

PART II. PROJECT NARRATIVE

A. Executive Summary

Provide a brief narrative of your proposed AmeriCorps*VISTA project, including population to be served, issue areas, history of your organization's activities in these issue areas, and the type of service activities you expect the AmeriCorps*VISTA members to accomplish.

Organizational History.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mendocino County is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with 32 years of experience in the mentoring field, providing academic, vocational, and recreational mentoring. BBBS is the only mentoring program in Mendocino County that is fully certified by the national youth service organization Big Brothers Big Sisters of America to match volunteer mentors—"Bigs"—with at-risk children and youth—"Littles." Since 1997, the California Mentor Initiative has also certified BBBS as meeting California Mentoring Elements of Effective Practice. Following the guidelines of these organizations, BBBS recruits mentors and supervises mentoring matches with children and youth throughout Mendocino County. The BBBS mission statement reads: "Our work is as elementary as putting a friend in a child's life and as essential as putting hope in a child's future"

Please see the RCAA AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative

Proposed Program. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mendocino County Mentoring Program (BBBSMC) is a partnership of businesses, and community and government agencies that promote personal and social responsibility through one-to-one mentoring activities. The BBBSMC will utilize 2 AmeriCorps VISTA members to increase the number of quality mentors who will serve children living in at risk conditions including children of incarcerated and parents, the most vulnerable children in Mendocino County.

VISTA members will be placed in Ukiah and Fort Bragg to recruit mentors throughout Mendocino County for screening, referral and placement with BBBSMC using various strategies, including creating public service announcements and articles, distributing flyers and bookmarks, staffing event tables, etc. Direct outreach will include community presentations to businesses, civic clubs, professional associations, students and faculty at educational institutions, labor unions, military facilities, key leaders in the community, etc. Outreach materials (flyers, brochures, bookmarks, etc.) will be developed to: publicize the need for mentoring youth highlighting stories of success, promote community service, and annotate the rewards of mentoring.

Population Served and Issue Area. No one knows for certain how many children in this country have an incarcerated parent in state or federal prison or on parole. National estimates suggest that approximately 2 million children have an incarcerated parent, and many more have experienced parental incarceration at some point in their lives (Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, US Department of Justice, 1998). The Federal Resource Center for Children of Prisoners reports that the number of children with parents in prison has increased by more than 50% since 1991, a 5.7% annual increase, which suggests that the number of children affected by their parent's incarceration will continue to increase. In California alone, the number is estimated to exceed 200,000 children. Additionally, there is no number of how many vulnerable children between the ages of 7 and 17 that need mentoring services to support them in reaching their full potential, but we do have more than 200 children and youth waiting to be matched.

Until recently, children with incarcerated parents had not received attention as a special population with unique needs. Many factors have combined to hide them from view. These include: a criminal justice system struggling to deal with overpopulation; a lack of consideration for an inmate's familial relationships; an overwhelmed child welfare system; negative public attitudes toward incarcerated individuals; lack of a common database; and poor communication and fragmentation of services between agencies serving children with incarcerated parents.

B. Summary of Accomplishments (For Current AmeriCorps*VISTA Sponsoring Organizations Only) First time applicants: please leave blank. Current AmeriCorps*VISTA sponsoring organizations seeking project renewal are required to complete this section. Briefly state your project's objectives and provide a clear description of the project's impact/ outcomes, and accomplishments/outputs to date.

Please refer to the Overall Program narrative for specific accomplishments of that program.

C. Needs and Activities

1. State in measurable and quantifiable terms the specific poverty-related need(s) identified by the community(ies) that the AmeriCorps*VISTA project will address, including the number of low-income people directly affected by the problem(s).

Much of rural Mendocino County's population of approximately 90,000 is economically impoverished, with a median household income of \$35,664 (compared with \$47,323 for the state), and 22% of the county's children live in poverty (compared with 18% for the state). Ethnically, Mendocino County's school-age children are 28% Hispanic, 9% American Indian, 59% White/non-Hispanic, and 4% other or multiple ethnicities. Limited economic opportunities are associated with a host of community risk factors and social problems for many of the county's 25,000 children and youth:^{1[1]}

- ? Child abuse is reported in Mendocino County at more than twice the statewide rate, 118/1,000, compared with 52/1,000 statewide.
- ? The county's foster care placement rate is 15/1,000 (compared with 8/1,000 statewide).
- ? 60% of county students are eligible for the free or reduced price meal program (compared with 50% statewide).
- ? 312 Mendocino County youth on currently probation. Over the past four years, probation bookings of Hispanic offenders have increased by more than 50% (from 16% to 25%), and gang activity is increasing. Law enforcement agencies report that the rate of juvenile law enforcement dispositions is higher than all but 15 of the state's 58 counties. Rising trends in juvenile offenses related to community and school safety include vandalism (16% increase in the past 5 years); drug violations (88% increase); liquor law violations (59% increase); and aggravated assault (17% increase).

