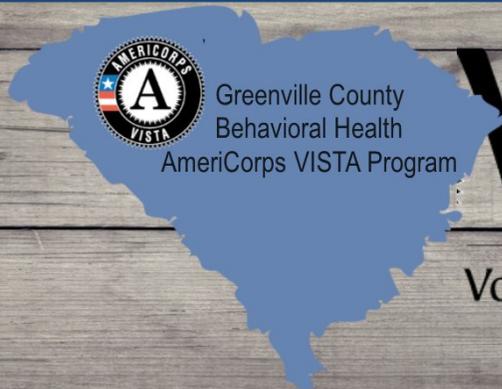


# Applying to be a GCBH AmeriCorps VISTA Agency Site for the 2019 Year



# VISTA

Volunteers In Service To America

ALLEVIATING POVERTY & INCREASING ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE IN GREENVILLE COUNTY

## 2019 PROGRAM SITE TIMELINE

- **2019 Site Applications Released** at [www.mhagc.org](http://www.mhagc.org) **Wed., 1/16/19**
- **Mandatory Information Session for Applying Sites** Agencies applying for one or more VISTA position must send a representative to one of the following information sessions held at MHAGC's administrative offices (429 N. Main St, Greenville).\*
  - ◆ **New Potential Sites:**
    - ◆ **8:30 AM, Fri., 1/25/19**
    - ◆ **4 PM, Thurs., 1/31/19**
    - ◆ **12 PM, Thurs., 2/7/19**
  - ◆ **Current Sites:**
    - ◆ **3 PM, Thurs., 2/7/19**
- **Completed Site Applications Due 12 PM, Wed., 2/13/19** (emailed to [mhagc@mhagc.org](mailto:mhagc@mhagc.org); MHAGC will confirm receipt)
- **Applicant Sites Notified of Status No later than Wed. 2/20/19**
- **VAD Development for 2019 Sites February-March 2019**
- **VISTA Recruitment & Interviews March-April 2019**
- **GCBH VISTA Sponsor Training Mon., July 8-Fri., July 26**
- **VISTAs Begin Service at Sites Mon., July 29**
- **Last Day of Service July 7, 2020**

## WHY THE GCBH VISTA PROGRAM?



**Access to behavioral health services continues to be a pressing need in our community.** Nationally, two in four individuals suffer from a mental illness at some point in their lives, with one out of four developing the symptoms before age 14. Our state ranks a dismal 49th nationally in how successfully an individual needing behavioral health services (including services related to mental health and substance misuse) can access them. The need for increased access to behavioral health care was identified as a top priority in separate 2016 studies released by Greenville Health System and Bon Secours St. Francis.

In Greenville County, strong and capable agency partners are confronting challenges related to the rapidly-increasing demand for services. For many of these organizations, requests for programming have doubled or tripled in recent years while financial resources have stayed consistent or declined, thereby forcing agency leaders to concentrate on day-to-day needs rather than prioritizing investments in capacity-building efforts.

**The Greenville County Behavioral Health (GCBH) VISTA Program is designed to increase access to behavioral health services for Greenville County's low-income residents in measurable and sustainable ways.** In the first year, nine members worked at three non-profit agencies. Beginning in Summer 2019 (Year Three), the program is expected to include 12 to 16 VISTAs working at a non-profit or government agency in order to enhance services related to either mental health or the opioid crisis.

# FAQs – Applying to be a 2019 GCBH VISTA Site

## What are AmeriCorps VISTA Members? What is the GCBH VISTA Program?

Across the nation, AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) engages more than 8,000 individuals annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. AmeriCorps VISTA Members serve full-time for one year at non-profit organizations or local government agencies to build their capacity and carry out programs that alleviate poverty. Instead of a salary, VISTAs receive a living stipend that puts them at a poverty line. Each VISTA works approximately 40-45 hours a week to fight poverty in their respective roles.

The Greenville County Behavioral Health (GCBH) VISTA Program is designed to increase access to behavioral health services for Greenville County's low-income residents in measurable and sustainable ways.

