



Peace Corps

GLOBAL POLICY HANDBOOK

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW: GLOBAL POLICY HANDBOOK¹

This Global Policy Handbook is based on and intended to accurately reflect Peace Corps policies set forth in the Peace Corps Policy Manual. This Handbook is for use by Invitees, Trainees and Volunteers.

Where the term Volunteer is used in this Handbook, the policies are applicable to all Peace Corps Trainees and Volunteers, spanning the entirety of your service that begins with your enter-on-duty date. The policies delineated in the Global Policy Handbook apply to all Volunteers, with certain exceptions pertaining to Peace Corps Response, the agency's shorter-term, highly specialized Volunteer program. Areas of policy which differ for Peace Corps Response Volunteers are explicitly indicated.

It is your responsibility to read, understand, and comply with the contents of this Handbook. You will be given an opportunity to review it and ask questions during Pre-Service Training. You will also be provided a Volunteer Service Handbook specific to your country of assignment (post-specific handbook) that reiterates these global policies and includes policies and procedures specific to your Peace Corps service in your assigned country.

Please note that this document is intended to serve as a convenient reference guide. It is a summary of relevant policies contained in the Peace Corps Manual, which governs the functioning of the agency. **In the event of inconsistencies between the language in the Global Policy Handbook and the Peace Corps Manual, the language in the Peace Corps Manual prevails.** You can consult the [Peace Corps Manual on-line](#). Footnotes refer to policy sources from the Peace Corps Manual or other official U.S. government documents. Please reach out to Peace Corps staff at any time throughout your service if you have any questions about global or post policies.

THE PEACE CORPS MISSION

The Peace Corps was established to promote world peace and friendship. As it has adapted to changing needs around the world, the Peace Corps continues to be guided by three goals:

- To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women.
- To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served.
- To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of all Americans.

¹ MS 204

SECTION 2: TRAINING AND SWEARING IN

QUALIFYING FOR SERVICE²

In order for the Peace Corps to be able to make appropriate selection and placement decisions, it is critical that applicants for Peace Corps service provide complete and accurate information throughout the application process. If at any time the Peace Corps determines that you provided misleading, inaccurate or incomplete information (“non-disclosure”) during the Peace Corps application process, you may be disqualified as an applicant or administratively separated as a Trainee or Volunteer.

All Trainees begin in-country service with Pre-Service Training (PST). The Peace Corps uses a competency-based training approach designed to help you master essential competencies and serve effectively and safely as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Peace Corps staff will measure your learning achievement and determine if you have successfully achieved competencies to swear-in as a Peace Corps Volunteer. Successful training results in competence in various technical, linguistic, cross-cultural, health, and safety and security areas. Failure to meet initial selection standards, attain any of the selection standards by the completion of training, or maintain these standards during service, may be grounds for de-selection and disqualification from Peace Corps service.

Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs), considered Volunteers upon departure from their home of record for service, undergo an initial orientation period. Typically two weeks in length, their training is designed to orient them to their host country and to convey important information regarding Peace Corps’ development model, health, safety and security, and other topics.

OATH AND PLEDGE³

All individuals who satisfy the standards for enrollment as a Volunteer by the end of PST must swear or affirm to the following oath orally and in writing (in English) in order to become a Volunteer. You have the option to swear or affirm, and to omit the last sentence.

I, *(insert first and last name)* do solemnly swear *(or affirm)* that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. *[So help me God.]*

At the discretion of the Country Director, after taking the required oath, Volunteers may also be required to take a version of the following Peace Corps Pledge orally and in writing:

I *(insert first and last name)* promise to serve alongside the people of *(insert Country of Service)*. I promise to share my culture with an open heart and open mind. I promise to foster an understanding of the people of *(Country of Service)*, with creativity, cultural sensitivity, and respect. I will face the challenges of service with patience, humility, and determination. I

² MS 201; 22 CFR 305

³ MS 207

will embrace the mission of world peace and friendship for as long as I serve and beyond. In the proud tradition of Peace Corps' legacy, and in the spirit of the Peace Corps family past, present, and future, I am a Peace Corps Volunteer.

SECTION 3: EXPECTATIONS FOR VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES⁴

Peace Corps Volunteers have responsibilities more complex than those of private citizens. While you are expected to learn and respect host country culture and customs, you must also conduct yourself in a way that reflects credit on the United States and the Peace Corps. Indeed, you may be the most identifiable, and the only U.S. citizen in a community. Accordingly, you are expected to adopt lifestyles sensitive to host country cultural norms, and exercise common sense and good judgment to promote safety and reduce risks at home, at work, and while traveling.

Volunteers are expected to participate fully in the culture of their host communities. Accordingly, you are expected to be at your site unless you are on official Peace Corps business or on leave.

Appropriate conduct is critical to the Peace Corps because it is intimately tied to the reputation and effectiveness of the Agency's Volunteer program and the safety and security of Trainees, Volunteers, and post staff.

Core Expectations

As a member of the Peace Corps community, you are responsible for fulfilling and sustaining the highest ethical standards of the Peace Corps and of the broader communities in which you serve and must abide by the following commitments.

“With integrity, and a shared commitment to equity and intercultural understanding, I will:

1. Prepare my affairs to keep my commitment to serve the full term of my assignment.
2. Build relationships and work alongside community members on locally prioritized projects that promote knowledge exchange and contribute to a lasting impact.
3. Serve where the Peace Corps places me with the flexibility needed for effective service.
4. Collaborate with the local community members on sustainable development work and spend most of my time respectfully integrating into the host community and culture.
5. Accept that during service I am responsible for my personal conduct and professional performance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
6. Honor diversity, advance equity, champion inclusion, and treat every human being with dignity and respect.
7. Adhere to the policies and rules of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where I serve.

⁴ MS 204; MS 218

8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect the health, safety, and well-being of myself and others.
9. Recognize that during service I represent the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America.
10. Promote a better understanding of other cultures by intentionally and ethically sharing my Peace Corps experience with family, friends, and the American public during and after service.”

Professionalism

To maximize their effectiveness and protect the reputation of the Peace Corps, Volunteers are expected to act with professionalism, integrity, competence, honesty, and to exhibit personal accountability in accordance with the Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers. Specifically, you should adhere to the following professional standards:

- (a) Show respect for the people and culture of the host country (including Peace Corps staff) and other Volunteers, at all times, as demonstrated by appropriate behaviors;
- (b) Observe local standards, behavior, dress, and practices/protocols that demonstrate respect for the host country;
- (c) Abide by established standards of moral and ethical conduct, including applicable Peace Corps policies;
- (d) Honor commitments and work obligations;
- (e) Acknowledge and accept responsibility for actions (including mistakes);
- (f) During interactions in-person and over technology (including social media) with host country co-workers, other Volunteers, and Peace Corps staff:
 - (1) Communicate courteously, professionally, and empathetically;
 - (2) Resolve any differences through open and respectful dialogue and actions;
 - (3) Avoid gossip, rumor, or personalization of conflicts, and the use of profanity or other offensive words or phrases;
- (g) Not discriminate against any individual in connection with their work on behalf of the Peace Corps, such as on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, or other bases as provided for under U.S. federal law and the nondiscrimination laws of their host country; and
- (h) Comply with policies and guidance that ensure Volunteers’ safety and security, and protect and preserve Volunteers’ effectiveness and the reputation of the Peace Corps.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION⁵

Volunteers and Trainees may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including administrative separation from the Peace Corps for any violation of the policies in the Peace Corps Manual or post-specific policies, for unsatisfactory conduct or performance, or on other grounds that diminish the effectiveness of the Volunteer or the Peace Corps program.

⁵ MS 204; MS 284

Country Directors (CDs) have broad discretion to determine the appropriate responses to Volunteer misconduct. Disciplinary actions that CDs may take include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Verbal or written warning, a letter of reprimand, or a Corrective Action Plan;
- Temporary restriction on travel and work away from Volunteer's site;
- Restriction of membership on Volunteer committees and other leadership committees;
- Withdrawal of opportunities to conduct training at Pre-service Training or other similar opportunities;
- Temporary restriction on work collaboration with other Volunteers;
- Temporary or permanent restriction on work on projects outside your primary assignment that involves travel away from your site;
- Loss of previously accrued and unused annual leave;
- Denial of advanced annual leave;
- Reduction in accrual of future annual leave and/or future annual leave allowance;
- Denial of letters of recommendation;
- Administrative Separation; or
- Other actions as may be appropriate⁶.

Where appropriate as determined by post staff, you may be directed to consult with the Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO).

(See also Immunity from Disciplinary Action, SECTION 4: Safety and Security; Annual Leave, SECTION 8: Administrative and Financial Considerations; and Administrative Separation, SECTION 13: Early Termination of Service.)

ALCOHOL⁷

Peace Corps recognizes that excessive use of alcohol, including binge drinking, may compromise a Volunteer's health and safety and security, lead to behavior which is a discredit to the Peace Corps or the individual Volunteer, or affect the Volunteer's performance in an assignment. Examples of such behavior include but are not limited to:

- Public intoxication;
- Drinking while at the work site;
- Failure to appear for work or training due to intoxication or hangovers;
- Verbal or physical aggressiveness while under the influence of alcohol;
- Drinking in a manner that is culturally inappropriate or damaging to the reputation or mission of the Volunteer or Peace Corps;
- Destruction of public or private property;
- Intoxication to the point of belligerence, incapacitation or blacking out;
- Inability to respond in an emergency situation or failure to make sound judgments; and/or
- Providing alcoholic beverages to or buying alcoholic beverages for persons under 18 years of age.

⁶ MS 204, Attachment B

⁷ MS 204

You must not drink alcohol in any way that impacts your work performance. Any inappropriate or unsafe behavior or inability to perform adequately in the assignment may be grounds for disciplinary action, including administrative separation. Volunteers who choose to drink are responsible for their conduct at all times and must always consider host country laws and culture and the effects of their conduct on their service and the in-country program.

If you believe you or another Volunteer are developing or have an alcohol problem, you are encouraged to share your concerns with an appropriate staff person, such as the PCMO. Excessive alcohol consumption may be a medical problem, as determined on a case-by-case basis by the PCMO. Through its medical and counseling support services, Peace Corps will assist a Volunteer who is willing to address an alcohol problem.

Alcohol inhibits clear thinking and produces a false sense of comfort and security. While intoxicated, Volunteers are not always able to make the safest decisions; their guard is lowered and they may end up in a situation which could jeopardize their safety. Encouraging someone to drink is a strategy often used by perpetrators to disable their intended target. In addition, perpetrators may become bolder when their potential victims are under the influence and when they themselves have been drinking. While it is never your fault if you are the victim of a crime, being sober can help you assess and react to potential threats more clearly.

CHILD PROTECTION CODE OF CONDUCT⁸

All Volunteers must adhere to the Child Protection Code of Conduct inserted below.

In the course of an employee's or Volunteer's association with the Peace Corps:

Acceptable Conduct

Volunteers will:

- Treat every child with respect and dignity.
- When possible, work in a visible space and avoid being alone with a child.
- Be accountable for maintaining appropriate responses to children's behavior, even if a child behaves in a sexually inappropriate manner.
- Promptly report any concern or allegation of child abuse by an employee or Volunteer.

Unacceptable Conduct

Volunteers will not:

- Hire a child for domestic or other labor which is culturally inappropriate or inappropriate given the child's age or developmental stage, or which significantly interferes with the child's time available for education and recreational activities or which places the child at significant risk of injury.
- Practice corporal punishment against, or physically assault, any child.
- Emotionally abuse a child.
- Develop a sexual or romantic relationship with a child.
- Touch, hold, kiss, or hug a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- Use language that is offensive, or abusive towards or around a child.

⁸ MS 648

- Behave in a sexually provocative or threatening way in the presence of a child.
- Perform tasks for a child that the child is able to do for himself or herself that involves physical contact, including changing the child's clothing or cleaning the child's private parts.
- Access, create, or distribute photos, videos, or other visual material of a sexual and abusive nature to or involving a child.

A child is defined as anyone under 18 years of age, regardless of local law. A Volunteer found to have been engaged in inappropriate conduct with a child may also be subject to host country and U.S. prosecution.

Volunteers are required to report allegations of violations to the Code of Conduct for Child Protection to the Country Director or other senior staff at Post, or to the appropriate Regional Director, the Associate Director for Safety and Security, the Associate Director for Global Operations, or the Office of Inspector General.

(See Guidance for Volunteers and Trainees who Witness Violence, SECTION 4: Safety and Security)

COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. AND LOCAL LAWS

You must comply with host country laws, just like any other American citizen in your host country. You have no "immunity" or other special legal status associated with being a Peace Corps Volunteer. You are also expected to comply with U.S. law while in service with the Peace Corps.

(See also Legal Representation, SECTION 4: Safety and Security.)

DRUGS⁹

Peace Corps has a zero-tolerance policy regarding Volunteer involvement with drugs. Involvement with drugs includes, but is not limited to, the direct sale, distribution, acquisition, purchase, possession, smuggling, and use of illicit drugs, including marijuana, and any drug not authorized by the Peace Corps for medical purposes. The Peace Corps enforces this strict policy not only because the cultivation, manufacture, and traffic in and use of drugs, including marijuana, is illegal in most countries; but also because drug involvement by Volunteers in any country could seriously jeopardize the entire Peace Corps program, as well as the safety and health of the Volunteers. Moreover, it is a violation of the trust Peace Corps has placed in Volunteers upon their selection and entry into public service.

Peace Corps staff are required to expeditiously report to the Office of Inspector General any suspected sale, distribution, or smuggling of illegal or prescription drugs, or any other violations of Peace Corps policies that may have a serious impact on the integrity of Peace Corps programs or operations.

