the information in the portal and forwards to the State Office for approval.

- b. The applicant is a citizen, national or lawful permanent resident alien of the US but can't provide one of the listed documents. The sponsor contacts the State Office to obtain guidance on other potential forms of documentation.
- c. The applicant is not a citizen, national or lawful permanent resident alien but can produce eligibility documentation of a legal residency of a state. The sponsor directs the applicant to the State Office to discuss the end of service cash stipend.

3. Corporation State Office Reviews Information From Sponsor: Once the sponsor official enters online all the appropriate information and certifies it, the information appears in the State Office portal work basket. State Office personnel review the information to confirm the document provided is consistent with the requirements in this memo. In scenarios a and b above the State Office is finished when it approves the applicant. In scenario c, the State Office must contact the VMSU and alert the unit that the applicant in question is only entitled to receive the end of service cash stipend.

The VMSU is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate selection of post-service benefit is made by the member.