

PEACE CORPS

# *Volunteer Handbook*

2014





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# Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to become a Peace Corps Volunteer! You are joining an extraordinary group of Americans who, like yourself, have sought the challenges that are unique to Peace Corps service: the opportunity to live in a different culture, to learn a new language, and to forge lasting relationships with the people of your host country and fellow Volunteers. At the same time, you will share your skills, patience, and idealism with people who want to build a better future for their communities. Your work will be demanding, but the time and energy you give to the people of your host community will leave an impression for years to come. Moreover, the personal rewards of Peace Corps service will enrich your life long after your service abroad.

This handbook is an introduction to Peace Corps service. It provides information on a wide variety of topics, serves as a reference guide for questions that may arise as you make your final preparations to become a Volunteer, and will be a helpful resource to you during your service abroad.

When you accept your invitation to become a Volunteer, you are agreeing to abide by the policies and regulations governing Peace Corps service. Many of those policies and regulations are discussed generally in this handbook; they are set forth in more detail in the authoritative Peace Corps Manual (also available at [www.peacecorps.gov/docs](http://www.peacecorps.gov/docs)) and in policy handbooks distributed by individual country programs. As you will recall, during the application process you agreed to adhere to these guidelines. Please carefully review the Core Expectations of Peace Corps Volunteers (found on Page vi), as this summarizes the expectations of Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers.

We wish you the best of luck as you begin the uniquely rewarding experience of being a Peace Corps Volunteer.

# The Peace Corps Mission

The Peace Corps was established in 1961 to promote world peace and friendship through the service of American Volunteers abroad. In adapting to changing needs around the world, the Peace Corps remains guided by three goals from the Peace Corps Act:

1. To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
2. To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
3. To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans

Over the past 50 years, more than 215,000 Americans have furthered these goals through Peace Corps service in 139 countries around the world. Volunteers are the foundation of the Peace Corps. Coming from every background and traveling to the far reaches of the globe to share skills and promote mutual understanding, Volunteers earn the admiration and respect of people who often have never met a person from the U.S. From facilitating HIV/AIDS education programs to assisting farmers with agricultural techniques, Volunteers make a lasting difference in peoples' lives. In the face of many personal and physical challenges, Peace Corps Volunteers offer their ingenuity and an approach to problems that is both conscientious and pragmatic. Despite advances in technology that make it easier to communicate across the world, the personal relationships Peace Corps Volunteers forge with their co-workers and friends continue to be fundamental to international peace and understanding.

A Volunteer's contribution is not limited to what he or she does while abroad. During and after their service, Peace Corps Volunteers share their understanding of the cultures, languages, and traditions of other countries with countless family members, friends, co-workers, schoolchildren, and

community groups in the United States. Volunteers also make a difference at home by continuing community service and applying the skills they learned as Volunteers to a variety of professional disciplines.

The Peace Corps is more than the sum of the Volunteers' activities. It represents something special. It is a unique government agency that best reflects the enduring values and ideals of the American people: generosity, civic pride, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to service. By demonstrating and sharing these qualities during their service every day, Volunteers help create a better understanding of Americans around the world.





# Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission of promoting world peace and friendship, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to do the following:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months.
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed.
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service.
4. Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture.
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance.
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect.
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve.
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others.
9. Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America.
10. Represent responsibly the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service.





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# The First Steps

## THE INVITATION

When you accept your invitation, you will be making a commitment to serve approximately 27 months, which includes about three months of pre-service training (PST) abroad and 24 months of actual service at your site. Your two-year tour as a Peace Corps Volunteer begins on the day you take the Peace Corps oath at the end of your pre-service training.

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*Your invitation letter includes links to your Volunteer Assignment, your host country welcome book, and more.*

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To accept your invitation, please submit the Invitation Decision form within seven calendar days of receiving it. This form will be attached to your invitation letter email. If, for some reason, you cannot accept this invitation, please email the Placement Office. If the Peace Corps does not hear from you, the Placement Office will assume you are no longer interested in Volunteer service and the assignment will be offered to another applicant. The invitation letter also includes links to your Volunteer Assignment Description, your host country welcome book, and other important details about Peace Corps service. You will receive a reply within five business days after accepting your invitation with information about the next steps to becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer.

## VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

Your Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) indicates the country and project to which you are assigned and provides a general description of your assignment, including the training you will receive prior to your service. Please note the first page of the VAD cites the host country, assignment

name, assignment number, and the tentative date of your staging event (your pre-departure orientation). While the VAD provides a general idea of what you may expect in your assignment, individual site placements can vary greatly. It is important to be flexible about your assignment location, working conditions, and colleagues. VADs are usually written several months before invitations are extended; host country policies, counterpart organizations, and even the objectives of the assignment can change between the time the VAD is written and when you complete training. Occasionally, for reasons generally beyond the control of the Peace Corps, an assignment must be postponed or even canceled after an invitation is issued. Such reasons may include deterioration in security conditions in the host country or a major change in host country policies that affects the Peace Corps program. The Peace Corps realizes how disruptive these changes are and a lot of consideration goes into decisions to postpone or cancel a project. When project changes or cancellations occur, the Peace Corps will do its best to find appropriate new assignments for displaced invitees as soon as possible.

## **WELCOME BOOK**

While this handbook gives you general information and policies that apply to all Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers, the welcome book contains specific information about the country where you will be serving. Your welcome book is included as an attachment to your invitation letter email. You may also access your welcome book through the “Country Resources” section of the New Volunteer Portal. This document provides information about your host country and local living conditions, practical advice on what to pack for your service abroad, letters from current Volunteers, points of contact at Peace Corps headquarters, and other valuable information.

## **NEW VOLUNTEER PORTAL**

You will receive access information for the New Volunteer Portal via email one to two days after you accept your invitation. This portal provides you with access to all of the activities that you need to complete to register as a Peace Corps trainee. It also contains information about applying for your no-fee Peace Corps passport and for a visa to enter your country of service (if required). You may begin your registration activities as soon as you receive access to the New Volunteer Portal. The deadline for completing your registration activities is 30 days prior to your staging event. Please contact

the Peace Corps Staging Unit if you have any questions concerning your New Volunteer Portal.

## **NO-FEE PASSPORT**

No-fee passports are to be used by Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers for all travel during Peace Corps service. If you accept this invitation, you must apply for a no-fee passport, even if you already have a personal passport. Applying for a no-fee passport does not invalidate your personal passport. **It can take up to six weeks for the U.S. Department of State to issue a passport, so it is essential that you complete the no-fee passport application immediately.** Instructions for completing an application for a no-fee passport can be found in the “Content” tab of your New Volunteer Portal under “Country Resources.” It is important to follow these instructions precisely, as they differ from instructions found on the Department of State’s website. Please note that the no-fee passport will not be mailed to you after you apply. You will receive your no-fee passport at staging, along with any necessary visas, the international portion of your airline ticket, and any documents you submitted to apply for your no-fee passport (personal passport, birth certificate, naturalization certificate, etc.).

The no-fee passport is issued to enable Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers to fulfill their overseas responsibilities; but it does not confer trainees and Volunteers with diplomatic or official status. Volunteers who complete their service may use the no-fee passport for not more than 90 days of personal travel after Peace Corps service. For post-service travel exceeding 90 days, Volunteers who do not already have a personal passport must obtain one from a U.S. embassy or consulate.

Volunteers whose service is terminated before the end of their 27-month tour are required to return their no-fee passport to Peace Corps headquarters within 14 days of their return to the United States. A Volunteer who elects to remain in his/her country of service following early termination or who does not return to the United States directly must return the no-fee passport to the country director prior to his/her termination date.

If, for any reason, you do not go overseas to become a Peace Corps Volunteer and would like the documents you submitted to obtain your no-fee passport returned to you, send your request, and the address to which you want the documents sent, to

Peace Corps/CWTSatoTravel  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526

These documents will be returned only upon request. If not returned, they will be kept on file for two years and then destroyed. If you have further questions, call CWTSatoTravel at 202.692.1170.

## **VISAS**

Like other international travelers, Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers may be required to have a visa. If your host country requires a visa, the application(s) are included in the “Content” tab of the New Volunteer Portal under “Country Resources.” Visa applications can take up to six weeks (and sometimes longer) to process. If a visa is required for your country of service, please return the visa application and required photos immediately to avoid delaying your departure.

Visa application forms vary, but you will need to complete all personal information, such as name, address, date of birth, etc. Any request for passport information refers to the no-fee Peace Corps passport and not your personal passport. If you are unsure of a response, leave it blank. Peace Corps staff will complete your visa application as details about your assignment are finalized.

Any questions about your visa application should be directed to CWTSatoTravel. If you decide not to enter an overseas training class and want your visa application and photographs returned, provide a written request to CWTSatoTravel. Unless you request these personal documents, they will be held on file for three months in the travel office and then destroyed.

## **BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION**

After you have been invited and before you depart for service, the Peace Corps initiates a background investigation, as required by law, for all Volunteers. The Peace Corps contacts the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other relevant agencies that may have records pertaining to you.

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*If your answer to any of the questions below has changed to “yes,” you must advise the Placement Office’s legal eligibility specialist at [legalplacement@peacecorps.gov](mailto:legalplacement@peacecorps.gov).*

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Background investigations are one of several sources of information used by the Peace Corps to determine eligibility and suitability for service abroad. Applicants who have provided the Peace Corps with information that is misleading, inaccurate, or incomplete may have their invitation rescinded, or later may be separated from service.

Before accepting this invitation, please review the following questions. If your answer is “yes” to any of these questions, please advise the Placement Office staff as soon as possible. Failure to inform the Placement Office truthfully and completely to the best of your knowledge at this time may result in the withdrawal of your invitation for Peace Corps service or future separation from service.

Since you originally submitted your application for Peace Corps service has any of the following occurred:

- Has your marital status changed?
- Has your name changed due to marriage, divorce, or any other legal process?
- Have you been arrested, charged, cited, or convicted of any offense by a civilian or military court or tribunal? Report misdemeanors, felonies, driving while intoxicated (DWI) or driving under the influence (DUI) charges or citations, public intoxication, open containers, etc., as well as speeding and other traffic violations. It is required that you report your criminal record information regardless of whether the record in your case has been sealed, expunged, or otherwise stricken from the court record.
- Are you now facing charges for any offense (including traffic offenses), are any judgments now pending against you, or are you a party to any civil suits?

- Do you have any new financial obligations (including student loans that have not been reported) that cannot or will not be satisfied prior to your arrival at the staging event?
- Do you anticipate being called to testify in any legal proceeding during your period of service?
- Have any persons become partially or totally dependent upon you for their support (whether or not they are living with you)? Include any individuals for whose support you are legally responsible, regardless of whether you actually provide support.
- Has the status of your U.S. citizenship changed?
- Have you or a member of your family been engaged in, or had any connection with, the collection, dissemination, or analysis of intelligence information? If you or your family have been employed by, or otherwise associated with, an intelligence agency or activity since you submitted your application and you have doubts about whether you can disclose the connection, please consult with that agency, preferably its Office of General Counsel, before responding.
- Have you been discharged from any branch of the U.S. armed forces on other than an honorable basis?
- Have you been employed by, or sought employment with, any agency or organization, civilian or military, or by a division of such an agency, a substantial part of whose mission includes intelligence activities?

If, at any time after you have accepted the invitation and are waiting to depart, a situation arises that would cause your answers to any of the preceding questions to change from “no” to “yes,” you must advise the Placement Office’s Legal Eligibility team at [legalplacement@peacecorps.gov](mailto:legalplacement@peacecorps.gov).

The sooner you advise the Placement Office of the situation, the sooner it may be able to resolve any problems that would delay or interfere with your departure. At your staging event, you will be required to sign a certification that your answers to these questions have not changed since you last reported them to the Peace Corps. Failure to advise the Placement Office of any change, at the soonest possible date, may preclude you from service.



## **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

Please confirm the addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers at which you can be reached prior to your departure abroad. Accurate information regarding your home of record is important.

If your plans change and you must change your address, email, or phone number, please notify your country desk officer at least one month prior to your staging event. The travel agency begins to make preparations for your plane ticket one month in advance and cannot make airport or address changes after that time.

In addition, please be sure to update your email address so you are using an account that will be valid once you have returned from Peace Corps service. The Peace Corps will need to contact you, particularly as you exit service, and an email address that ends in .edu could expire during your service.

# Making the Adjustment

Life as a Peace Corps Volunteer will challenge you with a series of adjustments, including moving from pre-service training to your assigned site, adjusting to new ways of working and socializing, learning a new language, and eating unfamiliar food. While these may be a part of the excitement and adventure that initially sparked your interest in the Peace Corps, the adjustments will require your effort, energy, and accommodation.

Your attitude toward life as a Peace Corps Volunteer is bound to evolve as the initial novelty of living and working abroad wears off. It may be difficult, at times, to maintain your enthusiasm and energy, especially after sustaining setbacks or encountering misunderstandings and lingering difficulties. Even when you are not facing obstacles and frustrations, the challenge of functioning effectively in a foreign culture cannot be dismissed lightly: Just when you think you've mastered it, something will happen to remind you that in some important respects you have not completely integrated into your community.

As the guest of another country, you will be expected to observe and respect its laws and customs. Volunteers and trainees do not have diplomatic immunity and are not entitled to any special treatment under local law. Your behavior should project respect for the American culture you represent and for the host country culture in which you live. This respect is demonstrated by how you focus on the Peace Corps mission, integrate in your community, exhibit professional conduct, demonstrate healthy lifestyle choices, increase your language competence, and utilize appropriate listening and observation skills. Together, these will help ensure your safety, security, and success as a Volunteer.

Look to Peace Corps staff for counsel and understanding, and remember that other Volunteers and your host country friends and colleagues are a viable support network to help you through the inevitable low periods. While it will take time to develop genuine, trusting friendships at your site, the bonds with neighbors, families, and other host country individuals will prove to be an invaluable support system for advice, guidance, and social

activities throughout your service. The Peace Corps provides a variety of resources for you to learn more about both the process of intercultural adjustment and your own personal adjustment.

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*While it will certainly take time to develop genuine, trusting friendships at your site, the bonds with neighbors, families, and other host country individuals can provide an invaluable support system for advice, guidance, and social activities.*

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These include the Peace Corps publications *A Few Minor Adjustments* and *On the Home Front*. The latter is a handbook for families of Volunteers that discusses intercultural adjustment and offers practical advice for concerns that may arise during your service overseas. It will be sent to you with your reporting instructions three to four weeks prior to your departure overseas. You can view and download *On the Home Front* and other resources for family and friends at [peacecorps.gov/family](https://peacecorps.gov/family).

# Volunteer Health

## **PREPARING FOR A HEALTHY AND TIMELY DEPARTURE**

Your well-being during your service is very important to the Peace Corps, and it is critical that complete and accurate health information is available. To ensure that the medical records forwarded to your overseas health unit are accurate, the Office of Medical Services (OMS) will review your medical and dental reports prior to your staging event. This review sometimes indicates a need to update certain medical or dental evaluations or confirm that recommended treatments have been completed. Please note that you will not be issued a ticket to travel to the staging event if your health record is incomplete. To avoid departure delays, please review the following requests and respond to those that apply to you:

- If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, dental, or if you have been prescribed new medications, or a change in medication dosage—since the time you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify OMS.
- Failure to disclose changes in your health, including new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy, can endanger your health and may be cause for separation from Peace Corps service. Every year, several Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers are required to leave Peace Corps because they failed to disclose pertinent information about their health. Please don't be one of them!
- Volunteers in certain locations abroad will not have immediate access to dental care. Dental clearance is required before you are issued an airline ticket to staging. Your home-of-record dentist will be asked to complete a dental clearance form after a dental exam and after any recommended treatment is completed. This letter, along with the dental examination form and specified X-rays, must be sent to OMS.

- The Peace Corps will provide the immunizations necessary for your assignment, either at your staging event or shortly after you arrive in-country. These immunizations are in addition to those you have already received and informed OMS about during the evaluation process. To avoid taking duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and hand carry it to your staging event. If you know you are sensitive to vaccines or if you have religious reservations concerning the use of immunizations or medication, you should contact OMS through your secure medical portal immediately, and before your staging event.

## **HEALTH ITEMS YOU WILL NEED FOR DEPARTURE OR OVERSEAS USE**

Before your departure, please obtain and pack the following items:

- A physician's copy of your immunization record, if possible. Carry this by hand to your host country and keep it with your passport.
- A three-month supply of approved prescription medication you use on a regular basis. Your Peace Corps health unit will order a supply of the prescription and nonprescription medications you require when you arrive in-country. In most cases, the Peace Corps will order a generic equivalent to fill the prescription. Be aware that it can take an extremely long time for shipments to reach some countries. For your own comfort and well-being, bring a three-month supply of these items. You are advised to pack a portion of your three-month supply in your carry-on luggage and the balance in your accompanying baggage. The Peace Corps will provide basic over-the-counter medical supplies such as Band-Aids, acetaminophen, etc. The Peace Corps does not provide medications that are elective or cosmetic (such as for erectile dysfunction, hair loss, or facial wrinkles). The Peace Corps does not provide medications not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, homeopathic or naturopathic (herbal) remedies, or vitamin treatments other than multivitamins.
- If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you to your staging event. Due to a wide variance in water quality and other environmental concerns that could promote eye infections with contact lens use, Peace Corps Volunteers should not use contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not

replace contact lenses or supply lens solution or related equipment. If a pair of the glasses you bring with you breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it with another pair. Please note that designer frames or lenses (tinted, coated, etc.) will not be replaced. Generic frames and prescription lenses will be used.

## **YOUR HEALTH-CARE SERVICES**

As a trainee and Volunteer, your authorized medical needs and expenses are covered by the Peace Corps from the time you leave home to travel directly to your staging event until the end of your service, regardless of whether you are in your assigned country, the United States, or another country. For information about medical confidentiality, see Pages 13–14.

Overseas, a Peace Corps medical officer (PCMO) will provide primary medical care through your post's health unit. The PCMO also administers a comprehensive health-care program to protect and maintain your health. To a great extent, the effectiveness of the health-care program depends on your personal commitment to taking precautions against risky behaviors, illness, and injury. Indeed, maintaining your health is one of your principal responsibilities as a trainee and Volunteer. The Peace Corps will vaccinate you against many infectious diseases, but immunizations cannot protect you from some of the most common health problems Volunteers experience.

Maintaining your well-being means practicing the disease- and risk prevention strategies your PCMO describes during training and following the guidelines in the health handbook you will receive in-country. Strategies include complying with malaria prophylaxis requirements as prescribed and avoiding behaviors that can put you at risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. You will be asked to take necessary precautions with regard to water treatment, sanitation, nutrition, and personal safety, and to see your PCMO for treatment when necessary. The PCMO is the only staff member in-country who can authorize any medical and dental procedures performed in-country.

Being aware of one's emotional health is also important. You may react in unusual ways to your environment abroad. When this happens, you should feel free to seek out your PCMO for counsel. A PCMO can be an important source of support in making a successful adjustment to a new way of living and working. In addition, the Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit provides phone consultation to Volunteers who wish to speak with

someone concerning their emotional health. Such consultations are facilitated by your PCMO. You will find more information about cross-cultural adaptation and what to expect in terms of feelings and frustrations in the Peace Corps booklet *A Few Minor Adjustments*.

The range of services available at your post's health unit is limited. When necessary, the PCMO may refer you to in-country physicians and local health-care facilities. If your medical problems are beyond the level of care available locally, you will be medically evacuated (medevaced) to a location where appropriate evaluation and treatment are available.

