

Frequently Asked Questions

AmeriCorps VISTA: Illinois Affordable Housing Support Program

About AmeriCorps VISTA

1. How can I get more information about AmeriCorps VISTA and the Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project (IAHSP)?

You can contact IAHSP VISTA Leaders at vista@housingactionil.org or 312-939-6074 x107

You can also visit the links below:

- [AmeriCorps VISTA](#)
- [Housing Action IAHSP webpage](#)
- [IAHSP VISTA Resources](#)

2. What is the Corporation for National and Community Service?

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is the federal agency responsible for managing AmeriCorps and other national service programs.

3. What is AmeriCorps VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA is the national service program designed specifically to fight poverty. Founded as Volunteers In Service to America in 1965 and incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs in 1993, VISTA has been on the front line in the fight against poverty in America for more than 40 years.

VISTA members commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local governmental agency working to fight homelessness, strengthen community groups, and much more. With passion, commitment and hard work, VISTA members create or expand programs designed to bring individuals and communities out of poverty.

4. Is AmeriCorps like Peace Corps?

Yes. AmeriCorps is often referred to as the “domestic Peace Corps.” Both programs are committed to service and both offer challenging and rewarding full-time opportunities. Peace Corps assignments are all overseas and AmeriCorps members serve in the U.S. While Peace Corps volunteers serve for two years, AmeriCorps lasts one year, but interested members may re-apply for another year. Some AmeriCorps VISTA members serve more than one term.

5. What are the expectations?

Members are, as stated above, expected to serve for a full year at their host site. Along with other AmeriCorps expectations, members are expected to comply with professional standards of their host site organizations. In addition, members will be expected to attend a regional Pre-Service Orientation one week before their start of service. You can learn more about [PSO here](#).

AmeriCorps VISTA Benefits

6. What are the benefits of being an AmeriCorps VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA offers the following benefits: monthly living allowance, student-loan forbearance or deferment, choice of End of Service Stipend or Education Award that can be used to repay student loans or for future education expenses, childcare assistance if eligible, relocation allowance, and [non-competitive eligibility for federal jobs](#).

VISTAs can also apply for SNAP benefits (formerly Food Stamps).

7. Are AmeriCorps VISTA members paid?

VISTAs receive a modest living allowance between \$11,676 and \$12,312 annually, before taxes, depending on county. The living allowance varies by county in which the VISTA is placed and set at the poverty level.

For more information on resources and tips for living on the modest allowance, visit the [IAHSP VISTA Member Hub](#).

8. Does AmeriCorps pay for moving expenses?

The Corporation for National and Community Service will reimburse members for mileage, or purchase plane or train tickets to relocate for service. Members moving more than 50 miles from their “home of record” will receive a \$550 relocation allowance in their first living allowance check.

9. Do AmeriCorps VISTA members receive any vacation or medical leave?

VISTA members are eligible for 10 personal days and 10 sick days. In certain circumstances, VISTAs may be eligible for emergency leave and parental leave.

10. Is VISTA a full-time position?

VISTA is a full-time, 12-month commitment.

11. Can VISTAs hold outside employment?

VISTAs are allowed to take part-time employment as long as the position does not interfere with their VISTA service and is approved by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

12. How does the Segal Education Award work?

If you have completed your entire term of service, you can choose to receive the Segal Education Award (\$5,700 towards education) or the end of service stipend (\$1,500 cash). The education award can be used to pay loans that have already accumulated or to pay for future education. Some institutions match the [Segal education Award](#), giving you twice as much spending power-be sure to check out the list of matching institutions.

13. Where can I go to get more information about the benefits of the AmeriCorps VISTA program?

Visit the [VISTA Campus Benefits](#) page.

Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project (IAHSP) VISTA Program

14. What is the Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project - VISTA Program?

The Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project is a VISTA Program sponsored by Housing Action Illinois. IAHSP VISTAs serve our community in various capacities, all aimed at fighting poverty and improving the lives of disadvantaged individuals by expanding and improving the availability of decent, affordable, accessible housing in Illinois.

15. What do IAHSP VISTAs do?

VISTAs commit to serve full-time for a year at a nonprofit organization or local governmental organizations in Illinois focused on increasing and improving affordable housing. VISTAs work on a variety of or projects including: community organizing, program management and development, fundraising and donor relations, marketing and communications, educating low-income renters on housing resources, developing green housing and sustainable living initiatives, and developing the leadership skills of homeless youth.

16. What are benefits specific to the IAHSP VISTA program?

- Gaining in-depth knowledge and experience in the nonprofit sector.
- Professional development training.
- VISTAs in the Chicago metro area receive reimbursement for Chicago Transit Authority transit passes.

Become a IAHSP VISTA Member

17. How can I find out what positions are available?

[You can check out the full listing of positions here.](#)

18. What is the application and interview process?

Step 1: Complete AmeriCorps VISTA Online Application

- Go on the [AmeriCorps Portal](#) and set up an application and profile. On the [Search page](#), enter into the Program Name field, "AHSP". All IAHSP positions accepting applications will appear with the keyword.

Step 2: Scheduling and Preparing for 1st Interview

- If your application is selected, one of our VISTA Leaders will contact you with scheduling information and this FAQ you are now reading. You will also be required to write up a 300-500 word Statement of Interest essay on what motivated you to apply to the Illinois Affordable Housing Support Project. Be prepared for a phone interview.

Step 3: Scheduling 2nd Interview

- So you got through the first interview and were told you will be contacted if you move to the next phase. The next interview will be held by the specific host site organization you applied to serve at (ex. Hesed House, Chicago Rehab Network, Habitat For Humanity, etc.). The supervisor of the organization will contact you and schedule the next interview. The method of interview varies, but typically is over phone, via Skype, or in-person.

Step 4: Accepting the Position

- Typically, you will be extended an offer within a week's time if you seem to be a match for the host site. After this you will receive an email from the VISTA Leader you interviewed with and have to formally accept the position over the AmeriCorps Portal. The CNCS office will then determine whether you will be approved for appointment at your host site.