

CRS Report for Congress

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VISTA and the Senior Volunteer Service Corps: Description and Funding Levels

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Summary

The Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program and the National Senior Volunteer Corps are authorized under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, as amended (DVSA), and are administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), an independent agency.¹ The purpose of DVSA is to foster and expand voluntary citizen service in communities throughout the Nation in activities designed to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and the elderly. The Senior Corps consists of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, the Senior Companion Program, and the Senior Demonstration Program. Funding for both VISTA and the Senior Corps, is contained in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act.² This report provides a brief summary of each of the DVSA programs, including the FY2004 appropriations (P.L. 108-199), the President's FY2005 budget request, and the FY2005 appropriations (P.L. 108-447). The figures for appropriations are the *adjusted* levels, which take into account the cuts to many discretionary programs specified in both FY2004 and FY2005 bills.³

VISTA (Title I-A). *Program Focus:* Serving poverty communities. *Eligibility:* 18 years or older. *Amount of volunteer service:* Full time for up to three years. *Benefits:* a living allowance and either a \$1,200 "lump-sum" cash stipend or a \$4,725 educational award per year of service. The maximum number of lump-sum payments per participant

¹ Although authorization of appropriations for DVSA programs expired at the end of FY1996, they continue to be funded through appropriations.

² For further information on DVSA programs, see CRS Report RL30186, *Community Service: A Description of AmeriCorps, Foster Grandparents, and Other Federally Funded Programs*, by Ann Lordeman.

³ For information on NCSA programs and funding, see CRS Report RS20420, *AmeriCorps and Other Service Programs: Description and Funding Levels*, by Ann Lordeman.

is three, and the maximum number of educational awards is two.⁴ *Administrative Entity:* State Office of the Corporation. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$93.7 million. *FY2005 Request:* \$96.4 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$94.2 million.

Special Volunteer Programs (Section 122, Title I-C). Since FY2002, funds have been appropriated for homeland security grants, which are awarded to national and local nonprofit agencies, and cities, counties, and state commissions on national and community services. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$9.9 million. *FY2005 Request:* \$15.0 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$5.0 million.

National Senior Volunteer Corps (Title II). The four programs comprising the Senior Corps are summarized below. For FY2004, the total appropriation for these programs was \$214.3 million. For FY2005, the request was \$224.5 million. For FY2005, the appropriation is \$215.9 million.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) (Title II-A). *Program Focus:* Serving the community. *Eligibility:* 55 years or older. *Amount of volunteer service:* Up to 40 hours a week. *Benefits:* No direct benefits (e.g., stipends or educational awards). *Administrative Entity:* State Office of the Corporation. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$58.2 million. *FY2005 Request:* \$69.9 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$58.5 million.

Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) (Title II-B). *Program Focus:* Serving children. *Eligibility:* 60 years or older and low income. *Amount of volunteer service:* Average of 20 hours a week. *Benefits:* A stipend of \$2.65 an hour. *Administrative Entity:* State Office of the Corporation. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$110.1 million. *FY2005 Request:* \$106.7 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$111.4 million.

Senior Companion Program (SCP) (Title II-C). *Program Focus:* Serving adults. *Eligibility:* 60 years or older and low income. *Amount of volunteer service:* Average of 20 hours a week. *Benefits:* A stipend of \$2.65 an hour. *Administrative Entity:* State Office of the Corporation. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$46.0 million. *FY2005 Request:* \$46.6 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$45.9 million.

Senior Demonstration Program (Title II-E). The Corporation enters into grants or contracts with public or nonprofit organizations for the purpose of demonstrating innovative activities involving older individuals as volunteers. *FY2004 Appropriation:* \$0.0. *FY2005 Request:* \$1.4 million. *FY2005 Appropriation:* \$0.0.

Total DVSA Funding. For FY2004, the total funding, including funding for program administration, was \$354.3 million. For FY2005, the request was \$375.3 million. For FY2005, the appropriation is \$353.7 million.

⁴ Funding for educational awards is provided for in the National Service Trust authorized by the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and funded in the VA-HUD appropriations act.