⁹ MS 204; MS 271

Except as noted in Voluntary Self-Referral below, a Volunteer found to be involved with drugs, as described above, in a manner not authorized by the Peace Corps for medical purposes, in any way in any country, shall be administratively separated immediately in accordance with the Peace Corps Manual. Individuals separated in connection with involvement with drugs shall not be considered for a transfer to another program or reinstatement regardless of the quality of their service.

Because of the potentially serious social, political, and legal impact of such incidents, the CD is required to notify the Peace Corps Region and Office of General Counsel of all allegations of drug involvement. All allegations that are found to be credible shall be brought immediately to the personal attention of the Peace Corps Director, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, and Associate Director for the Office of Global Operations.

Unconfirmed Allegations or Rumors

Although a Volunteer may not be formally charged with violating drug laws, some host countries' attitudes toward involvement with drugs are so negative that mere rumors of such involvement, though unproven, may affect the credibility of the individual Volunteer or the Peace Corps program. In cases where an unsubstantiated allegation is made that you are involved with drugs while serving in the host country, and your CD determines that the knowledge of the allegation is sufficiently widespread to jeopardize your credibility or the program, the CD may discontinue your service as interrupted service.

Voluntary Self-Referral

You may request help from Peace Corps staff on the basis that your involvement with drugs is associated with an illness (such as a substance use disorder as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) that requires treatment. If such a request is made prior to the Peace Corps (including the Office of Inspector General) receiving information indicating possible violation of drug policies, then you will be referred to the PCMO and Office of Health Services for assessment. The PCMO/OHS must inform your CD about whether or not the assessment resulted in a recommendation for medical evacuation to the United States.

If you are medically evacuated under these circumstances, you will not return to service. If you are not medically evacuated or medically separated, you will be referred back to your CD for initiation of administrative separation.

(See also SECTION 11: Reporting Allegations and Concerns; SECTION 13: Early Termination of Service.)

ETHICS AND FINANCIAL GAIN¹⁰

Peace Corps Volunteers may not take advantage of a situation in the host country or use their Peace Corps status or information gained from their service for financial gain. This means that you may not purchase or acquire real estate, bonds, shares or stock of commercial concerns headquartered in your country of assignment or which conduct a substantial portion of their business in that country. You may not engage in any business or activity for profit or personal

¹⁰ MS 204

financial gain (including fundraising through individual effort of using platforms to fundraise) or undertake any gainful employment, be compensated or paid for any work done or related to Peace Corps service or for other services, work, or tasks while in service in your country of assignment. Nor may you sell or dispose of personal property at prices producing profits, including those that might result from import privileges deriving from your status as a Volunteer. At the end of your service, you are encouraged to donate items purchased with Peace Corps allowance to your community, other Volunteers, or local charitable institutions.

You may not accept payment during service for any written work or photographs relating to your Peace Corps service.

In cases where payment cannot be avoided, you must report receipt of such payment to your CD and donate the proceeds to a worthwhile institution or organization in the host country or to the Peace Corps Partnership Program.

(See also Fundraising, Grants and Gifts, SECTION 8: Administrative and Financial Considerations.)

FIREARMS¹¹

Volunteers are not permitted to use or possess any firearms while at any Peace Corps post.

GAMBLING AND CASINOS¹²

All casinos and gambling establishments are off-limits to Volunteers.

HARASSMENT¹³

Volunteers may not engage in harassment, including sexual harassment, against other Volunteers, staff, community members, or other persons they encounter during Peace Corps service.

For the purposes of this section, “harassment” is defined as unwelcome conduct based on one or more of the protected categories set forth in Peace Corps policies.¹⁴ Examples of harassment covered by this Section, when based on a person’s protected characteristics, include but are not limited to the following, whether they occur in person, electronically, on social media, or in any other manner: offensive jokes, comments, objects, or pictures; unwelcome questions about a person’s identity; undue and unwelcome attention; ridicule or mockery; insults or put-downs; unwelcome touching or contact that would not be covered by sexual misconduct policies¹⁵; slurs or epithets; threats or other forms of intimidation; or physical assault. Harassment on the basis of sex does not need to be sexual in nature.

¹¹ MS 204

¹² MS 204

¹³ MS 204; MS 645

¹⁴ MS 653

¹⁵ IPS 1-12

The Peace Corps will not tolerate retaliation against you for opposing harassing conduct, for reporting harassing conduct, or for assisting in any inquiry, investigation, or disciplinary action about a report of harassment.

If you believe you have been harassed or witnessed harassment by any currently serving Volunteer based on the protected categories set forth in Peace Corps policies, you may report it to your CD and/or the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Complaints of general harassment that are not based on a protected category, may also be filed with your CD or with the OIG.

If you believe you have been harassed or witnessed harassment by Peace Corps staff based on the protected categories, you may file a complaint in writing with the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OICRD). Complaints to OICRD must be filed within 30 days of the occurrence.

(See SECTION 11: Reporting Allegations and Concerns for related information and OICRD and OIG contact information.)

INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES¹⁶

It is crucial to the Peace Corps in carrying out its mission that there be a complete and total separation of Peace Corps from the intelligence activities of the United States Government or any foreign government, both in fact and appearance.

NONDISCRIMINATION¹⁷

The Peace Corps does not discriminate against any person on account of race, color, religion, sex (including but not limited to gender identity and gender expression), national origin, age (40 and over), disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, union membership, genetic information, or history of participation in the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) process, any grievance procedure or any authorized complaint procedure. You are expected to act accordingly in your dealings with Peace Corps staff, other Volunteers and Trainees, and community members.

(See also Office of Civil Rights and Diversity, SECTION 11: Reporting Allegations and Concerns.)

PERSONAL APPEARANCE¹⁸

You are expected to dress professionally and suitably both on and off the job, and to respect host country and community attitudes towards personal appearance. Where required by the host entity or school, you are expected to adhere to the dress code applicable to your counterparts at those institutions. Country-specific policies regarding personal appearance are provided at post.

¹⁶ MS 611

¹⁷ 22 CFR 305.1(d)

¹⁸ MS 204

PET OWNERSHIP¹⁹

In general, as long as a Volunteer fully understands, agrees to and follows the rules of responsible pet ownership, the Peace Corps allows Volunteers to own a dog or cat. A Volunteer should obtain permission from the CD, in accordance with established post policy and procedures. Trainees are not permitted to own a pet.

If permitted by post, you may own a pet in accordance with post policies and host country laws and regulations. You are responsible for all aspects of pet ownership, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Obtaining any required permissions (e.g., from post, local authorities, host country counterparts, host families) and completing all required procedures and documentation;
- (b) Ensuring all required immunizations (including rabies) and anti-parasitic prevention (for internal and external parasites) and treatments are completed in a timely manner and updated in accordance with post and host country requirements;
- (c) Paying for all costs and expenses related to pet ownership and care;
- (d) Providing proper care and supervision of the pet; and
- (e) Making necessary arrangements for the pet while you are away from site, including but not limited to annual leave, official Peace Corps business, activation of the Emergency Action Plan, medical evacuation, interrupted service, other early termination, or Completion of Service.

Upon ending your service, you will be responsible for finding a new home in-country for the pet and any related costs, or for arranging and paying all costs for transport, vaccinations, and other requirements for U.S. entry.

POLITICAL EXPRESSION²⁰

The Peace Corps recognizes that you may wish to express your opinions and views regarding certain topics or movements arising in the United States, your country of service, or any other country. However, in doing so, you must comply with the laws of the host country, and you should make it clear that the views expressed are your own and not necessarily those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. Government. You are free to privately discuss issues relating to the United States or other countries. You are also free to petition the U.S. Government and its officials in the same manner as if you had remained in the United States.

Volunteers serve at the invitation of the host country and hold an obligation to demonstrate balance and tolerance in respecting host country norms as well as honoring the primacy of its citizens as the rightful agents of social and political change. You should be aware, however, that public political expression overseas may raise issues of Volunteers' safety and security if the issues could provoke hostility locally. You should also be aware that, particularly in the area of foreign affairs, some policies or actions of the United States or other countries may relate to political issues or other controversial issues within the host country.

¹⁹ MS 204

²⁰ MS 204

The Peace Corps' credibility, and hence its ability to perform its mission, is contingent on not becoming identified with controversial or political issues of local interest or local political issues or movements. Volunteers abroad are not in-country in a purely individual capacity with obligations only to themselves. They are abroad having responsibilities to, and representing, Peace Corps.

Therefore, you must avoid becoming involved in the political affairs of your host country. Any public statement or action which potentially may involve you with your host country's political issues or other controversial issues within the host country, or which are otherwise matters of official concern to Peace Corps, must be first discussed and reviewed with your CD. "Matters of official concern" are those that are related to Peace Corps or U.S. foreign policy or matters that can reasonably be expected to affect the foreign relations of the United States.

Statements or actions concerning such issues that may, in the opinion of your CD, endanger you or the post's safety and security, or impair the effectiveness of you or the Peace Corps, may be grounds for administrative separation or other disciplinary action.

RADIO TRANSMITTERS AND DRONES²¹

You are not permitted to use or possess radio transmitters or drones, or similar equipment, during your service except as explicitly approved in writing by your CD.

RELATIONSHIPS

Adoption of Children²²

Adopting children during your service may be a complicated process which may place an enormous burden on you, is incompatible with continued Peace Corps service, and will result in termination of service. Prior to making a decision regarding the adoption of a child, you should consult with appropriate consulate personnel to understand the legal requirements and complications of the adoption, both in the host country and the United States. You must personally obtain the necessary approvals for an adoption and, when appropriate, for the child's exit from the host country and entry into the United States. Peace Corps staff will not assist in the adoption process.

Conduct of Spouse²³

The behavior of a Volunteer's spouse who is not serving in the Peace Corps may have direct impact on the effectiveness of the Volunteer's service and on the Peace Corps program. As a result, non-serving spouses are expected to maintain the same standards of conduct expected of Volunteers. Volunteers whose non-serving spouses behave in a manner which adversely affects their credibility or that of the program may be subject to early termination.

²¹ MS 204

²² MS 204

²³ MS 204

Marriage²⁴

If you intend to marry and continue in service, you must notify and consult with your CD. Approval in writing from the CD is required for you to continue in service after the marriage.

Minor Dependents²⁵

No Volunteer may serve with a minor dependent who lives in the country of service. If a Volunteer becomes a parent or guardian of a minor dependent who lives in the country of service, the Volunteer will be separated with interrupted service. This includes situations in which a Volunteer fathers a child in a country, regardless of whether the child is living with the Volunteer. In that case, the Volunteer will be separated with interrupted service after the child is born.

(See Interrupted Service, SECTION 13: Early Termination of Service.)

Paternity²⁶

A Volunteer who fathers a child prior to leaving service should fulfill, or arrange to fulfill, his responsibilities for providing support to the mother and child. Host country law or custom may serve as a guide in determining the appropriate extent of compensation and support. A Volunteer's readjustment allowance may be used to satisfy obligations when the Volunteer consents in writing to such use or where his financial obligation has been established through legal process. The Peace Corps will not provide legal counsel to a Volunteer in the event that legal action is commenced to determine paternity, except in situations determined by the CD and the General Counsel to result in a violation of the Volunteer's substantial rights.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR²⁷

While the matter of sexual behavior is a highly personal one, Volunteers are required to follow certain legal and policy requirements.

Host Country Sexual Mores

Because of the legal, social, and political implications of inappropriate sexual behavior, it is important that Volunteers understand the host country sexual mores, including those in relation to dating, pre-marital sexual activity, adultery, and single parent maternity and paternity, and the consequences for Volunteers and the Peace Corps program if these mores are questioned or violated.

²⁴ MS 205

²⁵ MS 204

²⁶ MS 204

²⁷ MS 204

Commercial Sex²⁸

Volunteers are prohibited from procuring commercial sex, regardless of whether prostitution is legal in the host country. For the purposes of this section, “commercial sex” is defined as any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Fraternization²⁹

Fraternization, whether occurring in person or via electronic means, including over social media, is prohibited by the Peace Corps. Fraternalization is defined as any dating, intimate physical relationship, sexual relationship, or any attempt thereof, between any Peace Corps staff member and any Peace Corps Volunteer, or between any Volunteer and person, including any individual, such as a student, over whom the Volunteer holds authority or maintains control over needed support or resources (such as host family members and paid language tutors). Fraternalization between Peace Corps staff and Volunteers is also prohibited. Disciplinary action does not apply to instances where the Volunteer is coerced or otherwise not acting freely.

Minors³⁰

Regardless of the applicable age of consent, Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in sexual activity or contact with anyone who is under the age of 18. Depending on the applicable age of consent, Volunteers who engage in sexual activity or contact with minors overseas may be subject to criminal prosecution both in the United States and in the host country.

(See also Child Protection Code of Conduct in this SECTION.)

Sexual Misconduct³¹

Sexual Misconduct comprises a broad range of behavior, including rape, aggravated sexual assault, non-aggravated sexual assault, sexual exploitation and stalking, that will not be tolerated in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps is committed to providing an environment free from Sexual Misconduct.

Any current or former Volunteer may report Sexual Misconduct concerning another Volunteer to any Peace Corps staff at post. Volunteers are also entitled to report Sexual Misconduct directly to the Office of Inspector General and to relevant law enforcement agencies, regardless of whether that Volunteer has brought a complaint of Sexual Misconduct. The Peace Corps can only take administrative action against the accused Volunteer if the accused Volunteer continues to serve as a Volunteer at the time the complaint is brought. So long as the accused continues to serve as a Volunteer, there is no time limit for making a report of Sexual Misconduct. Nevertheless, Volunteers are encouraged to report Sexual Misconduct immediately in order to maximize the Peace Corps’ ability to obtain evidence and conduct a thorough, impartial and reliable investigation. Failure to promptly report Sexual Misconduct may result in the loss of

²⁸ MS 204

²⁹ MS 644

³⁰ MS 204

³¹ IPS 1-12

relevant evidence and witness testimony and may impair the Peace Corps' ability to enforce this policy.

