

# MS 265 Death of a Volunteer Procedures

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**Responsible Offices:** Office of Post Performance and Support (OPPS), Office of Volunteer Health (OVH) and Office of Volunteer Safety and Security (OVSS)

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## 1.0 Introduction

These Procedures support the implementation of MS 265 *Death of a Volunteer* and provide a framework for Posts and Peace Corps/Washington (PC/W) staff to effectively respond to the death of a Volunteer.

MS 265, these Procedures, and the following Attachments to MS 265 should be thoroughly reviewed by Posts and PC/W staff who would normally participate in any response to the death of a Volunteer.

- (a) **Attachment A – Post Death Procedures Template:** Each Post is required to have country-specific Post Death Procedures, based on Attachment A, which address the unique logistical, administrative and cultural challenges of the country where the Post is located.
- (b) **Attachment B – Response Action Checklist and Toolkit:** A detailed, interactive checklist of actions and timeline for each stakeholder office.
- (c) **Attachment C – Notice of Volunteer/Trainee Action (PC-440HQ):** Document that records the end of a Volunteer’s service.
- (d) **Attachment D – Notification of Death Telephone Flow Chart:** Flow chart for the prompt notification of the death of a Volunteer to key individuals within the Peace Corps and the U.S. Embassy.

For purposes of MS 265 and these Procedures:

1. The individual named by the deceased Volunteer as next-of-kin/designated representative on the Trainee/Volunteer Registration Form PC-1487 will serve as the designated representative until an executor or administrator has been designated under state law in the state pertaining to the Volunteer’s Home-of-Record. Thereafter, upon proper written notice to the Peace Corps, the individual designated under state law will become the designated representative.
2. The term Volunteer encompasses Trainees.

Responding to the death of a Volunteer is a sensitive and often difficult, complex matter that requires participation from many staff and offices at both the Post and PC/W.

The general roles and responsibilities of offices and staff involved in the response to the death of a Volunteer are provided below.

## 2.0 Response Teams

Coordination of the immediate response is carried out by a Post Response Team and a Headquarters Response Team.

- (a) **Post Response Team:** Established and led by the Country Director. Will normally include the Country Director, Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer, Peace Corps Medical Officer, Director of Management and Operations, Director of Programming and Training, Safety and Security Manager, and others as needed.
- (b) **Headquarters Response Team (HQRT):** Established and led by the Director of the Office of Post Performance and Support (D/OPPS).

At a minimum, the HQRT includes representatives from: Office of the Director, Office of the General Counsel, Office of Volunteer Safety and Security, Office of Volunteer Health, Department of Strategic and External Affairs, and Department of Administration and Management. Subject-matter Experts who have defined roles in MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit* should also be invited.

Post's Country Director participates remotely in meetings of the HQRT. Other members of the Post Response Team participate as necessary.

The HQRT should meet within the first 12 to 24 hours after confirmation of a Volunteer death and then meet daily, or as needed, until the response is completed. The D/OPPS chairs the meetings and sets up the meeting schedule.

OPPS staff, usually through the Post's Country Desk Officer, creates a distribution list of Response Team members, and prepares and distributes daily notes and updates to HQRT members as needed.

### **3.0 Post Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **3.1 Country Director (CD)**

- (a) Leads the Post response and ensures that Post Response Team members understand their roles and responsibilities. Leads planning and preparation, including the development of Post Death Procedures. Ensures that staff likely to participate on the Post Response Team understand MS 265 policies and procedures and their respective roles and responsibilities.
- (b) Makes the initial notification of a possible or confirmed Volunteer death to the Designated Security Specialist with the Office of Volunteer Safety and Security. Subsequently, the Country Director notifies the Regional Security Officer (RSO), the U.S. Ambassador, and American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy to ensure coordination with the U.S. Mission. If the Country Director is unable to make the notifications, the Country Director may delegate the responsibility to another USDH. Notification should be made by telephone or in person rather than email.
- (c) Ensures positive identification of the deceased Volunteer's remains by the Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) or another Peace Corps staff member as quickly as possible.
- (d) Once guidance and authorization are received from the Designated Security Specialist regarding the preservation of potential evidence, assigns at least one Peace Corps employee, as necessary, in coordination with host country authorities, as appropriate, to secure the deceased Volunteer's residence and personal possessions and limit access only to Peace Corps staff, the Regional Security Officer, the Consular Officer, host country authorities and the Office of Inspector General if applicable.
- (e) Ensures all response actions are recorded by Post in a detailed log, which is found in MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit*.
- (f) In order to ensure dignified and respectful handling of the deceased Volunteer's remains, assigns Peace Corps staff, or appropriate representatives, to stand watch at all times with the deceased Volunteer's remains, as long as it is safe to do so.
- (g) Reviews the Post Legal Environment Survey to determine if in-country autopsy will be required. Consults with the Medical Services Division of the Office of Volunteer Health regarding arrangements for autopsy, either through agreement with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) or by alternative means.

- (h) In coordination with PC/W offices, designates a staff member to accompany the deceased Volunteer's remains to the Home-of-Record (HOR). The Country Director is usually the best candidate to escort the Volunteer's remains to the HOR and should be prepared to play that important role.
- (i) In coordination with the post's Chief of Operations (ChOps), the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section, and the PC/W Communications Unit of the Office of External and Strategic Communications (OESC/CE/C), develops content for notification messages to Volunteers, staff, the host family and community, and local public releases. Such notification messages cannot be made until authorized by the Director or their designee and the content of the notification messages is cleared by the D/OPPS.

### **3.2 Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO)**

- (a) Acts as a member of the Post Response Team, coordinating completion of necessary medical procedures, based on the Post Death Procedures and the Office of Volunteer Health Medical Technical Guidelines regarding autopsy, embalming, and pathological specimens.
- (b) Assists in planning and preparation, including the development of Post Death Procedures, especially regarding autopsy, preparation, casketing and shipment of remains.
- (c) Responsible for identifying a qualified pathologist and an in-country facility capable of performing an autopsy.
- (d) As appropriate and feasible, promptly travels to the location of the deceased Volunteer's remains, confirms positive identification, and escorts the remains to the refrigeration site.
- (e) Attends both the autopsy and the embalming, if possible under local law. Should bring a photograph of the Volunteer to assist in identifying the remains before autopsy and embalming. Records all significant findings from the autopsy. If the PCMO is unable to attend, another Peace Corps staff person should be present to ensure that the dignity of and respect for the Volunteer are maintained.
- (f) Makes every effort to photograph the remains prior to the start of the autopsy.
- (g) Provides dental records as needed to assist in identifying the remains.
- (h) Sends a medical report to the Office of Volunteer Health, designated "For Med Eyes Only", on each Volunteer involved. The report should include the following:
  - (1) Description of the incident;
  - (2) Description of the first contact with the remains;
  - (3) Comment on the escort of the remains;
  - (4) Comment on the release of the remains to a mortuary;
  - (5) Description of the autopsy and any findings;

- (6) Description of the embalming;
- (7) Method of sealing of the casket;
- (8) Comment on appropriateness of family members viewing the body; and
- (9) Comment on memorial service that was held.

(i) Obtains a copy of the autopsy report.

### **3.3 Director of Management and Operations (DMO)**

- (a) Acts as a member of the Post Response Team, managing the administrative and financial matters to support the response and in-country memorial service, including coordination with the appropriate PC/W offices to ensure funding for all allowable expenses.
- (b) Manages logistics for transporting remains.
- (c) Works with the Country Director to coordinate, inventory, secure and transport the property of the deceased Volunteer.
- (d) Submits administrative and financial information to appropriate PC/W offices.

