



MS 270: Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security

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REFERENCED MANUAL SECTIONS

- MS 125** Associate Director for International Operations Functions (See MS 114:
Delegation of Authority)
- MS 204** Volunteer Conduct
- MS 218** Applicant, Trainee, and Volunteer Travel and Use of Hostels
- MS 268** Medical Confidentiality
- MS 284** Early Termination
- MS 350** Emergency Action Plan
- MS 897** Privacy Act Administration

REFERENCED TECHNICAL GUIDELINES

- TG 150** Medical Confidentiality
- TG 310** In-Country Health and Safety Training
- TG 410** Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS)
- TG 420** Assault Notification and Surveillance System
- TG 540** Management of Sexual Assault
- TG 545** Sexual Assault: Counseling

1.0 PURPOSE

This Manual section describes the basic components of the Volunteer and Trainee (V/T) safety support system that each overseas post is required to maintain and identifies the individuals or offices responsible for each component.

To enhance safety overseas, all V/Ts should have a clear understanding of safety and security issues at their posts, should be provided relevant safety training, and should be placed at sites that have been inspected for a safe living and working environment. Additionally, overseas posts are required to have a detailed Emergency Action Plan (EAP) and should establish protocols for reporting and responding to safety and security incidents.

2.0 GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Coordinator for Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security (VSOS)

The Coordinator for VSOS reports directly to the Director of the Peace Corps and the Associate Director of Volunteer Support. The Coordinator is responsible for providing leadership and guidance in all areas related to V/T safety and overseas security issues. The Coordinator facilitates the activities of the Volunteer Safety Council (VSC) and disseminates information regarding safety and security throughout the Agency.

2.2 Country Director (CD)

The CD is responsible for establishing and maintaining the V/T safety support system at post. Under the CD's leadership, the senior staff at post (Associate Peace Corps Director, Peace Corps Medical Officer, Programming and Training Officer, and Administrative Officer) is responsible for developing post-specific policies and procedures to implement this Manual section and any additional safety and security guidelines established by Peace Corps/Washington (PC/W).

As a member of the U.S. mission, the CD is responsible for maintaining regular contact with the U.S. Embassy on assaults and other crimes against V/Ts, revisions to the EAP, and other issues relating to V/T safety and security. The CD should ensure Peace Corps representation on the U.S. Embassy Emergency Action Committee.

2.3 Regional Director (RD)

The RD is responsible for providing regional information and guidance about specific safety issues to CDs; directing resources to CDs for safety and security support and improvements; ensuring that CDs establish effective in-country V/T safety support systems; acting as liaison with the State Department in Washington, D.C., regarding safety and security issues that affect the region; and assuring Regional representation on the VSC. (Refer to MS 350 and MS 125.)

2.4 Volunteer/Trainee (V/T)

V/Ts 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. (Refer to MS 204 and MS 284.)

V/Ts are responsible for participating in safety and security training and for learning and abiding by specific safety and security policies and procedures. V/Ts are also responsible for reporting safety and security issues to post.

3.0 MONITORING, ASSESSING, AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

3.1 Policy

V/Ts should have a clear and informed understanding of the potential safety and security risks in their countries of service. Safety and security information should be provided to V/Ts before their departure overseas and throughout their service. This information should include an overall assessment of potential safety and security risks to V/Ts, any country-specific conditions that may require V/Ts to adjust their lifestyles, and the support that V/Ts can expect from the Peace Corps.

To assure that safety and security information is current and relevant, post should monitor and assess the security environment in-country and provide that information to the Region and other relevant Agency offices on an on-going basis.

3.2 Responsibilities

The CD is responsible for establishing procedures to monitor and assess personal safety and security environments for V/Ts and for apprising the RD of safety and security issues that may emerge. The CD is responsible for establishing and maintaining protocols for communicating safety and security information to PC/W and to V/Ts throughout their service.

4.0 TRAINING

4.1 Policy

V/Ts should be provided training that prepares them to adopt culturally appropriate lifestyles and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in their home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training should be offered throughout the V/T's tour of duty and should be integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training to maximize effectiveness.

4.2 Responsibilities

The CD is responsible for ensuring that V/T safety and security training is implemented in accordance with this policy. (Refer to TG 310.)

5.0 SELECTION AND MONITORING OF SITES

5.1 Policy

Each V/T site should be inspected before the V/T's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection should be based on established safety and security criteria that reflect consideration, among other things, of: any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communication, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other V/T support needs. (Refer to Volunteer Safety - Best Practices, Appendix B.)

