

MS 241 Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline Procedures

Effective Date: March 27, 2019

Responsible Offices: Office of Health Services/Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit; Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Supersedes: 06/15/15

1.0 Applicability and Definitions

1.1 Applicability

These procedures are to be used whenever a Volunteer accesses the Hotline to discuss a sexual assault, receive crisis counseling, learn about support options and understand the Peace Corps' reporting and response guidelines.

1.2 Definitions

- (a) The terms defined in MS 241 *Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline*, have the same meanings when used in these procedures.
- (b) "Post" means the country in which the Peace Corps Volunteer is currently serving.

2.0 Accessing the Hotline

- (a) The Sexual Assault Hotline will be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days by trained Hotline Support Staff.
- (b) Volunteers will be able to contact the Sexual Assault Hotline through a variety of methods as described below:
 - (1) By phone at 011-408-844-HELP(4357);
 - (i) Volunteers can directly call a U.S.-based hotline number from the US or overseas;
 - (ii) Volunteers can call toll-free via a mobile phone application ("click to call" technology) iOS or android;
 - (iii) By texting, the Hotline Support Staff will offer referrals, information on the Peace Corps reporting options, and crisis counseling. The texting option for crisis counseling is a last resort should there be no other way for a volunteer to access the Sexual Assault Hotline.
 - (2) Online at www.PCSAVESHelpline.org;

- (i) By online chat, Volunteers can access live, one-on-one support through an agency dedicated website;
- (ii) Volunteers can use a computer using voice over IP (VOIP) technology and a data connection;
- (iii) Volunteers can visit the agency's dedicated Sexual Assault Hotline website and enter a phone number, which will notify the Hotline Support Staff to call the Volunteer at the number provided.

3.0 Responding to a Sexual Assault Hotline Call

- (a) When a Hotline Support Staff receives a call through the Sexual Assault Hotline, it will be patched through a call center. Throughout the call, Hotline Support Staff will utilize best practices in sexual assault crisis intervention in order to allow the Volunteer to share what information they feel comfortable sharing.
- (b) Hotline Support Staff will be trained on Peace Corps' Sexual Assault Response policy and procedures and also have information on Peace Corps services and contact information for any potential referrals to provide to the Volunteer, including post specific referrals.
- (c) On an annual basis and more frequently as needed Peace Corps will provide the Hotline Support Staff with an updated post-specific referral list.

3.1 Confidentiality and Informed Consent

- (a) After receiving a Hotline call, the Hotline Support Staff will discuss anonymity and limits of confidentiality and informed consent with the Volunteer. This will include that discussions with Hotline Support Staff are anonymous, except for when the Volunteer provides information about who they are and also reports Serious or Imminent Threat, suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent, or plan, or sexual abuse of minors.
- (b) If information is received about Volunteers perpetrating sexual abuse of minors, the Hotline Support Staff will ask the Volunteer for personally identifiable information (PII). If PII is obtained, the Hotline Support Staff must share the PII immediately with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Director or designee, who will contact the Office of Inspector General.

3.2 Responding to Suicidal Volunteers

- (a) If a Volunteer expresses distress or reports suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent, or plan, a risk assessment will be conducted by Hotline Support Staff. If the Volunteer denies suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent, or plan, the call will proceed as procedurally or clinically indicated.
- (b) If there is no imminent risk (i.e., no suicidal or homicidal ideation, intent, or plan), the hotline counseling will continue. The Hotline Support Staff will provide the Volunteer with

referral information and encouraged to reach out to the Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) for an assessment and treatment by the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit.

