

**WORKING FOR THE PEACE CORPS**  
**A GUIDE FOR OVERSEAS STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES**



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## INTRODUCTION

*Working for the Peace Corps: A Guide for Overseas Staff and Their Families* (the Guide) was created to help you prepare for life overseas as a Peace Corps staff member or staff family member.

Sections are compiled in chronological order; from what you need to take care of as soon as you receive your appointment to the concerns you may have at the end of your tour. Information for families is incorporated into each section to address the particular needs of all family members moving overseas.

The Guide was not created to declare Peace Corps' policy since policy is already stated in the Peace Corps Manual, Foreign Affairs Manual, Standardized Regulations, Code of Federal and Regulatory Government Travel Regulations. Instead, it provides you with quick, accurate information that will help you answer questions and point you in the right direction should you need further guidance. If you need assistance with agency procedures and are unable find the related sections in the policy manuals, please call or write the appropriate person at headquarters (Current employees should also check the Peace Corps Intranet site (<http://inside.peacecorps.gov>) for information.

You are encouraged to bring the Guide with you to the overseas staff training (OST) and to your new post overseas. You will find it extremely helpful at unexpected times.

We hope that you will be forthcoming with suggestions for the Guide. Since our goal is to best serve you, you are the best person to tell us if we are meeting that objective. Your input is very valuable, and we hope that you will take the time to complete the evaluation sheet at the back of the booklet and mail it to the address given. Thank you for your time and input.

We look forward to meeting you soon and working with you in the near future!

## OVERSEAS STAFF BENEFITS

**SALARY**—The country director positions are classified as FP - 2/1 (equivalent to GS 14/15). The current salary range is \$77,294 to \$124,010.

**HOUSING**—The Peace Corps pays for staff housing overseas that is approved by the embassy's regional security officer. Maintenance of the house is covered by Peace Corps.

**HOUSE FURNISHINGS**—All residences are furnished by the Peace Corps with basic furnishings including drapes/blinds and all large appliances (heating/cooling units, washer/dryer, stove, refrigerator, etc.).

**UTILITIES**—All utilities charges are paid by the Peace Corps except for telephone expenses.

**EDUCATION ALLOWANCE**—If you have dependent children between 4 and 20 years of age, you are eligible for an education allowance for elementary and secondary school levels. This amount is determined by the U.S. Department of State based on each post. This allowance is used primarily to cover tuition, room/board, and periodic transportation between the post and school.

**EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL**—The Peace Corps will provide one yearly round trip transportation to post for full-time students (under the age of 23) attending an undergraduate college or post-secondary vocational or technical school in the U.S.

**MEDICAL COVERAGE**—The Peace Corps staff members and their families can utilize the embassy's health unit free of charge for medical consultation, routine outpatient treatment, and preventive health services. The U.S. Department of State's medical program can authorize hospitalization and/or a medical evacuation for illness, injury, or serious medical condition occurring overseas for Peace Corps staff and eligible family members. The Peace Corps will pay for all customary, reasonable and usual incidental expenses for a hospitalization which are not covered by your health insurance carrier. The Peace Corps requires all overseas employees to have health insurance coverage.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY**—Peace Corps requires that all US Direct Hire staff posted overseas must have the same level of protection which is provided to State Department officials, unless there is a threat-driven reason to provide more to a specific person. If the State Department officials have 24/7 guard service at their residences, Peace Corps staff residences would have the same coverage. Conversely, if the Embassy only provides 12 hour guard services, PC staff will be provided 12 hour guard services.

**DUTY-FREE PRIVILEGES**—Most Peace Corps countries provide duty-free privileges to Peace Corps staff members on all imported goods.

**HOME LEAVE**—The Peace Corps will pay you and your eligible family members to



round-trip transportation to your home of record if a second tour of service is authorized by the regional director. In addition, for each 12 months of service abroad, you will earn five days of home leave which you can take in conjunction with other approved leave.

**UTILIZATION OF PEACE CORPS VEHICLES**—The Peace Corps allows limited personal use of a Peace Corps vehicle for up to 90 days after your arrival in-country. You will be charged based on the number of miles driven. Spouses and family members are not permitted to drive Peace Corps vehicles. By law, misuse of a government vehicle requires a mandatory 30-day suspension with no pay.

**EMERGENCY VISITATION TRAVEL**—The Peace Corps will pay round-trip transportation for family visitation in emergencies cases of critical illness and/or injury where death is imminent, or for the death of an immediate family member. Generally, only the staff member or the spouse involved would travel at Peace Corps expense.

**TRAVEL OF CHILDREN OF SEPARATED PARENTS**—The Peace Corps will authorize one round trip per tour for children under 21 who are under legal custody of the other parent.

**ANNUAL LEAVE**—As an overseas staff member, you may carry over a maximum of 360 hours of annual leave from one year to the next.

**SHIPPING PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS**—All staff members, regardless of family size are allowed a combined total of 14,000 lbs. for storage and sea freight. The relationship between the two is determined by family size. The amount authorized for air and sea freight is determined by the size of the family. For example, staff and one family member are eligible for 3,500 lbs. net weight for sea freight and 10,500 lbs. of storage. Staff with three family members is 4,500 lbs. for sea freight and 10,000 lbs. for storage.

In addition, staff is entitled to air freight; the amount is determined by family size. For example, staff and one family member is eligible for 450 lbs. gross weight of air freight.

Some countries are designated by the U.S. Department of State as consumable posts. Consumables are items like food, diapers, laundry soap, etc. A consumable shipment is authorized when there is a lack of availability or excessive costs of certain items that may be required by you or your dependents. The additional consumable allowance is set at 2,500 net weight per staff member.

**REPRESENTATIONAL ALLOWANCE**—A representational allowance is available to staff to cover costs of official entertainment. Each year, a Country Director can approve an expenditure of up to \$500; a Regional Director may approve for up to an additional \$500 and the Chief of Staff may approve amounts over these limits.

**TAXES**—All direct-hire U.S. citizens of U.S. government are required to pay federal, state, and local income tax, as appropriate, on their income.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

\*\* Will the Peace Corps provide my family and me with a house and will it be furnished?

- See Section Four, Paragraph D “Housing.”

\*\* I have a vehicle that I would like to ship to my country of assignment, will the Peace Corps pay for shipment or will the Peace Corps provide me with a vehicle at post?

- See Section Three, Paragraph F “Shipment of Vehicles” and Section Four, Paragraph E “Use of Peace Corps Vehicles.”

\*\* I have one child in high school and one attending a university in the U.S. What type of education allowances will I receive?

- See Section Two, Paragraph H “Educational Assistance.”

\*\* My spouse is a professional and hopes to work at our new post. What opportunities might he expect to find?

- See Section Four, Paragraph C “Employment of Family Members”

\*\* I am new to the federal government. How much annual and sick leave will I earn each pay period?

- See Section Four, Paragraph J “Leave and Absence.”

\*\* If the Peace Corps approves a second tour for me, will home leave be authorized for me and my family?

- See Section Four, Paragraph J.4 “Home Leave.”

\*\* I will be going overseas with my spouse and two children, how much weight am I authorized to put in storage and ship? Also, what are the weight limits for air and sea freight?

- See Section Three, Paragraph D “Shipping Your Belongings and Household Effects.”

\*\* I would like to have my spouse participate in a portion of overseas staff training (OST), will the Peace Corps cover the cost of his/her transportation and per diem?

- See Section Three, Paragraph D.2 “OST and AOT and participation of Family Members.”

\*\* What clearances do I need before I can depart for my country of assignment?

- See Section Two, Paragraph B.1–2 “Medical Matters – Medical Clearance and Immunizations” and Paragraph C “Security Clearance.”

\*\* As country director, I plan to entertain host country officials from the ministries where

Volunteers are assigned, will the Peace Corps help in covering some of these expenses?

- See Section Four, Paragraph H.8 “Representational Allowance.”

\*\* Will I be able to send mail and small parcels through the diplomatic pouch?

- See Section Two, Paragraph F “Overseas Mail.”

\*\* I would like to send my pet to post, will the Peace Corps pay for this?

- See Section Three, Paragraph G “Pets.”

\*\*I have retired from the U.S. Department of State, if I take a position with the Peace Corps how will this affect my retirement annuity?

- See Section One, Paragraph C.5 “Foreign Service (FS) Annuitants.”

# SECTION ONE: So You've Been Offered a Job with the Peace Corps



Your offer letter from the Office of Human Resource Management (HRM) will have information on your conditional terms of employment, as well as clearances, housing, and other matters. This section provides more details about Peace Corps employment, benefits, and the Department of State (DOS) Medical Program.

## A. Employment with the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps is a unique organization. Some of this uniqueness is a result of the employment policies and regulations under which it operates. Whether you come from another government agency or from the private sector, we would like to take this opportunity to describe some basic parameters of Peace Corps employment.

First, the Peace Corps is an excepted service federal agency. All U.S. citizen Peace Corps employees receive time-limited (non-career) appointments, usually for 30 months. Country directors (CDs) serve at the discretion of the Peace Corps director. Overseas appointments are contingent on medical clearances for the employee and his/her eligible family members who will accompany the employee to post as well as successful completion of the employee's background investigation. All Peace Corps employees are on an initial six-month probationary period.

Another unique aspect of employment with the Peace Corps is that certain restrictions apply in hiring individuals who have been connected with intelligence-related activities. As a new staff member, you will be asked to certify that you have not been employed by an intelligence organization or otherwise engaged in or been connected with intelligence-related activities. Under this provision, a family relationship to an individual employed by or otherwise engaged in or connected with intelligence activities may be considered a disqualifying connection and the basis for withdrawing an offer of employment.

After an initial 30-month tour, a reappointment for 30 months or less can be granted; however, employees are neither guaranteed nor automatically entitled to a second tour. Legislation enacted in 1965 established a general five-year limit on Peace Corps employment, which is known as the "Five Year Rule." A small number of appointments may be extended for a sixth year and/or a third tour under special circumstances and with the approval of the Peace Corps director. In addition, an "In-Out Rule" requires that employees must have been away from the Peace Corps for the same amount of time that they were employed before they can be rehired. A more detailed explanation of these rules can be found in the Peace Corps Act and in Peace Corps Manual Section (MS) 601. Although employment with the Peace Corps does not provide career tenure in the federal government, 36 months of continuous service as an employee does provide noncompetitive eligibility for federal government positions for up to three years.

## **B. Conditions of Service**

Another feature of your Peace Corps employment is that prior to departure for post, all U.S. overseas permanent employees are required to sign a “Conditions of Employment with the Peace Corps Outside the Continental U.S. Agreement (PC-1529).” The agreement specifies the employee’s financial obligations for travel and transportation costs if he or she fails to fulfill the prescribed tour of duty overseas. A copy of this agreement is included in your offer package. Review it carefully and bring it with you to Washington, DC.

## **C. Retirement, Life Insurance, and Health Benefits**

On your first day of employment, you will be asked to select health insurance, select or waive life insurance, and be offered the opportunity to participate in the U.S. government Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) if you are eligible. The information below, as well as the brochures in your offer package, can assist you in your choices.

### **1. Federal Employees Retirement System**

Any federal employee hired on or after January 1, 1987, is covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Most new Peace Corps employees fall into this category. This plan is a three-tiered system and provides benefits through basic annuity, Social Security, and TSP. Each pay period, a mandatory deduction of 8.45 percent is taken from your salary and goes to FERS, Social Security, and Medicare tax.

### **2. Civil Service Retirement System**

Many Peace Corps employees who began their federal service before 1987 are covered by the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS).

The Civil Service Retirement System originated in 1920 and was designed to provide comprehensive retirement, disability, and survivor benefits for civilian employees in the federal government.

CSRS employees are eligible to retire at age 55 with at least 30 years of service, or age 60 with at least 20 years of service, or at age 62 with at least 5 years of civilian service. If you will be eligible for retirement at the end of your tour, you should contact the HRM benefits specialist at least three months prior to your separation from the Peace Corps.

### **3. Civil Service Retirement System Offset**

The Civil Service Retirement System Offset (CSRS/Offset) is a plan for federal employees covered by CSRS and Social Security. To be covered by this plan, an employee must have had at least five years of CSRS service prior to January 1, 1987,

must have had a break in service exceeding one year, and must have been rehired after December 31, 1983. Previous CSRS employees who have had less than five years of service are automatically covered under FERS. Like CSRS employees, individuals covered by the CSRS/Offset plan contribute 8.45 percent of their basic pay to the civil service retirement system through automatic pay deductions, of which 6.2 percent is contributed to Social Security. Upon retirement, CSRS/Offset employees are entitled to the same benefits as CSRS employees until they are eligible for Social Security benefits (usually age 62). At that time, CSRS benefits for CSRS/Offset annuitants are reduced (offset) by the amount of any Social Security benefit.

Former federal employees covered under the CSRS/Offset may elect to transfer to FERS during the first six months after being rehired. Employees who transfer will have their service under CSRS/Offset converted to FERS. If you think you are eligible to participate in this plan, please make sure to discuss it with the HRM benefits specialist as soon as you begin work.

If you will be eligible for retirement at the end of your tour, you should contact the HRM benefits specialist at least three months prior to your separation from the Peace Corps.

#### **4. Service Credit Deposit**

In 1993, Congress passed a special law to allow former Peace Corps Volunteers who were later hired by the federal government to receive credit toward retirement for their years of Volunteer service if they made a deposit to cover that period of service. Please note that the number of annual leave hours you accrue per pay period will not be affected by whether or not you make a deposit for your Peace Corps Volunteer service. For further information regarding this matter, see “Annual Leave” in Section IV.

If you are a former Peace Corps Volunteer, no money was deducted from your monthly readjustment allowance for the Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) or for the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS). The amount of your deposit will be the amount of money that would have been deducted, plus any interest that would have accrued. Your training period is not creditable service.

If you would like to make a deposit for Peace Corps Volunteer service or other creditable government service, please complete a SF-3108, FERS Application to Make Service Credit Deposit for Civilian Service; or a SF-2803, CSRS Application for Deposit or Re-deposit. Please contact the HRM benefits specialist to request a form and to verify your eligibility for deposit. Once completed, the form should be returned to HRM.

The HRM benefits specialist will finalize your form and send it to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). OPM will calculate the amount you must pay to receive credit for retirement. OPM will send the bill to you and tell you where to send your payment. Once OPM receives your payment, they will send you a receipt. Keep this receipt with your important papers and send a copy to HRM for your personnel folder. This payment will not be documented on your leave and earnings statement.

## 5. Reemployed Federal Employee Annuitants

**FERS Annuitants:** Reemployment will cause your annuity to stop if the following apply:

- 1) You are a disability annuitant whom OPM has found recovered or restored to earning capacity prior to reemployment; or
- 2) You are a disability annuitant who was not disabled for your National Guard Technician position but were awarded disability annuity because you were medically disqualified for continued membership in the National Guard.

If your annuity stops as the result of your reemployment with the government, you have the same status as any other federal employee. Your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage as an annuitant will stop. If your appointment is one that gives you eligibility for FEHB coverage, you can enroll in FEHB. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program will also stop without a right to convert to an individual policy. You acquire life insurance coverage as an employee under the same conditions as any other employee who is rehired in the federal service.

However, if your annuity does not stop under the rules discussed above then you will continue to receive your annuity while you are working. But, your salary will be reduced by the amount of your annuity for the period you work. If you do not work full time, the reduction in pay will be adjusted proportionately. Reemployment may increase your retirement benefits. As a reemployed annuitant, you can earn either a supplemental or a re-determined annuity. A supplemental annuity is an annuity that is added on to your current annuity if you work at least one year. A re-determined annuity is a recomputed annuity that takes the place of your current annuity if you work at least five years. The retirement deductions (FERS: 0.8 percent, Social Security: 6.20 percent, and Medicare: 1.45 percent) will be withheld from your pay. Your FEHB will continue as an annuitant and withholding of the premiums will continue to be made from your annuity payment. Your FEGLI will remain the same, unless the type of appointment as employee makes you eligible for FEGLI coverage. Any basic life insurance, standard and family options are suspended and you will have the coverage as an employee.

**CSRS/CSRS Offset Annuitants:** Reemployment will cause your annuity to stop if the following apply:

- 1) You are a disability annuitant whom OPM has found recovered or restored to earning capacity prior to reemployment; or
- 2) You are a disability annuitant who was not disabled for your National Guard Technician position but were awarded disability annuity because

you were medically disqualified for continued membership in the National Guard; or

- 3) Your annuity is based on an involuntary separation (other than a separation that was required by law based on your age and length of service or a separation for cause on charges of misconduct or delinquency) and your new appointment is permanent in nature ( for example career, career conditional, or excepted); or
- 4) You receive a Presidential appointment subject to retirement deductions.

If your annuity stops as the result of your reemployment with the government, you have the same status as any other federal employee. Your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage as an annuitant will stop. If your appointment is one that gives you eligibility for FEHB coverage, you can enroll in FEHB. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program will also stop without a right to convert to an individual policy. You acquire life insurance coverage as an employee under the same conditions as any other employee who is rehired in the Federal service.

