

# MS 241 Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline

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**Effective Date:** March 27, 2019

**Responsible Offices:** Office of Health Services/Counseling & Outreach Unit; Office of Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response

**Supersedes:** 06/15/15

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Issuance Memo (06/15/2015)

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## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Section is to set out the Peace Corps policy on the 24-hour Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline (“Sexual Assault Hotline”) for Volunteers and Trainees (collectively Volunteers) located at all posts, the roles and responsibilities of the parties who staff and manage the Sexual Assault Hotline, and protocols followed by Peace Corps regarding information originating on the Sexual Assault Hotline. The procedures for implementing this Manual Section are contained in the MS 241 *Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline Procedures*.

## 2.0 Authority

22 U.S.C. §2507a.

## 3.0 Definitions

- (a) **Anonymous**, as used in connection with information obtained through the Sexual Assault Hotline, means that no Personally Identifiable Information will be collected by the Hotline Support Staff during the Sexual Assault Hotline call, except as provided by sections 3.0(f) and 4.1(c).
- (b) **Hotline Support Staff** is a trained professional answering calls on the Sexual Assault Hotline.
- (c) **Crisis Counseling** means providing assistance and support to the Volunteer by Hotline Support Staff, which generally involves a brief assessment and relevant interventions related to the Sexual Assault.
- (d) **Personally Identifiable Information (PII)** is the following information about a Volunteer:
  - (1) First or last name;
  - (2) Home or other physical address;

- (3) Contact information for the Volunteer, including postal, email, Internet protocol address, or telephone or facsimile number;
  - (4) Social security number or ID number;
  - (5) Volunteer's site; and
  - (6) Any other information, including date of birth, racial or ethnic background, or religious affiliation that, by itself or in combination with any information described in subparagraphs (i) through (v), would serve to identify the Volunteer.
- (e) **Confidential Information** is information that will be kept in confidence between the Volunteer caller and Hotline Support Staff, which may not be disclosed to Peace Corps or any other party without the Volunteer's consent. However, in cases of Serious or Imminent Threat, suicidal or homicidal ideation, or sexual abuse of minors, the Hotline Support Staff is authorized to disclose any information that is relevant to individuals with a Specific Need to Know (See sections 3.0(f) and 3.0(i)). If there is any uncertainty on the scope of "specific need to know" the Hotline Support Staff should consult the Office of the General Counsel for legal guidance.
- (f) **Serious or Imminent Threat** means a serious and imminent threat to the health or safety of the Volunteer or others, such as (i) any life threatening, or potentially life threatening condition or security situation, (ii) any condition or security situation that threatens loss of limb or other serious bodily harm, or (iii) any situation that involves the Volunteer losing consciousness. A threat to health or safety would only be considered to be a Serious or Imminent Threat if it cannot be adequately prevented or lessened by the Volunteer or Hotline Support Staff and will require disclosure of the Volunteer's PII to limited individuals, offices, or organizations to adequately prevent or lessen or address the substance of the threat to health or safety.
- (g) **Sexual Assault** means a Rape, Aggravated Sexual Assault, or Non-Aggravated Sexual Assault as defined in the Peace Corps Consolidated Incident Reporting System.
- (h) **Sexual Assault Hotline** means a 24-hours, 7-days a week telephone service for a Volunteer to anonymously discuss a Sexual Assault; receive Crisis Counseling in the event of a Sexual Assault; and seek information about Peace Corps Sexual Assault reporting options and response protocols. This service may be provided by outside professionals under a contract with the Peace Corps.
- (i) **Specific Need to Know** means, with respect to particular information, that an individual is unable to perform a specific task that is part of that individual's official duties without knowledge of that particular information.
- (j) **Volunteer** is a Volunteer or Trainee who calls the Sexual Assault Hotline.

## **4.0 Policy**

### **4.1 Access to the Sexual Assault Hotline**

- (a) The Sexual Assault Hotline is available to all Volunteers currently serving in the Peace Corps. The Sexual Assault Hotline contact information will be provided to Peace Corps applicants as well as during staging.
- (b) Except as provided in section 4.1(c), all information received on the Sexual Assault Hotline will be treated as Confidential Information. Confidential Information may not be disclosed to Peace Corps or any other party without the Volunteer's consent. Calls relating to matters other than sexual assault will be referred to other Peace Corps resources as appropriate.
- (c) In calls when there is a Serious or Imminent Threat, suicidal or homicidal ideation, or sexual abuse of minors, the Hotline Support Staff will make an attempt to collect Volunteer's relevant PII and, if obtained, will disclose information to individuals with a Specific Need to Know. The Peace Corps will take such action as is necessary to protect the privacy and safety of the Volunteer and will limit this disclosure to the minimum information necessary to attempt to prevent, lessen or address the imminent threat to the health or safety of the Volunteer or others.

