

# MS 220 LEAVE FOR VOLUNTEERS/TRAINEES

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Issuance Memo

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Attachment

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Attachment A Country Specific Whereabouts Notification and Annual Leave Directive

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## **1.0 PURPOSE**

This manual section sets out the Peace Corps' policies and procedures regarding all types of leave for Volunteers and Trainees (V/Ts).

## **2.0 DEFINITION OF LEAVE**

For the purposes of this manual section:

- (a) A V/T is on leave when he or she is on one of the types of leave listed in Sections 4.0, 6.0, or 7.0 of this manual section;
- (b) A V/T is not on leave when traveling on approved Peace Corps business; and
- (c) A V/T is not on leave when he or she takes time away from the community for certain personal needs. *See* Section 3.1 below.

## **3.0 POLICIES**

### **3.1 Time away from Community**

V/Ts need occasional days away from their communities to take care of personal needs. Such time away from their community does not constitute leave. However, such breaks should be taken infrequently and must not be abused.

### **3.2 Whereabouts Requirement**

For safety reasons, it is essential that Peace Corps is able to contact V/Ts at all times during their service. In order to maximize V/Ts' safety and security, whether on leave or at their community, each post/country should have a written whereabouts policy, based on MS 270, Volunteer/Trainee Safety and Security, and an annual leave policy. Post staff and Volunteers shall annually review and comment on both policies. *See* Attachment A for a sample of a post specific whereabouts notification and annual leave policies.

### **3.3 Disciplinary Action**

Failure to comply with the leave requirements in this manual section will result in disciplinary action up to and including administrative separation.

## **4.0 ANNUAL LEAVE**

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. However, Volunteers must comply with the policies set out in MS 450, Volunteer and Trainee Transportation, and Interim Policy Statement, 5-05, Restrictions on Volunteer Travel Destinations.

### **4.1 Annual Leave Allowance**

Volunteers accrue two days of annual leave allowance for each month of Volunteer service, regardless of whether they actually use, or are authorized to take, the annual leave. *See* MS 221 Volunteer Allowances.

Annual leave allowance is normally paid with the Volunteer's living allowance. *See* MS 221.

### **4.2 Timing for Annual Leave**

To ensure that annual leave is an integral part of a Volunteer's service, 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 the Country Director approves leave under special circumstances, or in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave.

### **4.3 Advancement of Annual Leave**

The Country Director has the discretion, consistent with policies established in-country, to advance annual leave, not to exceed the amount accruable during the Volunteer's service.

### **4.4 Annual Leave Outside of Country**

Annual leave must be taken any time a Volunteer travels out of the 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 the Volunteer's site and the point of exit out of or entry into the country of assignment.

### **4.5 Annual Leave within Country**

When annual leave is taken within the Volunteer's country of assignment, host country holidays are not counted in computing annual leave days. All weekends and U.S. holidays that fall within the annual leave period are counted in computing annual leave days.

## **5.0 MEDICAL COVERAGE DURING LEAVE**

The Peace Corps continues to provide V/Ts with necessary medical care during leave. A V/T who becomes ill or who is injured while on leave should contact the office of Medical Services (VS/MS). *See* MS 262 Health Services for Trainees, Volunteers, and Dependents.

## **6.0 EMERGENCY LEAVE**

The office of Special Services (VS/SS) may authorize emergency leave and travel, at Peace Corps' expense, for V/Ts in the event of a family medical emergency, as defined below.