## What kind of work can GCBH VISTAs focus on?

VISTAs' work **may not** focus on direct service. Instead their activities must be sustainable and build the capacity of the organization. GCBH VISTA encourages sites to pursue positions focusing on one or more of the following:

- Social Media/Marketing Management
- Fundraising
- Developing/Modifying and Recording Programs to Increase Access to Care
- Updating/Creating Databases
- Partnership-Building
- Improving Volunteer Recruitment or Management Systems
- Program or Community Assessment



## I understand that that the third GCBH VISTA cohort begins in July 2019. Where have GCBH VISTAs worked in the past?

In 2019, men and women from across the country will begin a year of VISTA service in the third GCBH VISTA Cohort. Each GCBH VISTA works at a local organization. Current sites include Just Say Something, The Phoenix Center, NAMI Greenville, Furman University and Mental Health America of Greenville County. VISTAs concentrate on expanding access to services related to either mental health or opioid abuse/misuse for low-income individuals. To ensure the program is best supported, an additional individual—with proven service experience—serves as a VISTA Leader.

## How is GCBH VISTA funded?

Each year, sites are asked to contribute a per-member amount to help cover some of the costs the sponsor administers to the Corporation. A generous grant from Greenville Women Giving provided funding for many of the Year One supports (including mileage reimbursement during the service year, uniform costs, supplies, etc.). Funding from the Jolley Foundation, the Graham Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service helped fund Year 2 costs. MHAGC is currently pursuing funding for Year 3; the sponsor is committing to a cohort with a minimum of 12 positions. The cohort may be larger depending on funding and interest.

## What changes are planned for Year Three?

Year Three of the GCBH VISTA program will be a continuation of learning what works and what does not. In Year Two, GCBH VISTA added a mandatory independent project to be conducted at the MHAGC offices each week. This session is three to four hours and is scheduled according to the site and VISTA schedules. It allows VISTAs to improve listening skills while contributing to a partnership-focused project related to expanding behavioral health services. In Year Three, some of the program requirements have been adjusted slightly.

# FAQs – Applying to be a 2019 GCBH VISTA Site

## How many GCBH VISTA positions are available for 2019-2020 (Cohort Three)?

The Greenville County Behavioral Health VISTA Program currently expects that Cohort Three, based on current projections of grant funds, that the number of positions is projected to be between 12 and 16 VISTA positions and one Leader position. For the 2019-2020 program year, roughly half of the VISTA positions focusing on mental health access and the remaining VISTA positions focusing on services related to opioid abuse/use disorder. The exact number of positions will be determined in mid-February based on funding, the number of total slots available through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the number of strong site applications for positions, and the sponsor's capacity to effectively administer the program.

## How will sites be selected? What makes a stronger application?

A diverse committee of community partners familiar with issues related to behavioral health access and individuals with expertise in VISTA programming will independently review and evaluate site applications. Please refer to the attached rubric which will be used by each committee member. Greater consideration will be given to sites that can demonstrate:

- Understanding of and experience with the AmeriCorps VISTA program;
- A clear connection between the requested VISTA position(s) and fighting poverty;
- A clear connection between the requested VISTA position(s) and increasing access to behavioral health care;
- Understanding of the capacity-building and sustainable nature of VISTAs' work; and
- Ability and measures to thoroughly support the VISTA throughout his/her service.



## Let's say my site is selected? What happens next? Must I accept?

GCBH VISTA will notify all applicants about the outcome (selected, waitlisted, or denied) of their application no later than Wednesday, February 20. A GCBH VISTA program team member will then work with your site to develop position listings to be used for potential member recruitment and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between your organization and the program sponsor Mental Health America of Greenville County. This MOU needs to be signed by your organization's CEO no later than Tuesday, March 6, 2019 to officially accept your site's position(s) for the 2019-2020 program year. In March, the GCBH VISTA Program team will work with your staff to develop and submit to CNCS for approval the VISTA assignment description (VAD) for each position. The GCBH VISTA Leader and staff will post your positions, conduct initial screenings of candidates, and send qualified candidates to your site for your team to interview and consider for selection.

## If my site is selected, what is the cost? What other things must my site provide before and during the service year?

Please refer to the application for the full list of mandatory/optional supports for the program. The host site provides a work space, mileage reimbursement for service-related activity (at a minimum per-mile rate consistent with the federal reimbursement rate), and the supplies necessary for the VISTA's service. The \$4,000-per VISTA cost-share (made payable to the program sponsor) helps cover the costs the sponsor submits to CNCS for each VISTA position. A housing stipend totaling \$600 for the service year (paid by the host site/organization to the landlord of the VISTA on a quarterly basis) provides support to the VISTA beyond the CNCS living stipend. VISTAs receive training from CNCS and initial training by the sponsor ("on-site orientation and training") which includes general program information and active listening skills. The site must provide site- and position-specific training in August and as needed throughout the year. The site must have a full-time staff member who will be the day-to-day supervisor of the VISTA,