### **3.4 Director of Programming and Training (DPT)**

- (a) Acts as a member of the Post Response Team, providing support as needed.
- (b) May oversee coordination of in-country memorial service(s).

### **3.5 Safety and Security Manager (SSM)**

- (a) Acts as member of Post Response Team, and may be directed to interface with U.S. Embassy Regional Security Officer and local law enforcement officials as necessary.
- (b) Works with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer and Regional Security Officer to advise the Country Director and Post Response Team on relevant country laws, policies and procedures and how they impact Volunteer death procedures in country.
- (c) Obtains the local police report, if applicable.

## **4.0 Peace Corps/Washington Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Department of Global Operations (DGO)**

- (a) Ensures prompt notification of senior leadership of a possible or confirmed Volunteer death.
- (b) Provides coordination and support for the Headquarters Response Team, as necessary.
- (c) Designates PC/W staff to: coordinate support for the staff escort accompanying the Volunteer's remains upon arrival in the U.S.; support Peace Corps staff participation in funerals

or memorial services in the U.S.; and assist with or provide compassionate, in-person delivery of the Volunteer's personal effects to the next-of-kin or designated representative.

#### **4.1.1 Office of Volunteer Health (OVH)**

##### **4.1.1.1 Medical Services Division (MSD)**

- (a) The Director of the Medical Services Division (D/MSD) designates non-clinical MSD staff ("Family Liaison") to serve as the point of contact and the primary liaison with the deceased Volunteer's next-of-kin or designated representative. The Family Liaison:
- (1) Supports the Peace Corps Director during notification of the deceased Volunteer's next-of-kin/designated representative.
  - (2) After the Director's call to the next-of-kin/designated representative, calls the next-of-kin/designated representative to offer support, identify points of contact for streamlined communication, and establish a plan for regular communication. Seeks from the deceased's next-of-kin/designated representative any preferences regarding religious or cultural practices in handling or transporting the deceased's remains.
  - (3) Consults with CD, OVSS Designated Security Specialist, and Office of General Counsel, as needed, and notifies next-of-kin/designated representative of any host government or legal restrictions that may affect handling or transporting the deceased's remains.
  - (4) Discusses with the Volunteer's next-of-kin/designated representative the timing of the return of the Volunteer's remains, plans for a funeral/memorial service, and where the final resting place will be.
  - (5) Assigns trained staff to work with Post in supporting Volunteers affected by the Volunteer death, consults with Post staff in their support of Volunteers, and travels to Post if requested.
- (b) The D/MSD designates clinical MSD staff to:
- (1) Consult with next-of-kin/designated representative, Post, and PC/W staff as necessary, regarding arrangements for autopsy, either through agreement with the AFMES or other alternative.
  - (2) Act as the agency point-of-contact with the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES).
  - (3) Advise the PCMO on the autopsy, especially the handling of blood, fluid, and tissue specimens and/or slides prior to an autopsy.
  - (4) Advise and support the PCMO as necessary.
  - (5) Provide the Office of Volunteer Safety and Security with a copy of the death certificate and autopsy report.

- (c) The D/MSD informs the Headquarters Response Team and the Country Director of the names and contact information for MSD staff assigned to various tasks in these Procedures.

#### **4.1.2 Office of Post Performance and Support (OPPS)**

The Director of OPPS (D/OPPS):

- (a) Leads the Headquarters Response Team.
- (b) Designates the Post's ChOps as the point of contact between the Post and Headquarters to coordinate communications with Post and the HQRT, minimize multiple callers to Post, and establish a schedule for regular communication with the Country Director, such as a daily phone call with the D/OPPS, ChOps, and Country Desk Officer.
- (c) Ensures timely reports are provided to the Peace Corps Director and members of the HQRT.
- (d) Ensures distribution of the Volunteer's biographical information (e.g. Resume, Aspiration Statement and photo) to the Director, OESC/CE/C, and the Family Liaison. (Motivation and Aspiration statements are not available if it is a Peace Corps Response Volunteer)
- (e) Co-leads after-action briefing with the Office of Volunteer Safety and Security; documents and shares lessons learned.
- (f) Oversees management of the Agency Duty Officer program and ensures participants are trained in how to respond effectively when notified of a Volunteer's death.

#### **4.1.3 Office of Volunteer Safety and Security (OVSS)**

##### **4.1.3.1 Crime Response and Analysis Division**

The Designated Security Specialist (DSS):

- (a) Receives initial report of death from Post, calls the Country Director, and notifies the Post's ChOps and Agency Duty Officer, which initiates the call notification protocol within PC/W. (*See MS 265 Attachment D Notification of Death Telephone Flowchart*)
- (b) Provides initial guidance to Post regarding actions needed to safeguard other Volunteers and potential evidence for a possible criminal investigation if warranted.
- (c) May serve as a liaison with the Office of Inspector General (OIG), CD, and PCSO. Consults with OIG as needed concerning information and evidence regarding the case and whether OIG plans to conduct an investigation.
- (d) If a crime is suspected, contacts the Diplomatic Security Service/Criminal Investigative Liaison, U.S. Department of State.

- (e) Ensures notification is sent to the State Operations Center, U.S. Department of State.
- (f) References the Post's Legal Environment Survey to provide guidance to the HQRT and in determining actions related to investigation (if applicable) and repatriation.

#### **4.1.3.2 Overseas Operations Division**

- (a) Coordinates investigation support from host country law enforcement and other agencies as appropriate. Conducts an inquiry for the purpose of compiling the official timeline and all other relevant information and evidence for the Agency's official Death of Volunteer Report.
- (b) Advises Post and OPPS on appropriate coordination with the RSO and local law enforcement officials.
- (c) Dispatches the PCSSO to coordinate investigation support and assess safety and security concerns.
- (d) Shares observations and recommendations based on security and investigation findings from, host country law enforcement and other agencies, as appropriate.
- (e) Consults with OIG on evidence regarding the case.
- (f) Briefs OIG within 10 days after the death notification and provides a copy of the Death of Volunteer report when completed.
- (g) Provides a joint after-action briefing with OPPS to the HQRT.

#### **4.1.3.3 Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO)**

- (a) Upon learning of the possible or confirmed Volunteer death, contacts the Country Director to discuss circumstances of the incident, the PCSSO's role, and their travel to Post.
- (b) Travels to Post to coordinate investigation support, assess safety and security concerns, liaise with the DSS, and provide other relevant support as needed.
- (c) Communicates and coordinates with the RSO as needed.
- (d) Provides the Agency's official Death of Volunteer Report.

## **4.2 Office of the Director**

- (a) Once the Volunteer's name and death are confirmed, contacts the next-of-kin/designated representative and conveys condolences to family.
- (b) Sends official Peace Corps condolence letter to the next-of-kin/designated representative, consulting with the Family Liaison as needed. The condolence letter may be hand-carried to the funeral/memorial service or visit with the Volunteer's family.

- (c) Ensures senior Peace Corps leadership representation at the Volunteer's funeral or memorial service.
- (d) Sends notification of death to appropriate Congressional, White House, State Department and Embassy (host country in Washington, DC) officials. Includes an invitation to the funeral/memorial service if requested by the next-of-kin/designated representative.
- (e) Designates an appropriate staff member to serve as liaison between the Office of the Director and the HQRT.

### **4.3 Office of the General Counsel (OGC)**

Provides legal and policy advice as appropriate.

