

MS 242 Stalking of a Volunteer Procedures

Attachment A – [Serious or Imminent Threat Assessment Tool](#)

Attachment B – [Safety Plan](#)

1.0 Applicability and Definitions

1.1 Applicability

- (a) These procedures implement MS 242 *Stalking of a Volunteer* and should be used whenever a stalking incident is reported to the post or the post has concerns of a stalking incident.
- (b) These procedures reflect the principles of the [Safety and Security Instruction 202 Response to Threatening Situations \(SSI 202\)](#).

1.2 Definitions

For the purposes of these procedures the terms defined in MS 242 *Stalking of a Volunteer* have the same meanings when used in these procedures.

2.0 Immediate Response to Report of Stalking

- (a) If a Volunteer reports a stalking incident to a member of post staff, or any staff member becomes concerned about stalking of a Volunteer, that staff member must immediately notify the Country Director.
- (b) The Country Director must inform the Safety and Security Manager (SSM) and the Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) about the report or concern.
- (c) If the alleged offender is a Volunteer, a Peace Corps staff member or another individual who conducts transactions with the Peace Corps or receives Peace Corps funds, the Country Director must notify the Office of Inspector General immediately.
- (d) The SSM, in consultation with the Country Director, must use the *Serious or Imminent Threat Assessment Tool* (see [Attachment A](#)) to determine if there is a threat of imminent bodily harm to the Volunteer. If the SSM or Country Director believes that there may be a threat of imminent bodily harm to the Volunteer, then immediate steps must be taken to mitigate the threat and consult with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO). If the PCSSO cannot be reached, the Country Director should contact the Designated Security Specialist at 202-437-5159.
- (e) When the incident is not verbally communicated by the Volunteer, the SSM or Country Director must ensure that positive contact is made with the Volunteer either by telephone,

radio, or in-person within 24 hours after receiving a report of stalking and follow the procedures in SSI 202.

- (f) If positive contact with the Volunteer is not made within 24 hours, the Volunteer must be considered missing or endangered and the Country Director must immediately notify the Office of Safety and Security at +1 (202) 437-5159 and initiate the actions specified in MS 465 *Overseas Disappearance of Volunteer/Trainee*.

2.1 Removal from Site

- (a) If there is a credible risk that the stalking poses an imminent threat of bodily harm to the Volunteer, or to other Volunteers in the area, or if a Volunteer reports feeling at-risk of imminent bodily harm, the affected Volunteer(s) must be removed from the area as expeditiously as practicable in accordance with paragraph 6.8 of MS 270 *Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security* and SSI 202.
- (b) Any Volunteer removed due to imminent threat may not be allowed to return to the affected area until post has conducted a post incident assessment and determined that the threat has been effectively mitigated. (See MS 243 Procedures regarding the Post Incident Assessment Tool)
- (c) A Volunteer who is removed from a site and is unable or unwilling to return to the site may, in unique and exceptional circumstances, be eligible for a reassignment or transfer under MS 282 *Transfers, Reassignments, Reinstatements and Re-enrollments of Trainees and Volunteers*. If such a reassignment or transfer is not possible, the Country Director may determine that the Volunteer should be separated with interrupted service status in accordance with MS 284 *Early Termination of Service*.

3.0 Assessing Safety and Health of Volunteer

3.1 Identifying Ongoing Risk and Mitigating Strategies

- (a) The SSM, or other staff person designated by the Country Director, has the responsibility to assess any ongoing risk to the Volunteer using the *Post Incident Assessment Tool* and following the requirements in SSI 202.
- (b) The SSM, in consultation with the Country Director, should discuss the stalking incident with the PCSSO. The PCSSO should provide additional guidance on next steps and strategies for re-assessing security concerns. If the PCSSO cannot be reached, the SSM should contact the Designated Security Specialist.
- (c) Once the assessment has been completed, the SSM must share the findings and recommendations with the Country Director and PCSSO.

3.3 Health of Volunteer

The PCMO must contact the Volunteer to assess the physical and emotional health of the Volunteer. The PCMO should provide the Volunteer with information about access to counseling services through the Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU).

