

# MS 220 Leave for Volunteers/Trainees

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## Attachment A – Third Goal on Annual Leave Guidance

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## 1 Purpose

This Manual Section sets out the Peace Corps' policies and procedures regarding all types of leave for Volunteers and Trainees (V/Ts).

## 2 Definition of Leave

For the purposes of this Manual Section:

- (a) A V/T is on leave when on one of the types of leave listed in Sections 4.0, 6.0, or 7.0 of this manual section;
- (b) A V/T is not on leave when traveling on approved Peace Corps business; and
- (c) A V/T is not on leave when taking time away from the community for certain personal needs. *See* subsection 3.1 below.

## 3 Policies

### 3.1 Time Away from Community

V/Ts need occasional days away from their communities to take care of personal needs. Such time away from their community does not constitute leave. However, such breaks should be taken infrequently and must not be abused.

### 3.2 Whereabouts Reporting Requirement

*Whereabouts Reporting* is a core component of the Peace Corps' emergency preparedness and response program requiring all V/Ts to report their whereabouts every time they are away from site overnight (without exception) and when they return to site to ensure their safety and security. (For additional information, *see* Whereabouts Reporting Requirement within MS 270 *Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security*, subsection 8.3.

### 3.3 Travel Destination Restrictions

### **3.3.1 In-Country Travel**

A Country Director has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management and execution of safety and security programs at the Post and, in performance of that duty, may determine that certain parts of the country in which the Post is located are off-limits for purposes of travel by V/Ts. The Country Director is responsible for informing V/Ts if any parts of the country of their assignment are off-limits for travel and V/Ts are responsible for complying with the restrictions at all times, including when they are on time away from their community or on leave.

### **3.3.2 Out-of-Country Travel**

When a V/T requests approval for leave, the V/T must inform the Country Director of the planned travel destinations and receive prior approval from the Country Director before commencing leave. With respect to a particular destination, the Country Director:

- (a) Must deny approval for V/T travel to a particular destination if the Associate Director of Safety and Security, in consultation with the Associate Director for Global Operations, has restricted travel by V/Ts to such destination because of a serious risk to the safety and security of V/Ts or because of other significant government interests.
- (b) May deny approval for V/T travel to a particular destination if the Country Director determines that such travel would be detrimental due to significant political or security considerations that are unique to the country of service of the V/T.
- (c) Must deny approval for V/T travel to a particular destination in another country if the Country Director responsible for that country has restricted travel by V/Ts to such destination.
- (d) Must deny approval for V/T travel to a particular destination if the applicable Peace Corps Medical Officer or the Office of Health Services has determined that travel to the destination would pose a serious risk to the health of the V/T or others.
- (e) Must deny approval for V/T travel to a particular destination if the State Department has restricted travel by U.S. citizens to such destination.
- (f) When a V/T travels to another Peace Corps country, the V/T is responsible for following the restrictions on travel destinations of the Post in that country. In addition, the V/T's Country Director must inform the Country Director in the country of destination that the V/T will be traveling to the destination country and must specify the dates of travel.

## **3.4 Disciplinary Action**

Failure to comply with the leave requirements in this manual section may result in disciplinary action up to and including administrative separation.

## **4 Annual Leave**

Annual leave, also known as vacation leave, generally provides Volunteers the opportunity to increase their understanding of their host country and region or to travel to areas outside of their country or region, while allowing time for rest and relaxation. However, Volunteers must comply with the policies set out in MS 450 *Volunteer and Trainee Transportation*. Volunteers accrue annual leave at a rate of two days for each month of service.

#### **4.1 Annual Leave Allowance**

Volunteers accrue annual leave allowance for each month of Volunteer service, regardless of whether they actually use, or are authorized to take, the annual leave. *See MS 221, Volunteer Allowances.*

Annual leave allowance is normally paid with the Volunteer's living allowance. *See MS 221, Volunteer Allowances.*

#### **4.2 Timing for Annual Leave**

To ensure that annual leave is an integral part of a Volunteer's service, annual leave is discouraged during the beginning or end of service, and should not be taken during the first three months or last three months of service for Volunteers serving for two years or during the first month or last month of service for Volunteers serving for one year or less, except when the Country Director approves leave under special circumstances, or in conjunction with an authorized Emergency Leave.

#### **4.3 Advancement of Annual Leave**

The Country Director has the discretion, consistent with policies established in-country, to advance annual leave, not to exceed the amount accruable during the Volunteer's service.

