



Master's International Student Handbook

Your Guide to the Education Adventure of a Lifetime



Master's International
University and Domestic Partnerships (UDP)
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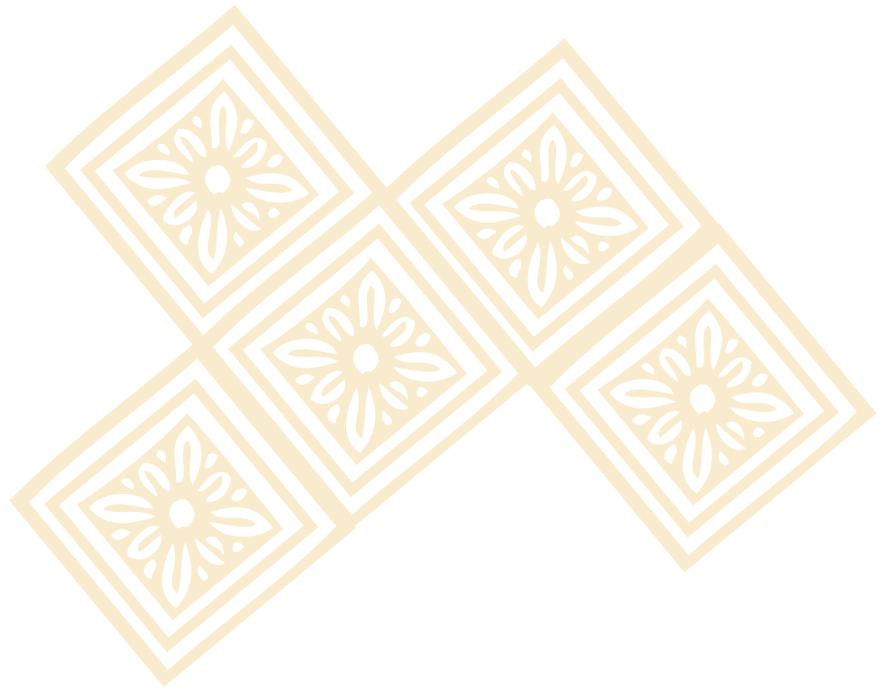
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Introduction

From Student to Volunteer and Back



Welcome to Peace Corps Master's International! As a Master's International (MI) student, you can look forward to unique personal and academic experiences while serving the global community. With your skills and personal commitment to promoting the Peace Corps' goals, you are someone who is going to make an extraordinary contribution to the lives of people in a developing country. While you will undoubtedly impact others during your service, your experience will probably have an even greater impact on you.

This handbook will help you to be a successful MI Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV). On these pages you will find information on preparing for your departure, your time overseas, your return home, and the completion of your degree. Good luck with your academic studies. We look forward to staying in touch with you!

“If you want great returns, you must make great investments. If you are about to enter a Master's International program, you should know that it will be years longer, more challenging, more frustrating, and more demanding than any other master's program; but the rewards will be broader and deeper than a traditional master's degree, and they will last a lifetime.”

— Kate Cleary, MI student, Colorado State University



The Steps to an MI Degree



- 1) Apply to MI graduate schools. Tell each school that you plan to be an MI student.
- 2) Once accepted to school, submit application to the Peace Corps.
- 3a) Start graduate school.
- and 3b) Connect with your MI Coordinator.
- 4) Submit a copy of official graduate school acceptance letter stating that you are an MI student to the Peace Corps.
- 5a) Follow through with the entire Peace Corps application process.
- and 5b) Fulfill pre-service graduate school requirements.
- 6) Attend staging in the United States.
- 7) Travel to host country.
- 8a) Attend pre-service training (PST) in host country.
- and 8b) Inform host country staff that you are an MI student.
- 9a) Serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer.
- and 9b) Work with graduate school to develop academic project.
- 10) Return to the United States after 27 months of service.
- 11) Complete any remaining requirements for master's degree.
- 12) Ask your faculty advisor if s/he will recommend your master's thesis/project to the Peace Corps for publication. (Only high quality works will be accepted.)





Section One

On Campus



What to Do When You Arrive on Campus

The time has come for you to embark on the first leg of your MI experience. You may be both excited and nervous about what lies ahead, but you can take pride in knowing that you have begun your classes in preparation for making a difference in the lives of others as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

The Peace Corps aims to make the application process for MI students as smooth as possible. To ensure that you are on track for an early placement in a Volunteer assignment, work actively with your recruiter and the staff at Peace Corps headquarters. Keep the Peace Corps informed of your academic progress by sending updated transcripts and contact information to the Placement Office, as well as by providing information on any new skills or experiences you have gained. Describe the kinds of activities/work that your master's degree has prepared you for so that your recruiter and placement officer can determine the best fit among the various assignments Peace Corps offers.

Submitting Medical Information

After submitting your Peace Corps application, you will be required to fill out an electronic Health History Form (HHF). You will need to send the completed form directly to the Office of Medical Services. All MI candidates will communicate with the Office of Medical Services through the online Medical Applicant Portal (MAP). In certain cases, an MI candidate will be requested to submit supporting documents that validate the information disclosed in the HHF. These documents must be submitted electronically through the MAP.

Upon submission of the information, a nurse in the Office of Medical Services will review the documents and grant you preliminary medical clearance. Only candidates who have accepted an invitation are given an assigned window of time with guidance as to when they must submit their medical information for a final medical clearance. When told to do so, you should begin to schedule necessary appointments that fall within the assigned window prior to your departure date. If you submit medical information outside of that window you will be asked to repeat exams.



Working with Your MI Coordinator

Your university has chosen an MI Coordinator who is your on-campus program contact. The MI Coordinator assists MI participants by serving as a liaison with Peace Corps headquarters. Coordinators have many responsibilities, not only to currently enrolled students but also to candidates and to PCVs in the field. Many coordinators are faculty members or administrators who balance their MI role with other job responsibilities.

You should meet your coordinator as early as possible during your first term on campus. As an MI participant, you should:

- ⊖ Inform your coordinator of your latest campus address, email address, and phone number.
- ⊖ Schedule regular meetings with your coordinator to discuss your academic plans.
- ⊖ Inform your coordinator of any changes or delays that occur during the Peace Corps placement or medical processes.
- ⊖ Determine how you will maintain regular contact with your coordinator while abroad on assignment.

Working with Your Faculty Advisor

During your first term on campus, in addition to working with your MI Coordinator, you will need to work closely with your faculty advisor. Your MI curriculum has been designed to meet the academic requirements of your degree and to provide you with the technical skills that may prepare you for your Peace Corps assignment.

