

MS 465 Overseas Disappearance of Volunteer/Trainee Procedures

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These procedures implement MS 465 *Overseas Disappearance of Volunteer/Trainee*. They describe the duties and required actions of various Peace Corps personnel, primarily the Country Director, in the event of a Volunteer or Trainee (V/T) disappearance. All terms used in the procedures, which are not defined, have the meanings given in MS 465.

1.0 Unaccounted for V/T

There are number of reasons why a Country Director of a post may be unable to account for the whereabouts of a V/T. (See Attachment A.) When a post is unable to reasonably account for the whereabouts of a V/T, the post will initiate actions in an attempt to contact the V/T or verify the location and well-being of the V/T. The post should follow the action steps in Attachment B in the attempt to account for the V/T. No specific notifications to Peace Corps Washington Headquarters are required at this point; however, the post may wish to enlist the aid of the Regional Director or the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO) in the attempt to account for the V/T.

If, after 48 hours of trying to reach the V/T, the post has been unable to contact the V/T or otherwise account for the V/T's whereabouts, the V/T will be considered *missing*. If during the attempt to account for the V/T's whereabouts, the post suspects that the V/T may have been the victim of a crime or has concerns regarding the V/T's health, then the V/T will be considered *missing endangered*.

If a post suspects that the V/T has been kidnapped, post will immediately initiate the actions specified in MS 466 *Kidnapping of Volunteer/Trainee*.

2.0 Missing V/T Notifications

2.1 Initial Notification – Missing V/T

When a V/T is considered *missing* or *missing endangered*, the Country Director must promptly notify the Counseling and Outreach Duty Officer or the after-hours Duty Officer by phone (202-692-1470). The Duty Officer must immediately notify the Associate Director for Safety and Security, as well as the offices of the Deputy Director, Chief of Staff/Operations, Regional Director, and any other office as appropriate.

If a V/T is considered *missing* or *missing endangered*, the Country Director must also immediately notify the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO) and the Chief of Mission at the Embassy.

2.2 Additional Notification – Missing Endangered V/T

If the V/T is considered *missing endangered* because of a health condition, the PCMO should consult with the Office of Medical Services.

2.3 Notification and Report of a Kidnapping

If the Country Director determines that a V/T has been kidnapped, the Country Director must immediately notify the RSO and Headquarters through the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit Duty Officer (or the after-hours Duty Officer) at 202-692-1470. The Duty Officer will immediately notify the Associate Director for Safety and Security, as well as the offices of the Deputy Director, Chief of Staff/Operations, the appropriate Regional Director, and any other office as appropriate.

For detailed information concerning procedures in the event a V/T is kidnapped refer to Manual Section 466.

2.4 Initial Report

As soon as possible, the Country Director must provide an initial report to the Associate Director for Safety and Security that includes as much of the information below as is known:

- (a) The V/T's name.
- (b) Time, place, and circumstances surrounding the disappearance including a narrative description of why the reporter believes the V/T is missing.
- (c) When and where last seen, and by whom.

- (d) Names of other persons directly involved or as witnesses, and the nature of their involvement.
- (e) Whether or not the situation is public information or is likely to be publicized by the news media.
- (f) Local reaction and law enforcement response.
- (g) Efforts made to locate the missing person and places where efforts to locate the person may be beneficial.
- (h) Mental and emotional state when last seen.
- (i) Possible or likely causes of disappearance.
- (j) What personal belongings, if any, are missing.
- (k) Reason for concern over V/T's health or well-being, including likelihood of injury or death.
- (l) Requests for assistance from Headquarters or other posts or agencies in attempting to locate the individual.
- (m) Any other information relevant to the case.

2.5 Actions to Locate Missing or Missing Endangered V/T

- (a) When there is a likelihood that the V/T may be *missing* (but not *missing endangered*) due to his or her own willful conduct or circumstances beyond his or her control, such as a transportation strike in another country, the Country Director may choose initially to conduct an internal preliminary inquiry in consultation with the Office of Safety and Security.
- (b) If the V/T is considered *missing endangered* (accident, act of violence, or circumstances indicating a risk to the health and safety of the V/T), the Country Director should enlist the assistance of the RSO, the Consular Section and the Office of Safety and Security. If there is no embassy, the Country Director should consult with the supporting embassy and enlist the aid of local authorities. The Country Director may provide the information specified in Attachment C, as applicable, to the RSO, the Consular Section, or local authorities to enable them to assist in locating the V/T. When the Country Director thinks that a crime (other than a kidnapping) might be involved, the Office of Safety and Security will coordinate with the RSO and ensure that local authorities undertake investigative work.

In addition to the actions listed in Attachment C, the Country Director must also:

- (1) Determine whether the V/T may be in jail someplace in the country. (Support from the RSO and/or Consular Affairs may be helpful).