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*It is important to know that HIV/AIDS is a significant public health threat worldwide. The Peace Corps provides Volunteers with complete information on the modes of transmission, the risks of exposure to HIV, and Volunteers' responsibilities for prevention. Your PCMO or the Office of Medical Services can give you more detailed information upon request.*

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The decision to medevac a Volunteer to the U.S. or to another country is made by the PCMO in collaboration with OMS staff. If a medical evacuation is necessary, Peace Corps staff will coordinate logistics, such as travel and housing, and manage your medical evaluation and treatment. Volunteers may be placed on "medevac status" for no more than 45 days and generally there is a resolution sooner than that. If a condition cannot be resolved within that time period, a Volunteer may be medically separated.

During service, you may or may not be authorized health care while visiting the United States. If you need health care at this time, your PCMO will communicate with OMS, which will then issue you an authorization form. This authorization form, along with your health benefit identification card, is to be presented to a network provider. As a participant in a provider network, you are not responsible for any charge associated with authorized care. As an alternative, you may also pay for the service and request reimbursement as outlined on the authorization form. Prior authorization from OMS staff or the PCMO is required (except in emergencies) for all medical and dental care while out of the country of service.



You are expected to schedule and complete treatment within the time allotted for leave or vacation. If evaluation and treatment of a medical or dental problem cannot be completed by the end of your home leave, you may be placed on medical hold or medically separated. You must be cleared by OMS to return to your Peace Corps country if you have been seen by a physician in the U.S. while on leave. You must also contact OMS at 855.855.1961, option 1, ext. 1500, or after hours at 301.790.4749, if a new health problem develops or a previous health problem becomes unstable while you are in the United States. Evaluation and treatment of illnesses or injuries that develop while you are in the U.S. are authorized and managed by OMS. Unauthorized medical expenses will not be reimbursed by the Peace Corps.

## **POST-SERVICE HEALTH BENEFITS**

For six months after service, the Peace Corps may authorize payment for medical and dental evaluations of conditions that have arisen in connection with your service abroad. For conditions relating to a sexual assault during service, see “Volunteer Safety: Support for Sexual Assault Victims.” Should you require treatment for a service-related health condition, OMS’ post-service health unit will assist you in making a claim for benefits under the Federal Employees’ Compensation Act (FECA).

To cover medical expenses for conditions that are not service-related, you will be eligible to purchase a private health insurance plan. A more detailed description of this benefit follows.

### **Federal Employees’ Compensation Act**

After service, Peace Corps trainees and Volunteers may be eligible to file a claim for post-service health-care and compensation benefits under FECA for service-related health conditions. FECA is administered by the Office of Workers’ Compensation Programs (OWCP) within the U.S. Department of Labor, which is solely responsible for determining whether a claim is accepted.

If a claim is accepted, FECA covers post-service medical expenses for service-related injuries or illnesses. FECA may also cover medical expenses for a pre-existing condition if OWCP determines that the condition was

aggravated, accelerated, or precipitated as a result of Peace Corps service. Three cases are specifically excluded from FECA coverage:

- Conditions caused by willful misconduct
- Conditions caused by the Volunteer's intention to bring about the injury or death of him/herself or another
- Conditions proximately caused by intoxication or drug abuse

Illness or injury is generally considered to be service-related when it occurs during your Peace Corps service anywhere outside of the United States. Illness or injury that develops in the United States is not considered to be service-related unless the trainee or Volunteer is engaged in a Peace Corps activity when it occurs. Regardless of whether an illness or injury occurs in the United States or abroad, the Peace Corps will provide for your medical needs while you are in service. In addition, the Peace Corps will provide you with the information you need to file for benefits under FECA.

### **Health Insurance after Peace Corps Service**

After your service, you are eligible to purchase a specific post-service private individual health insurance plan that provides coverage for some health conditions that are not covered by FECA because they

- existed before your Peace Corps service;
- developed while you were on personal business in the United States during service; or
- originated after you left service abroad.

The Peace Corps automatically enrolls trainees and Volunteers in the plan as they leave service abroad and pays the first month of insurance premiums on their behalf. You may purchase up to two additional months of coverage. You are strongly encouraged to purchase health insurance when you complete your Peace Corps service to meet health-care needs not covered by FECA during your post-service readjustment period. If you do not sign up for additional insurance before the end of the first month's coverage period, you forfeit your right to subscribe to this plan.

## **Health Insurance Portability**

The Peace Corps and the insurance plan after service will issue certificates of health plan coverage in case you need them for subsequent health insurance programs.

Like all Americans, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers will have access to new options for quality, affordable health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act. You will be able to access health insurance in a variety of ways, including through state or federal marketplaces or exchanges, under your parents' coverage plan if you are under 26 years old, through an employer or school plan, or through Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance. To compare plans, shop for options, or find out more information about obtaining health insurance, please visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov).

## **VOLUNTEERS ENROLLED IN MEDICARE**

Please note that this information is advisory only. Please discuss the specifics of your situation with representatives of the appropriate agencies.

Because the Peace Corps provides medical care for Peace Corps Volunteers during their service, Medicare permits Volunteers to temporarily withdraw from their Medicare Parts B and D (but only Parts B and D, and not Part A or C) while in service, then permits them to re-enroll during a Special Enrollment Period after service without being charged a penalty fee, pursuant to 42 CFR 407.20 and 42 CFR 423.38.

Please keep in mind that the Social Security Administration has a special classification for Peace Corps Volunteers that treats Peace Corps service as employment for Social Security and Medicare purposes. That rule is set out in 20 CFR 404.1018(d). The Social Security Administration has separate rules for "international volunteers," which differ from Peace Corps Volunteers.

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you are eligible to enroll in Medicare during a Special Enrollment Period that is anytime while you are still in service or during the eight months following the month your Peace Corps service ends. For additional information on the Special Enrollment Period, visit [www.medicare.gov/MedicareEligibility](http://www.medicare.gov/MedicareEligibility).

Please note that you must meet specific eligibility requirements for the Special Enrollment Period, depending on whether you were previously enrolled in Part B. If you are enrolled in Medicare Part B prior to Peace Corps

service, please check with your local Social Security office prior to terminating your Part B coverage; visit [www.peacecorps.gov/ssa](http://www.peacecorps.gov/ssa).

If you do not enroll in Medicare Part B during your Special Enrollment Period, you will have to wait until the next General Enrollment Period, which is January 1 through March 31 of each year. You may then have to pay a higher Medicare Part B premium because you could have had Medicare Part B and did not take it.

Please note that the delayed enrollment or re-enrollment applies only to Medicare Part B. Please call Social Security at 800.772.1213 for their policies and procedures for withdrawing and/or enrolling in Medicare. This information is advisory only. Please discuss the specifics of your situation with representatives of the appropriate agencies.

## **MEDICAL CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Peace Corps recognizes that protecting the confidentiality of a Volunteer's medical information is extremely important. The Peace Corps wants you to feel comfortable giving the PCMO or others providing health care or treatment the information necessary for them to be able to provide you proper care and treatment. At the same time, the Peace Corps is responsible for your overall safety and security and the safe and successful management of the Peace Corps program in your country.

The confidentiality of your health information abroad—including your health records, your health-related conversations with the PCMO, and information PCMOs are given by other medical professionals related to your health care—is protected by the Privacy Act and Peace Corps policy. This protection means that your medical information will be shared only among Peace Corps medical staff and other medical professionals who need it to care for or treat you, and with other Peace Corps staff only to the extent that they have a specific need to know the information in order to fulfill their official Peace Corps responsibilities. For example, the PCMO is required to disclose to the country director (or his or her designee) medically confidential information if this information is specifically needed to properly manage the post. Therefore, if you have a medical accommodation, the country director will be informed. The PCMO will also share with the country director information about illegal drug use or other conduct that involves a serious threat to your (or someone else's) health or safety. These are only examples. There may be other situations in which the country director and

non-medical Peace Corps staff will be provided with confidential medical information. However, any Peace Corps staff member with whom a PCMO shares any medically confidential information has a responsibility to protect its confidentiality.

For more information about the Peace Corps' policy on medical confidentiality, see Peace Corps Manual, Section 268.

## **RELEASE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION TO FAMILIES**

The Peace Corps will not automatically notify your family if you become ill or are injured during your service. Information about your medical condition will only be provided to those individuals whom you specifically designate as emergency contacts or designated representatives/next-of-kin. You have the opportunity to make these designations at staging. You may also give the Peace Corps written consent to notify other individuals as you choose.

## **FAMILY EMERGENCIES AND EMERGENCY LEAVE**

The Peace Corps Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU) provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the U.S., you should instruct your family that if they have difficulty reaching you directly or need assistance, they should notify COU immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or the death of an immediate family member. Call COU at 202.692.1470 or 855.855.1961, option 2.

If you are notified directly about a family emergency while abroad, you should contact your country director (CD). The CD will inform COU of the emergency, requesting that your family be contacted for verification and additional information concerning the situation. When necessary and possible, the CD may also arrange for telephone calls to or from the United States.

In the event of a death or immediate life-threatening illness of a parent (including an individual who has performed the parenting function for a substantial period), spouse, sibling, child, or grandchild, emergency leave will be authorized. Transportation home, along with an allowance, will be paid by the Peace Corps. This leave is for a period of two weeks, excluding travel time.

Only one emergency leave can be granted to attend the same family medical emergency during a Volunteer's period of service. In the case of married Volunteers, the CD will determine on an individual basis whether the spouse should accompany the affected Volunteer to the United States.





# Volunteer Safety and Security

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

The safety and security of Peace Corps Volunteers is our highest priority. The Peace Corps devotes significant resources to providing Volunteers with the training, support, and information they need to stay healthy and safe. Yet because Volunteers serve worldwide, often in very remote areas, health and safety risks are an inherent part of Volunteer service.

Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as wealthy are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. During the course of their service, Volunteers are likely to experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of robbery and physical and sexual assaults also occur, sometimes with serious injury. Although rare, there are incidents of Volunteer deaths during service from causes ranging from accidents, natural and/or medical conditions, or homicide.

Before establishing a program, the Peace Corps completes a thorough assessment of the safety conditions of the country. When choosing sites to place Volunteers, careful consideration is given to many factors. These include access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications and transportation; and the existence of suitable housing arrangements. Proximity to other Peace Corps Volunteers is also considered. Peace Corps staff at post train Volunteers in preventative safety and risk-reduction procedures and policies. Volunteers can play a key role in supporting safety and security efforts by abiding by the Peace Corps' policies.

If a Volunteer is the victim of a crime during service, the local Peace Corps post and the Peace Corps offices of Safety and Security, Health Services, and Victim Advocacy are ready to provide support. Immediate reporting to Peace Corps officials is strongly encouraged, so the Peace Corps can provide a Volunteer victim with the support that he/she deserves and to

quickly address any safety and security concerns. Timely reporting may also be critical to the preservation of evidence, the apprehension of a suspect, and a successful prosecution if a Volunteer chooses to report the incident to local authorities. In the event a crime does occur, the authority and responsibility for investigation and prosecution will likely reside with the host country government. In the event of a serious crime against a Volunteer, the Peace Corps may retain local attorneys to represent the interests of a Volunteer and/or provide legal advice to the post.

In cases where the perpetrator of the crime is associated with the Peace Corps, the Peace Corps Office of Inspector General (OIG) is responsible for conducting an investigation as appropriate, and coordinating with host country authorities or U.S. federal prosecutors. Outside of any criminal matter, OIG also investigates allegations of wrongdoing by those associated with the Peace Corps. See MS 861 for further guidance.

If you do become a victim of a serious crime during your Peace Corps service, first make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust, and second, contact the country director, duty officer, or medical officer. In most cases, country directors and medical officers are required to report crimes to the following Peace Corps headquarters offices: Safety and Security, Health Services, Victim Advocacy, Inspector General, your country's regional office, and Global Operations. In addition, the U.S. Embassy regional security officer will be informed. This information is protected from unauthorized disclosure by the Privacy Act.

**Our aim is to reduce risks.** The Peace Corps has established policies, training, and procedures to help Volunteers reduce risks and enhance their health and safety. One's personal safety is optimized by mature behavior and exercising sound judgment. Volunteers must practice effective situational awareness, including being aware of their surroundings, understanding how their conduct and actions may be perceived, and being sensitive to how their behavior may impact one's personal safety. Often Volunteers must change a range of behaviors to minimize risks to their safety and security abroad. Such changes may involve dress, living arrangements, exercise, alcohol consumption, socializing with members of the opposite sex, and going out alone at night. The challenge is to find the right balance and comport oneself in a manner that enables you to have a safe, productive experience. Peace Corps staff members are committed to helping Volunteers meet this challenge.

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*It is essential to always be aware of your surroundings, understand how your conduct and actions may be perceived, and be sensitive to how your behavior may impact your personal safety.*

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During pre-service training, the Peace Corps provides training and resources to help Volunteers develop language, technical, and cross-cultural proficiency, and acquire personal health and safety knowledge. A guide, *Safety and Security Information to Help You Prepare for Peace Corps Service*, containing detailed information on how to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of crime, is included in your invitation materials as an electronic document. You will also receive country-specific crime reduction strategies during your training in-country.

## **SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

The Peace Corps is committed to supporting all Volunteers who become the victims of a crime during their service. This support includes taking appropriate steps to assure that the Volunteer is safe and provided with the necessary legal, medical, advocacy, and emotional support to help him or her recover from the event. The Peace Corps victim advocates offer any Volunteer victim the appropriate support after a crime, both during and after the Volunteer's completion of Peace Corps service.

There are policies and procedures in place at each Peace Corps post so that Volunteers can report when they have been a victim. Every effort is made to maintain the Volunteer's privacy when they report a crime. Peace Corps staff in-country have been trained on how to respond to a Volunteer when a crime is committed against them. Additionally, during their pre-service training, all Volunteers receive training on how to report crimes, including sexual assault, and the support they will receive.

## **Office of Victim Advocacy**

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource for currently serving and returned Volunteers who have been victims of crime. The Peace Corps victim advocates have three main responsibilities:

- To ensure Volunteers are aware of and have access to the support services offered by the Peace Corps.
- To ensure Peace Corps staff is aware of and take into consideration Volunteer's choices and wishes regarding the care they receive and their continued service in the Peace Corps.
- To answer questions and address concerns related to Peace Corps policies and procedures or the local criminal justice and legal systems.

When a Volunteer chooses to report to law enforcement, OVA is responsible for keeping Volunteers informed and updated throughout the investigative process, legal proceedings, and internal investigations. Victim advocates are also able to accompany Volunteers and returned Volunteers abroad for participation in investigative and legal proceedings.

Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist Volunteers by calling or texting 202.409.2704 or emailing [victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov](mailto:victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov).

## **Commitment to Sexual Assault Victims**

The Peace Corps is committed to providing a compassionate and supportive response to all Volunteers who have been sexually assaulted. To that end, the Peace Corps makes the following commitment to Volunteers who are victims of sexual assault:

### *Compassion*

We will treat you with dignity and respect. No one deserves to be a victim of a sexual assault.

### *Safety*

We will take appropriate steps to provide for your ongoing safety.

### *Support*

We will provide you with the support you need to aid in your recovery.

### *Legal*

We will help you understand the relevant legal processes and your legal options.

### *Open Communication*

We will keep you informed of the progress of your case, should you choose to report the incident to law enforcement.

### *Continuation of Service*

We will work closely with you to make decisions regarding your continued service.

### *Privacy*

We will respect your privacy and will not, without your consent, disclose your identity or share the details of the incident with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know.

Peace Corps staff members worldwide will honor this commitment and demonstrate that commitment to you through their words and actions.

## **Support for Sexual Assault Victims**

In addition to reporting procedures, the Peace Corps has established a 24-hour anonymous sexual assault hotline reserved only for currently serving Volunteers. This hotline is set up for Volunteers who have been victims of sexual assault to get crisis counseling and information. Volunteers are given the number for the sexual assault hotline once they arrive at their country of service.

Every Peace Corps post has two designated staff members who have volunteered to serve as a sexual assault response liaison and have received comprehensive training on how to respond to and support Volunteers who report a sexual assault. SARLs are available, at the request of the Volunteer, to provide accompaniment through the in-country response such as attending meetings with Peace Corps staff, local law enforcement, during the sexual assault forensic examination, or attending court. SARLs are another support staff member available to Volunteers in addition to the safety and security coordinator and the Peace Corps medical officer.

## **EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS**

The Peace Corps addresses larger security concerns through country-specific emergency action plans (EAPs). These plans, developed to address natural disasters, political unrest, serious accidents, etc., set forth the strategies developed by the Peace Corps in each country to prepare for, respond to, and recover from such crises. You will receive an EAP orientation during pre-service training and subsequent in-service trainings. You will also receive a copy of the EAP and be expected to familiarize yourself with the plan and your roles and responsibilities during times of crisis.

The Peace Corps staff works very closely with the U.S. ambassador and the embassy's regional security officer on matters of Volunteer safety and crisis management, such as natural disasters. If a situation arises in-country that poses a potential threat to Volunteers, the Peace Corps will respond immediately to assess the nature of the threat and respond in a manner that maximizes Volunteers' safety and well-being. Under some circumstances, Volunteers may be required to remain at their sites, be moved from their sites either temporarily or permanently, or be evacuated from the country altogether. If the decision is made to evacuate a country, the Peace Corps will commit every resource at hand to safeguard the well-being of each Volunteer.

# Personal and Financial Matters

You should make arrangements to settle personal and financial affairs before reporting for service. As you prepare to depart, please remember that any legal or financial affairs should not require you to return home during the 27 months you are serving in the Peace Corps. You may want to grant power of attorney to a relative or friend to act on your behalf concerning such matters as your house, car, debts, taxes, student loans, or business. You may also wish to consider whether you need a durable power of attorney or a health-care power of attorney (exercisable if you are disabled). Before you depart, you must obtain satisfactory resolution of any outstanding legal actions in which you are involved. Failure to do so may result in a delay or withdrawal of your invitation, or subsequent removal from service. As you put your affairs in order, remember that the Peace Corps is still processing your medical and other background information. You should not make changes in employment, education, or housing arrangements until you have accepted an invitation to a specific program and have received medical and dental clearance for service abroad.

## **RECORDS AND PERSONAL PAPERS**

The application and related documents you provide to the Peace Corps, and the records generated as a result of your training and Volunteer service, are the property of the federal government. Do not submit the original or the only available copy of a personal record. A copy of your Volunteer Description of Service (DOS) statement will be kept indefinitely as a permanent record in the National Archives. Medical records are retained for 25 years, and most other Peace Corps records are kept for seven years after completion of service or termination date. Records relating to a Volunteer's service or medical history will be released only with the written consent of the Volunteer, or as otherwise authorized under the federal Privacy Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or other applicable laws. Please note that once you are in service, your name, country of service, and dates of service are public information.

## STUDENT LOANS

For many Volunteers, student loans are a major concern during their time of service. It is your responsibility to ensure that your student loan obligations will be met during your Peace Corps service. All matters of deferment, payment, reactivation and cancellation of loans are your responsibility. Depending on your loan situation, you may choose to defer payments, reduce payments using an income-based repayment plan, or make full regular payments during your service. Please read the following sections carefully and speak with your lender to determine what is right for you. More information about student loans is available at [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whyvol/finben/faq/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whyvol/finben/faq/).

