

# IPS 3-20 Voluntary and Temporary Separate Maintenance Allowances for Peace Corps Overseas U.S. Direct Hire Employees

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**Effective Date:** July 21, 2020

**Responsible Offices:** Office of Human Resources; Office of Global Operations; Office of the Chief Financial Officer; Office of Safety and Security; Office of Health Services

## **New Interim Policy Statement**

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Issuance Memo (07/21/2020)

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### **1.0 Authorities**

- (a) MS 642 *Conditions of Service for U.S. Overseas Staff*;
- (b) Department of State Standardized Regulation (DSSR) 260 Separate Maintenance Allowance; and
- (c) State Department Cable 20 STATE 53030, *Extension of Global Authorized Departure for Individuals on G/AD*.

### **2.0 Purpose**

The purpose of Interim Policy Statement (IPS) 3-20 *Voluntary and Temporary Separate Maintenance Allowances for Peace Corps Overseas U.S. Direct Hire Employees* is to establish the Peace Corps policy and procedures for requesting and authorizing various Separate Maintenance Allowances (i.e. cost-of-living allowances) intended to help overseas U.S. Direct Hire (USDH) employees and any Eligible Family Members (EFMs).

As the U.S. Department of State (State) begins to ease G/AD and posts begin to re-open, each Chief of Mission (COM) will review the circumstances at their post and determine the conditions under which U.S. Foreign Direct Hire employees subject to COM authority and EFMs may return or be deployed overseas.

In recognition of a wide variety of circumstances and possible difficulties that may be faced by Peace Corps USDH employees when planning to return overseas, Peace Corps is adopting this interim policy until September 30, 2021 to provide a Voluntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (VSMA) and a Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance (TSMA) for EFMs, in addition to the Separate Maintenance Allowance (SMA) contained in MS 642 *Conditions of Service for U.S. Overseas Staff*.

Peace Corps adheres to the Uniform Regulations established by State for all Foreign Affairs Agencies. State's SMA rules and requirements are set forth in Department of State Standardized Regulation (DSSR) 260 *Separate Maintenance Allowance*.

### 3.0 Applicability

This IPS applies to Peace Corps USDH employees assigned overseas, newly hired USDH employees awaiting deployment overseas, and their EFMs. Any employee in the U.S. having G/AD status will become eligible to be considered for VSMA and TSMA when their G/AD status is ended due to an early to return to post. Upon the scheduled termination of G/AD, all employees then having G/AD status will become eligible to be considered for VSMA and TSMA on that date.

### 4.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this IPS, the following definitions apply:

- (a) **Voluntary Separate Maintenance Allowance (VSMA)** means a voluntary SMA may be granted to an employee who requests such an allowance, based on special needs or hardship of the employee or family member(s).
- (b) **Transitional Separate Maintenance Allowance (TSMA)** means a transitional SMA may be granted to an employee who requests such an allowance whose family members temporarily occupy commercial quarters following termination of an authorized or ordered departure or in connection with an unaccompanied assignment.

### 5.0 Policy

Peace Corps USDH employees assigned overseas may apply for the VSMA and TSMA as outlined in sections 5.1 and 5.2 below.

#### 5.1 Voluntary Separate Maintenance Allowance

If an employee requests a VSMA, the Peace Corps may authorize the allowance, in accordance with DSSR 262.2 *Voluntary SMA (VSMA) - For Special Needs or Hardship of the Employee*, when an employee has special needs or experiences hardship prior to or after arrival at a post for reasons including, but not limited to, (i) career, (ii) health, (iii) educational, or (iv) other family considerations.

##### (a) VSMA Eligibility

To be eligible for a VSMA, there must be a reasonable expectation that the employee's separation period from their EFMs will continue for at least 90 consecutive calendar days.

##### (b) VSMA Exceptions

- (1) The employee's separation period from their EFMs may be reduced from at least 90 consecutive calendar days to at least 30 consecutive calendar days when:

- (i) adequate medical facilities in the area are not available for pre- and post-natal care;
  - (ii) family members are detained in the United States for medical clearance; or
  - (iii) children must begin or complete a school year before the employee has arrived at post or after the employee has departed on transfer to another overseas post.
- (2) If, after expiration of the 90-day or 30-day periods, the Director of the Peace Corps or an authorizing official (i.e. Associate Director for the Office of Global Operations (AD/OGO), Associate Director for the Office of Safety and Security (AD/OSS), or Associate Director for the Office of Health Services (AD/OHS), as appropriate) determines that the condition necessitating separate maintenance has continued for a longer period, the period of time for VSMA may be extended for up to the entire period of separation.

## **5.2 Transitional Separation Maintenance Allowance**

TSMA is available in accordance with DSSR 262.3 *Transitional SMA (TSMA) - Following the Termination of an Evacuation or in Connection with Commencement/Termination of an Unaccompanied Tour*. DSSR 262.3 states that TSMA can be authorized to assist an employee incurring additional costs due to family members having to temporarily occupy commercial housing while establishing permanent housing following an authorized or ordered departure or in connection with an unaccompanied assignment.

### **(a) TSMA Eligibility**

- (1) Temporary commercial housing is housing that is occupied on a short-term basis, such as a hotel, motel, commercially-leased house or apartment, or other similar commercial establishment.
- (2) Employees whose family members reside in non-commercial housing, housing that can be occupied for a longer-term or in private housing, are not eligible to receive TSMA. Examples of non-commercial housing include employee-owned housing, living with family or friends, and apartment rentals where the lease term is longer than six months.
- (3) TSMA may be granted for a period up to 60 calendar days after the end of an authorized or ordered departure, when the post is converted to any unaccompanied status.

### **(b) TSMA Exceptions**

When the Director of the Peace Corps or an authorizing official (i.e. AD/OGO, AD/OSS, AD/OHS, as appropriate) determines that extreme or unusual circumstances are present, the period of time for TSMA may be extended for not more than 30 calendar days.

## **6.0 Timeframe**

This IPS covers all requests for VSMA and TSMA to go in effect through September 30, 2021.

## **7.0 Procedures**

An employee requesting VSMA or TSMA must submit an SF-1190 to their supervisor for approval.

If the supervisor receives a request for a VSMA or TSMA, the supervisor shall send the request for consideration and approval to the Peace Corps Director or the AD/OGO, AD/OSS, or AD/OHS, as appropriate. Please see OFMH 65.4.4 for procedures to complete SMA requests. Approval of requests will be in accordance with DSSR 262.2 *Voluntary SMA* and DSSR 262.3 *Transitional SMA* and any subsequent State Department guidance regarding any form of SMA during the period this IPS is in effect.

## **8.0 Effective Date**

- (a) The effective date of this IPS is the date of issuance.
- (b) This IPS will be reviewed by the Senior Policy Committee prior to September 30, 2021 to assess its applicability and whether any further revisions are required to the interim policy and/or the time period for providing VSMA and TSMA.