### **4.4 Department of Administration and Management (DAM)**

- (a) Works with DGO to ensure that adequate funds are available to support the response and transportation of the deceased Volunteer.
- (b) Provides information and support to DMO and CD regarding financial matters regarding the Volunteer death.
- (c) Provides complete copy of Volunteer personnel file to the Family Liaison and ChOps as soon as possible.
- (d) Records death in financial system with information from form PC-440 submitted by the Family Liaison (*see MS 265 Attachment C Notice of Volunteer/Trainee Action*).
- (e) Determines life insurance coverage.
- (f) Supports as necessary transportation of the deceased Volunteer and travel support for the staff escort and other travelers.
- (g) Provides U.S. and Peace Corps memorial flags to a Peace Corps representative to present to the Volunteer's family.
- (h) Ensures Volunteer's name is etched into the Memorial Wall at PC/W.

### **4.5 Department of Strategic and External Affairs**

#### **4.5.1 Office of External and Strategic Communications, Communications and Engagement Division, Communications Unit (OESC/CE/C)**

- (a) In accordance with MS 294 *Confidentiality of Volunteer Information* supports OPSS in developing talking points and a communication plan that includes PC/W intranet notification, public news release, and notification to Volunteers, host family and community.

- (b) Once talking points are approved by the Director (or Director's designee), distributes approved talking points to the HQRT, Agency Duty Officer, Country Director, and U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Officer. Updates talking points as necessary, following consultation with the D/OPPS and Director.
- (c) Responds to U.S. media inquiries.
- (d) Provides guidance to Post on communications with local media.
- (e) Oversees the agency's communication with media and public; coordinates as needed with the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Office.

#### **4.5.2 Office of External and Strategic Communications, Communications and Engagement Division, Congressional Relations Unit (OESC/CE/CR)**

- (a) Supports the Peace Corps Director as needed in notifying appropriate Congressional leaders and provides additional information to Congressional staff or representatives as requested.
- (b) Encourages Congressional condolence letters. Condolence letters should be sent to the Family Liaison, who will direct condolences to the next-of-kin/designated representative.

#### **4.6 Office of Inspector General (OIG)**

- (a) In instances where a Volunteer, staff member or other individual connected to the Peace Corps is suspected of being involved in the death of a Volunteer, investigates any crime or serious misconduct, coordinates with the Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security (Criminal Investigative Liaison Branch), the RSO, and other Federal agencies, and, to the extent necessary, serves as liaison with host country law enforcement officials.
- (b) Consistent with the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, may independently review the facts and circumstances surrounding the death of a Volunteer and the actions taken by the Peace Corps in responding to such incident. OIG may conduct a preliminary inquiry of any incident leading to the death of a Volunteer, as well as the agency's response, to determine whether a further review is warranted. The characteristics of any review (i.e. investigation, evaluation, management advisory report) will be driven by the nature of the incident leading to the death of the Volunteer.
- (c) Promptly informs the Designated Security Specialist whether OIG plans to investigate or review the death.
- (d) Attends meetings consistent with their oversight responsibilities.

### **5.0 U.S. Embassy Roles and Responsibilities**

In the event of the death of a volunteer, the U.S. Embassy will support the Peace Corps by providing the following services:

- (a) The consular officer, through American Citizen Services, will develop the Disposition of Remains report (*see 7 FAM 260 Disposition of Remains Report*), which the Country Director incorporates into an annex to MS 265 Attachment A *Post Death Procedures Template*; and
- (b) The consular officer will provide the Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad (CRODA) in accordance with 7 FAM 270 *Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad*.

The Peace Corps may request additional services related to the death of a volunteer from the U.S. Embassy to include:

- (a) The consular officer may be trained to witness autopsies and embalming and may accompany Peace Corps staff involved in the procedures.
- (b) The Regional Security Officer (RSO) may advise and support the PCSSO, Designated Security Specialist, and post staff with related investigative activities; and
- (c) Upon request, may advise and support the Peace Corps on logistics and contact with U.S. Despatch Agents.

## **6.0 Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES) Roles and Responsibilities**

Through an agreement established by the Peace Corps and managed by the Office of Volunteer Health (OVH), AFMES may provide autopsy and pathology services when requested.

## **7.0 Notification Protocol**

Notification of a possible or confirmed Volunteer death must be made through direct telephone contact or in person, not by email.

For each notification listed below, callers must clarify whether the death and Volunteer's identity have been confirmed. The Volunteer's identity and death should be confirmed prior to making any additional notifications beyond those listed in this subsection.

The notification protocol outlined below and in MS 265 Attachment D *Notification of Death Telephone Flowchart* are the ideal approach to timely and methodical notification of key PC/W and U.S. Embassy offices. However, there occasionally are situations in which an outside entity makes the initial notification of a possible or confirmed Volunteer death directly to PC/W, such as to the Agency Duty Officer. PC/W and Post staff should ensure all appropriate offices are notified, no matter how the initial notification is received.

### **7.1 Country Director**

- (a) When Post receives notification of a possible Volunteer death, the Country Director at Post first calls the Designated Security Specialist (+1 202-437-5159) who will initiate the PC/W call notification protocol (*see MS 265 Attachment D Notification of Death Telephone*

*Flowchart*). This call must take place as quickly as possible, whether or not visual identification and confirmation of a Volunteer's death has occurred.

- (b) The Country Director then notifies the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer, Ambassador and consular officer at American Citizen Services (ACS). If the Country Director is unable to make the calls, the Country Director may delegate the responsibility to another USDH.
- (c) The Country Director should explicitly explain to ACS that the Peace Corps will make all next-of-kin/designated representative notification and will coordinate future press announcements with the Ambassador and Public Affairs Office (PAO). (It is standard operating procedure for ACS to contact next-of-kin when a death of US Citizen is reported; thus, ACS may need to be reminded that the Peace Corps will handle this notification.) (*See 7 FAM 224.3 Notification and Reporting of Deaths of U.S. Nationals Abroad*).
- (d) The Country Director is responsible for ensuring visual identification and confirmation of the Volunteer's remains by the PCMO or another staff member as quickly as possible. Once positive visual identification has been made, the Country Director must inform the Designated Security Specialist.
- (e) The Country Director should refrain from issuing an email or other mass communication to staff and Volunteers until the Country Director receives verification that the Peace Corps Director has notified the deceased Volunteer's next-of-kin/designated representative.
- (f) The Country Director should inform any staff and Volunteers who are aware of the death to refrain from blogging, posting on social media, speaking to the press or contacting the deceased Volunteer's family until the Country Director authorizes such communication after confirming the Peace Corps Director has notified the deceased Volunteer's next-of-kin/designated representative.
- (g) Prior to issuing any mass communication to staff, Volunteers, and host country partners, the content must be reviewed and cleared by the post's ChOps.

## **7.2 Designated Security Specialist**

- (a) If the Designated Security Specialist is notified of the possible or confirmed Volunteer death from the Country Director, the Designated Security Specialist initiates the Headquarters call notification protocol, as delineated in MS 265 Attachment D *Notification of Death Telephone Flowchart*, by first calling the Post's ChOps and then the Agency Duty Officer (+1 202-692-1470). If the DSS is unable to reach the ChOps immediately, the DSS will call the D/OPPS.
- (b) If the Designated Security Specialist is notified of the possible or confirmed death by the Agency Duty Officer, who received notification from an outside caller, the DSS will call the Country Director before notifying the Post's ChOps and the Agency Duty Officer.
- (c) The DSS subsequently calls the D/OVSS.
- (d) The DSS, in collaboration with the OIG, notifies the Post's PCSSO so that steps can be immediately taken to advise Post on how to secure a potential crime scene.

### **7.3 Office of Post Performance and Support**

- (a) The ChOps immediately notifies the D/OPPS and the Associate Director, Department of Global Operations (AD/DGO).
- (b) Subsequently, the ChOps notifies the relevant Country Desk Officer (CDO) so that staff can prepare to support the HQRT and Post as needed.

