**Successful VISTA & Host Site Supervisor Relationships**

*“The mentors and students are equal and become united through a partnership. Each works collaboratively toward a mutual and beneficial goal. On a FIRST team, a mentor’s goal should be to actively share his/her knowledge and experiences with the team to help foster intellectual growth.” – FIRST Team Mentoring Handbook*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Best Practice: Maintain constant communication with clearly defined goals and expectations**   * Weekly check-in with a structured agenda * Keep each other “in the loop” with projects, events, ideas, etc. * Promote a culture of open, clear, and collaborative communication * As any issues arise, they are raised directly with the other party in a respectful and professional manner. Issues are viewed as opportunities for improvement and professional growth.   **Best Practice: Cultivate mutual trust and respect**   * Host Site Supervisor and VISTA member work collectively toward a mutually beneficial goal, and put forth their best efforts to collaborate effectively * Host Site Supervisor recognizes the sacrifice of the VISTA member and respects their choice to serve * VISTA member respects the time and effort of the Host Site Supervisor, and fulfills all duties/obligations to the best of their ability | |
| **Less of this...** | **More of this...** |
| Supervisor-Employee relationship | Mentor-Student relationship |
| Authoritative  Supervising  What can you do for me? | Collaborative, Facilitating, Coaching  Focus on mutual benefit  Trust and respect  Two-way communication  Give and take |
| Assigning tasks based solely on the Host Site’s immediate needs | Working with the VISTA member to develop projects that are in line with the VAD, the VISTA’s talents, and the needs of the Host Site |
| Dealing with issues in a punitive manner | Encouraging improvement, professional development and growth |

**Remember: The VISTA experience is often difficult and transformative.**

**Member retention is a VERY IMPORTANT part of how our program is evaluated.** As a Host Site Supervisor, our grant depends on **YOU** to help us retain our VISTA members throughout their entire service year.

**Conflict Management Procedure**

There are times when, for a variety of reasons, the relationship between the *FIRST* VISTA member, Host Site Supervisor, and *FIRST* VISTA Program faces challenges. In these situations, it is important to thoughtfully explore the circumstances contributing to these challenges in order to provide the best outcome for all.

**Expectations for Managing Conflict**

In order for a Host Site to stay in good standing with the *FIRST* VISTA Program, Host Site Supervisors are expected to:

1. Promptly notify *FIRST* VISTA Program staff of any issues or challenges that arise
2. Make efforts in good faith to help understand and correct the issue, including
   1. Utilizing a Performance Improvement Plan
   2. Pursuing mediation with *FIRST* VISTA Program staff
   3. Following up and providing recommendations for further action
3. Provide documentation that supports the Host Site Supervisor’s efforts to resolve the issue with the related parties

**Removal of a *FIRST* VISTA Member from the *FIRST* VISTA Program**

Occasionally, for a variety of reasons, it may be necessary to consider removing a *FIRST* VISTA member from the *FIRST* VISTA Program. When a Host Site Supervisor experiences exceptional difficulties with an individual *FIRST* VISTA member that may merit removal, such removal may be granted via the following process:

1. Host Site Supervisor will notify *FIRST* VISTA Program staff of the issue
   1. *FIRST* VISTA Program staff may request to mediate a discussion between the Host Site Supervisor and *FIRST* VISTA member
2. After notifying *FIRST* VISTA Program staff, the Host Site Supervisor will outline the issues in a Performance Improvement Plan and present it to the *FIRST* VISTA member so the member has an opportunity to improve performance.
   1. This plan will contain tangible outcomes by which to evaluate the member’s improvement or continued deficiency
   2. The Host Site Supervisor will document progress for **at least 10 business days**
3. After 10 business days, the Host Site Supervisor will update *FIRST* VISTA Program staff on any progress and recommendations for further action. At this point, the Host Site Supervisor will provide all documentation that supports efforts made to correct the issue.
   1. If improvement has been made, the *FIRST* VISTA member may continue with service. The member and Host Site Supervisor are advised to regularly assess progress.
   2. If no satisfactory improvement has been made, the Host Site Supervisor may recommend the removal of the *FIRST* VISTA member from the *FIRST* VISTA Program.

In the case of a major offense of member misconduct, the *FIRST* VISTA Program may elect to immediately remove a *FIRST* VISTA member from service. In this case, the Host Site Supervisor will be notified of the decision.

When a *FIRST* VISTA member is removed from a site for any reason, the *FIRST* VISTA Program will coordinate with the NH CNCS State Office to coordinate the member’s separation from service.