Sexual Misconduct may also violate criminal and other laws of the U.S. or the local jurisdiction in which the Sexual Misconduct took place.

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' process for addressing Sexual Misconduct by one Volunteer against another Volunteer is available in Peace Corps policies and from your CD or PCMO.

(See also SECTION 11: Reporting Allegations and Concerns, and Administrative Separation, SECTION 13: Early Termination of Service.)

EXERCISE OF PERSONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS³²

Volunteers are free to exercise their religious beliefs, but they may not engage in religious proselytizing. If you are not clear as to what activity constitutes religious proselytizing, consult with your CD.

SECTION 4: SAFETY AND SECURITY

The safety and security of Volunteers is a paramount objective of the Peace Corps and is the shared responsibility of Peace Corps staff and Volunteers. Service in the Peace Corps entails certain safety and security risks that are commensurate with living and traveling in an unfamiliar and potentially more dangerous environment overseas. Volunteers may need to modify their routines, actions, and attitudes towards their own safety and security. To that end, Volunteers will need to:

- Adopt lifestyles that support community integration, promote safety, minimize risk, and are sensitive to, and are consistent with, host country cultural norms.
- Exercise good judgment at all times to promote safety and to reduce risks at home, work, and while traveling.
- Participate in safety and security training and learning and follow the specific safety and security policies, procedures and rules at post.³³

In addition, Volunteers are strongly encouraged to report safety and security incidents and concerns to post staff.

(See also SECTION 11: Reporting Allegations and Concerns.)

REPORTING SECURITY INCIDENTS³⁴

The Peace Corps is committed to creating an environment that encourages Volunteers to report incidents committed against them so that the necessary and proper support may be provided.

³² MS 204

³³ MS 270

³⁴ MS 270; MS 461

As a Volunteer, you are responsible for reporting any safety or security concerns about your site to Peace Corps staff. If you feel at risk of imminent bodily harm at your site, you may request to be removed from your site. When you make such a request, staff must remove you from the site as expeditiously as practicable, even if the staff has a different opinion of site safety at the time of your request. Staff must conduct an assessment and evaluation of the safety of the site before making a determination that it is safe for you to return to the site. If the post determines the site to be safe, the post may, if you agree, return you to the site.

(See also SECTION 9: Housing and Sites.)

CRIMES AGAINST VOLUNTEERS³⁵

The Peace Corps recognizes that crime may have a lasting impact on a Volunteer, may disrupt the Volunteer's service, and may undermine the Volunteer's sense of safety and security. Each incident and Volunteer is unique. The response and support by the Peace Corps to an incident should help a Volunteer who is a victim of crime regain a sense of control by:

- taking into consideration the Volunteer's preferences in the decision-making process;
- providing the Volunteer with a transparent response and decision-making process; and
- providing the Volunteer with choices consistent with Peace Corps obligations and limitations.

If you are a victim of crime, the Peace Corps will maintain your confidentiality and will not, without your prior written consent, disclose your Personally Identifying Information or details of the incident to anyone within or outside of the Peace Corps who does not have a need to know. In this regard, "need to know" means, with respect to particular information, that access by a Peace Corps staff member to that information is useful in or facilitates the efficient performance of that individual's official duties. The Peace Corps will not, without your consent, report incidents to host country authorities except in cases involving the death of a Volunteer, where required by law, where there is a compelling government interest, or where there is an ongoing security threat or concern to you or others.

Office of Victim Advocacy³⁶

The Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA) is a resource to all current and returned Volunteers who have been victims of crimes, including sexual assault and stalking, during their service. OVA helps to ensure Volunteers have access to the full range of support services provided by the Peace Corps.

OVA is committed to ensuring that all Volunteers who report a crime are treated with compassion, dignity, and respect throughout the reporting process. OVA provides comprehensive advocacy services, including the following:

- Information on available mental health, medical, and legal options;
- Assistance with safety planning;
- Participation in investigative and legal proceedings when necessary; and

³⁵ MS 461

³⁶ MS 123

- Connecting resources for support services, both within the Peace Corps and from outside organizations.

Victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you are a victim of crime, OVA can be reached 24/7 via:

- Call or text: 202.409.2704 or
- Email: victimadvocate@peacecorps.gov

Sexual Assault³⁷

Peace Corps Commitments

Peace Corps is committed to providing a compassionate and supportive response to all Volunteers who are sexually assaulted. To that end, the Peace Corps makes the following commitment to our Volunteers who are victims of sexual assault. Peace Corps staff worldwide will demonstrate this commitment through our words and actions:

- **Compassion:** We will treat you with dignity and respect. No one deserves to be a victim of a sexual assault.
- **Safety:** We will take appropriate steps to provide for your ongoing safety.
- **Support:** We will provide you with the support you need to aid in your recovery.
- **Legal:** We will help you understand the relevant legal processes and your legal options.
- **Open Communication:** We will keep you informed of the progress of your case, should you choose to pursue prosecution.
- **Continuation of Service:** We will work closely with you to make decisions regarding your continued service.
- **Privacy:** We will respect your privacy and will not, without your consent, disclose your identity or share the details of the incident with anyone who does not have a specific need to know.

Reporting Options and Response

All Volunteers who are victims of sexual assault are encouraged to come forward to access the services and support they need. A Volunteer who has been sexually assaulted during service has the option to make either a Restricted Report or a Standard Report of a sexual assault. A Volunteer may ask for their report to be changed from Restricted to Standard at any time.

The Peace Corps believes it is best able to respond to the needs of a Volunteer who has been sexually assaulted when the Volunteer makes a Standard Report of the sexual assault. Standard reporting provides a Volunteer with the full array of support services and options while still maintaining, to the extent possible, the confidentiality of the Volunteer's sexual assault. The agency recognizes that Volunteers may, for a variety of reasons, be reluctant or unwilling to report sexual assaults under Standard Report procedures. As a result, the Peace Corps developed restricted reporting policy and procedures to provide Volunteers with an alternative way to confidentially report sexual assaults.

³⁷ MS 243

- Restricted Reporting provides a Volunteer with the option of confidentially reporting the sexual assault and requesting certain specific services, without dissemination of information about the Volunteer or the sexual assault except as necessary for the provision of the services requested by the Volunteer and without automatically triggering an official investigation.
- Standard Reporting provides a Volunteer with the full array of support services and options, including the opportunity to request an official investigation, while still maintaining the confidentiality of information about the Volunteer and the sexual assault.

For Restricted Report services, Peace Corps will only inform the staff necessary to provide the service. For Standard Reports, Peace Corps will only inform those staff members who have a specific need to know the information in question. Both types of reports are considered confidential and are treated accordingly. Although all reports are initially Restricted Reports by default, you may choose a Restricted Report or Standard Report in accordance with the services you wish to request.

A Volunteer who wishes to report a sexual assault should directly contact the PCMO Duty Officer or another Designated Staff member, regardless of whether the Volunteer wants to receive services at the time. Designated Staff at post are:

- Peace Corps Medical Officers;
- Safety and Security Manager; and
- Sexual Assault Response Liaisons.

Alternatively, a Volunteer can contact any trusted staff member to report a sexual assault.

Database administrators, quality assurance staff, monitoring and evaluation staff, and trained support staff within medical and safety offices may have access to information, but only to the extent necessary for provision of services or to ensure quality of response. Peace Corps' Office of the Inspector General may access all Peace Corps records for evaluation and oversight purposes, including Restricted Reports of sexual assault.

Services for Victims of Sexual Assault

Our first and main concern will be that you are safe and secure. If you are sexually assaulted, there are a number of services for which you are eligible at the time of the incident or at any time later in service:

- Provision of emergency health care, including a mechanism to evaluate the provider.
- Provision of counseling and psychiatric medication support.
- Completion of a Safety Plan and a Medical Treatment Plan.
- Evacuation for medical treatment, accompanied by Designated Staff at the Volunteer's request and, when evacuated to the United States, to the extent practicable a choice of medical providers and a mechanism to evaluate such providers
- Provision of a Sexual Assault Response Liaison (SARL) and a Victim Advocate.
- Provision of a sexual assault forensic exam in accordance with host country laws.
- An explanation of law enforcement and prosecutorial options, including, for this purpose, legal representation.
- Assistance in filing a report with law enforcement authorities.

- Assistance in legal proceedings related to the sexual assault.
- Retention of legal counsel to represent the Volunteer in legal proceedings.
- Consideration of site and host family changes.
- Ability to report to, and receive assistance from, the Office of Inspector General.
- Ability to initiate an administrative complaint of sexual misconduct if the assailant is another Peace Corps Volunteer.
- Support and assistance from non-Designated Staff.
- Any other services deemed necessary in the particular circumstances.

Sexual Assault Response Liaisons (SARLs)³⁸

SARLs are members of the Peace Corps post's Designated Staff team who, in addition to their regular duties, support Volunteers who report a sexual assault. SARLs are available to serve as first responders along with other members of the Designated Staff team. You can contact a SARL directly, or their services can be requested through another Designated Staff person.

Anonymous Sexual Assault Hotline (PC Saves Helpline)³⁹

An anonymous sexual assault hotline is available to all Volunteers currently serving in the Peace Corps, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, via phone, text, and through the PC Saves app. The purpose of the helpline is to provide crisis counseling, support and information to Volunteers who have experienced sexual assault. Information received on the PC Saves Helpline will be treated as confidential information and may not be disclosed to the Peace Corps or any other party without the individual's consent. In calls when there is a serious or imminent threat, suicidal or homicidal ideation, or sexual abuse of minors, however, the Helpline support staff will make an attempt to collect personally identifying information and, if obtained, will disclose information to individuals at Peace Corps with a specific need to know. The Peace Corps will take such action as is necessary to protect your privacy and safety and will limit this disclosure to the minimum information necessary to attempt to prevent, lessen or address the imminent threat to your health or safety or that of others.

There are numerous ways you can contact this free, confidential helpline: online chat, calling through an internet connection, international calls, texting, call-back services, and the PC SAVES mobile app.

Access additional information and connect with a professional via the PC SAVES website. (<https://pcsaveshelpline.org/>)

- Telephone or text:
 - (International) 001-408-844-HELP(4357);
 - (U.S.) 408-844-HELP(4357)

Information on how to install a mobile app is available at: <https://pcsaveshelpline.org/>.

³⁸ MS 244

³⁹ MS 241

Stalking⁴⁰

Stalking means engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person (including the Volunteer or staff) to either (a) fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or (b) suffer substantial emotional distress. Even if one of the foregoing behaviors may not appear to be serious, such behavior may constitute stalking when it occurs repeatedly or in combination with other behaviors. Under some circumstances, behavior constituting stalking may be a crime or a violation of another Peace Corps policy.

You are strongly encouraged to report stalking incidents and concerns to post staff. In cases where a Volunteer suspects that another Volunteer or staff member is engaging in stalking behavior against another Volunteer, a Volunteer may report the stalking behavior to the Office of Inspector General, the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (for staff conduct), and/or Peace Corps post staff.

Immunity from Disciplinary Action⁴¹

Volunteers who are victims of a sexual assault, as well as Volunteer witnesses who provide information or assistance in relation to the sexual assault, will not be subject to any disciplinary action for violations of Peace Corps policy that may have taken place in connection with, or in the same general time frame as, the sexual assault incident. Volunteers who are victims of stalking, as well as Volunteer witnesses who provide information or assistance in relation to the stalking, will not be subject to any disciplinary actions for violations of Peace Corps policy that may have taken place in connection with the stalking. Prohibited disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to, verbal or written reprimands, behavioral contracts or administrative separation.

This policy applies only to the Peace Corps; it does not grant immunity from criminal or civil liability for violations of U.S. or local law. Volunteers found to have encouraged or voluntarily participated in a sexual assault or stalking are excluded from this policy. Nothing in this policy is intended to preclude the Peace Corps from taking appropriate action against Volunteers who knowingly or recklessly make false statements or accusations.

GUIDANCE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINEES WHO WITNESS VIOLENCE

Consistent with its mission of world peace and friendship, the Peace Corps affirms that everyone deserves to be free from violence. The purpose of this guidance is to provide information to help you navigate a situation in which you witness any type of violence such as domestic violence, child abuse and gender-based violence (GBV) including sexual violence and/or intimate partner violence.

Definitions

- **Violence** is the intentional use of physical force or power against another person that results in serious harm or injury.

⁴⁰ MS 242

⁴¹ MS 240

- **Child Abuse** is when another person purposely physically injures or puts a minor (defined as a person under 18) at risk of harm by another person and/or engages in any type of sexual activity with a child.
- **Domestic Violence** is when an individual exhibits a pattern of abuse to exert power and control over another individual, with whom they are in a familial or intimate-partner relationship. The abuse can take place through physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or psychological tactics.
- **Gender Based Violence** is any harmful threat or act directed at an individual or group based on actual or perceived biological sex, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, and/or lack of adherence to varying socially constructed norms around masculinity and femininity. Women, girls, and gender non-conforming individuals face a disproportionate risk of gender-based violence across every context due to their unequal status in society compared to men and boys. Gender-based violence impacts people from all walks of life. Any person of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender can be a victim or perpetrator of gender-based violence.
- **Intimate Partner Violence** is abuse or aggression that occurs in a romantic or intimate-partner relationship. The abuse can take place through physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or psychological tactics.

