

§ 2556.335

leave, emergency leave, or in administrative hold status in the VISTA program.

(3) The activity or action is alleged to have occurred at or near their assigned project, but is clearly not part of, or required by, the VISTA member's service assignment.

(c) For the legal defense, beyond arraignment in Federal, State, and local criminal proceedings, of a VISTA member who is charged with a criminal offense, AmeriCorps may also pay actual and reasonable legal expenses when:

(1) The charged offense against the VISTA member relates exclusively to their VISTA assignment or status as a VISTA member;

(2) The charged offense against the VISTA member arises from an alleged activity or action that is a part of, or required by, the VISTA member's VISTA assignment;

(3) The VISTA member has not admitted a willful or knowing violation of law; or

(4) The charged offense against the VISTA member is not a minor offense or misdemeanor, such as a minor vehicle violation.

(d) Notwithstanding paragraphs (a) through (c) of this section, there may be situations in which the criminal proceedings at issue arise from a matter that also gives rise to a civil claim under the Federal Tort Claims Act. In such a situation, the U.S. Department of Justice may, on behalf of the United States, agree to defend the VISTA. If the U.S. Department of Justice agrees to defend the VISTA member, unless there is a conflict between the VISTA member's interest and that of the United States, AmeriCorps will not pay for expenses associated with any additional legal representation (such as counsel fees for private counsel) for the VISTA member.

§ 2556.335 When may a VISTA be provided coverage for legal defense expenses related to civil or administrative proceedings?

For the legal defense in Federal, State, and local civil judicial and administrative proceedings of a VISTA member, AmeriCorps may also pay actual and reasonable legal expenses when:

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(a) The complaint or charge is against the VISTA, and is directly related to their VISTA service and not to their personal activities or obligations;

(b) The VISTA has not admitted to willfully or knowingly pursuing a course of conduct that would result in the plaintiff or complainant initiating such a proceeding; and

(c) The judgment sought involves a monetary award that exceeds \$1,000.

§ 2556.340 What is non-competitive eligibility and who is eligible for it?

(a) Non-competitive eligibility is a status that means a person is eligible for appointment, by a Federal agency in the Executive branch, into a civil service position in the Federal competitive service, in accordance with 5 CFR 315.605.

(b) An individual who successfully completes at least a year-long term of service as a VISTA, and who has not been terminated for cause from the VISTA program at any time, has non-competitive eligibility status for one year following the end of the term of service as a VISTA.

(c) In addition to the year of non-competitive eligibility status as provided in paragraph (b) of this section, an individual's non-competitive eligibility status may extend for two more years, to a total of three years, if the individual is:

(1) In the military service;

(2) Studying at a recognized institution of higher learning; or

(3) In another activity which, in the view of the Federal agency referenced in paragraph (a) of this section, warrants extension.

§ 2556.345 Who may present a grievance?

(a) Under the VISTA program grievance procedure, a grievance may be presented by any individual who is currently enrolled in the VISTA program or who was enrolled in the VISTA program within the past 30 calendar days.

(b) A VISTA's grievance may not be construed as reflecting on the VISTA's standing, performance, or desirability as a VISTA.

(c) A VISTA who presents a grievance may not be subjected to restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination,