

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

Proposed Program. The Redwood Community Action Agency's (RCAA) Northcoast Mentor Program (NMP) Mentoring Children of Prisoners has created partnerships with community, government, business and/or faith-based organizations whose mission is to promote personal and social responsibility through one-to-one mentoring activities. NMP will utilize AmeriCorps* VISTA members to increase the number of quality mentors referred to local service providers serving children living in at risk conditions including children of incarcerated parents.

VISTA members will recruit mentors throughout Humboldt County for screening, referral and placement with local service providers who serve children of incarcerated parents, using various strategies, including creating public service announcements and articles, distributing flyers and bookmarks, and staffing event tables. Direct outreach will include community presentations to businesses, civic clubs, professional associations, churches and other faith-based organizations, students and faculty at educational institutions, labor unions, military facilities, and key leaders and individuals in the community, outreach materials, such as flyers, brochures, and bookmarks, will be developed to publicize the need for mentoring youth, highlighting stories of success; promote community service; annotate the rewards of mentoring; and how to become involved.

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 a parent's incarceration will continue to increase. In California alone, the number is estimated to exceed 200,000 children.

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) Briefly state your project's objectives and provide a clear description of the project's impact/ outcomes, and accomplishments/outputs to date.

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

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).

The state correctional system reports that in 2003, 743 inmates were former Humboldt County residents. In the year 2003 more than 600 men and women were on parole in this county. Bureau of Justice statistics show 56% of inmates are parents of children under age 18 nationally. On average, incarcerated parents have 2.4 children, and in 2003 alone there were approximately 1334 children of prisoners living in Humboldt County. It is not uncommon for this information to be unknown by schools and/or agencies serving children and youth.

For the purposes of this application, the RCAA Mentor Project AmeriCorps*VISTA members will recruit, screen, and refer 80 mentors to be matched in one-to-one mentoring relationships with youth, ages 4-17, whose parent/s are incarcerated in a county, state or federal prison with mentors recruited from the community.

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.**

The Redwood Community Action Agency's Northcoast Mentor Program (NMP) developed a coordinated system of service for local mentoring organizations through program and resource development, community collaboration, mentor recruitment, screening, referral and training. The NMP recognizes the potential of all children to succeed to their full adult potential with the support and guidance of a caring and consistent adult in their lives. The AmeriCorps VISTA members will be placed with the NMP collaborative to support our commitment to that goal. VISTA members will recruit mentors for local youth thereby building the capacity for collaborative partners to expand and enhance 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 see Redwood Community Action Agency's AmeriCorps*VISTA Program Overview Narrative, Section B.

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 RCAA's mentoring programs will:

- ✍ Build their knowledge of mentoring by attending mentor trainings
- ✍ Identify mentor program challenges and needs
- ✍ Create interest survey for mentor-mentee matches
- ✍ Collaborate with program partners by attending quarterly Mentor Council meetings
- ✍ Develop outreach and marketing plans
- ✍ Produce program materials for community outreach and education, recruitment of volunteers, and support of mentor/mentee matches
- ✍ Recruit volunteers to mentor local youth
- ✍ Screen and refer potential mentors
- ✍ Create strategies for volunteer retention
- ✍ Build community resources to support mentor-mentee matches
- ✍ Organize activities and events supporting mentor-mentee matches
- ✍ 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 part time Special Projects Manager. 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.

One third of the RCAA board is composed of low income members of the community. For more detail related to the RCAA board, please see the overall RCAA AmeriCorps* VISTA Application narrative. For detail on the board make-up of individual sites, please see the Part B Application narrative for each prospective year 1 site.

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)(Mentoring Children of Prisoners grantor) evaluation plan is extensive and quarterly reports are required. Program partners submit monthly and quarterly data on the status of mentoring relationships to VISTA members. In addition, VISTA members will glean success and challenges from conversations with mentors and their mentees during VISTA facilitated activities.

VISTA members are required to track progress on the goals and objectives of their work plan by:

- ✍ number of outreach presentations
- ✍ number of volunteers screened
- ✍ number of volunteers referred
- ✍ number of mentors matched to participating program youth and the hours they serve
- ✍ 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.

The Northcoast Mentor Program is committed to paying the share of cost for one VISTA member. Unfortunately ACF does not allow funding to be used for the AmeriCorps VISTA share of cost. As a result will apply for foundation funding to help us cover this cost.

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

The NMP will support the AmeriCorps*VISTA members with all the necessary tools to fulfill their service assignments including desk space, office supplies, computers, phones, resource directories, training, agency vehicle and on the job 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.

The NMP facilitates the Northcoast Mentor Council (NMC), a coalition of agencies working to strengthen community partnerships and the promotion of quality mentor programs. The NMC was formed to provide leadership, training and support for all entities that serve youth in a mentor capacity throughout the county. The NMC includes: Campfire USA; Eureka City Schools; Grl Scouts; Humboldt County Office of Education Court and Community Schools and Tapestry Program; Humboldt State University YES House; North Coast Big Brothers Big Sisters; RCAA Family Services, Straight Up AmeriCorps Program and Youth Service Bureau; This Side of the Rock Fellowship, Volunteer Center of the Redwoods, and others. This collaborative approach fosters the expansion of quality assured mentor programs. In addition, we contract with Eureka City Schools, Northcoast Big Brothers Big Sisters, RCAA Family Services and Youth Service Bureau, This Side of the Rock Fellowship Faith-Based Mentor Program, to extend mentoring services to 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?

RCAA's NMP 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.