### **7.4 Associate Director, Department of Global Operations (AD/DGO)**

- (a) The AD/DGO immediately informs the Peace Corps Director of the possible Volunteer death, noting whether there is confirmation of the Volunteer's death or identity.
- (b) The AD/DGO or their designee notifies the Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, Associate Directors of the DSEA and DAM, General Counsel, and Inspector General.

### **7.5 Agency Duty Officer**

- (a) If the Agency Duty Officer receives the initial notification of a Volunteer death from an outside source, before the call notification protocol in MS 265 Attachment D *Notification of Death Telephone Flowchart* is operational, the Agency Duty Officer should immediately relay the information to the Designated Security Specialist before making any other notification calls.
- (b) The Agency Duty Officer immediately notifies the Director of the Office of Volunteer Health (D/OVH).

## **8.0 Confirmation and Report of Volunteer Death**

- (a) Post must make every effort to expeditiously confirm the alleged death and identity of the Volunteer. The PCMO or another member of Post staff must confirm positive identification of the deceased's remains.
- (b) The Country Director should inform the DSS immediately upon receiving confirmation of the Volunteer's identity and death. The DSS subsequently notifies the Post's ChOps who ensures the information is appropriately shared with the Director and the HQRT.
- (c) After the DSS informs the ChOps that the death is confirmed, the ChOps should call the Country Director to offer support and to establish a communication process and daily call schedule that minimizes disruption of the Post's ability to handle the multiple, complex challenges related to a Volunteer's death.

## **9.0 Reports**

### **9.1 Initial Report and Updates**

- (a) Generally between 12-24 hours after a Volunteer death, Post sends a brief report via e-mail to their ChOps and PCSSO. The template for the initial report of the death is provided in MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit*, under the Initial Report tab.
- (b) The Country Director should submit updates by email to the ChOps every 24 hours, or as needed, until all uncertainties of the Volunteer's death are resolved and the D/OPPS confirms they are no longer needed.
- (c) The ChOps and CDO will disseminate the information to the D/OPPS, O/VSS and others as the D/OPPS determines.
- (d) Such information should be disclosed only to offices or personnel who have a need to know the information in order to perform their official duties. (*See MS 265 Death of a Volunteer Subsection 6.4 Privacy*).

## **9.2 SIMS Notification**

Post must report a Volunteer death via the Security Information Management System (SIMS) within three business days of the incident and update the report as necessary. This report must be done whether or not a crime is suspected.

## **9.3 Post Action Log**

The Country Director must ensure a detailed log of all actions taken in country is maintained. The log of action items informs the daily updates to the HQRT and the PCSSO's official Death of Volunteer report. The log should be regularly updated in real time.

A template for the Post Action Log can be found in MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit*. The log must be provided to the PCSSO upon request so the official Death of Volunteer report can be compiled.

## **9.4 Post Updates to OPSS**

Through a communication schedule established by the ChOps and the CD, Post should have a phone call with the D/OPSS, ChOps, and CDO at least once every 24 hours, or as frequently as needed, until all uncertainties about the death are resolved.

## **10.0 Inquiry**

OVSS will conduct an inquiry into the Volunteer death, even if the death was determined to be accidental. The inquiry will help the agency develop lessons learned and more fully understand the circumstances around the event, the causal factors and future steps that could be taken to mitigate risks.

## **11.0 Supporting Families, Volunteers, Staff and Communities**

### **11.1 Supporting Families**

- (a) The Family Liaison is the primary agency point of contact between the Peace Corps and the next-of-kin/designated representative.
- (b) At the request of the next-of-kin/designated representative, the Family Liaison may contact PC/W staff to help establish a memorial fund or allocate funds to a Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) in memory of the Volunteer.

### **11.2 Supporting Volunteers and Post Staff**

- (a) OVH/MSD will provide a trained staff member to support the grieving process for Volunteers in conjunction with Post staff, at the request of the Country Director.
- (b) Post should be mindful of any Volunteers who may be in Post's office prior to the Country Director notifying all Volunteers of the death. Additionally, some Volunteers may arrive in the office without having seen the Country Director's message. As such, the Country Director should assign a Peace Corps staff member to inform Volunteers about the death as they come into the Post's office. If the Country Director is not yet authorized to issue mass communication about the death (*see* 7.1 of these Procedures), Volunteers should be instructed to refrain from notifying others about the death or posting on social media.
- (c) In addition to receiving the Country Director's mass communication to Volunteers, individual phone calls should be made to any Volunteers who were especially close to the deceased. The Program Manager is typically the person assigned to make such calls.
- (d) Any Volunteers who witnessed or were directly involved with the death should come to the office as soon as feasible. Post should consider arranging transportation for such Volunteers. Names of witnesses should be provided to the PCSSO and RSO and if requested, OIG.
- (e) Information should be given to the Volunteers frankly and openly. Staff should acknowledge feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, and frustration.
- (f) A period of mourning is important for the Volunteer community. Post should consider how to provide Volunteers the time and flexibility to mourn with other Volunteers, such as revising training schedules or providing more flexibility with out-of-site restrictions and personal leave.
- (g) Volunteers should be given an opportunity to participate in any in-country memorial service.
- (h) Volunteers who were especially close to the Volunteer or who were injured in the same incident may need to be medically evacuated to the U.S. Other Volunteers may be fearful and vulnerable particularly in the case of a violent or accidental death. For assistance with short-term counseling, refer to TG 510 *Behavioral Health Assessment and Response*.

- (i) The Peace Corps host country staff may have their own way of marking a death according to local customs. Be sensitive to their needs and include them in the memorial service. Allow them the opportunity to grieve.
- (j) Keep updating the Volunteer community about the death, as appropriate. Ask the representative of Peace Corps at the funeral in the U.S. to bring back any pictures or announcements of the service that can be shared with Volunteers and staff.
- (k) The death of a Volunteer may be a difficult experience for all staff. On a case-by-case basis, the Country Director may grant up to three days of Administrative Leave and counseling support to staff as described in MS 682 *Staff Safety and Health Program*. Special consideration should be given to the PCMO, Safety and Security Manager and other staff who were directly involved in identifying the deceased Volunteer's remains, witnessing the crime site, attending the autopsy, or other significant events. Such individuals may need some additional time to recuperate.
- (l) The Country Director should remind staff of the availability of the Peace Corps Employee Assistance program (*see MS 658 Peace Corps Employee Assistance Program*).

## **12.0 Conduct of Funeral and Memorial Services**

### **12.1 Post Memorial Service**

- (a) When a Post elects to have an in-country memorial service, the Country Director should delegate the coordination of the service(s) to an appropriate staff member, often the Director of Programming Training. Posts are encouraged to include Volunteers in memorial service planning and to provide opportunities at the service(s) for staff and Volunteers to share memories and stories about the deceased Volunteer.
- (b) Posts are encouraged to provide a recording of the service and other appropriate memorial photos or reflections that can be shared with the deceased Volunteer's next-of-kin/designated representative ("family"). All items should be sent to the Family Liaison to either be transmitted to the family during the memorial service when possible or be coordinated with the Family Liaison so they can arrive with the rest of the personal effects. In preparation, Post should provide the Family Liaison a calendar of memorial events as well as a list of possessions that they wish to be conveyed to the next-of-kin/designated representative.
- (c) The DMO should work closely with the Supervisory Financial Management Officer, Office of Accounts Payable and Receivable, Department of Administration and Management (DAM/OF/APR Supervisory FMO).
- (d) DAM/OF/APR Supervisory FMO determines appropriate expenses and spending authority described in MS 724 *Representation Allowance* and MS 729 *Food and Refreshment Expenses*.