In Mendocino County, social indicators conspire with climate and topography (only 3% of the Mendocino County's 3,510 square miles is flat!) to support an underground economy that flourishes on the growth and production of marijuana and methamphetamines. While alcohol and drug abuse are common elsewhere, the situation in Mendocino County—located in northern California's infamous "emerald triangle" of marijuana cultivation—is especially acute because of the geographic isolation, patterns of multigenerational abuse, and a culture of acceptance that views drug production, use, and abuse as normal parts of life. In California's 2005 Campaign Against Marijuana Production (CAMP), Mendocino County bore the dubious honor of ranking fifth highest in the state in marijuana confiscations. Of the 723 youth who were booked into the county Juvenile Hall during 2003, 8% (58 youth) were booked under substance abuse charges, and an additional 38% (275 youth) were booked for violations of probation, most of which were related to substance abuse.^{2[2]}

All of these problems place children's healthy development—both personal and academic development—at risk. Poverty, social pressures, media overload, and the disintegration of the family unit all play a part in creating an environment that fosters risk factors and diminishes opportunities for youth to develop assets that contribute to their positive development and their success in school. Specific challenges to schools and students include academic under-performance as demonstrated by standardized testing results—Mendocino County's 4th grade math scores place it below all but 7 of the state's 58 counties. Schools are also challenged by increasing numbers of English Language Learners in the targeted communities (ranging from 18% in Point Arena to 55% in Anderson Valley).

D. Strengthening Communities

1. Describe how the new infrastructure or organizational capacity created by your project will bring individuals and, ultimately, the community out of poverty.

BBBSMC has developed a multitude of mentor services through partnerships with community service organizations, government programs, schools, and others in the community. These VISTA members will provide additional resource development, community collaboration, mentor recruitment, screening, referral and match support. BBBSMC recognizes that in order for all children to live up to their full adult potential they need the support and guidance of a caring and consistent adult in their lives. The two AmeriCorps VISTA members placed with the BBBSMC to support their commitment to that goal. VISTA members will recruit mentors for local youth thereby building BBBSMC capacity enhance and expand their ability to provide quality-mentoring services.

2. How, if at all, will you collaborate with other national service programs (AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, RSVP, NCC) in order to support the proposed project?

Please refer to RCAA AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overall Narrative

^{1[1]} These indicators are cited in *Children Now California County Data Book, 2005*. Oakland, CA: Children Now.

^{2[2]} Mendocino County Probation Department, 2005.

E. Recruitment and Development (of Members, Volunteers and Participants)

1. Describe in specific terms how your organization will recruit qualified AmeriCorps*VISTA members to serve on this project.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-1.

2. Describe the service-related transportation needs of the AmeriCorps*VISTA members and your plans for meeting those needs.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-2.

3. Briefly describe plans for orienting members to your organization and the community. Describe any training opportunities and technical assistance that will be available to members throughout their service.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section E-3.

F. VISTA Assignment Description

1. List the tasks and activities AmeriCorps*VISTA member(s) and Leader(s) must perform to implement the strategies described in the project plan(s). These tasks and activities should logically relate to the overall project goals and activities you propose in Part III, Project plan for AmeriCorps*VISTA Project Applicants. This section will include more detail on the actual service activities, and should not include direct service activities. Create as many different assignment descriptions as needed for the project.

AmeriCorps VISTA Members serving with the Northcoast Mentor Program will:

- ✍ Build their knowledge of mentoring by attending mentor trainings
- ✍ Identify mentor program challenges and needs
- ✍ Collaborate with program partners by attending quarterly Mentor Council
- ✍ Develop outreach and marketing plans
- ✍ Produce program materials for community outreach and education, recruitment of volunteers, and support of mentor/mentee matches
- ✍ Recruit 50 volunteers to mentor local youth
- ✍ Screen and refer potential mentors
- ✍ Create strategies for volunteer retention
- ✍ Build community resources to support mentor/ mentee matches and project sustainability
- ✍ Create interest survey for mentor/mentee matches
- ✍ Organize activities and events supporting mentor/mentee
- ✍ Update mentor/mentee data tracking system
- ✍ Model mentoring

2. List the recommended skills and qualifications that an AmeriCorps*VISTA member or Leader should have to successfully complete the project plan.

- ✍ Must be self-directed
- ✍ Mentoring experience/knowledge is helpful
- ✍ Ability to write and speak well
- ✍ Comfortable with speaking in public
- ✍ Ability to motivate others
- ✍ Serve as a role model
- ✍ Computer literate
- ✍ Volunteer recruitment experience is helpful
- ✍ Excellent organizational skills
- ✍ Marketing/outreach experience
- ✍ Well-developed work ethic to include: integrity, flexibility, accountability and a desire to make a difference

G. Project Management

1. Describe plans for daily supervision of AmeriCorps*VISTA members. Specify if supervision will be a full-time or part-time responsibility.

