

Department of Health Services
Division of Medicaid Services
1 West Wilson Street
PO Box 309
Madison WI 53707-0309

Telephone: 608-266-8922
Fax: 608-266-1096



Department of Children and Families
201 East Washington Avenue
PO Box 8916
Madison WI 53708-8916

Telephone: 608-267-3905
Fax: 608-266-6836

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: November 10, 2017

DMS, DECE, and DFES Operations Memo 17-J5

To: Income Maintenance Supervisors
Income Maintenance Lead Workers
Income Maintenance Staff
Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers
W-2 Agencies
Training Staff
Child Care Coordinators

From: Rebecca McAtee, Bureau Director
Bureau of Enrollment Policy and Systems
Division of Medicaid Services
Department of Health Services

Katherine McGurk, Director
Bureau of Early Learning and Policy
Division of Early Care and Education
Department of Children and Families

Margaret McMahon, Director
Bureau of Working Families
Division of Family and Economic Security
Department of Children and Families

Affected Programs:

- BadgerCare Plus
- Caretaker Supplement
- Child Care
- Children First
- Emergency Assistance
- FoodShare
- FoodShare Employment and Training
- Job Access Loan
- Job Center Programs
- Medicaid
- Other Employment Programs
- Refugee Assistance Program
- SeniorCare
- Wisconsin Works
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Exclusion of AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America Program Income in the Determination of Eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and Family Planning Only Services

CROSS REFERENCE

- BadgerCare Plus Eligibility Handbook, [Section 16.2 Income Types Not Counted](#) and [Section 16.4.1 Specially Treated Wages](#)
- Medicaid Eligibility Handbook, [Section 15.3.22 Special Programs](#)
- FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook, [Section 4.3.2.2 Disregarded Earned Income](#)
- Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Policy Manual, [Section 1.5.4 Limited Income Exclusions from the Child Care Budget](#)
- Wisconsin Works (W-2) Manual, [Section 3.2.9.2 Income with Limited Disregards](#)

EFFECTIVE DATE

Immediately

PURPOSE

This Operations Memo announces a change in policy related to the treatment of AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) income when income maintenance workers determine eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and Family Planning Only Services (FPOS) under Modified Adjusted Gross Income (MAGI) budgeting rules. This Memo also provides directions for how workers enter income received from AmeriCorps programs into CARES Worker Web (CWW).

BACKGROUND

Financial eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and FPOS under MAGI budgeting rules is generally based on taxable income. The AmeriCorps VISTA income is taxable, so it has been considered countable income when determining eligibility for these programs.

However, the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (DVSA), a law that covers National Volunteer Antipoverty Programs (including AmeriCorps VISTA and other Special Volunteer Programs such as the Foster Grandparent Program and Retired and Senior Volunteer Program), prohibits payments made to volunteers in these specific programs from impacting their level of or eligibility for assistance or services under government programs. In accordance with the DVSA, even though AmeriCorps VISTA income is taxable, it does not count when determining BadgerCare Plus and FPOS eligibility.

Note: The VISTA program was initially created in 1964. It was eventually placed under the AmeriCorps program in 1993 and renamed AmeriCorps VISTA. Other non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs, such as AmeriCorps State/National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), are not covered under the DVSA, so the income exemption for determining BadgerCare Plus and FPOS eligibility does not apply to those programs.

POLICY

Old Policy

Earnings or cash benefits received through AmeriCorps programs, including AmeriCorps VISTA, were counted as earned income under MAGI rules for BadgerCare Plus and FPOS because the income is taxable.

New Policy

Effective immediately, AmeriCorps VISTA income should not be counted when determining eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and FPOS. This income should be disregarded like the income attributed to the special programs identified in [BadgerCare Plus Eligibility Handbook, Section 16.2.22 Special Programs](#).

Income received from non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs will continue to be counted as income when workers determine eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and FPOS.

This change in policy only affects eligibility for BadgerCare Plus and FPOS; AmeriCorps VISTA income will continue to be counted or disregarded based on the existing eligibility policies for other programs, including, but not limited to, the following:

- FoodShare
- Medicaid for the Elderly, Blind or Disabled (EBD Medicaid)
- Wisconsin Shares Child Care (Child Care)
- Wisconsin Works (W-2)

The following table summarizes how to count income from AmeriCorps programs (VISTA and non-VISTA) to determine eligibility.