#### **4.4 Annual Leave Outside of Country**

Annual leave must be taken any time a Volunteer travels out of the country of assignment for vacation purposes. Annual leave for out-of-country travel is computed in terms of calendar days, including weekends and host country and U.S. holidays. The day after departure from the country of assignment through the day of return to the country of assignment are counted as annual leave days. The computation of annual leave days does not include the necessary minimum time to travel between the Volunteer's site and the point of exit out of or entry into the country of assignment.

#### **4.5 Annual Leave within Country**

When annual leave is taken within the Volunteer's country of assignment, host country holidays are not counted in computing annual leave days. All weekends and U.S. holidays that fall within the annual leave period are counted in computing annual leave days.

#### **4.6 Loss or Reduction of Annual Leave and Annual Leave Allowance**

The Country Director has the discretion to impose the following disciplinary actions on a Volunteer for any violation of policies under MS 204 *Volunteer Conduct*:

- (a) Loss of previously accrued and unused annual leave.
- (b) Reduction in the accrual of future annual leave.
- (c) Reduction in the accrual of future annual leave allowance.

#### **4.7 Third Goal on Annual Leave**

Third Goal on Annual Leave (3GOAL) is an incentive program for Volunteers to share their host country and Volunteer service experiences with the American people while providing an opportunity to earn back annual leave through a 3GOAL credit. The 3GOAL credit may be utilized by the Volunteer for future annual leave.

The Country Director has the discretion to approve a 3GOAL credit of up to three annual leave days back to a Volunteer who registers for and conducts a “Third Goal” activity, while on annual leave in the United States. The Volunteer can receive up to a day of 3GOAL credit for each leave day during which he or she conducts one or more Third Goal activities, up to a maximum of three days credit during the Volunteer’s service.

In order to receive the 3GOAL credit, the Volunteer must:

- (a) Obtain Country Director approval;
- (b) Inform the Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services of the Third Goal activity and its location and date; and
- (c) Inform the Regional Recruitment Office that covers the location where the Third Goal activity takes place.

For additional details, see MS 220 *Leave for Volunteers/Trainees Attachment A – Third Goal on Annual Leave Guidance*.

## **5 Medical Coverage during Leave**

The Peace Corps continues to provide V/Ts with necessary medical care during leave. A V/T who becomes ill or who is injured while on leave should contact the Office of Medical Services (OHS/MS). See MS 262, Peace Corps Medical Services Program.

## **6 Emergency Leave**

The Agency Duty Officer (ADO) program, coordinated and administered by the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit (OHS/BHO), may authorize emergency leave and travel, at the Peace Corps' expense, for V/Ts, in the event of a family medical emergency, as defined below.

### **6.1 Definitions of Family Medical Emergency**

### 6.1.1 Definitions

A Family Medical Emergency is defined as:

- (a) a critical, life-threatening illness or injury with respect to which the patient's physician has informed the V/T and/or their family that death is likely to occur within thirty (30) days;
- (b) death; or
- (c) a situation in which the personal presence of the V/T is required to make new living or care arrangements for an ill or injured immediate family member because the V/T is able to make those arrangements and believes no one else is able to do so. This shall not include granting emergency leave to allow the V/T to care for an ill or injured immediate family member outside of such circumstances.

### 6.1.2 Conditions Granting Emergency Leave

For a Family Medical Emergency to give rise to the granting of Emergency Leave, it must directly affect:

- (a) a member of the V/T's immediate family, which is defined as a parent, spouse, domestic partner, sibling, child, or grandchild related to the V/T by blood, marriage/civil union/domestic partnership, or adoption. This definition includes step-relatives, e.g., step-mother, but does not include in-laws, e.g., mother-in-law.
- (b) a person who, in the absence of one or both parents, lived with the V/T and performed a parent's duties and responsibilities with respect to the V/T for at least three consecutive years prior to the V/T's reaching the age of 18. This is a surrogate parent who took the place of a parent absent in the V/T's life. This is not an additional person who lived with the V/T.
- (c) a person for whom the V/T assumed a parent's duties and responsibilities for at least five consecutive years prior to this person's attaining the age of 18.

## 6.2 Preliminary Communication Concerning a Family Medical Situation

Many family medical situations are resolved before becoming family medical emergencies or otherwise do not fit the definition of a family medical emergency (*see* paragraph 6.1). V/Ts, Country Directors, or families may initiate discussion of emergency leave by calling the ADO concerning a family medical situation. V/Ts and Country Directors who learn directly of a family medical situation should immediately contact the ADO by telephone.