### Deferments During Service

Generally, Volunteers may obtain a deferment of payments on the principal of most federally guaranteed student loans for the length of their Peace Corps service. For certain federal loans, interest deferments and/or subsidies may also be available. The terms and conditions of available deferments differ with the type of loan, the date the loan was disbursed or consolidated, and the policies of the individual lender. For general information about federal loan deferment, visit [www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whyvol/finben/instructions/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whyvol/finben/instructions/).

Some older federal loan programs grant Peace Corps Volunteers a categorical deferment, which must be renewed annually. Specifically, Direct/Stafford loans issued before 1993 require that you apply for a “public service” deferment. Direct/Stafford loans issued after 1993, however, require that you apply for an “economic hardship” deferment, for which the U.S. Secretary of Education has determined Peace Corps Volunteers meet the necessary requirements. Generally, economic hardship deferments for federal loans are granted for a maximum of three years. If you have been granted an economic hardship deferment prior to Peace Corps service, check with your lender to determine the available deferment length to which you would be entitled.

The Peace Corps does not—and cannot—grant loan deferments: Lenders do. It is your responsibility to obtain appropriate deferment forms from your lender, obtain the necessary certifications, complete and submit the appropriate forms, keep copies of the paperwork, and apply for a renewal of the deferment, if necessary. Procedures vary among lenders; for example



some may not grant a deferment until the end of a grace period following graduation. Others require annual renewals of the certification and deferment. For this reason, the Peace Corps strongly recommends that you give power of attorney to a relative or friend to handle your loan deferments during your service. Many lenders will not speak with anyone else but the borrower without a power of attorney. A Privacy Act waiver allows the Peace Corps to disclose financial-related information to those person(s) identified, but it is for Peace Corps purposes only and will not be valid for a lender. This waiver can be filled out as an activity in the New Volunteer Portal.

The Peace Corps will provide you with certification of your status as a Volunteer at your staging event but cannot certify your status prior to staging. Do not mail deferment forms to Peace Corps headquarters. Please bring deferment forms, envelopes, and stamps with you to staging, so you can mail the forms along with the Peace Corps-provided certification before you go abroad. Renewal certifications for deferments are available in-country from the country director. Alternatively, the person serving as your power of attorney or the person(s) identified in your Privacy Act waiver may send renewal certification requests on your behalf to [certify@peacecorps.gov](mailto:certify@peacecorps.gov) or to the following address:

Peace Corps/Volunteer Certification Specialist  
Volunteer and PSC Financial Services  
Office of the Chief Financial Officer  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526

### **Public Service Loan Forgiveness**

If you have Federal Direct Loans and plan on a career in public service, you may want to consider participation in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program. Under this program, borrowers may qualify for forgiveness of the remaining balance of their Direct Loans after they have made 120 qualifying payments on those loans while employed full time by certain public service employers, including the Peace Corps.

Volunteers who wish to participate in PSLF will likely want to select an income-based repayment plan rather than a deferment. More information about PSLF can be found at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/charts/public-service>.

## **Post-Service Deferments and Forgiveness**

You should ask your lender about a grace period for payment of student loans after service. Most returned Volunteers must begin making payments in the month following the completion of their service.

If you have a Perkins loan, you will be eligible for a six-month post-service grace period. Additionally, Perkins loans that are not consolidated allow for a portion of the total loan obligation, plus accrued interest, to be canceled for Peace Corps Volunteers. For each of the first and second complete years of your Peace Corps service, including training, 15 percent of your loan obligation (subject to statutory maximums) can be canceled. For each of the third and fourth complete years of service, up to 20 percent of your total obligation can be canceled per year. A new cancellation form must be submitted after each 12-month period of service. It is your responsibility to forward the certified form to your lending institution or loan servicer, and to follow up with the lender to determine the status of your cancellation request. The partial cancellation provision applies only to Perkins loans made to “new borrowers” to cover the cost of instruction for periods of enrollment beginning on or after July 1, 1987. A new borrower is an individual who, on July 1, 1987, had no outstanding balance of principal or interest owed on any loan made under the Perkins or National Direct Student Loan (NDSL) program. The provision does not grandfather past and/or current Volunteers with outstanding NDSLs, and it does not allow cancellation benefits for Perkins loans or NDSLs taken after Peace Corps Volunteer service.

## **PERSONAL PROPERTY INSURANCE**

The Peace Corps does not insure Volunteers’ personal property or cash and, except in limited circumstances, will not replace or reimburse the cost of personal property or cash that is lost, damaged, or stolen. You should avoid bringing expensive personal items for your service abroad. It is difficult to safeguard property at many Volunteer sites, and the possession of valuable items may increase your risk of theft. Possession of valuable items is also inconsistent with living within the modest means expected of Volunteers. The Peace Corps encourages you to purchase personal property insurance to cover the belongings you do bring abroad. You may arrange for premiums for renewal of your annual policy to be deducted from your readjustment allowance by contacting your administrative staff in-country.

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*Do not bring expensive personal items abroad with you. The possession of valuable items may increase your risk of theft.*

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## **LIFE INSURANCE**

New trainees have the opportunity to purchase or decline group term life insurance by completing the corresponding activity in the New Volunteer portal. Those selecting life insurance coverage will have the monthly premium automatically deducted from their readjustment allowance.

You should weigh this decision carefully. If you waive or cancel this insurance, it cannot be reinstated during your service. The policy remains in force for 60 days after service termination abroad, and for 15 days if service termination occurs in the United States. The policy cannot be converted to any other form of insurance and cannot be continued past the 60- or 15-day limits. If the need arises, you may revise your beneficiaries at any time by contacting the administrative staff in-country.

## **PERSONAL FUNDS**

Volunteers are responsible for safekeeping their personal funds. To minimize the risk of theft, do not bring significant amounts of cash abroad. Use ATM cards, debit cards, or traveler's checks when possible.

## **ALLOWANCES DURING TRAINING AND SERVICE**

The allowances provided to trainees and Volunteers are calculated to permit them to live at the modest standards of the people they serve, while not compromising or endangering health or safety. As a Volunteer, you are expected to live within the allowances provided to you. The Peace Corps does not allow trainees or Volunteers to receive payment for any work done while in the Peace Corps, make investments within the host country, or engage in any other activity for personal financial gain within the host country while serving. Receiving money from home or using your own personal funds to supplement Peace Corps allowances is discouraged.

### **Walk-Around Allowance**

During pre-service training, you will be provided with a modest amount of pocket money in local currency, usually called the walk-around allowance, in addition to room and board. In the event that room and board are not provided directly, the Peace Corps will provide you with adequate funds for this purpose.

### **Settling-In Allowance**

After being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will receive a settling-in allowance in local currency to cover initial in-country housekeeping needs, such as furniture and supplies. Purchases should be consistent with the modest living standards encouraged by the Peace Corps. While items purchased with the settling-in allowance become your personal property, it is generally expected that Volunteers will leave such items in-country when they leave service. The Peace Corps will not pay to ship these items home nor reimburse you if they are lost during shipment home.

### **Living Allowance**

You will receive a living allowance during your service abroad, generally on a monthly basis. It will be sufficient to cover subsistence needs: adequate food, clothing, housing, utilities, communications, transportation, and incidentals such as local entertainment, laundry, and postage. Allowances are based on local living costs and differ from country to country and sometimes even within a country. They are subject to change depending on changes in host country living costs.

### **Leave Allowance**

Volunteers are considered to be working seven days a week, and they accrue two days of annual leave for every month of Volunteer service. Volunteers are provided allowances for annual leave expenses. Payment of a Volunteer's annual leave allowance is included with the payment of the living allowance in local currency.

## **Post-Service Readjustment Allowance**

Volunteers are given a readjustment allowance at close of service (COS) to facilitate their transition from Peace Corps service to the next step in their careers and lives. For Peace Corps Volunteers, the allowance currently accrues at a rate of \$275 per month of service (\$325 after October 1, 2014) and is held, without interest, in an individual readjustment allowance account at Peace Corps headquarters. For Volunteers who extend their service, the allowance accrues at a rate of \$375 per month (\$425 after October 1, 2014) for each month over 27 months of service (including for those Volunteers who transfer to another country of service). For all Peace Corps Response Volunteers, the allowance currently accrues at a rate of \$375 per month (\$425 after October 1, 2014). For Peace Corps Volunteers, accrual of the readjustment allowance starts on the day of registration for training. For Peace Corps Response Volunteers, accrual begins on the day of departure for service. For all Volunteers, the accrual continues through the end of service. The total amount accrued at the end of service will vary depending on the actual time served and any allotments or withdrawals you may have requested during your service.

Social Security and Medicare taxes are automatically deducted from the readjustment allowance, even if you are retired and receive Social Security payments. Federal income taxes are not withheld unless requested. You may request federal income tax withholding by submitting a W-4 form at any time during your service. The Peace Corps does not withhold state taxes.

One-third of the net amount of your Volunteer readjustment allowance is sent to your U.S. bank account approximately one to two weeks before your close of service date. The remainder of the readjustment allowance will be sent to your U.S. bank account approximately two to four weeks after the Office of the Chief Financial Officer processes your close-of-service information. Only under very limited circumstances may the final payment of the readjustment allowance be sent by a check payment to a U.S. address or an address outside the United States.

## **WITHDRAWALS AND ALLOTMENTS**

Although the readjustment allowance is reserved primarily for the transition to life after the Peace Corps, in certain circumstances a part of the accrued monthly readjustment allowance may be used to meet financial obligations

incurred prior to Peace Corps service, or, in an emergency, for obligations incurred during service.

A trainee or Volunteer may request single-payment withdrawals from their readjustment allowance account for payment of certain non-routine expenses. These would include payment of health, personal property, or life insurance premiums; repayment of interest on educational or other loans; financial debts incurred prior to service; family support payments; cost of dental work in preparation of Peace Corps service; payment of income tax; and other personal, family, or medical emergencies. Payments can not be permitted for any reason outside of those listed. Withdrawals will not be authorized to supplement living or leave allowances. Withdrawals will not be authorized for more than 50 percent of the net accrued readjustment allowance.

An allotment, or series of monthly payments, may be requested under many of the same circumstances as a withdrawal. An allotment may be requested while you are a trainee, but allotment payments will not begin until you are sworn in as a Volunteer. An allotment must be for a minimum of five consecutive monthly payments of at least \$25 each. Each Volunteer is allowed a maximum of three concurrent allotments. The maximum single monthly allotment and the total of all allotments in a month may not exceed a certain specified amount.

Both withdrawal and allotment payments must be paid to a third party, not to the Volunteer or the Volunteer's stateside bank account. Exceptions are made for expenses related to applications to post-secondary education programs. Withdrawals and allotments can be requested by submitting the appropriate form to the administrative staff in-country for approval. Supporting documentation may be required.

## **BONDS**

The only permissible way to earn interest on your readjustment allowance is through an allotment for the purchase of U.S. savings bonds. You will need to have created an account with TreasuryDirect prior to leaving the United States in order to be able to use this option. The TreasuryDirect program requires a pass-code mailed to your U.S. address. Additional steps are needed to fully register your account after this pass-code is received. Once your account is fully set up, you will have all the information necessary to request a monthly payment for purchase of bonds. For more information

on TreasuryDirect accounts, please visit [www.savingsbonds.gov](http://www.savingsbonds.gov). You may request an allotment for savings bonds at any time during service except the last six months. Bond allotments can be requested by completing the corresponding activity in the volunteer portal or by submitting the appropriate form to the administrative staff in-country. A bond allotment requested during training will not begin until after you are sworn in as a Volunteer.

## INCOME TAXES

The readjustment allowance, trainee walk-around allowance, a portion of the monthly living allowance, and all leave allowances are subject to federal income taxes. However, because Peace Corps allowances are relatively low, it is doubtful you will meet the minimum income level to file federal income taxes or be required to pay much unless you have additional outside income. The Peace Corps does not withhold federal income taxes unless requested; the agency does not withhold state income taxes. If you are required to pay taxes, you may use up to 75 percent of your readjustment allowance to do so. At the end of each tax year, you will receive a W-2 form that reflects the readjustment allowance accrued during that tax year and all other taxable allowances you received. Your W-2 form will be mailed to you in your country of service and not to your home of record. If you plan to have someone else file for you, you must grant that person access to your financial information by submitting a Privacy Act waiver. A duplicate W-2 will be sent to those specified on your Privacy Act waiver. After ending service, the W-2 form will be mailed to your home of record.

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*As with federal income taxes, Peace Corps Volunteer service does not exempt you from filing a state income tax return if state law requires you to do so. You should obtain all necessary tax information from your state tax office prior to departure.*

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During service, forms necessary to complete your federal tax return will also be available to you in-country. Volunteer and PSC Financial Services will only release your W-2 form to you or those listed on the Privacy Act waiver. If you do not submit a Privacy Act waiver via the New Volunteer

Portal, you may submit a request form to your administrative staff in-country. This form must be received by December to be effective for that tax year.

Depending on your state of residence, you may also have to pay state or local taxes. The Peace Corps does not supply state tax forms, withhold state taxes, or maintain information on state tax requirements. Peace Corps Volunteers are generally considered residents of their home-of-record state for the purpose of filing state income taxes. Serving as a Volunteer does not exempt you from filing a state income tax return if state law requires you to do so. You should obtain all necessary tax information from your state tax office prior to departure.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

The U.S. Department of Labor has ruled that Volunteers are not eligible for unemployment compensation.

## **VOTING**

The Peace Corps encourages trainees and Volunteers to vote in U.S. national, state, and local elections. However, you may encounter special problems in exercising your right to vote while you are abroad. Plan ahead by taking the following steps before you depart for Peace Corps service:

- Maintain a permanent residence address for voting purposes
- Register to vote before leaving home or, if this is impossible, ascertain whether absentee registration is permitted in your state and, if so, how to register while abroad
- Find out how to vote by absentee ballot in your state and when you should apply for an absentee ballot
- Note the address of your local election board where you should direct correspondence, including your absentee ballot
- In most states, you may use the federal post card application (FPCA) to apply for absentee ballots. This form, along with full instructions, will be provided by in-country staff in advance of national elections. Absentee voting is a privilege granted and regulated by individual states, and filing an FPCA does not guarantee voting in absentia.



# Pre-Departure Information

## THE STAGING EVENT

The last stop before your departure overseas is the pre-departure orientation, commonly called staging. The goal of staging is to welcome you to the global Peace Corps community, provide you an opportunity to reflect on your commitment to service, and orient you to the general demands of being a healthy, safe, and effective Volunteer. All trainees participate in a staging, which occurs in the U.S., usually in a city close to the point of departure for the flight abroad.

At staging, you will complete the registration process to formally enter duty as a Peace Corps trainee. You will also participate in training activities and prepare for departure to your country of service. Additionally, you will meet your fellow trainees and begin to identify personal and cultural adjustments you can make to promote your successful service. Staging is a precursor to eight to 12 weeks of pre-service training (PST) that occurs in the country or geographic region of assignment.

The tentative date of your staging event can be found in your Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD). Staging dates are subject to change. Your country desk officer will call you if the date is moved more than four or five days. The exact date will be sent to you three to five weeks before staging in a reporting instructions email.

## REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS

Three to five weeks before staging, you will receive reporting instructions for the staging event. These instructions will specify the exact time, date, and location of your staging. The Peace Corps will cover the cost of travel from your home of record (HOR) to the staging location, up to an authorized limit. Once you have received the reporting instructions, call CWTsatoTravel (800.735.2554) to make your reservations for travel to the staging event, or send an email to [peacecorps@cwtsatotravel.com](mailto:peacecorps@cwtsatotravel.com). The email



should include your full name, birth date, mailing address, phone number, departure city, and any special accommodations you require.

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*When you receive your reporting instructions, call or email CWTsatoTravel to make reservations for travel to the staging event.*

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You do not need to make reservations for travel abroad; you will be given your international ticket and passport at the staging event. About two weeks before your staging, CWTsatoTravel will send you a paper ticket or electronic ticket receipt for your travel from your home of record to the staging location. You may alter your ticket (at your own expense) to accommodate indirect personal travel.

Notify the Staging Unit at least two weeks before the staging event if you wish to make your own travel arrangements. If you choose to do this, you must travel at your own expense and may claim reimbursement at the staging event. You will need all receipts to claim reimbursement. Reimbursement is limited to the actual cost of your travel and cannot exceed the cost of an authorized air ticket at the government rate from your home of record to the staging location. Federal law stipulates that the use of a foreign carrier may disallow reimbursement of all or part of your travel costs. Travel in a private vehicle, for distances over 40 miles, will be reimbursed on the basis of mileage from the point of origin directly to the staging site.

During the staging event, you must stay at the hotel or training facility designated in the reporting instructions. The Peace Corps has made your hotel arrangements and will cover the cost of your food and lodging. You will be eligible for medical care from the Peace Corps during the period you are traveling directly from your home of record to the staging event. If you have not received your staging information two weeks before your staging, call the Staging Office immediately at 855.855.1961, option 1, ext.1865.

# Travel Information

## **TRAVEL ON A U.S. AIRLINE CARRIER**

Travel funded by the U.S. government must, by law, be on an American carrier (or on a carrier from a country with a bilateral or multilateral reciprocal agreement with the U.S.) for as long a distance as possible.

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*For travel reservations and questions, call  
CWTSatoTravel at 800.424.8580 ext. 1170.*

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Your flights from the staging event to your country of assignment and, in most cases, your flight home at the end of service are paid by the Peace Corps and arranged on American carriers. If, during your service, you purchase your own ticket to travel to the U.S. and then terminate your service while there, you may be entitled to reimbursement for the cost of your ticket. Reimbursement will be limited to the cost of the most direct travel route via economy class on a U.S.-authorized carrier, if one is available. If travel is on a non-authorized foreign carrier, your ticket may not be reimbursable. If frequent-flyer points or other special discount coupons are used for travel, reimbursement may be denied or limited to the actual cost of travel.

## **BAGGAGE**

Most airlines have limits for baggage size and weight. They may assess charges for baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limitations, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds its limitations. The Peace Corps authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height), and the largest piece cannot exceed 62 linear inches. Neither bag may weigh more than 50 pounds. One carry-on bag is allowed with dimensions of no more than 45 inches.

Most airlines also restrict the weight of the carry-on bag. These restrictions vary by carrier; you should check with your airline for the weight allowance of a carry-on bag. You will be responsible for any excess weight or oversize charges you incur. Do not bring more than you can carry; you are responsible for the handling of your items en route and abroad. Important: Do not pack any sharp objects, such as scissors, pocketknives, or metal nail files, in any carry-on baggage. Follow the Transportation Security Administration restrictions on liquid items in your carry-on bag. Objects that look suspicious will be confiscated by airport security and not returned to you. Any article of this nature should be packed into your checked baggage.

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*Be sure to thoroughly read and adhere to size and weight restrictions for both checked and carry-on luggage.*

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Visit [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) for current regulations, and check the regulations of any countries you will be traveling through.

## **CUSTOMS AND IMPORT REGULATIONS**

Before packing for travel abroad, check to see if your host country's customs and import regulations prohibit the entry of certain items. Your airline carrier also may be able to provide this information. Generally, personal belongings are not subject to import duty when you first arrive in-country. In some countries, after your initial entry, you will be subject to the host country's import duty restrictions on any goods you bring into the country upon re-entry. Other countries allow you to hand carry or check goods duty-free when re-entering the country for a specified period of time after your initial entry.

Before leaving the United States, you should register any valuable possessions (such as cameras or computers) with the U.S. Customs Service to avoid having them subject to duty upon your return. Trainees and Volunteers have no special customs privileges upon their return to the United States; they are subject to the same rules as other returning American citizens. Prior to completion of service, you will be given specific information on customs and agricultural restrictions.

