

PROJECT NARRATIVE

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.

The Tehama County Mentoring program matches at-risk youth aged 5-18 with caring, trained mentors through 5 distinct mentoring programs. These are: One to One Mentors, Mentor-Tutors, Mentoring Moms (for pregnant and parenting teens), Cross Age Mentors and Lunch Buddies. Group activities for mentors and mentees are scheduled on a regular basis to promote socialization and connectedness to the community and mentoring program. There is special outreach to children of prisoners. The Tehama County Mentoring Program has been active since 2000. It is a program of the office of prevention at the Tehama County Department of Education.

The AmeriCorps*VISTA assigned to this project will be primarily responsible for the Cross Age Mentoring Program, which matches elementary students in SERRF after school programs with high school students from four county high schools: Red Bluff High, Corning High, Los Molinos High and Mercy High. The VISTA will help identify children of incarcerated parents, with the goal of identifying an adult mentor for these children by the time the school year is complete and a high school mentor’s commitment is complete.

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).

Tehama County historically suffers from a chronically depressed economy and high unemployment. Tehama County's population of 57,101 ranks 53rd out of 58 in the state on per capita income (2001). Nearly 31% of Tehama County children live in poverty, and of the households with children under the age of eighteen, 20% are headed by single women (U.S. Census Bureau, 1999). Tehama County students are faced with increasing rates of substance abuse and mental health issues, interpersonal and family violence, unintended pregnancy, and low rates of academic performance and college achievement. According to Children Now, on the average, 33% percent of Tehama County mothers have less than twelve years of formal education.

Research shows that children who have mentors are less likely to engage in violent acts, use alcohol and other drugs, become teenage parents, or skip school (Rhodes, J. 2002). The Tehama County Mentoring Program has been functioning with one full time staff member coordinating five programs as well as group activities. The program has served around 100 children per year. With the addition of an AmeriCorps*VISTA member, the program hopes to double its capacity to serve families. The VISTA member would assume responsibility for growing the Cross Age Mentoring Program which has the most potential to match children with mentors. This would involve coordinating with staff and students at four area high schools and eight elementary level SERRF after school programs.

Strengthening Communities

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

The Tehama County Mentoring Program is an official site of the RSVP program and actively recruits for retired and senior volunteers to serve as mentors. The program has also enrolled three AmeriCorps members stationed at

MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS – CALIFORNIA AMERICORPS*VISTA PROJECT

Northern Valley Catholic Social Service to provide mentoring services to five at-risk children, including one child of a prisoner.

VISTA Assignment Description

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

Recommended skills and qualifications include:

1. A commitment to the value of mentoring as an important youth development program;
2. Excellent presentation skills;
3. Excellent writing skills;
4. Experience coordinating a project or group of volunteers;
5. An educator, counselor, or individual who has experience with youth programs is desirable; and,
6. Ability to communicate effectively with both adults and youth in formal and informal settings
7. Ability to keep detailed records and confidentiality.

Project Management

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

The AmeriCorps*VISTA member will be supervised by the Mentoring Program Coordinator. Supervision will be a full-time responsibility. Additional support will come from Prevention Program Director.

2. Are 51 percent or more of the persons on your board of directors' 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.

The Tehama County Mentoring Program Advisory Board consists of representatives from agencies serving low income individuals. These include representatives from Tehama County Health Services Agency Public Health and Drug and Alcohol Divisions, Tehama County Sheriff's Office, the Tehama County Department of Education, and Computers for Classrooms. One local business woman has joined the board as a community representative.

The program receives feedback from the clients served (both parents and children) through a comprehensive evaluation process developed and administered by Duerr Evaluation. This includes surveys, focus groups and data collection.

Organizational Capacity

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

The Tehama county Mentoring Program will provide a desk, computer, phone and work space for the AmeriCorps VISTA member. The member will receive mileage reimbursement for work-related travel. Prevention staff will also be cognizant of helping to identify low or no-cost recreational activities for the VISTA member.

2. 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.

Tehama County is known for collaborating to serve children and families. Among the organizations that the mentoring program coordinates closely with are: Tehama County Health Services Agency, Northern Valley Catholic Social Service, the network of Family Resource Centers (Red Bluff, Corning, Gerber/Los Molinos), Tehama County Sheriff's Office, Police Activities League, SERRF After School Programs, and the Red Bluff and

MENTORING CHILDREN OF PRISONERS – CALIFORNIA AMERICORPS*VISTA PROJECT

Corning Exchange Clubs. All organizations have complimentary programs or activities. We network to provide a full range of services to our families.

The AmeriCorps VISTA member will help increase capacity of our mentoring programs, which will in turn help us identify more children of prisoners and families who could benefit from local support services.

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

The Tehama County Mentoring Program is able to make reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. However, the duties of this position will require the Vista member to drive, possibly up to 50 miles on any given day, for the purpose of traveling to mentoring program sites and schools.