### **12.2 Counterpart and Host-Community Memorial Services**

Posts are also encouraged to attend and support memorial services arranged by host country officials or members of the deceased Volunteer's site or training community.

### **12.3 Family Funeral/Memorial Service**

- (a) The Family Liaison will confirm the family's plans for funeral/memorial services and inform the Peace Corps Director and Country Director whether the family would like to have an official Peace Corps representative present remarks during the service.
- (b) The Director's Office will provide remarks to the senior Peace Corps representative who will make a presentation or deliver remarks during the funeral/memorial service.
- (c) PC/W staff designated by the AD/DGO provides transportation or other support as needed to Post and HQ staff accompanying the deceased's remains and attending the service.
- (d) The Family Liaison sends flowers to the service on behalf of the Peace Corps.

### **13.0 Preservation of Information and Material**

The Country Director, in consultation with and guidance from the DSS, and the OIG as appropriate, must ensure Post staff take reasonable measures, in accordance with host country laws, to preserve and refrain from tampering with, disturbing, or moving any information or material, in any medium or format, that may be relevant to determining the cause or root cause of the cause of death. Such measures must not interfere with the legal procedures of the host country if the government of the host country is exercising jurisdiction over the investigation of such death.

The OIG must be given the opportunity to inspect any secured items or relevant materials prior to their final disposition.

#### **13.1 Securing the Volunteer Residence and Potential Evidence**

- (a) Immediately upon learning of a death, the Country Director shall consult with the DSS on the steps to be taken to secure the Volunteer's residence. The DSS shall liaison with the PCSSO, RSO and OIG to relieve the Country Director of multiple calls. Securing the Volunteer's residence immediately reduces the risk of theft or tampering with potential evidence.
- (b) The Country Director must assign one or more Peace Corps staff as necessary, in coordination with host country authorities as appropriate, to secure the Volunteer's residence and limit access only to authorized Peace Corps staff, the Regional Security Officer, the Consular Officer, and host country legal authorities. The Volunteer's residence must be secured regardless of the location or possible cause of the death. If it is impossible for staff to secure the site quickly, the Country Director may ask a trusted community member to do so. Individuals should be advised not to touch or remove any items from the Volunteer's residence until authorized by the Country Director.

- (c) Potential evidence related to the death must not be tampered with or moved. This includes the body, unless directed by local authorities, evidence or material found near or on the body must be safeguarded, secured in place, and left undisturbed until informed otherwise by competent local law enforcement or OIG. The Country Director should ensure that guidance is received from the DSS or PCSSO before staff touch or remove any items associated with the crime scene or in the Volunteer's residence. Examples of items to be secured include:
  - (1) Electronics (computer, cell phone, fitness tracker, charging cables, etc.);
  - (2) Medications (both prescribed and over-the-counter);
  - (3) Clothing and other personal effects;
  - (4) Cash; and
  - (5) Personal identification (wallet, passports, credit cards, etc.).
- (d) Local authorities will generally inventory, collect and maintain items at the death scene if an investigation is being conducted.
- (e) The site of the Volunteer's death should be preserved for an investigation of a crime until the Country Director is notified otherwise by the PCSSO, OIG, or DSS. If feasible, in cases where that is not possible, such as a traffic accident, mitigating steps such as filming or taking photographs of the site should be taken prior to anything being moved.
- (f) The DSS shall consult with OIG, as needed, to determine guidance to be communicated to the Country Director regarding inventory and collection of personal effects. Prior to the release of any personal effects, OIG must be given an opportunity to inspect items.

## **14.0 Preparing the Remains**

### **14.1 In-country Accompaniment and Vigil**

The Country Director must assign one or more staff members to accompany the Volunteer's remains 24/7 within the host country. As conditions permit, this includes escorting the deceased Volunteer's remains during in-country travel and maintaining a vigil in the funeral home or other in-country facilities.

### **14.2 Autopsy**

OVH encourages the performance of an autopsy on all deceased Volunteers even if the cause of death appears obvious. Many host country laws require an autopsy prior to removal of a body from the country. The Family Liaison must seek permission from the next-of-kin/designated official for an autopsy unless it is required by local laws; for example as in forensic cases such as unnatural or unattended death if the host country does not require an autopsy, it is preferred that it be performed in the U.S. by the Armed Forces Medical Examiners System (AFMES) at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware or another appropriate facility in the U.S., Europe, or other location, e.g., other U.S. military facility.

In the rare circumstance that the family wishes to have the examination done in the host country, the PCMO is responsible for identifying a qualified pathologist and an in-country facility capable of performing an autopsy if the country does not have specifically designated pathologists required to perform such autopsies. Whichever location is chosen for the autopsy, BHO will obtain consent from the family and inform post of the family's wishes.

### **14.3.1 Basic Information about Autopsies**

- (a) **Full Autopsy:** A full autopsy entails inspection of the body and the internal organs so that any structural abnormalities can be ascertained. The goal of the autopsy is to determine the cause and manner of death.
- (b) **Microscopic Examination:** At the time of the gross autopsy, specimens of all body tissues are prepared using a fixative. After fixation, sections are taken and placed on microscope slides. Microscopic examination reveals abnormalities in the histologic patterns of the various tissues. These abnormalities can help pinpoint the cause of death in many cases.
- (c) **Toxicologic Studies:** Specimens for biochemical analysis are extremely important in cases where toxic substances may have contributed to the death, either accidentally or with suicidal intent.

*(See Technical Guidelines 165 for more guidance about autopsies.)*

### **14.4 Embalming**

- (a) Embalming is usually required by commercial air carriers before accepting a body for transport. If autopsy is performed in-country, or if an autopsy will not be performed, embalming prior to repatriation is appropriate.
- (b) Preservation of the body in a cold environment (refrigeration) may be necessary while coordinating transportation arrangements if on an outer island or extremely remote site. If unavailable, consult with OHS on best preservation methods, such as ice.
- (c) Embalming prior to autopsy limits the information that can be obtained as it makes microscopic and toxicology analyses more difficult or impossible.
- (d) Customs, laws, and procedures regarding embalming vary widely from country to country. The Consular Officer can provide more information on local procedures that should be included when filling in the Post Death Procedures Template.
- (e) If autopsy is planned to be performed at a facility in another location, e.g. the U.S., Europe, a U.S. military facility, etc., refrigerated shipment of the remains without embalming should be arranged. This may require extensive advance preparation.

## **15.0 Casket and Transportation of the Remains**

The Travel and Transportation Division of the Office of Operations and Security (DAM/OOS/TT) shall:

- (a) Arrange transportation of the deceased Volunteer's remains and the escorting staff member in consultation with the Post's DMO.
- (b) Advise Post, the CDO and the Family Liaison on transportation shipping options, as needed, taking into consideration potential travel challenges and family wishes.

For burials in the United States, the Family Liaison will provide the name of the licensed funeral home/ director or other individual to whom the shipment is to be consigned.

Hermetically sealable caskets and transfer cases may be available at U.S. Missions, consulates, and U.S. military installations. The Country Director should have this information ahead of time in the Post Death Procedures.

Post must ensure that the Volunteer's autopsy and death record match the identity of the Volunteer and will be casketed and shipped to the correct funeral home.