How to Count Income From AmeriCorps Programs to Determine Eligibility		
Benefit Program	AmeriCorps VISTA	AmeriCorps Non-VISTA
BadgerCare Plus	Income from VISTA AmeriCorps is exempt.	Income from non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs is counted.
FPOS	Income from VISTA AmeriCorps is exempt.	Income from non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs is counted.
Child Care	Income from VISTA AmeriCorps is exempt if it is equal to or less than the minimum wage.*	Income from non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs is exempt if it is equal to or less than the minimum wage.*
EBD Medicaid	Income from AmeriCorps VISTA is exempt.	Income from AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC is exempt.
FoodShare	When the person applied for FoodShare determines whether income from AmeriCorps VISTA is exempt or counted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person is receiving FoodShare and then joins AmeriCorps VISTA, the income is exempt. • If the person has joined AmeriCorps VISTA and then applies for FoodShare, the income is counted in the eligibility determination for FoodShare. 	Income from AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps NCCC is exempt.
W-2	Income from VISTA AmeriCorps is exempt if it is equal to or less than the minimum wage.*	Income from non-VISTA AmeriCorps programs is exempt if it is equal to or less than the minimum wage.*

* To calculate income in terms of the minimum wage, divide the stipend amount by the number of hours worked.

CARES

Workers should continue to select the “M - AMERICORPS” option from the Employment Type drop-down menu in the “Employment Description” section on the Employment page in CWW. Using that code is the first step to ensure the income is correctly counted or disregarded for all eligibility determinations under MAGI budgeting rules, FPOS, EBD Medicaid, Medicare Savings Programs, FoodShare, W-2, and Child Care.

Employment Description	
* Employee Type:	PE - Permanent
* Job Title for Health Insurance:	ST - Staff
* Employment Type:	M - AMERICORPS
* Verification:	AF - AGENCY FORM
* Begin Date:	01 / 01 / 2017
* Verification:	AF - AGENCY FORM
First Pay Check Date:	MM / DD / YYYY
* Employment Ended?	No
Employment End Date:	MM / DD / YYYY
Verification:	
Date Of Last Paycheck:	MM / DD / YYYY
Verification:	

Figure 1 Employment Page With AmeriCorps Selected as the Employment Type

Next, workers should use the Override fields in the “Detailed Wage Information” section of the Employment page to ensure the income is correctly counted or disregarded (as applicable) for certain programs, including BadgerCare Plus and FPOS.

Note: Child Care workers and W-2 workers should only use the code “M - AMERICORPS” and should not use override fields. CWW will automatically do one of the following:

- Disregard the income if the amount of income is equal to or less than minimum wage
- Count the income if the amount is greater than minimum wage

USING THE OVERRIDE FIELDS FOR NON-VISTA AMERICORPS INCOME

Non-VISTA AmeriCorps income should be counted for MAGI assistance groups and FPOS. To correctly count this income for these programs and disregard it for others, workers must do the following:

1. Enter the wages earned in the “Detailed Wage Information” section on the Employment page. Upon entry, CWW will automatically determine the monthly amounts.
2. Zero out the counted income for FoodShare eligibility in the Override Converted Amount field.
3. Zero out the counted income for EBD Medicaid in the Override MA Gross Amount field.
4. Note in the Comment field that the income is from a non-VISTA AmeriCorps program.

Detailed Wage Information

Pay Frequency: W - WEEKLY

Rate Per Hour: \$ [] . [] Wage Type: []
Average Hours Per Pay Period: [] Verification: []
Total Amount Per Pay Period: \$ [] . [] Delete:

Rate Per Hour	Wage Type	Average Hours Per Pay Period	Verification	Total Amount Per Pay Period	Delete
12.00	REG - REGULAR PAY	20.00	AF - AGENCY FORM	240.00	<input type="checkbox"/>

BC+ Pre-Tax Deductions

Pre-Tax Deduction Type: [] Frequency: []
Pre-Tax Deduction Amount: \$ [] . [] Verification: []
Delete:

Pre-Tax Deduction Type	Frequency	Pre-Tax Deduction Amount	Verification	Delete
------------------------	-----------	--------------------------	--------------	--------