5.2 Responsibilities

The CD is responsible for establishing safety and security criteria for prospective V/T sites. The CD is also responsible for establishing procedures to ensure that prospective sites meet the criteria before a V/T's arrival at site; that post staff work closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a V/T's arrival; that post staff provide guidance to host communities and counterpart agencies regarding their respective roles in supporting V/Ts throughout their service; and that post staff make regular visits to each V/T's site.

The CD is responsible for establishing procedures to ensure that site locator forms are revised and updated as and when necessary (refer to Volunteer Safety - Best Practices, Appendix L); site history forms are maintained; and safety and security concerns expressed by V/Ts regarding their sites are addressed in a timely manner.

6.0 REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT

6.1 Policy

Procedures should be established for reporting safety and security incidents, responding to such incidents, and assuring that information is shared, as appropriate, among in-country staff, V/Ts, and headquarters staff. Such procedures are essential to post's ability to provide support to affected V/Ts, evaluate and monitor safety and security risks, and allocate resources to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimize those risks.

The compilation and maintenance of accurate information about safety and security risks require prompt reporting of safety or security incidents or concerns by V/Ts to their in-country staff.

6.2 Responsibilities

The CD is responsible for establishing protocols for reporting V/T safety and security incidents and assuring that the collection and dissemination of data and other relevant information to in-country staff, embassy officials, host country officials, and V/Ts are consistent with established confidentiality policies and other Manual sections. (Refer to MS 268, MS 897, and TG 150.)

The CD is responsible for establishing protocols for responding to all safety and security incidents reported by V/Ts. The protocols must address the timely provision of appropriate support (administrative, medical; refer to TG 540 and TG 545) and post

procedures for reviewing and evaluating collected data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to V/Ts. Post is responsible for relaying information regarding any incidents affecting V/T safety and security to the appropriate office(s) at PC/W.

The CD is responsible for making V/Ts aware of the safety and security reporting protocols and for explaining their importance.

Assaults shall be reported and classified by the Peace Corps Medical Officer in accordance with TG 420. (Also refer to MS 268, TG 150, and TG 545.)

7.0 EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN (EAP)

7.1 Policy

Each post is required to have a detailed EAP that sets forth the procedures that staff and V/Ts should follow to prepare for and respond to non-medical emergencies that may occur in-country. (Refer to MS 350.)

7.2 Responsibilities

Under the direction of the CD, the EAP must be reviewed and tested annually to identify areas that may need revision. Such testing should include, at a minimum, the adequacy and reliability of the in-country communication network and the process for confirming the course of action to be taken by V/Ts and staff at each potential stage of an emergency (refer to MS 218 and the *Crisis Management Handbook*). The EAP must be distributed to all senior staff at post, the U.S. Embassy, the respective Region at PC/W, and any other relevant groups, such as host country sponsoring organizations and neighboring posts. Staff responsibilities under the EAP are outlined in MS 350.

8.0 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PC/W provides support and resource materials to assist posts in establishing an effective V/T safety support system.

8.1 Office of Special Services (VS/OSS) supports the Regions and posts in matters involving crisis management or V/T safety. VS/OSS also serves as a liaison between V/Ts and their families regarding any possible safety and security issues.

8.2 Office of Medical Services (VS/OMS) provides pre-service medical screening, in-service health care, and assistance with post-service medical claims for V/Ts. VS/OMS monitors the Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), TG 410, and the operation of the Assault Notification and Surveillance System (ANSS), TG 420.

8.3 Center For Field Assistance and Applied Research (The Center) provides guidance and support for integrating safety and security issues into all components of V/T training.

8.4 Crisis Management Handbook (1996) offers step-by-step guidance to overseas staff about how to manage a Peace Corps post before, during, and after a crisis event.

This document, developed by the VSC, is available through VSOS and corresponds with MS 350.

8.5 Evacuation Support Guide (1999) describes in detail the different stages of an evacuation and the responsibilities of headquarters and overseas staff during each stage.

8.6 Rape Response Handbook (1999) addresses rape notification protocol, policies, procedures, and related issues, such as preserving medical confidentiality.

8.7 Volunteer Safety - Best Practices (1996) is a compilation of country-specific forms, checklists, recommendations, surveys, plans, policies, and guides to promote V/T safety.

8.8 Country Director Handbook (1998) describes strategies for achieving high performance at post.