

MS 624 Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

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Responsible Office: Office of Human Resources

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Attachments

Attachment A – Sample Proof of Disability Letter

Attachment B – Standard Form 256 Self-Identification of Disability Form

1.0 Authorities

The Peace Corps Act; Executive Order 13548 Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities; Executive Order 13163 Increasing the Opportunity for Individuals with Disabilities to Be Employed in the Federal Government; Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

2.0 Purpose

This Manual Section establishes the policy of the Peace Corps with respect to provision by the agency of job opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities (IWDs).

3.0 Scope

This policy outlines the hiring authority that may be used to appoint eligible and qualified IWDs to positions at the Peace Corps, and readers, interpreters, and personal assistants for agency employees with severe disabilities as reasonable accommodations, whether hired competitively or non-competitively, and provides further guidance to the agency consistent with *MS 620 Direct Hire Merit Selection and Promotion*. Although the Peace Corps is an independent, excepted service agency within the Executive Branch of the U.S. government, the agency is committed to leveraging its hiring flexibilities in a manner consistent with the actions of other federal agencies across the U.S. government. This hiring authority applies only to direct-hire positions at the Peace Corps.

4.0 Definitions

- (a) **Basic qualifications requirements** are the experience and education (if applicable) an applicant is required to possess to be considered for a vacant position, as determined by the Office of Human Resources.
- (b) **Competitive hiring** is the hiring process that requires the application of candidates through a vacancy announcement, the ranking of candidates based on the eligibility requirements, and the basic qualification standards of the position.
- (c) **Disabilities hiring** is the hiring authority that provides for the hiring of individuals with intellectual disabilities, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities.
- (d) **Eligibility requirements** are the position or promotion requirements that must be met by an applicant for that person to be considered for a position (e.g., U.S. citizenship and, in the case of a merit promotion, one year of service in-grade).
- (e) **Individuals with Disabilities (IWDs)** are persons who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, or persons who have a history or record of such an impairment.
- (f) **Non-competitive hiring** is the hiring process that does not require the application of candidates in response to a vacancy announcement and the ranking of those candidates, but rather a hiring process that employs an approved, non-competitive hiring authority at the Peace Corps with its own eligibility requirements and basic qualification standards for a position.

- (g) The *referral certificate* is a listing of qualified candidates for a vacant position, developed by the Office of Human Resources and submitted to a Selecting Official.
- (h) The *Selecting Official* is a person serving in a supervisory level position at the agency who is authorized to hire a candidate for a particular vacant position.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

- (a) The Office of Human Resources (OHR) is responsible for the overall administration and management hiring process for IWDs. This includes:
 - (1) Collaborating with Selecting Officials and facilitating all recruitment and hiring efforts for employment at the Peace Corps of IWDs.
 - (2) Determining whether IWDs meet eligibility and basic qualifications requirements for appointments at the Peace Corps.
 - (3) Issuing referral certificates to Selecting Officials for competitive vacancy announcements that identify applicants eligible and qualified for IWD appointments.
 - (4) Coordinating with the Office of Civil Rights to identify and facilitate reasonable accommodation(s) requests for employees, when appropriate.
- (b) The Office of Civil Rights is responsible for:
 - (1) Administering a reasonable accommodation program in a manner consistent with Peace Corps policies and procedures and all applicable federal laws, regulations, and guidelines.
- (c) Selecting Officials are responsible for:
 - (1) Reviewing applications of referral candidates and scheduling interviews.
 - (2) Conducting interviews to identify the best candidate(s) for the position in support of an equitable hiring process.
 - (3) Returning referral certificates and selection memos that identify candidates for the position during the hiring process.
 - (4) Adhering to guidelines contained in this policy for the hiring of IWDs.

6.0 Policy

6.1 Hiring Individuals with Disabilities Overview

The Peace Corps will grant appointments to IWDs who are applying for agency positions open to applicants from outside of the agency through its competitive and non-competitive processes. It cannot be used to grant promotions, reassignments, and other position change requests to current Peace Corps employees.