4.0 Safety Plan

- (a) If warranted or requested by the Volunteer, the Country Director, or designee, in consultation with the PCSSO and Office of Victim Advocacy, must assist the Volunteer in developing a safety plan utilizing the safety plan template. (See [Attachment B](#))
- (b) The SSM must continue to assess the security environment as frequently as necessary to monitor the continued well-being of the Volunteer, and report back to the Country Director. If appropriate, the post should include the counterparts and local officials for assistance in the long-term security of the Volunteer.
- (c) The PCMO in consultation with the Office of Health Services and the Volunteer should develop, if needed, a medical treatment plan to provide for the continued well-being of the Volunteer.

5.0 Confidentiality of Reports

- (a) Any Peace Corps staff member who receives or has knowledge of a Volunteer's report or concern about stalking must treat the information with the utmost discretion and confidentiality. In dealing with incidents of stalking, staff should take particular care in following MS 271 *Confidentiality Protection*.

The identity of any Volunteer providing the information may not be disclosed unless:

- (1) the Volunteer consents to such disclosure;
- (2) such disclosure is necessary in order to protect the health or safety of the Volunteer; or
- (3) the Inspector General determines such disclosure is unavoidable during the course of an investigation.

SERIOUS OR IMMINENT THREAT ASSESSMENT TOOL

This form should be used immediately following a physical assault, sexual assault, or stalking incident to determine if there is a serious or imminent threat to health or safety of the PCV or others. It should be used in conjunction with the MS 243 *Responding to Sexual Assault Procedures*, MS 461 *Crimes Against Volunteers and Trainees*, and MS 242 *Stalking of a Volunteer* (as applicable).

The SSM and PCMO should work together to complete the assessment. Once completed, the form must be printed, dated, and signed by the PCMO and SSM and filed by the SSM in their secure files. A completed SITA may be uploaded to the CARS CMS.

Answer the questions below by checking the appropriate box and following the instructions.

CATEGORY	MEDICAL CRITERIA	THREAT	
MEDICAL		No	Yes
	Does the PCV require hospitalization or surgery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the PCV lose consciousness before, during, or after the assault	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the PCV suffer serious blows to the head or abdomen resulting in major injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Was strangulation involved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Are the PCVs injuries or vital signs potentially life threatening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is loss of limb a possibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do the PCVs injuries meet any of the criteria outlined in TG 212, Clinical Escalation Policy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	STOP: if you checked Yes for any of the medical criteria above this may be a Serious or Imminent Threat to the health of the PCV. Provide immediate medical care and complete the remainder of this checklist.		
For sexual assaults, if you cannot provide the needed medical care without revealing Restricted Information, contact the On Duty Medical Officer at +1 202-692-1028.			
If you did not check Yes to any of the criteria above, proceed to the next section.			

PCMO Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

SSM Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

CIRS#: _____

SECURITY CRITERIA		THREAT	
Situation/Environment		No	Yes
	Is the PCV still in close proximity to the offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the PCV work or live with the offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Is the offender a boyfriend or girlfriend; host family member, or a counterpart	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Does the offender know where the PCV lives or works	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the offender threaten the PCV following the assault or stalking incident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Has the offender harmed, threatened, or assaulted the PCV in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Did the offender stalk the PCV prior to the assault or most recent stalking incident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STOP: if you checked Yes for any of the situational criteria above this may be a Serious or Imminent Threat to the security of the PCV. Move the PCV to a place where the offender cannot contact or locate them and complete the remainder of this checklist.			
In cases of sexual assault, if you cannot provide the needed assistance without revealing Restricted Information, contact the Designated Security Specialist at 202-437-5159. For all cases of stalking, contact the PCSO.			
If you did not check Yes to any of the criteria above, proceed to the next section			
SECURITY CRITERIA		THREAT	
Other PCVs		No	Yes
	Is there reason to believe the offender may target other PCVs in the area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Based on the nature of the incident, would other PCVs be at risk from this offender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STOP: In cases of physical or sexual assault, if you checked Yes for any of the situational criteria above this may be a Serious or Imminent Threat to the security of OTHERS. Notify the Designated Security Specialist immediately at 202-437-5159. For all cases of stalking, contact the PCSO.			
In cases of sexual assault, if you cannot provide the needed assistance without revealing Restricted Information, contact the Designated Security Specialist at 202-437-5159.			
If you did not check Yes to any of the criteria above, continue providing services outlined in the MS 243 <i>Responding to Sexual Assault Procedures</i> or MS 242 <i>Stalking of a Volunteer Procedures</i> as appropriate.			

