

MS 648 Child Protection

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Responsible Office: Office of Global Operations

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Issuance Memo (11/14/2014)

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Attachments

[Attachment A – Child Protection Code of Conduct](#)

[Attachment B – Frequently Asked Questions – PCVs](#)

[Attachment C – Frequently Asked Questions – Staff](#)

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Section is to set forth the policy on proper conduct while working or engaging with children during Peace Corps service or employment. It also establishes the process for reporting instances of child abuse by an employee or Volunteer. The Peace Corps strongly supports measures to reduce the risks of child abuse caused or perpetrated by an employee or Volunteer.

2.0 Authorities

22 U.S.C. §2504(a); 22 U.S.C. §2506(c).

3.0 Definitions

- (a) **Child** is defined as any individual under the age of 18 years, regardless of local laws that may set a lower age for adulthood.
- (b) **Child Abuse** includes four categories of abuse which are defined below as follows:
 - (1) **Physical Abuse** means any non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child.
 - (2) **Emotional Abuse** means the actual or likely adverse effect on the emotional and behavioral development of a child caused by persistent or severe ill treatment or rejection.

- (3) ***Sexual Abuse*** means the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, manipulation, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct, including for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct (i.e., photography, videography); or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children. It includes any behavior that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity (i.e., grooming of a child to engage in sexual activity).
- (4) ***Exploitation*** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of differential power or trust with respect to a child for sexual or monetary purposes, including, but not limited to, the distribution and retention of child pornography or engaging a child in labor that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous or harmful, or interferes with their schooling.
- (c) ***Child Protection*** is defined as all reasonable measures taken to protect children from child abuse.
- (d) ***Employee*** means an individual hired by the Peace Corps, permanent or temporary, and includes individuals performing duties as experts, consultants, Foreign Service nationals and personal services contractors.
- (e) ***Volunteer***, for the purposes of this Manual Section, means any Peace Corps Volunteer or Trainee.

4.0 Policy

- (a) All employees in the course of their official duties and all Volunteers must adhere to this policy and the *Child Protection Code of Conduct* set out in Attachment A.
- (b) In order to identify individuals who may pose a risk to child safety, Peace Corps conducts a background investigation in the selection of employees and Volunteers.
- (c) Peace Corps incorporates the principles of its child protection policy into its onboarding training for employees and Volunteers.
- (d) Employees and Volunteers must bring to the attention of the Peace Corps, as outlined in section 5.0, any allegations of child abuse by any employee or Volunteer.
- (e) Failure to comply with this Manual Section may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of Peace Corps service or employment. An employee or Volunteer found to have violated this policy may also be subject to host country and U.S. prosecution.
- (f) Reports made by Volunteers will be treated with the utmost discretion. Confidential reports made by Volunteers will strictly follow the provisions set forth in MS 271

Confidentiality Protection in order to protect the confidentiality and safety of such Volunteers.

5.0 How to Report Allegations of Violations

Employees and Volunteers must report all allegations of violations to this Manual Section.

5.1 Volunteers

Volunteers are required to report allegations of violations to this Manual Section to the Country Director or other senior staff at post, or the appropriate Regional Director, the Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Associate Director for Global Operations, or directly to the Office of Inspector General. Volunteers may confidentially make such reports under the provisions of MS 271 *Confidentiality Protection*.

5.2 Employees

Employees are required to expeditiously report allegations of violations to this Manual Section to the Office of Inspector General. While all staff are encouraged to report directly to OIG, non-supervisory or non-management employees may do so via their supervisor or office head. If the allegation occurs in a Peace Corps country, the Country Director, the appropriate Regional Director and Safety and Security Officer must also be notified.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Country Directors

Country Directors are responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring that employees and Volunteers are trained on this Manual Section and their obligation to adhere to its guidance.
- (b) Responding expeditiously to allegations of child abuse committed by employees and Volunteers including notification to:
 - (1) the OIG; and
 - (2) the appropriate Regional Director and Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO).
- (c) Considering child protection issues as discussed in this policy and the *Child Protection Code of Conduct* (Attachment A) in making site placements and developing relationships with other organizations and agencies.
- (d) Consulting the appropriate Region as needed on any issues concerning child protection at post. Such Regional Director may then consult with additional HQ offices as needed.

6.2 Office of Human Resources

The Office of Human Resources is responsible for ensuring that new domestic employees receive appropriate training on MS 648 *Child Protection*, including their obligations under this Manual Section.

6.3 Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

The Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection is responsible for the screening of applicants for Volunteer service in order to identify individuals who have a documented record of child abuse.

6.4 Office of Safety and Security

The Office of Safety and Security is responsible for implementing the screening protocols of potential employees in order to identify individuals who have a documented record of child abuse.

6.5 Office of Staff learning and Development

The Office of Staff Learning and Development is responsible for ensuring that overseas U.S. Direct Hire employees have access to training on their obligations in this Manual Section during Overseas Staff Training. It is the responsibility of the relevant Supervisor to ensure staff are accountable for the timely completion of the training.

7.0 Procedures

Any necessary procedures implementing this Manual Section must be approved by the Office of Global Operations, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, Office of Human Resources, Office of the General Counsel, and Office of Staff Learning and Development.

8.0 Effective Date

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