Refraining from Intervening

A common response when someone witnesses violence, including GBV, is to attempt to intervene in the incident. While that instinct may seem like the right thing to do in the moment, intervening is not always the best action to take to ensure you and others in the community remain safe. For example, taking direct action, such as standing up to the alleged offender or reaching out directly to the police, may:

- Put you in harm's way. The offender may respond in a very negative or even a life-threatening way, placing you in danger and potentially impacting your ability to continue service at site or in country.
- Lead to unintended negative consequences for the person on whose behalf you are trying to intervene, including putting them in danger of greater harm.
- Cause additional unintended consequences for the person's family, friends, classmates, coworkers or other members of the community.

Although you are advised not to physically intervene in a violent situation, there are other steps you can take to support the survivor of the violence you witness.

Reporting Your Experience to Staff

- You are encouraged to reach out to Safety and Security Managers, PCMOs, SARLs and/or the duty officers who can provide support. They have been trained on how to support Volunteers and provide a safe space to discuss Peace Corps policies and procedures, in a wide range of different contexts and situations.
 - When disclosing an incident to staff, please ensure the discussion takes place in a private and safe location, especially if the offender or others are nearby.
- The Peace Corps staff member will highlight two things before beginning the conversation:

- Safety: They will ask if you are safe or if you feel that you are in immediate danger. If you tell the staff member, or they believe you may be in immediate danger or in a potentially unsafe situation, they will tell you to contact the Safety and Security Manager immediately or they may do it for you.
- Confidentiality: They will let you know that what you share will be treated with the utmost discretion and will only be shared with others on a “need to know” basis under specific circumstances. There may be instances where what you disclose needs to be shared with key designated staff at post, the Country Director for discretionary decision making, or with the Designated Security Specialist at Peace Corps headquarters. Staff are guided by a manual section that informs Confidentiality Protection and safety of Volunteers and Trainees who report allegations^{1,42}.
- Feel free to share what you witnessed and experienced, including your concerns about the circumstances. Staff are encouraged to listen with an open mind and give you time to discuss the situation, which can be distressing for everyone involved. To ensure they understand your experience, they may use clarifying and open-ended questions to clarify any issues. It is important to keep in mind that the violence you witness(ed) may trigger difficult or traumatic feelings from your own background and personal experiences. While staff are trained to provide support, many are not medical or licensed professionals. In some cases, you may want to access further resources through your PCMO.
- Witnessing violence can lead to strong emotional reactions, including confusion, frustration, anger and many other feelings. It is important to reflect and acknowledge that those feelings make sense, especially when working navigating these difficulties in different cultural contexts than you might be familiar with.

Asking for Specific Support

If you have witnessed violence, you may need someone to listen, or you may have more specific needs. The Peace Corps can offer medical support, respite leave from site and further counseling from BHO (includes regional mental health psychologists (RMHOs)) through the PCMO at post. It is possible that you suffer ethical distress (moral injury) that leads you to want to leave the country rather than consider a site change. In these cases, an interrupted service may be offered to you.

Guidance for Reporting to Local Authorities

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure you know your options for reporting (or not reporting) incidents when you witness gender-based violence (GBV), sexual violence, intimate partner violence and/or domestic violence-including child abuse.

- If deciding whether to report the violence you witnessed to local law enforcement, you should consult with Peace Corps and ensure you are making an informed decision.
- You may refer the incident to the Safety and Security Manager, who will assess your safety in witnessing the violence and your risk if the incident is reported to local authorities.
- You should explore reporting options with the Safety and Security Manager and the potential impact that reporting may have on your personal safety, on your continued Peace Corps service.

⁴² MS 271

- Staff will work closely with you so that you fully understand your reporting options and help ensure that you are not perceived as interfering by the offender/community or creating additional security risks for you or the person/people you are trying to help.
- Reporting may impact your ability to continue service safely. In some circumstances, Peace Corps may have to assess whether it is safe for a Volunteer to remain at their site if they witness a crime, including sexual or other physical violence, in their workplace or home. If it is found that it is not safe for the reporting-Volunteer to remain at their site, please know this is not a punitive measure rather reflects Peace Corps' commitment to your continued safety.

LEGAL REPRESENTATION⁴³

When a Volunteer has been made a party to a foreign judicial or administrative proceeding during the Volunteer's service, the Peace Corps may:

- Retain counsel for the Volunteer and pay the related legal fees;
- Pay court costs, bail, and other expenses incident to the Volunteer's defense, including costs relating to investigations, counsel's travel, witness fees etc.; and
- Continue to pay such expenses after the Volunteer leaves Peace Corps service.
- The Peace Corps retains sole discretion to determine whether to retain counsel or to continue the services of counsel.
- Peace Corps expenditures are not authorized in connection with civil actions instituted by a Volunteer. Further, Peace Corps will not pay for fines or damages.

The Peace Corps will retain counsel for a Volunteer who is the victim of a sexual assault if requested by the Volunteer. The Peace Corps may retain counsel in support of a Volunteer who is a party, complaining witness, or otherwise participating in the prosecution of a crime against the Volunteer.

EMERGENCY PLANNING AND RESPONSE⁴⁴

Each post has a detailed Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that addresses the most likely emergency situations that would impact Peace Corps personnel and operations. The EAP contains information on specific threats at post, notification and communication protocols, and steps you will need to take if directed.

You are responsible for:

- Familiarizing yourself with your EAP brochure and threat-specific information;
- Maintaining situational awareness and being prepared for potential emergencies;
- Knowing the location of your Consolidation Point;
- Maintaining emergency contact information;
- Participating in EAP training and drills; and
- Adhering to Post's directives and instructions.

⁴³ MS 774

⁴⁴ MS 270

WHEREABOUTS REPORTING⁴⁵

Peace Corps requires you to report your whereabouts whenever you are away from site overnight, and upon return to site. This includes attending a Peace Corps-sponsored event or medical appointment that includes an overnight stay. Whereabouts reporting is a core component of Peace Corps' emergency preparedness and response program and ensures that Peace Corps can contact and locate you quickly in the event of an emergency. Some reasons the Peace Corps might urgently need to know your whereabouts and/or contact you immediately include:

- Natural disasters, such as floods or earthquakes;
- Political unrest or violence;
- A serious accident, illness, or death in your family;
- To help support other nearby Volunteers who may be in need of assistance;
- To know where Peace Corps staff and others may search if you are reported missing from your community; and
- To activate and test the post's Emergency Action Plan. Even though you are likely to have a mobile phone, communication networks can be overwhelmed or fail during emergency events. Mobile phones may also be lost, damaged or without a signal or charge.

Whereabouts reporting and seeking approval for annual leave to be away from your work assignment are two separate requirements. Annual leave, also known as vacation leave, generally provides you the opportunity to schedule time away from your work assignment for rest and relaxation and requires advance approval. The Whereabouts Reporting requirement is an essential function in order to locate and contact Volunteers quickly in the event of a crisis or emergency.

You are required to adhere to your post's Whereabouts Reporting processes. Posts are not authorized to use Whereabouts Reporting as a measurement of your performance at site, time in site, or to track your annual leave. However, Peace Corps staff may review whereabouts reports and records to verify your compliance with this policy.

You are responsible for your own whereabouts reporting; one Volunteer may not make a whereabouts report on behalf of another Volunteer, and Peace Corps staff are not responsible for transmitting or informing your whereabouts information to other staff. We expect you to be responsible and professional and to comply with post's whereabouts notification requirements.

SECTION 5: HEALTH CARE

OVERVIEW⁴⁶

You will be provided with all necessary and appropriate medical care during the course of your Peace Corps service. A comprehensive health care program is managed and implemented in country by the post Peace Corps Medical Officer (PCMO) under administrative supervision of your CD and with professional guidance and oversight from the Office of Medical Services (OMS)

⁴⁵ MS 270

⁴⁶ MS 262

in Peace Corps Washington. Some Peace Corps countries are also served by a Regional Medical Officer (RMO).

The health care program includes:

- Pre-service immunization and prophylaxis as described in the OMS Technical Guidelines, as well as regular immunization and prophylaxis as necessary throughout the term of service;
- Clinical care throughout service;
- Health orientation and education throughout service;
- Evaluation of health conditions at potential sites for Volunteer placement; and
- Other health support for Volunteers at their sites through staff site visits, when appropriate.

All necessary medical care and services are provided primarily through, or under the direction of, the PCMO(s) at post and through local health care providers in country, as necessary. Authorization from the PCMO is required for all medical and dental care not provided directly by Peace Corps medical staff.

Because Volunteers and Trainees face significant health risks, and immediate access to health care overseas is often limited, you are expected to follow both Peace Corps medical policies and the medical advice of your PCMO. Refusal to take required immunizations and vaccinations and medical prophylaxes will result in administrative separation. In addition, failure to follow other medical advice or policies may lead to administrative separation, where such failure poses a serious risk of harm to you or others.

HEALTH CARE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES⁴⁷

You have the right to:

- Receive all necessary medical care in the event of an illness or injury including medical evacuation if needed.
- Be treated with respect, consideration and dignity regardless of your race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation or your participation in any authorized complaint procedure.
- Privacy, security, and medical confidentiality for your health information and records.
- Privacy during the physical exam. You will be offered a chaperone and a gown or drape for all exams that require exposing all or part of your body.
- Be informed about the diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis of an illness or injury.
- Be informed about the credentials and qualifications of your health care providers.
- Be informed about the scope and availability of health care services in your country.
- Receive individual health information regarding personal wellness and illness.
- Receive health education/training on the prevention of illness and injury specific to your country.
- Receive immunizations and malaria prophylaxis according to Peace Corps protocols.

⁴⁷ Technical Guideline 120, Attachment B

- Refuse all or part of your care subject to the conditions imposed by law and Peace Corps policy.
- Be informed about your post-service benefits, including the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) program and post-service health insurance.
- Bring a complaint or concern regarding your health care services to the attention of the appropriate Peace Corps officials.

Your responsibilities include:

- Treat all staff with respect, dignity and consideration.
- Reporting all significant health problems to the PCMO.
- Providing complete information to the PCMO about your past medical history and current health problems to allow proper evaluation and treatment.
- Except in an emergency, obtaining PCMO authorization prior to receiving any medical or dental care.
- Complying with all medical policies and practices of the Volunteer Health Program. For example, you must:
 - Take disease prevention medication as prescribed;
 - Follow all prescribed therapies and other medical recommendations carefully;
 - Not wear contact lenses;
 - Engage in responsible and safe sex if you choose to be sexually active;
 - Keep up to date on your immunizations;
 - Drink alcohol only moderately, if at all, and do not use illegal drugs;
 - Sleep with a mosquito net in malarious areas;
 - Drink safe water and buy and prepare food carefully;
 - Swim only in places that are unquestionably safe.
- Doing all within your power to assure your own well-being and safety. For example, you must:
 - Write a detailed emergency plan for your site;
 - Wear a seat belt, if available, when riding in a vehicle;
 - Wear a helmet when on a bicycle or motorcycle;
 - Avoid all dangerous areas, especially at dusk and at night;
 - Refrain from riding on or operating a motorized two wheel vehicle unless it is allowed in your host country.

MEDICAL EVACUATION⁴⁸

In appropriate situations (as determined by the Office of Health Services and your PCMO), a Volunteer may be medically evacuated to the United States or some other destination when an illness, injury, or other medical necessity requires evaluation and/or treatment beyond the scope of care available in-country.

PREGNANCY⁴⁹

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the

⁴⁸ MS 264

⁴⁹ MS 262

availability of appropriate medical care in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

A Volunteer who is pregnant will be medically evacuated to the United States at the Peace Corps' expense in order to receive necessary or appropriate medical care. The Peace Corps will cover any medical expenses that directly related to a pregnancy until the Volunteer is medically separated. The Peace Corps is prohibited by federal law from paying for abortions except in very limited circumstances. Your PCMO can provide more information on what medical care the Peace Corps provides pregnant Volunteers.

SECTION 6: CONFIDENTIALITY OF VOLUNTEER INFORMATION⁵⁰

The Peace Corps seeks to protect the confidentiality of Volunteer information to the greatest extent possible consistent with applicable laws and effective management of Peace Corps programs. Peace Corps policies limit the amount of information staff members may disclose about applicants, Trainees, Volunteers and Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

With only a few exceptions, the Peace Corps will not disclose non-public information about you to someone outside the agency (including to another Volunteer, your family or friends) unless you have provided written consent.

Your name, dates and country of service are considered public information and may be disclosed to any person upon request and to the public as the Peace Corps deems appropriate. Sensitive information (such as your contact information, location, travel plans, conduct or performance) and protected information (such as your medical information, certain information relating to a sexual assault or stalking, and information relating to Volunteer allegations of misconduct) is further restricted. The Peace Corps provides that a PCMO may share medical information about you to your CD or other staff, where the PCMO determines that there may be a significant risk to your safety or health or that of others or to the Peace Corps' reputation in country. Peace Corps medical staff are required to disclose evidence of illegal drug use by a Volunteer.

If a Volunteer dies, is incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to make decisions (and thus is unable to provide consent), staff members may notify the individual designated by the Volunteer as the Volunteer's next of kin/designated representative on the specified form. You may also list one or more individuals whom the Peace Corps is also authorized to notify in case of an emergency (emergency contact(s)). In that case, you have given express written consent to notify the individuals listed, and the Peace Corps may decide how and when to make such notification. To the extent possible, the Peace Corps will consult with you before notifying a listed individual.

The Peace Corps maintains Volunteer health information electronically. These electronic records are medically confidential and are maintained in compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA)

⁵⁰ MS 294

and Peace Corps policy. You may obtain your medical records by requesting access through your PCMO or the Medical Records office in the Office of Health Services, Peace Corps Washington.