Preparing for Your Master's Project

Throughout your time on campus, you may work with your MI Coordinator and faculty advisor to lay the groundwork for a proposed master's project if such a project is required by your school. This project may take the form of a professional paper, project paper, thesis, portfolio, or other professional work.

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 requires creativity, persistence and flexibility. You must fulfill any academic requirements in concert with, and complementary to, your Peace Corps assignment. Remember, you will be going overseas as a PCV as well as a student. If a final master's project is required, you will decide on it after you arrive in your country of service.

Why should you be flexible when preparing your master's project? Because you probably won't know your specific site assignment until several weeks after you arrive in your country of service. Placement locations vary considerably within a country, and the type of master's project that is possible



may depend in part upon the resources available at your site. As an MI student, you should be prepared to adapt your master's project to the opportunities available at your site. Most MI Volunteers discover their project ideas change once they arrive overseas and start their Peace Corps assignments.

Determining Academic and Communication Requirements

Communication may be unreliable in your community. While you will have access to the local postal system, you should not count on having regular email access (see section titled "Preparing to Go Overseas: Communication While Overseas"). You should work out a tentative, flexible communication schedule with your MI Coordinator and faculty advisor that can be adapted to either postal services or email availability once you are actually in-country.

It is important to understand the specifics of your program and know what is expected of you. While you are preparing to go overseas, keep these questions in mind:

- ⊖ How will you communicate (e.g., email, fax, letters, telephone)?
- ⊖ How often are you expected to be in contact with your MI Coordinator and faculty advisor during your Peace Corps service?
- ⊖ Do you need to submit reports monthly, quarterly, or biannually?
- ⊖ Is any other form of communication required?
- ⊖ What degree requirements will the completion of your project meet?
- ⊖ How and when will you submit your final work to your advisor? How will you share your work with counterparts and staff in your host country and in what language?

Working with Peace Corps Offices

The Peace Corps is a federal agency with many offices—each with its own set of responsibilities. Please refer to "Meet the Key Players in Your MI Experience" in the appendices for a more detailed description of these offices.

This manual has been drafted by Peace Corps MI program staff in the Office of University and Domestic Partnerships (UDP). The MI program staff's primary responsibility is to work with university MI Coordinators and monitor the national administration and management of the MI program. We are also available to respond to your queries so feel free to contact us for guidance, information, or status updates at any time. Refer to the contact list on the last page of this handbook for email addresses and telephone numbers of the various offices at the Peace Corps.





We strongly recommend that you establish and maintain a complete application file containing photocopies or electronic versions of all documents you send to the Peace Corps. You may also wish to keep a record with the dates and names of your telephone contacts with Peace Corps staff. In this way, it will be easier to resolve any issues that may arise regarding your nomination, invitation, or service.

What Happens to Your File

After you have been nominated by your recruiter, the Placement Office will receive notification that they may begin to assess your application. You will be asked to submit a transcript for your master's degree and an updated resume.

Unless you have been notified by the Office of Medical Services that more documentation for a preliminary medical clearance is needed, you do not need to visit any doctors. You will be instructed to visit a doctor if the Office of Medical Services requires it.

If something happens that affects your availability date (i.e., you need to stay on campus for an extra semester), you should contact the Peace Corps Placement Office immediately. Not all assignments begin at regular intervals during the year, and an extra term on campus could mean a three to nine month wait for an invitation.

Remember that your file must be complete to be reviewed. It is your responsibility to provide your references and necessary legal documentation. In the case that you need to submit medical forms prior to being invited it is important that you submit them in a timely manner through the MAP. If you choose not to do so, it is very likely that your departure date will be delayed.

A Note about Two-Year Programs

All MI candidates should submit their Peace Corps application after they have been accepted into their graduate program even if they are in a two-year program.

How Placement Decisions Are Made

One of the most typical concerns for Peace Corps MI candidates is learning where you will serve. Once candidates' applications have been assessed for skills, experience, and suitability for potential service, the Placement Office works to find the best available assignments by matching countries' requests for Volunteers with nominees' qualifications. Medical accommodations, as identified by the Office of Medical Services, are taken into consideration during the placement process.

Your preferences will be considered, but a high degree of flexibility on your part is needed. Peace Corps Volunteers work in sectors where the host country has identified the greatest need, meaning that individual countries do not implement projects from every skill sector. There are several factors that come into play when the Placement Office determines the country to which you will be invited. Language fluency, skill background and availability are just a few of the variables that are consid-



ered in determining your placement. Some program areas require practical experience in addition to coursework. Make sure that you convey all practical experience as it may relate to your area of study and to any sectors in which Peace Corps Volunteers work. This may make you eligible for more than one sector and in turn make you a more competitive candidate.

The Placement Office works to ensure a successful fit between skills and experience and the programming needs in the country, but the Peace Corps cannot guarantee a placement in any specific country, region, or area of study. The Peace Corps' priority is to place qualified Volunteers where their skills are most needed.

Once you have received preliminary medical clearance, legal clearance, and your file has been assessed by the Placement Office, you will be notified of your assignment by an electronic invitation.

Foreign Language Requirements

The ability to learn a new language is an important ingredient for a successful Peace Corps experience. There is a great need for French and Spanish speakers, and the Peace Corps has specific requirements to ensure your language background is sufficient for specific service opportunities in Spanish- and French-speaking countries.

At the same time, it is important to be aware that language competency is not a guarantee that you will be placed in a country with a given language requirement. Particularly as an MI student, the programmatic focus of your master's degree will generally take precedent over your foreign language skills in determining your placement.

Language requirements are subject to change at any time. For any questions on the latest requirements, please contact your recruiter prior to nomination or contact the Placement Office after you are nominated.





Preparing to Go Overseas

Remember to:

- ⊖ Confirm your date of availability.
- ⊖ Submit a copy of your latest transcript and updated resume.
- ⊖ Respond to any requests from the Office of Medical Services in the MAP.
- ⊖ Submit your new address, email, and phone number if necessary.

Your Invitation Email

Once the Placement Office has conducted their assessment of your file and deemed you qualified for Peace Corps service, a Placement Officer will identify an assignment for you and invite you to the program. The invitation email includes a Volunteer Assignment Description and a country specific Welcome Book that provides information about the country and program to which you've been invited. You will also receive travel information and guidance for pursuing the final medical clearance.

Upon accepting your invitation to serve, you will be asked to upload an updated, detailed resume and a one- to two-page Aspiration Statement through the Onboarding Portal. You should send this information within two weeks of accepting your invitation. Additional detailed instructions will be made available once you accept your Peace Corps invitation.



Because Peace Corps staff members at your country post do not receive a copy of your original application, it is important to use your Aspiration Statement to describe your personal and professional goals and objectives for serving in the Peace Corps.

