

MS 648 *Child Protection*

Effective Date: November 14, 2014

Responsible Office: Office of Global Operations

New Interim Policy Statement

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Manual Section is to set out the policy on proper conduct while working or engaging with children during Peace Corps service or employment. It also establishes the process for reporting instances of child abuse or exploitation by an employee or Volunteer. The Peace Corps strongly supports measures to reduce the risks of child abuse and exploitation caused or perpetrated by an employee or Volunteer.

2.0 Authorities

22 U.S.C. §2504(a); 22 U.S.C §2506(c).

3.0 Definitions

- (a) **Child** is defined as any individual under the age of 18 years, regardless of local laws that may set a lower age for adulthood.
- (b) **Child Abuse** includes four categories of 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.
 - (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.
 - (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).
 - (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.

- (c) **Child Protection** is defined as all reasonable measures taken to protect children from child abuse.
- (d) **Employee** means an individual hired by the Peace Corps, whether full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary, and includes individuals performing duties as experts, consultants, and personal services contractors.
- (e) **Volunteer** means any Peace Corps Volunteer or Trainee.

4.0 Policy

- (a) All employees while working with children in the course of their official duties and all Volunteers must adhere to the Child Protection Code of Conduct set out in Attachment A.
- (b) In order to identify individuals who may pose a risk to child safety, Peace Corps will conduct a background investigation in the selection of employees and Volunteers.
- (c) Peace Corps will incorporate the principles of its child protection policy into its regular training for employees and Volunteers.
- (d) Employees and Volunteers must bring to the attention of the Peace Corps any suspected child abuse by any employee or Volunteer.
- (e) Failure to comply with this Manual Section may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of Peace Corps service or employment. An employee or Volunteer found to have violated this policy may also be subject to host country and U.S. prosecution.

5.0 How to Report Violations

Employees and Volunteers may report allegations of violations of this Manual Section to the Country Director or other senior staff at post, or 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. Volunteers may confidentially make such reports under the provisions of MS 271 *Confidentiality Protection*. For information on reporting violations of this Manual Section to the Office of Inspector General, see MS 861 *Office of Inspector General*.

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Country Directors

Country Directors are responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring that employees and Volunteers receive appropriate training on child protection issues and on their obligations under this Manual Section.
- (b) Responding in a timely manner to child abuse reports or allegations committed by employees and Volunteers.
- (c) Considering child protection issues and policies in making appropriate site placements and developing relationships with other organizations and agencies.

6.2 Human Resources Management

Human Resources Management is responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring that new Headquarters and Regional Recruiting Offices employees receive appropriate training on MS 648 Child Protection and on their obligations under this Manual Section.
- (b) Providing notification to current Headquarters and Regional Recruiting Offices employees about their obligations under this Manual Section.

6.3 Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

The Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection is responsible for the screening of applicants for Volunteer service in order to identify individuals who have a documented record of child abuse.

6.4 Office of Safety and Security

The Office of Safety and Security is responsible for implementing the screening protocols of potential employees in order to identify individuals who have a documented record of child abuse.

6.5 Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support

The Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support is responsible for ensuring that Overseas U.S. direct hires receive appropriate training on child protection issues and on their obligations under this Manual Section during Overseas Staff Training (OST).

7.0 Procedures

Any necessary procedures implementing this Manual Section must be approved by the Office of Global Operations, the Office of Safety and Security, the Office of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection, the Office of Human Resources Management, and the Office of the General Counsel.

8.0 Effective Date

The Effective Date is the date of issuance.

Child Protection Code of Conduct

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

Acceptable Conduct

At minimum, the employee or Volunteer will:

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

Unacceptable Conduct

And, at minimum, the employee or Volunteer will not:

- (a) 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.
- (b) Practice corporal punishment against, or physically assault, any child.
- (c) Emotionally abuse a child.
- (d) Develop a sexual or romantic relationship with a child.
- (e) Touch, hold, kiss, or hug a child in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
- (f) Use language that is offensive, or abusive towards or around a child.
- (g) Behave in a sexually provocative or threatening way in the presence of a child.
- (h) 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.
- (i) Access, create, or distribute photos, videos, or other visual material of a sexual and abusive nature to or involving a child.