(For more information regarding Confidentiality of Volunteer Information policies, see MS 294 and MS 294 Guidance. For more information about the special rules about disclosure of information relating to sexual assault, see MS 243. For information about the special rules on disclosure of information relating to allegations of misconduct, see MS 271.)

SECTION 7: COMMUNICATION

MEDIA CONTACT⁵¹

You are free to discuss your role in the Peace Corps with media representatives; however, you should notify your CD of such discussions before they take place. You must be aware of, and be sensitive to, the impact your personal comments may have on you, your co-workers and program, and the Peace Corps world-wide.

PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES⁵²

You may write articles for publication during service; however, these should be discussed in advance with your CD to ascertain whether they might cause problems which you may not have anticipated. Publication of material in any format, contrary to your CD's advice, which subsequently results in adverse consequences for you or the program, may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Articles, manuals, teaching materials and other work-related products that you develop in connection with your Peace Corps service and/or that are financed by the Peace Corps or other United States Government funds are in the public domain and not copyrighted by the U.S. Government. Therefore, you cannot claim a copyright in these Peace Corps products.

(See also Ethics and Financial Gain, SECTION 3: Expectations for Volunteer Conduct.)

SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER ONLINE CONTENT⁵³

Volunteers are representatives of the agency and the U.S. government. This means that communication, in person or via social media or other online platforms, should reflect professional and respectful content consistent with Peace Corps policies pertaining to professionalism⁵⁴ and use of IT systems⁵⁵. Anything you may post in a positive or negative light can be shared widely. Even if the social media or other online account is private, your photos, videos, stories, or comments may still end up in the public sphere. Posts on social media or other online platforms,

⁵¹ MS 204

⁵² MS 204

⁵³ MS 204

⁵⁴ MS 204

⁵⁵ MS 543

which subsequently result in adverse consequences for you or the program, may be grounds for disciplinary action.

USE OF THE PEACE CORPS NAME, SEAL AND LOGO⁵⁶

You may use the Peace Corps name and logo in connection with your primary and secondary projects with the approval of your CD. You may use the Peace Corps name and logo on business cards, emails and other official communications during service, but only in connection with your Peace Corps service and for the purposes of accurately identifying your position to interested parties. CDs must approve all such uses. You may not use the Peace Corps name or logo for personal gain, financial benefit or other individual purposes. Returned Volunteers may not use the Peace Corps logo after their service ends.

Use of the Peace Corps seal may only be authorized by the Director of the Peace Corps.

PEACE CORPS AND OTHER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS⁵⁷

Peace Corps-owned computers are made available overseas to Volunteers on a limited basis. You are required to comply with the mandatory guidelines on the use of such computers as set out in Peace Corps policies.

There is no expectation of or right to privacy on Peace Corps computers or networks.

The extent to which you have access to computer equipment owned by other entities, such as a sponsoring agency, local non-governmental agency, or private donor, may vary from post to post. If you use such equipment, you should follow applicable computer use policies and be aware that the Peace Corps will not be responsible for the maintenance or replacement of the equipment.

SECTION 8: ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

ALLOWANCES⁵⁸

It is Peace Corps policy that Volunteers live modestly by the standards of the people they serve, yet not in a manner that would endanger their health or safety. At the end of your service, you are encouraged to donate items purchased with Peace Corps allowances to your community, other Volunteers, or local charitable institutions.

Settling-In Allowance⁵⁹

Volunteers are provided a settling-in allowance to purchase necessary housing supplies and equipment for their initial site assignment. This allows you to be involved immediately in your

⁵⁶ MS 321

⁵⁷ MS 543

⁵⁸ MS 221

⁵⁹ MS 221

community with freedom to manage your own affairs. Volunteers are encouraged to purchase items available locally and to restrict their purchases to genuine needs. Supplies and equipment purchased with the settling-in allowance become your personal property.

If you are reassigned to another location, an additional settling-in allowance may be authorized if your CD believes it is justified.

Living Allowance⁶⁰

Volunteers receive a living allowance in order that they may serve effectively and safely overseas. Living allowances are based on local living standards and costs and will thus vary among, and sometimes within, countries. Calculations for living allowances include categories such as food, local transportation, some communication costs, household supplies, and clothing.

At least annually, the post must conduct a living allowance survey of Volunteers. This survey is intended to help the CD determine the most appropriate level of goods and services needed to ensure the health and effective service of Volunteers, and to determine if a different locality supplement is warranted for a particular site type or location.

Overpayments of any monthly allowance must be collected from you whenever you do not serve one calendar day within any given month.

Readjustment Allowance⁶¹

The readjustment allowance assists Volunteers in transitioning from Peace Corps service; it is not a deferred salary. Readjustment allowance, set at a global rate by Peace Corps Washington⁶², currently accrues at the rate of \$400 per month for each month of satisfactory service (pro-rated for partial months of service) from your enter-on-duty date as a Trainee to the end of your Peace Corps service. Volunteers who extend beyond two years of service and Peace Corps Response Volunteers receive \$500 per month. Peace Corps Washington establishes and maintains a record of your accrued readjustment allowance and all disbursements made from your account.

Upon completion of service, one-third of your net readjustment allowance will be paid to you immediately. The remaining balance will be sent electronically to your bank or a check will be mailed to the U.S. address of your choosing. The readjustment allowance is subject to deductions for Social Security and Medicare tax; those deductions cannot be waived.

You are not entitled to receive or use your readjustment allowance until your service ends, except in certain limited situations. You may request a single payment withdrawal from your net accrued readjustment allowance account for certain non-routine expenses, such as: family support; insurance premiums; liens; and other obligations incurred prior to Peace Corps training and service. Additionally, you can request single withdrawal payments for purposes such as: continuing education application fees; payments for housing after Peace Corps service; dental

⁶⁰ MS 221

⁶¹ MS 223

⁶² Cited rates are effective May 1, 2022

expenses not covered by the Peace Corps; unusual family, medical, or other emergency expenses; and federal income tax payments.

You may also request that certain recurring expenses be paid monthly from your readjustment allowance account. Recurring payments can be requested to continue payments on obligations incurred prior to Peace Corps training or service, such as family support, student loans, and credit card debt; and to support readjustment after Peace Corps service, such as payments made into an Individual Retirement Account.

During the course of your service, all withdrawal requests made and granted against your net accrued Readjustment Allowance at the time the requests are made cannot exceed 75 percent of your total net accrued Readjustment Allowance during service.

The CD may authorize a withdrawal of \$200 or less for payment of extraordinary expenses, such as fees for applications to colleges and universities, or emergency leave travel not covered by the Peace Corps,

If you have any outstanding debts at the time you end service (including in-country debt and loss or unaccounted for grant funds), the Peace Corps will deduct those payments from your readjustment allowance account. Early terminating Volunteers may be advanced up to \$200 from their readjustment allowance account before leaving the country. Early terminating Trainees are not eligible for an advance from their readjustment allowance.

Additional guidance about withdrawals from your readjustment allowance account can be found in the Peace Corps Manual or obtained from the Director of Management and Operations or other in-country financial staff.

BAGGAGE⁶³

You are given baggage allowances for the transport of personal effects from your authorized point of departure to your country of assignment and return. Airline baggage regulations vary greatly on a worldwide basis. Peace Corps' authorized allowances are restricted to a total of 100 pounds in two checked pieces of accompanied baggage. If your airline allows more than two checked pieces of baggage free of charge, you may take advantage of the airline's allowance provided there is no additional charge to the Peace Corps. You are responsible for payment of any baggage that exceeds Peace Corps authorized allowances.

The Peace Corps assumes no responsibility for accompanied or unaccompanied baggage that is damaged or lost.

BANKING

During Pre-Service Training, Peace Corps staff will assist you in opening a local bank account to which your Peace Corps allowances, reimbursements and other payments will be deposited. You are responsible for managing your own bank account, ensuring the safety of all banking documentation, and closing bank accounts prior to the close of your service.

⁶³ MS 214

DEBT OBLIGATIONS⁶⁴

Service in the Peace Corps does not relieve you from responsibility for private debts, and the Peace Corps will not permit such service to be used to avoid these responsibilities. Volunteers are expected to pay their financial and legal obligations promptly. Generally, the Peace Corps has no authority to act as an intermediary to collect private debts on behalf of a claimant, whether the debt was incurred before or during Peace Corps service; nor does Peace Corps staff have authority to direct Volunteers to take specific action concerning their financial affairs. The allowances of Peace Corps Volunteers generally are not subject to garnishment and cannot be diverted, without the Volunteer's permission or as otherwise provided by law, to satisfy private indebtedness. However, debts owed to the U.S. government, including the Peace Corps, may be deducted from your readjustment allowance.

You should make every effort to resolve any financial difficulties and to prevent them from becoming matters of controversy. Continued nonpayment of an acknowledged or adjudicated obligation without good cause reflects adversely upon you and the Peace Corps. Moreover, the failure to discharge your debts promptly may create difficulty for other Volunteers in dealing with the host country commercial community. Thus, such conduct may be grounds for administrative separation.

Student Loans⁶⁵

Peace Corps has no authority to grant a deferment of student loan obligations, to permit forbearance of student loans, or to pay down, cancel, or forgive student loan obligations. Moreover, Peace Corps has no authority to determine if you are eligible for a loan deferment, forbearance, cancellation, or forgiveness. Such actions are at the discretion of the lending institution or loan servicer and their respective student loan policies. Upon your request, the Peace Corps can certify your Peace Corps service and have a portion of your accrued readjustment allowance apply to the repayment of student loans.

The Peace Corps website has some basic guidance and resource materials to assist you.

FUNDRAISING, GRANTS AND GIFTS⁶⁶

The Peace Corps Small Grants Program, funded by external sources, enables posts to better support and enhance development and implementation of sustainable grassroots projects that build capacity in communities where Volunteers serve. The Peace Corps Small Grants Program is managed by offices at Peace Corps Washington.

Volunteers are not authorized to solicit or accept gifts on behalf of the Peace Corps, including crowdfunding or other online fundraising efforts for any purpose. Accepting external funds outside of the Small Grants Program makes you susceptible to safety and security risks and undermines the Peace Corps' approach to development and Volunteers' effectiveness in their communities.

⁶⁴ MS 232

⁶⁵ MS 231

⁶⁶ MS 720; MS 204

You may, however, promote approved Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) projects among your family and friends. Information about PCPP processes can be obtained from your post.

In the event there is a possible, pending or future gift to the agency, which advances the mission of the agency and the post, you should contact your Director of Programming and Training (DPT) and CD, and, as needed, the Office of Gifts and Grants Management, for further guidance.

HOME-OF-RECORD⁶⁷

Your home-of-record is the city and state or country which you determine to be your permanent residence. Peace Corps utilizes your home-of-record for multiple purposes, including travel arrangements, medical evacuations, and mailing income tax forms following the end of your service. Requests for home-of-record changes must meet one of several conditions listed in Peace Corps global policy; changes cannot be made merely for your convenience. Requests for any changes to your home-of-record must be submitted no later than 75 days prior to your scheduled departure date and must be approved by your CD and Peace Corps Washington.

INCOME TAX⁶⁸

The readjustment allowance, Trainee walk-around allowance, annual leave allowance, special leave allowance, and a portion of the living allowance are subject to federal income tax. The settling-in allowance and allowances connected to travel away from post are not taxable.

At the end of each tax year, Peace Corps Washington will provide a W-2 form reflecting the taxable portion of allowances you received. Income tax packets are then prepared and distributed to all Volunteers. This information is only for Peace Corps income. Any income earned prior to Peace Corps service, or from investments or other sources, may be taxable as well. Depending on the state of residence, Volunteers may also be required to pay state tax. Individuals will need to obtain the forms needed for this. Volunteers are not required to pay income tax to the host country government. Consult a tax specialist if questions arise related to taxes. Peace Corps staff cannot provide income tax guidance.

Upon your request, your CD may approve cash withdrawals of up to \$350 from your readjustment allowance account for payment of federal income tax. Withdrawals of more than \$350 require authorization from Peace Corps Washington. You can also request monthly deductions from your Readjustment Allowance account for federal tax withholding.

LEAVE⁶⁹

You must comply with the post's Whereabouts Reporting policy and Peace Corps' transportation and travel policies when you leave your community. Except for medical evacuation and emergency leave, which must be authorized by Peace Corps Washington, you must obtain your CD's authorization before you leave your country of assignment. Additionally, whenever you

⁶⁷ MS 219

⁶⁸ MS 236

⁶⁹ MS 220; MS 450

travel to another country that has Peace Corps programs, you must adhere to that post's travel policies.

The Peace Corps continues to provide necessary medical coverage during your leave. If you become ill or injured while on leave, contact the Office of Medical Services (Peace Corps Washington).

(See also Whereabouts Reporting, SECTION 4: Safety and Security and SECTION 10: Transportation and Travel.)

Annual Leave⁷⁰

Annual leave, also known as vacation leave, generally provides Volunteers the opportunity to increase their understanding of their host country and region or to travel to areas outside of their country or region, while allowing time for rest and relaxation. You accrue annual leave at a rate of two days for each month of service and receive an annual leave allowance, set globally by Peace Corps Washington, with your monthly living allowance.

Annual leave is discouraged during the beginning or end of service and should not be taken during the first three months or last three months of service, except when your CD approves leave under special circumstances, or in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave.

CDs have the discretion, consistent with policies established in-country, to advance annual leave, not to exceed the amount accruable during your service. CDs also can reduce accrued, unused or future annual leave as a disciplinary action for violation of policies.

When requesting leave for travel outside of your country of assignment, you must inform your CD of the planned travel destinations and receive the CD's prior approval before commencing leave.