This hiring authority is used to hire and appoint persons with severe physical disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. Severe physical disabilities include, but are not limited to, blindness, deafness, paralysis, missing limbs, epilepsy and dwarfism.

This hiring authority is also used to hire and appoint readers, interpreters, and personal assistants for employees with severe disabilities as reasonable accommodations for their disabilities.

6.2 Competitive and Non-Competitive Hiring

IWDs may be selected for appointments at the Peace Corps both competitively and non-competitively. Appointments may be granted up to the FP-01 level to IWDs who meet eligibility and basic qualifications requirements.

OHR will make all final determinations regarding eligibility and basic qualifications of IWDs for vacant positions at the Peace Corps. Although an IWD may be found eligible and qualified for a position, this alone does not guarantee appointment at the agency. Selecting Officials have discretion to hire all individuals found eligible and qualified by OHR for vacant and funded positions.

6.2.1 Competitive Appointments of Individuals with Disabilities

IWDs are given consideration during the merit process in accordance with U.S. government-wide vacancy announcements. If they meet eligibility and basic qualifications requirements, they will be referred to Selecting Officials for further consideration along with all other applicants eligible through the competitive hiring process. Selecting Officials will have the discretion to select any individual included on a referral certificate developed by OHR.

6.2.2 Non-Competitive Appointments of Individuals with Disabilities

Selecting Officials may also select IWDs for vacant and funded positions non-competitively. IWDs must meet eligibility requirements and basic qualifications of the position to be considered non-competitively for selection. Selecting Officials must coordinate directly with OHR with respect to all non-competitive appointments of such individuals.

6.3 Required Documentation

The following documentation is required for OHR to determine an applicant's eligibility for an IWD appointment at the Peace Corps:

- (a) Applicant’s Resume.
- (b) Proof of Disability Documentation Letter – This letter does not need to detail the applicant’s specific disability, medical history or need for accommodation. The letter must certify that because of an intellectual disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability, the applicant is eligible for consideration for federal employment under 5 CFR 213.3102, Schedule A hiring authority, or other appointment authority for persons with disabilities. To aid in determining eligibility, this letter must have been provided to the applicant by a licensed medical professional, a licensed rehabilitation professional; or a federal, state, District of Columbia, or U.S. territory agency that issues or provides disability benefits. The Department of Labor’s Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) has also identified [questions](#) that may be helpful in determining an applicant’s eligibility.
- (c) Standard Form 256 (SF-256) Self-Identification of Disability – IWDs are required to complete the [SF-256](#) before they onboard. Applicants should not be removed from consideration of appointment at the Peace Corps for declining to identify their disability status.

6.4 Appointments Made

All eligible and qualified IWDs selected for appointments at the Peace Corps through competitive or non-competitive processes will be appointed subject to the same 60-month term limitations to which direct hire staff are subject, as outlined in MS 601 *Administration of the Peace Corps Direct Hire Personnel System*. In documenting these appointments, OHR will enter the following secondary legal authority codes on the SF-50 Notification of Personnel Action as the situation warrants:

- (a) Secondary Legal Authority Code “**ID1** – *Competitive Appointment of Individuals with Disabilities, MS 624 Hiring Individuals with Disabilities Policy.*”
- (b) Secondary Legal Authority Code “**ID2** – *Non-Competitive Appointment of Individuals with Disabilities, MS 624 Hiring Individuals with Disabilities Policy.*”
- (c) Secondary Legal Authority Code “**ID3** – *Appointment of Readers, Interpreters, and Personal Assistants as a Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities, MS 624 Hiring Individuals with Disabilities Policy.*”

6.5 Probationary Period

All eligible IWD appointments under this authority will be subject to the probationary period outlined in MS 613 *Probationary Period for Foreign Service Employees*.

7.0 Effective Date

The effective date of this Manual Section is the date of issuance.