However, if your annuity does not stop under the rules discussed above then you will continue to receive your annuity while you are working. But, your salary will be reduced by the amount of your annuity for the period you work. If you do not work full time, the reduction in pay will be adjusted proportionately. Reemployment may increase your retirement benefits. As a reemployed annuitant, you can earn either a supplemental or a re-determined annuity. A supplemental annuity is an annuity that is added on to your current annuity if you work at least one year. A re-determined annuity is a recomputed annuity that takes the place of your current annuity if you work at least five years. But, CSRS reemployed annuitant service cannot be credited in a supplement or re-determined annuity unless either a deposit with increase is paid after separation or retirement deductions are withheld. Your FEHB will continue as an annuitant and withholding of the premiums will continue to be made from your annuity payment. Your FEGLI will remain the same, unless the type of appointment as employee makes you eligible for FEGLI coverage. Any basic life insurance, standard and family options are suspended and you will have the coverage as an employee.

**Foreign Service (FS) Annuitants:** There are **two basic provisions** for adjusting benefits when an FS annuitant receiving retirement benefits under the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System or the Foreign Service Pension System is reemployed. The first provision, suspension of annuity during reemployment, applies when the annuitant is hired in a full-time, career, career conditional, or excepted. The second provision, continuation of benefits subject to the salary/annuity limitation, applies when the annuitant has been continuously reemployed in a part-time, temporary or intermittent (WAE) basis. If your annuity stops as the result of your reemployment with the government, you have the same status as any other federal employee. Your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) coverage as an annuitant will stop. If your appointment is one that gives you eligibility for FEHB coverage, you can enroll in FEHB. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program will also stop without a right to convert to an individual policy. You acquire life insurance coverage as an employee



under the same conditions as any other employee who is rehired in the federal service. When your reemployment ends, your annuity will resume with the Foreign Service. However, if you have met the requirements for retirement under FERS, you may also apply for annuity through Office of Personnel Management.

## **6. The Thrift Savings Plan (For more information see [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov))**

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is a retirement savings and investment plan for civilians who are employed by the United States Government and members of the uniformed services. The purpose of the TSP is to provide retirement income. The TSP offers federal employees the same type of savings and tax benefits that many private corporations offer their employees under "401(k)" plans. Contributions made to TSP accounts are voluntary and are separate from contributions to FERS and CSRS Basic annuities. The retirement income from TSP accounts depends on how much participants (and their agencies, if they are FERS employees) have contributed to their accounts during their working years and the earnings on those contributions. All eligible TSP participants, regardless of retirement plan, may invest any portion of their accounts in any of the TSP investment funds:

- Government Securities Investment (G) Fund
- Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund
- Small Capitalization Stock Index Investment (S) Fund
- International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund
- Lifecycle (L) Funds – the L Funds are "asset allocation portfolios" that mix investments based on a participant's targeted retirement date. As retirement approaches, the fund's investments automatically become more conservative.

Before making investment decisions among the funds, TSP participants are encouraged to read the Fund Information Sheets to better understand their advantages, risks, and performance. Specific information on the various funds can be accessed directly from the TSP website at <http://www.tsp.gov/rates/fundsheets.html>

## **7. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance**

As a federal employee, you are eligible for the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program. This is term insurance. Although it does not build cash on loan value, it offers an immediate protection against financial hardship or loss in the event of death.

From the effective date of your appointment, you are automatically enrolled in FEGLI for basic life insurance, and premiums will be withheld from your first paycheck unless you waive coverage before the end of the first pay period. If you waive coverage, you may not enroll in FEGLI for at least one year and must furnish satisfactory medical evidence of insurability. If you are transferring from another federal agency and are enrolled in FEGLI, your coverage will continue. Opportunities for changing your life insurance coverage are limited; there are no set "open seasons" for changing your life insurance election.

## **8. Federal Employees Health Benefits Program**

One of the benefits of working for the U.S. government is protection against the high cost of medical care through health insurance provided by the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHB). Although you will be covered by the DOS medical program while at your overseas post, medical facilities in most countries will be limited and outpatient treatment will not be covered unless your health insurance plan covers it. In addition, the DOS medical program will not cover you while you are on vacation or while you are in the U.S., even if you are on official travel or home leave. Therefore, while you are employed by the Peace Corps, you are strongly encouraged to carry health insurance. Careful consideration should be given to the health insurance you select.

All federal employees with regularly scheduled tours of duty for more than one year are eligible for the FEHB program. As a new employee, you have 60 days from the date of your appointment to enroll. The effective date of your enrollment is the first day of the pay period after HRM receives your enrollment form. If you are transferring from another federal agency and are enrolled in the FEHB, your coverage will continue; however, if your health insurance plan does not provide overseas coverage (e.g., an HMO), you must enroll in a different plan. Health benefits are offered to you without a medical examination or other restrictions.

Fee-for-service plans under the FEHB program reimburse you or the health-care provider for covered services. In general, you may choose your own physician, hospital, and other health-care providers. However, please be aware that some fee-for-service plans have preferred providers even if you are an overseas employee; if you do not use a preferred provider, you may be liable for additional costs.

Basic information regarding all the plans for which you are eligible, as well as specific information regarding costs for both individual and family coverage will be sent to you once the job offer is made.

Once you enroll in a health benefits plan, HRM will give you a copy of your processed enrollment form. This form may be used as evidence of your enrollment if you need to see a doctor or visit a hospital shortly following your enrollment. Enrollment cards are sent from your insurance carrier to the address shown on your enrollment form and usually take two to three months to arrive. You should take copies of your health insurance reimbursement forms with you overseas.

## **D. Department of State Medical Program**

In addition to the FEHB program, overseas employees and their eligible family members are also covered by the Department of State (DOS) medical program. Coverage under this program begins once you and your dependents have received medical clearance from the DOS and have arrived at your overseas post. The program offers routine medical care (at posts with embassy health units), facilitates employees and their families receiving

additional care including medical evacuations, and authorizes the payment of specific health-related costs. The features of the DOS medical program are summarized below. For further information, refer to the pamphlets from the DOS enclosed in your offer package. **While employed with the Peace Corps, you must carry health insurance.** Although carrying health insurance is not a legal requirement, your health insurance provider is always the primary payer for all medical bills. The Peace Corps is the secondary payer for medical costs (relating only to hospitalization and required medical exams), which may be a fraction of your total medical costs.

## 1. Routine Medical Care and Counseling Services

Many posts with an American embassy maintain a health unit that might be staffed by a doctor, nurse, or medical practitioner. You and your family will have access to the health unit free of charge for medical consultation, routine outpatient treatment, and preventative medical services. In addition, the DOS has a core of regional health-care providers (physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and psychiatrists) who visit posts on a periodic basis. They are also available to you and your family for medical and mental health consultations. If you make a request for consultations through post embassy medical personnel, cables will be coded “for medical eyes only” and sent via Medical Channel to protect your confidentiality. You may also contact the regional staff directly. Once at post, your embassy health unit can provide specifics on all services.

For posts without an American embassy, routine medical care is accessed through the local medical community. The Peace Corps medical contractor (PCMC) and/or DOS regional medical provider can assist you in locating a local physician in such cases, but PCMCs can only provide medical services to Volunteers.

## 2. Outpatient Care

The embassy health unit (or PCMC for posts without embassies) will refer you to local physicians and other specialists when appropriate and necessary care exceeds the limits of the embassy health unit staff. When referred to a local clinic or doctor for routine and specialty outpatient care, the costs of these consultations and treatments are your responsibility. No portion of an outpatient care bill (not related to hospitalization) is paid by the Peace Corps. Subject to policy deductibles, your health insurance carrier will reimburse you for charges.

However, the costs for outpatient care directly related to a **DOS-authorized hospitalization** are covered under the DOS medical program and will be reimbursed by the Peace Corps. Examples include: post-hospitalization follow-up appointments, necessary physical therapy, follow-up laboratory tests, etc. Bills must be forwarded to your health insurance carrier for payment before submitting them to the DOS for any additional authorized payment.

### 3. Hospitalization

If indicated, the Peace Corps, through the DOS medical program, will authorize hospitalization for an illness, injury, or serious medical condition incurred overseas. This applies to both you and your eligible family members. Hospitalization may occur at any of the following locations: 1) private clinics or hospitals in-country; 2) a private clinic, hospital, or U.S. military facility in your region; or 3) a hospital in the United States. Choice of locale for hospitalization should be discussed with your post medical officer and regional health-care provider (RHCP).

U.S. hospitals and U.S. military hospitals overseas will bill your health insurance carrier directly. The Peace Corps, upon authorization from the DOS, will pay some, or all, of the balance. Should you be hospitalized at a local hospital that requires immediate payment, the Peace Corps will initially pay for the bill. However, you must submit a claim to your health insurance carrier to reimburse the government.

Hospitals at regional centers, such as Pretoria, London, or Singapore, may or may not require “up-front” payment. If they do require immediate payment, the Peace Corps will cover the charges, subject to the DOS authorization. Again, you will submit a claim to your insurance carrier for reimbursement to the government. In some instances, hospitals in regional centers have formalized agreements with the DOS to bill health insurance carriers directly, thereby easing the billing process for both the patient and the government.

When properly authorized by the DOS, all customary, reasonable, and usual expenses incidental to a period of hospitalization are covered after your health insurance carrier pays. This includes surgery, doctors’ visits, medication, room charges, nursing care, tests, post-operative care, anesthesia, etc.

### 4. Medical Evacuations

A medical evacuation occurs when the RHCP or the Foreign Programs Division of the Office of Medical Services at the DOS determines that adequate medical facilities do not exist at post to treat an employee’s or eligible family member’s medical problem. This may or may not mean that hospitalization is required. In all cases of an authorized medical evacuation, the Peace Corps will pay for travel costs and appropriate per diem expenses while either you or your family member is undergoing treatment. If hospitalization is necessary, travel and medical costs (as secondary payer after your health insurance carrier) are covered. More information on medical evacuations can be found in “Emergencies” in section four.

#### **Limitations**

**There are certain categories of treatment and medical expenses that the DOS medical program does not cover. Some types of routine health care, such as**

prescription drugs, are not covered. Medical expenses incurred in the U.S. while on home leave, vacation, or official duty (excluding those incurred while on an authorized medical evacuation) are excluded from coverage. Cosmetic surgery or prosthetic devices (unless connected with authorized medical treatment) are not covered. Routine dental care is not covered; nor are private hospital rooms and personal conveniences, such as telephones, TVs, or extra nursing care. Medical treatment not authorized and expenses deemed inappropriate or excessive by the DOS are not covered.

## **5. Dental Care**

Routine dental care is not covered by the DOS medical program. A medical evacuation for an emergency dental condition may be authorized by the RHCP or the DOS in Washington, DC. The decision for evacuation is based on availability of adequate dental care facilities in-country. If authorized, medical evacuation travel costs are covered under the DOS medical program; however, the costs of treatment for the emergency dental condition are not covered. Per diem is limited to only three days in the case of an emergency dental evacuation. Emergency dental care is defined as any dental condition that is causing severe pain and/or for which the deferment of proper treatment would cause permanent and irreparable damage to the teeth or supporting dental structures. Orthodontia is not regarded as an emergency dental condition.


## **6. Obstetrical Care**

Expenses related to hospitalization for delivery are covered, including the six-week neonatal examination of the infant, which is required for the newborn's medical clearance. As mentioned previously, all medical bills should be forwarded to your primary health insurance carrier prior to submission to the U.S. Department of State. The Peace Corps will pay for any DOS-approved expenses not covered by your insurance.

## **7. Newly Acquired Dependents**

New dependents (through marriage, birth, or adoption) must undergo the prescribed medical examination and receive a medical clearance to be eligible for benefits. A new child is automatically covered by the DOS medical program for the first 90 days after birth or adoption; however, he/she must receive the prescribed medical clearance during that time. A revised Residence and Dependency Report Form OF-126 must be submitted to HRM.

## SECTION TWO: Getting Ready to Go Overseas



Before you arrive at your new post, you and your family will be faced with many decisions and challenges as you prepare for life overseas. Most staff members stop in Washington, DC, for either overseas staff training (OST) or administrative officer training (AOT) which, in addition to the comprehensive training provided, is an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the Peace Corps' operations and procedures and to finalize employment-related matters. For those new employees not attending OST or AOT, it is important to keep in regular contact with your region as well as the Office of Human Resource Management (HRM) and the Travel Management Center as you prepare to become a Peace Corps employee. The following section provides detailed guidance and information on many issues that you and your family will face during your move overseas.

### A. Offer Package

Once you receive your conditional offer of employment, your first priority in getting ready to go overseas is to review the contents of the information sent to you by HRM. The package will include information about your conditional offer of employment and gives instructions on the forms needed to initiate the medical clearance process and background investigation. Brochures on various federal benefits programs are also included and enrollment forms provided. Please pay careful attention to all instructions on the forms and forward completed forms to the appropriate office as soon as possible. Your human resources specialist is available to assist you with questions.

#### **For Your Immediate Attention:**

1. Set up appointment(s) for physical examinations.
2. If necessary, complete security forms.
3. Apply for official passport(s).
4. Arrange for storage or shipment of household items.
5. In conjunction with your bank, complete your direct deposit form.

## B. Medical Matters

### 1. Medical Clearance

You and all eligible family members who will be residing with you at post must be granted a medical clearance prior to departure for post. Your medical clearance is important for a variety of reasons. The Peace Corps needs to be assured of your good health, as well as that of your family. Given the possibility of limited medical facilities at your post, you will also want to be confident that you and your family are physically fit to fulfill your tour of duty away from the U.S. It is your responsibility to have the medical examinations completed immediately.

If you live within a 50-mile radius of Washington, DC, you and your dependents six years of age and older should schedule physical examinations at the U.S. Department of State, Office of Medical Services (see Appendix A). If you live outside the 50-mile radius of Washington, you are authorized to have an examination performed by your private physician. Be sure that your private physician submits the completed medical forms directly to the DOS/Office of Medical Services as soon as the results are obtained. **Doctors frequently forget to completely fill out and/or sign exam forms. This will impede your clearance. Please check forms over carefully before your doctor forwards them to the DOS.** You and your physician should keep copies of the forms with examination and laboratory results.

You should pay all private physician bills and laboratory costs or forward them to your current health insurance carrier. The instructions for reimbursement are given on the DOS Authorization for Medical Examination Form, DS 3069 (formerly DSL 820). If some costs are not covered by your health insurance, or you do not presently have insurance, you may submit the bills (with insurance payment explanation) to the DOS for reimbursement. Reimbursement will be based on whether or not the charges for the exam or tests were reasonable, customary, and usual. **If they are not, you will have to pay those charges.** You may call the DOS claims office for information regarding allowable charges (see Appendix A).

The DOS receives the information sent from your physician and reviews each family member's case. The DOS is responsible for medically clearing you and your dependents for overseas assignments. HRM is then notified regarding the status of the clearance and will notify you and your regional office. Occasionally, the DOS will require additional tests. If this is the case, you will be notified by a letter that will outline what is needed. Upon request from the Peace Corps, the DOS will also notify HRM regarding the pending status of your clearance. If you have specific concerns about your clearance, you may personally contact the DOS to determine your status (see Appendix A for the telephone number). The medical clearance process generally takes at least three weeks after the DOS receives all of your medical history forms and examination results. Clearance will be delayed if the information is incomplete or if further tests are required. Thus, it is imperative that you begin the process immediately and that you monitor it until the clearance is complete. **It is your responsibility to follow up with your physician to**

**ensure that all tests are completed, that the forms are filled out properly, and that they are mailed to the DOS in a timely fashion.** If you suspect that there may be a problem with the clearance process (such as a pre-existing condition or illness in the family), please discuss it with DOS/Office of Medical Services and advise your HRM personnel specialist immediately so that the clearance process can be carefully monitored by the DOS and the Peace Corps. **You and your family must be medically cleared before traveling to post.**

It is strongly recommended that you take copies of your and your family's physical exam forms, lab results, and complete medical records from your previous health-care provider.

## 2. Immunizations

Various countries require particular immunizations for entry. You may contact the DOS Office of Medical Services to inquire about the immunizations needed for your post (see Appendix A for the telephone number). Proof of immunization must be recorded on your medical record, as well as on your World Health Organization (WHO) card, which must be carried with you to post. The DOS may recommend some inoculations for post-related reasons, while others may be recommended for reasons specific to your health.

Some of the immunizations are given in series. To allow proper spacing of the immunizations, it would be advantageous to schedule them as far in advance as possible before you travel. However, it is advisable to contact the immunization clinic before you schedule a series of inoculations because you may be able to complete some at post. Alert your physician or nurse if you have had any adverse reactions to previous inoculations.

Children should receive routine immunizations by the family physician or pediatrician. However, for post-specific immunizations they may come to the DOS if they are in the Washington, DC area. Adults may obtain their immunizations from the DOS, a government public health facility, or private physician. The DOS will require you to show a copy of your assignment travel authorization prior to giving you any immunizations. This travel authorization is generally available on your first day of employment. The immunization clinic is located in State Annex 1 (SA – 1), Columbia Plaza, 2401 E Street NW, room 201, Washington, DC. They have specific hours; therefore, you should call in advance to make sure they are open (see Appendix A for telephone number).

