



MS 648 Child Protection Policy FAQs for Volunteers

Purpose of MS 648

The U.S Peace Corps is committed to providing a safe and positive environment in all aspects of work with children at every post. The Peace Corps strongly supports measures to reduce the risks of child abuse and exploitation caused or perpetrated by an employee or Volunteer. MS 648 Child Protection outlines proper conduct while working or engaging with children during Peace Corps service or employment.

The following highlights specific Q&As for Volunteers to aid in the understanding and adherence to MS 648.

If I am still a trainee, do I have to adhere to this policy?

Yes, as a trainee you must adhere to this policy. For purposes of MS 648, the term **Volunteer** means any Peace Corps Volunteer or Trainee.

Does this apply to my personal time as well as my official work time?

Yes. As a Volunteer you represent Peace Corps during your entire service so you must display appropriate behavior with children during both work and personal time. You are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance during the duration of your service with Peace Corps.

How do I know what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the presence of children in my host country?

To determine appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the presence of children in your host country, contact your host country national staff. You will receive cultural training during pre-service training, including training on child protection issues and issues that are particular to your country of service. Local Peace Corps staff are incredibly knowledgeable on cultural issues and serve as a significant cultural resource for you during your service.

Why do I have to be conscious about spending time alone with children?

To avoid any unnecessary rumors it is recommended to have more than one adult present with a child and work in a visible space when interacting with a child. Peace Corps promotes this as a precaution for Volunteers because regardless of what is actually happening, spending alone time with children may be perceived negatively in your communities. Due to the nature of Peace Corps' work, this may be

difficult to achieve at all times, however, you should comply to this when possible and always be aware of the image you project to others when working with a child.

What if I have strong reason to believe another Volunteer is abusing a child?

If you believe another Volunteer may be abusing a child you must report those allegations of child abuse by a Volunteer to Peace Corps. You may report those concerns of child abuse by a Volunteer to any of following: the Country Director or other senior staff at post, the appropriate Regional Director, the Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Associate Director for Global Operations, the Office of Inspector General, or other appropriate offices at Headquarters.

What if I have strong reason to believe a Peace Corps employee is abusing a child?

If you believe a Peace Corps employee may be abusing a child you must report those allegations of child abuse by an employee to Peace Corps. You may report those concerns of child abuse by an employee to any of following: the Country Director or other senior staff at post, the appropriate Regional Director, the Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Associate Director for Global Operations, the Office of Inspector General, or other appropriate offices at Headquarters.

What if I witness child abuse in my community?

Peace Corps Volunteers are in a unique situation as you live within the communities, but view the activities within the community through an American perspective. There may be certain practices in regard to interactions with children that you may not think are appropriate, but they are culturally accepted within the community. If that happens, contact your host country national staff as they will be the best resource in explaining that situation to you and providing cultural insights into those practices.

However, if you witness Child Abuse (as outlined in MS 648) do not directly engage in the situation. For your safety, Peace Corps Volunteers cannot act as the neighborhood watch within their community nor should you be directly associated with a situation involving child abuse. If you have concerns for a child(ren)'s welfare, contact Peace Corps staff and they will advise you on the appropriate action.

Why do we have to be trained on this information?

Peace Corps takes your safety and security very seriously. As part of that responsibility we must ensure all Volunteers are aware of what is expected of them during service and prepare them well for those expectations. The trainings sessions may be delivered at various points during your service and however they all serve as tools for education and are designed to build your confidence in your interactions with children. Additionally, Peace Corps must ensure all appropriate measures are taken to minimize the risk of child abuse by any Peace Corps Volunteer or staff member.

Where can I go for more information?

If you would like more information on MS 648 contact your Country Director.