## 6.3 Verification and Approval Authority

The ADO will evaluate the situation to determine whether a family medical emergency exists, including verification of the emergency with a third party (e. g., physician, nurse, funeral director, coroner), and then authorize or deny emergency leave. ***Neither the Country Director nor Post staff has the authority to approve emergency leave.*** Any authorization made contrary

to this policy may result in the personal liability of the Country Director or staff for expenses incurred for travel and allowances issued to the V/T.

Upon approval of emergency leave, the ADO will send an email to Post with instructions and administrative information. The ADO will also send an email to Post if Emergency Leave is denied so staff can work with V/Ts on alternate arrangements if necessary, such as annual leave or leave without pay. Post staff shall inform the V/T of the emergency leave decision.

### **6.3.1 Emergency Leave Travel**

Each V/T authorized emergency leave travel will be issued a round-trip travel authorization and a ticket for one-way or round-trip travel, whichever is appropriate, to the location of the emergency to be charged to OHS. See Chapter 61 of the Overseas Financial Management Handbook for further details.

V/Ts should have current passports, valid exit and re-entry visas, and World Health Organization (WHO) cards before they leave the country of assignment. V/Ts who leave without these documents and need assistance obtaining them should contact ADO the first working day after arrival in the United States.

Emergency leave is intended for immediate travel. If travel is not taken immediately, authorization may be denied except when death services are delayed due to weather conditions or contingent upon coordination with U.S. veteran or military rites.

Upon denial, the V/T may renew their request at a later date if an emergency situation still exists.

*See paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during leave.*

### **6.3.2 Notification of Travel Itinerary**

The Country Director or their designee must inform the ADO of the V/T's complete travel itinerary to the United States by email prior to the V/T's departure. The communication should include a copy of the travel authorization, stating the cost of the airfare, if applicable – funds obligated in U.S. dollars USD for the Transportation Division to authorize return travel, and the amount of emergency leave and travel allowance actually disbursed to the V/T via electronic funds transfer (EFT) and/or imprest.

### **6.3.3 V/T Communication with the ADO**

V/Ts must keep ADO informed about the family medical emergency and report their whereabouts per MS 270 Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security during the Emergency Leave and during any authorized extensions. Post staff shall instruct each V/T to contact ADO within three (3) business days after arrival to the designated travel destination.

### **6.3.4 Travel after Arrival at Site of Emergency**

Post will issue the V/T a travel authorization and a ticket to (and usually from) the site of the family emergency. If, after arrival at the location of the emergency, it is necessary for the V/T to travel to another location, for reasons directly related to the family emergency, the ADO may authorize such travel.

#### **6.4 Emergency Leave Duration**

Emergency leave is limited to a maximum of 14 days, plus travel time. *See* paragraph 6.6 for information about extensions to emergency leave.

During pre-service training, because it is of short duration and is considered crucial to a Volunteer's effective service, extended absence from a training program is not advisable. Although the ADO may authorize up to 14 days of Emergency Leave, the Country Director, in consultation with the Post's training team, has the authority to set a shorter limit to the number of days a Trainee may be absent from a training program. In some cases, it may be necessary for a Trainee to separate from the Peace Corps to seek to re-instate or re-enroll at a later time (*see* MS 282 *Peace Corps Service Re-enrollments, Reinstatements, and Transfers*).

#### **6.5 Volunteer Allowances during Emergency Leave**

##### **6.5.1 Emergency Leave Allowance**

During Emergency Leave, V/Ts are entitled to receive the current authorized leave allowance for each day of leave actually used (maximum of 14 days, excluding travel time) and an en route allowance. *See* MS 221, *Volunteer Allowances*.

The Post should normally disburse through imprest or EFT to a V/T's U.S. bank account the appropriate Emergency Leave allowance and the en route allowance to the V/T before departure from the host country. If all of the allowance is not disbursed, this fact shall be noted in the itinerary email which is sent in accordance with paragraph 6.3.2 above.

##### **6.5.2 Refund of Unused Emergency Leave Allowance**

V/Ts must return the allowance for any day of the Emergency Leave that is not actually taken.

##### **6.5.3 Reimbursement for Extraordinary Expenses**

V/Ts are expected to stay with family and friends during Emergency Leave. With the prior approval of the ADO, V/Ts who incur extraordinary expenses for food and lodging during the Emergency Leave (e. g., if circumstances preclude lodging with family or friends) may be reimbursed for expenses incurred, upon presentation of proof of actual cost to the ADO. Such reimbursements shall not exceed the staff per diem authorized for that location.

##### **6.5.4 Living Allowance**

The V/T will continue to receive the normal living allowance during emergency leave (excluding any extension period) and during travel time. Payment of the living allowance during an extension depends on the type of extension authorized (*see* paragraphs 6.6, 4.0, and 6.5).