- (c) If a Volunteer indicates a suicidal or homicidal plan and an intent to carry out that plan, or if the Volunteer has indicated that they have hurt themselves or someone else has taken place, the Hotline Support Staff will attempt to obtain the Volunteer's name and location of Volunteer throughout the call.
 - (1) If PII is provided, the Hotline Support Staff will immediately make a report to the PCMO through the Duty Phone. The PCMO will contact the on-duty SSM, and an active rescue will be initiated. The SSM will follow protocols outlined in SSI 202 *Response to Threatening Situations*.
 - (i) If Hotline Support Staff are not able to reach the PCMO through the Medical Duty Phone, they will attempt to make contact through other post-specific numbers provided.
 - (ii) If those contact attempts are unsuccessful, Hotline Support Staff will contact the Safety and Security Duty Phone at headquarters.
 - (2) If no PII is provided to the Hotline Support Staff, the Hotline Support Staff will continue counseling in an attempt to deescalate the Volunteer.
 - (3) Following the completion of the call, Hotline Support Staff will provide the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Director or designee with de-identified information about the call.

3.3 Responding to Callers who Report a Serious or Imminent Threat

- (a) If a Volunteer reports a serious or imminent threat, Hotline Support Staff will attempt to obtain the Volunteer's name and location and report the situation to first responders at Peace Corps.
- (b) If PII is provided, the Hotline Support Staff will immediately make a report to the SSM through the Duty Phone. The SSM will follow protocols outlined in SSI 202 *Response to Threatening Situations*. If Hotline Support Staff are not able to reach the SSM through the Duty Phone, they will attempt to make contact with the Safety and Security Duty Phone at headquarters
- (c) If no PII is provided to the Hotline Support Staff, the Hotline Support Staff will continue attempts to obtain information and provide assistance, and then will make immediate contact with the Safety and Security Duty Phone at Headquarters.
- (d) Following the completion of the call, Hotline Support Staff will provide the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program Director with de-identified information about the call.

4.0 Reporting a Sexual Assault

- (a) Except as noted in 3.2 and 3.3, the Hotline Support Staff will not contact anyone on the Volunteer's behalf without that Volunteer's explicit consent, even if the Hotline Support Staff receives the Volunteer's PII. The Hotline Support Staff may provide referral information to the Volunteer so that the Volunteer may make a sexual assault report.
- (b) Hotline Support Staff will provide the Volunteer with information on Peace Corps sexual assault response procedures, reporting options, and support services upon request of the Volunteer.

4.1 Reporting an Incident of Another Volunteer

Volunteers who are seeking information for another Volunteer will receive the same information about the Peace Corps services, including information on reporting options and support services.

5.0 Training

- (a) Sexual Assault Hotline vendor will complete an annual training given by the Peace Corps regarding Peace Corps-specific policies and procedures as it relates to the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program.
- (b) Sexual Assault Hotline vendor will develop initial and refresher training for its support specialists and DC licensed clinical supervisors. Topics would include Peace Corps specific policies and procedures, such as MS 243 Responding to Sexual Assault, privacy policies, and mandatory reporting.
- (c) Hotline Support Staff will also be trained by the vendor in trauma-informed care and hotline best practices, including information about international settings to the degree possible .
- (d) All Peace Corps related vendor-conducted training will be submitted to the Peace Corps Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Director for approval prior to delivery.

6.0 Accessibility

- (a) Post will give all Volunteers instructions on how to contact the Sexual Assault Hotline.
- (b) At staging Trainees will receive information and instructions on how to access the Sexual Assault Hotline. Information and instructions will also be incorporated into the post Welcome Book.
- (c) The Sexual Assault Hotline contact information will be included on post's emergency contact card.

7.0 Data Collection

- (a) No PII will be collected by the Hotline Support Staff unless Sections 3.1 and either 3.2 or 3.3 applies.
- (b) The Sexual Assault Hotline vendor will deliver a monthly usage data status report, which will include the aggregate non-PII data of the following: number of calls, caller type, assailant information, purpose of call, time of assault, assault characteristics, type of sexual assault, and assault report status. The report will also include feedback collected by Hotline Support Staff on customer service. This monthly report will be submitted to the agency's Contracting Officer via email within 5 business days after the end of each month.

8.0 Effective Date

The effective date of these procedures is the date of issuance.