# Pre-Service Training and Volunteer Selection

The Peace Corps' qualification and selection process is demanding—about one in three applicants becomes a trainee. Pre-service training is also challenging. On average, nine out of 10 trainees successfully complete pre-service training and are sworn in as Volunteers.

This rigorous selection and training process is based on criteria designed to ensure that Volunteers are fully qualified technically and interact favorably with others. The pre-service training experience provides an opportunity not only for the Peace Corps to assess a trainee's competence, but for trainees to re-evaluate their commitment to improve the quality of life of the people with whom Volunteers live and work and, in doing so, develop new knowledge, skills, and attitudes while adapting existing ones. Service in the Peace Corps is voluntary, but once the commitment to serve is made, expectations are created on the part of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps, the host country, cooperating agencies, and, in particular, the people in your new community. By accepting an invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer, an individual commits to serving the people of the host country for 27 months. The Peace Corps, for its part, commits to select individuals with the capacity and motivation to serve effectively, to train them properly, to place them where their knowledge and skills can be used, and to support them during their service.

## **PRE-SERVICE TRAINING**

Pre-service training (PST) is the first event in a competency-based training program that continues throughout your Volunteer service. Pre-service training ensures that Volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively perform their jobs. Pre-service training is conducted in the host country by the Peace Corps with participation from representatives of host country organizations, former and current Volunteers, and training contractors. The length of pre-service training varies, ranging

from eight to 12 weeks depending on the assignment. Posts measure learning accomplishments and determine if trainees have successfully achieved competencies, including language standards, for swearing-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Pre-service training affords trainees the opportunity to develop and test their own resources. As a trainee, you will play an active role in self-education.

You will be asked to decide how best to set and meet objectives and to find alternative solutions. You will be asked to prepare for an experience in which you will often have to take the initiative and accept responsibility for your decisions. Your success will be enhanced by your own effort to take responsibility for your learning and by sharing experiences with others.

Peace Corps training is founded on adult learning principles and often includes experiential “hands-on” applications. These involve exercises such as conducting a participatory community needs assessment and working with small groups to build technical skills and the skills to efficiently and effectively manage tasks—building the skills of Volunteers and their host communities. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, intercultural, health, and safety and security standards. Community integration is one of the core competencies Volunteers are expected to achieve both in pre-service training and during their service. Successful sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence Volunteers build by living in, and respectfully integrating into, the local host community and culture. Trainees are prepared for this through a “homestay” experience, which often requires trainees to live with host families during pre-service training. Integration into the community facilitates good working relationships and fosters language learning and intercultural acceptance and trust, which help ensure your health, safety, and security.

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*As with technical competence and intercultural awareness, the ability to communicate in the host country language is critical to being an effective Peace Corps Volunteer.*

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The ability to communicate in the host country language is critical to being an effective Peace Corps Volunteer. So basic is this precept that it is explicit in the Peace Corps Act: “No person shall be assigned to duty as a

Volunteer under this Act in any foreign country or area unless at the time of such assignment he (or she) possesses such reasonable proficiency as his (or her) assignment requires in speaking the language of the country or area to which he (or she) is assigned.”

## **ONGOING LEARNING**

Your opportunities for continued learning do not end at the conclusion of PST. Throughout your service as a Volunteer you are expected to improve your knowledge and skills in the areas of technical, language, cross-cultural awareness, safety and security, and health. The Peace Corps has developed a well-established continuum of learning events and activities for Volunteers over their 27-month period of service.

Your learning will continue through in-service training opportunities, specialized technical and language workshops, and a close-of-service conference to help you evaluate your service and prepare for your return to the United States. In addition to formal, organized workshops and conferences, you will also continue to learn in nonformal settings, through conversations, and readings, and interactions with your colleagues, community members and fellow Volunteers.

## **QUALIFYING FOR SERVICE**

Performance evaluation is ongoing throughout your service, as Volunteers are responsible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for personal and professional conduct. Successful completion of pre-service training is measured by determining competence and achievement of learning objectives. All of the training staff—including the training manager and the language, technical, and cross-cultural trainers—will provide you with performance feedback throughout training to help you achieve the highest competencies possible.

After reviewing and observing your performance, the country director is responsible for making the final decision on whether you have qualified to serve as a Volunteer in the host country. Upon successful completion of training, trainees who qualify for Peace Corps service are required by law to swear or affirm an oath of loyalty to the United States. This oath, the text of which is provided below, cannot be changed or waived under any circumstance. Consult a staff member during training if you have any questions about the wording or meaning of the oath:



I, [your name], do solemnly swear [or affirm] that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, domestic or foreign, that I take this obligation freely, and without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion, and that I will well and faithfully discharge my duties in the Peace Corps [so help me God].

# Peace Corps Overseas Staff

Each country of assignment has a Peace Corps country director and a staff of administrative, program support, training, and health professionals. Their jobs are to provide Volunteer support and implement the Peace Corps program. Staff consists of Americans and host country nationals, as well as citizens of other countries. Like Volunteers, country directors and other American staff do not have diplomatic privileges or immunities. Moreover, they do not draw hardship pay, unlike many American officials of other agencies.

## **COUNTRY DIRECTOR**

The country director (CD) is the senior Peace Corps official in the country of assignment. The CD has full authority and responsibility for the management and direction of all aspects of the Peace Corps program in that country. As a member of the U.S. mission country team, the CD is in communication with the American ambassador, who has responsibility for all U.S. government activities and personnel in the host country. The CD sets policies, administers and establishes projects, maintains contact with host country officials, manages the in-country safety and security program, and remains in touch with Volunteers in the field. Additionally, the CD is responsible for the program's budget and the supervision of all Peace Corps personnel in-country.

## **DIRECTOR OF MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS AND DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMMING AND TRAINING**

Each post is staffed with a director of management and operations (DMO) who manages the post's budget and administrative functions. DMOs allocate Volunteer living allowances and reimbursements, manage administrative and general services staff, and are responsible for Peace Corps property management, human resources, and contracts. Most posts are staffed with a director of programming and training (DPT) who provides support to Volunteers, supervises programming staff, and oversees program planning and training events.

## **ASSOCIATE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR**

Associate Peace Corps directors (APCDs), sometimes called program or region managers, may be specialists in one or more sectors of development, such as small business development, health and HIV/AIDS, education, agriculture, youth, or environment. APCDs are responsible for programming, training, and supporting Volunteers' project work. This includes ensuring Volunteers have suitable jobs and adequate living arrangements. APCDs collaborate with other agencies and individuals involved in Volunteers' job assignments and projects.

## **TRAINING MANAGER**

The training manager provides Volunteers with the necessary knowledge and skills to meet ongoing learning objectives. The training manager ensures that trainees and Volunteers achieve core and sector competencies, including language proficiency standards.

The training manager also helps prepare trainees and equip Volunteers personally and professionally to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months. This allows Volunteers to commit to improve the quality of life of the people with whom they live and work by learning new skills and sharing and adapting existing ones. The training manager collaborates with multiple stakeholders to assess learning needs and provides a meaningful ongoing learning experience for Volunteers throughout their 27 months of service.

## **PEACE CORPS MEDICAL OFFICER**

The Peace Corps medical officer (PCMO) is a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or nurse who manages a comprehensive in-country health program for Volunteers. The health program includes treatment of illness and injury, immunizations, continuing health education, prevention of endemic disease, emotional support, periodic physical exams, and screening for early detection of disease. When indicated, the PCMO may refer Volunteers to in-country physicians and local health-care facilities. The PCMOs work closely with the medical staff at the Peace Corps Office of Health Services in Washington, D.C., to assure Volunteers receive the highest quality of medical care possible. Volunteers with medical problems beyond the scope of local care are medically evacuated to locations where appropriate evaluation and treatment are available.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY COORDINATOR**

The safety and security coordinator manages the post's safety and security program, collaborating closely with other staff to monitor the security environment, respond to incidents involving Volunteers, and provide effective strategies to address risks and threats.

## **HOST COUNTRY SUPPORT STAFF**

In most countries served by the Peace Corps, host country resident personal services contractors (PSCs) and non-host country resident PSCs (commonly third-country residents) comprise a large part of the Peace Corps staff. These individuals serve in many capacities, including as APCDs, cashiers, drivers, trainers, mechanics, guards, administrative assistants, and many other key positions.

They are vital to the proper functioning of a Peace Corps post and work closely with Volunteers throughout their training and service.

# Volunteer Assignments Overseas

After the successful completion of pre-service training and swearing in, Volunteers report to their assigned sites. There, they apply their language, technical, health, safety, and cross-cultural skills to their job assignments and to the challenge of integrating into their communities. Each Volunteer's individual efforts will, in large part, determine his or her success; yet, Peace Corps staff, host country nationals, and other Volunteers can be sources of significant support, serving as project partners, trainers, advisors, or simply willing listeners.

## **PEACE CORPS PROGRAMS**

Since its inception, the Peace Corps has aimed to promote world peace and friendship by helping the people of interested countries meet their needs for trained men and women; helping to promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and helping to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans. To accomplish this, each Peace Corps country office has established an overall strategy or program, created at the invitation of, and in collaboration with, the host country government. This program reflects the host country's national priorities and resources, community priorities and assets, and available Peace Corps Volunteer knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

## **PROJECTS**

Volunteers are the foundation of the Peace Corps. Within a country program, Volunteers are assigned to serve in specific projects in the sectors of agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth in development. Additionally, work in information technology, HIV/AIDS, and other cross-cutting initiatives are integrated into many program areas. Projects are designed by Peace Corps field staff with extensive input from host country officials, community partners, and Volunteers. This cooperation ensures that the Peace Corps' projects reflect

real needs and host country development priorities, and that project efforts will be sustained after Volunteers leave. Each project has a set of goals and objectives, which serve as a guide for the Volunteers' activities. Volunteers contribute to these goals and objectives through their technical assignments and work in their communities, and they also help evaluate and plan future project activities based on the successes and challenges they face. In most cases, projects call for a group of Volunteers with a mix of skills and backgrounds. Volunteers' skills and backgrounds complement each other and are taken into consideration as staff members consider the most appropriate site assignment for each Volunteer. Each assignment complements the other and allows Volunteers to combine efforts to accomplish a project's purpose. Some Volunteers will be assigned to existing project sites and continue the work of previous Volunteers; others may be assigned to a new project site.

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*The Peace Corps designs its programs to promote sustainable development in response to the expressed needs of host countries.*

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Each project is designed to

- increase local capacity in a demonstrable way;
- address the expressed needs and priorities of those who have limited access to resources and opportunities;
- seek sustainable results that complement other development efforts;
- engage local participants as partners in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the project;
- address Peace Corps initiatives and cross-cutting themes as appropriate;
- consider gender relationships and promote women's participation to increase their status and opportunities;
- place Volunteers where they can engage with those they serve and assure that their skills match locally identified needs;
- avoid displacing qualified and available local workers with Volunteers;

- use the types and numbers of Volunteers that are consistent with available applicants;
- utilize local Peace Corps staff and resources to train and support Volunteers to complete their assignments successfully; and
- engage host agencies and communities as partners that can support the project and the Volunteers.

Each project is also expected to continuously evolve in response to changing conditions or as goals are accomplished.

## **VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES**

Volunteer assignments support the goals and objectives of specific projects and are intended to engage Volunteers in building local capacity with a focus on developing people, not things. They empower people to create new opportunities and to take charge of their own future. Volunteers may engage in a range of activities, from helping children and youth acquire new leadership and life skills to helping a municipality better utilize radio and the Internet to communicate with the public. They work with individuals and international organizations to prevent the spread of diseases, offer business advice to emerging entrepreneurs, and support communities in addressing environmental degradation. At the same time, a project's goals and objectives are not permanent. They change over time as needs evolve, as goals are accomplished, or as project monitoring and evaluations reveal that the original plan needs modification. Though Peace Corps staff and host country representatives develop assignments prior to the arrival of Volunteers, a new Volunteer may find that any assignment is subject to changes and unpredictable new circumstances.

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*Often, the efforts of Volunteers build upon those of Volunteers who have served previously, lending continuity to the Peace Corps' assistance to the host country.*

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In some cases, an assignment may not work out exactly as planned or may develop in ways not originally included in the project plan. Consider the following scenarios:

- A Volunteer arrives at the clinic where he or she has been assigned and discovers that essential supplies are not available because there is not enough money to purchase them.
- Materials to support a construction project are late in arriving because of transportation problems. This delays work for weeks or months.
- The school director is away (for an unspecified period of time). In the meantime, no one can approve plans to test the environmental education curriculum a Volunteer has developed.
- A host country national counterpart finds a job opportunity in another town and cannot continue to work with the Volunteer. The sponsoring ministry says it does not have the funds to replace the counterpart.

Situations such as these can be challenging, yet they do occur and may reflect cultural differences, personal conflicts, or the needs that prompted the request for the Peace Corps' assistance. While you will have the support of Peace Corps staff in resolving any significant difficulties with your assignment, your success will depend, in large part, on patience, a sense of perspective, resourcefulness, flexibility, and creativity.

## **CROSS-SECTOR PROGRAMMING PRIORITIES**

As appropriate, all Volunteers incorporate the following agency cross-sector programming priorities and themes into their work.

### **HIV/AIDS**

Peace Corps Volunteers around the world contribute to the global response to AIDS by supporting their community partners to prevent the further spread of the epidemic and mitigate its impact on individuals and communities. While HIV/AIDS prevention and care is a central component of most Peace Corps Volunteer health assignments, Volunteers across all projects integrate HIV/AIDS education into their work through activities such as incorporating life skills and HIV/AIDS prevention training into formal and nonformal education, training communities in more efficient small-



scale agricultural techniques to improve the nutrition of people living with HIV, establishing income-generating activities for orphans and vulnerable children, facilitating girls' and women's empowerment programs to reduce their vulnerability to infection, providing training to caregivers and service providers to improve care for people living with HIV/AIDS, and building the management capacity of HIV/AIDS-service organizations.

The Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH) at headquarters works with posts and Volunteers to develop strong, evidence-based projects that contribute to in-country HIV priorities. It coordinates the Peace Corps' participation in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which has made it possible for posts in all regions to add dedicated Volunteer positions committed to HIV activities, provide small grants to support Volunteer projects, or otherwise strengthen their AIDS programming.

For more information on Peace Corps resources for HIV programming, contact the program staff or check for resources at [peacecorps.gov/library](http://peacecorps.gov/library). For information on HIV/AIDS in a particular country, look at the country-specific statistics available through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) at [www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org).

### **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

Projects are more effective and sustainable when Volunteers use a gender-sensitive perspective to inform their work. The Peace Corps Act provides that the agency should include women in their projects to improve women's status. Thus, the design, implementation, and evaluation of all projects incorporate an awareness of gender roles and the gender-specific needs of girls, boys, women, and men. Volunteers and their host country counterparts take gender roles into account when planning and implementing projects. This gender-sensitive approach results in activities that effectively address the needs of all members in the communities where Volunteers work.

### **People with Disabilities**

The Peace Corps Act also makes People with Disabilities a cross-sector programming priority that presents an opportunity to have a positive impact on some of the most disadvantaged populations in the countries served. Many Volunteers help people with disabilities to improve the quality of their lives. Peace Corps has placed hundreds of Volunteers with schools and organiza-

tions that assist people with disabilities. Partners have included schools for the blind, schools for the deaf, and Special Olympics.

## **Youth**

Peace Corps Volunteers have always had success working with young people. Recent figures estimate that two-thirds of all the people that Volunteers reach are young men and women under the age of 25. Volunteers work with youth in all sectors: agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth development. Youth development is unique in the Peace Corps, as it is both a project sector area designed to support the assets and capacities of young people, as well as an agency cross-cutting programming priority that promotes an approach that can be utilized to strengthen the overall impact of the Volunteer's work in a community.

In the field of youth development, the Peace Corps believes approaches are more effective if they create and support expectations of positive outcomes by developing assets and strengths rather than focusing solely on removing problems. Life skills, emotional development, and relationship building, along with supporting a sense of hope to meet aspirations for basic needs and beyond, should be part of the underlying assumptions of youth programming.

## **Technology for Development**

Peace Corps Volunteers around the world use technology at all levels of project planning and implementation. In addition to those specifically recruited with information technology backgrounds, most Volunteers come to the Peace Corps well-versed in various uses of technology, including radio, video, computers, Internet, and cellphones. Beyond their English language proficiency, the second general "language" of most Volunteers involves using technologies for information collection and dissemination.

Through training and community activities, Volunteers translate their basic information technology familiarity into a development-focused context that is culturally appropriate and accessible for audiences in a variety of urban, peri-urban, and rural settings. Volunteer information technology activities range from giving individual and group instruction at the community level to using mass media to disseminate development-themed content and instructional material.

## **Volunteerism**

The Peace Corps seeks to help Volunteers replicate the transformational aspect of their experience by inspiring and supporting volunteerism within their host countries. Thus, Volunteers are encouraged to seek and create opportunities to expand host country voluntary service activities within the scope of their work and support the capacity of host organizations to effectively mobilize, utilize, and sustain host country volunteers.

## **MONITORING, REPORTING, AND EVALUATION**

A common challenge Volunteers have faced is answering the question, “How is my work helping my host community?” Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation helps Volunteers capture critical information on what the community was like when they arrived, how things have changed, and what contributions they made in helping local community members bring about that change.

Your Volunteer assignment is part of an overall strategy or program created at the invitation of, and in collaboration with, your host country government. The work you do with your counterpart will reflect your host country’s needs, priorities, and resources. A critical component of your work will be to use monitoring, reporting, and evaluation tools to document the impact you have in your community. This is an essential responsibility of each Volunteer and helps the agency to improve its programming.

The Peace Corps has developed professional monitoring, reporting, and evaluation guidelines for Volunteers to track the results of their work, report accurate evidence of accomplishments, and document the value of the Peace Corps’ involvement. These guidelines—and specific indicators to measure your work—will be shared with you as part of your training to help you understand your role as an integral part of an effective monitoring, reporting, and evaluation system.

One of your responsibilities is to report on your activities and the results of your work through the Volunteer Reporting Tool. The data you report helps your counterparts and post staff identify opportunities for continued success based on your progress, is added to data from other Volunteers in your project to provide a broader picture of the project’s success, and is included in agency-level reporting. This information helps the Peace Corps to improve its programming both in-country and globally, as well as helps demonstrate overall value to the American public and report accomplish-

ments to Congress. All of this effort begins with you, the Volunteer, as the most important component of this essential monitoring, reporting, and evaluation process.

Beyond helping the Peace Corps and your counterparts, the development of monitoring, reporting, and evaluation skills also benefits you professionally. International development agencies, domestic and international nonprofit groups, and private organizations, for example, expect their employees to be able to demonstrate evidence of how their work and projects are improving the quality of beneficiaries' lives. Peace Corps service offers you the opportunity to sharpen your professional expertise related to monitoring, reporting, and evaluation and to build skills that you can use for the rest of your professional life.

### **SETTING REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

A chief source of frustration for you may be the sense that your efforts seem to yield few tangible accomplishments. After weeks, sometimes months, of work, you may feel as if you are no further along than you were when you first arrived at your site.