- (2) Check all morgues to determine whether an unidentified body has been found that may fit the description of the V/T. (Support from the Consular Affairs and/or RSO may be helpful.)
 - (3) Check all hospitals to determine whether or not the V/T or someone fitting description of the V/T has been admitted.
 - (4) Identify and interview the host country sponsoring agency supervisor and/or host country national counterpart, host country national co-workers, neighbors and friends including other V/Ts who are close to the missing V/T to determine their knowledge of the disappearance, the dates the individual was last seen or heard from, and any other pertinent information.
 - (5) Develop information about the individual from the V/T's bank accounts and phone records, if obtainable under local law. The RSO may be able to assist with access to these records. If there is no RSO available to advise the Country Director as to how to proceed, the Country Director should email or fax the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit and the Office of Safety and Security (copies to the General Counsel) for advice and instructions.
 - (6) Canvass internet cafes, bars, restaurants, nightclubs and residences that the V/T was known to frequent as well as hotels or hostels where the V/T may have stayed and determine if the V/T was seen recently.
 - (7) Check with immigration authorities and border crossings to see if there is a record of the V/T leaving (or entering) the country. (Support from the RSO may be helpful.)
 - (8) Determine the local legal requirements and process for filing a missing person report.
- (c) When necessary in seeking to locate a V/T, the Office of General Counsel will provide guidance to overseas posts on the retention of local counsel to provide assistance (*see MS 774 Retention of Counsel and Payment of Related Expenses Overseas*).

2.6 Formal Missing Person Report

After consultation with the RSO, Consular Affairs and the Office of Safety and Security (and with the emailed concurrence of the Regional Director and General Counsel) the Country Director must file, or request the embassy to file, a formal missing person report with the local authorities.

2.7 Subsequent Notifications and Reports

The Country Director must send periodic follow-up emails to the Office of Safety and Security or designated point of contact as new information emerges, or as otherwise directed, until all uncertainties about the disappearance have been resolved. The Country Director must keep the Regional Director regularly informed about progress in locating the missing V/T.

3.0 Headquarters Notification Procedures

Immediately upon learning of a *missing* or *missing endangered* V/T, the Associate Director for Safety and Security will promptly contact the Deputy Director, the Chief of Staff/Operations, and Regional Director. The Associate Director for Safety and Security, in collaboration with the Regional Director and the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit will determine the steps for follow-up action. Other offices, such as, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Congressional Relations, the Office of Medical Services, the Office of Communications, and others at Headquarters may be informed and consulted as appropriate.

The Associate Director for Safety and Security will be the crisis manager for the duration of the situation. The Associate Director for Safety and Security should designate a point of contact to funnel all communication to the post pertaining to the crisis.

4.0 Role of Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit in Contacting Next-of-Kin

The Director of the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit must review the administrative records of the missing V/T to determine names of the designated next-of-kin and their whereabouts, and other emergency contact information.

Each disappearance will likely involve different circumstances; therefore, when to notify the designated emergency contact/next-of-kin (*see* Peace Corps Form 1487-Trainee/Volunteer Registration Form) and the actual timing of such notification are decisions made by the Director of the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit, in collaboration with the Associate Director for Safety and Security, Regional Director, Country Director and others as appropriate. Once notification is deemed appropriate, the Director of the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit will determine the most appropriate person at the Peace Corps to telephone the designated emergency contact/next-of-kin of the missing V/T. The Regional Director may also notify the host country embassy in Washington D.C.

The Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit will serve as the next-of-kin's contact throughout the emergency. In this role, the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit will be in touch with responsible individuals at the scene of the disappearance and will coordinate all activities in conjunction with the Director, Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Regional Director, and other involved offices as necessary. The Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit will provide the Regional Director with copies of all emails and briefing papers pertaining to the disappearance. As appropriate in the case of an ongoing investigation, Office of Safety and Security may contact the next-of-kin directly for investigative coordination purposes, in collaboration with the Behavioral Health and Outreach Unit.

5.0 Enlisting the Support of Other Offices or Agencies

The Office of Safety and Security may request the Embassy to provide support for ongoing efforts to locate the missing V/T and enlist the cooperation of the other appropriate agencies as needed.

6.0 Administrative Procedures

6.1 Securing Missing V/T's Living Quarters and Personal Effects

The Country Director may decide that entering the V/T's residence is necessary to ensure that the V/T is not incapacitated or injured. When the Country Director elects to enter the residence, it should only be done in consultation with the RSO and/or local police. Nothing in the V/T's living quarters should be touched, disturbed or moved until law enforcement authorities have conducted their investigation and obtained evidence, such as photographs and fingerprints. In countries where there is limited capacity to analyze physical evidence, the Office of Safety and Security must coordinate the evidence collection in conjunction with the RSO and others as appropriate. The Country Director, in consultation with the RSO and the Office of Safety and Security will determine how to appropriately safeguard the V/T's property.

6.2 Missing V/T's Unclaimed Mail

The Country Director must arrange to collect and secure the missing V/T's unclaimed mail. Return addresses and postmark information should be released only to authorized investigative authorities.

6.3 Living Allowance

The Country Director must arrange to place a hold on all un-disbursed payments to the missing V/T (except where it is necessary to review the payments as part of an investigation, in accordance with MS 221 *Volunteer Allowances*). However, funds required for rent/utilities are authorized to be paid from the living allowance for a reasonable period of time, pending return of the V/T or the conclusion of the investigation.

7.0 Recordkeeping

The Country Director shall keep a detailed log of all actions taken in-country for the duration of a V/T disappearance and must forward a final narrative case report to the Office of Safety and Security after the situation has been resolved.