## **6.6 Extensions**

### **6.6.1 First Extension**

After confirming a continuing medical emergency, the ADO may authorize, with the concurrence of the Country Director, an extension of up to 14 days additional leave to be charged to the V/T's accrued annual leave (see paragraph 4.0) or to leave without allowance (LWOA) (see paragraph 6.5). Although Volunteers may have accrued annual leave, they may not use such leave for an extension of the emergency leave without prior approval of ADO and the Country Director. Extensions should only be granted if warranted by the family medical emergency.

### **6.6.2 Further Extensions**

The V/T is expected to return within a reasonable time after the family medical emergency is resolved. Generally, a V/T who needs more than 28 days (excluding travel time) to resolve a family medical emergency should consider resignation (see paragraph 6.10). Under extraordinary circumstances (usually involving a terminal illness where the attending physician confirms that life expectancy is short and death could occur at any time), OHS/BHO may authorize, with the concurrence of the Country Director, further extensions to be charged to accrued annual leave or LWOA.

### **6.6.3 Limitations**

An authorized extension requires the Country Director's confirmation that a Volunteer's continued absence will not have an undue adverse effect on the Volunteer's project or Peace Corps' effectiveness in the host country or that a Trainee's continued absence will not adversely affect their training.

Under no circumstances may the combined emergency leave and extensions, excluding travel time, exceed 60 days.

## **6.7 Travel for V/T Spouse**

The Peace Corps will generally provide travel and allowances only for the affected V/T. However, in the case of a V/T married to or in a committed domestic partnership with another V/T, the Country Director may authorize, with the concurrence of OHS/BHO, Emergency Leave for an accompanying partner/spouse. In authorizing Emergency Leave for a V/T partner/spouse, the Country Director should consider the effect on the accompanying partner/spouse's training or project, the site situation, and other relevant factors.

The Peace Corps will not pay any expenses of an accompanying partner/spouse who is not a V/T.

## **6.8 Multiple Leaves for Family Medical Emergencies**

No more than one Emergency Leave may be granted in connection with the same family medical emergency. For purposes of granting Emergency Leave, the death of a family member whose

injury or illness occasioned one Emergency Leave is regarded as a different family medical emergency.

V/Ts who return to their assignments following an Emergency Leave and who later feel obligated to take additional leave for the same family medical emergency may:

- (a) Request annual leave in accordance with the guidelines specified by the Country Director.
- (b) Request leave without allowance (LWOA), with appropriate discontinuance of the readjustment and living allowances; or
- (c) Resign from the Peace Corps to return home permanently.

If either Annual Leave or LWOA is approved, the V/T is responsible for all transportation costs. MS 223 Volunteer/Trainee Readjustment Allowance subsection 5.0 covers early withdrawals from Readjustment Allowances. In the event of the family member's death, or other change in condition that could result in the approval of the Emergency Leave request, a V/T who is on annual leave or LWOA to attend to that family member's illness or injury, may be retroactively authorized Emergency Leave by the ADO and reimbursed for travel provided the V/T's travel meets the requirements of the "Fly America Act" for reimbursement.

## **6.9 Advance of Completion of Service (COS)**

The Regional Director or designee will normally advance the COS date of a Volunteer who concludes an emergency leave within 90 days of the Volunteer's established COS—unless the Country Director determines that there are compelling programmatic reasons for returning the Volunteer to the host country. *See MS 281 Completion of Service Date Advancement and Extension of Service.*

## **6.10 Resignation**

V/Ts on Emergency Leave who need additional time at home to meet personal responsibilities should consider resigning from Peace Corps service (*see MS 284 Early Termination of Service*). A V/T in-country who has been denied Emergency Leave may discuss with their Country Director the possibility of using annual leave, taking LWOA, or resigning.

If the V/T makes the decision to resign and notifies the Post, the Post should follow MS 284 *Early Termination of Service*, subsection 2.2, to ensure OHS receives the required information to confirm all medical requirements are closed out.

Eligibility for reinstatement after resignation is governed by MS 282 *Peace Corps Service Re-enrollments, Reinstatements, and Transfers*.

## **6.11 Additional Considerations**

The foregoing notwithstanding, in rare circumstances in which the request for Emergency Leave does not meet the definition of Family Medical Emergency in 6.1.1 or involves a person that

does not meet the definition of the V/T's immediate family in 6.1.2, the Country Director shall consult, through the ADO, with the Associate Director, Office of Health Services (AD/OHS).