In your Aspiration Statement be sure to state that you are an MI student and emphasize your current skills and technical expertise, other special strengths (e.g., group facilitation skills, HIV/AIDS training, nongovernmental organization development, gender issues, youth development), and the courses you have completed in graduate school. This information is helpful as posts identify a site placement for you in country.

You will be sent additional information and a description of your pre-service training after you accept the invitation to become a Volunteer. Thirty days before your anticipated departure you will receive specific instructions for your mandatory pre-departure orientation (staging) with the date and location in the United States. The Peace Corps travel office, CWT Sato Travel, will make arrangements for travel to your staging site and to your country of service.



Communication While Overseas

Volunteers communicate with family and friends by regular international mail or—where available—by email. Your mailing address during your training period will be included in the information you receive. Please provide your address to your academic advisor and MI Coordinator so that they may contact you when you are in the field.

Once you arrive in your country of service the Peace Corps staff will provide you with guidance on the best way to make international calls and how to acquire a cell phone. Also, many Volunteers who have access to email have found that setting up a website or blog is a convenient way to share experiences and communicate with friends, classmates and family.

While many Volunteers find communication to the United States virtually as easy as at home, this is not the case for everyone. Access to, and usage costs of computers, email, or the Internet vary considerably among countries and even within the same country. Peace Corps staff is generally supportive of an MI Volunteer's need to communicate with academic advisors, but it may not always be possible to use a computer at the local Peace Corps office.

Many Volunteers bring their own laptops. Personal ownership of computers does not exempt Volunteers from conformance to agency policies governing computer use. Since Volunteers represent both the Peace Corps and the United States in their host communities, the policy described below applies to all Volunteers.

Web Policy

The following is an excerpt from the Peace Corps Manual, Section 543: Use of IT Systems by Volunteers, Trainees, and returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs):

“Volunteers who create their own websites, or post information to websites that have been created and maintained by others, should be reminded that, unless password protected, any information posted on the Internet can be accessed by the general public, even if that is not intended. Volunteers are responsible for discussing the content in advance with the country director to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with this general guidance as well as with any country-specific guidance.

The thoughtful and accurate insights that you convey in your communications with others can contribute substantially to the Peace Corps' Third Goal—bringing to the U.S. a better understanding of other countries. However, given the broad access to Volunteer-posted material on the Web, both in your country of service and elsewhere, you should remain culturally sensitive regarding the material you post to any website. People in host countries and members of the U.S. 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. Volunteer-posted material on the Web should not embarrass or reflect poorly on the Peace Corps or the countries where Volunteers serve.”



As a safety precaution, do not include information on your website about your precise living location or those of other Volunteers, or information about the location of events to be attended by Volunteers.

Information Collection and Exchange (ICE)

ICE is a resource for how-to manuals, training guides, curricula, lesson plans, and case studies published by the Peace Corps and other sources. The ICE Catalog contains titles and descriptions of both print and digital publications. All Volunteers receive a CD-ROM, *Sharing Promising Practices: ICE Digital Documents* (ICE No. RE014K), with over 160 digital ICE documents. This can be a valuable resource as you begin to develop your Peace Corps and master's projects.

Deferring Your Student Loans



You may have student loans from your undergraduate studies or new loans to cover the costs of graduate school. Because your Peace Corps service will take you out of the United States for an extended period, make arrangements to settle personal and financial affairs before reporting for service. Failure to do so may result in a delay or withdrawal of your invitation.

It is important that you discuss with your lender how you will defer your loans while you are in the Peace Corps. When deciding how to manage your student loans, consider whether:

- ⊖ You will be continuously enrolled as a full-time student.
- ⊖ Your lender will allow you to defer payments during Peace Corps service.
- ⊖ You can defer your loans based on "economic hardship" status.

Speak with your academic advisor about what your student status will be while you are a Volunteer and then talk to your student loan lenders.

We strongly recommend that you keep copies of all paperwork and give Power of Attorney to a relative or friend to handle your loan deferments during your Peace Corps service. All matters related to student loan deferment, loan repayment, and/or partial cancellation of Perkins loans are the Volunteer's sole responsibility.

The Peace Corps does not grant loan deferments and/or partial Perkins loan cancellations. The Peace Corps will provide you with a Peace Corps Certification of your status as a Volunteer at the staging event (pre-departure orientation) that your lender(s) will most likely require from you in order to defer your loan(s).

Your lender(s) may also require student loan deferment form(s) for their deferment process. The number of deferment forms you will need depends upon the number and types of loans you have, and upon whether your lender(s) require renewal for deferment each year. Contact your lender(s)



to obtain loan deferment forms. You should bring these forms with you to your Peace Corps staging event. One copy of your deferment form(s) will be certified at your Peace Corps staging event for you to send to your lender(s). Subsequent deferment forms will be certified by Peace Corps staff in your country of assignment, and then it is your responsibility to send them to your lender(s). Deferments will probably need renewal every year, and renewal will be your responsibility.



Whoever will be handling your affairs stateside should know that you will be receiving a deferral, and should monitor your mail for any loan materials that may be delivered while you are overseas. You and/or your Power of Attorney should always follow up with your lender(s) to determine the status of your request to make sure that the information was received and processed. You can send loan deferment forms for certification to the Volunteer Certification Specialist at certifications@peacecorps.gov, by fax at 202.692.1422, by phone at 202.692.1784 or by mail at:

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters
Volunteer and PSC Financial Services
Volunteer Financial Operations
Attn: Certifying Officer
1111 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20526

For more information about federally guaranteed student loans, call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 800.433.3243, or search online via www.studentaid.ed.gov.

In addition, for important information regarding student loan deferment and partial Perkins loan cancellation, please visit the link below for an explanation on the Peace Corps website: <http://www.peacecorps.gov/learn/whyvol/finben/>.

Filing Taxes

The Peace Corps Office of Volunteer and PSC Financial Services distributes W-2 forms each January directly to PCVs overseas. You will need to fill out a Privacy Act Waiver, which is provided in your invitation email, and bring it to staging. Your individual situation and the amount of income earned for that tax year determines whether or not you must file taxes.

Arriving In-Country

Pre-Service Training

The knowledge and skills you have gained since beginning the MI program will be factors in determining your Peace Corps assignment. Nevertheless, there is still more to learn. You will complete an



in-depth pre-service training (PST) program upon arriving in your country of service to prepare you more specifically for your assignment and life in country. Your graduate education has been good preparation for your assignment, but PST enhances what you have already learned and includes language, technical, health, safety and security, and cross-cultural components. After successfully completing the PST program, which lasts eight to 12 weeks, you are sworn in as a PCV.