While you are expected to put your best efforts into your work, unrealistically high expectations of what you want to accomplish may collide with actual conditions in your host country. It is not unusual to experience frustration and confusion when efforts fail to yield expected results for unknown or unexpected reasons. For example, you may learn that your students attend school in addition to working long hours to support their families. You may find that the minister of agriculture is struggling with an insufficient budget to pay his or her staff, let alone support additional projects. Or, as a foreigner and a newcomer, you may be perceived by some as an intruder, with your efforts being viewed as a threat to be ignored or blocked.

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*Lack of tangible outcomes should not discourage you from fulfilling your assignment.*

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On the other hand, you may see real achievements during your Volunteer service. Such is the case of a Volunteer who could count lives saved when villagers learned to apply oral re-hydration therapy to sick infants. Recognize, however, that the full impact of your efforts may not be felt for several years.

An example would be the teacher whose students found opportunities and success years later because of the Volunteer's instruction. Maintain a sense of perspective when setting your goals, evaluating your accomplishments, and building your relationships. A lack of tangible outcomes should not discourage you from fulfilling your assignment.

Successful Volunteers manage their expectations using a variety of strategies. Those Volunteers who feel a need for more structure create regular routines that require them to interact with different people in the community. Another strategy is to focus on your role as "learner" and be disciplined about seeking to expand your understanding of your community. Remember to celebrate even small accomplishments with your work partners, as this will build motivation and enthusiasm for your efforts. Remind yourself that it is better to start slowly with your work so that you can learn from the inevitable small mistakes and avoid making big mistakes early on. Most importantly, remind yourself that capacity building is a slow, and often invisible, process. It begins with building trusting relationships in your community, which takes time.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH CO-WORKERS**

Your most immediate day-to-day responsibilities will be to the host country organization or community in which you are placed and to your supervisors and colleagues or community leaders. While it is not realistic to expect you'll get along perfectly with all of your co-workers, your work relationships will impact your effectiveness. Much of what you accomplish will depend on your ability and willingness to work with your colleagues as equal partners. Moreover, supporting and building the capacity of your host country partners is the only way to achieve lasting, sustainable results.

The way your co-workers approach their tasks may not be what you had expected. Examine your own cultural attitudes and try to understand those of your colleagues. Remember, they are working for a living and will remain in the host country (perhaps doing the same work) long after you have left. Demonstrated competence and cross-cultural understanding will usually win a co-worker's respect.

Proposing change to established ways of doing things cannot be effective if it is presented inappropriately. You may appear arrogant when, as a stranger and newcomer, you claim to bring "improvement." Assuming that the American way is always best nullifies the spirit of working as an

equal with your co-workers. Remember that you will learn as much as you teach—and probably more.

## **COLLABORATING WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

As a Volunteer, you will probably become familiar with the work of other international organizations in your host country. These organizations have often been of great help to Peace Corps Volunteers, and many Volunteers have worked in development projects with private sector, nonprofit, multi-lateral, bilateral, and other development and donor organizations. In fact, in many countries, you may find that the expatriate management of these international organizations are comprised of returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), who may have a particular affinity and willingness to collaborate with you in your host communities. If you are interested in working with a particular organization on a specific activity or project in your host community or surrounding area, discuss it first with your post's programmatic staff to ensure that the activities or projects are consistent with your assignment as well as the overall Peace Corps mission, which is firmly anchored in community-based development and cross-cultural understanding. It is very important to include post programmatic staff in your discussions with partners, because they may also be meeting with related organizations. The sole authority to formalize partnerships through written agreements rests with the country director. Written agreements may be necessary when an exchange of funds or allocations of resources occurs or PCVs need copyright access to materials. You are not authorized to negotiate partnership agreements.

You also may find yourself living and working with volunteers from various American or other national voluntary organizations, including the United Nations. Some countries in which the Peace Corps serves have domestic volunteer programs of their own. The terms and conditions of service will vary from organization to organization, but these volunteers generally have motivations and aims similar to those of the Peace Corps. Contact with volunteers of other organizations can enrich your Peace Corps service through sharing experiences or exchanging viewpoints on needs, philosophies, and methods of service.

# Technical Resources and Supplementary Programs

## THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE RESOURCES

The Peace Corps' approach to development promotes the dignity of people and their ability to improve their own lives. Two key characteristics of the Peace Corps' approach to development are capacity building and sustainability.

Helping your community identify external resources and funding is important and the process of applying for those resources can build capacity within a community. Volunteers are encouraged to assist their communities in this process in order to build local capacity and foster lasting sustainability for initiatives they undertake jointly in their communities. There are some key questions to consider:

- Does the community want the outside assistance?
- Have all local resources been tapped?
- Will an outside grant promote dependency?
- Will your effectiveness as a Volunteer be compromised if you are identified with outside material and financial resources?

Funding is often needed to make ideas realities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, it is essential to consider the deeper, longer-lasting effects of external funding during the project planning process. Volunteers should never accept funds from external sources, but rather, work with their communities to build lasting capacity for proposal writing, money management, project implementation, and reporting by working with their community organizations to help their communities directly receive funding.

## **The Peace Corps Small Grant Program**

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program includes several sources of funding for Volunteer activities. These are Small Project Assistance (SPA), Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), Volunteer Activities Support and Training (VAST), Feed the Future (FTF), and Energy Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA). However, not all of these sources are available in every Peace Corps host country, as some sources are geographically or programmatically limited.

Though each program is supported by different funding sources, they all share the same goal: to facilitate the development and implementation of sustainable grassroots small grant projects that build capacity in communities where Volunteers serve. All small grants are subject to the same guidelines and use the same materials and resources. Volunteers should contact their small grants coordinator at post to confirm which funding sources are available, or if they have questions about applying for a small grant.

The only authorized mechanism through which a Volunteer may receive funds to implement a project is through the Peace Corps Small Grants Program. For more information, please see Section 5, Volunteer Life and Conduct.

## **In-Kind Donations**

While working with communities, Volunteers may identify items that are necessary to enhance a project or goal. In some instances individuals or organizations may wish to donate these items to Volunteers or the Peace Corps. These are considered in-kind donations. An in-kind donation is any non-financial gift to the Peace Corps (for example, books, soccer balls, school supplies, etc.). All shipping and customs fees for sending an in-kind donation must be paid for by the donor. Volunteers may not solicit for in-kind donations; however, they may assist their community counterparts in the solicitation process. Volunteers should work with their communities to consider local resources and businesses that may be able to provide the same materials prior to pursuing an in-kind donation from external parties. If a donor is interested in contributing an in-kind donation to a Volunteer, have the country director email the Office of Gifts and Grants Management at [donate@peacecorps.gov](mailto:donate@peacecorps.gov) for more information and guidance.



## **KNOWLEDGE & LEARNING UNIT**

Knowledge & Learning Unit (KLU) is part of the Peace Corps Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS). KLU works across the agency and with other stakeholders to develop, publish, and distribute technical and training resources for Volunteers and overseas staff. KLU supports capacity building through knowledge sharing, using the most appropriate delivery systems available.

### **Publications**

KLU team members work with OPATS specialists to publish technical training resources used by overseas staff to train Volunteers and used by Volunteers for work in their communities. Publications are available in various print and digital formats, including PDFs and e-books.

### **Information Resource Centers**

An Information Resource Center (IRC) enhances programming and training at a Peace Corps post by providing access to publications and other information resources to assist Volunteers and staff in their work. KLU staff provides guidance, support, and training for the IRC managers who maintain these centers. Volunteers are encouraged to use the post IRC as a first point of contact for obtaining both Peace Corps publications and local resources.

### **Online Learning and Information Sharing**

KLU develops, deploys, and supports the use of e-learning, online information sharing, and collaboration tools for Volunteers and staff.

#### *PCLive*

PCLive ([pclive.peacecorps.gov](http://pclive.peacecorps.gov)) is a new knowledge sharing platform for Peace Corps Volunteers, staff, and invited guests. Users can access PCLive to locate country- and sector-specific resources, identify Peace Corps best practices, and participate in communities of practice. The PCLive platform is expected to be re-launched in August 2014 and will then be open to all Volunteers and staff.

### *LearningSpace*

LearningSpace ([learning.peacecorps.gov](http://learning.peacecorps.gov)) is a learning management system that offers online learning courses to Peace Corps Volunteers worldwide. Mandatory courses are currently available; new courses will be added as they are developed.

Requests for materials and information can be sent to [kluorders@peacecorps.gov](mailto:kluorders@peacecorps.gov) or to

Peace Corps  
Knowledge & Learning Unit  
Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526

### **PAUL D. COVERDELL WORLD WISE SCHOOLS CORRESPONDENCE MATCH PROGRAM**

The Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS) Correspondence Match program, housed within the Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services, is geared toward accomplishing the Peace Corps Third Goal: to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans. As a result of technology and changes to the global economy, the world is becoming increasingly connected and the need for intercultural understanding is greater than ever before.

More than one-half of all Peace Corps Volunteers participate in the Correspondence Match program. Volunteers are asked to share their Peace Corps experience with U.S. classrooms through the program. Through emails, videoconferencing (e.g., Skype), YouTube videos, blogs, letters, photographs, artwork, and other educational materials, U.S. students learn about other countries and cultures through the eyes of a Peace Corps Volunteer. Teachers who participate in the program report that their students improve their geographic, international, and cross-cultural awareness and acquire an appreciation for service and volunteerism.

To participate in Correspondence Match, access the online enrollment form on the New Volunteer Portal, or go to [www.peacecorps.gov/wws/volunteers/correspondence/enroll/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/volunteers/correspondence/enroll/).

As Volunteers who become acquainted with their educators before leaving for their service generally have more productive, long-lasting Correspondence Match relationships, you are encouraged to identify a teacher to work with before you begin your service.

Volunteers who participate in Correspondence Match will receive, as part of their living allowance, a stipend to reimburse them for the cost of mailing one letter per month to each of their match partners, while teachers receive materials from World Wise Schools for use in the classroom. Although you may typically exchange emails and letters during your service, the relationship between you and your U.S. classroom can grow in ways limited only by the creativity and energy you and the teacher invest in the program.

In addition to operating the Correspondence Match program, WWS has worked with Volunteers to create educational resources for U.S. classrooms based on Peace Corps Volunteer experiences. These can be found at [www.peacecorps.gov/wws](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws).

For more information about the Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools program, Correspondence Match, or Speakers Match, call, email, or visit the website:

202.692.1459  
202.692.1421 (fax)  
[wwsinfo@peacecorps.gov](mailto:wwsinfo@peacecorps.gov)  
[www.peacecorps.gov/wws](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws)

## **MASTER'S INTERNATIONAL**

The Master's International (MI) program allows you to begin studies on campus, serve abroad for two years, then return to school to finish your degree.

### **Preparing for Your Master's Project**

Throughout your time on campus, you most likely will have worked with your MI campus coordinator and faculty adviser to lay the groundwork for a proposed master's project, if required by your school. This project may be a presentation, project paper, thesis, portfolio, or other professional work. You will be going abroad as a Peace Corps Volunteer, and your Peace Corps assignment will be your primary responsibility. The academic project or research you work on will grow out of your Volunteer experience. You must

fulfill any academic requirements in concert with, and complementary to, your Peace Corps assignment. MI alumni who have successfully completed their projects have found ways during their service to integrate their Peace Corps responsibilities with their academic requirements. This takes creativity, persistence, and flexibility.

Additional information on all aspects of the MI Volunteer experience is available in the Master's International Student Handbook. If you do not have one, it is available from the MI staff at headquarters, from your campus MI coordinator, and on the Peace Corps website, [www.peacecorps.gov/masters](http://www.peacecorps.gov/masters).

### **Determining Your Academic and Communication Requirements**

Invariably, communication with your MI coordinator/adviser will be affected by your site placement. While you will have access to the local postal system, you should not count on having regular email access. You should work out a tentative, flexible communication schedule with your MI campus coordinator and faculty adviser that can be adapted to either postal or email availability once you are actually in-country. It is important to understand the specifics of your particular program and know what the university expects of you.

### **Upon Arrival at Post**

The Peace Corps MI program staff will notify your post that you are a Master's International participant before you arrive. The DPT, APCD, or program manager will be your program director, and it is up to you to discuss your MI academic objectives with him or her early in your training. Some post staff members have had experience working with MI candidates, some have not. Take the initiative in meeting with post staff to discuss the nature of your particular MI program. You must receive a signed approval letter from the country director for any academic work you will conduct. It is up to you to adapt your overseas academic requirements to the specifics of your Peace Corps assignment and the conditions of your site. The Peace Corps encourages you to keep in touch with your faculty adviser(s), the MI campus coordinator, and MI staff at headquarters. Your feedback is valued and welcome. To share your experiences as a Volunteer or if you have questions, contact the MI staff at [mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov](mailto:mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov).

## **PEACE CORPS RECRUITMENT**

Many currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers have exciting opportunities to assist with recruitment and engage in Third Goal activities. Sharing your perspective as a Volunteer can bring invaluable insight to any recruitment event. Contact your country director for clearance to participate in recruitment activities.

One opportunity to help recruit is Volunteers in Action: Recruiting Others (VARO). This program is designed for PCVs who visit the U.S. during their service. The Peace Corps recruitment team loves fresh stories and insight from visiting Volunteers. VARO gives Volunteers the opportunity to get a head start on Third Goal activities while in the U.S., and to also receive credit from their country office. By first obtaining permission from your country director, then sending a letter of interest to [VARO@peacecorps.gov](mailto:VARO@peacecorps.gov), you will be connected with a recruiter who will arrange for you to participate in a recruitment event near the area you will be visiting. If you successfully obtain permission and participate, you will be granted one workday credit for your time back in the U.S.

# Volunteer Life and Conduct

Every society has rules by which its members are regulated and their behavior is judged. As a visitor in another country and culture, you may be extended privileges exempting you from certain obligations, and some of your fumbles may be looked upon with tolerance. On the other hand, your behavior—what you say and what you do—will be observed and noted, whether you are on the job, traveling on a train or bus, or just walking down the street. Many aspects of your personal conduct can help determine the success of your assignment and your reputation within the community, as well as the effectiveness and reputation of the Peace Corps program in your country. Your personal appearance, how you entertain, what you buy, and the way you handle financial obligations all send messages to others.

As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest and should be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and customs of your hosts. Certain behavior may jeopardize the Peace Corps mission, so it cannot be tolerated and, if engaged in, may lead to administrative separation—a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service. (For more information on administrative separation, see the “Early Terminations” section in this handbook.)

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*Your personal conduct can influence your effectiveness with your assignment and your reputation within the community.*

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This chapter addresses various aspects of Volunteer life and discusses, in general terms, the Peace Corps’ rules and policies Volunteers should follow during training and service. This chapter is not exhaustive: It does not contain every rule and policy applicable to Peace Corps Volunteers. Applicable rules and policies are contained in the authoritative Peace Corps Manual (available at [www.peacecorps.gov/docs](http://www.peacecorps.gov/docs)), the country-specific Volunteer handbook, and other materials distributed to you in your country of assign-

ment. Moreover, Peace Corps policies periodically change; the Peace Corps Manual and your post's Volunteer Handbook should reflect those changes.

## **IN THE COMMUNITY**

### **Living Standards**

Peace Corps Volunteers are expected to live modestly and at the same living standards as the people they serve. The Peace Corps' philosophy is grounded in the belief that development and mutual learning are achieved most effectively when people live and work together. Reliance on material goods and conveniences not generally available in the host community can create social barriers that preclude a Volunteer from becoming a part of the host community. Volunteers are, therefore, encouraged to pack lightly, choose functional but modest items, and leave at home anything they are not prepared to lose. Peace Corps Volunteers receive a living allowance from the Peace Corps that permits them to live and serve effectively and safely in their country of assignment. The living allowance is usually distributed on a monthly or quarterly basis, and is intended to cover housing, utilities, household supplies, clothing, food, recreation and entertainment, transportation, reading material, and incidental expenses. This allowance is tied to local costs and circumstances.

Consequently, the amount varies from one country to another. In some countries the host government or others provide housing, and thus, the living allowance does not include housing costs. The living allowance is periodically adjusted when justified by surveys that show local price changes.

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*The Peace Corps' philosophy is grounded in a belief that development and mutual learning are achieved most effectively when people live and work together.*

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### **Personal Appearance**

Volunteers should dress appropriately both on and off the job and respect host country and community attitudes toward personal appearance. In some countries, long hair, beards, visible tattoos, piercings, shorts, and certain other apparel may be considered inappropriate for male Volunteers.





Likewise, short skirts, shorts, slacks, sleeveless or backless dresses, and visible tattoos or piercings may be considered inappropriate for female Volunteers. CDs have both the authority and the responsibility to establish specific guidelines regarding the personal appearance of Volunteers. Review the dress-code section in your Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD) and the “Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior” section in your welcome book for further details about the guidelines in your country of assignment. Additionally, you can discuss with Peace Corps staff members what is and is not appropriate dress or appearance in light of host country attitudes and expectations.

## **PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

### **Computer and Other IT Use Guidelines**

As the Peace Corps expands the role of Volunteers in promoting information technology as a development tool, Volunteers need to be informed about their responsibilities in using this technology. Although cellphone coverage and Internet access are becoming increasingly more available in some countries where Volunteers serve, Volunteers and their families should not assume that Volunteers will have easy access to computers, email, cellphones or the Internet while serving abroad. Landline telephones may be limited or inconvenient. Access and costs vary considerably among countries and even among assignments within the same country. Volunteers who create their own websites or blogs or post information to websites or blogs that have been created and maintained by others should remember that any information posted on the Internet can probably be accessed by the general public (and may be accessed or monitored by others even if password-protected). Search engines regularly index Internet sites, so users could locate a Volunteer website by searching for information about the Peace Corps or a certain country. This is possible even if the Volunteer does not actively promote his/her website. Given these realities, Volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their IT use is consistent with Peace Corps and federal government guidelines.

### **Monitoring and Privacy**

Volunteers should assume that other persons or entities may be interested in the Volunteer’s communications overseas, regardless of the method of communication the Volunteer uses. Landline and cellphone calls, email, person-

al mail, blogs, websites, social media, or other forms of communication may be monitored either in a country of assignment or elsewhere. Concepts of privacy for private communications are not necessarily recognized or strictly respected in all countries. Assume at all times you have no privacy protections outside of the U.S.

#### *Guidelines for Use of Peace Corps Computers*

At various points during Peace Corps service, Volunteers and trainees may need to use Peace Corps computers. There are mandatory guidelines for such usage in the Peace Corps Manual. These rules will also be covered in detail during pre-service training. The guidelines are in addition to other Peace Corps policies regarding IT security policies and procedures in Peace Corps Manual, Section 542.

#### *Use of Non-Peace Corps-Owned Equipment*

The extent to which Volunteers have access to computer equipment owned by other entities (such as a sponsoring agency or local nongovernmental organization) may vary from post to post and assignment to assignment. The Peace Corps is not responsible for the maintenance and replacement of this equipment and Volunteers who use this equipment should follow the other entity's applicable computer-use policies. Volunteers should not process or store sensitive Peace Corps information or a Volunteer's personally identifiable information on computer equipment owned by other entities.

#### *Practice Safe Computing*

Regardless of equipment ownership, Volunteers should follow best practices when utilizing computer equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Adhering to the policies and procedures that govern the equipment and network in use
- Incorporating safe computer practices, such as using strong passwords, protecting passwords, and using anti-virus software on all computing equipment and devices
- Recognizing that Internet cafes are a prime source of identity theft and malware and exercising extra care when using public computers

## **Volunteer Web Presence**

### *Notification*

Volunteers who create their own social media profiles or websites, including personal blogs, or post material to websites created by others are responsible for discussing the content with their country director in advance. This ensures that the material is suitable and complies with this general guidance, any country-specific guidance, and any safety and security considerations.

