

Get to Know Member Letter

<<DATE>>

Hello!

Welcome to the <<program name>>. We are very excited to have you on our team to help <<program focus/mission>>. We hope you are looking forward to working together over the coming year as much as we are.

As you probably expect, your VISTA experience will be both challenging and fulfilling. But what else can you anticipate during your term of service? What about the details? You will get answers to these and many other questions at your Pre-Service Orientation (PSO) and during your orientation at your host site.

In the meantime, we've put together this packet of important information to help guide you on your path to becoming a VISTA. Please review it carefully and feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

Included with this letter are <<create a welcome packet with information such as that described below>>:

VISTA Welcome Packet

In this very useful collection of information you'll find out what is expected of you as a VISTA and what to expect from PSO. Inside are an explanation of benefits, a job description, and organizational information (including a list of contacts). Don't forget to check out the various listservs and Web sites that may be of interest to you.

"Getting to Know You" Form

We don't mean to pry . . . we just want to get to know you! We also want to make sure that we have your most current contact information and get a better understanding of why you chose to be part of our team. Please fill out this form and send it back by <<deadline>>.

Electronic Deposit Authorization

[<<Important Note: Check with your sponsoring agency. Some agencies will accept only their own forms, not the one distributed at PSO. If that's the case, enclose your direct deposit form here and let VISTAs know not to submit the one they receive at PSO or before.>>]

The direct deposit form is very important—you'll need to complete it in order to get paid! Per the official VISTA guidelines, all VISTAs must receive their biweekly living allowance stipends via direct deposit (that means no paper checks).

<<Program Name>> VISTA Orientation

The <<Program Name>> VISTA Orientation will be held <<date and location>>. The orientation is your introduction to our project and your fellow VISTAs and AmeriCorps members. Much of the time will be spent covering topics that will be of use to you in your new position. There will also be plenty of social opportunities to get to know each other. Mark it on your calendar! Enclosed is a registration form for this training, which you are expected to attend; a draft agenda will follow. Please return the registration form by <<deadline.>>

Forbearance Request for National Service Form

If you have elected the end-of-service Education Award, use this form to put your loan(s) in forbearance. You'll want to do this not only to delay repayment but also to get the Corporation to pay the interest accrued during your service (which is in addition to the award amount). Send the form to <<program coordinator or contact>> for date verification and program director signature.

Applying for Food Stamps

If you plan to apply for food stamps (or if you already receive food stamps) please read this document carefully. It is important to note that the amount of money you are eligible to receive will vary significantly depending on when you schedule an appointment with a case worker (i.e., before PSO vs. after PSO).

<<Program Name>> VISTAs Attending PSO

There will be <<number>> new VISTAs from our project starting in <<month>>. Make sure you look for each other at PSO and take advantage of the opportunity to network. E-mail addresses are also included here in case you want to get in touch beforehand. [<<List any e-mail blogs, listservsm or other online communities VISTAs may want to join now.>>]

VISTA Projects in <<state/area>>

At PSO, you will likely meet VISTAs who will also be serving in <<state/area>> but with projects other than <<your project/program name>>. This informational sheet is meant to help you piece together the puzzle so you can see how your efforts as a VISTA fit with the big picture.

If you have questions about any of the enclosed items, please contact us! We are happy to help however we can. We hope you have an enriching experience at PSO. We'll see you soon!

Sincerely,

<<Name and contact information of VISTA supervisor or leader>>

Getting to Know You

Questionnaire for new <<Program Name>> VISTAs



Name:		Site name and location:	
Nickname:		Current home address:	
Birthday:			
Preferred e-mail address:		Home phone:	Cell phone:
Sweatshirt size:	Dietary preferences/allergies:		
Background/family information:			
Hobbies/interests:			
Talents/skills:			
What do you hope to learn? (training requests, etc.)			
Why did you become a VISTA?			

Please return this form to: <<Contact name and address>>