Upon Arrival at Post

Before you arrive, Peace Corps MI program staff notifies Peace Corps country staff that you are an MI participant. It is your responsibility to discuss your MI academic objectives with your country staff supervisor early in your training. Some overseas staff members have experience working with MI candidates while others do not. Take the initiative to meet with your staff supervisor to discuss the nature of your particular MI program. As you go through training, you will be evaluated on your ability to acquire the local language, to function in the culture, to adapt to your new environment, and to develop technical skills. Each country staff makes assignments based upon the needs of the site and your perceived skills and interests.

We encourage you to keep in touch with your faculty advisor(s), the MI Coordinator, and MI program staff during your service. We value your feedback and welcome hearing about your experiences as a PCV.

Returning Home

Before You Leave Your Post

Up to three months before your Peace Corps service ends, you will participate in a Close of-Service conference. The purpose of the conference is to reflect upon your service and to discuss the procedures to be completed in the final weeks in country. There will also be several workshops focused on how to prepare for life after the Peace Corps.

As an MI participant, you will also need to plan the next steps to fulfill your academic requirements and receive your degree. Your community will have played a significant part in the development of your project and it is important to thank all who have been a part of its success. Leave copies of your work with all who have requested it and all who would find it useful. Indicate what you did, why it was important, and the effect that it had. Your area of study may prove to be a good foundation for collaborative work in the future.



Issues to Consider

- ⊖ Have you compiled all the information you need for your academic work?
- ⊖ Do you need to set up a graduate review committee?
- ⊖ Have you determined how you will share your work with counterparts and staff in your host country?
- ⊖ Do you plan to travel before returning to the United States?
- ⊖ Will travel plans affect your academic standing?
- ⊖ Will travel plans affect your student loan deferments?
- ⊖ If necessary, have you informed your MI Coordinator of your travel plans?

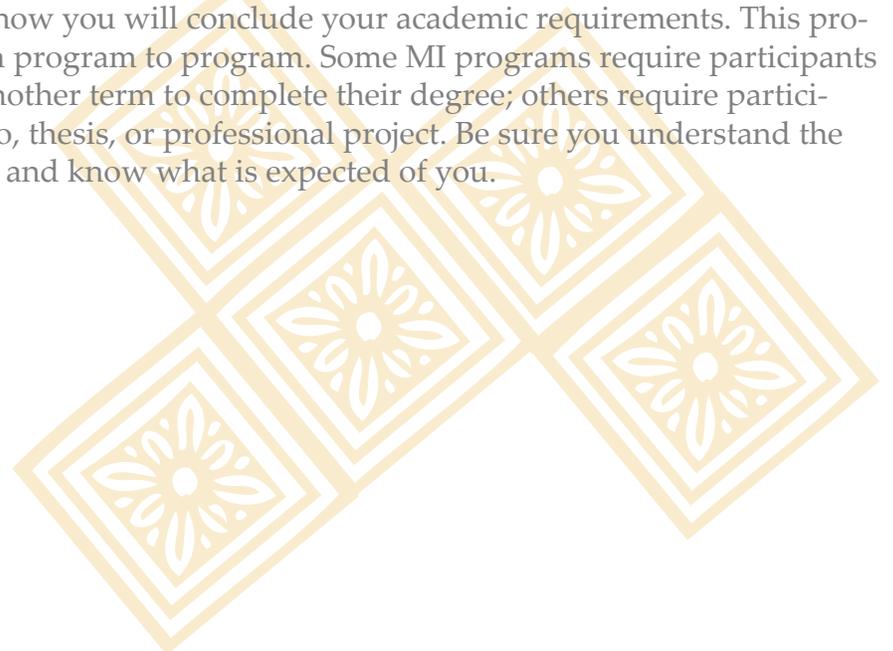
Readjustment Allowance

Returning Volunteers receive a readjustment allowance from the Peace Corps of \$275 per month for each month of service, totaling \$7,425 for a full tour of 27 months.

Completing Your Academic Requirements



Once you are back in the United States, contact your MI Coordinator and faculty advisor to confirm when and how you will conclude your academic requirements. This process can vary greatly from program to program. Some MI programs require participants to return to campus for another term to complete their degree; others require participants to submit a portfolio, thesis, or professional project. Be sure you understand the specifics of your program and know what is expected of you.





Section Two

Frequently Asked Questions



What will I do as a PCV?

As much as it is possible, MI students are placed in projects relevant to their course of study. The many projects implemented by MI students have included:

- ⊖ A community development project in Thailand that used aerobic dance competitions, among other activities, to promote the development of community organizations.
- ⊖ A health project in Peru in which families received and raised guinea pigs to improve nutrition and provide additional income for the community.
- ⊖ A forestry project in Paraguay that promoted the integration of forestry with current agricultural practices, working with farmers to help increase farm income and conserve local natural resources.
- ⊖ A business project in Kenya that helped entrepreneurs gain practical business skills, including inventory management, accounting practices, marketing, and methods in accessing credit.
- ⊖ A project in Kyrgyzstan that taught English to secondary students and introduced new teaching methods to local English teachers, improving their English skills in the process.

What are the benefits of being an MI student?

The foremost benefit of the MI program is that you will gain both a master's degree and two years of international experience upon completion of your program. Together, they comprise superb credentials for your career path. In addition to receiving excellent training and practical experience, MI students receive numerous benefits from the Peace Corps, including:

- ⊖ Transportation to and from the country of service.
- ⊖ Living and housing expenses.
- ⊖ Language, cross-cultural and technical training.
- ⊖ Full medical and dental coverage.
- ⊖ Vacation time and allowance.
- ⊖ Deferment or cancellation of certain government education loans.
- ⊖ A readjustment allowance of \$7,425 given at completion of 27 months of service.
- ⊖ Career counseling and support.



- ⊖ Noncompetitive eligibility for federal government jobs for one year after completing a full term of overseas service, or following completion of full-time student status.
- ⊖ Academic credit for Peace Corps service. In addition, several schools provide scholarships or tuition waivers for these credits. MI students at some universities can also compete for research or teaching assistantships. Benefits are unique to each school.

What determines the degree programs offered through MI?

Degrees are offered in areas of study where the Peace Corps has the need for Volunteers with specific technical skills and has received host country requests for those skills and experience.

When will I receive my Peace Corps assignment?

While you are completing your coursework, your Peace Corps application will be kept with the Placement Office in Washington, D.C., which is responsible for assessing and placing candidates in specific projects. Peace Corps host countries submit requests for Volunteers at least six months prior to the scheduled starting date of training. The Placement Office works to ensure a successful fit for your skills and experience and the programs in the country.