You must take annual leave any time you travel out of your country of assignment for vacation purposes. Annual leave for out-of-country travel is computed in terms of calendar days, including weekends and host country and U.S. holidays. The day after departure from the country of assignment through the day of return to the country of assignment are counted as annual leave days. The computation of annual leave days does not include the necessary minimum time to travel between your site and the point of exit out of or entry into the country of assignment.

When annual leave is taken within your country of assignment, host country holidays are not counted in computing annual leave days. However, all weekends and U.S. holidays that fall within the annual leave period are counted in computing annual leave days.

Time Away from Community⁷¹

It is the policy of the Peace Corps that Volunteers participate fully in the culture of their host communities. However, the Peace Corps recognizes that you may need occasional days away from your community to take care of personal needs. Such time away from your community does

⁷⁰ MS 220

⁷¹ MS 218; MS 220

not constitute annual leave. However, such breaks should be taken infrequently and must not be abused. Reporting under your post's Whereabouts Reporting policy is still required.

Holidays and Host Country Vacation Periods⁷²

Volunteers may be excused, according to their post's policy, from work on holidays during which their host country counterparts do not work. Volunteers are not excused from work on U.S. holidays, which are not observed by their co-workers. During host country vacation periods, Volunteers, unless otherwise permitted by Peace Corps policies, are expected to take annual leave or use this time to work on Peace Corps activities.

Emergency Leave⁷³

In the event of a family medical emergency affecting a family member, as defined below, Peace Corps Washington may authorize emergency leave and travel, at the Peace Corps' expense. The term "medical emergency" is defined as:

- a terminal illness;
- a critical, life-threatening illness or injury where death is considered likely within 14-28 days;
- onset of para/quadruplegia;
- death; and
- a situation in which your personal presence is required to make new living or care arrangements for an ill or injured family member. Note: This is not to provide care but only to arrange for care if you are the only person able to make these arrangements.

Emergency leave is available only for medical emergencies directly affecting:

- a member of your immediate family (i.e., a parent, spouse, sibling, child, or grandchild related to you by blood, marriage, or adoption). This definition includes step-relatives (e.g., stepmother), but does not include in-laws or grandparent except one who meets the definition of surrogate below.
- a caregiver who, in the absence of one or both parents, lived with you and performed a parent's duties and responsibilities for you for at least five consecutive years prior to you reaching the age of 18. (This is a surrogate parent who took the place of a parent absent in your life, not an additional person who lived with you.)
- a person for whom you assumed a parent's duties and responsibilities for at least five consecutive years prior to that person attaining the age of 18.

To obtain authorization for emergency leave, either you or a family member must contact Peace Corps Washington, who subsequently will contact your CD. The emergency line will be answered by Peace Corps Washington staff, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 855.855.1961 (option 2) or 202.692.1470. Peace Corps Washington will determine whether a family medical emergency exists, including verification of the emergency with a third party (e. g., doctor, nurse, funeral director, coroner), and then authorize or deny emergency leave. Neither your CD nor post staff has the authority to approve emergency leave.

⁷² MS 220

⁷³ MS 220

Emergency leave is limited to 14 days, excluding travel time.

During emergency leave, you continue to receive the normal living allowance (excluding any extension period) and during travel time. Payment of the living allowance during an extension depends on the type of extension authorized.

After confirming a continuing medical emergency, Peace Corps Washington may authorize, with the concurrence of the CD, an extension of 14 days' additional leave to be charged to accrued annual leave or to leave without allowance. Although you may have accrued annual leave, you may not use such leave for an extension of the emergency leave without prior approval of Peace Corps Washington and your CD. Under no circumstances may the combined emergency leave and extensions, excluding travel time, exceed 60 days.

The Peace Corps will generally provide travel and allowances only for the affected Volunteer.

No more than one emergency leave may be granted in connection with the same family medical emergency. For purposes of granting emergency leave, the death of a family member whose injury or illness occasioned one emergency leave is regarded as a different family medical emergency.

If additional leave is required for the same family emergency after you return to your assignment, you may request annual leave in accordance with post's policies, request leave without allowance, or resign from the Peace Corps to return home permanently. You are responsible for all transportation costs if annual leave or leave without allowance is granted in such circumstances. In the event of the family member's death while you are on annual leave or leave without allowance to attend to that family member's illness or injury, you may be retroactively authorized emergency leave by Peace Corps Washington and reimbursed for travel expenses.

Professional or Academic Examinations⁷⁴

You may take up to three days of administrative leave in order to take professional or academic examinations (e.g., LSAT, GRE, Foreign Service Exam). During that time, you will continue to receive your living allowance and accrue readjustment allowances; however, no other allowances will be paid or authorized.

Leave Without Allowance (LWOA)⁷⁵

At your CD's discretion, you may be placed in LWOA status and be absent from training or your project site for personal reasons for up to 30 days. Your CD is authorized to grant a subsequent extension of up to 30 days. The CD's decision must be based on a determination that your absence will not adversely affect your training, project, or Peace Corps' effectiveness in the host country.

In LWOA status, you do not accrue readjustment allowance or receive other allowances, except for a portion of the living allowance which may be continued if needed to meet ongoing expenses at your assigned site, such as rent or electric bills.

⁷⁴ MS 220

⁷⁵ MS 220

Third Goal on Annual Leave⁷⁶

Third Goal on Annual Leave (3GOAL) is an incentive program for Volunteers to share their host country and Volunteer service experiences with Americans while providing an opportunity to earn back up to three days of annual leave days. A Third Goal activity is a planned event or talk to a group of Americans in the United States that creates a better understanding of the people or culture in your country of service. For example, Third Goal activities include visiting a classroom and giving an interactive presentation; hosting a table at a high school career fair; and giving a talk at a local community organization. Social occasions with Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, or informal gatherings with friends and family are not considered Third Goal activities for the purposes of this leave credit.

Your CD has the discretion to approve a credit of up to three annual leave days for a Volunteer who registers for and conducts a Third Goal activity while on annual leave in the United States. You can receive up to a day of 3GOAL credit for each leave day during which you conduct one or more Third Goal activities, up to a maximum of three days credit during your Volunteer service.

In order to qualify for a 3GOAL annual leave credit, you must obtain approval from your CD at least two weeks prior to beginning annual leave and register the planned activity with Peace Corps Washington. In your request to your CD, include the date, time, place, estimated number of attendees at each planned 3GOAL activity, and the number of 3GOAL credit days requested. Once your 3GOAL leave is approved, please email the Office of Third Goal and Returned Volunteer Services (thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov) and the closest recruiter to your event with the date, time, place, and estimated number of attendees. You can find the nearest recruiter by visiting the [Peace Corps website](#) and entering the zip code of your event. If more than one recruiter is listed, please include both recruiters on the email.

Upon returning to Post, you must report your 3GOAL activities in the Volunteer Reporting and Grants (VRG) tool.

Brand Ambassador Program

The new Peace Corps Volunteer Brand Ambassador Program provides an opportunity for currently serving Volunteers to inspire other U.S. citizens to apply for future Peace Corps service. Brand Ambassadors' outreach and presentations help increase awareness of the Peace Corps and assist the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection in generating interest among possible future applicants. By participating in the Brand Ambassador Program, Volunteers gain valuable skills in conducting outreach activities, public speaking, and leadership.

Volunteers who, after submitting an application, are selected to be Brand Ambassadors must complete mandatory training prior to their presentations, which can be conducted through the Third Goal program, either while they are on annual leave or virtually from their host country. Brand Ambassadors are expected to organize and conduct presentations independently. They may also be asked to serve as panelists in the Peace Corps' virtual and in-person recruiting events, and/or collaborate with the Peace Corps communications team to highlight their story to the public.

⁷⁶ MS 220

Brand Ambassadors who conduct in-person events while on annual leave may receive, at the discretion of the CD, an additional day of annual leave for each day in which they participate in an event, up to a maximum of three additional annual leave days. The Peace Corps will reimburse costs for each in-person event, up to \$100, such as ground transportation and printed materials, but not including food, lodging, or airfare.

Presentations may also be conducted virtually from a Volunteer's site. If your site has low internet connectivity, you may be reimbursed for travel to the Peace Corps <country> office to use the office's internet connection. Virtual events do not qualify for additional annual leave days under existing global policy.

Respite Leave⁷⁷

The Peace Corps may authorize in-country respite leave and travel, at the agency's expense, in the event of a traumatic event that you experience during service. Respite leave is granted in cases where the leave may provide appropriate respite, recovery or resolution to a traumatic event experienced within the time allotted (generally 30 days from the traumatic event). You may request respite leave through the Office of Victim Advocacy (OVA), the PCMO, and/or the CD.

You can be considered for respite leave if all of the following conditions are satisfied:

- The traumatic event prompting the respite leave request is the result of any of the following incidents that happen during Peace Corps training and service:
 - a sexual assault or stalking;
 - an aggravated physical assault;
 - being a witness to a violent crime; or
- Directly experiencing or witnessing an accident that resulted in serious injury or a person's death, and you reported the incident to the Peace Corps and request Respite Leave within 30 days of submitting that report.
- The PCMO does not believe that medical hold is warranted at the time of the request.

Respite leave can only be granted once for each report of a traumatic event, or, if multiple traumatic events are experienced simultaneously, respite leave can only be granted once for the report of those traumatic events. Respite leave days cannot be split up or taken at multiple times, unless the CD (or in Restricted Report cases, the PCMO) determines that extenuating circumstances are present and warrant an exception. Respite leave may not be combined with annual leave.

You are expected to begin respite leave as soon as feasible following approval. In consultation with you, the staff person granting respite leave will determine permissible in-country locations for the respite leave, according to the post-specific list of permissible locations. While on respite leave you must adhere to existing travel and whereabouts policies at post. You will continue to receive your living allowance and will be reimbursed for travel expenses and per diem according to the post's travel reimbursement policies.

⁷⁷ MS 245

Volunteers can be granted an initial respite leave of 1-7 calendar days. In situations that warrant more time away from site, the CD (or in the case of Restricted Reports, the PCMO) may extend respite leave up to a total of 14 calendar days, inclusive of the initial respite leave days.

Special Leave⁷⁸

A Volunteer who extends service for a year or more (by one or more extensions) is entitled to 30 days of special leave. Volunteers granted special leave in conjunction with an extension of service receive a special daily leave allowance at the start of the special leave.

Administrative Hold⁷⁹

The Regional Director (Peace Corps Washington) may authorize non-duty status where the Peace Corps requires a Volunteer to be away from the country of assignment for a limited period of time. Administrative hold may be used for an array of reasons, such as withdrawing you from your country of assignment as a result of civil or political unrest or for safety reasons. During administrative hold, living allowance is discontinued; however, a daily allowance is provided.

Medical Hold⁸⁰

The Office of Medical Services (Peace Corps Washington) may place Volunteers on non-duty status for a limited period of time because of an unresolved medical condition. During medical hold, living allowance is discontinued; however, a daily allowance is provided.

LIFE INSURANCE⁸¹

You are automatically insured by a non-convertible death benefit insurance policy effective from the first day of Staging. Coverage under the policy terminates automatically:

- At the end of fifteen days following termination of service in the U.S.; or
- At the end of sixty days following termination of service overseas.

Premium charges are deducted for each month you accrue readjustment allowance. You can waive life insurance coverage at the start of service or at any time during service. Once waived, insurance coverage may be restarted during your current term of service but additional actions, such as an independent health assessment, may be required.

MAIL AND PACKAGES⁸²

You will receive additional information about mail services in your country of assignment.

PASSPORTS AND OTHER OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS⁸³

⁷⁸ MS 220; MS 221; MS 281

⁷⁹ MS 220; MS 221

⁸⁰ MS 220; MS 221

⁸¹ MS 223

⁸² MS 835

⁸³ MS 213

Peace Corps arranges for you to receive a U.S. No-Fee Passport (containing service-related visas if applicable) to be used during your Peace Corps service for the following purposes:

- (a) official travel during your Peace Corps service, including, but not limited to, medical evacuation, special leave, and emergency leave;
- (b) direct travel between your home-of-record (or other destination as instructed by the Peace Corps) and your country of service at the beginning and end of service;
- (c) during personal travel for the sole purpose of exiting from and returning to your country of service due to the host government's immigration and visa processes;
- (d) exiting the country of service at the end of service; and
- (e) in order to obtain a visa in your personal passport in the case of Field Termination.

Limited use of the No-Fee Passports in emergency situations may be permitted.

Unless permitted as specified above, you may not use a No-Fee Passport. You must use a Personal Passport for all personal travel during Peace Corps service and for all personal travel following early termination or completion of service. Although you are permitted to use your No-Fee Passports to exit and enter your country of service while on personal leave, you must use your Personal Passport to enter and exit all other countries while on personal leave. Consult post staff on the use of the No-Fee Passport to exit and enter the country of service.

Volunteers on personal international travel must carry both a Personal Passport and a No-Fee Passport in order to avoid any potential travel disruptions and misuse of the No-Fee Passport. Using a No-Fee Passport for personal travel simply because you do not have a Personal Passport does not constitute emergency use and is not permissible under State Department policy. As such, Volunteers planning personal international travel during service or immediately after their service are strongly encouraged to obtain a Personal Passport while in the U.S. prior to departure for service.

You are responsible for safeguarding the No-Fee Passport issued to you at all times. Notify post staff if your No-Fee Passport and/or visa becomes lost, stolen or damaged.

Your CD has the authority to hold and secure No-Fee Passports for safekeeping in certain limited situations. However, CDs cannot use this authority to retain No-Fee Passports to restrict Volunteers' travel if the use of the No-Fee Passport is permitted as listed above.