### **4.2 PII Data**

The Volunteer's privacy and anonymity are very important. PII will not be retained when a Volunteer accesses the Sexual Assault Hotline. Hotline Support Staff will not ask Volunteers to provide any PII, except when necessary to address a Serious or Imminent Threat. PII provided to the Hotline Support Staff by Volunteers will not be stored, saved, catalogued or disclosed by Hotline Support Staff, except as necessary in instances involving a Serious or Imminent Threat, or in instances where the Volunteer gives consent. Except for disclosures based on section 4.1(c), any notes relating to PII taken by the Hotline Support Staff during a Sexual Assault Hotline call will be destroyed at the end of the call.

### **4.3 Non-PII Data**

Peace Corps will collect non-PII data from the Sexual Assault Hotline in order to improve the Sexual Assault Hotline, the agency's Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program, and determine training needs for Volunteers and Peace Corps staff.

### **4.4 Referral for Services**

Volunteers will be referred to appropriate offices as necessary or as requested by the Volunteer.

### **4.5 Sexual Assault Hotline Support Staff Standards**

- (a) Hotline Supervisors are contractors who must:

- (1) Have practiced for at least one year in psychology, social work, counseling, or psychiatry.
  - (2) Hold a current license in the state where the service is being provided.
  - (3) Have at least 40 hours training and prior experience in rape crisis counseling.
  - (4) Receive training on the applicable aspects of the Peace Corps comprehensive Sexual Assault policy and procedures.
- (b) Hotline Support Staff are contractors who must:
- (1) Have at least 40 hours of training and prior experience in rape crisis counseling.
  - (2) Receive training on the applicable aspects of the Peace Corps comprehensive Sexual Assault policy and procedures.

## **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **5.1 The Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program Director or Designee**

The Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program Director or designee is responsible for:

- (a) Managing the in-house issues relating to the Sexual Assault Hotline.
- (b) Reviewing and storing relevant data usage reports from the vendor providing hotline support services.
- (c) Providing relevant information from the Sexual Assault Hotline to Office of Global Operations and Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection to provide to Volunteers.
- (d) Developing and implementing appropriate training for Sexual Assault Hotline Support Staff, collaborating as needed with the Office of Safety and Security, Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Health Services, and the Office of Victim Advocacy.
- (e) Ensuring that the Contracting Officer Representative acts as point of contact for the vendor providing hotline support services.

### **5.2 Sexual Assault Hotline Support Staff**

- (a) Hotline Support Staff are responsible for performing assigned duties on the Sexual Assault Hotline and providing Volunteers with Crisis Counseling related to a sexual assault 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
- (b) Abiding by Peace Corps *Commitments to Sexual Assault Victims*, Hotline Support Staff are responsible for providing Volunteers with accurate information on Peace Corps

Sexual Assault policies and procedures, reporting options, and available support services.

- (c) Hotline Support Staff will not provide any medical advice, legal advice, or on-going counseling.

### **5.3 Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection**

The Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection will incorporate information provided by the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program Director or designee in any materials provided to applicants and invitees related to the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program.

### **5.4 Office of Global Operations**

The Office of Global Operations will collaborate with the Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response Program Director or designee to ensure that the training and marketing materials for Volunteers and staff are provided to the Country Director at each post.

### **5.5 Country Directors**

Each Country Director will ensure that the Volunteers and post staff receive information and training on the operation of and access to the Sexual Assault Hotline.

## **6.0 Procedures**

Procedures implementing this Manual Section are contained in the MS 241 *Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline Procedures*, which must be approved by the Office of Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response, Office of Health Services/Counseling and Outreach Unit, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Global Operations, Office of Victim Advocacy, and Office of the General Counsel.

## **7.0 Effective Date**

- (a) The effective date is the date of issuance.
- (b) The Office of Sexual Assault Risk Reduction and Response, Office of Victim Advocacy, Office of Global Operations, Office of Safety and Security, Office of Health Services, and Office of the General Counsel will create mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this Manual Section and the conforming MS 241 *Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline Procedures*, regularly reviewing data from these mechanisms.