As you begin your academic studies, you are encouraged to provide the Placement Office with your contact information and to verify the completion of your Peace Corps application. The Placement Office will note any updates in your file—including legal status, any new work or volunteer experience, transcripts, availability date, romantic interests and anything else that might affect your application status. Placements can be made only where Volunteers with specific skills have been requested. The more flexible you are about your assignment, the more satisfied you will be with your overall experience as an MI student.

During your application process, it is important to respond to messages from the Peace Corps in a timely fashion. Failure to do so could result in your application for consideration of service being withdrawn.

Can I decline my invitation?

Yes, but you should be aware that second invitations are rarely offered, unless there are extenuating circumstances and Peace Corps' programmatic capabilities permit such exceptions. Please send the Placement Office a statement regarding your reasons for declining the invitation and the office will take this into consideration when determining whether or not a second invitation will be offered. Again, because the time and effort taken to extend a first invitation is quite intensive, second invitations are rarely issued.



Will my placement be handled differently if I am recently married or soon to be married?

Please note that any change in marital status will require that you re-apply. The Peace Corps accepts married couples, but the application and placement process can take longer. Both people must qualify, and the Placement Office must determine an assignment where you can both serve together. Couples must be legally married as defined by federal law and have been married for 12 months before their scheduled departure date. If you wish to serve in the Peace Corps without your spouse, this will also involve special consideration by the Placement Office.

Where might I serve in the Peace Corps?

The Peace Corps will extend an invitation to you approximately four to nine months before the date you indicate you are available for Peace Corps training. The invitation will specify both a country of service and an assignment area. There are many factors involved in making a placement, including the selection criteria set by the countries, your language skills, and possible medical issues. While you are encouraged to express your preferences regarding geographic region and the reasons for those preferences, it is not always possible for the Peace Corps to accommodate those preferences.

How does placement for MI students differ from placement for regular Volunteers?

The main difference is that the Peace Corps attempts to place MI students in assignments that closely match their academic programs of study. For instance, agriculture majors might be assigned to work in farm management; English majors might find themselves teaching English; and, forestry majors might work in the area of natural resources with local forestry agencies.

How long will I serve in the Peace Corps?

PCVs serve for 27 months. This includes up to three months of technical, cross-cultural, safety and security, and language training that takes place in the country of service prior to beginning work on your project. PCVs typically say that it takes at least one year simply to get adjusted, learn the language, and establish the necessary credibility in the host community. We encourage you to be patient with this process and with yourself—the results are worth the wait!



Do the assignments differ between typical Volunteers and MI Volunteers?

No. MI Volunteers work side by side with other Volunteers. MI Volunteers are expected to be both PCVs and students.

As an MI student, will I be treated differently from other PCVs?

You will have the same responsibilities as other PCVs. You will need to explain your status as an MI student to the Peace Corps staff in your country of service and discuss with them ways in which you can approach a study project in a sensitive and culturally appropriate manner.

Can I earn a Ph.D. through MI?

MI does not provide the opportunity to earn a doctoral degree, but our sister program, the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program, does. For more information, visit www.peacecorps.gov/fellows.

How is the MI process different from entering graduate school and the Peace Corps separately?

As an MI student, you earn academic credit for your Peace Corps service. In some cases, the school will waive the cost of these credits. You will have the benefit of your faculty advisor's technical expertise and support as you identify and address areas of need in your community of service. In addition, you will return to the United States with two years of degree-related professional international experience.

Does the Peace Corps provide financial support to MI students?

The Peace Corps does not provide scholarships to MI students. However, some student loans can be deferred or cancelled in connection with your service. All costs associated with your Peace Corps experience are covered by the Peace Corps, including transportation, medical care, and living expenses. In addition, the Peace Corps provides a readjustment allowance of \$7,425, which is paid at the end of service. Most schools provide students with an opportunity for research or teaching assistantships, scholarships, or tuition waivers.

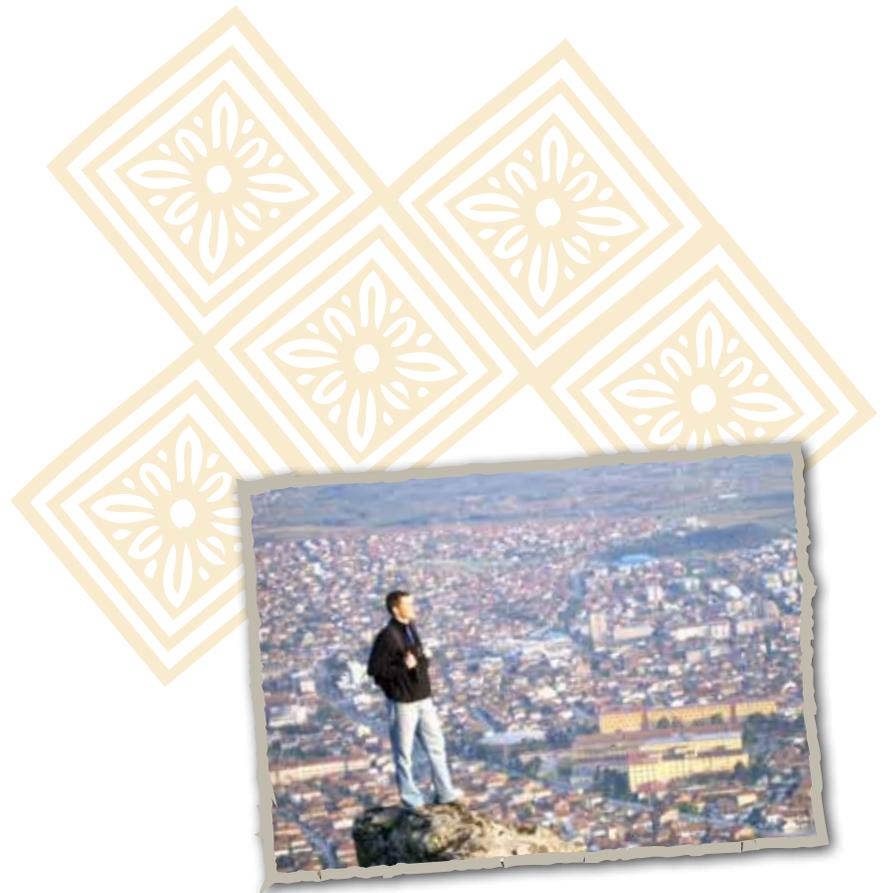


What happens if I don't complete my Peace Corps service?

You will need to contact your university and your MI Coordinator to determine how the early termination of your Peace Corps service will affect the completion of your master's degree.