SAFETY PLANS

Safety Plans are personalized, practical steps that can help Volunteers manage their personal security following an incident. Each safety plan is unique, and therefore, should be tailored to the circumstances of the incident and the needs of the Volunteer. Not all Volunteers or incidents require a safety plan. However, all Volunteers have a right to request a safety plan.

Purpose of a Safety Plan

- To assist the Volunteer in identifying strategies for mitigating on-going risks.
- To outline possible responses and resources in instances of potential future harm.
- To strengthen the partnership between the Volunteer and staff in promoting the Volunteer's on-going safety and security and well-being.
- To empower the Volunteer to reclaim a sense of safety and security by addressing safety and security needs and concerns.

Safety Plans are NOT:

- Safety plans cannot guarantee future safety of the Volunteer.
- Safety plans are not a behavioral contract, therefore, a Volunteer should never be asked to sign a safety plan or be told they will be held accountable to one.
- Safety plans are not meant to take the place of working with a mental health specialist to identify ways to cope with emotions and stressful situations which may arise in the aftermath of an incident. If the Volunteer would like such assistance, counseling can be arranged through the PCMO.

When are Safety Plans Needed?

- When requested by the Volunteer.
- When staff have identified an on-going security concern after conducting the Post Incident Assessment (PIA).

Who Develops the Safety Plan?

- Safety plans should be developed jointly by the Volunteer and appropriate staff.
- In Restricted Reports of sexual assaults, only Designated Staff are involved in safety planning with the Volunteer.
- For Standard Reports of sexual assault, stalking and other serious crimes, the Country Director should coordinate with a Victim Advocate, PCMO, SSM, and DSS or PCSSO to assist in the safety planning.
- When a Volunteer is on medevac, the Victim Advocate or the Designated Security Specialist may assist the Volunteer in developing the safety plan with input and concurrence from post.

How is a Safety Plan Developed?

When developing a safety plan with a Volunteer, it is important that staff ensure the plan covers the following three topics:

- 1) On-going risks and concerns associated with the incident,
 - 2) Strategies on how to respond when a perceived threat is present, and
 - 3) The Volunteer's safety and well-being.
- To assist the Volunteer in being prepared for the conversation, provide the Volunteer with advance notice of the purpose of the meeting and an overview of the safety planning process including the three topic areas. Encourage the Volunteer to think about issues of concern as well as possible strategies for addressing those issues.
 - Staff participating in the conversation should be familiar with both the details of the incident and the Volunteer. Staff should feel free to offer suggestions if the Volunteer has difficulties or ask for assistance.
 - Review the Post-Incident Assessment in order to identify areas of concern which should be addressed.
 - Incorporate feedback from the PCMO, OHS/COU, Victim Advocate or other pertinent staff (only Designated Staff may be consulted if it is a Restricted Report) which may be critical to the Volunteer's safety and well-being. Use the *Safety Plan Conversation Guide* (see below) to identify the issues to be addressed during the safety planning conversation.
 - Limit the number of staff members present during the conversation to no more than two so the Volunteer feels comfortable and not overwhelmed (preferably this should be staff that the Volunteer trusts and who will be understanding and patient).
 - In all cases where a Volunteer has been removed from site and a safety plan has been requested or required, the Volunteer and staff should meet before the Volunteer returns to site.

What Happens During the Safety Planning Conversation?

