



Criminal History Checks for VISTAs and Leaders Sponsor Responsibilities

Below is an overview of sponsor responsibilities regarding Criminal History Check policy for VISTAs and Leaders. If you have questions about VISTA's criminal history check policy, please contact your Corporation State Office.

1. Review an application for disclosure of a criminal history and discuss the history with the applicant during the interview.

In determining whether to allow the applicant to serve with VISTA, consider, where applicable, the following:

- Nature of the criminal history;
- Conditions or circumstances that led to the offense(s);
- How long ago any offenses were committed;
- Applicant's age at the time of the offense(s);
- Relevant evidence of rehabilitation or change (e.g. courses, community service hours, life achievements, motivations);
- Nature of the anticipated VISTA assignment;
- Whether the VISTA applicant is currently on probation or parole.

Note that if a person is on parole or probation, VISTA will accept the individual only under rare, extenuating circumstances. A compelling argument must be made on behalf of the applicant.

2. Ensure the applicant's criminal history has been accurately reported on the application.

Any intentional misrepresentation or omission of a criminal history on the part of an applicant will result in disqualification for service.

Please ask the VISTA applicant whether s/he disclosed his/her complete criminal history on the application? If an applicant's criminal history has not been fully disclosed, notify the Corporation State Office.

Applicants who disclose a criminal history at the time of application or interview may be asked to provide the relevant court documentation to their Corporation State Office.

3. Inform all applicants of the VISTA Criminal History Check policy

The AmeriCorps VISTA application process requires a criminal history check to ensure community members with whom we work are secure, particularly children, individuals with disabilities, and adults aged 60 and above.

AmeriCorps VISTA investigates for past sexual offenses, violent crimes, and crimes that would have a direct bearing on an individual's service. This background check entails a search of the National Sex Offenders Registry (NSOPR) and an FBI criminal history check, which requires candidates to be fingerprinted at Pre-Service Orientation.

4. Make recommendation to the Corporation State Office

5. Close Supervision of VISTA Members

VISTA members may not have unsupervised access to vulnerable populations until their FBI record is received and cleared by VISTA. VISTAs must be accompanied by a responsible sponsor staff member when working with persons 18 years of age or younger, 60 years of age or older, or persons with disabilities. Corporation State Offices will notify sponsors when members have been cleared for service.