Are there career counseling or placement services available for MI students?

The Peace Corps provides career information, advice, and job listings for RPCVs. Visit the Peace Corps website at <http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv>.





Conclusion



The Adventure Is Just Beginning

Thank you for being a part of the Peace Corps and the MI program. You are making an invaluable contribution to your community and to the world. Your efforts are commendable and we hope you will have an amazing experience—one that is academically, professionally, and personally enriching. We wish you the best of luck

in your studies and with service; we look forward to hearing about your experiences as an MI student and as a PCV.



If you send us stories and photos, with your permission we would like to share them with others. In this way, while supporting the MI program with your accounts, you can simultaneously support the Third Goal of the agency—to help Americans learn about other peoples and places.

Know that we are impressed with the difference you're about to begin making overseas and the cross-cultural relationships you'll be forging. We hope that during your service you'll remain inspired and healthy, and that you'll stay in touch. Please feel free to contact us, the MI program staff, if you have any questions, comments, or updates at mastersinternational@peacecorps.gov.





Appendices



A. Meet the Key Players in Your MI Experience

B. Learning the Lingo: Common Peace Corps Terms

C. Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers

D. Information from the Office of Medical Services





Appendix A: Meet the Key Players in Your MI Experience

You

You are the person who will make your MI degree happen. Familiarize yourself with the processes described in this manual. Keep the steps toward your MI degree progressing smoothly by: using a checklist, writing key deadlines in your calendar, keeping copies of all Peace Corps paperwork, and keeping notes of all your communications with Peace Corps staff.

The University Players

MI Coordinator – The MI Coordinator is the official university point person who liaises between your university and the Peace Corps. Touch base with your coordinator as soon as possible. S/he may be able to help in many ways such as: providing you with important information from Peace Corps headquarters, putting you in touch with the Peace Corps community on your campus, informing you about academic requirements for your MI program, or helping you to inform your faculty advisor about the Peace Corps components of your graduate program.

Faculty/Academic advisor – Your faculty advisor plays the special role of mentoring you in your academic work as you progress toward your MI degree. Ideally, your faculty advisor should help you to combine your academic work with your Peace Corps service and should stay in touch with you while you are overseas.

The Peace Corps Players

Peace Corps recruiter – Your recruiter, based out of your regional office, is the first Peace Corps representative you will encounter. Your recruiter will review your Peace Corps application, interview you, and nominate you for service in the Peace Corps if s/he finds that you are qualified for Peace Corps service.

Office of Medical Services – Once you have been nominated, you will be sent paperwork for medical and dental checks; the medical services staff at Peace Corps headquarters will be in touch with you if they have questions or if they need additional information. You may also contact the medical services staff directly if you have questions about the status of your medical clearance.





Placement Office – Once you have received a preliminary medical clearance, you will begin an on-going relationship with the Placement Office at Peace Corps headquarters. Staff from this office will assess your entire application, talk to you over the telephone, and, ultimately, determine your type of assignment, the country you will be working in, and your departure date.

Office of University and Domestic Partnerships (UDP) – UDP staff provides general oversight for Master’s International and the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Programs, serving as the primary liaison between Peace Corps headquarters and participating schools. The office also promotes the program nationally. The staff members serve as a resource to you, the student, throughout your MI experience, and encourage you to share your experiences with them.

Country Director – This overseas staff person supervises all operations in your host country.

Other overseas staff – Posts can have vastly different numbers of staff members, ranging to as many as 60 members for large countries, including your Program Manager, Medical Officer, Director of Programming and Training, and Training Manager – all of whom will support you throughout your overseas service.

Host country nationals (HCNs) – Host country nationals are the citizens and residents of your country of service. You will live and work with HCNs on a daily basis, and you will be a guest in their country. Among these hosts, you will have an official HCN counterpart and numerous project counterparts who will help you in undertaking your Peace Corps project.





Appendix B: Learning the Lingo: Common Peace Corps Terms

AF – Africa. One of the three geographic regions where the Peace Corps sends Volunteers, and also the name of the Peace Corps department responsible for overseeing programming in this region.

APCD – Associate Peace Corps Director. This Peace Corps professional works in your host country and is responsible for developing Volunteer assignments to specific projects in country. The position reports to the Director of Program and Training.

Assignment – Your Peace Corps assignment refers to what kind of work you will be doing and where you will be located. You may be assigned, for example, to environmental education in Guatemala.

COS – Close of service. The day your Peace Corps service officially ends.

Country Director (CD) – The head of the Peace Corps program in a particular country.

Country of service – Not to be confused with “COS,” this is the country where you live and complete your Peace Corps service.

DOS – Description of Service. A legal document you will receive at the end of your service verifying that you were a Peace Corps Volunteer.

EMA – Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia. One of the three geographic regions where the Peace Corps sends Volunteers, and also the name of the Peace Corps department responsible for overseeing programming in this region.

EOD – Enter on duty. The act of formally beginning Peace Corps service.

HCN – Host country national. A citizen and resident of the country where you undertake your Peace Corps service.

Host country – Your country of service.

Host country staff – The professionals who work for the Peace Corps in your country of service. This team is managed by the Country Director, and includes training, safety and security, programming and medical staff.

IAP – Inter-America and the Pacific. One of the three geographic regions where the Peace Corps sends Volunteers, and also the name of the Peace Corps department responsible for overseeing programming in this region.

Invitation – An official offer from the Peace Corps to serve in a particular assignment and country. You receive your invitation after you have been nominated.



Master's project – The academic project that draws upon your Peace Corps experience and is part of your graduate studies.

MI Coordinator – Your graduate school's official liaison with the Peace Corps.

Nomination (NOM) – Also referred to as "NOM." Official notification from your recruiter to Peace Corps headquarters stating that you are a strong candidate for Peace Corps service. You must secure a nomination before continuing with the Peace Corps application process, and your nomination may or may not lead to an invitation to serve.

OMS – The Peace Corps Office of Medical Services at headquarters.

PCV – Peace Corps Volunteer. In Peace Corps terminology, this refers only to people who are currently serving. Before your service you are an "applicant" or an "invitee," for the first three months preceding your service you are a "trainee," and upon completing your service you become an "RPCV" (see below).

Peace Corps project – The work you will conduct in your host country for the Peace Corps. You design your project with your in-country staff.

Placement – The Peace Corps' process of determining where and in what capacity you will serve. Agency staff will match your skills, language competency, disability status, and availability date with an appropriate Peace Corps assignment.

Program areas – (Sometimes referred to as "programs" or "project sectors.") These are the professional fields or sectors in which Peace Corps Volunteers conduct their work, namely: agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, HIV/ AIDS, and youth.