No-Fee Passports will be cancelled by the Transportation Division within 45 days of the end of a Volunteer's service.

(See Field Termination, SECTION 13: Early Termination of Service.)

PERSONAL PROPERTY⁸⁴

You are personally responsible for safeguarding your personal cash, living and other allowances, personal property, and Peace Corps property in your possession. You should bring only the amount of personal property and cash that is necessary to maintain a modest standard of living,

⁸⁴ MS 235

and should not bring excess cash or expensive or valuable items. The Peace Corps will generally not replace or reimburse you for property or cash lost, damaged, or stolen.

The Peace Corps recommends that Volunteers consider the purchase of personal property insurance, as the Peace Corps does not insure a Volunteer's property and cash. Upon your request, the Peace Corps will arrange for a withdrawal from your readjustment allowance account to pay the insurance premiums.

In the limited circumstances when Peace Corps may replace or reimburse a Volunteer for losses, no claim will be approved for insured property unless the insurer has first denied the claim.

If your property or cash is lost, damaged or stolen, the Peace Corps may replace or reimburse the loss if your CD determines:

- The item of property (excluding cash or allowances) is essential to your health, welfare, or continued service;
- The Peace Corps assumed custody of your property or cash in accordance with Peace Corps policies and procedures;
- You lost living or walk-around allowance;
- The circumstances regarding your loss of an allowance (other than living allowance) lead to the determination that full or partial reimbursement is appropriate and fair; or
- The loss resulted from Peace Corps evacuation of the host country, an event that is often uninsurable.

TRAVEL EXPENSES⁸⁵

Volunteers traveling on official business will be provided transportation at Peace Corps expense via the most direct, economical, and advantageous means available in compliance with Peace Corps regulations and procedures.

Volunteers authorized to travel on official business between their country of assignment and the United States, or their country of assignment and a third country, will receive en route travel allowance to cover lodging as needed and incidental expenses while in transit.

Volunteers will receive an allowance to cover any applicable departure taxes that may be charged when leaving the country of service. This allowance will be paid on authorized emergency travel, special leave, and for Completion of Service or Early Termination travel purchased by Peace Corps.

Peace Corps has no authority to pay expenses that you incur in your individual pursuit of future employment or educational opportunities. Thus, Peace Corps will not provide transportation, daily allowances, or travel allowances for travel outside your country of assignment to take examinations relating to future education or interview for future employment.

VOTING⁸⁶

⁸⁵ MS 221

⁸⁶ MS 253

Volunteers who wish to vote by absentee ballot are responsible for observing the requirements and regulations of the state in which their home of record is located.

As an agency of the U.S. government, Peace Corps participates in the Federal Voting Assistance Plan which supports absentee voting by U.S. citizens living overseas.

The Voting Assistance Guide is a compilation of absentee voting regulations, laws, deadlines, materials, and procedures. It is the primary source of information for U.S. citizens covered by the Absentee Voting Act regarding the procedures for registering to vote, requesting a ballot, and voting in their State or territory of legal residence. The guide is issued by the Department of Defense and is regularly updated to accommodate state changes. The Voting Assistance Guide is available online or you can read a copy in the Peace Corps office. Volunteers can also email FVAP at vote@fvap.gov or call 1-800-8683 for the most up-to-date voting information.

The Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which is available online and in the Peace Corps office, can be used to request ballots for primary and general elections for Federal offices. You are responsible for filling out the FPCA according to the guidelines in the Voting Assistance Guide and then sending it to your local election office.

Further information on the Federal Voting Assistance Plan and a copy of the Voting Assistance Guide can be found at www.fvap.gov.

SECTION 9: HOUSING AND SITES⁸⁷

All housing or host family arrangements must be inspected and approved by post staff prior to occupancy to ensure each house and/or homestay arrangement meets all minimum standards as established by the Peace Corps and the post. This also applies to Volunteers who wish to change residences.

SECTION 10: TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL⁸⁸

Volunteers are not permitted to travel to countries placed off-limits by the Peace Corps.

Volunteers must adhere to their post transportation policies in their country of service. Volunteers on official travel or annual leave to another Peace Corps post outside of their country of service must also adhere to that post's transportation policies. It is the responsibility of Volunteers to be aware of any travel restrictions before booking travel.

MODES OF TRANSPORTATION⁸⁹

You are prohibited from operating motor vehicles. The only exceptions are when you are on approved leave and the operation of the vehicle does not violate the post-specific transportation policy in the country where the leave is taken, or when otherwise specifically authorized by your CD.

⁸⁷ MS 270

⁸⁸ MS 450; MS 220

⁸⁹ MS 450

Motorcycles⁹⁰

Motorcycle use (including as a passenger) is prohibited except where the CD has determined that use is clearly necessary to accomplish the goals of the particular project to which Volunteers are assigned. In most posts, motorcycle use is not permitted in any situation. You may not purchase or own a motorcycle for project or personal use during Volunteer service. In any case where motorcycle use is approved by the CD, Volunteers must wear approved helmets at all times while operating or riding on a motorcycle. You are required to comply with motorcycle and helmet policies at all times during your Peace Corps service, including periods of leave.

Except in extraordinary circumstances, failure to wear a Peace Corps-approved motorcycle helmet while operating or riding on a motorcycle will result in mandatory administrative separation.

Bicycles⁹¹

You must wear an approved bicycle helmet while operating or riding a bicycle.

SECTION 11: REPORTING ALLEGATIONS AND CONCERNS⁹²

You have the right to bring to the attention of the Peace Corps allegations of misconduct, mismanagement, or violations of law or policy that relate to Peace Corps staff, contractors, other Volunteers, programs and operations. You also have the right to discuss with the Peace Corps allegations or concerns on topics or issues that are beyond the legal jurisdiction of the Peace Corps, such as behavior by a host country national with whom you have regular contact, but who does not work for the Peace Corps or participate directly in a Peace Corps project or program. Peace Corps staff must handle the information with utmost discretion in order to protect the confidentiality and safety of Volunteers.

No Peace Corps staff person may retaliate against you because you reported an allegation or concern.

You may report confidentially allegations or concerns related to issues referenced above to 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 Peace Corps Washington.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

You are strongly encouraged to report promptly to the Office of Inspector General suspected fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement related to Peace Corps programs and operations, including criminal wrongdoing, serious administrative misconduct and violations of federal laws, rules and regulations, by Peace Corps staff, Volunteers and any contractors and other individuals

⁹⁰ MS 523

⁹¹ MS 523

⁹² MS 271; MS 293; MS 645; MS 861

and entities conducting transactions with the Peace Corps or receiving Peace Corps funds. You are also strongly encouraged to promptly report to the Office of Inspector General any activity which you reasonably believe constitutes a substantial and specific danger to the public health or safety relating to programs and operations of the Peace Corps.

The Office of the Inspector General may be reached via:

- Email: oig@peacecorpsig.gov
- Telephone: 1.800.233.5874 or 202.692.2915
- Online Reporting Tool: www.peacecorps.gov/oig/contactus

You are required to cooperate fully and truthfully with the OIG during the course of an audit, evaluation, investigation, or review. You are also required to reply fully and promptly to requests by the OIG for information and data and, when requested, make available to the OIG documents and other materials related to agency programs and operations.

Unreasonable refusal to answer questions or provide information or documentation reasonably related to any authorized OIG function may result in disciplinary or other administrative action at the discretion of appropriate agency officials. Knowingly furnishing false or misleading information to an OIG representative during the course of an authorized OIG function may result in disciplinary or other administrative action and/or criminal prosecution.

Peace Corps staff are required to report expeditiously the following types of suspected Volunteer misconduct to the Office of Inspector General:

- Sale, distribution, or smuggling of illegal drugs or prescription drugs;
- Engaging in sexual activities or sexual contact with any person under the age of 18;
- Fraternalization;
- Sexual assault (does not include restricted reports), sexual exploitation or stalking;
- Loss, theft, embezzlement or misuse of Peace Corps funds or funds entrusted to you by another party;
- Fraud or other misuse of your position for financial gain;
- Materially misleading or inaccurate information in the application process;
- Theft or serious misuse of Peace Corps property or other resources, including but not limited to Peace Corps IT systems;
- Any other criminal wrongdoing under U.S. state or federal law; and
- Any other violations of Peace Corps policies that may have a serious impact on the integrity of Peace Corps programs or operations.

OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND DIVERSITY

If you feel that you have been discriminated against by Peace Corps staff or been subject to harassment by staff, you may contact the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCD). You may also contact OCD if you would like to request an accommodation for a disability.

You must contact OCD within 30 days of the alleged discriminatory action.

The Office of Civil Rights and Diversity may be reached via:

- Email: ocrd@peacecorps.gov
- Telephone: 202.692.2139

- Postal service: 1275 First Street NE, 1111 20th Street NW, Washington, DC 20526.

OFFICE OF MEDICAL SERVICES

If you are concerned about the care you are receiving from your medical officer or an in-country provider, you may contact the Office of Medical Services Quality Improvement Unit Quality Nurse Line via:

- Email: qualitynurse@peacecorps.gov

RETALIATION PROHIBITED

Peace Corps staff may not retaliate against you because you contacted the OIG or OCRD, or reported alleged discrimination or harassment, or raised concerns or allegations of misconduct by a Peace Corps staff person. Peace Corps staff are prohibited from taking, or threatening to take, any action against you in retaliation for making a complaint or disclosing information to the OIG, unless the complaint was made or the information disclosed with the knowledge that it was false or with willful disregard for its truth or falsity.

Volunteer complaints of retaliation may be filed with the Office of Inspector General at any time or with the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity within 60 days of the occurrence of the retaliation.

SECTION 12: COMPLETION OF SERVICE⁹³

You are expected to honor fully your commitment to serve the people of the host country to the best of your ability for the period of time specified by the Peace Corps, which is usually 24 months after your oath date (unless serving as a Peace Corps Response Volunteer).

EARLY COMPLETION OF SERVICE⁹⁴

Your Completion of Service (COS) date may be advanced to a date that is more than 21 months after your oath date, provided that you will have completed your primary and secondary responsibilities before the proposed COS date and that host country officials concur. Your CD may advance your COS to a date that reflects more than 23 months of service after your oath date. Advancement of your COS to a date that reflects between 21 and 23 months of service after your oath date requires the Regional Director's approval.

EXTENSION OF SERVICE⁹⁵

You may request permission to extend service by submitting a written request to your CD. For administrative purposes, such requests must be made at least two months before the established COS date. In unusual situations an extension request made during the last two months of your service may be considered for approval by your CD.

⁹³ MS 281

⁹⁴ MS 281

⁹⁵ MS 281

Volunteers extending their service for 12 months or more are entitled to 30 days of special leave. Each day of special leave is considered part of your service, but is not counted toward completion of the extension period, e.g., a 12-month extension and 30 days of special leave extends your COS date by 13 months. If your CD determines that the nature of your assignment is such that an 11-month rather than a 12-month extension would be appropriate, the Regional Director's concurrence is needed to authorize an extension with special leave. This option should be exercised only where the shortness of your assignment results from circumstances beyond your control, such as the length of the school year.

NON-COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES⁹⁶

Federal law and agency policy enables Volunteers, including Peace Corps Response Volunteers (PCRVs), to be selected for employment by some federal agencies outside of competitive hiring processes. These opportunities are not an entitlement to federal employment.

The non-competitive employment opportunities, their eligibility criteria, and the benefits provided at the Peace Corps and at other federal agencies differ.

Peace Corps Eligibility (PCE):

- Volunteers, including PCRVs, are granted three years of PCE status, commencing immediately upon the successful completion of their term of Peace Corps service.
- Volunteers and PCRVs who terminate early may be eligible for PCE if their CD determines that the termination of service is for reasons beyond their control, with the following caveats:
 - A Volunteer's period of service must be of sufficient duration (i.e., at least twelve (12) consecutive months, including training) to demonstrate to the CD the Volunteer's capability to complete satisfactorily a full term of service.
 - A PCRV must complete three months or at least 50 percent of their assigned term of service, whichever is greater.
- PCE is limited to domestic positions within the Peace Corps.
- Former Volunteers with PCE status can be non-competitively selected from a certificate of applicants with PCE (the PCE Roster) if they meet the minimum qualifications for an entry-level position (positions at the Foreign Pay (FP) grades 5/6/7). For positions higher than grade 5, they must compete but only with internal applicants and other former Volunteers with PCE status.
- Volunteers and PCRVs who expect to end their Peace Corps service satisfactorily within 90 days and wish to apply to the "PCE Roster" or for another domestic staff position at the Peace Corps may request a "Pre-Close of Service Consideration of PCE Letter" from their CD. The letter should be submitted as part of your job application. Satisfactory completion of your service and submission of your signed Description of Service are required for appointment.
- The CD's determination of PCE eligibility constitutes the final agency action.

⁹⁶ MS 285

Non-competitive eligibility at other federal agencies (NCE):

- Eligibility for NCE begins immediately upon the successful completion of a Volunteer's term of Peace Corps service and lasts for one year.
- Eligible Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) can be hired non-competitively at some other federal agencies if they meet the minimum qualifications for the position.
- Not all federal agencies provide non-competitive hiring processes for RPCVs.
- The decision whether to hire an RPCV under NCE is at the discretion of the hiring agency, not the Peace Corps.
- When a RPCV enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities that in the view of the hiring agency warrant extension, the hiring agency may extend RPCVs' NCE status for up to three years.
- You will receive certification of your NCE status in your Description of Service (see below) if you were appointed (either by initial appointment or extensions to an initial appointment) to a term of Peace Corps service of at least two consecutive years and satisfactorily complete your full term of service. If your service is terminated prior to the end of the full term of service, you may also be eligible for NCE status when:
 - Your period of service was of sufficient duration (at least 12 consecutive months, including training) to demonstrate the capability to complete satisfactorily a full term of service; and
 - The termination of your service is determined to be for reasons beyond your control.