When having this conversation with the Volunteer, remember, your goal is to empower Volunteers to make choices by providing the information they need to make informed decisions.

It is important that this be a collaborative process so the Volunteer does not feel they are being told what to do or blamed for the incident.

- Encourage the Volunteer to share any safety and security concerns related to the incident they may have and be sure you do the same.
- Once you have jointly identified areas of concern, ask the Volunteer to identify mitigating strategies or actions they may take to reduce any on-going safety and security concerns.
- Identify strategies or actions post may take to support the Volunteer in these efforts.

- If the Volunteer fails to identify or address a particular issue that post may have identified, ask them about the issue with open-ended questions, like “Have you thought about [insert issue]?”
- Be mindful that the Volunteer may have concerns of their own that you didn’t identify beforehand. These are also valid and you should be willing to discuss them. Remember to listen carefully and be patient.
- Give the Volunteer plenty of time to think about their ideas. Do not interrupt when they are speaking and let them fully explore any ideas or suggestions they may have.
- The conversation should not be rushed so be sure both you and the Volunteer plan accordingly.
- If the Volunteer expresses a great deal of fear or anxiety, have a conversation about their interest in speaking to the PCMO or a therapist to assist the Volunteer in talking about these feelings.
- When you have finished developing and discussing the safety plan with the Volunteer, ask the Volunteer if they have any questions.
- It may be helpful to revisit key points to ensure clarity.
- Advise the Volunteer that safety planning is an on-going process. Over time, new concerns may arise that require adjusting the safety plan. Encourage Volunteers to let you know when their needs or circumstances change. The SSM will regularly check-in with the Volunteer and work with them to modify their safety plans to accommodate any changes.
- Volunteers are free to take notes, however, remind them of the importance of keeping their notes in a safe place to protect their privacy and security.

How is a Safety Plan Completed?

Attached you will find an outline of key topics (*Safety Plan Conversation Guide*) that can be discussed with the Volunteer. It lists examples of both safety measure conversations and action items which can be utilized by staff and Volunteers.

Write up a summary, provide to SSM to be filed in their case file and forward to appropriate staff:

- Restricted Report: Only Designated Staff
- All other incidents: Country Director and PCSSO

Remember the *Safety Plan Conversation Guide* is intended to guide and help facilitate a conversation with the Volunteer. Each safety plan should be tailored to the circumstances of the incident and the needs and concerns of the Volunteer.

Safety Plan Conversation Guide

This guide is intended to serve as a helpful tool for the Safety Planning conversation and includes some examples of concerns and concrete actions the PCV and Post can use in their safety plan discussion. Not all topics may be relevant. Depending upon the incident, there may also be additional safety and security measures that can be utilized by both volunteer and post.

Your safety and security is always a primary concern for us. We want to support you in being and feeling safe before you go back to site or return to service.

What safety concerns do you have before returning to site or service?

Physical Safety

Concerns:

Have you anticipated where and in which ways you might come into contact with the perpetrator and perpetrator's friends/family?

If you were to come into contact with the perpetrator and perpetrator's family/friends, have you thought about specific things you could do that might help you feel safe in that situation?

Have you thought about making a plan in case of emergencies of who you could call, where you could go, and how you could get there? How can Peace Corps assist you in developing this plan?

Actions:

- *Know where to go for help*
- *Have a way to alert neighbors/counterparts if there's a problem*
- *Help develop a phone list of people to call in an emergency*
- *Ensure that the Volunteer has readily accessible emergency contact numbers for local authorities and Peace Corps*
- *If requested, establish contacts between Peace Corps and counterpart, neighbors, local law enforcement & community leaders so they know how to contact Peace Corps*
- *Having important documents ready in case of an emergency*

Home

Concerns:

Do you suspect the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family/friends know where you live? If so, do you believe the perpetrator may have access to your housing?

Do you feel safe inside your home? What can Peace Corps do to help you feel safe inside your home (e.g., working locks on door/windows, etc.)?

If you live with a host family or on a family compound, does anyone know about the incident? If not, would they be supportive if they were to learn of the incident?