Project sectors – Also known as "program areas." See above.

Pre-service Training (PST) – Pre-service training. The first 10 to 12 weeks of your service abroad when you participate in classes and activities designed to prepare you for your assignment. These include language and cultural awareness training, health and safety training, and information related to your program area.

Recruiter – A Peace Corps employee who oversees your initial steps in applying to the Peace Corps.

RPCV – Returned Peace Corps Volunteer. Your life-long status once you have satisfactorily completed your Peace Corps service.

RRO – Regional Recruitment Office. One of the various offices across the United States through which the Peace Corps recruits new Volunteers.

Staging – Training and orientation held in the United States directly before your departure to your host country.

Volunteer – (See PCV.)



Appendix C: Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers



The mission of the Peace Corps is to promote world peace and friendship by:

- ⊖ Helping people of interested countries to meet their need for trained men and women.
- ⊖ Helping promote better understanding of Americans on the part of peoples served.
- ⊖ Helping promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

In working toward fulfilling the Peace Corps mission, as a trainee and Volunteer, you are expected to:

- ⊖ Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months.
- ⊖ 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.
- ⊖ Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service.
- ⊖ 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.
- ⊖ Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, seven days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance.
- ⊖ Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect.
- ⊖ Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve.
- ⊖ Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others.
- ⊖ 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.
- ⊖ 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.



Appendix D: Information from the Office of Medical Services



Part 1: Medical Clearance Timeline for Applicants

Stage 1: Complete your Health History Form (HHF)
Immediately after completing your application

After submitting a completed Peace Corps application, you will be prompted through email to access your Medical Applicant Portal (MAP). The MAP contains your HHF, which is a comprehensive survey that focuses on your recent health history and ongoing health conditions. The HHF is used to determine what you will need to do in order to receive your Medical Pre-Clearance. Your HHF will also be used in the final stages of your medical clearance when you will be required to present it to your examining physician and have them sign it to verify your health history.

Stage 2 – Complete your Tasks for your Medical Pre-Clearance
Due within 30 days of completing your HHF

Based on their responses in the HHF most applicants will have individualized “Tasks” immediately populate in their Medical Applicant Portal. These Tasks need to be completed in order to receive your Medical Pre-Clearance. Each Task will pertain to a specific medical condition and may require you to submit medical records and/or visit a healthcare provider to complete a standardized evaluation form. Occasionally, applicants will not have any required Tasks for their Medical Pre-Clearance and their file will automatically fall under medical review.

Stage 3 – Await your Medical Pre-Clearance and your Invitation
After completion of your Pre-Clearance Tasks

Once you complete your Tasks, a nurse will review your file and determine if you can proceed to the next stage of the process based on our knowledge of overseas living conditions for Volunteers and the constraints of the Peace Corps medical and mental health resources outside of the United States. A medical pre-clearance means that, based on the information you have provided so far, you are preliminarily medically cleared for Peace Corps service. This is NOT a final medical clearance. Your application will now be reviewed by our Placement Office for Invitation. The timeframe between completing your Medical Pre-Clearance and receiving your Invitation can vary because applicants are prioritized based on their Nomination dates. There will be at least four months from the time an Invitation is accepted until the time of staging and departure.



Stage 4 – Complete your dental exam and your immunizations

Available as soon as you accept your Invitation, due two months prior to Staging

Once you accept your Invitation, your dental and immunization tasks will be assigned in your MAP. You have until 60 days prior to your departure date to complete these tasks. However, you are encouraged to initiate these tasks immediately after they are posted to ensure adequate time to schedule appointments and coordinate vaccination scheduling.

NOTE: The dental task will expire after one year. If your departure date is more than a year from the time you receive your Invitation (this is most common for Master’s International candidates), you should wait to do your dental exam until you are within one year of your departure. These candidates may have extra timeline considerations and are encouraged to contact the Office of Medical Services if they have any questions or concerns.

Stage 5 – Complete your physical exam and receive your Final Medical Clearance

Available four months prior to Staging, due two months prior to Staging

Four months prior to your departure date, you will be notified of the final tasks you will need to complete for your final medical clearance, which include a physical exam, some blood work and supplemental screening tests, which vary depending on your age, gender, and medical history. If you are concerned you may not be able to get an appointment with your physician you should call in advance to schedule an appointment. However, this appointment cannot take place more than four months prior to your staging event. It is your responsibility to undergo these exams in the time frames set by the Office of Medical Services.

Part 2: Frequently Asked Medical Questions

1. How do I upload a document to my Medical Applicant Portal?

Scan your documentation and save it to your computer (if the documentation is more than one page, be sure to save it as one file). Check to make sure that the file extension in the document name is not capitalized, i.e. pdf instead of PDF; remove any periods, commas, dashes, etc. from the file name. Click on the corresponding task in your portal, click browse to locate the document in your computer and click upload. Our technical support at amsadmin@peacecorps.gov is always available should you experience difficulties with this process.

2. When/How do I get in touch with a pre-service assistant or nurse?

All communications should be sent to the Office of Medical Services via your Medical Applicant Portal (MAP). All communications will be assessed and responded to as quickly as possible.





3. I want a copy of my answers to the Health History Form. What should I do?

You will be provided a copy of your Health History Form (HHF) when your physical examination task is posted to your Medical Applicant Portal. You cannot get a copy before then. Before you submit your HHF, you may print off a copy of all of your answers on the HHF Verification page.

4. I have tasks to complete on my portal but won't be able to submit them by the due date. What will happen if I miss the due date?

If you miss a due date your file will be temporarily deactivated and you risk being reassigned to a different program.

5. Can I have the tasks completed by health care providers in a foreign country?

Yes, you can complete tasks outside of the United States. However, all forms must be completed in English or translated into English.

6. I don't want to continue in the application process. Who should I contact to let them know I am withdrawing?

If you have already accepted an invitation to serve, please contact your Placement Officer. If you have not yet been invited to serve, please contact your Recruiter.

7. I received my tasks for a dental examination and immunizations, but don't see any tasks associated with a physical examination. When do I need to get a physical examination?

The dental examination and immunization tasks are available immediately after you accept your invitation. Tasks associated with the physical exam will be available approximately four months prior to your departure date. Do not get a physical exam before the task is posted. The physical exam task is posted later than your dental and immunization tasks because your physical examination needs to be as current as possible.

8. Can I get my immunizations done at the time of my physical examination?

Yes, you can. It may be a good idea to call the physician's office prior to your examination appointment to ensure they will be able to give the required immunizations. Not all physician offices can give all of the required immunizations.





9. My doctor says I don't need all these immunizations because I had all my required childhood immunizations. Do I really need to get all of them?