PCRVs are only eligible for NCE status if they satisfactorily complete PCRVs are only eligible for NCE status if they satisfactorily complete (either by initial appointment or extension to an initial appointment) a term of service of at least two consecutive years and have satisfactorily completed the full term of that service.

Appeals of Eligibility Denial

If you are denied NCE certification despite having served at least 12 months and your service is terminated for a reason beyond your control, the CD must provide you written notification. The notification must include the reasons for denial and information on how you can appeal the CD's decision. Your appeal must explain how your Peace Corps service demonstrated your capability to satisfactorily complete a full term of service had your service not been terminated.

You may appeal a NCE decision by writing to the Associate Director for Global Operations, Peace Corps, 1275 First Street NE, Washington, DC 20526. The appeal must be postmarked or sent by e-mail (NCEappeal@peacecorps.gov) within 30 days of notification of the denial of certification. In the absence of special circumstances, appeals postmarked after this period will not be considered. Your appeal must detail specifically the reason for the appeal and include a copy of your CD's written notification. The Associate Director for Global Operations, in consultation with the appropriate Regional Director and CD, will make the final agency determination on such appeal.

There is no appeal process for the denial of PCE certification.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICE⁹⁷

The Description of Service (DOS) is an official Peace Corps statement of a Volunteer's service that describes the Volunteer's training and overseas activities in non-evaluative terms. It also includes the certification of PCE and/or NCE for those Volunteers who qualify for those benefits. The DOS is a publicly available document except for any information regarding a Volunteer's Social Security Number. The DOS can also serve as an official verification of services performed. Trainees do not receive a DOS.

The DOS for evacuated Volunteers should include an explanation for their early departure.

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS⁹⁸

Peace Corps staff members may provide personal references for Volunteers and Returned Volunteers as long as the recommendation is based on the staff member's personal knowledge of the Volunteer. However, no Volunteer is entitled to such a reference.

POST-SERVICE MEDICAL BENEFITS⁹⁹

Upon leaving service, Peace Corps Volunteers will receive information about medical benefits available to them after service.

The Peace Corps provides vouchers to terminating Volunteers for certain limited medical and dental evaluations after service.

Returned Volunteers may be eligible after service for benefits under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) for conditions that are incurred during Peace Corps service overseas. The Peace Corps provides assistance in filing for FECA benefits with the U.S. Department of Labor, which manages the FECA program.

The Peace Corps also facilitates purchase of a short-term insurance policy that covers medical needs not covered by either FECA or the vouchers described above. The Peace Corps pays for the first month's coverage; you have the option to purchase two additional months of coverage.

RE-ENROLLMENTS AND REINSTATEMENTS¹⁰⁰

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who complete service or are early terminated due to medical separation, interrupted service, or other circumstances beyond their control may seek to be re-enrolled or reinstated to Peace Corps service.

⁹⁷ MS 285

⁹⁸ MS 285

⁹⁹ MS 266

¹⁰⁰ MS 282

SECTION 13: EARLY TERMINATION OF SERVICE¹⁰¹

Peace Corps policies govern the circumstances under which your service may end prior to the completion of your service date. Service in the Peace Corps is voluntary, but once the commitment to serve is made, expectations are created on the part of the Peace Corps, the host country and cooperating agencies. By accepting an invitation, you commit yourself to serve the people of the host country to the best of your ability within the framework and support systems established by the Peace Corps. However, there are circumstances under which you cannot or should not remain in service. Peace Corps expects that you will depart your site in a professional and respectful manner.

EARLY TERMINATION CATEGORIES

There are four types of early termination:

Resignation

A resignation is a decision made by a Volunteer who no longer wishes to continue in Peace Corps service. You have the right to resign at any time, for any reason, and are not required to provide a reason for the resignation.

If you ever consider resigning from Peace Corps, you should:

- Be aware that while it is your right to resign from service at any time, for any reason, the Peace Corps hopes that your original commitment to service will be honored.
- Consider discussing the circumstances surrounding your possible resignation with a Peace Corps staff member, host country national, or another person whose opinion you value.
- Examine possibilities for resolution of the situation short of resignation through counseling (provided by a Peace Corps contracted counselor), peer support, or administrative or programmatic remedies.
- Allow yourself time to ensure that you are not making a hasty decision to resign.

Once you have decided to resign, you should send your decision via email to your Program Manager. Once your resignation email is received, you will need to depart the host country expeditiously, usually within 72 hours.

If you resign while away from your Post (e.g., annual leave), you must notify in writing, as soon as practicable, either the Country Desk Unit at Peace Corps Headquarters or Post staff of your decision.

Once Post staff is aware of your decision, the CD or another staff member will contact you to respond directly to any questions or concerns you may have and to assist with administrative procedures.

¹⁰¹ MS 284

You may choose to resign instead of being administratively separated, except as stated in Administrative Separation policies.

Medical Separation

If you have or develop a medical condition that Peace Corps cannot medically accommodate or resolve within forty-five (45) days or any medical hold extension period granted by the Peace Corps, you will be medically separated. This decision is made by the Office of Medical Services in Peace Corps Washington in consultation with your PCMO and, if needed, appropriate medical consultants.

You may appeal a decision to medically separate you by contacting your Field Support Clinician and requesting a review by the Associate Director, Office of Health Services. The decision of the Associate Director, or their designee, will be the final Agency decision in the case.

Interrupted Service

You may be separated with interrupted service status if your CD determines that circumstances beyond your control make it necessary for you to leave your present assignment.

Interrupted service may be appropriate if:

- You are unable to meet technical or language requirements in your current assignment or country but your CD recommends future volunteer service;
- You no longer meet eligibility requirements due to changes in legal, marital, or other circumstances that are beyond your control;
- There is no viable assignment in the country of assignment for which you are qualified;
- Circumstances in the country of assignment prevent you from carrying out your assignment;
- Circumstances beyond your control may damage your effectiveness or the credibility or effectiveness of the Peace Corps program;
- The host country (or other cooperating agency to which you are assigned) requests that you be removed from service for reasons that would not constitute grounds for administrative separation;
- You have a spouse who has been medically separated, administratively separated, or separated with interrupted service status, and you personally are not subject to administrative separation;
- Circumstances in your country of assignment may endanger your safety;
- You were the victim of a sexual assault, stalking, or other serious crime; or
- You are evacuated but did not serve the requisite period of time to be given completion-of-service date advancement.

If you believe that the reasons for Interrupted Service do not apply, you may appeal the decision in writing to the Regional Director for your country of assignment. The Regional Director's decision is the final Agency action.

Administrative Separation

You may be administratively separated for unsatisfactory conduct or performance; violation of any Peace Corps policy, including those in the Peace Corps Manual, whether agency-wide or post-

specific; or other grounds that diminish your effectiveness or the effectiveness of the Peace Corps program, as determined in the sole discretion of the Peace Corps.

A Trainee may be administratively separated at any time during staging in the U.S. by the Regional Director, or during training overseas by the CD, following consultation with appropriate offices. Trainees are given the option to resign in lieu of being administratively separated within 24 hours after being notified of administrative separation. However, when the decision to administratively separate a Trainee is based upon an admission to the CD or staff of the Office of Inspector General of the use, possession or distribution of drugs, or on a finding of the use, possession or distribution of drugs by the Trainee, the Trainee will not be provided the option to resign in lieu of being administratively separated.

Except as provided below, if you are a Volunteer, your CD, following consultation with the Region and the Office of General Counsel, will provide you a brief Consideration of Administrative Separation (COAS) memo stating the grounds for the separation and the information in support of those grounds. You have the opportunity to respond to the COAS memo and the option to resign in lieu of administrative separation up to 24 hours after a final administrative separation decision is made.

If, after considering your response, your CD decides to separate you, the CD may do so only after review by the Office of General Counsel and with the concurrence of the applicable Regional Director. Following a final administrative separation decision, you will be given an additional 24 hours to resign in lieu of being administratively separated. If you do not resign within 24 hours, you will receive written notification of administrative separation from service.

Apart from instances of Voluntary Self-Referral,¹⁰² you will be administratively separated if you admit to the CD or staff of the Office of Inspector General, or are found to have engaged in the use, possession, or distribution of drugs in a manner not authorized by the Peace Corps for medical purposes, in any way in any country. In such situations, your CD, after consultation with the Region and the Office of General Counsel, will inform you that you are being administratively separated without the option to resign in lieu of administrative separation.

There is no appeal from an administrative separation.

EARLY TERMINATION TRAVEL¹⁰³

The Peace Corps will pay return transportation costs for early terminating Volunteers who, upon termination from the Peace Corps, return directly and immediately to their home of record from their country of assignment. "Direct" means the most direct route from country of assignment to your home-of-record as determined by the Peace Corps. Early terminating Volunteers are expected to depart for their home-of-record within 72 hours. Your CD may grant an exception to the requirement to return directly and immediately to your Home of Record if the requirement would create a hardship for you and the early termination is for reasons beyond your control. Trainees are not eligible for this exception.

¹⁰² MS 204

¹⁰³ MS 284

EVACUATION¹⁰⁴

Evacuation is a partial withdrawal (involving a substantial number of Volunteers and Trainees) or total withdrawal of Volunteers and Trainees from a post, on a temporary or permanent basis, for operational reasons, including, but not limited to, conditions, events, or circumstances in which the Peace Corps cannot adequately ensure the health or safety of the Volunteers and Trainees. As an evacuee, you may be sent to a third country, your home-of-record, or another location in the United States. You may be placed on Administrative Hold, have your Completion-of-Service date advanced, or be early terminated. If evacuated to a third country or location in the U.S. other than your home-of-record, you must remain in that location and may be placed on administrative hold until the Peace Corps makes a determination about your future service.

Volunteers and Trainees who are evacuated and do not return to service will end their service as follows:

- Trainees will be given Interrupted Service.
- Volunteers who have completed fewer than 21 months of service will be given Interrupted Service.
- Volunteers who have completed 21 months or more of service will be given a Completion of Service date advancement.

If your service ends due to an evacuation, you will receive an evacuation allowance in order to facilitate your return to your home-of-record. Volunteers who return to their country of service or continue their service uninterrupted in another country do not receive the evacuation allowance. Evacuated Volunteers and Trainees will be given priority consideration for re-enrollment in another Peace Corps program and may be transferred to other posts.

FIELD TERMINATION¹⁰⁵

An early terminating Trainee or Volunteer who chooses not to accept the return transportation paid by the Peace Corps or be bound by Peace Corps travel policies is considered to have field terminated. If you choose to field terminate, the Peace Corps will not cover your return travel costs to your home-of-record. However, at your request, the Peace Corps may pay for a ticket to your home-of-record if there are sufficient funds in your readjustment allowance to deduct the cost of the ticket. Once the decision to field terminate is made and termination is complete, the decision cannot be reversed or changed. The Peace Corps will not assume any expenses for return transportation costs or shipment of personal effects.

If you choose field termination, your No-Fee Passport and visa will be cancelled at the end of your service. Your No-Fee Passport and visa may be used to exit the country of service at the end of service and to obtain a visa in your Personal Passport. A Personal Passport must be used for any subsequent travel during which you will travel as a private U.S. citizen without travel assistance or other support from the Peace Corps. You are encouraged to obtain medical

¹⁰⁴ MS 284; MS 221

¹⁰⁵ MS 284, MS 213

insurance to provide for any necessary medical care or medical evacuation after Peace Corps service.

The Peace Corps will determine the final balance of your readjustment allowance account after all deductions have been made to cover unpaid allowances, overpayments, debts owed to the Peace Corps and in-country debts. Upon your request, your CD may authorize an advance of up to \$200.00, provided there is a sufficient balance in your readjustment allowance account. Trainees are not eligible for a readjustment allowance advance.

If you field terminate, you should obtain medical insurance to provide for any necessary medical care after termination of Peace Corps service beyond the post-service benefits provided by the Peace Corps.

(See Travel Expenses in SECTION 8: Administrative and Financial Considerations.)

ACRONYMS

ACD	Acting Country Director	MEDEVAC	Medical evacuation
ADMIN SEP	Administrative Separation	MRE	Monitoring, research and evaluation
BHO	Behavioral Health and Outreach	MS	Manual section (global Peace Corps Manual)
CD	Country Director	NCE	Non-competitive eligibility
CDO	Country Desk Officer	OHS	Office of Health Services
COS	Completion of Service	PAO	Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy
DMO	Director, Management and Operations	PC	Peace Corps
DOB	Date of birth	PCMO	Peace Corps Medical Officer
DOS	Description of service	PCPP	Peace Corps Partnership Program
DPT	Director, Programming and Training	PCT	Peace Corps Trainee
EAP	Emergency action plan	PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
ET	Early Termination (includes Resignation, Medical Separation, Interrupted Service and Administrative Separation)	PM	Program Manager
FECA	Federal Employees Compensation Act	PST	Pre-service training
FY	Fiscal year (U.S. government: October 1 – September 30)	RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer
HCN	Host country national	RSO	Regional Security Officer, U.S. Embassy
HOR	Home-of-record	SARL	Sexual Assault Response Liaison
IS	Interrupted service	SPA	Small project assistance (grant source)
IST	In-service training	SSM	Safety and Security Manager
LCC	Language and Cultural Coordinator	TD	Training Director
LCG	Language Cultural Facilitator	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
LPI	Language proficiency interview	USG	United States government
LWOA	Leave without allowance	VAC	Volunteer Advisory Committee
MED SEP	Medical separation	VIDA	Volunteer information database application