Totals and Comments

Monthly In-kind Amount: \$ [] . [] Verification: []
Total Amount Per Pay Period: \$ 240 . 00
Monthly MA Gross Amount: \$ 960 . 00
Override MA Gross Amount: \$ 0 . 00 Verification: AF - AGENCY FORM
Monthly BC+ Pre-Tax Deductions Amount: \$ [] . []
Monthly BC+ Taxable Amount: \$ 960 . 00
Override BC+ Taxable Amount: \$ [] . [] Verification: []
Monthly Converted Amount: \$ 1032 . 00
Override Converted Amount: \$ 0 . 00 Verification: AF - AGENCY FORM
Monthly Total Hours: 86
Monthly Override Hours: 86
Subsidized Employment Subsidy: \$ [] . []
Comment: **AmeriCorps non-VISTA income, counted for MAGI only**
Current Size = 50 characters (240 characters max.)

Figure 2 Employment Page With Non-VISTA AmeriCorps Income Zeroed Out

USING THE OVERRIDE FIELDS FOR AMERICORPS VISTA INCOME

To correctly disregard AmeriCorps VISTA income, workers must do the following:

1. Zero out the Override MA Gross Amount and Override BC+ Taxable Amount fields.
2. Zero out the counted income for FoodShare eligibility in the Override Converted Amount field.
3. Note in the Comment field that the income is from the AmeriCorps VISTA program.

Note: The Override Converted Amount field should only be changed to zero if the AmeriCorps VISTA income should be exempt for determining eligibility for FoodShare based on whether the applicant or member was participating in VISTA prior to enrolling in FoodShare.

The screenshot displays the 'Totals and Comments' section of a software interface. It features a 'Calculate' button in the top right corner. The form is organized into two columns. The left column contains monetary and hour-based fields, while the right column contains verification dropdown menus. Several fields are highlighted with red boxes: 'Override MA Gross Amount' (set to \$0.00), 'Override BC+ Taxable Amount' (set to \$0.00), 'Override Converted Amount' (set to \$0.00), and the 'Comment' field (containing the text 'AmeriCorps VISTA income; disregarded for all programs'). Other fields include 'Monthly In-kind Amount', 'Total Amount Per Pay Period' (\$240.00), 'Monthly MA Gross Amount' (\$960.00), 'Monthly BC+ Pre-Tax Deductions Amount', 'Monthly BC+ Taxable Amount' (\$960.00), 'Monthly Converted Amount' (\$1032.00), 'Monthly Total Hours' (86), and 'Monthly Override Hours' (86). Verification dropdowns are set to 'AF - AGENCY FORM'. A status bar at the bottom indicates 'Current Size = 53 characters (240 characters max.)'.

Field	Value	Verification
Monthly In-kind Amount	\$ [] . []	[]
Total Amount Per Pay Period	\$ 240 . 00	[]
Monthly MA Gross Amount	\$ 960 . 00	[]
Override MA Gross Amount	\$ 0 . 00	AF - AGENCY FORM
Monthly BC+ Pre-Tax Deductions Amount	\$ [] . []	[]
Monthly BC+ Taxable Amount	\$ 960 . 00	[]
Override BC+ Taxable Amount	\$ 0 . 00	AF - AGENCY FORM
Monthly Converted Amount	\$ 1032 . 00	[]
Override Converted Amount	\$ 0 . 00	AF - AGENCY FORM
Monthly Total Hours	86	[]
Monthly Override Hours	86	[]
Subsidized Employment Subsidy	\$ [] . []	[]
Comment	AmeriCorps VISTA income; disregarded for all programs	

Figure 3 Employment Page With AmeriCorps VISTA Income Zeroed Out

CONTACTS

BEPS CARES Information and Problem Resolution Center

For Child Care policy questions outside of Milwaukee County: Bureau of Regional Operations (BRO), Child Care Coordinators at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/regionaloperations/pdf/bro-contacts.pdf>

For Child Care CARES/CWW, CSAW, and CCPI IT systems processing questions statewide and policy questions in Milwaukee County: Child Care Help Desk at childcare@wisconsin.gov or 608-264-1657

For W-2 Policy Questions in the Balance of State: Bureau of Regional Operations, W-2 Regional Coordinators

For W-2 Policy Questions in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Operations Section, Regional Administrators

For W-2 CARES Processing Questions: W-2 Help Desk

DHS/DMS/BEPS/NH
DCF/DECE/BELP/RP
DCF/DFES/BWF/JC