## C. Security Clearance

All U.S. citizen direct-hire employees of the Peace Corps assigned overseas must be cleared for top-secret access. This level of clearance is necessary to ensure you will be given unimpeded access to the information necessary to fully perform in your assigned position. In order to be cleared at the top secret level, you must undergo a Single Scope



Background Investigation (SSBI). The SSBI is conducted by the Peace Corps Office of Safety and Security (OSS), and includes a subject interview; personal interviews with former employers, neighbors, education sources, and character references; and credit, law enforcement, and national agency checks. The completed investigation is adjudicated to ensure that the issuance of a security clearance is in the best interest of national security. The security clearance process normally takes 30 to 60 days to finalize once all forms are received by the Peace Corps.

All staff are required to complete the Questionnaire for National Security Positions Form SF-86 via the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) online portal, E-QIP. Once Peace Corps receives your Declaration of Employment Form OF-306, and the Fair Credit Reporting Act release, OSS will create an account for you so that you may access the E-QIP system. A link to the secure portal and a brochure will be provided, via e-mail, to assist you in accessing, completing, and submitting the form. OSS will also be available to assist you with the online application process.

Country director candidates will be fingerprinted at Peace Corps headquarters when you come to Washington, DC for your panel interview.

For other U.S. direct hire staff (PTOs, APCDs, and AOs) you will be sent a security packet. It should be completed and returned to OSS within three days of receipt of your offer package. The security packet consists of two fingerprint cards forms SF-87, one Federal Declaration of Employment Form OF-306 and one Fair Credit Reporting Act release. Each requires an original signature and date. Fingerprinting can be arranged at most local law enforcement agencies.

Please make sure that you furnish all requested information and provide original signatures on the OF-306, SF-87, and Fair Credit Reporting Act release before mailing the forms to OSS. The two most common causes for delay in the issuance of clearances is failure to complete the forms as required (e.g., complete middle name not just middle initial, zip codes where requested, etc.) and delay in submitting the necessary security forms.

Your spouse will not have to complete a separate security clearance form. The data you furnish on your SF-86 will provide the necessary spousal information.

## **D. Money Matters**

### **1. Direct Deposit**

The Peace Corps will deposit your net salary to the U.S. financial institution you designate on the Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form SF 1199a included in your offer package. Please have your financial institution complete section 3 of the Direct Deposit Sign-Up form, and send or bring this with you to Washington, DC. If you are unable to do this, you may complete sections 1 and 2 of the Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form and bring a voided check from your U.S. financial institution with you to Washington, DC. You may

complete additional direct deposit forms to have up to two allotment payments to other accounts, such as savings, money market accounts, bank loans, etc.

## 2. Lafayette Federal Credit Union

The Peace Corps is affiliated with Lafayette Federal Credit Union (LFCU). LFCU offers a wide range of financial services and has experience in dealing with overseas customers. For more information, contact LFCU or the HRM benefits specialist (see telephone numbers in Appendix A).

## 3. Other Bank Services

You may want to consider bank services to pay bills such as credit cards, mortgage payments, and the like, or you might wish to have a special bank account with signatory rights by someone you designate or who may have power of attorney. Some banks can process transactions for customers overseas using special international telephone numbers. These arrangements can be changed once you are overseas, but you will find it easier to take care of them prior to departure.

Good news on the banking front: Many banks offer online banking services that allow members 24-hour access via the Internet to review account history, transfer funds, make loan payments, pay bills, etc. Check with your financial institution for such services. If you are choosing a bank, look for services that are the most convenient and least expensive. There are advantages when each spouse has a separate account (e.g., in case of disability, death of a spouse, or need to establish a separate credit rating), which can be invaluable in emergency situations. Valuables left behind, as well as important personal and legal documents, should be kept in a safety deposit box and not with your storage. You may need to look around for a safety deposit box that is available immediately. Commercial establishments offer safe deposit services that may be more costly but more extensive than financial institutions.

## 4. Charge Accounts and Credit Cards

Store accounts, as well as mail-order accounts, are often convenient for shopping while overseas. You should verify with stores whether or not they mail overseas. Please be aware, however, that the billing and payment process can be quite slow. You may want to pay bills upon charging items so you do not accrue late charges or interest. The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) at the DOS (see Appendix A for telephone number) has lists of mail-order companies. These can be obtained while you are in Washington, DC or sent to you upon request.

**Note: Keep a list of all credit card numbers, bank account numbers, and serial numbers on photographic, stereo, and video equipment in several readily**

**accessible places in the event of loss or theft of any of the items. Carry a copy of the list with your passport, place one in a secure file cabinet in your office, and leave another with a family member or friend.**

## **5. Advance of Pay**

Upon request, up to three months' pay may be advanced to you in order to ease the financial burden involved in moving overseas. This can be requested no earlier than 45 days prior to departure for post and no later than 60 days after arrival at the overseas assignment. Repayment of this advance is made by payroll deduction. Requests for advance of pay are processed through your regional office. You may want to consider a salary advance to cover such costs as purchasing a car overseas or buying consumables. Your regional staffing analyst can assist you in obtaining a salary advance.

## **6. Commercial Accommodation Exchange**

When making arrangements for banking services and your personal finances, you will be dealing with commercial institutions for accommodation exchange and check cashing in most cases. Overseas staff members are required to use commercial facilities if they are available at the post.

## **E. Legal Matters: Consult personal counsel on these matters.**

### **1. Power of Attorney**

You may want to consider assigning power of attorney to a friend, lawyer, or relative who will be remaining in the U.S. and can handle some of your affairs while you are overseas. A power of attorney is a document by which one person authorizes another as an agent to take actions on his/her behalf. A power of attorney may be general, allowing your agent to do anything and everything on your behalf, or limited. It assures the person or institution that needs the signature that the principal will honor the signature of his/her attorney and be legally bound by it, just as if the principal had been there and signed it. A power of attorney may be drawn and notarized at the U.S. consulate in your country of assignment should the need arise. It is recommended that you check with experts in your state for the specific requirements for a valid power of attorney to fit your particular situation.

### **2. Wills/Letters of Instruction**

You should consider whether to have both a will and a living will for each adult member of your family, particularly if you have young children. Personal legal counsel can advise

you on this, take you through the process, and explain whether further action is required upon major changes, such as death of a beneficiary, birth or adoption of a child, change in marital status, etc. You should also consider drawing up a list of instructions to be followed in the event of your death and include the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of relatives and close friends to be notified. Counsel can also advise you on whether matters such as preferred funeral arrangements and the name of a person to act as guardian for minor children are better placed in the will, the letter, or both. Leave copies of the will and instructions with a friend, relative, or lawyer. Additional information is available at the Overseas Briefing Center website at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

### **3. Income Tax**

All direct-hire U.S. citizens of the U.S. government are required to pay federal, state, and local income tax, as appropriate, on their income. Every year you must prepare for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) an accounting of where your income came from, what your exemptions and deductions might be, and what you owe in tax to the U.S. government. You also must prepare a similar accounting for your state of domicile if it has an income tax. Every January, you should receive a set of tax forms and basic instructions from the IRS and from your state. If you do not receive them, you can call or write the IRS and your state government to request the forms or visit the website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). Federal tax forms are available in the consular section of every embassy, but state forms must always be requested. In addition, don't forget to inform your previous employer where to send your W-2 form for the time you worked before entering the Peace Corps. It is important for you to verify that taxes are being taken out correctly by reviewing your earnings and leave statement, which you should receive every two weeks. You can also check your earnings and leave statements online at [www.nfc.usda.gov](http://www.nfc.usda.gov). You may also find current information on federal tax matters at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

### **4. Absentee Ballots**

Though overseas, eligible voters generally may still vote in the U.S. national, state, and local elections by absentee ballot. Before you leave home, inform your local election board that you are leaving to work for the Peace Corps overseas and that you wish to have absentee ballots sent to your address abroad. Obtain an address to write for absentee ballots prior to departure. The board may require that you request absentee ballots for each election. Take into account your local postal system and apply for the ballots well before the election in order to provide ample time for receipt and return of the ballot. Ask your local election board about this, as well as what you must do to maintain a permanent address for voting purposes.

## 5. Driver's License

Renew your driver's license if possible before you leave so it will be valid throughout your tour. If it is not possible, you may be able to renew it by mail during the course of your tour. In that case, try to get the renewal forms before you leave the U.S. An international driver's license can be obtained from the American Automobile Association (AAA) in person or by mail before you arrive in Washington, DC. You should consider having both a U.S. license and an international license.

## 6. Legal Status In-Country

As a Peace Corps direct-hire employee, you do not have diplomatic privileges and immunities. You are subject to host country laws. Those laws vary considerably and frequently impose different liabilities and responsibilities than those in the U.S. The Peace Corps will do its best to assist you should you be involved in an arrest, accident, or other matter in the course and scope of your employment requiring legal assistance, but you do not have diplomatic immunity to protect you or your family. The U.S. consular officer can also advise and assist in local matters that could affect you, and your family.

## F. Overseas Mail

It will be important for family, friends, and business associates to be able to contact you while you are overseas. The post office has change-of-address kits with forms that can be sent to advise others of your new address and also available on the Internet at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com) by clicking "change address." Make address changes at least one month prior to departure. Having a list of all necessary addresses will facilitate change-of-address notifications every time you move. Be sure to send change-of-address forms to all of your insurance companies, department of motor vehicles, federal and state income tax bureaus, store accounts, companies of any stock you own, credit card companies, and investment firms. For your family and friends, you might consider preparing a special announcement that includes your new address and, if possible, telephone numbers of your future office and residence. For associates, banks, and credit card companies, you may wish to include the name, address, and telephone number of the person who will be responsible for your affairs in your absence.

Generally, there are three ways you receive mail overseas: international postal service (airmail), APO/FPO (military postal service—not available at every post), and DOS diplomatic mail and pouch (not available at every post). Even though the Peace Corps uses APO/FPO and pouch services, the agency costs have substantially increased over the past few years. Therefore, the use of these facilities by staff and family may be limited. You should contact your country desk unit (CDU) to determine which service is available at your post and for address instructions. For posts with APO/FPO or pouch services, the CDU can advise you if mail is better sent via these methods or by international airmail. One bonus in using pouch and military postal service is that the mailing costs are based

on domestic rates. Timeliness and dependability of the different mail services can vary widely from post to post.

For posts with APO/FPO services, authorized users are full-time, direct-hire U.S. government employees associated with the embassy (this includes U.S. direct-hire Peace Corps employees). Restricted package contents include currency, radio transceivers/cordless phones, plants/seeds, meats, cigarettes/tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, printer ink, and, obviously, no poisons, explosives, or firearms. Packages may not exceed 65 pounds and cannot be more than 42 inches in length and 72 inches in length and girth combined. Gross weight of packages must be written on the lower corner of the container.

For posts with diplomatic mail and pouch privileges, authorized users are also full-time, direct-hire U.S. government employees associated with the embassy. Restricted contents include currency, plants/seeds, food products/meats/animal products, firearms/ammunition/explosives, alcoholic beverages, any items for resale, bulk supplies of any nature, caustics/corrosives, controlled substances/narcotics, poisons, flammable-type films, incendiary materials, glass containers/liquids, printer ink, and radioactive substances/magnetic materials. Packages may not exceed 40 pounds, and the gross weight of the container must appear on the lower right corner of the container. The maximum single item dimensions are 18" x 12" x 10" = 62" in length and girth.

International airmail is another way individuals can send you mail at post. For employees at posts where there is no military presence or embassy, this is the only option. You can request an international mail address for your post from your country desk officer.

Sending packages from post to the U.S. can sometimes be problematic. Check with the Peace Corps and/or embassy staff when sending packages to ensure you use the best postal method.

## **G. Contact Information**

Important contact numbers of staff members at the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, DC, and at the Department of State who can assist you before and during your employment are listed in Appendix A.

## **H. Educational Assistance**

### **1. Educational Allowance and Educational Travel Allowances**

If you have children, their education will certainly be one of your top priorities. The Peace Corps provides employees with school-age children either an education allowance or an educational travel allowance. Both are described in the following paragraphs. If you have any questions, please contact your human resource specialist or refer to section 270

and 280 of the Department of State Standardized Regulations.

Children older than 4 and younger than 21 years of age are eligible for an education allowance if enrolled in the elementary or secondary school levels (i.e., grades K-12). A child who has reached the age of 21 during a school year remains eligible for an education allowance only until the end of that school year. The education allowance is designed to assist in defraying those costs necessary to obtain educational services, which are ordinarily provided without charge by the public schools in the U.S. This allowance is a fixed amount determined by the DOS allowances office based on each post. It may be used to cover the cost of tuition and room and board, and any unused portion may be used for periodic transportation between your child's school and post.

**Educational travel** provides yearly round-trip transportation from post to the U.S. for full-time students (under age 23) attending an undergraduate college or post-secondary vocational or technical school in the U.S. Educational travel may also include travel to a school outside the U.S. if the student is attending the school for less than one year and the program is approved by the school which the student is enrolled on a full-time basis. Educational travel for students attending U.S. public primary or secondary schools is in lieu of an education allowance. Tickets are paid for from posts' budgets.

Request copies of your children's school records, including any special test results, well in advance of your departure. Bring this information with you to post along with other essential personal documents.

## **2. The Office of Overseas Schools**

The DOS Office of Overseas Schools promotes quality educational opportunities at the elementary and secondary level for dependents of American citizens carrying out programs and interests of the U.S. government abroad. This office, located in Washington, DC, is staffed by personnel who are well informed about schools attended by U.S. government school-age children. The office publishes a one-page fact sheet on each overseas American-sponsored school assisted by the DOS and has more in-depth information on microfiche and hard copy. Families are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Overseas Schools for information on educational opportunities overseas for their school-age children (see Appendix A for the telephone number). Parents or guardians of a special-needs child must be aware that the Office of Overseas Schools must approve the school placement for the post to be approved for that child.

## **I. Department of State Resources**

### **1. National Foreign Affairs Training Center (The Overseas Briefing Center)**

DOS has several offices that provide services to new employees and their families. Although these offices are excellent resources for new overseas staff and family

members, the Peace Corps differs in some allowances and procedures from the DOS.

The Overseas Briefing Center (OBC) was established to provide information, training, and assistance to employees and families of all U.S. government agencies anticipating an overseas assignment or returning from a tour abroad. It performs this function by serving as a repository for information furnished by overseas posts. It houses a collection of visual and printed materials on overseas posts (e.g., housing, schools, employment, medical facilities, recreation, administrative matters, and cultural environment). In addition, the OBC sponsors a variety of workshops and seminars that are available to U.S. government employees and their families free of charge. The OBC is a good place to take children to learn more about your country of assignment. HRM also has brochures describing the center, announcements for upcoming courses, and directions to the OBC. If you live in the Washington, DC area or you come through the area for staff training or orientation, visit the OBC located in Arlington, Virginia. Call the OBC (see Appendix A for the telephone number) for information about hours and directions.

## **2. Family Liaison Office**

Another resource for new overseas employees and their families is the Family Liaison Office (FLO), a two-way channel of communication for the foreign affairs community. It aims to improve the quality of life for foreign service families serving abroad by identifying issues, advocating for programs and solutions, providing client services, and managing the worldwide community liaison office program. Major areas within the FLO include education and youth, family member employment, educational support, and support services. The FLO provides information on continuing education, correspondence courses, degree-granting programs, and tutorials. Should you need child care when you are in Washington, DC for training, the FLO can provide child-care referrals. Spouses interested in employment overseas should also contact the FLO to be put into their skills database. FLO provides publications that specifically address the issues faced by U.S. government employees and family members assigned to, serving at, or returning from a mission abroad (see Appendix A for the telephone number).

## **3. Employment Consultation Service**

The Employee Consultation Service (ECS), located at the DOS in Washington, DC, is available to you and your family for brief counseling and referrals. Some of the problems the clinical social workers in ECS can assist with include job stress, marital and relationship problems, parenting concerns, school adjustment problems, elderly parent concerns, separation, loss and grief, medical illness, financial concerns, cross-cultural adjustment, and pre-departure and re-entry issues. The ECS also provides services for children with special needs. ECS social workers assist in arranging educational, psychological, and psychiatric evaluations of children, as well as in finding appropriate school placements for children with special needs. Consultations with the ECS are completely confidential and do not become part of an employee's medical record (see Appendix A for the telephone number).



#### 4. Peace Corps Resources


Part of preparing for your assignment overseas is learning about the country you are going to and the adjustments you will have to make. In addition to DOS resources, the Peace Corps has an abundance of resources that are geared towards Volunteers, but may also be useful for staff and their families. Such information may be obtained through your country desk unit (CDU). The CDU may also refer you to current employees at post for more specific answers to your questions, such as what to expect concerning housing and furnishing at your post.

Not only will you and your family be going through an adjustment as you move overseas, but your family and friends at home will be facing adjustments as well. Some useful materials include *A Few Minor Adjustments*, *The Volunteer Welcome Book* for your country, and *On the Home Front*. Ask your CDU for these materials as well.

#### 5. Overseas Staff Training

The Peace Corps provides overseas staff with a month-long orientation to prepare you for your new position. Overseas staff training (OST) includes skills training, interaction with various headquarters' staff members, and opportunities to work collaboratively with many new and experienced overseas staff members. The OST program is very intense; therefore, you will not be able to schedule other personal appointments during this time. You will receive detailed information on OST in an invitation letter from the OST coordinator.

## SECTION THREE: Getting To Post



Moving to post might seem like a complicated task, but keep in mind the staff in the Transportation Division are experts who have been helping new staff members with their relocations for years.