### **6.1 Definitions**

The term medical emergency is defined as:

- (a) a terminal illness
- (b) a critical, life-threatening illness or injury
- (c) onset of para/quadruplegia
- (d) death
- (e) a situation in which the personal presence of the V/T is required to make new living or care arrangements for an ill or injured family member

The term family medical emergency means a medical emergency directly affecting:

- (a) a member of the V/T's immediate family, i.e., a parent, spouse, sibling, child, or grandchild related to the V/T by blood, marriage, or adoption. This definition includes step-relatives, e.g., step-mother, but does not include in-laws, e.g., mother-in-law. A Country Director may authorize a V/T spouse to accompany a V/T who is authorized to take emergency leave (*See* paragraph 6.7).
- (b) a caregiver who, in the absence of one or both parents, lived with the V/T and performed a parent's duties and responsibilities with respect to the V/T for at least five consecutive years prior to the V/T's reaching the age of 18. This is a surrogate parent who took the place of a parent absent in the V/T's life. This is not an additional person who lived with the V/T.
- (c) a person for whom the V/T assumed a parent's duties and responsibilities for at least five consecutive years prior to this person's attaining the age of 18.

### **6.2 Preliminary Communication Concerning a Family Medical Situation**

Families usually initiate discussion of emergency leave by calling VS/SS concerning a family medical situation, who in turn contacts the Country Director. V/Ts and Country Directors who learn directly of a family medical situation should immediately contact VS/SS by fax or telephone.

Many family medical situations are resolved before becoming family medical emergencies or otherwise do not fit the definition of a family medical emergency (*See* paragraph 6.1). V/Ts, with the assistance of VS/SS and the country staff, should attempt to resolve their concerns about family medical situations in-country. The Country Director may authorize telephone calls, from V/Ts to their families, to be made at Peace Corps' expense (chargeable to the in-country budget). VS/SS will make every effort to provide the V/T with information regarding a family medical situation.

### **6.3 Verification and Approval Authority**

VS/SS will evaluate the situation to 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 the Country Director nor his/her staff has the authority to approve emergency leave. Any authorization made contrary to this policy may result in the personal liability of the Country Director or staff for expenses incurred for travel and allowances issued to the V/T.

Upon approval of emergency leave, VS/SS will send a fax to country with instructions and fiscal information.

### **6.3.1 Emergency Leave Travel**

Each V/T authorized emergency leave travel will be issued a round-trip travel authorization and a ticket for one-way or round-trip travel, whichever is appropriate, to the location of the emergency, to be charged to VS/SS.

V/Ts should have current passports, valid exit and re-entry visas, and World Health Organization (WHO) cards before they leave the country of assignment. V/Ts who leave without these documents and need assistance obtaining them should contact VS/SS the first working day after arrival in the United States.

*See* paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during leave.

### **6.3.2 Notification of Travel Itinerary**

The Country Director must inform VS/SS of the V/T's complete travel itinerary to the United States by fax or cable prior to the V/T's departure. The communication should include a copy of the travel authorization, stating the cost of the airfare, and the amount of emergency leave and travel allowance actually disbursed to the V/T. VS/SS will notify the family of the V/T's estimated time of arrival.

### **6.3.3 V/T Communication with VS/SS**

V/Ts must keep VS/SS informed about the family medical emergency and their whereabouts in the United States during the emergency leave and during any authorized extensions. Each V/T should be instructed to contact VS/SS within three working days after arrival in the United States.

### **6.3.4 Travel after Arrival at Site of Emergency**

Post will issue the V/T a travel authorization and a ticket to (and usually from) the site of the family emergency. If, after arrival at the location of the emergency, it is necessary for the V/T to travel to another location, for reasons directly related to the family emergency, VS/SS may authorize such travel.

## **6.4 Emergency Leave Duration**

Emergency leave is limited to a maximum of 14 days, plus travel time. *See* paragraph 6.6 for information about extensions to emergency leave.

During pre-service training, because it is of short duration and is considered crucial to a Volunteer's effective service, extended absence from a training program may not be advisable. Although VS/SS may authorize 14 days' emergency leave, the Country Director and training director have the authority to set a shorter limit to the number of days a Trainee may be absent from a training program. In some cases, it may be necessary for a Trainee to resign from Peace Corps and re-enter training at a later time.

## **6.5 Volunteer Allowances during Emergency Leave**

### **6.5.1 Emergency Leave Allowance**

During emergency leave, V/Ts are entitled to receive the current authorized leave allowance for each day of leave actually used (maximum of 14 days, excluding travel time) and an en route allowance to be charged to VS/SS. *See* MS 221 Volunteer Allowances.