**Removal of a *FIRST* VISTA Host Site from the *FIRST* VISTA Program**

If a Host Site wishes to no longer participate in the *FIRST* VISTA Program, the Host Site Supervisor must make a formal request in writing, giving a full report detailing their reasons for removal. At this point, the *FIRST* VISTA Program will schedule a phone call to discuss the issues and explore options for optimal resolution. If both parties agree that a removal from the *FIRST* VISTA Program is best, the relationship shall terminate no earlier than 10 business days after the decision is made.

**VISTA Member Performance Improvement Procedure**

1. Determine if the problem is a ***performance*** problem (VISTA has not been able to demonstrate mastery of skills/tasks) or a ***behavior*** problem (VISTA may perform the tasks but creates an environment that disrupts the workplace).
2. Define **duties** or **behaviors** where improvement is required

* Which skills need improvement?
* What changes need to be made in application of skills an VISTA has already demonstrated?
* What behaviors need to be modified?

1. Establish **priorities** of the duties (and/or behaviors) identified above

* How do they relate when compared with other duties?
* How frequently are these duties performed?
* What are the possible consequences of errors associated with these duties?

1. **Identify the standards** upon which performance will be measured for each of the duties identified

* Are they reasonable?
* Are they attainable?

1. **Establish short-range and long-range goals** and timetables for accomplishing change in performance/behavior with the VISTA.

* Are they reasonable?
* Are they attainable?

1. **Develop a corrective plan.**

* What will the Host Site Supervisor do to help the VISTA accomplish the goals within the desired timeframe?
* What will the VISTA do to facilitate improvement?
* Are these items reasonable and attainable?
* Are they flexible?

1. **Establish a review date** on which action items from the corrective plan will be evaluated.
2. **Measure actual performance against the standards** you have set to determine if the expectations were met, not met, or exceeded
3. **Work with HQ to decide what further steps need to be taken based** on the follow-up evaluation.

**Performance Improvement Plan [Sample]**

**Jane Doe, *FIRST* VISTA [Site Location]**

**[Date]**

**Deficiency Statement:** Failure to maintain good interpersonal working relationship with other staff members, including acceptance of the role of your immediate supervisor.

**Duties**

Maintain open communication with other staff members, including your immediate supervisor.

* **Priority**: High priority. Disharmony in the workplace has a negative effect on morale and in accomplishing the goals of the department.
* **Performance Standards:** VISTAs performance meets expectations when VISTAs
  1. Is polite;
  2. Accepts assistance from other staff when offered, or declines it gracefully;
  3. Cooperates and collaborates on projects with other staff;
  4. Takes pride in and responsibility for own work without becoming possessive about it;
* **Goals and Timetables:** Have a cooperative relationship with your immediate supervisor which will be demonstrated by your willingness to utilize this person as a resource in your day-to-day activities. Within three to six months develop communication and team-oriented skills that demonstrate your commitment to be a part of the team within your department. Based on direct observations and reports from colleagues within first two months, you will significantly reduce the number of times you refuse assistance in getting your own work accomplished. Within the second two months, you will begin to recognize when other members of the team need assistance and voluntarily offer it to them, while continuing to accept assistance from others when needed. Within three months, you and your immediate supervisor will develop a positive working relationship and be able to note at least three occasions where cooperative efforts have been used to the advantage of the department.
* **Action Plans:** Your immediate supervisor will meet with you on a regular basis (no less frequently that bi-weekly) to discuss problems you identify as prohibiting you from accomplishing this goal. You will provide input and feedback to your immediate supervisor to help identify areas where you believe that improvement can be made. Department management will arrange for someone from Human Resources to work with the immediate work group toward Team Building.

**Performance Improvement Plan Terms of Agreement**

The purpose of this document is to identify performance deficiencies and to provide a clear concise mechanism for improving performance to a standard of "Meets Expectations". Every effort will be made to provide training and support necessary for the successful completion of this Performance Improvement Plan. Items contained in this plan are subject to modification under several circumstances. First, should it become clear that the level of "Meets Expectations" has been attained prior to the projected date; the plan may be dissolved upon agreement of the supervisor and VISTA. Second, where improvement in overall performance is noted, but additional time and/or training is required to reach a standard of "Meets Expectations" in all areas, the plan may be renegotiated. Finally, after a reasonable amount of time has passed, should it be determined that the overall performance continues at the level of "Does Not Meet Expectations" or that a standard of "Meets Expectations" cannot be met, a final warning will be issued.

We agree to work together on the items identified in this Performance Improvement Plan and to make every effort to reach the goals and expectations defined.

Supervisor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

VISTA Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Next Performance Review Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_