If the perpetrator or the perpetrator's family/friends were to show up at your home are there people you can turn to for assistance?

In the unlikely event of a non-medical emergency, are there local friends, community members, or other Volunteers nearby who you can stay with or contact for assistance? If not, can Peace Corps help you identify individuals and establish those contacts?

How could you contact these individuals?

Can you think of other resources or things you can do to feel safer where you live? What can Peace Corps do to assist you with this?

Actions:

- *Know where to go for help*
- *Staff may conduct a safety inspection of the Volunteer's home*
- *Ensure needed security upgrades are completed*
- *Help develop a phone list of people to call in an emergency*
- *Ensure that the Volunteer has readily accessible emergency contact numbers for local authorities and Peace Corps*
- *Have a way to alert neighbors/counterparts if there's a problem*
- *Take steps to enhance privacy (use locks, keep curtains closed, etc.)*

Safety and Technology

Concerns:

Does the perpetrator know your cell phone number? Your email address? Have you thought about what you would do if the perpetrator or perpetrator's friends/family attempts to contact you or posts things about you online? What can Peace Corps do to help you?

Does the perpetrator know any of your passwords? If so, have you considered changing your passwords?

Do you have any social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Google, Twitter, Linked In, blogs)? Are you "friends" with the perpetrator or perpetrator's friends/family? If so, do you know how to block the perpetrator or perpetrator's family or friends?

Are you concerned that the perpetrator or perpetrator's family/friends will contact you on the Internet? If they do, have you thought about what you will do?

Actions:

- *Change Volunteer's SIM card or cellphone*
- *Ensure that the Volunteer has readily accessible emergency contact numbers for local authorities and PC*
- *Change user names and/or passwords for mail and other social media*
- *Try to avoid using location services or posting information that may divulge location*
- *Notify Peace Corps as soon as possible of safety and security concerns or if the perpetrator attempts to contact you.*
- *Program phone with important emergency numbers*
- *Keep phone charged and have enough minutes in case of an emergency.*

Workplace

Concerns:

Does the perpetrator or perpetrator's family/friends know where you work?

Does anyone else at work know about the incident?

If your counter-part/supervisor learns about the incident, do you think it would make you more or less safe?

If you work with the perpetrator, are there steps you can take to avoid interacting with the perpetrator?

If the perpetrator shows up at your work are there people you can turn to for support?

Is there anything that the Peace Corps can do to help you feel safe at work?

Actions:

- *Establish contacts between Peace Corps and counterpart so they know how to contact Peace Corps*
- *Identify an emergency point of contact in the workplace*
- *Immediately notify Peace Corps if the perpetrator comes to your work*
- *If working in isolated areas seek accompaniment by a coworker or community member if possible*
- *Avoid staying late or alone in the office or workplace*

Community

Concerns:

Do you anticipate that you will see the perpetrator when you are out in public? If yes, where?

Do you see the perpetrator's family/friends when you are out in public? If yes, where?

If needed, is there someone you trust who can accompany you to the places you need to go?

If you were approached by the perpetrator or perpetrator's friends/family in a public place, do you know where you could go to be safe?

Do you have any concerns about rumors related to the incident that are mentioned by community members or other Volunteers? How might you respond to these? How might these rumors impact you? How can Peace Corps assist you in dealing with rumors?

Are there specific things you or Peace Corps can do that might help you feel safer in your community?

Actions:

- *Recognize and validate the times the Volunteer has managed personal safety*
- *Reassure the Volunteer that Peace Corps is here to provide support*
- *Offer skills and strategies for coping with stress*
- *Establish regular check-in plan with PCMO and other Peace Corps staff*
- *Ensure Volunteer is aware of support services available, including Volunteer Support Network and PCVLs*
- *Trust instincts; don't worry about appearing to over-react (over-reacting is okay)*
- *Be aware of unhealthy coping mechanisms such as self-medicating, isolating oneself, etc. and seek help from Peace Corps*
- *Ask Peace Corps for help before stress becomes overwhelming*

Transportation

Concerns:

Do you have any safety concerns with any modes of transportation related to the incident?