In order to avoid delays, the Post should generally adhere to the following procedures:

- (c) Have a through airway bill made out to the final destination (a through airway bill expedites movement of the remains from an international carrier to a domestic carrier at the port of entry), including the following:

(1) FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE NOTIFY UPON ARRIVAL

U.S. PORT OF ENTRY, U.S. DESPATCH AGENT  
(Name of U.S. Despatch Agent)

(Complete Address of Despatch Agent)  
(City, State Zip Code)

(Complete Phone Number)

(2) TRANSFER TO ASSIGNED FUNERAL DIRECTOR

(Name of Funeral Director)

(Name of Funeral Home)

(Complete Address of Funeral Home)  
(City, State, Zip Code)

(Complete Phone Number)

- (d) The addresses of the U.S. Despatch Agents of the Department of State can be obtained from DAM/OOS/TT. U.S. Despatch Agents work for the Department of State and facilitate shipments to and from U.S. government employees overseas.
- (e) Send copies of the U.S. Government Bill of Lading and the through airway bill to the appropriate Despatch Agent as soon as possible with a copy to DAM/OOS/TT.

- (f) Arrange, in coordination with the DAM/OOS/TT as necessary, for CONFIRMED AIR FREIGHT space and CONFIRMED SEATING FOR ESCORT from the host country to final destination on the earliest available flight(s).
- (g) The Family Liaison may assist DAM/OOS/TT by acting as the liaison between the various parties involved in arranging the transfer of the remains from an international airport to a domestic airport within the United States, for example, from John F. Kennedy Airport, NY (JFK) to LaGuardia Airport, NY (LGA). There must be a minimum of six hours between the arrival time of the international flight and the departure time of the domestic flight to accomplish the transfer. For the transfer of remains from an international carrier to a domestic carrier at the same port of entry airport, a minimum layover of four hours is required.
- (h) DAM/OOS/TT, in consultation with the Department of Global Operations, should consult with the OIG to ensure U.S. Customs and Border Control arranges for the accompanying staff escort to stay with the deceased's remains upon arrival at the U.S. airport.
- (i) Send applicable documents described in 7 FAM 258 (Consular Mortuary Certificate; Certificate of Death; Affidavit by the Local Funeral Director; Transit Permit) with the shipment.
- (j) Inform the Family Liaison by e-mail (the U.S. Despatch Agent should be an information addressee on all communications concerning shipping arrangements) of the following as it becomes available:
  - (1) Complete shipping schedule, including the names of all airline carriers, all flight numbers, all departure/arrival times and dates, and the name of each airport that is a transfer point. If air freight space and/or escort seating is not confirmed, point this out and request assistance from the Family Liaison.
  - (2) Through airway bill number.
  - (3) Complete dimensions of shipping container, including weight, height, length, and depth.
  - (4) Name of person who will escort the remains, the nature of the escort's relationship to the deceased Volunteer, and a physical description of the escort to facilitate being met by the U.S. Despatch Agent at the port of entry; and
  - (5) Confirmation of the departure of the escort and the deceased's remains. If time is a critical factor, the escort may choose to confirm departure by an international phone call to the Agency Duty Officer. The Agency Duty Officer will immediately notify the Family Liaison. If necessary, DAM/OOS/TT will arrange routing within the U.S.; however, to avoid confusion, this routing must be confirmed prior to the departure of the escort and the remains from the host country.
- (k) Request the airline carrier accepting the shipment to communicate all information regarding the shipment, the through airway bill number, and the complete flight schedule to the appropriate person(s) at the transfer points and to the carrier making the final delivery to the destination. Instructions advising the final delivering carrier must be included in case the

shipment is delayed or re-routed. The carrier accepting the shipment also must confirm that all connecting flights can accommodate the weight and size of the shipping container.

- (l) Determine any difficulties that might be anticipated in transporting the deceased Volunteer's remains through a third country enroute to the U.S., and as necessary enlist the aid of the Embassy or any Peace Corps Country Director there to resolve any problems. Be certain that information copies of any e-mail traffic arising from such a situation are also addressed to the Family Liaison and the U.S. Despatch Agent.
- (m) If the casket is shrink-wrapped for transport:
  - (1) Post staff must notify DAM/OOS/TT who will add a note on the escort's Passenger Name Record (PNR)/ flight record and notify U.S. Customs and Border Protection.
  - (2) The staff escort should seek to have the wrapping removed before the next-of-kin view the casket.
  - (3) To the extent possible, the staff escort should ensure that packing materials are removed from the casket and that the casket is draped with a U.S. flag upon existing the cargo area and during transportation to the place of burial.
- (n) The Family Liaison should notify the staff escort if the Volunteer's next-of-kin/designee might be present upon arrival at the airport or the funeral home.

## **16.0 Death Certificate and Consular Report**

Post should verify with local officials what documents are needed to obtain a death certificate. Multiple copies of the local death certificate should be obtained, at least 12 if possible. It may take several days or weeks for death certificates to be available. Post should arrange for an accurate translation to be made of the death certificate in order to inform the OVH of its content.

Post should obtain at least 12 copies of the Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad (CRODA) from American Citizen Services. At least three copies should be held for the OPSS, Family Liaison and Department of Administration and Management (DAM/OF). Post should refer to the U.S. Embassy's Disposition of Remains report to verify required documents to obtain the CRODA. Upon receipt, Post should scan and email the CRODA to the Family Liaison.

## **17.0 Staff Escort**

- (a) The Country Director or designated staff member ("staff escort"), will accompany the shipment of the deceased Volunteer and act as the Peace Corps country representative at the funeral. If possible, the escort should be someone who knew the deceased Volunteer well and who also knows the host country well.
- (b) Reservations for transport of remains are not automatically linked with the accompanying traveler. When making reservations, take great care to ensure that the two reservations are always together. Request the airline to link the two reservations together. Where appropriate,

services of U.S. Embassy expeditors should be engaged, especially at transfer and connection airports.

- (c) Any, and all, special arrangements should be made before departure, such as having an Honor Guard and anticipating potential difficulties in remaining with the Volunteer's remains during airport transfers. Post should contact DAM/OOS/TT and their ChOps, as necessary.
- (d) Back-up transportation plans must be in place to counter any unforeseen problems, including those caused by delays that may occur. The escort must be able to deal with any and all delays and logistical problems that may be encountered enroute. Therefore, the escort should not be an individual who was so closely associated with the deceased Volunteer that their grief would preclude effective handling of any problems that could arise. The escort should be fluent in English and be someone with a valid U.S. passport (and a visa if not a U.S. citizen).
- (e) If any significant delays or difficulties, including missed connections, are encountered en route, the staff escort should enlist the aid of the nearest Embassy Consular Section to resolve the problem and notify the ChOps and the U.S. Despatch Agent by whatever means necessary. The staff escort is responsible for contacting the Family Liaison immediately upon arrival at the port of entry.
- (f) The U.S. Despatch Agent at the port of entry is normally responsible for safeguarding the remains during the transfer from an international to a domestic carrier. When the Despatch Agent is not available, the staff escort assumes these responsibilities. In extremely unusual cases when the staff escort does not accompany the remains during shipment, the ChOps may authorize the staff escort to proceed directly to the U.S. port of entry to assume duty.
- (g) The D/OPPS will authorize the staff escort to proceed to Washington, DC for debriefing following the discharge of their duties with the next-of-kin/designated representative. The consultation will be done in coordination with the OPPS staff and other PC/W staff as warranted. The Office of Volunteer Health will pay transportation and per diem expenses for the Family Liaison escort and OPPS will pay for Post staff expenses, as appropriate.
- (h) Post may reach out to DAM/OIS for assistance in obtaining a cell phone for the staff escort to use during travel.