### A. Travel Authorization

The Office of Human Resource Management (HRM) will initiate the process for issuance of your travel authorization (TA) after your tentative offer of employment has been made and accepted. HRM will notify the Peace Corps Transportation Division that you are ready to begin your travel planning. The Transportation Division is responsible for completing your official TA, and they will provide you with detailed information regarding your travel, passports, and packing and shipping or storing your personal belongings. (See Appendix A for the telephone number.)

**To avoid any unnecessary delay in issuing your TA, it is essential for HRM to have the correct names and dates of births of your eligible dependents and the correct address of your legal residence (current address or the place from which you will travel). A TA is necessary before arrangements can be made for your travel and storage and/or shipment of your belongings to post.**

Your airline tickets, as well as the release of your air and sea freight for shipment, are issued by the Transportation Division once notification of your security and medical clearances is received from HRM, and after you have signed the conditions of service as described in Section One: So You've Been Offered a Job with the Peace Corps.

### B. Travel Arrangements

The Transportation Division staff, in conjunction with the Travel Management Center (TMC), will make all the necessary travel arrangements for you and your family, including storage and/or shipment of your belongings to your new post. All travel arrangements to Washington, DC and to your overseas post assignment must be made by the Transportation Division. **The Peace Corps will not be held responsible for the payment to any other vendor for travel arrangements that are made through personal means unless authorized by the Transportation Division prior to making such arrangements.**

## 1. Travel to OST or AOT

Travel at government expense is authorized from your place of residence to Washington, D.C. for overseas staff training (OST) or administrative officer training (AOT) en route to your overseas post. You should be prepared to leave directly for post following your training in Washington, DC. For employees traveling to post without attending training in Washington, DC, travel is authorized from place of residence to post via the most direct route or through Washington, DC for consultation.

## 2. Per Diem Expenses

If you live outside of the Washington, DC metropolitan area (50 mile radius) you are authorized per diem during OST or AOT. If you have been offered employment while a resident of the metropolitan Washington, DC area, you are not eligible for any per diem during OST or AOT. HRM or the Transportation Division can provide you with additional information upon request.

## C. Passports and Visas

### 1. Passport Information

Your offer package should include a Passport Application Form, DSP 11, and a Cover Letter for Official Passport Form FL-41 for you and each of your eligible family members. You and each of your eligible family members must obtain official passports for travel outside the U.S. Non-U.S. citizen family members should travel with passports issued by their country of citizenship. You are advised to **complete the passport application within three days of receipt of your conditional job offer package** as it can take four to six weeks for an official passport to be issued. Please read all the instructions on the reverse side of the application before applying for the passport(s) to avoid further delays in issuance. To obtain a passport, you must have either (a) a previously issued passport, (b) a certified birth certificate, or (c) naturalization papers as proof of American citizenship and another form of identification. Remember you must apply in person before an authorized passport agent. **Do not send the application forms to the Peace Corps.** The applications are not valid unless witnessed and signed by the appropriate official. If you have a previously issued personal passport, you may be able to use an Expedited Mail-In Application Form, DSP 82. If application for passports cannot be made on a timely basis, or if you have less than two weeks before departing to Washington, DC for training, it will be necessary for you to wait and apply in person in Washington, DC. Contact either the Transportation Division or the TMC for more information and guidance, including the use of the DSP 82 form. (See Appendix A for telephone numbers.)

## 2. Visa Requirements

A visa may be required for entry into your country of assignment. The visa is normally stamped onto the official passport by the issuing embassy. Some countries may require the completion of visa forms and photos. Contact the TMC for more information relating to visas for your country. The TMC will assist you in securing an official visa. You may wish to have extra passport photos to keep with you during your tour.

Your expenses related to obtaining official passports and/or official visas are paid by the Peace Corps. Please be sure to keep an accurate record of your receipts, as they will be needed to claim reimbursement when filing your travel voucher once you reach your post.

## D. Shipping Your Belongings Overseas

### 1. Personal Belongings and Household Effects

Personal belongings and household effects (HHE) are those items for use by the employee and the employee's family while serving on an overseas assignment or put into storage during the employee's tenure with the Peace Corps.

**Your possessions are divided into four categories:**

1. Storage
2. Accompanied baggage (to be carried with you)
3. Unaccompanied baggage (air freight)
4. Surface shipment (sea freight), which includes larger household items, also referred to as HHE

Lists of suggested items for accompanied baggage, unaccompanied baggage (air freight), and surface (sea freight) are included in Appendix C.

### 2. Weight Allowances

Weight limits are determined by the number of people traveling to post. Your belongings are authorized for either storage or sea freight/surface shipment. All staff, regardless of family size, are allowed a combined total of 14,000 lbs. for storage and shipment. The following is a breakdown of air and sea shipment authorized by size of family.

**Single Staff Member:**

Air Freight 250 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 2,500 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with one family member:**

Air Freight 450 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 3,500 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with two family members:**

Air Freight 600 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 4,000 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with three family members:**

Air Freight 700 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 4,500 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with four family members:**

Air Freight 800 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 5,000 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with five family members:**

Air Freight 900 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 5,500 lbs. net weight

**Staff Member with six family members:**

Air Freight 1,000 lbs. gross weight

Sea Freight 6,000 lbs. net weight

**Check with the Transportation Division if you have more than six family members.**

### 3. Storage

The storage and surface shipment allowances are separate from the allowances granted for air freight. Allowances for storage and sea freight are net weight amounts. This means the weight of shipping containers and packing materials is not included in the total weight of the shipment.

Controlled storage may be authorized for some clothing, rugs, tapestries, paintings, and other works of art and items of high value. The Transportation Division must be notified in advance if controlled storage is required for any of your personal belongings.

If you elect to buy insurance for your storage items, you must arrange with the storage company to bill you separately for these charges. The Peace Corps will not pay for any insurance fees.

The Peace Corps will pay storage costs for personal belongings stored in the U.S. for three months from the last day of your overseas assignment.

### 4. Accompanied Baggage

Baggage allowances will vary between airlines; therefore you should check with the airline on their policy. Most American-flag carriers allow two checked pieces of baggage per passenger (weight not to exceed 50 lbs. each) whereas foreign carriers usually have a weight restriction of 44 lbs. free baggage per person. In this case, the Peace Corps will authorize an additional 22 lbs. of excess baggage for a total of 66 lbs. each per person. If your routing involves the use of both American and foreign-flag carriers, it is recommended that your accompanied baggage be limited to two pieces of checked luggage, not to exceed a total of 66 lbs. for each member of the family. The Transportation Division or TMC can provide additional information regarding allowable weight and pieces.

### 5. Unaccompanied Baggage (Air Freight)

**Please be advised that you should pack the essential items you will need immediately upon arrival at post in your air freight shipment.**

Typically, Peace Corps employees have needed such items as linens, dishes, utensils, lightweight cookware, clothing, and children's toys. Consult with the country desk unit (CDU) for specific items previous employees have needed at your post. Do not include hazardous materials, alcohol, large, or fragile items in your air freight. Be sure to allow 15 to 20 lbs. per box for additional packing material and banding by the packing company since this is a gross-weight allowance.

## **6. Surface Shipments (Sea Freight)**

Larger household items and those articles that are not needed right away should be placed in your surface shipment (sea freight). It may be helpful for you to consult with the CDU to determine the approximate size of your living quarters at post. The living quarters may be smaller than comparable living quarters in the U.S. They will probably be already furnished and therefore the Transportation Division recommends that you do not plan to ship unusually large pieces of furniture. Aircraft, kayaks, canoes, and other watercraft may not be shipped or stored at the Peace Corps' expense.

## **7. Allowance for Shipment of Consumables**

Some countries are designated by the U.S. Department of State as consumable posts. This is determined by a lack of availability or excessive costs of certain items that may be required by you or your dependents. If you are assigned to such a post, the Transportation Division will authorize a separate additional allowance for shipment of consumables for you. This allowance has been established at 2,500 lbs. net weight, for each staff member. This allowance is added to the initial travel authorization. You may use the allowance for up to one year with a maximum of three shipments. When choosing your consumables, be aware of conditions of extreme heat or cold during shipping. For example, cheeses may melt or liquids may freeze.

## **8. Purchases**

It is suggested that you consult with your CDU regarding living conditions in your country before making purchases of any kind for shipment to your post. You will receive assistance from the CDU as to the climate and culture of the country in which you will live and work. Information regarding the housing conditions, the office, and the embassy environment will also be helpful to you. This information will assist you in deciding which items should be stored, purchased, or discarded.

### **Clothing**

If you have children, try to predict the clothing sizes they will need for the duration of your assignment. Dry cleaning and laundry facilities overseas can be very hard on clothing, so keep that in mind when you calculate the quantities and type of clothing needed for you and any family members. Dry cleaning may also be very costly or, in some cases, unavailable.

### **Items for Entertaining**

You may be asked to provide a wide range of entertainment functions, from planning informal Volunteer get-togethers to hosting official lunches and dinners for representatives of U.S. missions, international agencies, and host country ministries. The CDU or the country director is the best resource for suggestions regarding entertainment supplies, especially for VIP entertaining. Although you are strongly discouraged from shipping irreplaceable china and crystal, some formal dinnerware may be both useful and appropriate to have with you.

### **Food Supplies**

If you are a gourmet cook or have family members with special dietary needs, you will want to find out what is available at post (and more specifically, what is not available) in order to put aside certain food items to be packed along with your personal effects. Spices, baking supplies, as well as packaged foods for favorite recipes, are difficult to obtain in many places. Call the country desk unit to inquire about country-specific information.

### **Pharmaceutical Supplies**

If you need special medicines, you should make arrangements with a pharmacist in the U.S. for periodic shipments to you. There are a number of such pharmacists in Washington, DC who specialize in sending prescriptions to foreign service personnel. In addition, some federal employees health benefits insurance companies have pharmaceutical service programs. The pouch can be used for pharmaceuticals. It is suggested that you carry multiple pairs of contact lenses and eyeglasses and several copies of eyeglass/contact lens prescriptions. In many countries you will want dark glasses. In tropical areas you may need good sun-block creams. For cold climates, extra-strength moisturizer may be necessary. Checking with a dermatologist prior to departure would be advisable. For countries with limited sun during daylight hours, you may want to investigate special lighting that counteracts seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

### **Books, Games, and Electronics**

Believe it or not, there will be times when you and your family will have quiet moments. In fact, you might seriously think about scheduling such periods from the very outset. Working with no diversions can make you a dull staff member in no time at all. Therefore, before you finish your packing list and before you make purchases, think of the things you and your family like to do for relaxation and fun. Purchase some games and books and subscribe to a couple of magazines. Decorations for American holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Fourth of July, and even Halloween are always difficult if not impossible to find and will be greatly appreciated by your family and the Volunteers. Another indispensable investment would be a good, small transistor short-wave radio. You might consider joining the DOS Recreation Association before you depart Washington, DC so that you can buy electronic equipment at a discount. Be sure that all electronic equipment is compatible with overseas systems in regards to electrical currents and television/video systems.

### **Transformers**

Transformers (otherwise known as converters) are available in a variety of sizes to



accommodate different wattages. Voltage and cycles on electrical equipment should be noted before packing begins. Many posts have 220 volts and 50 cycles, others have 110 volts and 60 cycles, and some have both. The CDU can advise you on voltage and cycles at post and on the necessity of purchasing transformers. Small portable transformers for travel are often handy, as well as appliances that operate on batteries. In some instances, the Peace Corps office will have transformers for use by the staff. You should check with your CDU.

## 9. Packing

The Transportation Division will help you make all necessary arrangements and provide you with the name and contact information for the company that will handle your shipments. You should contact the representative and make an appointment with the representative of the packing and storage company to estimate what your shipments and storage will weigh. It is your responsibility to request this pre-pack estimate. Be certain the estimator knows of and includes all items stored in your garage or attic, as well as the items you intend to purchase. Although experienced company estimators generally give an estimate within 10 percent of the actual weight, the estimate is not binding, and all charges are based on actual weights. To protect yourself against an overweight shipment, advise the packing company in writing that it may not ship or store any weight in excess of your allowances without your written consent. The signed pre-packaging estimate will enable you to eliminate any items necessary to keep you within your shipment and storage allowances or, if underweight, give you a chance to include additional items in your shipment. This will also allow the packing company to determine what materials are required to prepare your goods for pack-out. Be sure to advise the company of any items that will require special crating. The Transportation Division will send a letter of authorization along with complete instructions for packing and handling and information on billing. You should not pay any fees with regard to the shipping of the authorized amount of freight.

The selection of a reliable packing company is invaluable. If at any time during the packing process you should feel uncomfortable with the company responsible for your storage and shipments, please contact the Transportation Division immediately. It is better to change companies at the beginning or work out the problems so that you are not concerned about your personal belongings being improperly stored or shipped.

Begin the packing process by making an inventory of all your possessions. You may want to consider a videotaped inventory. Once the inventory is completed, you can begin to plan how you will separate items according to whether they will be packed in your suitcase, sent by air freight, surface freight, or stored.

When your sea freight is unloaded at post, check off the number of each carton or loose item listed on your copy of the packer's inventory. Any missing or damaged items should be noted on the mover's inventory before signing it. If you wish to do some of your own unpacking later, note in writing at the bottom of the inventory sheet that the condition at the time of delivery is unknown.

When you unpack abroad, try to save cartons for the journey home. Cardboard products might be at a premium at your post and you may be glad you removed the tape, flattened, and stored an assortment of boxes. This is especially true for boxes for computers, stereos, recording equipment, etc. For further information on items to pack in each category of personal belongings, please see Appendix C.

## **E. Personal Property Loss or Damage**

The Peace Corps staff are covered for loss or damage to personal and HHE under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employee's Claims Act of 1964, as detailed in Peace Corps Manual Section 762. The maximum amount that will be reimbursed for loss or damage arising from a single incident is \$40,000. Claims will not be allowed if the loss is less than \$50. Please refer to Peace Corps Manual Section 762 for further information regarding this issue.

Employees are strongly encouraged to carry private insurance against damage to personal property since some risks may be excluded or limited by the Peace Corps and reimbursement is based upon the depreciated value only, not for the full replacement value of the item(s).

**It is important to file a written claim promptly to the Peace Corps or to your private insurance company for any loss or damage. Refer to Peace Corps Manual Section 762 for complete details regarding loss or damage to effects and procedures for submitting claims to the Peace Corps.**

## **F. Shipment of Vehicles**

Privately owned automobiles may be shipped at your expense and risk, provided the U.S. embassy at post has not established rules to the contrary and the vehicle itself is not ostentatious. Vehicles may be purchased in many overseas countries, particularly from people with duty-free status. While considering whether or not to ship your automobile overseas, find out the availability of parts and skilled mechanics for your particular type of automobile at post. Shipping and maintaining a vehicle overseas is very expensive and time-consuming. If you ship your vehicle, you are responsible for handling all matters related to shipment, customs clearance, and any required duties. Customs clearance may be particularly challenging.

## **G. Pets**

If you wish to take a pet with you to your overseas post, it will be at your own expense.

In addition, your weight allowance may not be used for the transportation of pets. You will be responsible for finding lodging that allows pets during your OST or AOT training and for researching your host country laws regarding health requirements and quarantine before the pet can be admitted. **All travel arrangements for pets are your responsibility.**

## SECTION FOUR: Life at Post



### A. Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Culture shock can affect everyone, even the most experienced traveler. It is important to recognize that moving—anytime, but particularly into an environment in which the familiar cues are no longer present—is one of the most stressful situations into which an individual and/or family can be placed. It is equally important to recognize that these are normal responses that can be handled and controlled in time. Often the adjustment is least difficult for the staff member who moves immediately into a work environment. The adjustment is also affected by language differences and the degree of interaction outside the office.

Culture shock may be more dramatic for spouses and/or children than for the staff member. For a spouse, this move usually means leaving behind a job, and often there is not an immediately apparent role at the new post for a spouse. Employment opportunities might not be available. Language is often a very real barrier. While the thought of household help that is common at many posts is initially enticing, the reality of managing household staff can be a very foreign and challenging experience. Children may manifest the stress in a variety of ways, even if they are veterans of other moves.

#### 1. The Cycles of Adjustment

No two people acclimate to a new environment in exactly the same way, but the common sequence for the cycle of adjustment is as follows:

##### **Initial Enthusiasm: “The Honeymoon”**

This first week or two in the host country, during which time exposure to country and culture is limited, the new arrival tends to view everything as exotic and quaint with enthusiasm and excitement. During this time, little is generally required of the newly arrived employee or their family in terms of adaptation, as other members of the community give them a great deal of attention and assistance.

##### **Initial Country and Culture Shock**

With wider exposure to the country and culture in the following few weeks, the newcomer develops more realistic, mixed reactions. The initial enthusiasm is tempered with some frustration. Feelings of vulnerability and dependence might begin, as well as homesickness. Not understanding the local language might undermine the new arrival’s confidence.

### **Initial Adjustment**

By the end of the first month or six weeks, the newcomer is reestablishing some routines as aspects of the country and culture begin to seem normal. By now, physical adjustments to the host country are smoother and the employee or family member is generally feeling more self-reliant and positive about his or her ability to function in country.

### **Further Culture Shock**

The second or third months tend to be the real settling-in period, when the new arrival begins to adjust to being on his or her own in-country. At this point, the employee may encounter work-related aspects of culture for the first time, experiencing surprises and frustrations. These feelings can be compounded by the surprise the new arrival might feel that they are still going through culture shock or adjustment.

