

# MS 648

# CHILD PROTECTION



MS 648,  
Child Protection



Overview and Policy Training for PCVs



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# AGENDA OVERVIEW

- Background of Policy
- Definitions
- Overview
- Code of Conduct
- What's my Role?
- FAQ

# Background

The Peace Corps is committed to providing a safe and positive environment in all aspects of our work, especially our work with children in every Peace Corps country.



# Background

- MS 648 was developed in response to the Office of Inspector General's June 10, 2014 Final Report on the audit of the Peace Corps applicant screening process.
- One of the recommendations was that “the Director develop and implement a specific child safety program to include ongoing training”.



# OVERVIEW

- MS 648 was created as a commitment from the agency to minimize the risk of child abuse by an employee or Volunteer.
- MS 648 *Child Protection* is the minimum child protection standards that all Peace Corps employees and Volunteers must follow. Peace Corps posts are encouraged to create stricter child protection guidelines if the Country Director deems it necessary based on post specific issues.



# MS 648 Definitions

- ❑ **Child:** as any individual under the age of **18** years, regardless of local laws that may set a lower age for adulthood.
- ❑ **Child Protection :**all reasonable measures taken to protect children from child abuse.



# MS 648 Definitions, Child Abuse

**1. Physical Abuse** means any **non-accidental** physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise **harming** a child.



# MS 648 Definitions, Child Abuse

**2. Emotional Abuse** means the actual or likely adverse effect on the emotional and **behavioral development** of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection.



# MS 648 Definitions, Child Abuse

**3. Sexual Abuse** means the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, the manipulation, or coercion of any child to **engage in**, or **assist** any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or **simulation** of such conduct, including for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct (i.e., photography, videography); or the **rape, molestation, prostitution**, or other form of **sexual exploitation** of children. It includes any behavior that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activity (i.e., grooming of a child to engage in sexual activity).



# MS 648 Definitions, Child Abuse

**4. Child Exploitation** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of differential power or trust with respect to a child for **sexual or monetary purposes**, including, but not limited to, the distribution and retention of **child pornography** or engaging a child in **labor** that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous or harmful, or interferes with their schooling.



# Code of Conduct- Acceptable

At minimum, the employee or Volunteer 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 childrens' 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.



# Code of Conduct- Unacceptable

At minimum, the employee or Volunteer 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.



# Code of Conduct- Unacceptable, con't.

- 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.
- 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.



# What's my Role? All Volunteers

- ❑ If you are a Peace Corps Trainee or Peace Corps Volunteer you must adhere to this policy.
- ❑ No one is expected to be a child protection expert, however you should know and understand the policy.



# Volunteer FAQs

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

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



# Volunteer FAQs

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

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



# Volunteer FAQs

## What if I witness child abuse in my community?

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

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

MS 648,  
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Questions?

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