## **18.0 Possessions of the Deceased Volunteer**

The Peace Corps has the primary responsibility for the disposition of the Volunteer's possessions, but the Post may contact the Consular Officer at the U.S. Embassy for information and assistance with respect to performing the inventory and valuation of the personal effects of the deceased Volunteer. (*See 7 FAM 224.3 Death of Peace Corps Personnel, 7 FAM 290 Personal Estates of Deceased U.S. Citizens Abroad.*)

The Country Director should assign at least two people, preferably a staff member or other trusted person, to secure the deceased Volunteer's residence to safeguard property. Such individuals should be advised to avoid touching or tampering with any items found in the

Volunteer's residence. (*See Section 13.1 Securing the Volunteer Residence and Potential Evidence.*)

The Country Director must receive authorization from the DSS before authorizing the release and disposition of any information or material, in any medium or format that may be relevant to determining the cause or root cause of death. The OIG must be given the opportunity to inspect such items before they are released.

Any questions regarding the custody, inventory, or appraisal of the effects of the deceased Volunteer must be referred through the Family Liaison to the Office of the General Counsel.

### **18.1 Inventory and Release of Personal Effects**

- (a) After receiving authorization from the DSS, and as quickly as possible, the Country Director should assign at least two people, preferably staff, to inventory the Volunteer's personal effects. This includes all personal effects (electronic equipment, medications, cash, clothing, personal identification, etc.).
- (b) The DSS shall consult with the OIG to determine guidance regarding the inventory, collection and release of personal effects and to clarify whether the OIG chooses to inspect items before they are released.
- (c) All of the Volunteer's personal effects must be inventoried, including those on the body, those in the Volunteer's living quarters, and any other personal effects, including currency. Pharmaceuticals must be listed and detailed by name, dosage, and amount, i.e., number of pills remaining as compared to the number prescribed.
- (d) The final inventory should clearly note which items will not be able to be returned (such as lithium ion batteries), items being held for OIG investigation, or items being hand-carried by the staff member accompanying the Volunteer's remains.
- (e) The Country Director must keep a copy of the inventory, also referred to as a log of personal effects. After the DSS receives the OIG's clearance and DSS authorization is given, and in accordance with local laws and directives, the Country Director should email the log of personal effects to the Family Liaison and may authorize release of the Volunteer's personal effects.
- (f) Peace Corps may send items of minimal value (i.e., with a total value of not more than U.S. \$1,000) back with the staff escort, along with a list of those items, and give them to the next-of-kin/designated representative. This might include personal effects such as photographs, diaries, letters, and other items of minimal value. Those personal effects carried personally by the staff escort must be secured and kept in the escort's presence at all times until arrival at the final destination. An acknowledgement of receipt from the next-of-kin/designated representative should be obtained, if possible. The Country Director must include on the inventory any items returned by the escort, with a notation that they were turned over to the next-of-kin/designated representative. The Country Director must advise the Family Liaison of any possessions withheld due to their un-presentable condition or relevance to the local investigation.

- (g) The Country Director must arrange for the collection of any personal funds from the residence and submit a voucher for payment to the designated representative. (*See the Overseas Financial Management Handbook for guidance*)
- (h) The Family Liaison will send a copy of the inventory to the next-of-kin/designated representative. The next-of-kin/designated representative can nominate items that they would like personally carried and delivered by the staff escort, i.e., cell phone, wallet, etc.
- (i) The next-of-kin/designated representative should indicate how each item in the inventory should be disposed of. The next-of-kin/designated representative should designate those items to be returned and those to be sold or given away and designate to whom they are to be given. For example, they may choose to give some items to other Volunteers who were close to the deceased Volunteer or to Host Country Nationals in the community where the deceased Volunteer lived.
- (j) The next-of-kin/designated representative should keep a copy of the inventory and return a list of the designations to the Family Liaison who will keep a copy of the list of designations and forward a copy by e-mail to the Country Director. Upon receipt of the email copy, the Country Director or their designee will contact the Family Liaison for final shipping instructions for all personal effects that the next-of-kin/designated representative wants returned.

## **18.2 Shipment or Delivery of Effects**

- (a) The personal effects must be packed in air freight containers of the lightest weight material available that is substantial enough to withstand handling and weather conditions, as well as the distance and time involved from origin to destination. Special care should be taken to ensure against breakage or other harm to the personal effects. Trunks, footlockers, etc. should be locked. Containers for air freight must not exceed dimensions of 80" x 40" x 40" personal effects shipped to the U.S. should be shipped by air, regardless of weight. For customs purposes, indicate on all shipping documentation that the Volunteer is deceased. All items should be sent in one shipment when possible, to minimize the strain on the designated representative and family.
- (b) The Family Liaison will coordinate with the Post and Country Desk Officer to ensure that any and all personal effects are shipped to a designated staff member of the Peace Corps who, upon receipt of such personal effects, will make arrangements for personal delivery of the effects to the next-of-kin/designated representative or someone selected by the next-of-kin/designated representative. In no instance will personal effects be sent directly to the family unless done so at the express direction of the next-of-kin/designated representative, as determined by the Family Liaison.
- (c) If the Volunteer's personal effects are to be delivered in person to the next-of-kin:
  - (1) As applicable, the PC/W staff designated by the AD/DGO receives the personal effects from the Family Liaison and hand delivers them to the next-of-kin or designee. Personal items should be delivered with the utmost compassion.
  - (2) The Family Liaison confirms with the next-of-kin the receipt of the personal effects.

## **19.0 In-Country Bank Accounts and Debts**

The Post's Director of Management and Operations or designee will assist in closing the Volunteer's in-country bank accounts by implementing the following procedures, as applicable:

- (a) The Director of Management and Operations will e-mail the Family Liaison with details of the bank's requirements for the closure of accounts of deceased individuals. This may include the need to obtain a Power of Attorney or letters testamentary from the designated representative.
- (b) The Family Liaison will coordinate obtaining the necessary Power of Attorney and/or letters testamentary and forward them to the designated in-country Post staff, who in turn will coordinate with in-country bank officials to close the account.
- (c) Upon receiving the funds from the accounts, the Director of Management and Operations will e-mail the Family Liaison indicating the amounts of the funds and advising that the funds will be issued to the next-of-kin/designated representative, or if there is no next-of-kin/designated representative, then such person as may be designated to receive such funds under a Power of Attorney. If there is no next-of-kin/designated representative or person designated under a Power of Attorney, the funds will be paid out in accordance with the order of precedence set forth in 5 U.S.C. § 5582(b). (As a precautionary note, the Family Liaison may need to inform the next-of-kin/designated representative in writing of the need to review all of the deceased Volunteer's debts prior to forwarding any funds in the deceased Volunteer's accounts.) The Family Liaison will notify the next-of-kin/designated representative in advance of the return and issuance of all funds.
- (d) Any outstanding in-country debts the Volunteer may have had are to be deducted from the Readjustment Allowance. Any funds remaining at Post should be paid to next-of-kin in U.S. dollars non-cashier liquidation.

### **19.1 Deceased Volunteer's Debts or Debts due the Deceased Volunteer**

If the deceased Volunteer has outstanding debts or there are debts due to the deceased Volunteer, the Post will contact the Family Liaison by e-mail immediately to inform the Family Liaison of the debts.

## **20.0 Funeral, Memorial, Cremation and Burial Costs**

- (a) In accordance with MS 265, the Peace Corps will assist in defraying the funeral, memorial, cremation, and burial or internment costs for a deceased Volunteer. The total amount authorized for such costs shall not exceed \$12,000, unless authorized in writing by the Director. Such costs may include, but are not limited to:
  - (1) Preparation of remains;
  - (2) Transportation of remains to/from funeral home (including funeral director expenses related to transportation of remains) to crematorium and/or place of burial (i.e. standard means of transportation (hearse));

- (3) Storage of Volunteer's remains (for a maximum of 60 days);
- (4) Casket or casket rental (including re-casketing, if necessary);
- (5) Cremation fee;
- (6) Urn;
- (7) Funeral and/or cremation expenses can only be paid within 60 days of the Volunteer's remains reaching the burial or cremation location. The Director of the Office of Volunteer Health, under extraordinary circumstances, may authorize the payment of funeral and/or cremation expenses beyond 60 days (i.e. due to frozen ground);
- (8) Burial vault, burial plot, headstone, and opening and closing of ground; and
- (9) Other traditional and common funeral or memorial service expenses.