### **Further Adjustment**

The time frame for adjustment (which can continue throughout a tour and still be a positive force for understanding) usually kicks in three or four months after arrival. By now, the employee or family member has settled in, is better able to work, and has made friends in the community. Perhaps they are beginning to develop some language fluency.

## **2. Coping with Culture Shock**

As culture shock is basically a state of anxiety, it responds to two predictable strategies. First, learning specific ways a newcomer can operate successfully in a strange setting is crucial. Sponsors, community involvement, and welcome procedures can help. Second, good communication with family members and/or colleagues, leading to a sense of place in the community, is very important.

Community liaison offices around the world carry a wide selection of reference materials—for both adults and children—that can be helpful to those dealing with culture shock (in addition to myriad other topics pertaining to life overseas, personal and professional development, etc.). Sometimes, it is beneficial to seek outside assistance in making these cultural adjustments, and individuals may also speak to the DOS medical officer at post, who may recommend contacting the regional psychiatrist. Remember that culture shock affects everyone in some way, and it does not necessarily reflect inflexibility or cultural insensitivity. The Peace Corps also has a wide variety of material on culture shock including a book called *Culture Matters*. This book and other books and pamphlets are published by the Peace Corps and will be available at OST.

## **B. The Community Liaison Office**

The Department of State's Family Liaison Office (FLO) is dedicated to addressing quality of life issues facing Foreign Service communities overseas. FLO's Community Liaison Office (CLO) Program provides CLO Coordinator services to all employees and family members from all agencies under Chief of Mission authority at post.

The CLO's areas of responsibility include: Welcoming and Orientation; Education Liaison; Family Member Employment; Crisis Management and Security Liaison; Guidance and Referral; Information and Resource Management; Community Liaison; and Events Planning. As advocate and morale officer, the CLO develops and administers a post-specific program plan across all areas.

The CLO will, among other things:

- assist with family members seeking employment within the mission or in the local economy;
- provide opportunities to discover the town, city or region you live in;
- offer cross-cultural presentations to help you adapt to post;
- coordinate a contingency planning seminar;
- maintain contact with schools at post and other educational options;
- provide confidential support and referral;
- and maintain a community resource center of post-specific information.

Unfortunately, for posts without embassies, there is no CLO. Additionally, a few embassies do not have the resources to establish a CLO position. Upon request, the Overseas Briefing Center, Family Liaison Office, and the Office of Human Resource Management can provide some of the support that the CLO offers.

## **C. Employment of Family Members**

All eligible family members interested in employment at post should contact the post personnel office and/or the CLO (at posts that have one). All hiring for jobs within the U.S. mission takes place at post, but a letter and an application or federal application OF-612 may be sent in advance.

Within the American community overseas, opportunities for employment may exist at the international school, recreation association, or commissary. Employment is also often possible in the local economy, with the permission of the host country and the Chief of Mission. The U.S. has bilateral work agreements with some countries and informal reciprocal arrangements with others. Family members who work in the local economy waive certain immunities and are subject to host country taxation. Family members who plan to work in the local economy should also be aware that credentials or licenses from the U.S. may not be recognized overseas. Questions regarding bilateral agreements and other employment issues can be answered by the Family Liaison Office (FLO) at the DOS or by the personnel office at post.

In the broader context of career development, volunteering is a valuable way to acquire experience and skills. Documenting what is learned through volunteer activity is essential to build on the experience as part of a plan to begin or return to paid employment. Again,

guidelines for documenting these experiences are available through the FLO.

Due to the small size of most Peace Corps' country staffs, nepotism issues, and concerns about the appearance of impropriety, it is generally not possible for employees' family members to work for the Peace Corps.

## **D. Housing**

The Peace Corps encourages staff members to live in neighborhoods predominantly occupied by host country citizens and in housing comparable to theirs. Staff members' living quarters are generally leased directly by the Peace Corps. When direct leasing is impractical, or the country director determines that private leasing is advantageous to the Peace Corps, an employee may be granted a housing allowance not in excess of the applicable DOS living quarters allowance rates published in the Standardized Regulations. It is important to remember that housing differs greatly from post to post, so for specific information, employees should contact the CDU for further details.

The Peace Corps will provide basic furniture. This includes movable items required to equip a residence for living, such as chairs, tables, sofas, beds and curtains; and major appliances, such as refrigerators, stoves, washers, dryers and heating and cooling equipment, as appropriate. The Peace Corps does not routinely provide food freezers. All furnishings provided by the Peace Corps remain Peace Corps' property. The CDU is the best source for specifics on what is in place at your particular post.

For posts with embassies, the post security officer or the regional safety and security officer (RSO) establishes and reviews housing locations and determines safety requirements. All employees and dependents are required to go through a safety and security orientation provided by the RSO.

While the Peace Corps provides furnished housing for its overseas staff, quarters may not be immediately available. Transition time in a hotel may be required for employees and their families. If temporary quarters are required at the post, you should ensure that temporary quarters are authorized by Peace Corps/Washington on your assignment travel authorization.

## **E. Use of Peace Corps Vehicles**

The Peace Corps does not pay for shipment of privately owned vehicles (POVs) from an employee's home of record in the U.S. to post (see Section Three: Getting to Post, part F). Instead, staff are encouraged to purchase vehicles locally for personal use. The pay advance option available through payroll is sometimes used for this purpose. The Peace Corps has specific guidelines for use of official vehicles, outlined in the Peace Corps Manual Section 522. These do allow for very limited personal use on a reimbursable basis for 90 days after an employee's arrival to allow time to find and purchase a POV.

You are also allowed to use an official vehicle on a reimbursable basis for 90 days prior to your departure from post. Spouses or other family members are not permitted to drive official Peace Corps vehicles. By law, misuse of a government vehicle requires a mandatory 30-day suspension with no pay.

## **F. Getting To Know Your Job**

During OST you will receive a copy of your position description and the performance plan for your position. While your position description describes your general job duties, your performance plan will list the standards of performance expected of you when you perform those duties. In essence, the performance plan is the “contract” you and your supervisor will agree to for the duration of the performance appraisal cycle. It is important that you familiarize yourself with these documents to understand what is expected of you in your job. Being conversant with your position duties, your supervisor’s expectations, and Peace Corps policies and procedures early on will ensure that your tour is off to a productive and successful start.

## **G. Compensation Issues**

### **1. Within Grade Increases (WGI)**

Depending on your current step, you will be eligible for a within grade (step) increase after either one or two years. The waiting period for a within grade increase for steps 1 through 10 is 52 weeks and for steps 11 through 14 it is 104 weeks. Your immediate and second-level supervisors must confirm that your performance is fully successful for the increase to be granted. A within grade increase is equal to a salary increase of approximately 3 percent.

### **2. Promotions**

Employees hired at less than full performance level are eligible for promotion to the next higher grade level based on availability of work at the higher level and performance of, or demonstrated potential to perform, duties and responsibilities at this level. Promotions for associate Peace Corps directors are recommended by the CD and authorized by the regional director. In the case of CDs, promotions are recommended by the regional director and authorized by the Peace Corps director. Please see Peace Corps Manual Section 620 for further information.

### **3. General Pay Increases**

Usually once a year, the President has the opportunity to sign an executive order for a general pay raise for federal employees worldwide. For the past several years these



increases have been between 3 percent and 4 percent. Unlike locality increases, which are authorized for domestic employees only, these general increases are given to all full-time direct-hire U.S. employees.

#### **4. Awards**

The Peace Corps has a variety of awards for excellence in service for which you may be nominated. You can receive a Special Achievement Award for a special act or for sustained superior performance. Special Achievement Awards are cash lump-sum awards granted in recognition of either (1) the performance of a special act or service of a non-recurring nature in an exceptional manner, or (2) superior performance that has been sustained for at least three months. An On-the-Spot Cash Award is given, as the name implies, on-the-spot to an employee or group of employees who perform a special act or service that is non-recurring in nature and significant, but not of a magnitude to warrant a Special Achievement Award.

Additionally, Time-Off Awards are used to encourage and reward superior accomplishments or other personal efforts that contribute to quality, efficiency, or economy. The award may be from one day up to 16 hours of time-off from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. The amount of the Time-Off Award is proportionate to the value of the contribution being recognized.

Lastly, employees who perform all major elements of their assigned position at a level that substantially exceeds basic expectations and who sustain that performance for a period of time that indicates that level of performance is characteristic and expected to continue in the future, may receive a meritorious step increase (MSI). Employees who receive an MSI are advanced to the next step level within their grade (with no effect on their regular waiting period for advancement to the next step level within their grade). An employee can only receive one MSI in a 52-week period.

#### **H. Allowances**

There are a number of allowances to which Peace Corps employees are entitled, as listed below. While Peace Corps generally follows the practices of the DOS, we do not always provide the same benefits DOS authorizes for its career employees. References are noted after each allowance in case further information is needed.

##### **1. Advance of Pay**

As mentioned in Section Two, this allows advance pay upon the assignment of the employee to a post in a foreign area. An advance may also be authorized for employees reassigned to another post for a second or third tour. This pay advance is intended to ease the financial burden of the transition period by ensuring that funds are available to meet

any required expenses or emergencies. The maximum amount allowed is three months advance pay. Repayments of advances are deducted from your salary over 18 pay periods or less. (The Peace Corps follows DOS regulations. See references: DOS Standardized Regulations {DSSR} 850, 3 Foreign Affairs Manual {FAM} 3280.)

## **2. Temporary Quarters Subsistence Allowance**

This allowance helps employees defray the cost of hotel rooms and extraordinary meal expenses which may be incurred upon first arrival at post or prior to final departure from post. This allowance is applicable up to the first three months after arrival and prior to departure from post. (References: DSSR 120 and DSSR 230).

## **3. Travel per Diem**

Per diem covers the average costs of room, meals, and incidental expenses for persons on travel orders while in actual travel status. Advances can be obtained through the travel card issued by the Peace Corps Washington (References: DSSR 925 and 14 FAM).

## **4. Separate Maintenance Allowance**

This allowance is provided to employees in extremely unusual and limited circumstances who have to maintain families elsewhere than at post of assignment as directed by the Peace Corps for reasons of health, safety, foreign policy, or due to revocation of medical clearance. While the DOS allows separate maintenance allowance (SMA) for personal reasons, the Peace Corps allows SMA only for the reasons stated above. (Reference: Peace Corps Manual Section {PCMS 642}.)

## **5. Living Quarters Allowance**

The Peace Corps provides either furnished housing or a comparable living quarters allowance (LQA) intended to cover the average cost of rent and utilities for its employees living in a foreign area. The LQA varies by post and family size. (Reference: DSSR 130.)

## **6. Travel of Children of Separated Parents**

Although not an allowance per se, the Peace Corps does authorize one round trip per tour for children under the age of 21 who are under the legal custody of the other parent. For further information, contact HRM.

## 7. Education Allowance and Educational Travel Allowance

See “Educational Assistance” in Section Two, part H.

## 8. Representational Allowance

The representation allowance may be used by staff to cover costs of official entertainment, including refreshments, gratuities, room rental for gatherings, catering, and any similar services or goods. It may also be used for certain other expenditures that promote United States interests abroad as listed in Section 905 of the Foreign Service Act. Within one fiscal year, a Country Director may approve expenditure of the allowance for up to \$500; a Regional Director may approve for up to an additional \$500, and the Chief of Staff/Chief of Operations may approve amounts over these limits. (Reference: Peace Corps Manual Section 724.)

Representation expenses may include food, beverages (including alcohol) and entertainment but (1) must clearly further the best interests of the government, and (2) at least half (50 percent) of the participants must be host country guests (exclusive of Peace Corps staff and contractors). An invitation list, indicating the name and organization represented must be attached to the voucher to ensure that the 50 percent minimum is realized.

## 9. U.S. Reassignment Expenses

When an employee and his or her family returns to the U.S. in connection with the employee’s transfer to an assignment in the U.S., they are eligible for a home service transfer allowance. **Note: this allowance only applies to employees reassigned from the field to the Peace Corps Headquarters.** An employee must agree to serve with the Peace Corps 12 additional months after the date of transfer. The subsistence expense is intended to offset the cost of hotel lodging, meals, and dry cleaning for up to 60 days. Actual expenses are reimbursed up to a predetermined minimum rate depending on the per diem allowance and the number of family members occupying temporary lodging. Please contact your administrative officer in your new assignment office for further information on this allowance.

## 10. Evacuation Pay

After a country evacuation or suspension, employees may continue receiving salary and certain allowances (e.g., education allowance or separate maintenance allowance) for up to 180 days. In addition to travel expenses and special foreign education allowances, a subsistence expense allowance may be paid to offset the direct and added expense of the evacuation for lodging, meals, and laundry. (Reference: DSSR 600.)

## 11. Emergency Visitation Travel

This allowance covers round-trip expenses from post to home for the employee or eligible dependents in the case of a critical illness, injury, or death of an immediate family member. For further information see “Emergencies” later in this section and 3 FAM 3744.

### I. Hours Of Work/Time And Attendance

As an employee working overseas, you will have a unique job and will be presented with many exciting challenges. No two days will be the same. You will be “on call” 24-hours a day, and it will often be hard to predict your daily schedule. Your job may require that you periodically vary your regular work hours so that you can get your job done the best way possible. For example, in order to make visits to Volunteer sites as frequently as you wish, it may be necessary to travel on weekends or other times outside of regular duty hours. Out of necessity, managers are usually flexible concerning work hours and time off. In fact, managers must sometimes remind their staff to keep a good balance between their work life and their home life. Work hours and personal time can easily become blurred. Once you arrive at your work site, make sure you clarify with your supervisor what his or her expectations are about work hours and scheduling your work. In a few countries the official work schedule is other than Monday through Friday. In such cases the employee may be eligible for a pay differential and should contact HRM.

**Pursuant to MS 630, Hours of Duty, subsections 1.0, 2.0, and 4.8.1.1.8, employees overseas cannot earn credit hours.**

Time and attendance is reported biweekly by the designated Peace Corps personnel at post to the Peace Corps payroll office. In addition, this information must be recorded biweekly by the post’s designated timekeeper on an annual attendance record (PC-57). If inaccuracies are found on your earnings and leave statements, you should notify your timekeeper immediately. If inaccuracies persist, you may want to contact the payroll office directly (see telephone number listed in Appendix A).

It is your PC-57, not your earnings and leave statement that is the official record of time worked and time in leave or leave without pay status.

### J. Leave And Absence

#### 1. Annual Leave

Annual leave is an absence from duty with pay, charged from the employee’s accumulated annual leave balance, which is requested by an employee for the purpose of taking a vacation, to take care of personal business, or for some types of emergencies.

The amount of annual leave that you earn is based on your total federal service, including Peace Corps/VISTA Volunteer service and creditable military service. In order to determine the rate at which you accrue leave, HRM will verify your claimed previous service. When your service has been verified, an SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action) will be processed to reflect your new service computation date (SCD). Your SCD is a date that represents your total years of creditable government service, and it is used to determine eligibility to enroll in TSP, retire, and earn leave at a higher rate. When you receive confirmation of your new SCD, make sure to notify your timekeeper so that your PC-57 can be adjusted.

**A full-time employee accrues leave during each full biweekly pay period while in pay status or in a combination of pay and non-pay status at the rates shown below:**

<u>Years of Service</u>	<u>Leave Per Pay Period</u>	<u>Leave Days Per Year</u>
Less than 3	4 hours	13
Three to less than fifteen	6 hours	20
Fifteen or more	8 hours	26

As an overseas employee, you may carry over a maximum of 360 hours from one year to the next. You need prior approval in order to take annual leave. CDs approve leave for their staff and regional directors approve leave for CDs. CDs must receive official approval in order to leave the country—at any time, for any reason. Should an emergency arise requiring you to take leave unexpectedly, you must notify your supervisor at the earliest possible time. There are provisions for requesting an advance of annual leave, if necessary. Peace Corps Manual Section 635 provides detailed information and guidance on time and attendance issues.

It is important that you acquaint yourself with the various types of leave and the rules governing their accrual and use once you get acclimated to your new job so you can manage your leave appropriately. For example, if your accrued annual leave balance exceeds the maximum allowable limit by the end of the leave year, you will automatically forfeit that leave if you have not requested and received written approval for leave restoration.

## 2. Sick Leave

Sick leave is an absence from duty with pay that is requested by an employee for health-related reasons, including appointments with physicians and dentists. The absence is charged from the employee's accumulated sick leave balance.

All employees, regardless of length of service, accrue four hours of sick leave for each

full biweekly pay period. There is no limit to the amount you may accumulate.

You must notify your supervisor of absences due to illness as soon as possible. If you are absent longer than three days, you must submit a certificate from your physician. In cases of prolonged illness or serious disability, you may require more sick leave than you have accrued. In such instances, you may request advance leave from your supervisor. Peace Corps Manual Section 635 provides more information on sick-leave issues.

### **3. Leave Without Pay**

Leave without pay (LWOP) is a temporary, non-pay status resulting from an absence from duty that may be granted at the supervisor's discretion upon an employee's written request. The authorized nature of LWOP distinguishes it from absence without official leave (AWOL), which is an absence from duty that is not authorized or approved. Normally, LWOP can be requested when other leave, such as sick or annual leave, is exhausted or inapplicable.