Country Directors should normally disburse 14 days' emergency leave allowance and the en route allowance to the V/T before departure from the host country. If all of the allowance is not disbursed, this fact should be noted in the itinerary fax or cable which is sent per paragraph 6.3.2 above.

### **6.5.2 Refund of Unused Emergency Leave Allowance**

V/Ts must return the allowance for any day of the emergency leave that is not actually taken.

### **6.5.3 Reimbursement for Extraordinary Expenses**

V/Ts are expected to stay with family and friends during emergency leave. With the prior approval of VS/SS, V/Ts who incur extraordinary expenses for food and lodging during the first 14 days of emergency leave (e. g., if circumstances preclude lodging with family or friends) may be reimbursed for expenses incurred, upon presentation of proof of actual cost to VS/SS. Such reimbursements shall not exceed the staff per diem authorized for that location.

### **6.5.4 Living Allowance**

The V/T will continue to receive the normal living allowance during emergency leave (excluding any extension period) and during travel time. Payment of the living allowance during an extension depends on the type of extension authorized (*See* paragraphs 6.6, 4.0, and 6.5).

## **6.6 Extensions**

### **6.6.1 First Extension**

After confirming a continuing medical emergency, VS/SS may authorize, with the concurrence of the Country Director, an extension of 14 days' additional leave to be charged to accrued annual leave (*See* paragraph 4.0) or to leave without allowance (LWOA) (*See* paragraph 6.5). Although Volunteers may have accrued annual leave, they may not use such leave for an extension of the emergency leave without prior approval of VS/SS and the Country Director. Extensions should only be granted if warranted by the family medical emergency.

### **6.6.2 Further Extensions**

The V/T is expected to return within a reasonable time after the family medical emergency is resolved. Generally, a V/T who needs more than 28 days to resolve a family medical emergency should consider resignation (*See* paragraph 6.10). Under extraordinary circumstances (usually involving a terminal illness where the attending physician confirms that life expectancy is short and death could occur at any time), VS/SS may authorize, with the concurrence of the Country Director, further extensions to be charged to accrued annual leave or LWOA.

### **6.6.3 Limitations**

An authorized extension requires the Country Director's confirmation that a Volunteer's continued absence will not have an undue adverse effect on the Volunteer's project or Peace Corps' effectiveness in the host country or that a Trainee's continued absence will not adversely affect his/her training.

Under no circumstances may the combined emergency leave and extensions, excluding travel time, exceed 60 days.

## **6.7 Travel for V/T Spouse and Children**

The Peace Corps will generally provide travel and allowances only for the affected V/T. However, in the case of a V/T married to another V/T, the Country Director may authorize, with the concurrence of VS/SS, emergency leave for an accompanying spouse and/or child. In authorizing emergency leave for a

V/T spouse, the Country Director should consider the effect on the accompanying spouse's training or project, the site situation, and other relevant factors. Authorization for a child to accompany the V/T should be based on the needs of the child. The travel and emergency leave allowance (travel only for a child) are charged to VS/SS.

The Peace Corps will not pay the travel expenses of an accompanying spouse who is not a V/T.

## **6.8 Multiple Leaves for Family Medical Emergencies**

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.

V/Ts who return to their assignments following an emergency leave and who later feel obligated to take additional leave for the same family medical emergency may:

- (a) Request annual leave in accordance with the guidelines specified by the Country Director.
- (b) Request leave without allowance (LWOA), with appropriate discontinuance of the readjustment and living allowances.
- (c) Resign from the Peace Corps to return home permanently.

If either annual leave or LWOA is approved, the V/T is responsible for all transportation costs. In the event of the family member's death, a V/T who is on annual leave or LWOA to attend to that family member's illness or injury, may be retroactively authorized emergency leave by VS/SS and reimbursed for travel provided the travel meets the requirements of the "Fly America Act" for reimbursement.