Peace Corps will either pay directly to the provider or reimburse next-of-kin up to \$12,000 for expenses claimed with appropriate documentation. Reimbursements must be claimed within 90 days of the repatriation of the deceased Volunteer's remains.

- (b) In addition to costs listed in subsection (a) above, the Peace Corps will pay for:
  - (1) Transportation of the Volunteer's personal effects;
  - (2) Travel of staff escort to place of burial or disposition of the remains; and
  - (3) Travel of staff escort to PC/W for debriefing with the OPPS, and other staff, as appropriate.
- (c) In the event the next-of-kin/designated representative requests payment of costs beyond those authorized in (a) and (b) above, the Family Liaison shall consult with the Supervisory Financial Management Officer (DAM/Office of Finance/Accounts Payable and Receivable Financial Services) and OGC before confirming Peace Corps payment.
- (d) If the next-of-kin/designated representative requests that the burial be in the host country, the Family Liaison will inform the Post and provide specific information regarding the family's instructions.
- (e) If the Volunteer was a U.S. Veteran, the Family Liaison facilitates the Peace Corps providing assistance to the family in applying for Veterans' benefits. (Such benefits may include a gravesite in a national cemetery, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate.) Families of some deceased Veterans may also be eligible for burial allowances from the Veterans' Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

## **21.0 Other Administrative Actions**

- (a) The Supervisory Financial Management Officer (DAM/OF/APR):

- (1) Based on form PC-440HQ received from the Family Liaison, terminate the Volunteer's service in HRMS and deactivate the Volunteer's Vendor Record in Odyssey/AP to prevent inappropriate payments.
  - (2) Provide to the Family Liaison the SF-1153 *Claim for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee* for next-of-kin/designated representative to claim Unpaid Compensation due to the Volunteer and provide MetLife insurance claim form to the Family Liaison to be completed by designated beneficiary.
  - (3) Coordinate with the Family Liaison to mail the agency's final payment (Readjustment Allowance and any funds recovered at Post) check to the next-of-kin.
- (b) The Family Liaison shall:
- (1) Support the next-of-kin in completing insurance forms
  - (2) Obtain from the Country Desk Officer the Volunteer's Life Insurance Beneficiary or Waiver of Coverage form.
  - (3) Support the next-of-kin in completing form SF-1153 *Claim for Unpaid Compensation of Deceased Civilian Employee*; submit the completed form to the Supervisory Financial Management Officer for final processing.
  - (4) Make arrangements with the next-of-kin regarding death benefits, including FECA reimbursement of funeral expenses, as needed.
- (c) Post shall close or transfer the Volunteer's Peace Corps Partnership Program and other grants, as necessary.
- (d) The Facilities Management Unit (DAM/OOS/FM) adds the Volunteer's name to the memorial wall in Peace Corps Headquarters after consulting with the Family Liaison on the family's wishes regarding the spelling of the name.
- (e) The Office of Volunteer Safety and Security shall brief the Office of Inspector General within 10 days of the death notification.
- (f) Post and PC/W shall follow all records management requirements as specified in MS 892 *Records Management*; specifically the DOV related records guidance in MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit* and MS 265 Attachment C *Notice of Volunteer of Trainee Action Form (PC-440HQ)*. Ensure OVSS receives a copy of all related documents.
- (g) Following the after-action debriefing co-led by OPPS and OVSS, the Department of Global Operations shall disseminate lessons learned to offices participating in the HQRT and ensure the updating of MS 265 Procedures, MS 265 Attachment B *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit* and other Attachments as needed.

## 21.1 Flags

- (a) Post should obtain a U.S. flag to drape over the casket during transport. Such flags can usually be provided through the U.S. Embassy. Post should contact DAM/OOS/TT if additional burial flags are needed.
- (b) To the extent possible, Post should ensure that the casket is draped with a U.S. flag during transportation to the place of burial.
- (c) The DAM/OOS/TT will provide two flags for the next-of-kin. The flags will be folded in a triangle pattern and each flag will be encased in its own wooden display case for presentation to the next-of-kin during the funeral/memorial service or other appropriate gathering.
- (d) Information for engraving the flag's case plaque should be obtained from the Family Liaison. The engraved plaque will be three rows with the first line containing the deceased name, second line will say "Peace Corps" with a hyphen and country of service, and the third line will have the date of service.
- (e) The Family Liaison should work with the DAM/OOS/TT to obtain a U.S. flag that can be either shipped or carried to the funeral home for draping over the casket during the funeral service. This is due to the assumption that a flag used during transportation from Post to place of burial it would no longer be in a presentable state.
- (f) If there is no funeral/memorial service, the Family Liaison should work with the DAM/OOS/TT to mail the encased flag to the Volunteer's next-of-kin or to the designated PC/W staff for hand-delivery to the deceased Volunteer's family.

## **22.0 Communications**

- (a) No communications outside of the HQRT (or to those staff members who have a direct role in supporting Post), can be disseminated until the Director or their designee clears the Talking Points.
- (b) Talking Points or any other public communication must never include Personal Identifying Information of V/Ts, as defined in MS 294 *Confidentiality of Volunteer Information*.
- (c) The CD's notification messages to Volunteers, staff, the host family and community, and local public releases cannot be made until authorized by the Director or their designee and the content of the notification messages is cleared by the D/OPPS.
- (d) The CD will provide guidance to V/Ts on appropriate parameters for sharing information on social media. Prior to providing such guidance, the CD must consult with their ChOps.

### **22.1 Talking Points**

- (a) The relevant ChOps takes the lead in drafting Talking Points, in consultation with the CD, OVSS, OVH and other subject-matter experts as needed. The template can be found in the [Talking Points Library on the Peace Corps Intranet](#).
- (b) The ChOps obtains clearance from OVSS and OVH before submitting a final draft of Talking Points to the OESC Communications Unit with a copy to the D/OPPS.

- (c) The OESC Communications Unit advises on the wording of the Talking Points so that information is appropriately communicated to external audiences.
- (d) The D/OPSS submits the final Talking Points to the Executive Secretariat for submission to the Director.
- (e) The final Talking Points must be approved by the Director or their designee before distribution and posting.
- (f) Once the Talking Points are cleared:
  - (1) The Executive Secretariat shall send the cleared Talking Points to the D/OPPS, CD, Director, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, Agency Duty Officer, Embassy Public Affairs Officer, and other offices the D/OPPS recommends.
  - (2) The OESC Communications Unit shall upload the Talking Points to the Talking Points Library, so the document is accessible to staff and publishes information on Peace Corps external website as appropriate.
  - (3) The D/OPPS recommends the updating of Talking Points, as necessary.

## **23.0 Training**

OVSS shall develop briefing materials and in-person training to ensure all relevant Headquarters staff are aware of their roles, responsibilities, and notification protocols in MS 265 policy and procedures.

## **24.0 After-Action Reviews**

- (a) An After-Action Review, co-led by OVSS and the OPSS, must be conducted. All offices participating in the HQRT and the Country Director shall be invited to participate in the After-Action Review.
- (b) The Country Director shall consult with their ChOps before inviting other post staff to the HQ After-Action Review.
- (c) OVSS and the ChOps shall collaborate on an After-Action Review report that documents significant lessons learned. The D/OPSS shall provide the report to the AD/DGO, the offices that participated in the HQRT, OGC, and the Office of Compliance and Risk.