### **4. Home Leave**

Home leave is authorized by 5 USC 6305, and is earned by direct-hire U.S. citizen employees when they serve overseas, for use in the U.S., the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or any possession of the U.S. Home leave entitles the employee and their eligible family members to round-trip transportation to their home of record. Home leave is also an additional leave category. For each 12 months of service abroad, you earn five days of home leave, which is credited to your account as earned. This type of leave may be granted in conjunction with other approved leave. Home leave may be approved by your regional director only after a second tour has been authorized. Employees typically take their home leave between their two tours overseas although there is some flexibility in scheduling. Scheduling and approval is arranged through the region.

### **5. Family Medical Leave Act and Family Friendly Leave Act**

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the Family Friendly Leave Act (FFLA) are intended to provide specific additional benefits to federal employees. All full-time employees may use up to five days of sick leave per year for family care or bereavement purposes. Additionally, employees who have a sick leave balance of at least 80 hours may use up to 13 days of sick leave per year for family care or bereavement. Part-time employees are able to take leave on a prorated basis. Sick leave under these provisions may be used to care for a family member due to illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth; to attend the medical, dental, or optical examination of a family member; or to make arrangements for and/or attend the funeral of a family member. Family members are defined as spouses and their parents, children and their spouses, parents, siblings and their spouses, and any individual related by blood or affinity whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship.

In addition to the above, employees may also schedule and be granted up to 24 hours of leave without pay during any 12-month period in order to participate in school activities directly related to the educational advancement of a child; to accompany their children to routine medical or dental appointments, such as annual checkups and vaccinations; and to accompany their elderly relatives to routine medical or dental appointments or other professional services related to the care of the elderly relative, such as making arrangements for housing, meals, telephones, banking services, and other similar activities.

Furthermore, you can use sick leave for absences relating to adopting a child. An adoptive parent may request sick leave for adoption-related activities, including appointments with adoption agencies, social workers, and attorneys; court proceedings; required travel; and other activities necessary to allow the adoption to proceed. You may also use sick leave if required by the court or adoption agency to take time off from work to care for the newly adopted child. However, there is no provision in the law or regulation to permit the use of sick leave by birth parents or adoptive parents who choose to be absent from work to bond with their newborn or adopted child.

## **K. Changes In Family Status**

It is very important that you notify the Peace Corps/HRM if you have any change in family status while abroad, such as marriage, divorce, the birth or adoption of a child, or a change in your home of record. Prompt notification of these changes will help HRM ensure continued benefits to all eligible family members. Any of these changes require the submission of a revised Residence and Dependency Report Form OF-126. You can obtain the form at a U.S. embassy or request one from HRM.

### **1. Marriage**

After your marriage, you must submit a copy of your marriage certificate and a revised OF-126 to HRM. HRM will provide instructions on medical clearances for your spouse and any other new family members. You will also be given the opportunity to make changes to your health and life insurance and any other benefits affected by this change in family status.

If you plan to marry a non-U.S. citizen, you must notify the Peace Corps Office of Personnel Security at least 60 days in advance of the marriage. An Application for Employment in the Foreign Service of the United States Form OF-174, as well as a brief biography, must be completed by the intended spouse and submitted to the Office of Personnel Security. If either you or your intended spouse have been previously married, a certified copy of the divorce decree(s) must also be submitted. A security clearance will be initiated and the results forwarded to post. After the marriage, and as outlined above, please submit a copy of your marriage certificate and a revised OF-126 to HRM. (Reference: Peace Corps Manual Section 642.)

If you intend to marry a person (either U.S. citizen or non-US citizen) with an intelligence background, you must advise the Peace Corps Office of General Counsel (GC) at least 120 days in advance. A brief biographical report about the intended spouse must be submitted. The GC will review the case and notify the employee as to whether the proposed marriage is incompatible with his/her continued employment with the Peace Corps. Additional information about this issue is in Peace Corps Manual Section 611.

**Expeditious Naturalization: If your non-U.S. citizen spouse or adopted minor child would like to become a naturalized U.S. citizen, s/he may apply for expeditious naturalization while you are employed at the Peace Corps. This application should be submitted well in advance of your last year with the Peace Corps. The employee is required to have at least one year left on his/her overseas assignment. For more information contact HRM and the embassy at post.**

## **2. Birth/Adoption**

You will need to submit a copy of the baby's birth certificate (and adoption papers, if applicable) and a revised OF-126 to HRM. HRM will provide instructions for the medical clearance. Your new child is automatically covered by the U.S. Department of State's medical program for the first 90 days after birth or adoption. However, the child must have the prescribed medical examination during this time and receive a medical clearance in order to continue to be eligible for benefits. You will also be advised concerning opportunities to change your health and life insurance and any other benefits affected by the change in family status.

You are entitled to a layette shipment of 250 lbs. of air freight from the U.S. (or from another country on a cost-constructive basis) to your post. A layette includes typical baby items such as bassinet, baby clothes, diapers, etc. This shipment may commence 120 days prior to the expected birth to no later than 60 days after the birth [14 FAM 613.5 (c)] or the adoption of a child less than six months of age. This allowance is authorized only for staff and/or a spouse residing at a post overseas. It does not apply to new staff or their spouse still residing in the U.S.

## **2. Home of Record/Legal Status**

You may at any time during overseas assignment, change your legal residence, home leave address, or service separation address, by submitting to HRM a revised OF-126 form. This change affects authorized transportation costs for your final shipments back to the U.S., as well as your travel and that of eligible family members, back to your home of record for home leave or at the completion of your tour.



## L. In-Service Physical Exams

In-service physical exams are required at the end of a 30-month tour prior to beginning a new tour. These exams are especially important if you are transferring to a new post. These exams are for staff members and their family members residing at post. If you or your eligible family member is under age 45, a waiver of in-service medical exam may be signed. In most cases the medical exams can be performed at post by the post medical personnel or by the regional healthcare provider. If you are unable to get an exam at post, then you should contact your regional staffing analyst. Once completed, medical exams must be sent to the DOS for review and continuation of the employee and their family's medical clearances.

## M. Emergencies

### 1. Emergency Visitation Travel

The Peace Corps will pay round-trip travel expenses for family visitation in emergencies involving cases of critical illness and/or injury where death is imminent, or death of an immediate family member. This is called emergency visitation travel (EVT) and is authorized from post to home of record although authorization may include cost-constructive travel to other locations. Immediate family for the purpose of EVT is defined as your spouse, your children, your mother, your father, and like relatives of your spouse. For siblings, EVT is authorized only in the case of death. Normally, only the staff member or the spouse involved may travel at government expense. However, in a case where a dependent child is critically ill, injured, or deceased, both the staff member and spouse will be authorized EVT. Approval for EVT in the case of critical illness is approved in advance by the DOS, though prior approval for travel is not required in the case of death of an immediate family member.

It is crucial that you or the person in the U.S. who calls the DOS Office of Medical Services or the Peace Corps regional office to advise of the family emergency is prepared to give the staff member's name and post, as well as the name and relationship of the immediate family member. In the case of critical illness or injury, the name, address, and telephone number of the attending physician or hospital facility must be furnished.

Peace Corps staff or their eligible family members may travel prior to authorization from the DOS Office or Medical Services; however, they must sign a repayment agreement in case the travel is not authorized. A sample repayment agreement can be found in the *Overseas Financial Management Handbook* at post. A Peace Corps post can issue a travel advance to provide funds for transportation costs to the medical evacuation point. If funds are requested, then the employee is required to immediately submit medical bills to his or her insurance company and make the reimbursements payable to the Peace Corps.

## 2. Medical Evacuations

Medical evacuations are coordinated by the medical officer at post—generally at the embassy’s health unit—in coordination with the Regional Medical Officer (RMO) and/or the DOS Office of Medical Services in Washington. Medical evacuations must be approved by DOS medical services staff. For staff at posts without embassies, it is suggested that the employee and their PCMC contact the RHCP shortly after arrival in-country to discuss specific procedures for staff and family medical evacuations. If post records do not indicate who the RHCP is, contact the DOS Office of Medical Services.

**Please remember that any bills incurred during your medical evacuation should first be submitted to your health insurance company (e.g., Blue Cross Blue Shield; Foreign Service Benefit Plan). Costs not covered by your insurance and approved by the DOS will be reimbursed by the Peace Corps if they are customary and reasonable.**

Peace Corps employees or their family members requiring evacuation from post are sent either to the closest designated medical evacuation post (e.g., London, Pretoria, Hawaii, Bangkok) or to the nearest port of entry in the U.S. Should the staff member choose to be medically evacuated to another site in the U.S., travel beyond the port of entry will be paid by the employee on a cost-constructive basis.

Spouses or family members are usually not authorized to accompany the individual being evacuated, except in the case of a child being medically evacuated who needs to be accompanied by a parent, or a situation in which a parent is being evacuated and it is determined that the child must not be separated from his/her parent. In some cases, the medical officer from post will be required to accompany the individual being evacuated in order to continue providing medical treatment or observation during travel.

## 3. Post-Specific Emergencies or Evacuations

Each U.S. mission overseas has an emergency action plan in place for dealing with emergencies at post, such as political unrest, and natural disasters, etc. This emergency action plan is formulated and updated by the post’s emergency action committee, on which representatives from all agencies serve. Newly arriving staff members should ask to review this document (which is classified and kept at the embassy) and familiarize themselves and their families with the relevant details. Post evacuations are coordinated by the embassy, or, in the case of posts without official representation, the nearest embassy in the region.

In some situations, such as civil unrest, natural disaster, or illness resulting in loss of a medical clearance, one or all family members may be required to leave post. In these situations, they may be eligible for separate maintenance allowance. Questions regarding

these separations and the appropriate allowances should be addressed to HRM.

The post is responsible for developing an evacuation plan independent of the embassy plan. For obvious reasons, if an evacuation occurs, both this plan and embassy procedures will be utilized as appropriate.

## **N. Safety At Post**

Living and traveling in a foreign country may present certain risks to your personal safety. Each individual can develop effective strategies to reduce exposure to these risks and have an enjoyable, productive and safe experience. Common sense is the watch word here. But given cultural differences, it is not always clear what “common” is. In this regard understanding the language and culture of the host country and developing relationships locally will provide the clues to determining the most appropriate strategies for reducing your exposure to risk. It takes time to develop the understanding and skills to recognize and accurately interpret the cultural cues and nuances that attend daily interactions. Your actions and exposure to risk should be guided by an appreciation of this vulnerability. If you spend time in a big city, exercise the same awareness and vigilance you would in the U.S.

There are no firm guarantees for your safety, but there are attitudes you can develop and actions you can take to reduce the risk of being victimized. Immediately upon arrival in-country contact the Consular Section at the U.S. embassy to discuss your new environment and any safety concerns that you might have. Contact the regional security officer (RSO) at the U.S. embassy to provide personal safety briefings, resources, and support for you and your family. Expatriates and local colleagues will also have a wealth of information and guidance for you. When it comes to personal safety in a variety of foreign environments, there are few definitive prescriptions. But experience has taught us some useful lessons.

### **1. Pre-Departure**

As you prepare to travel, live, and work overseas you can enhance your safety by informing yourself about the new environment. The Internet and contact persons who have recently traveled to the same destination are valuable sources of useful information and lessons learned. Here are some basic measures that may prove useful.

- Travel light. Carry clothing that is conservative and practical. If you'd hate to lose it, don't bring it.
- Take an extra pair of glasses. Contact lenses can be problematic in many countries.
- Ensure that insurance policies are up to date and arrange for payment of premiums.
- Authorize a Power of Attorney for a trusted individual.
- Make out a will.
- Take out property insurance on necessary equipment (cameras, binoculars, laptops, etc.).
- Photocopy passport and visa, credit cards, other documents that need to be replaced

quickly, if lost or stolen. Leave one set of copies with reliable person at home and carry extra copies in a place separate from the originals.

- Notify credit card company of intent to travel. Confirm credit limit.
- Bring extra passport photos.
- Visit country-specific websites for information on political, social, economic, geographic, and other characteristics of your destination country.
- Visit Department of State Consular Affairs website for security advisories and other travel guidance ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)).
- If you plan to carry prescription medicines make sure you have authorization to carry such from your physician. Some prescription medicines are considered controlled substances in other countries.
- Start learning a few common phrases in the local language.
- If possible, establish a reliable, personal contact in the country of destination. Communicate frequently (for clarification, response to concerns, guidance, etc.) with this individual prior to departure.
- Leave travel itinerary and contact information with family or friends; otherwise keep this information confidential.

## 2. Be Informed and Aware

Personal safety begins with awareness. Awareness begins with a clear understanding of one's attitudes, values, self-esteem, personal strengths and limitations. What does your attitude, dress, and body language say about your vulnerability? It continues with insight into the host culture and environment—local attitudes toward strangers, gender perceptions, values, mores and means of communicating. In order to be alert to potential dangers and risks to your well-being, you need to be aware of what is going on in your immediate environment. Study. Observe. Ask.

Some general themes for raising awareness follow:

- Assess your emotional and physical strengths and limitations.
- Be attentive to how you are perceived by local people and behave in a manner that is not provocative or does not draw unwanted attention.
- Strive to understand the local language and cultural norms.
- Understand local currency exchange rates.
- Familiarize yourself with your neighborhood and work environment.
- Use street smarts. Beware of pickpockets, scam artists, overly friendly strangers, loiterers, etc.
- Pay attention to local media (newspapers, radio, television, gossip).
- Be aware of the people nearby, of dark streets, of parked cars.
- Take a seat on a bus or train that allows you to observe fellow passengers, but does not preclude options to change seats if necessary.
- Be alert to potential trouble and choose to avoid when possible.
- Educate yourself of any pending events (elections, demonstrations, anniversaries) that may cause civil disturbance, and avoid unnecessary risks.
- Establish a support network among your colleagues and U.S. embassy personnel.

- Inform yourself of the availability and reliability of local support services (police, security, medical, emergency, fire).
- Confirm with the U.S. embassy the procedures for you and your family in the event of a crisis or evacuation.
- Politely decline offers of food or drink from strangers.
- Accept beverages only from sealed containers; make sure there's been no tampering.
- Other useful websites are: [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov), [www.airsecurity.com](http://www.airsecurity.com), [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov); [www.tkb.org](http://www.tkb.org); [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index); [www.asirt.org](http://www.asirt.org) provides transportation safety information for many countries.

### 3. Personal Conduct

It is important to appreciate the image you (as an American abroad) project and how this is perceived by others. MTV, CNN, and television programs that depict violent conflict and/or promiscuous, well-to-do Americans are widely watched. Local people of all stripes may look upon you and your behavior in light of these predominant images. While the RSO will surely provide you with some safety guidance, the choices you make regarding behavior, attire, travel, possessions, relationships, etc. can influence your exposure to risk. How you behave affects not only your personal safety, but the safety of others with whom you are associated. It is incumbent upon each one of you to conduct yourself in a manner that is neither disrespectful nor provocative.

- Behave professionally and in a manner befitting your status in the local society. Insist on being treated with respect.
- Dress in a manner that is inoffensive to local cultural norms.
- Avoid clothing that shows your nationality.
- Establish personal boundaries and act to protect them.
- Exercise added caution on occasions when displaying conspicuous possessions (jewelry, iPod, sunglasses, camera, etc.).
- Divide money among several pockets.
- Take a patient and calm approach to ambiguity and conflict.
- Be cautious about what you say in public.
- Radiate confidence while walking in public places.
- Follow your instincts. If a situation is uncomfortable, remove yourself from that situation.
- Be cool when facing confrontation; focus on de-escalation and escape.
- Respect local sensitivities to photographing/videotaping especially at airports, police and government facilities.
- Carry official identification with you at all times.
- Report any security incidents to the RSO (who will advise you of options—reporting to local authorities, prosecution, corrective measures, etc.).
- Maintain a low-key profile, especially in places where there may be hostility toward Americans.

For additional information or questions, please phone the Peace Corps Office of Safety and Security in Washington, D.C. at 202-692-2550 or the Chief of Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security at 202-692-2560.

#### 4. At Home

The RSO at each post conducts an annual security assessment that is used to determine the Security Environment Threat List (SETL) of that post. The SETL designation will determine the minimum safety standards for U.S. government facilities (including offices and American staff residences). These standards provide a benchmark against which you can determine your own needs. Here are some security measures you might want to consider:

- Ensure the sound, secure structure of your residence.
- Strictly control access to and distribution of keys.
- Install lighting, window bars, alarm systems, walls as necessary.
- Establish access procedures for strangers and visitors.
- Ensure guards and night patrols are trained and alert.
- Set up a safe room in your house.
- Establish rapport with neighbors. Is there a “neighborhood watch” program? Report any unusual activity to the RSO.
- Seek guidance from local colleagues or expatriates who have insight into local housing arrangements.
- Ensure adequate communications (telephone, radio, cell phone) with local colleagues and the U.S. embassy.
- Install back-up generator and/or solar panels.
- Set aside emergency supplies (food, water, medicine, fuel, etc.).
- Install smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and carbon monoxide monitors, as appropriate. Know how to use them.
- Keep a few flashlights available for easy access.

