

IPS 2-15 Respite Leave

Effective Date: May 26, 2015

Responsible Office: Office of Global Operations, Counseling and Outreach Unit and Office of Victim Advocacy

New Interim Policy Statement

[Issuance Memo](#) (May 26, 2015)

1.0 Purpose

This Interim Policy Statement sets out the Peace Corps policy regarding respite leave for Volunteers and Trainees (Volunteers).

2.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. §2504.

3.0 Policy

The Peace Corps may authorize respite leave and travel, at the agency's expense, for Volunteers in the event of a personal trauma related to a Volunteer's service.

3.1 Purpose of Respite Leave

Respite leave is granted in cases where the leave may provide appropriate respite, recovery or resolution to a Volunteer's personal trauma within the time allotted. In cases where medical care is required, medevac should be used. See MS 264 *Medical Evacuation*. In cases where medical care is required during respite leave, the Volunteer may be placed on medical hold. See MS 220 *Leave for Volunteers/Trainees*.

3.2 Respite Leave Requests

(a) A Volunteer may ask a Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) for respite leave. In addition, in a case of a Volunteer who is a victim of a sexual assault, stalking or other crime, the Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) may request that the PCMO consider respite leave for the Volunteer.

(b) The PCMO may recommend the leave when if the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The personal trauma prompting the leave request is the result of any of the following incidents that happen during Peace Corps service:

(i) a sexual assault;

(ii) a physical assault;

(iii) use of a weapon or implied weapon during the incident;

(iv) being a witness to a violent crime; or

(v) directly experiencing or witnessing an accident that resulted in serious injury or death of another person; and

(2) The incident was reported to the Peace Corps within 30 days of requesting the respite leave.

(c) In events where several Volunteers are affected by the same trauma (e.g., death of a Volunteer), Counseling and Outreach Unit in the Office of Health Services (OHS/COU) will typically travel to the affected post to provide counseling services, rather than provide respite leave for each Volunteer. Based on best practice, counseling is successful in these cases if individuals suffering from the same trauma remain in the same vicinity as a source of moral support to one another.

(d) Once the PCMO is satisfied that the conditions for respite leave are satisfied, the PCMO submits the request for respite leave to the OHS/COU.

3.3 Verification and Approval Authority

(a) OHS/COU will evaluate the request for respite leave taking into account the criteria set out in 3.2(b)(1)-(2) and the accommodations available for the Volunteer at the location of the respite leave. If respite leave is requested for a Volunteer who is a victim of a sexual assault, stalking or other crime, OHS/COU should consult with OVA prior to making a final decision on the request.

(b) If OHS/COU determines that respite leave is appropriate, OHS/COU will then authorize respite leave. OHS/COU must inform the PCMO of its decision of the request and, in cases of a sexual assault, stalking or other crime, inform OVA. OHS/COU must approve the location of the respite leave.

(c) Upon approval of respite leave, OHS/COU will send an email to the post with instructions and fiscal information.

3.4 Respite Leave Travel

(a) Each Volunteer authorized respite leave will be issued a round-trip travel authorization and a ticket to the approved location of the respite leave, to be charged to OHS/COU. The location of the respite leave will be the Volunteer's Home of Record unless OHS/COU determines that location to be inappropriate.

(b) Volunteers should have current passports, valid exit and re-entry visas, and World Health Organization (WHO) cards before they leave the country of assignment. Volunteers who leave without these documents and need assistance obtaining them should contact OHS/COU the first business day after arrival at the location of the respite leave.

(c) See MS 220, paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during leave.

3.5 Notification of Travel Itinerary

The PCMO must inform OHS/COU of the Volunteer's complete travel itinerary to the United States by email prior to the Volunteer's departure. The communication should include a copy of the travel authorization, stating the cost of the airfare, and the amount of respite leave and travel allowance actually disbursed to the Volunteer. In a case of respite leave for a Volunteer who is a victim of a sexual assault, stalking or other crime, OVA should also be notified.

3.6 Volunteer Communication with OHS/COU

Volunteers must keep OHS/COU informed about their whereabouts during the respite leave. The PCMO should instruct the Volunteer to contact OHS/COU within 24 hours after arrival at the location of the respite leave.

3.7 Travel After Arrival at Location of Respite Leave

Post will issue the Volunteer a travel authorization and a ticket to (and usually from) the location of the respite leave. After arrival at the location of the respite leave, if it is necessary for the Volunteer to travel to another location, such travel will be at the Volunteer's own expense.

3.8 Respite Leave Duration

Respite leave is limited to a maximum of 14 days, plus travel time.

4.0 Volunteer Allowances During Respite Leave

4.1 Respite Leave Allowance

During respite leave, Volunteers are entitled to receive the current authorized leave allowance for each day of leave actually used (maximum of 14 days, excluding travel time) and an en route allowance to be charged to OHS/COU. See MS 221 *Volunteer Allowances* and MS 222 *Trainee Allowances*.

The Director of Management and Operations should normally disburse 14 days' respite leave allowance and the en route allowance to the Volunteer before departure from the host country. If all of the allowance is not disbursed, this fact should be noted in the email sent per paragraph 3.5 above.

4.2 Refund of Unused Respite Leave Allowance

Volunteers must return the allowance for any day of the respite leave that is not actually taken.

4.3 Reimbursement for Extraordinary Expenses

Volunteers are normally expected to stay with family and friends during respite leave. With the prior approval of OHS/COU, Volunteers who incur extraordinary expenses for food and lodging during the 14 days of respite leave (e. g., if circumstances preclude lodging with family or friends) may be reimbursed for expenses incurred, upon presentation to OHS/COU of proof of actual cost incurred by the Volunteer and such is known before respite leave begins. Such reimbursements shall not exceed the USG per diem authorized for that respite leave location.

4.4 Living Allowance

The Volunteer will continue to receive the normal living allowance during respite leave and during travel time.

5.0 Effective Date

(a) The effective date of this policy is the date of issuance.

(b) The Office of Victim Advocacy, the Office of Global Operations and OHS/Counseling and Outreach Unit will put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of IPS 2-15. The Senior Policy Committee will review this policy 12 months from the date of issuance to determine whether it should be revised or replaced and incorporated into MS 220.