### *Disclaimer*

Any website or social media profile maintained by a Volunteer during his or her Peace Corps service must reflect that it is neither an official publication of the Peace Corps, nor of the U.S. government. The site must prominently display an appropriate disclaimer such as: “The contents of this website are mine personally and do not reflect any position of the U.S. government or the Peace Corps.”

### *Use of the Peace Corps Logo Online*

Use of the Peace Corps name and logo is restricted by law, and may not be used on Volunteers’ personal websites, blogs, or social media. (See additional logo guidance in this chapter.) Peace Corps-produced Web banners may be used by Volunteers and others on their websites and social media sites and are available at [www.peacecorps.gov/media/psa/webbanners](http://www.peacecorps.gov/media/psa/webbanners). The Web banners are intended to promote general awareness and recruitment for the Peace Corps. Web banners must link to the Peace Corps website and may not be altered in any way. The use of a Web banner does not constitute authorization to use the Peace Corps name and logo separate and apart from the banner.

### *Cultural Sensitivity*

The thoughtful and accurate insights that Volunteers convey to others can contribute substantially to bringing a better understanding of other countries to people in the United States. However, given the broad access to Volunteer-posted material on the Web—both in-country and elsewhere—Volunteers must be culturally sensitive with the material they post online. People in host countries and the American public may make inferences about the Peace Corps or the Volunteer’s country of service based on the

material a Volunteer posts to a website or social media profile. Accordingly, Volunteer-posted material should not embarrass or reflect poorly on the Peace Corps or on the countries where Volunteers serve, nor should it involve political or other sensitive or controversial host country issues or matters of official concern.

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*Volunteers must be culturally sensitive with the material they post online.*

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### *Safety and Security*

As a safety precaution, Volunteers shall not post information about their precise whereabouts or of fellow Volunteers. This includes the location of events that will be attended by a number of Volunteers. Volunteers who live in remote areas should also refrain from posting the names of their towns or villages. The same precaution applies to posting photographs to a Volunteer social media profile or website.

Volunteers should also consider the risk of identity fraud and other security concerns connected with the posting of any personal information about themselves, family members, or others on websites.

### *Appropriate Use of IT Systems and Services*

The potential exists for violation of U.S. or host country privacy or other laws if Volunteers include personal information about others in any electronic communication (email or webpage) without the permission of such individuals. Social Security numbers or other personal information should never be posted on a website or transmitted via email.

### **Media Contacts**

The Peace Corps Office of Communications in Washington, D.C., is responsible for officially informing the public about Peace Corps activities. You are free to discuss your role in the Peace Corps with the press, but Volunteers should notify their country director prior to speaking to the press. There are responsibilities associated with this freedom. An ill-considered statement could be used to embarrass you, the Peace Corps, the United States, and/or the host country in which you serve. On the other hand, your

thoughtful and accurate views and insights can contribute substantially to bringing Americans a better understanding of another country. While you may write about your Volunteer experiences for publication after service, you should first discuss the piece with the CD to review what you have written and discuss any potential problems. Publication of material contrary to the advice of the country director that diminishes the effectiveness of the Volunteer or causes adverse impact to the Peace Corps program may be grounds for administrative separation. Care should be taken in private communication as well. Letters and electronic communications to friends and family may be read by others or passed to the press and become a public issue in-country.

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*You are free to discuss your role in the Peace Corps with the press, but Volunteers should notify their country director prior to speaking to the press.*

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### **Volunteer Contributions to the Peace Corps' Official Website, Social Media, Marketing, and Promotion**

The Office of Communications oversees the Peace Corps' official external website ([www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)), social media profiles, and centralized marketing and promotion for the agency and its work. As such, it welcomes Volunteer stories and photographs that will highlight Peace Corps activities to prospective applicants and to the general public. All submissions should be reviewed by the country director and forwarded to the Office of Communications for consideration. Stories and photographs can be sent to [pressliaison@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pressliaison@peacecorps.gov).

### **Publication of Writings, Photographs, and Video Images**

Volunteers may not accept payment for anything they write, record, or photograph while in service. Any "writings," including articles, manuals, teaching materials, photographs or video images taken with Peace Corps equipment; or other work-related products relating to Peace Corps service, are part of the public domain and may not be copyrighted or sold at any time.

After one's service ends, journals or other writings, as well as photographs or video images taken with a Volunteer's own equipment, that relate to, describe, or depict a Volunteer's Peace Corps experience, may be published. Volunteers may receive compensation for such works at that time. Publishing materials, including online, that Volunteers have not authored or created may violate U.S., host country, or applicable copyright laws.

### **Use of the Peace Corps Logo**

The Peace Corps name and logo may be used only to designate programs authorized under the Peace Corps Act. The Peace Corps logo may not be altered or manipulated in any manner. Also, the Peace Corps name and logo may not be used by third parties for commercial or fundraising purposes, or for endorsement or promotion of such third parties or their respective goods or services.

In accordance with these guidelines, the name and logo may be used by/ for the following:

- In connection with Peace Corps programs, events, and activities that are held to publicize Peace Corps programs at home and abroad (e.g., hand-outs and logo items to promote programs to the local community), Peace Corps publications (e.g., posts' annual reports or materials such as brochures), and banners and logo items (e.g., T-shirts) for events relating to approved Volunteer projects, trainings, and swearing-in ceremonies. The name and logo may also be used on T-shirts approved for Volunteer and general staff use to publicize the Peace Corps and its programs.
- In connection with Volunteer primary or secondary projects with written consent of the respective country director.
- Volunteers may use the Peace Corps name and logo on their business cards during service, but the cards must be used only in connection with their Peace Corps service. Volunteers should not use them after their service ends.

Instructions for use:

- The Peace Corps logo may not be altered or manipulated in any manner.

- Peace Corps posts should not generate their own Peace Corps logo, or manipulate the logo in any way (i.e., distorting the Peace Corps logo or adding additional text inside the circle). Peace Corps posts may add the name of the country and/or the Peace Corps name in the native language on the outside of the logo only.
- The country director, regional director, regional manager, or other office manager, as applicable, must confirm, in accordance with the guidelines above, that the request for the logo and name usage is appropriate. The zip file of the logo is available by request.

## Leave

Volunteers accrue two calendar days of annual leave and leave allowance for each month of Volunteer service (excluding training). Volunteers are encouraged to use annual leave to travel within their host country or to nearby places to become more familiar with these areas. Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service following swearing in, or the last three months of service, except under exceptional circumstances such as in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Volunteers must comply with the Peace Corps' leave policies in-country, which generally requires advance consent from the country director.

All posts require traveling Volunteers to leave an itinerary and contact numbers with the Peace Corps staff so the Volunteer can be contacted quickly in case of a family or other emergency. Posts also require that a Volunteer notify Peace Corps staff immediately if his or her departure is accelerated or return is delayed. Failure to obtain required approvals for annual leave or to return as scheduled from annual leave could result in administrative separation. When a Volunteer travels outside his or her host country, the Peace Corps requires that the Peace Corps CD in the country of travel be notified (if it has a Peace Corps post) and recommends that the Volunteer also inform the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. Consulate concerning his or her whereabouts. Volunteers are expected to adhere to the Peace Corps' policies in the countries they are visiting, including not traveling to areas determined to be off-limits to Volunteers.

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*Volunteers are encouraged to use annual leave to travel within their host country or to nearby places to become more familiar with these areas.*

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U.S. holidays are not treated as holidays for Volunteers. Host country holidays may be taken as holidays by Volunteers without charge to annual leave as long as the Volunteer remains within his or her country of assignment and the holiday period does not exceed one week. During host country vacation periods longer than one week, Volunteers are expected to take annual leave, to use this time to attend Peace Corps in-service training, or to work on special Peace Corps activities. Many posts require Volunteers to be involved in self-initiated or designated projects during long vacation periods (such as summer for teachers).

## **PERSONAL CONDUCT**

### **Mail**

Volunteers and their family and friends must send personal letters and packages via regular international mail. Incoming packages are subjected to in-country customs regulations and import duties may be assessed. Shipments to Volunteers via diplomatic pouch (U.S. State Department), Military Postal Service (APO), or Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) are permissible only for items the Peace Corps determines are vital to a Volunteer's health, or when it is necessary to transmit extremely important financial or legal documents.

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*Personal letters and packages between Volunteers and their family and friends must be sent via regular international mail, which will probably take longer than U.S. domestic mail.*

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### **Marriage**

Marriage during service—either between Peace Corps Volunteers or between a Volunteer and a non-Volunteer—may affect the Volunteer's ability



to continue to serve effectively. Thus, a trainee or Volunteer who wishes to marry and continue in the Peace Corps must notify and consult with his or her country director well in advance of the marriage. The country director will consider whether the marriage would prevent or diminish the Volunteer's or trainee's ability to serve effectively, require a change in sites or housing, or create financial burdens on the couple or the post, and whether the prospective spouse's background and lifestyle are consistent with the agency's goals and philosophy. The Peace Corps cannot provide support to a non-Volunteer spouse.

A decision of a Volunteer couple to divorce or separate may also affect their service. Country directors are authorized to consider a request from either spouse, or from both, to terminate service early or to continue or extend Peace Corps service. The country director's decision will be based on what is in the best interests of the Peace Corps program in that country, as well as the needs and wishes of the couple.

### **Pregnancy**

Pregnancy is a health condition that is treated in the same manner as any other Volunteer health condition requiring medical attention. The Peace Corps medical officer, in consultation with the Office of Medical Services, is responsible for determining the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work and the medical support available in Peace Corps countries, Volunteers who become pregnant may be medically separated from service if they cannot be medically accommodated.

### **Paternity**

A Volunteer who fathers a child by a woman to whom he is not married may be administratively separated from the Peace Corps, at the discretion of the CD, if the Volunteer's action has jeopardized his effectiveness in performing his assignment, impaired the credibility of the Peace Corps program, or offended host country laws or customs. Regardless of whether disciplinary action is taken, the Volunteer will be strongly encouraged to fulfill his responsibilities for providing support to the mother and child.

The Peace Corps cannot provide support for the non-Volunteer mother, beyond certain prenatal and obstetric medical care.

## **Adoption**

Adoption by a Volunteer during service is discouraged due to the burden it places on the Volunteer and, consequently, on the Volunteer's project. A Volunteer who wishes to adopt a child must obtain the CD's approval to continue Peace Corps service after the adoption. That approval is contingent on a determination by the CD that the adoption will not affect the Volunteer's ability to serve satisfactorily.

## **LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Nondiscrimination and Diversity in the Peace Corps**

The Peace Corps Act mandates that the agency "promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served." By sharing the diversity of American society with people of our host countries, the Peace Corps achieves this goal. No Peace Corps applicant, trainee, or Volunteer will be denied equal opportunity under applicable laws for Volunteer service opportunities because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, union membership, genetic information, or history of participation in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) process or any authorized complaint procedure.

The Peace Corps is committed to representing the full spectrum of American diversity and cultural richness to the people of our host nations. In representing this broad spectrum of Americans overseas, Volunteers may encounter preconceived notions of what it is to be an American. Some host country nationals may be unaccustomed to, or unaware of, racial, cultural and other differences in America. Volunteers who do not match host country assumptions may experience a variety of reactions from their co-workers and community, ranging from disappointment to incredulity, confusion to curiosity, and possibly even rejection.

Likewise, Volunteers may be mistaken for citizens of the host country or other nations, or they may encounter instances of subtle or even blatant discrimination. While the Peace Corps can set and enforce goals and rules for its own organization, it cannot control every aspect of host country national treatment of Volunteers. If an incident of discrimination by host country individuals or institutions occurs, discuss it promptly with a Peace Corps staff member.

In some cases, Volunteers may encounter fellow Volunteers who have limited experience with diversity issues or experience with those from outside of their own communities. It is critical that Volunteers and staff understand and support diversity within the Peace Corps community as well. Peace Corps country directors are charged with working toward ensuring harmony within the diverse body of Peace Corps trainees, Volunteers, and staff. Training materials help foster a supportive atmosphere within the Peace Corps community. If you experience discrimination from a Peace Corps staff member, trainee, or Volunteer, contact the Peace Corps Office of Civil Rights and Diversity **within 60 days of the alleged discriminatory act.**

Peace Corps/Office of Civil Rights and Diversity  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
202.692.2139  
ocrd@peacecorps.gov

Additionally, many posts have Volunteer committees dedicated to supporting Volunteers on diversity issues and the Peace Corps' employee resource groups serve as another support mechanism. Groups include the following: HALO, Hispanic Association for Leadership and Opportunity, [halo@peacecorps.gov](mailto:halo@peacecorps.gov); Sankofa, for the African diaspora, [sankofa@peacecorps.gov](mailto:sankofa@peacecorps.gov); Shalom Corps, for Jewish employees, [shalomcorps@peacecorps.gov](mailto:shalomcorps@peacecorps.gov); Spectrum, LGBTQA resource group, [spectrum@peacecorps.gov](mailto:spectrum@peacecorps.gov); WE@PC, Women's Empowerment at Peace Corps, [we\\_pc@peacecorps.gov](mailto:we_pc@peacecorps.gov).

### *LGBTQ Issues*

The LGBTQ community has a long history of significant contributions to the Peace Corps Volunteer and staff communities. The Peace Corps does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression and seeks to reflect the rich diversity of America in its recruitment efforts, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. In 2013, the Peace Corps began accepting applications from same-sex couples. As an agency, the Peace Corps intends to create open, inclusive, and accepting environments and encourages all Volunteers to serve

as allies to their LGBTQ colleagues to create a safe environment. Many Peace Corps posts have Volunteer support groups such as diversity committees and peer support networks that offer a safe space for Volunteers to share experiences and seek support. Some Peace Corps staff have “safe zone” signs, indicating that they are comfortable discussing LGBTQ and other diversity issues with Volunteers. The Peace Corps also offers LGBTQ support training sessions designed for both Volunteers and staff.

Many LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to be discreet about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity within their host community. Some LGBTQ Volunteers have chosen to come out to community members, with a mix of positive and negative reactions, while some come out only to select Peace Corps staff and fellow Volunteers. Mindful of the cultural norms and country-specific laws, the decision to serve openly is left to each individual Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps staff will work with Peace Corps Volunteers to provide them with locally informed perspectives, which may influence a Volunteer’s decision. For more information on the LGBTQ PCV experience and available resources please visit the LGBT Peace Corps Association [www.lgbrpcv.org](http://www.lgbrpcv.org) or email Spectrum (the Peace Corps’ LGBTQ employee resource group) at [spectrum@peacecorps.gov](mailto:spectrum@peacecorps.gov).

### **Sexual Harassment**

The Peace Corps is committed to maintaining high standards of conduct. This includes providing all staff and Volunteers with an environment that is free from sexual harassment by other American or host country national Peace Corps employees, contractors, Volunteers, or trainees. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of Peace Corps employment or service, or the conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. This applies to all Peace Corps Volunteers, trainees, employees, and contractors. Managers are responsible for enforcing this policy. This includes ensuring that all Volunteers, trainees, employees, and contractors know what constitutes unacceptable conduct and that they take immediate action to correct behavior or displays that may constitute sexual harassment.

Trainees and Volunteers who experience or observe sexual harassment should immediately notify their country director, supervisor, a higher management authority, or the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity.

Peace Corps/Office of Civil Rights and Diversity  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
202.692.2139  
ocrd@peacecorps.gov

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*Each Volunteer, trainee, employee, and contractor is legally and ethically obliged to refrain from sexual harassment.*

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### **Fraternization**

Dating and intimate physical or sexual relations between Peace Corps staff and Volunteers, or between Volunteers and students or others over whom they have authority, are prohibited.

### **Compliance with Host Country Laws**

Trainees and Volunteers are subject to host country laws during their service abroad and do not have diplomatic immunity. Local laws, and the procedures used to enforce them, may differ substantially from U.S. laws and legal procedures. This can have serious ramifications for Volunteers who are arrested abroad for possession of drugs or other unlawful behaviors, or who are alleged to have violated civil legal requirements (e.g., an automobile accident or a paternity suit).

### **Inappropriate and Criminal Sexual Behavior**

Inappropriate sexual behavior by Volunteers and trainees is addressed in Peace Corps Manual, Section 204 on Volunteer Conduct. The Peace Corps is committed to providing an environment free from sexual misconduct.

Sexual misconduct comprises a broad range of behavior that will not be tolerated in the Peace Corps. Sexual misconduct includes non-consensual sexual activity, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or stalking. A Volunteer or trainee who is found to have engaged in sexual misconduct may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including administrative separation. Volunteers and trainees are strongly encouraged to report to their country director if they suspect inappropriate behavior has occurred.

It is the Peace Corps' policy that dating or having contact of a sexual nature with anyone under age 18 is cause for administrative separation. Volunteers and trainees are strongly encouraged to report inappropriate sexual behavior with anyone under age 18 to the Office of Inspector General.

Peace Corps/Office of Inspector General  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
202.692.2915  
OIG@peacecorps.gov  
Online reporting tool: [www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspgen/contact/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspgen/contact/)

### **Financial Gain**

As a Volunteer, you represent the best that the Peace Corps and the United States have to offer. Certain ethical standards must guide your activities in your host country. Peace Corps Volunteers may not take advantage of a situation in the host country or use their Peace Corps status for their own financial gain. This means Volunteers may not, during their service, invest money in real estate, bonds, shares, or stocks of commercial concerns located in the country of assignment or conduct a substantial portion of their business in that country; engage in any business activity for profit or personal financial gain or undertake any gainful employment; or sell or dispose of personal property at prices producing profits. Nor may Volunteers accept payment for their services except from the Peace Corps. Violation of these rules may be grounds for administrative separation.

## **External Funds**

Volunteers are prohibited from accepting gifts on behalf of the Peace Corps. This includes the prohibition to solicit and accept any gifts that may be offered to support the work that Volunteers are doing with their communities. Volunteers may not implement projects or fundraise through organizations such as Kickstarter, GoFundMe, or Water Charity/Appropriate Projects. If Volunteers are approached or solicited to apply for funds from any organization, they should contact their posts immediately. Volunteers should refer any potential donor to the appropriate official (e.g., country director) with gift acceptance authority for the determination of whether such gift(s) may be accepted by the Peace Corps.

Any funds needed for initiatives at a Volunteer's site should either be channeled through the Peace Corps Small Grant Program (see Section 4, Technical Resources and Supplementary Programs) or given directly to the community. Volunteers may work with their communities to facilitate proposal writing and project implementation as long as they do not accept or manage project funds. For questions, Volunteers should contact their post small grant coordinator or APCD.

## **Office of Inspector General**

Everyone at headquarters fulfills a different role to support Volunteers in serving productively and safely abroad. As mandated by Congress, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) provides the Peace Corps with independent oversight of all agency programs and operations. By law OIG reports directly to Congress and the Peace Corps Director, keeping them fully informed about the results of OIG's oversight work. OIG conduct audits, evaluations, and investigations domestically and overseas, provides management with recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency, and prevents and detects fraud, waste, and abuse.

If at any point during your service, you suspect fraud, waste, or abuse of government resources, you should report it to OIG. Also, if you believe something was mismanaged (for example, a bribe was taken or staff's response to a sexual assault was mishandled), you are urged to contact OIG. The integrity of the Peace Corps depends on the behavior of each individual associated with the agency. It is OIG's job to investigate allegations of administrative misconduct and criminal wrongdoing involving Peace Corps staff, contractors, and Volunteers, and it is OIG's mission to make sure that

agency funds are spent appropriately. Volunteers can support OIG's work by cooperating with OIG during the course of an audit, evaluation, investigation, or review.