#### 5. While Traveling

In many of the countries where you will work, extreme caution should be exercised while traveling. You may encounter dangerous road conditions; untrained or unlicensed drivers; drivers operating under the influence of alcohol; vehicles that are poorly maintained and therefore hazardous (no headlights or tail lights, faulty brakes, bald tires, etc.); police check points or roadblocks; bandits and other criminals. For your daily travel it is important to remember to vary your routes and times during your daily commutes. Some recommendations for travel follow:

- Plan your trips carefully. Always know where you are going.
- Before you leave, let someone know your plans.
- Avoid night travel.
- Travel with others when possible.
- Avoid hitchhiking.
- Do not take shortcuts through remote or unlighted areas.
- Have someone meet you at your destination point.
- Use a common vehicle model. If you rent, remove any markings that identify vehicle as a rental.
- Carry a cell phone, first aid kit, maps, flashlight, and official documents in your

vehicle.

- Use the seat belts and keep the vehicle windows rolled up and the doors locked.
- Be alert to scam artists and carjackers while stopped in traffic. If confronted, it is usually advised to surrender your vehicle.
- Understand the local “rules” for response should you be involved in or witness a traffic accident. In many cases, stopping for an accident can put your life at risk.
- Only take official, licensed taxis. Note the license plate number of taxi—write it down.
- Avoid getting into a taxi already occupied by others. If necessary, pay extra for a single fare. Negotiate price *before* getting in taxi. Have money ready to pay in appropriate denominations.
- Use reputable hotels, hostels or boarding houses – your safety is worth any added cost.
- Avoid ground floor rooms at the hotel. Second through fifth floors are desirable (harder to break into, but still accessible to firefighting equipment).
- Meet visitors in the lobby. Avoid entertaining strangers in your room.
- Familiarize yourself with hotel emergency exits and fire extinguishers.
- Count the doors between your room and nearest emergency exit (in case of fire or blackout). Rehearse your escape plan.
- Keep hotel door locked with dead bolt or chain at all times (don’t forget the sliding glass door and windows).
- Identify your visitor before you open the door.
- If you doubt room delivery, check with the front desk before opening the door.
- If you are out of your room, leave television/radio on. Place “do not disturb” sign outside door.

## 6. If You Become A Victim

Despite all of your efforts to reduce exposure to risks and to avoid threats, you may still become the victim of a crime or critical event. Following are some general response strategies:

- Remain calm and alert.
- Try first to defuse the situation. Culturally appropriate greetings or humor may reduce tensions.
- If an assailant demands property, give it up.
- You can create a timely diversion by tossing your wallet, watch, etc. to the ground in the opposite direction you choose to flee.
- Against overwhelming odds (weapons, multiple assailants) try reasoning, cajoling, begging, any psychological ploy.
- Carefully note details of the environment around you (license plate number, distinguishing features, accents, clothing, etc.).
- If you feel your life is endangered and you decide to physically resist, commit to the decision with every fiber of your being. Turn fear into fury.
- Report any incident to the RSO.
- Seek support for post-traumatic stress (even if you exhibit no symptoms).

## O. Staff Development at Post

Development opportunities, both professional and personal, for staff and family are available at most posts. The challenge will likely be how to manage your time so that you can best take advantage of all of the opportunities that will present themselves to you. However, although there are many wonderful chances to grow while you are at post, those chances may not match one's *expectations*. When this is the case, you will need to manage your expectations or risk disappointment.

Described below are some of the broad categories of professional and personal development opportunities available to you.

### 1. Working with a Multi-Cultural Team

At post you will face some of the most challenging and rewarding, team-based work situations available anywhere in the world. You are in a new and perhaps unfamiliar environment. The “rules” of communication and cooperation may not be clear. Language may be an issue. Comfort may be at a premium, whether it's too hot, cold, bright, or dark. Dust, noise, interruptions, and constant demands may define the “normal” workday atmosphere.

Opportunities for professional growth in multi-cultural teams revolve primarily around your everyday work experiences in the Peace Corps office. However, a post staff retreat can include a section on team building or other cross-cultural issues, such as communication, role expectations, respect, etc. We encourage you to support this idea as a post plans and prepares for the retreat. A point of consideration: when your post has requested an outside trainer/facilitator to come to country, whether it's to conduct a pre-service training, in-service training, project evaluation, or whatever, check out his or her credentials in team building. It may require only a little extra effort for someone to add a day or few hours exclusively allocated to cross-cultural activities. Alternatively, look in-country for cross-cultural experts. You may find that there are skilled trainers and facilitators available in-country either from private sector or public sector sources.

There should be regular weekly staff meetings at post. These provide the perfect forum to bring up team-building issues and ideas for consideration. One of the most important qualities of effective multicultural work teams is that team members take ownership and responsibility for their own ideas—offer to design, organize, or facilitate a team activity. Whatever you do: don't do it all yourself—remember there are other members of the team as well. It is also important that all team members' voices are heard.

International conferences are usually initiated and organized by Peace Corps/Washington. As part of the information gathering/needs assessment portion of the conference design, discuss team-building issues during a staff meeting and identify team issues at post. Headquarters may then incorporate discussion of these issues into its conference schedule.



Another point to remember is that groups can be defined in many ways—beyond Peace Corps-related groups. There may be other groups in-country that you are either already part of or can join. For example, if you are the administrative officer (AO) you may find that there is a “community” of professionals who work in a related field, such as administrative officers from other missions or embassies or local officials who deal with finance, administration and logistics. Taking the time to form a group, or join a group, of professionals who face similar responsibilities and challenges at post may turn out to be one of the wisest investments you can make.

The Office of Special Services has a training module on team building, which should be available at all posts. *Culture Matters*, published through Information Collection and Exchange, is an additional resource for team-building exercises.

**If your post has Internet capability you will find hundreds of resources. Check out [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or a search engine like [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and search under “cross-cultural training” or “team.” Also, browse the local library, embassies, and book stores to find additional resources.**

## 2. Language Skills

Language-learning opportunities are integral to the Peace Corps experience. As staff, you may have been hired because of your preexisting language skills in whatever language is the *lingua franca* of your post. If your fluency is not both verbal and written, then you may still have a fundamental learning opportunity ahead of you.

However, if you’re not fluent or language skill was not a condition of your employment, then you have a brand new learning opportunity. Your effort to learn a host country language will be an invaluable element of your credibility both in the work place and socially. Nonetheless, you will have to be realistic about the time, resources, and costs associated with language learning.

If you have family at post, this issue may take on yet another level of importance. Your spouse and family may benefit greatly from learning the language, both for now and later in life. Shopping, travel, school, socializing, and just “being plugged in” to the local environment may require being able to converse and perhaps read in the local language. Whether or not you decide to learn the language as staff, it is important that you support your family’s interest in learning it!

Some language-learning resources to consider are: local professional language trainers or schools (especially for conversational); tapes and videos; correspondence courses (for reading and writing); and local newspapers and magazines. Check with the embassy to see if language classes are available. The Family Liaison Office may have lists of tutors and/or language conversation groups. Also see if language tapes are available from FSI.

By the way, tempting as it may be, pre-service training for Volunteers is not an appropriate place for staff or spouses or family to learn the local language. However, local professionals who have worked as language trainers for Peace Corps pre-service training are excellent resources. These trainers know the Peace Corps, know good language-learning methodology, and are familiar and (most likely) comfortable with Americans. Please make sure you are willing to pay a competitive rate.

A new EU-sponsored website—launched on May 22, 2006—is designed to help adults who want to improve their language skills. Lingu@NET Europa, (<http://www.linguanet-europa.org/plus/welcome.htm>) a multilingual site, helps learners understand their strengths and weaknesses and points them towards ways to learn. It guides them in a choice of over 3,500 online learning resources, gives advice on overcoming common problems and provides motivational tips. Those who want to practice the language they are learning can find key pals for e-mail exchanges, read and post web logs, take part in live chat with other learners or even go into virtual worlds where they can learn the language. Everything on the Lingu@NET Europa website is free and has been developed by a consortium of expert educational, cultural and technical organizations throughout Europe and can be accessed in 19 languages.

### **3. Official Conferences**

The Peace Corps provides opportunities for staff to participate in conferences. Usually there is one conference per year for Peace Corps medical contractors, programming and training officers, administrative officers and country directors. These conferences may cover specific technical topics in administration (e.g., international financial operations conversion, programming and training initiatives, programmatic issues, and/or provide staff development).

### **4. Locally Available Education**

Identify locally available educational opportunities by talking with local staff, previous American staff recently returned or soon to depart, staff from other organizations and expatriates with children. Contact the Overseas Briefing Center (see Appendix A) to see if they have contact information for recent returnees from your post or country.

Formal education for your dependents may have been worked out prior to your arrival at post or shortly thereafter, but the range of other educational opportunities is probably much greater than you realize. Art, pottery, photography, bird-watching, hiking, sailing, woodworking, reading clubs, acting, etc. are probably all happening right now in your country.

Local universities may offer degree and non-degree courses as well. Check this out with a local staff person or, better yet, go to the institution directly and inquire.

If there are no universities at your post, or if you would like to supplement the instruction available, you may want to consider correspondence courses with U.S. universities or the

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Graduate School. To obtain information about correspondence opportunities, contact the employee development/performance management specialist in HRM.

## **P. Extension of Service/Reassignment**

Staff members can be offered and do opt for a second tour, which makes their total length of time with the Peace Corps five years. Some staff members are offered a third tour or an extension for a sixth year, but extensions beyond five years are the exception rather than the rule. There is an agency-wide cap that limits the number of current employees serving third tours to a maximum of 15 percent.

**If you would like to be considered for a second or third tour or an extension with the Peace Corps, you need to talk to the appropriate people at headquarters at least six months in advance of your end-of-tour date. For country directors, contact your regional director and for PTOs, AOs and APCDs, speak to your country director who will contact the region.**

## SECTION FIVE: Departure from Post and the Peace Corps



As you are finishing work projects, packing household items, and saying your good-byes, there are also close-out procedures necessary for completing employment with the Peace Corps. These procedures can be somewhat time consuming and involve some serious decision making, so it is best not to wait until the last moment to begin focusing on them. These procedures are in addition to any clearance procedures required by your embassy.

### A. Separation Procedures

As soon as the Office of Human Resource Management is notified by your region that you will be separating from the Peace Corps, you will be sent a separation package. The package contains clearance instructions and documents needed to officially clear out from the agency. It also provides instructions on returning passports and taking end-of-tour medical exams. If you are eligible to receive payment for unused annual leave, please realize that payment cannot be made until all separation procedures are completed. (Note: Annual leave is the only type of leave that is paid out upon your separation.) The processing of separation paperwork and unused annual leave checks often takes several months. Your financial planning for life after the Peace Corps should take this into account.

#### 1. Clearance Form PC-1530

You must obtain all appropriate signatures from headquarters and post as indicated on the Clearance Form PC-1530. Return this form to HRM after all signatures have been obtained. This form is your responsibility to finalize. However, if you are not traveling through Washington, DC at the end of your tour, contact your region for assistance in obtaining signatures from headquarters' offices.

#### 2. Request for Disposition of Check PC-1570

All employees who are entitled to a lump-sum payment for their unused annual leave should complete the Request for Disposition of Check Form PC-1570. It tells the agency's payroll office where to send your payment. Payment for unused annual leave will be sent directly to your account via direct deposit. Should you decide to have this payment directly deposited to your current account, simply write "continue direct deposit" in the space provided.

### 3. Individual Leave Record PC-57

The Individual Leave Record Form PC-57 is your permanent annual attendance record with the Peace Corps. The PC-57 transfers with you when you move from one Peace Corps office to another and is a complete picture of your attendance and leave throughout your tenure. You should get a copy of this form from your timekeeper before leaving post, and keep it in your records. Your timekeeper at post is responsible for signing and forwarding the original document to HRM. You cannot be paid for any unused annual leave unless the PC-57 has been completed, certified, and submitted to HRM.

### 4. Travel Vouchers

In closing out your service with the Peace Corps, you must complete your final travel voucher. Employees traveling before returning to their home of record should realize that if they are expecting a payment for unused annual leave it will not be processed until their final travel voucher is submitted and approved. In addition, any outstanding travel advances will also delay finalizing your clearance from the Peace Corps and payment for unused annual leave. You may want to check with headquarters to ensure all travel advances and travel vouchers from the beginning of your Peace Corps tenure have been cleared and processed.

## B. Retirement

If you are not eligible for immediate retirement upon separation from the Peace Corps, you will receive the booklet *Information for Separating FERS Employees Who are Not Eligible for an Immediate Annuity* and a booklet called *Information for Separating CSRS Employees Who Are Not Eligible for an Immediate Annuity*. These booklets address the requirements for both immediate retirement and for deferred retirement at age 62. These booklets also give information on applying for a refund of your retirement contributions. It is important to note that if a FERS employee takes a refund of his or her retirement contributions, that employee will not be eligible for deferred retirement at age 62. Thus, careful consideration should be given to whether you would like to withdraw your retirement contributions at this time. The form needed to apply for a refund will be included in your package.

Separated employees do not have to apply for their retirement contributions immediately upon separation. You may apply for a refund of this money any time prior to your eligibility for deferred retirement, at age 62. Should you choose to apply for a refund of your retirement deductions, keep in mind that the retirement contribution that has been deducted from your paycheck during your employment appears on your leave and earnings statement (0.8 percent of your basic salary if you are under FERS and 0.7 percent if you are under CSRS). Additionally, if the retirement contributions you made during your employment covered more than one year of service, the money will have earned interest at a variable market rate.

## C. Thrift Savings Plan

Enclosed in your separation package is a booklet entitled *Withdrawing Your TSP Account* and the forms required for making a withdrawal accompany it. Also enclosed is a handout called "Important Tax Information About Payments from Your Thrift savings plan Account."

**Note: If you will be changing your address, it is very important that you complete the TSP-9 form "Change of Address for Separated Participants." This form cannot be sent to the National Finance Center (NFC) until you have received your lump-sum payment of annual leave and the payroll office has notified the NFC of your separation. Therefore, remember to allow sufficient time before submitting this form to the Thrift Savings Plan service office.**

You do not have to withdraw your money from the Thrift Savings Plan when you separate from the agency. Your money can remain in your TSP account, accumulating interest, until you have reached the age of 70 1/2, at which time you must begin to have minimum distributions made from your account. If you wish to withdraw your money, use the Thrift Savings Plan Withdrawal Request Form TSP-70. However, keep in mind that there could be a 10 percent penalty for early withdrawal of this money, and you will pay tax on any money you withdraw. To avoid paying taxes on your TSP funds, you may immediately transfer the money to an individual retirement account (IRA).

Once you leave the agency, you may not continue to make contributions to the TSP (unless you work for another government agency). If you keep your money in your account, even if you never work for the government again, you have the right to make interfund transfers 12 times a year to your account. There is no limit to the amount of transactions.

## D. Health Benefits

Enclosed in your separation packet is a special *Guide to Federal Employees Health Benefits Plans for Temporary Continuation of Coverage and Former Spouse Enrollees*. Also included are a Health Benefits Registration Form SF-2809 and a booklet entitled *Temporary Continuation of Coverage (TCC) under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program*. A separated employee has up to 60 days to elect temporary continuation of coverage for themselves and their families and to return his or her election form for temporary continuation of coverage to HRM for processing. The effective date of coverage will be the next day following your 31-day grace period. The cost of this coverage includes the employee's share, the government's share, and a 2 percent administrative fee.

HRM will forward your completed election form to the payroll office and national finance center (NFC) for final processing. The NFC will process your form, send you payment information, and forward your paperwork to your selected health carrier. This coverage could last up to 18 months. At the end of the 18-month period, there will be another 31-day grace period, at which time you can convert to a private policy. Employees under the Temporary Continuation of Coverage health enrollment are afforded the opportunity to make changes in their health plans during “open seasons” that take place in November of each year for federal employees. Open season information will be sent to you by the NFC.

HRM will mail you a certified copy of your completed enrollment form, which may be used as evidence of your enrollment until such time as you receive your enrollment card from your carrier. It is important to return all five copies of your five-part enrollment form to HRM. Do not separate and keep the enrollee copy of this form, as it will not yet have been certified. You may wish to make a copy for your records.

## **E. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI)**

At the time of your separation from the Peace Corps, HRM staff will prepare a Certification of Life Insurance Form SF-2821 and a Notice of Conversion Privilege Form SF-2819 and send them to you for the purpose of converting your life insurance to an individual policy. This conversion information can be sent to you directly from the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance office (FEGLI), upon request. The FEGLI office will send you information concerning types of insurance policies available to you, premium rates, and eligible insurance companies with whom you may convert. Specific information on making this request is contained on the reverse side of the Notice of Conversion Privilege Form. Your life insurance coverage terminates at the end of the pay period in which you separate. You then have a 31-day free extension of coverage during which you may convert to an individual policy. No medical examination will be required. Note that federal employee life insurance is “term” insurance; there is no dollar value that is received by employees when they separate from the government.

## **F. Unemployment Insurance**

Enclosed with your exit package is a Notice to Federal Employee About Unemployment Insurance Standard Form-8. Should you wish to apply for unemployment compensation when your tour ends, you must take this form and a copy of your Notification of Personnel Action Standard Form 50 which reflects your separation from the Peace Corps to your local (state) unemployment office. The SF-50 reflecting your separation from the Peace Corps will not be in your exit package but will be sent to you at the forwarding address you list in your clearance papers. This is because the form cannot be prepared until after you have separated from the agency. It is extremely important that HRM have an accurate forwarding address so that all paperwork can be sent to you on a timely basis.