We need documentation that you have received the required immunizations, or series of immunizations within the defined time frames. For example, Peace Corps requires either a polio booster after age 18 or a titer test that demonstrates immunity to all three types of polio. Please read the posted tasks carefully for details related to each immunization. If you have further questions or concerns, please contact us through your Medical Applicant Portal.

10. I have discovered a list of immunizations I need before going to my country of service, but some of them are not posted as tasks in my Medical Applicant Portal. Should I get them?

No, you will be given further immunizations when you arrive in country.

11. Where do I send the cost share information, including receipts, to get the allowed reimbursement amounts?

You can find this information on the Cost Share forms. Please submit the Cost Share form, along with itemized bills and proof of payment to:

Peace Corps Health Benefit Program
PO Box 3370
Carmel, Indiana 46082-3370

Please direct any questions regarding reimbursement to 1-800-544-1802.

12. I don't remember who my treating mental health professional is, and I need an updated treatment form completed. What do I do?

Forms completed by mental health professionals who have treated you for a mental health condition provide a better picture than one completed by someone who has only met you to complete the form. It is in your best interest to try to locate the mental health professional who treated you in order for the form to be completed. You can check with your insurance company, or copies of invoices sent to cover the expense of the treatment. If you cannot locate the professional who treated you, you may need to see another mental health professional. Please contact the Pre-service Unit so they can evaluate if this will need to be done.

13. Can I fax requested items instead of uploading them?

We strongly encourage the use of the Portal for submitting documentation. However, if you have contacted amsadmin@peacecorps.gov for technical help and your problem has not been resolved, and



a due date is approaching, you may fax your documents to 202-692-1561. Please label each document with your name and Case number and identify the task associated with each document.

14. What x-rays do I need to submit for dental clearance?

Peace Corps requires current dental x-rays — either a panorex with 4 posterior bitewing x-rays or a full mouth series (FMS).

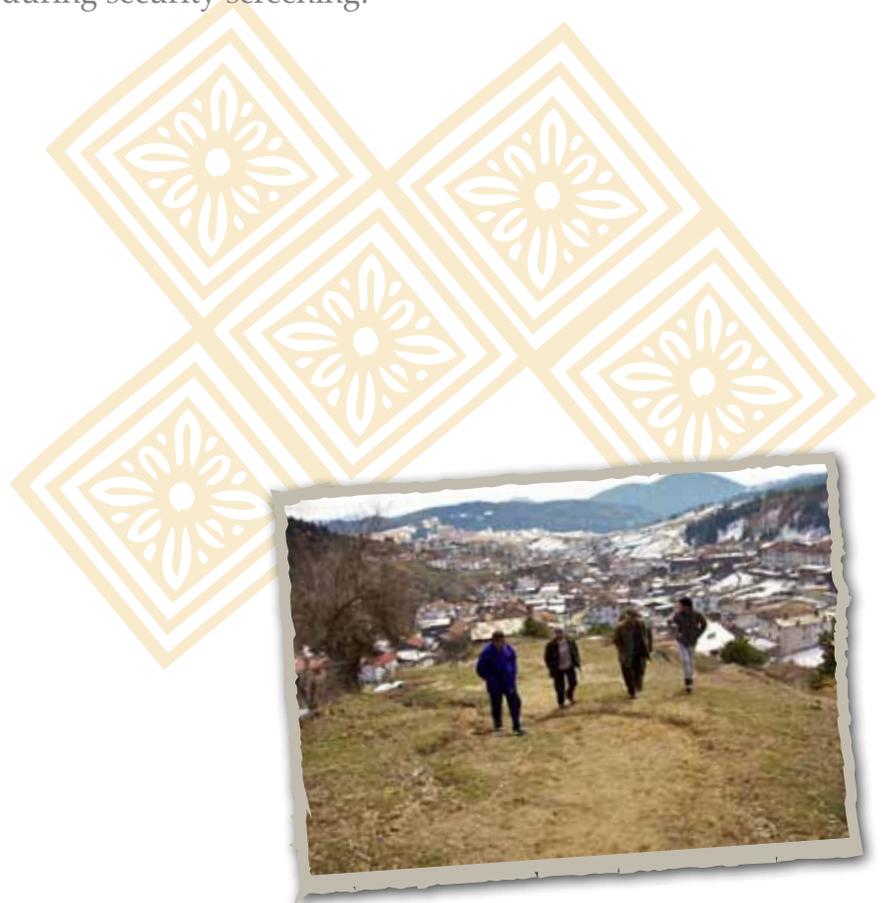
15. How can I submit my dental x-rays?

You can submit x-rays either digitally or by mail. If you submit digital x-rays, just upload the digital file in your Medical Applicant Portal. If you send your x-rays by postal mail, please use this mailing address:

Peace Corps
Office of Medical Services
Pre-Service Unit
1111 20th Street NW
Washington, DC 20077-9400



If you mail your x-rays, you must place a sheet of paper or cardboard between x-rays so they do not melt together during security screening.





Peace Corps Contact Information

You can always call Peace Corps toll free at:

855.855.1961

www.peacecorps.gov

Master's International MI Program Staff

202.692.1812 or Ext. 1812

Fax 202.692.1490

MastersInternational@peacecorps.gov

Placement Office

202.692.1903 or Ext. 1840

Fax 202.692.1897

MIPlacement@peacecorps.gov

Legal Questions

202.692.1845 or Ext. 1845

Fax 202.692.1898

Medical and Dental Clearance: Office of Medical Services

202.692.1500 or Ext. 1500

Fax 202.692.1501

Pre-ServiceUnit@peacecorps.gov

Loan Deferment Questions

202.692.1170 or Ext. 1784

Passports/Visas/Travel Arrangements: (CWT Sato Travel)

202.692.1170 or Ext. 1170

Staging Office

202.692.1871 or Ext. 1871

Staging@peacecorps.gov



Regional Recruitment Offices

855.855.1961

(Your call will be directed to your regional recruitment office.)

You may also call direct using the phone numbers below:

Atlanta – (AL, FL, GA, MS, SC, TN, PR, Virgin Islands)

404.562.3456

Chicago – (IL, IN, KY, MI, MO, OH, IA, MN, ND SD, WI)

312.353.4990

Dallas – (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX, CO, KS, NE, UT, WY)

214.253.5400

Los Angeles – (AZ, Southern CA)

310.356.1100

Northeast – (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

212.352.5440

San Francisco – (HI, Northern CA, NV)

510.452.8444

Seattle – (AK, ID, MT, OR, WA)

206.553.5490

Washington, D.C. – (DC, DE, MD, NC, VA, WV)

202.692.1040