OIG evaluates all complaints and protects the identity of complainants. No one may retaliate against you because you choose to report information or cooperate with OIG. You always have the option to report information anonymously to OIG. For further guidance, see Peace Corps Manual, Section 861.

OIG Reporting Hotline:  
U.S./International: 202.692.2915  
Toll-free in U.S.: 800.233.5874  
Peace Corps Office of Inspector General  
P.O. Box 57129  
Washington, DC 20037-7129  
OIG@peacecorps.gov  
[www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspgen/contact/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/inspgen/contact/)

General Information:  
Main Office: 202.692.2900  
Website: [peacecorps.gov/OIG](http://peacecorps.gov/OIG)

### **Confidentiality Protections for Volunteer/Trainee Allegations**

Volunteers and trainees have a right to bring to the attention of the Peace Corps allegations of misconduct, mismanagement, and violations of law or policy that relate to Peace Corps staff, contractors, other Volunteers, programs and operations. Volunteers and trainees should report to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) any activity which they reasonably believe constitutes a violation of federal law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; serious misconduct; gross waste of funds; abuse of authority; or substantial and specific danger to the public health and safety relating to the programs and operations of the Peace Corps. Volunteers or trainees may also report such allegations to senior staff at post, to the appropriate regional director, associate director for global operations, or another appropriate officer at headquarters.

Volunteers and trainees may discuss with Peace Corps staff allegations or concerns on topics or issues that are beyond the legal jurisdiction of the



Peace Corps, such as behavior by a host country national with whom the Volunteer/trainee has regular contact but who does not work for the Peace Corps or participate directly in a Peace Corps project or program.

Any Peace Corps staff member who receives or has knowledge of an allegation or concern from a Volunteer or trainee must treat it with the utmost discretion and confidentiality consistent with appropriate handling of such information and applicable law, including, where appropriate, referral to the Office of Inspector General or other legal authorities. All allegations by Volunteers and trainees will be given serious consideration and review and will be handled, resolved, or disposed of, as appropriate, by Peace Corps management and/or the OIG. Based on the nature of the allegations and the totality of available facts, management will take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of any Volunteer or trainee making such allegations.

No Peace Corps staff member may retaliate in any manner against a Volunteer or trainee because the Volunteer or trainee reported an allegation under this section. Volunteers or trainees who believe they have been retaliated against for reporting or cooperating with OIG are encouraged to report the matter directly to OIG.

### **Political Expression**

The Peace Corps' credibility—and hence its ability to perform its mission—is contingent on Volunteers not becoming identified with controversial or political affairs and issues in the host country. Any public statement or action that potentially may involve a Volunteer in political or other controversial issues in the host country must first be discussed with the country director. A Volunteer's statements or actions concerning such issues that may, in the opinion of the CD, endanger the safety and security of the individual Volunteer or the post, or impair the effectiveness of the Peace Corps or the individual Volunteer, may be grounds for administrative separation or other disciplinary action.

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*The Peace Corps prohibits Volunteers from becoming involved in the political affairs of a host country.*

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Of course, trainees and Volunteers are free to petition the U.S. government and its officials in the same manner as they would if they were in the United States. If you have questions regarding this policy, contact

Peace Corps/Office of the General Counsel  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
202.692.2150

## **Religion**

Volunteers are free under the First Amendment to the Constitution to exercise their personal religious beliefs. However, Volunteers may not engage in religious proselytizing in the host country, and some host countries may limit the public exercise of religion to those faiths approved by the state. The Peace Corps will seek to reasonably accommodate a Volunteer's religious practices. If you are not clear as to what constitutes religious proselytizing, consult with your CD or the Office of the General Counsel. Engaging in religious proselytizing may be grounds for administrative separation.

## **Prohibition of Intelligence Activities**

It is crucial to the Peace Corps mission that there be a total separation between the Peace Corps and any intelligence activities of the U.S. government or any other government—in fact and appearance. For this reason, the Peace Corps has adopted policies that exclude from Volunteer service and Peace Corps employment those persons who have engaged in intelligence activity or related work or who have been employed by, or connected with, an intelligence agency.

“Intelligence activity” includes any activities or specialized training involving or related to the clandestine collection of information, or the analysis or dissemination of such information, intended for use by the U.S. government in formulating or implementing political or military policy toward other countries. The term also includes any involvement in covert actions designed to influence events in foreign countries.

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## *Volunteers, trainees, and staff cannot be involved in intelligence activities.*

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“Related work” means any employment by, or other connection with, an intelligence agency or with an intelligence activity, if such connection could be the basis for an inference that the individual involved was engaged in an intelligence activity. Even a family relationship with an employee of an intelligence agency may be a disqualifying connection. Volunteers, trainees, and staff must not be involved in intelligence activities, including overseas intelligence activities in connection with law enforcement. This policy has been confirmed by successive secretaries of state and in agreements with intelligence agencies. The Central Intelligence Agency has adopted explicit policies precluding employment of former Peace Corps Volunteers, staff, and individual contractors for specific periods of time. These restrictions were established at the request of the Peace Corps. If you are contemplating employment by, or association with, an intelligence agency upon completion of Peace Corps service, you should consult with that agency regarding specific restrictions before accepting an invitation to serve in the Peace Corps.

If you are approached, or suspect you have been approached, for an intelligence-related purpose, you should contact your country director or other appropriate management official.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

A trainee or Volunteer found to be involved with drugs in a manner not authorized for medical purposes, in any way in any country, will be administratively separated immediately. The Peace Corps enforces this strict policy not only because the cultivation, manufacture, traffic in, and use of drugs, including marijuana, is illegal in most countries, but also because drug involvement by trainees or Volunteers in any country could seriously jeopardize the entire Peace Corps program, as well as the safety and health of the trainee or Volunteer. Although a Volunteer may not be formally charged with violating drug laws, some host countries’ attitudes toward drugs are so negative that mere rumors of such involvement, though unproven, may affect the credibility of the individual Volunteer or the Peace Corps program. In there is an unsubstantiated allegation that a Volunteer is involved with

drugs in-country and the country director determines that knowledge of the allegation is sufficiently widespread to jeopardize the Volunteer or program's credibility, the country director may discontinue the Volunteer's service in that host country. The Volunteer may be considered for reassignment to another Peace Corps country if the country director provides a positive recommendation.

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*A trainee or Volunteer found to be involved with drugs in a manner not authorized for medical purposes by the Peace Corps, in any way in any country, will be administratively separated immediately.*

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Through many years of experience, the agency also recognizes that the excessive use of alcohol can seriously undermine Volunteer and trainee safety and security. Peace Corps data demonstrates that Volunteer and trainee misuse of alcohol is substantially associated with being victimized by crime, including violent crimes such as assault and rape. The Peace Corps is committed to working with Volunteers and trainees to reduce their vulnerability to such incidents. The use of alcohol also affects Volunteers' ability to perform their jobs and how they are perceived in-country, often diminishing their effectiveness, credibility, and safety. Examples of unprofessional behavior include, but are not limited to, public intoxication, drinking while at a worksite, failure to appear for work or training due to intoxication or hangover, and verbal or physical aggressiveness while under the influence of alcohol. Such inappropriate or unsafe behavior or inability to perform adequately in the assignment can be grounds for disciplinary action and, depending upon the circumstances, may include administrative separation.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS**

### **Automobiles**

Trainees and Volunteers may not own an automobile in their country of assignment. In many host countries, private ownership of an automobile is inconsistent with the Peace Corps' standards of modest living and goal of integration into the local community. In addition, driving may pose a safety risk to Volunteers and others. A CD may authorize a Volunteer to drive a Peace Corps vehicle if it is necessary to perform his or her job or to serve a Peace Corps program purpose. The authorization will generally be limited in time and scope, and Volunteers are required to follow all local traffic regulations, as well as the Peace Corps' rules. Policies governing the use of other vehicles in-country (e.g., those owned by a sponsoring agency, friends, or rental vehicles during leave away from a Volunteer's site) are included in country-specific Volunteer handbooks.

### **Bicycles**

In some countries, the post may provide Volunteers with Peace Corps-supplied bicycles. In many other countries, Volunteers can purchase local bicycles. The Peace Corps promotes bicycle safety by distributing a bicycle helmet with each bicycle and by providing training about operating a bicycle safely. Volunteers must wear helmets when using a bicycle, whether the bicycle was provided by Peace Corps or personally purchased. Failure to wear one is a serious infraction and may result in administrative separation.

### **Motorcycles**

The Peace Corps strictly limits the use of motorcycles by Volunteers and trainees. Motorcycles are more dangerous to operate than other motor vehicles and, in the past, have contributed significantly to injuries and deaths of Volunteers and others. Volunteers are prohibited from operating motorcycles. Volunteers may ride motorcycles only where they are specifically permitted to do so (which is very unusual). This is dependent upon the country-specific program's policies: Some allow Volunteers to ride motorcycles as passengers with prior approval. In such rare cases, a Peace Corps-approved helmet is required. Failure to wear such a helmet while riding a motorcycle will result in administrative separation. This policy applies at all times, including periods of annual leave.

### **Firearms and Radio Transmitters**

Trainees and Volunteers are not permitted to use or possess any firearms. Volunteers may possess radio transmitters (ham radios, shortwave transmitters, etc.) as permissible under local law.

# Extensions of Service and Transfers

## EXTENSIONS OF SERVICE

The Peace Corps may, when it is in the best interest of the program, extend the service of highly qualified and effective Volunteers beyond 27 months in-country, provided they have the capacity to sustain their commitment and to continue to serve effectively. To be considered for an extension of service, Volunteers must have an outstanding record of service and a special or strategic skill or experience that is needed in a new or ongoing project.

If you extend for 12 months or more, you are entitled to 30 days of special leave. You will be given a ticket valued at the U.S. government (or excursion) fare that the Peace Corps designates from your country of assignment to your home of record in the United States. You will continue to receive living and readjustment allowances, plus a special leave allowance. This leave is not counted toward completion of the extended service. Therefore, if you extend 12 months and take 30 days of special leave, the total extension period is 13 months. Volunteers who extend service and plan to take special leave are expected to take the leave as soon as possible after the beginning of extended service, preferably between the end of the first assignment and the beginning of the second or during the first three months.

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*Apply to Peace Corps Response for a new short-term placement in your current country or another country.*

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Peace Corps Volunteers who are approaching the end of their service and wish to continue their service are encouraged to consider opportunities to serve with Peace Corps Response. For more information about this option, refer to Pages 79–80.

## TRANSFERS

Transfers within a country or to another country (unless an extension of service is granted) are not an agency priority because they are costly and disruptive to programs. However, when there are valid programmatic reasons, a country director may seek a transfer for a Volunteer.

## EARLY TERMINATIONS

The Peace Corps invites applicants to become trainees and Volunteers with the expectation that they will complete a full term of service. Sometimes, however, trainees and Volunteers separate from the Peace Corps before completing their terms. Early terminations fall within four categories: resignation, medical separation, interrupted service, and administrative separation.

## RESIGNATION

All trainees and Volunteers have the right to resign at any time, for any reason, during their training or service. The Peace Corps strongly urges trainees and Volunteers to discuss the circumstances that are leading them to consider resigning with a staff member or appropriate third party. This way, the Peace Corps can take steps to address the situation and, hopefully, avoid the resignation. In all cases, resignations are final and may not be reconsidered or appealed.

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*In all cases, resignations are final and may not be reconsidered or appealed.*

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## MEDICAL SEPARATION

A trainee or Volunteer will be medically separated from the Peace Corps if the trainee or Volunteer has or develops a medical condition that the Peace Corps cannot medically accommodate or resolve within 45 days. Medical separations may be appealed to the Office of Medical Services.



## **INTERRUPTED SERVICE**

A trainee or Volunteer may be separated with interrupted service status if the CD determines that circumstances beyond the control of the trainee or Volunteer make it necessary for the trainee or Volunteer to leave the current assignment. Circumstances that may result in interrupted service include, but are not limited to, the following:

- There is no viable assignment in-country for which the trainee or Volunteer is qualified.
- The trainee or Volunteer cannot meet technical or language requirements, but the CD recommends future service.
- The trainee or Volunteer no longer meets eligibility requirements due to changes in legal, marital, or other circumstances beyond his or her control.
- Circumstances in the country or place of assignment endanger the safety of an individual trainee or Volunteer.
- The host country or other cooperating agency requests that the trainee or Volunteer be removed from service for reasons that are not be grounds for administrative separation.
- Circumstances beyond the control of the trainee or Volunteer may damage the effectiveness of the individual or the credibility or effectiveness of the Peace Corps program.
- The Volunteer or trainee was the victim of a sexual assault, stalking, or other serious crime.

A trainee or Volunteer may appeal to the regional director if he or she thinks the reasons for separation with interrupted service do not apply.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATION**

Administrative separation occurs when the agency determines that a trainee or Volunteer should not continue in Peace Corps service. The procedures for administratively separating a trainee or Volunteer are set out in Peace Corps Manual, Section 284.4.

### **TRAINEES**

Trainees may be administratively separated at the discretion of the deciding official for any reason but will be given the opportunity to resign in lieu of administrative separation.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers may be administratively separated for unsatisfactory conduct or performance; violation of any Peace Corps policy, including those in the Peace Corps Manual, whether agencywide or post-specific; or other grounds that diminish the effectiveness of the Volunteer or the Peace Corps program, as determined at the sole discretion of the Peace Corps.

Under the procedures in Section 4.0 of Peace Corps Manual, Section 284, Volunteers will be given notice by the CD of the consideration of administrative separation, the opportunity to respond, and the option to resign in lieu of administrative separation.

## **NONCOMPETITIVE ELIGIBILITY FOR EARLY TERMINATING VOLUNTEERS**

Executive Order (EO) 11103 provides a benefit by which returned Peace Corps Volunteers may be hired by federal agencies on a noncompetitive basis. (See Future Federal Service and Noncompetitive Eligibility in the “Life After the Peace Corps” section for additional information.) In all early termination cases, the CD will determine a Volunteer’s eligibility for EO 11103 benefits.

# Completion of Service

## **CLOSE-OF-SERVICE CONFERENCE**

Before your service ends, you will attend a close-of-service (COS) conference in-country. This event, which is the last in a series of the Peace Corps-led trainings during your service, will encourage you to reflect upon and bring closure to your experiences. The conference also will provide you with a forum to discuss options for employment and continuing education, and will identify ways you can share your experiences with friends, family, and community members in the U.S. and facilitate your transition home. You will receive information regarding your readjustment allowance and post-service medical benefits, as well as instructions concerning COS procedures. You will also receive instructions on how to complete your Volunteer Description of Service (DOS) statement.

## **READJUSTMENT ALLOWANCE**

Upon completion of service, a payment representing one-third of your net readjustment allowance will be sent to your U.S. bank account, and it may be used for travel or in any way desired. Approximately two to four weeks after Peace Corps headquarters receives your close-of-service documents, the final portion of your net readjustment allowance will be disbursed to your U.S. bank account. Only under limited circumstances will a check be mailed to your home of record in the United States or any U.S. address.

## **POST-SERVICE INSURANCE COVERAGE**

### **Health Insurance**

Volunteers are eligible to purchase a short-term post-service health insurance plan (see the “Volunteer Health” section for more information). The Peace Corps pays the premium for the first month.

### **Life Insurance**

The life insurance coverage purchased by you through the Peace Corps ends 60 days after service if you terminate while abroad, or 15 days after the end of service if you terminate while in the United States.

### **Personal Property Insurance**

If you have not already done so by the time you complete your service, consider insuring personal items for shipment back home. The Peace Corps cannot accept responsibility for your personal items or for any loss, theft, or damage to them.

## **OUTSTANDING DEBT AND BORROWED MATERIALS**

When you terminate service, you are responsible for clearing all debts in your country of service. Volunteers are required to sign a statement indicating they have no outstanding debts in the country, to host country nationals, to the Peace Corps, to fellow Volunteers, or to others. You may authorize deductions from your readjustment allowance account to satisfy outstanding debts. You will also be expected to return Peace Corps-issued equipment, technical publications, and other reference materials supplied by the Peace Corps.

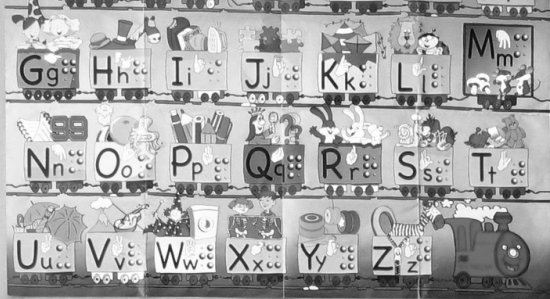
## **VOLUNTEER DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE STATEMENT**

The Description of Service (DOS) is the official Peace Corps statement of a Volunteer’s service. It describes the Volunteer’s training and overseas activities in non-evaluative terms and, where appropriate, includes the Volunteer’s certification of noncompetitive eligibility in seeking federal employment (see the “Early Terminations” and “Life After Peace Corps” sections for more information). Volunteers may wish to retain their original DOS statement to use in job or school applications. The Peace Corps also keeps copies

for 10 years and sends copies to the National Archives to be kept as a permanent record. The DOS is considered a public document.

## **CUSTOMS**

You should familiarize yourself with U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations that apply to any returning U.S. resident. There are restrictions on plants and agricultural items that may be brought into the U.S. You may also be required to pay duty on certain items acquired abroad. Customs brochures are generally available through the country director or through any U.S. embassy or consulate. Your host country may also have restrictions on what you may take out of the country, so check those customs regulations as well.



Teachers:

1. Logistics - place, time, commitment
2. Purpose - what kind of...
3. Int...
4. Assign...
5. S...

Students:

1. Determine and Develop Topics
2. Establish Routine
3. Materials, snacks, schedule
4. St...
5. A...



# Continued Peace Corps Service

## **PEACE CORPS RESPONSE**

Peace Corps Response (PCR) offers returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and other professionals with at least 10 years of experience the opportunity to serve in short-term, high-impact assignments in various programs around the world. Competitive candidates bring extensive technical skills to their assignments and, as such, may apply to specific positions in a country of their choice.

PCR positions range from three to 12 months, and average about six months in duration, with a short training and orientation upon arriving in-country. Volunteers work with international and nongovernmental partner organizations such as schools, hospitals, and host country government institutions, including national-level ministries, district governments, and local government entities. Volunteers provide targeted assistance in challenging and diverse assignments and often undertake a specialized leadership position within their host agency, making tangible contributions in a condensed period of time.

PCR Volunteers receive many of the same benefits as Peace Corps Volunteers, including transportation to and from country of service; settling-in, living, and leave allowances; vacation days; medical care; and the option to receive cash in lieu of a return ticket. In addition, PCR Volunteers receive a readjustment allowance of \$375 per month of service (\$425 after October 1, 2014). Unlike two-year Volunteers, PCR Volunteers do not receive one-third of the readjustment allowance while in their country of service, but are given the full amount following the close of service (COS) process.

For more information on eligibility requirements and available Peace Corps Response assignments, visit [www.peacecorps.gov/response](http://www.peacecorps.gov/response).

If you are an RPCV, a recommendation from the country director or other staff members in your country of service can strongly influence your suitability for a PCR assignment. In some circumstances, Peace

Corps Volunteers can extend their service by accepting a PCR assignment. Volunteers can also finish service and serve again at a later date.