Daily supervision of each VISTA member will be the part time responsibility of the full-time Executive Director. VISTA members will receive overall direction, support and resources from on a daily basis while being available to the members a minimum of 3 hours per day.

Please see Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section G.

2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of director's members of the low-income community? If not, please describe how your agency has developed, or will develop, an advisory council for the AmeriCorps*VISTA project that consists of members or representatives of the low-income community served by the proposed project.

There are nine member of the BBBSMC, two of the nine are parents of children who were in the program in the past and two that are currently serving as mentors in the program. Three of the nine are considered low income. BBBSMC is preparing to extend their board participation to the Ukiah area encouraging participation by low income and program participants.

3. Describe your plans for evaluating progress towards achieving your project's anticipated outcomes and accomplishments. What information and data will you use to demonstrate the concrete impacts of the project?

The Administration of Children and Families (ACF)(grantor) evaluation plan is extensive and bi monthly reporting is required. Program partners submit monthly and quarterly data on the status of mentoring relationships to NMP and VISTA members. In addition, BBBS National requires additional data based on goals and outcomes agreed upon by BBBSMC and approved. VISTA members will glean information from conversations with mentors and their mentees during activities.

VISTA Members are required to track progress on the goals and objectives of their workplan by:

- ✍ number of outreach presentations
- ✍ number of volunteers recruited
- ✍ number of volunteers referred
- ✍ number of mentors matched to participating program youth
- ✍ number of meetings facilitated
- ✍ number of activities and events coordinated
- ✍ number of mentor mentee matches participating in the coordinated activities and events
- ✍ amount of resources developed and donations received
- ✍ number of grants written and funded

H. Organizational Capacity

1. Is your organization able to contribute financially for all or some of costs related to AmeriCorps*VISTA members? Please explain.

Unfortunately BBBSMC does not have access to funds that could be used for cost sharing of 2 AmeriCorps VISTA positions. ACF grant funds do not allow monies to be spent on federal expenses.

2. What in-kind resources will you provide to ensure the success of the proposed project?

The BBBSMC will support both AmeriCorps*VISTA Members with all the necessary tools to fulfill their service assignments including desk space, office supplies, computers, phones, resource directories, training, mileage, etc.

3. Describe current activities your organization and other organizations are undertaking to address the problems identified in your need statement. Describe how the proposed project will complement this work.

BBBSMC is an affiliate with the National Big Brother Big Sisters of America. Locally, BBBSMC works with various organization in an effort to strengthen community partnerships and promote quality mentor services. Programs include:

? **Big Brothers Big Sisters Core Program**

Our traditional or "core" program is a county wide, one-on-one matching program. We match adult volunteers with children and youth ages 4-18. These matches are made based on compatibility between adult and child. We ask approximately three hours each week from our volunteers to spend with their "Littles," but there is

flexibility to allow for different schedules and life challenges because this is a program with the emphasis on PEOPLE. (Average over 100 community matches a year)

? **High School Mentoring Program**

Program that trains and matches high school mentors one on one with elementary aged kids. These friendships are based on-campus with a tutorial focus, but there are also times to chat, play tetherball, and create your own activity ideas. Matches are based on personality traits and basic compatibility. Each match lasts for the duration of the school year.

? **Jump Program**

The Jump Program is a site based program operating county wide that offers an option for adults over 18 where we place a community volunteer in the schools to help with academic study and other aspects of school life with a child needing extra support! There are presently volunteers at Redwood School in Ft. Bragg and in schools throughout Ukiah. County employees (approved by the county Board of Supervisors) qualify for two hours a month paid time to spend with a child if they match 2 hours of their own time!

? **Men to Boys / Women to Girls**

Both Men to Boys and Women to Girls are activity based programs that plan a different activity once per month, put together by a small group of adult male/female volunteers. Both programs focus on pre-teens who want to get together and have some fun! We need more mentors as volunteers!

? **Gang Prevention:** Focus on recruiting adult Mentors for the Fort Bragg

Middle School where gang activity has just started. Principal, Marli Shoop is incredibly supportive and hopes that we can continue building a strong base to serve this particular school. The Middle school was the focus of our recent Community Coalition for Gang Awareness and Prevention of which we are one of the sponsoring agencies.

BBBSSMC is a leader in providing mentoring services in Mendocino County. VISTA members will provide expansion of quality assured mentor services to at risk youth including children of incarcerated parents.

4. Describe the accessibility of services provided to members of the community with disabilities. Is your organization able to accommodate AmeriCorps*VISTA members with disabilities?

BBBSSMC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to meet the needs of qualified persons with disabilities wishing to serve as members.

I. Other

Please leave blank unless otherwise instructed.