## **6.9 Advance of Completion of Service (COS)**

VS/SS will normally advance the COS date of a Volunteer who begins an emergency leave within 90 days of his/her established COS --unless the Country Director determines that there are compelling programmatic reasons for returning the Volunteer to the host country. *See* MS 281 Completion of Service Date Advancement and Extension of Service.

## **6.10 Resignation**

V/Ts on emergency leave who need additional time at home to meet personal responsibilities should consider resigning from Peace Corps service (*See* MS 284 Early Termination of Service). A V/T in-country who has been denied emergency leave may discuss with his/her Country Director the possibility of using annual leave, taking LWOA, or resigning.

Eligibility for reinstatement after resignation is governed by MS 282, Transfer, Reassignment, Reinstatement, Reenrollment of Trainees and Volunteers.

## **7.0 OTHER TYPES OF LEAVE**

### **7.1 Special Leave**

A Volunteer who extends service for a year or more (by one or more extensions) is entitled to 30 days of special leave. *See* MS 281 Completion of Service Date Advancement and Extension of Service, for more information.

## **7.2 Holidays and Host Country Vacation Periods**

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

## **7.3 Maternity Leave**

*See* MS 263 Volunteer Pregnancy.

## **7.4 Leave for Professional or Academic Examinations**

Volunteers who leave their sites to take examinations relating to post-service activities may be authorized up to three days' administrative leave during which time the living allowance and readjustment allowance will continue but no other allowances will be paid or authorized. Examples of such exams are LSAT, MCAT, GRE and the Foreign Service Exam. Any absence beyond three days will be charged to annual leave or LWOA.

## **7.5 Leave Without Allowance (LWOA)**

V/Ts who must be absent from their training or project site for personal reasons may be placed in LWOA status for up to 30 days at the discretion of the Country Director, who may also approve an extension up to an additional 30 days. The Country Director's decision must be based on a determination that a Trainee's absence will not adversely affect his/her training, or that a Volunteer's absence will not adversely affect the Volunteer's project unduly or Peace Corps' effectiveness in the host country.

LWOA status must be reported to Volunteer and PSC Services (CFO/VPS) by the Country Director on Form PC-440, Notice of Volunteer-Trainee Action. In LWOA status, V/Ts do not accrue readjustment allowance nor receive other allowances, except for a portion of the living allowance which may be continued if needed to meet on-going expenses at the assigned site (e. g., rent or electric bill).

In extraordinary circumstances, as determined by the Regional Director, after any authorized period of administrative hold expires, a V/T who has applied for a transfer or transfer/extension may be placed on LWOA for up to 30 days. In these situations, the Regional Director may also approve extensions of LWOA up to an additional 30 days.

*See* paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during leave.

## **8.0 VOLUNTEER/TRAINEE HOLD**

### **8.1 Medical Hold**

Medical hold is a non-duty status to which a V/T is assigned because of an unresolved medical condition. V/Ts who are outside the country of assignment may be placed on medical hold as necessary and appropriate by the office of Medical Services (VS/MS) for a maximum of 45 days. *See* MS 221 Volunteer Allowances, for information on medical hold allowances.

*See* paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during medical hold.

## **8.2 Administrative Hold**

V/Ts whose departure for overseas duty, return to overseas duty, or transfer to another country of assignment is delayed for the convenience of the Peace Corps may, with the authorization of the Regional Director, be placed on administrative hold for a period not to exceed 60 days.

*See* paragraph 5.0 for information on medical coverage during administrative hold.

### **8.2.1 Return Transportation to Home of Record (HOR)**

With the authorization of the Regional Director, Peace Corps will provide transportation to the HOR and to any subsequent country of assignment for V/Ts who are sent home during an administrative hold period.

### **8.2.2 Allowances during Administrative Hold**

During the period of administrative hold, the living allowance will be discontinued. *See* MS 221 Volunteer Allowances, for hold allowance information.

## **9.0 EFFECTIVE DATE**

This manual section shall become effective on the date of issuance.