Does the perpetrator know your transportation routes? If yes, can you change the routes you take to work, home, shopping?

Does the perpetrator or the perpetrator's friends/family use the same transportation you do? If so, are there other ways you could get where you need to go?

Are there specific things you can think of doing or that Peace Corps might do that might help you feel safer in transport?

Actions:

- *Assist with identifying a safe taxi/moto-taxi or bus services*
- *Ensure that the Volunteer has readily accessible emergency contact numbers for local authorities and Peace Corps*
- *Recognize and validate the times the Volunteer has managed personal safety*
- *Notify Peace Corps as soon as possible of safety and security concerns*
- *Program phone with important emergency numbers*
- *Trust instincts; don't worry about appearing to over-react (over-reacting is okay)*
- *Modify daily routines, change times and routes to frequent locations if possible*
- *Keep personal belongings secure at all times*

Frequently Asked Questions—Safety Plan

Is a Safety Plan required if Post and the Volunteer don't feel one is necessary?

No. Safety Plans are only required when the Volunteer requests one or when staff feel there is an ongoing security concern related to the Volunteer's safety.

Does a Safety Plan need to be completed in person?

When possible, Safety Plans should be conducted in person. However, if that is not possible it can be done via a phone call or, if necessary, email.

What is the difference between a Safety Plan and a Behavioral Plan?

A Safety Plan is intended to help Volunteers manage their own sense of safety and security. The Safety Plan Conversation should empower the Volunteer to identify tangible strategies that may assist in addressing ongoing risks and concerns related to, or as a result of, the incident. Safety Plans are not contracts, they are not signed by either the Volunteer or staff, and the Volunteer is not held accountable to one.

Behavioral Plans are utilized to address deliberate violations of post or agency policy and procedure (e.g. leaving site without notifying post). It is signed by the Volunteer and Staff and the Volunteer is held accountable for meeting the established requirements.

What happens when a Volunteer doesn't follow the Safety Plan?

The safety plan is intended to be a joint exercise in helping the Volunteer to think of ways to mitigate their safety risks as related to the incident and is not intended to be a behavioral contract. As a result, it is not actionable in the same way that a behavioral contract would be. However, if at any time post believes there is a serious or imminent threat to the Volunteer then post should address this as outlined in SSI 202 (Responding to Imminent Threats).

What should I do if I have a concern about the Volunteer's behavior?

Post should address the concern directly with the Volunteer. In order to avoid victim blaming, do not directly reference the original incident to the Volunteer's current behavior. For example, if a Volunteer was raped while jogging in an isolated area and you subsequently learn that she has recently been jogging in an isolated area, do not reference the rape.

Should post document the Safety Plan conversation?

Yes. A summary of the safety plan conversation should be written up by the staff member participating in the conversation and provided to the SSM for the case file. A copy of the summary may be offered to the Volunteer for their own reference, but it is not mandatory that they accept the written summary.

What might a summary look like?

The summary should be brief and concise and only reference major points discussed in the conversation. Below is an example of a summary:

PCMO Robert Allan met with Sarah Windwood on Saturday March 14, 2014 to discuss safety planning. During the conversation several items were discussed. The PCV will use taxis to get to and from work and Peace Corps will reimburse her on a monthly basis. The PCMO also assisted the Volunteer in saving emergency contact information in her phone. The SSM will check-in with the Volunteer once a week for the next four weeks. The PCV will immediately notify Peace Corps in the event she feels unsafe.

How do I manage the Volunteer's confidentiality if the Volunteer is talking to other people about the incident?

Volunteers may tell others about the incident and this is a normal part of the healing process. A Volunteer has the choice to share their experiences with others and this should not affect our responsibility as staff to maintain confidentiality. In rare instances, sharing incident details may pose a threat to the safety or security of the Volunteer. If this is the case, then it is your responsibility to notify relevant staff so that it may be addressed.