Upon consultation with OGC, the AD/OHS may grant the Emergency Leave request based upon:

- (a) whether the person experiencing the medical emergency lived for a significant period of time in the V/T's household and the relationship between V/T and individual experiencing the medical emergency;
- (b) a description of the person's deteriorating medical condition that makes it time sensitive for the V/T to travel; and/or
- (c) Other factors that relate to (a) and (b) above.

The AD/OHS' decision shall be final and is not subject to appeal.

## **6.12 Readjustment Allowance Withdrawal**

If Emergency Leave is not approved by the AD/OHS and the V/T is granted Annual Leave or leave without pay, the V/T is responsible for all transportation costs. In such situations, the CD may authorize, upon the Volunteer's request, an advance of up to 50 percent of their net accrued Readjustment Allowance. Trainees are not eligible for a readjustment allowance advance. (See , MS 223, Subsection 5.0, Volunteer/Trainee Readjustment Allowance).

## **7 Other Types of Leave**

### **7.1 Special Leave**

A Volunteer who extends service for a year or more (by one or more extensions) is entitled to 30 days of special leave. *See* MS 281, Completion of Service Date Advancement and Extension of Service, for more information.

### **7.2 Holidays and Host Country Vacation Periods**

Volunteers may be excused, according to Post policy, from work on holidays during which their host country counterparts do not work. Volunteers are not ordinarily excused from work on U.S. holidays, which are not observed by their co-workers. During host country vacation periods, Volunteers, unless otherwise permitted in this manual section, are expected to take annual leave or use this time to work on Peace Corps activities.

### **7.3 Leave for Professional or Academic Examinations**

Volunteers who leave their sites to take examinations relating to activities after their Peace Corps service may be authorized up to three days' administrative leave during which time the living allowance and readjustment allowance will continue but no other allowances will be paid or authorized. Examples of such exams are LSAT, MCAT, GRE and the Foreign Service Exam. Any absence beyond three days will be charged to annual leave or LWOA.

## **7.4 Leave without Allowance (LWOA)**

V/Ts who must be absent from their training or project site for personal reasons may be placed in LWOA status for up to 30 days at the discretion of the Country Director, who may also approve an extension up to an additional 30 days. The Country Director's decision must be based on a determination that a Trainee's absence will not adversely affect their training, or that a Volunteer's absence will not adversely affect the Volunteer's project unduly or Peace Corps' effectiveness in the host country.

LWOA status must be reported to Volunteer and PSC Services (CFO/VPS) by the Country Director on [Form PC-440P](#), Notice of Volunteer-Trainee Action Post. In LWOA status, V/Ts do not accrue readjustment allowance nor receive other allowances, except for a portion of the living allowance which may be continued if needed to meet on-going expenses at the assigned site (e. g., rent or electric bill).

In extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Regional Director, after any authorized period of administrative hold expires, a V/T who has applied for a transfer or transfer/extension may be placed on LWOA for up to 30 days. In these situations, the Regional Director may also approve extensions of LWOA up to an additional 30 days.

(See MS 282 *Peace Corps Service Re-enrollments, Reinstatements, and Transfers* subsection 6.8.3.)

See paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during leave.

## **8 Volunteer/Trainee Hold**

### **8.1 Medical Hold**

Medical hold is a non-duty status to which a V/T is assigned because of an unresolved medical condition. V/Ts may be placed on medical hold as necessary and appropriate by the Office of Medical Services (OHS/MS) for a maximum of 45 days. Extensions of medical hold beyond 45 days may be granted by the Associate Director of OHS. See MS 221 *Volunteer Allowances*, for information on medical hold allowances.

See paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during medical hold.

### **8.2 Administrative Hold**

Administrative hold is a non-duty status to which a V/T is assigned by the Regional Director for up to 60 days. Administrative hold may be used (i) to delay a V/T's departure for overseas duty, return to overseas duty, or transfer to another country of assignment; (ii) to withdraw V/Ts from a country of assignment as a result of civil or political unrest or for safety reasons; or (iii) to remove a V/T from the country of assignment for a limited period of time. As necessary, the Associate Director for Global Operations may extend the administrative hold for a V/T for up to an additional 60 days.

See subsection 5.0 for information on medical coverage during administrative hold.

### **8.2.1 Return Transportation to Home of Record (HOR)**

With the authorization of the Regional Director, Peace Corps will provide transportation to the HOR and to any subsequent country of assignment for V/Ts who are sent home during an administrative hold period.

### **8.2.2 Allowances during Administrative Hold**

During the period of administrative hold, the living allowance will be discontinued. See MS 221 *Volunteer Allowances* for hold allowance information.

## **9 Effective Date**

This Manual Section shall become effective on the date of issuance.