Peace Corps Response  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
855.855.1961 ext. 2250  
[pcresponse@peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcresponse@peacecorps.gov)

## **REAPPLYING FOR PEACE CORPS SERVICE**

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) sometimes consider serving an additional term of Peace Corps service. While the Peace Corps recognizes the value of prior service and the potential contributions of RPCVs, completing a term of service does not automatically qualify an individual for a new assignment. RPCVs may apply for available assignments and will be assessed and re-evaluated for medical and dental clearance. Personal references from the country director or other staff members have a strong influence on determining suitability for another assignment, and are necessary for another assignment within five years of COS.

An RPCV may apply for re-enrollment for another two-year term of service within one year of his or her termination date without submitting a new application. The RPCV must have either completed service or terminated service early due to circumstances beyond his or her control. Re-enrollment applications are considered on a case-by-case basis, and are handled directly by the Placement Office. For more information on re-enrollment, contact the Placement Office at 855.855.1961, option 1, ext. 1830.

Trainees or Volunteers who decide to terminate their service early are asked to wait one year before submitting a new application. These applications are also considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances of the early termination and references from staff members in the former country of service.

In rare cases, a trainee or Volunteer may be reinstated to the original country of service within a year of completing or terminating service. To obtain additional information on reinstatement, contact the appropriate country desk unit. After one year post-close of service (COS), an RPCV must submit a new application through a regional recruitment office.





# Life After the Peace Corps

## **CAREER PLANNING AND RE-ENTRY**

The Peace Corps Returned Volunteer Services (RVS) is dedicated to career and transition support of returned Peace Corps Volunteers, and has a variety of career, educational, and transition information and resources to assist returning and returned Peace Corps Volunteers in self-directed approaches to career and educational opportunities. To this end, RVS offers in-person career events in Washington, D.C., and across the U.S. several times a year, as well as employer and career-related webinars, an online job board, and other services. Peace Corps headquarters also has a career center available to all RPCVs with a career development specialist who can provide in-person and online assistance to RPCVs as they transition into employment after the Peace Corps.

At the close-of-service (COS) conference, Peace Corps Volunteers gain access to an online COS kit, which contains resources on how to translate the Peace Corps experience into a career through self-assessment and career exploration, as well as information on various job-search tools and resources. COS kit materials also address many of the challenges related to re-entry and readjustment that you may face as a returning Peace Corps Volunteer.

Returned Volunteer Services publishes RPCV Career Link, an online job board where RPCVs can search for job vacancies and scholarship opportunities. To access this free platform, visit [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcvcareerlink](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcvcareerlink).

## **NONCOMPETITIVE ELIGIBILITY AND FUTURE FEDERAL SERVICE**

Under Presidential Executive Order 11103, Volunteers who successfully complete their service are awarded one year of noncompetitive eligibility (NCE) for federal employment. NCE does not mean RPCVs are entitled to federal employment. Rather, it permits, but does not require, agencies to hire an RPCV who meets the minimum qualifications for the position,

without going through all the formalities of the competitive process. The decision to hire an RPCV under noncompetitive eligibility is at the discretion of the hiring agency, not the Peace Corps (except for jobs with the Peace Corps itself).

If you qualify for noncompetitive eligibility under the executive order, a statement to that effect will be included in the DOS you receive at COS. While non-competitive eligibility is initially granted for one year immediately following your Peace Corps service, it may be extended by a hiring agency for an additional two years if you

- enroll in a college or university as a full-time student,
- join the military, or
- are involved in an activity that the hiring agency considers worthy of an extension.

When the reasons for leaving service are beyond their control, early terminating Volunteers may be eligible for the noncompetitive eligibility benefit; in these cases, decisions about eligibility are made by the country director. (See Noncompetitive Eligibility for Early Terminating Volunteers in the “Early Terminations” section.)

Peace Corps service may be counted for retirement purposes under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS), the Foreign Service Retirement System, and several other smaller retirement systems of the U.S. government for individuals who enter federal employment after their Peace Corps service.

## **GRADUATE SCHOOL**

The Paul D. Coverdell Fellows program is a graduate fellowship program for RPCVs. As Peace Corps Fellows, returned Volunteers pursue graduate studies at a reduced cost while using the skills and experience gained abroad in internships that help meet the needs of underserved American communities. Returned Volunteers who have satisfactorily completed service have lifetime eligibility for Coverdell Fellows. Satisfactory completion means having completed service, having been granted an early close of service or an interrupted service due to circumstances beyond your control, or having been medically separated as a Volunteer.

The Coverdell Fellows program is a collaboration of universities, public

agencies, community organizations, the Peace Corps, and the fellows themselves.

Partners highly value the unique perspectives and special skills that RPCVs bring to classrooms and communities. Depending on the program, benefits may include assistantships, tuition remission, scholarships, stipends, housing, paid employment, or medical insurance. The Peace Corps has established partnerships with more than 80 universities nationwide that offer programs in areas that include business, community and economic development, education, environmental studies, health care, international development, public administration, and more. Led by on-campus coordinators, Coverdell Fellows programs prepare RPCVs for challenging careers. They also provide a supportive atmosphere for RPCVs to share ideas, and to help each other with readjustment. For more information, including a list of participating universities, visit the website ([www.peacecorps.gov/fellows](http://www.peacecorps.gov/fellows)) or contact the Coverdell Fellows office at

The Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20526  
855.855.1961 ext. 1440  
[www.peacecorps.gov/fellows](http://www.peacecorps.gov/fellows)

### **THIRD GOAL PROGRAM**

*“The logic of the Peace Corps is that someday we are going to bring it home to America.”*

—President John F. Kennedy

The Third Goal of the Peace Corps promotes helping Americans understand the people and cultures of other countries. It is one of the three goals that support the mission of the Peace Corps to promote world peace and friendship. This mission is as vital today as it was when the Peace Corps was created. Current and returned Volunteers are encouraged to “bring the world home” by relating their Peace Corps experiences to their American communities throughout the year and during Peace Corps Week, which is held the week of March 1 each year. By living and working among different



cultures around the world, Peace Corps Volunteers attain an especially keen cross-cultural understanding. Any time you participate in or plan a Third Goal activity, be it during or after service, make sure you register the activity at [www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal](http://www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal) and receive a free Third Goal kit.

Sharing your experiences from your service abroad not only enriches the lives of students, neighbors, colleagues, and other Americans, it also helps build bridges across cultures—bridges to friendship, cross-cultural understanding, acceptance and, ultimately, peace. Current and returned Volunteers play a key role in promoting awareness of the Peace Corps' ongoing global contributions and planting the seeds of service in the minds of future applicants. You can participate in Third Goal activities in a variety of ways as a currently serving Volunteer and, later, as a returned Volunteer. Consider creating a blog, website, or online presentation video about your service. Try to balance your online production with sensitivity to how Americans may interpret what you present so your host country is not perceived in a negative light. Be sure to mention that your views are your own and do not represent those of the Peace Corps. Please also note that the use of the Peace Corps logo is restricted by the Peace Corps Act.

Peace Corps-produced Web banners may be downloaded for your website, blog, social media page, etc., to promote the agency. Finally, speak with your country director about your Third Goal project and let the Third Goal office at Peace Corps headquarters know too, as they love to highlight Third Goal activities ([thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov](mailto:thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov)).

When visiting the U.S. on vacation during service, and when you finish your service, consider giving talks in classrooms, to community organizations, and/or at workplaces. Consider asking another Volunteer or RPCV to give a presentation with you. Two or more viewpoints will give your audience a broader perspective of the work Volunteers do and might make the experience even more enjoyable for you. If you correspond with a U.S. classroom during your service, ask the teacher if he or she would like to organize a videoconference call between you and the students. This is a wonderful opportunity for students to hear from you in the field, with host country nationals and the background noise of everyday life in your host country. You may encourage your local newspaper to run a story about your experiences, to publish a letter to the editor about your Peace Corps service, or to cover your presentation or videoconference.

President John F. Kennedy signed the executive order establishing the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961. Each year during the week of March 1, thousands of current and returned Volunteers commemorate the agency's anniversary—Peace Corps Week—by participating in Third Goal activities. Join in the celebration by organizing your own activities to highlight your host country culture to Americans. Regardless of how often you promote the Third Goal, or in what way, visit the Third Goal website at [www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal](http://www.peacecorps.gov/thirdgoal) to register online once a year as an official participant and to get ideas, resources, and suggestions for your activities. All registrants will receive a free Third Goal kit.

### **RETURNED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER GROUPS**

RPCV groups are diverse. Generally, groups are organized by country of service, e.g., Friends of Malawi, or geographic area, e.g., RPCVs of Northern California. There are also groups in some workplaces, e.g., RPCVs at EPA, and some minority communities, e.g., African American RPCVs. As a federal agency, the Peace Corps does not have any official returned Peace Corps Volunteer groups.

RPCVs promote the Third Goal of the Peace Corps by bringing the world back home. To stay connected with the Peace Corps and Peace Corps programs, regularly update your contact information at [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/info](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/info). By staying connected, you can learn about agency news and opportunities. In addition to the opportunities provided by Peace Corps for Third Goal engagement, many RPCV groups also plan and support activities that utilize the experiences and knowledge of RPCVs to educate Americans about the developing world. Many RPCV groups also participate in community service projects and support Volunteer projects under the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

The National Peace Corps Association (NPCA) is a nongovernmental organization that serves returned Peace Corps Volunteers and former staff, and is the umbrella organization for many smaller RPCV groups. Although the NPCA is not part of the Peace Corps, the two organizations collaborate on Third Goal and recruiting activities.

# Glossary

## A

**A Few Minor Adjustments**—Intercultural handbook available to Volunteers in their country of assignment.

**Allowances**—Payments provided to trainees and Volunteers that permit them to live in accordance with the modest standards of the people they serve. These include walk-around, settling-in, living, and leave allowances.

**Associate Peace Corps director (APCD)**—Peace Corps staff member responsible for programming, administration, and support of Volunteer projects in-country. Also sometimes called a program manager.

## C

**Close-of-service (COS)**—The end of a Volunteer's completed term. This includes an end-of-service conference that is held for each Peace Corps Volunteer.

**Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU)**—Headquarters unit responsible for the behavioral health of Peace Corps Volunteers. COU works closely with Peace Corps medical officers, country staff, and headquarters staff to provide consultation and training on issues concerning the emotional health of Volunteers, as well as handles emergencies affecting trainees, Volunteers, or their families.

**Country desk officer (CDO)**—This is the main liaison between headquarters and overseas posts. Each CDO supports post operations in several countries, working with staff on matters related to administration, management, programs, and crisis management. CDOs also provide



information and assistance to current and potential Volunteers, their families and friends, and answer inquiries from the general public.

**Country director (CD)**—Senior Peace Corps official in the country of assignment; responsible for all aspects of the Peace Corps program in that country.

**Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program**—Peace Corps program that offers RPCVs the opportunity to work in underserved areas of the U.S. while attending graduate school at a reduced cost.

**Culture Matters**—Intercultural resource given to Volunteers during pre-service training.

**CWTSatoTravel**—Travel agency used by the Peace Corps.

## D

**Description of Service (DOS)**—Official Peace Corps record or statement of service for returned Volunteers.

**Director of management and operations (DMO)**—Peace Corps staff member who manages the budget and administrative functions in the country of assignment; also called administrative officer.

## E

**Early termination (ET)**—Any of the four types of separation from service other than COS: resignation, medical separation, interrupted service, and administrative separation.

**Emergency action plan (EAP)**—Strategy developed by each country to prepare for and respond to crisis situations overseas.

**Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**—Federal program to ensure equal opportunities for all employees, applicants, invitees, trainees, and Volunteers.

## F

**Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA)**—Federal program for employees and Volunteers that provides health-care benefits for service-related injuries or illnesses.

## G

**Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**—A development approach that incorporates an awareness of gender roles and the gender-specific needs of girls, boys, women, and men into the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.

**Gift-in-kind**—Any gift, including real, personal, mixed, tangible, or intangible property. This includes services of the kind often procured by government contract as non-personal services, such as films, reports, studies, and transportation. It does not mean gifts of money or voluntary services.

## H

**Home of record (HOR)**—Official home address for each trainee and Volunteer.

**Host country national (HCN)**—Citizen of the country of assignment.

## I

**In-service training (IST)**—Component of the Peace Corps' integrated training system that continues throughout Volunteer service.

**Information Collection and Exchange (ICE)**—Unit of the Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS). The ICE Catalog, available on the Peace Corps Intranet, is a bibliography of “how-to” manuals, training guides, curricula, lesson plans, and case studies published by the Peace Corps and others.

**Invitation**—Email inviting a prospective Volunteer to serve in the Peace Corps, which includes the volunteer assignment description and other country-specific information.

## M

**Master’s International (MI)**—Program that combines graduate study with Peace Corps service, available at more than 80 U.S. universities. Typically, a student completes one to one-and-one-half years of graduate school, 27 months of Peace Corps service, and then returns to the university to complete graduation requirements.

**Medevac**—Medical evacuation. Relocation of a trainee or Volunteer to another country for appropriate evaluation and treatment when medical problems are beyond the level of care available locally.

## N

**National Peace Corps Association (NPCA)**—Private, nonprofit alumni association, not affiliated with the Peace Corps, that serves as an organizational umbrella for returned Peace Corps Volunteer groups and their members.

**Noncompetitive eligibility (NCE)**—One year of eligibility available for federal employment that permits a returned Peace Corps Volunteer with the relevant qualifications to apply for employment with certain federal agencies without going through the formalities of the competitive process. The eligibility is available to Volunteers who satisfactorily complete a full tour, as well as, at the discretion of the country director, Volunteers who have com-

pleted at least one year of service and have ended their service early for reasons outside of their control but have served for a sufficient period of time.

## O

**Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCD)**—Headquarters office that provides leadership and guidance on all civil rights, equal employment opportunity and diversity matters, and addresses issues of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the recruitment and employment of staff and in the recruitment and service of Volunteers/trainees.

**Office of the General Counsel (GC)**—Headquarters office that provides legal advice to the Peace Corps.

**Office of Gifts and Grants Management (GGM)**—Headquarters office that oversees and manages the solicitation and acceptance of monetary and in-kind gifts and administers the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

**Office of Global Health and HIV (OGHH)**—Headquarters office that works with posts and Volunteers to develop strong, evidence-based projects that support in-country HIV priorities.

**Office of Health Services (OHS)**—Headquarters office that provides medical screening, in-service health care, and post-service support to trainees and Volunteers.

**Office of the Inspector General (OIG)**—Headquarters office that provides the Peace Corps with independent oversight of all agency programs and operations. By law, OIG reports directly to Congress and the Peace Corps Director, keeping them fully informed about the results of OIG's oversight work. OIG conduct audits, evaluations, and investigations domestically and overseas and provides management with recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency, while also preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse.

**Office of Programming and Training Support (OPATS)**—Headquarters office that assists Peace Corps posts with the resources they need to improve the effectiveness of their programming and training. OPATS provides training and support for overseas staff who, in turn, train and support Volunteers.

**Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services (3GL)**—Headquarters office whose mission is to fulfill the Peace Corps Third Goal of sharing other cultures with Americans and to provide career and transition assistance to returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

**Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA)**—Headquarters office that provides information and assistance to Volunteers and Trainees who are the victims of crime.

**On the Home Front**—Handbook for families of Volunteers that describes the process of intercultural adjustment and provides practical advice for concerns that may arise during a Volunteer's service abroad.

## P

**Peace Corps medical officer (PCMO)**—Peace Corps staff member who is responsible for assisting Volunteers in maintaining their health while in their country of assignment.

**Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP)**—Program that links private sector financial support to well-developed community-based projects coordinated by a Volunteer.

**Peace Corps Response (PCR)**—Program that places RPCVs and professionals with at least 10 years of experience in three to 12-month assignments in various program areas, including the agency's six program sectors, humanitarian disaster response, and health-care capacity development.

**Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV)**—U.S. citizen who has completed pre-service training and has been sworn in as a Volunteer.

**Placement Office**—Headquarters office that plans and manages the processing and placement of Peace Corps applicants for Volunteer service.

**Pre-service training (PST)**—Period of approximately eight to 12 weeks of training in language, intercultural, safety, and technical skills that precedes Volunteer service.

## R

**Readjustment allowance**—Allowance given to Volunteers upon COS to facilitate the transition after Peace Corps service.

**Regional director (RD)**—Peace Corps official in charge of administering one of the Peace Corps' three geographic regions: Africa; Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia; and Inter-America and the Pacific.

**Reporting instructions (staging email)**—Email sent to applicants 30 days before the staging event to inform them of the date, time, and location of the event.

**Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV)**—Peace Corps Volunteer who has completed his/her service.

**RPCV Career Link**—Online job board that contains a robust, up-to-the-minute listing of career opportunities posted by RPCV-friendly employers.

## S

**Sexual assault response liaison (SARL)**—Designated staff members at post who are trained to support Volunteers/trainees who report sexual assaults. Upon request, SARLs can accompany Volunteers through the in-country response, including forensic examinations, law enforcement meetings, and court proceedings. Each post has a minimum of two SARLs.

**Small Project Assistance (SPA)**—Program that combines the hands-on capabilities of Peace Corps Volunteers with the financial resources of USAID to help communities help themselves.

**Solicitation**—The personal request, written or oral, by a Volunteer for gifts in support of a specific project initiated by his or her host community, school, or organization.

**Staging event**—Pre-departure orientation. First stage of Peace Corps service as a trainee; stateside introduction to Volunteer safety and service abroad.

## T

**Trainee**—Prospective Peace Corps Volunteer during the period of the staging event through the completion of pre-service training.

## U

**U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**—U.S. government agency that administers foreign assistance programs in developing nations, including financial support for the Peace Corps SPA program.

## V

**Volunteer Assignment Description (VAD)**—Profile of the project to which the Peace Corps has assigned a Volunteer. It provides a general description of the Volunteer's assignment.

**Volunteer and PSC Financial Services (VPS)**—Headquarters office that administers the readjustment allowance and living allowance for Volunteers, provides student loan deferment certifications and verifications of service, and maintains Volunteer records (including DOS).

## W

**Welcome book**—Publication containing specific information about the country where a Volunteer will be working, accessible by the Intranet and included in PDF form in the invitation kit.

**World Wise Schools (WWS)**—Third Goal initiative that links classrooms and student groups in the U.S. with currently serving Volunteers to participate in a correspondence exchange. The program, Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools, also offers Peace Corps-related educational materials for U.S. classrooms and is named for the 11th director of the Peace Corps.



# Telephone Numbers

The Peace Corps toll-free number is **855.855.1961**. To contact the following offices toll-free, select option 1 at the prompt, then the last four digits of the direct-dial number.

**Placement Office** 202.692.1840

**Office of Staging** 202.692.1865

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS/TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

**CWTSato Travel Office** 800.735.2554

**Country Desk Officer** See VAD for contact name and number (or call the toll-free number above and ask for the specific country)

## MEDICAL AND DENTAL CLEARANCE

**Office of Health Services** 202.692.1500

**Medical reimbursements** 800.544.1802

## STUDENT LOAN DEFERMENT/TAXES

**Volunteer and PSC Financial Services** 202.692.1770

## FAMILY EMERGENCIES

**Counseling and Outreach Unit** 202.692.1470

**Office of Gifts and Grants Management** 202.692.2170

## Office of Inspector General

Hotline 800.233.5874 or 202.692.2915

General line 202.692.2900

**Office of Victim Advocacy** 202.409.2704

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Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
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