Please be aware that if you resign from the Peace Corps, you may not be eligible for unemployment insurance, depending on your state's unemployment law.

This process can be done by mail, but not on your behalf through a family member or other individual. For planning purposes, it will take at least four to six weeks before you will actually receive an unemployment check. Therefore, do not rely on the receipt of an unemployment check as an immediate source of income. Your unemployment benefits will be approximately one-half of what your normal earnings were, and the benefits are generally payable for up to 26 weeks.

## **G. Severance Pay**

In most cases, if you are a career federal government employee for at least twelve continuous months prior to joining the Peace Corps staff, you are eligible for severance pay upon the completion of a tour and separation from the Peace Corps. You are not eligible for severance pay if you are receiving workers' compensation benefits at separation or if you are eligible for an immediate retirement annuity. For further information on eligibility and computation of severance pay, please contact the HRM benefits specialist.

## **H. Separation Travel, Shipment, and Storage**

You and your dependents are authorized direct travel and shipment of effects from post to your home of record (HOR) up to a year after your separation date from the Peace Corps. The same rules and regulations apply to return travel as for assignment travel. You are required to use American flag carriers where available, use either government contract airfares if applicable or lowest economy-class through fare, and travel via the most direct route. You may interrupt, delay, or travel via indirect routes, but any additional travel costs are your personal expense. En route per diem is limited to the most direct travel.

Household effects are authorized for shipment from post to your HOR. You may ship to a location other than the authorized destination on a cost constructive basis. This means that you are responsible for payment of all additional charges, if shipping to a different location exceeds the cost of shipment to your HOR.

Sea freight must be sent to a warehouse at or near your HOR and delivered to your residence from the warehouse. Air freight may be sent to a home address or placed in storage. The Peace Corps will pay storage costs for 90 days on both air and sea freight shipments from the date of arrival into the warehouse. Remember that both shipments must be routed through a U.S. dispatch agent at designated gateway cities for custom clearance and forwarding to your HOR. Instructions for these procedures and addresses for U.S. dispatch agents will be provided by the Transportation Division.

The Peace Corps will pay storage costs for personal effects stored in the U.S. for 90 days



from the last date of your overseas assignment. Storage costs beyond 90 days are your responsibility. The Peace Corps will pay local delivery costs from the warehouse to your HOR up to one year from your termination date. You will need to give the Transportation Division your address and telephone number where you can be reached upon arrival in the U.S. or provide a contact name and telephone number if you are not traveling directly back to your HOR.

## **I. End-of-Tour Physical Exams**

Included in your final checkout package is a Waiver of Medical Claim Form DS-1689. If you complete and submit this form, you and your family members will not be required to take end-of-tour physical examinations. By completing this form, you waive all claims to future medical services from the Peace Corps through the DOS medical program. It is important that you read this through very carefully before signing it.

If you do not complete the Waiver of Medical Claim Form DS-1689, you and your eligible family members must take your end-of-tour medical examinations at post prior to departure. Completed forms must be forwarded as soon as possible to the medical division at the Department of State. If it is not feasible to have the exams done at post, they may be taken upon your return to the U.S. If you request this option, contact your human resource specialist well in advance of departure. Medical exams must be taken within 90 days of separation from the Peace Corps.

## **J. Non-Competitive Eligibility**

Executive Order 12721 on non-competitive eligibility enables departing Peace Corps staff members to be appointed non-competitively to the civil service once they return to the U.S. This means a departing employee may be appointed to any federal occupation and grade level for which they are qualified without competing for the position.

In order to qualify for non-competitive eligibility, an individual must have completed 36 months of service in a direct-hire position with the Peace Corps. Creditable service may have been in more than one position. Contract positions are not credited under this executive order. Non-competitive eligibility expires three years after the employee's separation date from the Peace Corps.

Family members who find employment at the U.S. mission at post in direct-hire positions may also qualify for non-competitive eligibility under a different authority. Questions on this benefit and how to utilize it may be directed to the human resource specialists in HRM.

## SECTION SIX: Life After the Peace Corps



### A. Preparing Yourself and Your Family to Leave

Your time with the Peace Corps is coming to a close. Once again there are a million-and-one things to take care of—packing up your home, making travel arrangements, medical exams, filing paperwork with the agency, etc. Sound familiar? These are all things you did before leaving the U.S., and in the previous section, we've given some tips on completing these procedures now that you are leaving. But what about the non-Peace Corps issues facing you? Saying good-bye to friends, preparing your co-workers, looking for another job, etc. This section provides some suggestions for things to consider as you look ahead to life after the Peace Corps.

#### 1. The Job Hunt

One of the first things to contemplate is what direction you would like to go personally and professionally. Do you want to remain overseas and, if so, where would you prefer to live? Country, region, continent? What about your family—are the kids in school? Does your spouse also need to plan for job relocation? Is it time to come back to the U.S. for a few years?

For the organizers out there, a year before your end-of-tour date is a good time to start planning your job search. Pull out your resume/CV, brush it up, and contact your network of references. Although a year might seem too early for some to start this process, we would caution that your end-of-tour will sneak up on you, and before you know it, you will be returned Peace Corps staff. For some people, the job search is not limited to simply sending out information but may also include investing time and money into flying back to the U.S. and/or other places for interviews, etc. If you are the type of person who needs definition for your future in order to be comfortable, plan accordingly.

If you are comfortable having a less definite agenda for your life after your Peace Corps tour, still try to get your resume/CV in shape and on the job market before you leave post. Even if you have plans to rest and relax in the U.S. for a few months before returning to work, get your name out there. The worst-case scenario is that you budget for a two-month vacation at friends' or family members' house and it turns into six or seven months because a job does not surface as you hoped.

It can be difficult to job hunt from a remote location. While there are no official out-placement services for staff, the Office of Human Resource Management can assist you with information on Internet resources and job advertisement publications. Check out the resources available to you at post, like the *Hotline*, which publishes announcements for

both domestic and international positions. Although many guides at post are geared to recent Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs), they can be helpful to you as well.

## **2. Preparing to Leave the Country and Its People**

Besides the professional preparations surrounding your departure, you will want to prepare yourself and others for when you are gone. If you have close relationships with co-workers, Volunteers, or members of the community, be sure to spend sufficient time with them before you leave. Without wishing to, you may leave without having put closure to relationships that have become important to you.

Along the same lines of saying good-bye to your friends and colleagues, you also need to say good-bye to the country you are in. Although you might return eventually, you could still be away for a good length of time. Now is the time to buy all of the trinkets and cultural items you have put off purchasing. Keep in mind the exchange rate of dollars to your host-country currency while shopping. What may seem outrageously expensive to you in host-country currency may translate into incredibly inexpensive after your tour when you are once again operating in only U.S. dollars.

Take lots of photos and go to all the places you always said you would. Make lists, if necessary, to ensure that you follow through with your plans. Regrets are not good things to bring home with you.

## **3. Writing Recommendations for Volunteers and Your Co-Workers**

Volunteers and staff members may start requesting recommendations from you as soon as they discover you are preparing to leave—these can really pile up at the end if you are not careful. Although you may write personal letters of recommendation for other Peace Corps employees, Volunteers, or individuals outside of the Peace Corps based on your personal knowledge of the requester's ability or character, there are some guidelines to follow if you use Peace Corps letterhead and your official title. They are:

- You may use letterhead and your title when recommending the requester for U.S. federal government employment.
- You may use letterhead and your title when recommending a Volunteer or others (e.g., another Peace Corps employee or someone outside of the agency such as a counterpart within a host country agency/NGO) when you have dealt with the requester within the context of your Peace Corps employment.

Regardless of who the letter is for, all personal letters of recommendation should indicate that the recommendation is based on your knowledge of the requester's abilities and character, and the recommendation is not an official Peace Corps evaluation of the requester.

It is inappropriate to use the Peace Corps letterhead and your official title when writing recommendations for persons who you have not dealt with in the context of the Peace Corps (e.g., your personal staff at home). However, you may refer to your official position in the body of the letter, as part of an overall brief biographical statement.

If you have questions or concerns regarding letters of recommendations, please contact the agency ethics officer in the Office of General Counsel.

## **B. Landing in the U.S.**

### **1. Reverse Culture Shock**

There are numerous problems that face the returning expatriate, including practical, psychological, and emotional issues. Some can be anticipated, others cannot. It is helpful to spend some time thinking about what might face you as you orchestrate your transition home. What do you expect will happen? How do you imagine it might feel? Are you making any assumptions about people? How may they have changed? How may they have stayed the same? How have you or your family changed? Do not get so tied up with plans and preparations for leaving post that you forget to give yourself, your spouse, or your children the additional attention necessary at this stressful time. By considering all of these issues, the re-entry process can become less stressful and easier to manage.

**Use the expertise you developed in counseling Volunteers to assist you and your family with combating reverse culture shock. There are many resources at post to help you and your family in this process, and once you return to the U.S. additional resources are available at the Overseas Briefing Center.**

Many of us know that at close of service Volunteers are advised that family and friends back in the U.S. may not be as excited about their adventures in foreign lands as they would expect and like them to be. The same applies for returned staff members. Be forewarned that the most meaningful parts of your overseas experiences may never be fully shared with your loved ones. Knowing this in advance may lessen your disappointment and prepare you for disinterested reactions to your stories.

### **2. New Job Culture**

Another cultural readjustment issue is transitioning to a new work environment and a new job. Working with the Peace Corps overseas is very challenging and rewarding, and you often have substantial influence on what becomes reality. The same job satisfaction and stimuli may not be found in a new job, particularly domestically. A new job also

means a new working culture—one which may be significantly different from the Peace Corps. Be aware that adjusting to a new job is as significant as adjusting to a new living environment.

## **C. Linking to Your Peace Corps Experience**

Upon your return to the U.S., there are numerous opportunities for you to stay involved with the Peace Corps and to apply the skills and experiences you acquired overseas. The Peace Corps encourages you to speak publicly about the challenges and rewards of your experience. Through your work, we can increase the impact of our “domestic dividend.” Please contact the nearest recruiting office to learn about specific opportunities and/or the Office of Domestic Programs, described below, to get involved nationally. Do not hesitate to contact the Communications Office if you plan to discuss the Peace Corps and need current statistics.

### **1. The Peace Corps’ Domestic Programs**

The Office of Domestic Programs provides leadership in pursuing third-goal activities and increasing our “domestic dividend.” In addition to the programs listed below, this office encourages returned Volunteer and staff participation in many special events, such as Peace Corps anniversary celebrations. On March 1, 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed the executive order establishing the Peace Corps. Each year on or close to March 1, current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers and staff commemorate the agency’s anniversary—Peace Corps Day—by participating in activities that advance our goals to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans, and to promote a better understanding of Americans in the countries where we serve.

### **2. Fellows/USA**

If you are a returned Peace Corps Volunteer who satisfactorily completed your service and are interested in obtaining an advanced degree at some point in your life, Peace Corps Fellows/USA may be for you. This fellowship program enables returned Volunteers to pursue graduate studies at reduced cost while applying the skills and experience they gained overseas to internships that help meet the needs of underserved U.S. communities. Returned Volunteers have lifetime eligibility for Fellows/USA programs that offer benefits such as assistantships, tuition remission, scholarships, in-state tuition, stipends, housing, paid employment, and health benefits, depending on the program. More than 30 participating universities offer degrees and certification in various fields including business, community and economic development, education, environmental studies, health care, international development, public administration, and more. For more information and a list of programs contact the Fellows/USA office at 202.692.1440 or [fellows@peacecorps.gov](mailto:fellows@peacecorps.gov), or visit [www.peacecorps.gov/fellows](http://www.peacecorps.gov/fellows).

### 3. Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools Program

Paul D. Coverdell World Wise Schools is a global education program of the Peace Corps that provides U.S. students the opportunity to learn from the overseas experience of currently serving and returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and staff.

World Wise Schools offers the Correspondence Match Program that links U.S. educators and their students with currently serving Peace Corps Volunteers to exchange stories, photographs, artifacts, audiotapes, and videotapes. Some classrooms write a letter every few months; others correspond through weekly e-mails. This program is a terrific way for Peace Corps staff to encourage Volunteers to stay connected to the U.S. while sharing important cross-cultural expertise and understanding.

Teachers can access award-winning, standards-based educational materials, including literature by RPCVs with corresponding lesson plans, all available on the Peace Corps website as well as in hard copy. Contact the World Wise Schools office at 202.692.1450 or see [www.peacecorps.gov/wws](http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws) for more information.

### 4. Returned Volunteer Services

Returned Volunteer Services (RVS) provides career, educational, and reentry information for current and returned Peace Corps Volunteers, such as the following:

*Hotline*, which is available online at [www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/hotline](http://www.peacecorps.gov/rpcv/hotline), is a good compilation of employers who value the Peace Corps experience. The newsletter also contains information about graduate school opportunities.

*Career Information Consultants* publishes the names of thousands of RPCVs and other career professionals who can be contacted for networking and informational interviewing. The publication is also available on CD-ROM. If you would like to include your name in a future edition, please contact [rvs@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvs@peacecorps.gov).

Additional career and educational publications on specific topic areas, such as teaching, business, and environmental careers as well as graduate schools. Reference copies should be available through the post's information resource center, and are good sources for preparing for transition.

Once you secure employment post-Peace Corps, keep RPCVs and other staff in mind for potential job openings at your new place of work. Contact Returned Volunteer Services at 202.692.1430 or [rvs@peacecorps.gov](mailto:rvs@peacecorps.gov) for more information on how you can help keep the network alive.

### 5. Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Groups

The work of the Peace Corps does not end when you have finished your overseas service. Whether you were a Volunteer, staff member, or both, there are more than 140 groups

that want your participation. These groups are as diverse as the people who have organized them. Some groups are national in scope, consisting of RPCVs who served in one country, while other groups consist of RPCVs in a given region or city. We encourage you to connect with a group and share your knowledge and experience with them. For information about existing RPCV groups and assistance in forming new groups, contact the membership director, National Peace Corps Association, 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 205, Washington, DC 20036; phone: 202.293.7728; website: [www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org); e-mail: [groups@rpcv.org](mailto:groups@rpcv.org).

## Appendix A: Important Telephone Numbers



**Peace Corps**—The Peace Corps toll-free number is 1-800-424-8580. Ask the operator for the office you want to contact, e.g., country desk units, transportation, safety and security, payroll, overseas staff training, etc.

Peace Corps' Office of Human Resource Management .....202-692-1221  
Overseas Staff Contact E-mail ..... [workingoverseas@peacecorps.gov](mailto:workingoverseas@peacecorps.gov)

### U.S. Department of State

#### Office of Medical Services

Exam appointments.....202-663-1779

Clearance Information.....703-875-5411

Immunization Clinic.....202-663-1705

Claims .....703-875-4842

FAX: .....703-875-4851

**Family Liaison Office**.....202-647-1076

[www.flo@state.gov](mailto:www.flo@state.gov)

**Employee Consultation Service**.....202-663-1815

[www.medics@state.gov](mailto:www.medics@state.gov)

**Office of Overseas Schools**.....202-261-8200

[www.overseasschools@state.gov](mailto:www.overseasschools@state.gov)

**Overseas Briefing Center**..... 703-302-7276 or 7277

[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

**Lafayette Federal Credit Union**.....202-682-0600

.....1-800-888-6560



## Appendix B: Peace Corps Acronyms

AA	Assignment Area
AF	Africa Region
AID	Agency for International Development
ADP	American Diversity Programs
AO	Administrative Officer
AOT	Administrative Officers Training
APCD	Associate Peace Corps Director
APCMO	Area Peace Corps Medical Officer
AWOL	Absence Without Leave
BIT	Budget Implementation Team
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBT	Community-Based Training or Computer- Based Training
CCBI	Community Content-Based Instruction
CD	Country Director or Community Development
CDA	Country Desk Assistant
CDO	Country Desk Officer
CDU	Country Desk Unit
CHOPS	Chief of Operations
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
CMA	Centrally Managed Account

CO	Certifying Officer or Current Operations
COLA	Cost-of-Living Adjustment
COS	Close of Service
COTR	Contracting Officer's Technical Representative
CR	Continuing Resolution
CSRS	Civil Service Retirement System
DCHOPS	Deputy Chief of Operations
DO	Disbursing Office
DOS	Department of State or Description of Service (for Volunteers)
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EMA	Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean, and Asia
EOD	Enter on Duty
EOT	End of Tour
ET	Early Termination
EVT	Emergency Visitation Travel
FAD	Field Assistance Division
FAH	Foreign Affairs Handbook
FAM	Foreign Affairs Manual
FAR	Foreign Affairs Regulations
FEGLI	Federal Employees Group Life Insurance
FEHB	Federal Employees Health Benefits
FERS	Federal Employees Retirement System
FFLA	Family Friendly Leave Act
FICA	Federal Insurance Contributions Act

FMC	Financial Management Center
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
FMLA	Family Medical Leave Act
FMO	Financial Management Officer
FSN	Foreign Service National
FSPS	Foreign Service Pension System
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
GAD	Gender and Development
GBL	Government Bill of Lading
GO_	Government of _____
GSO	General Service Officer
GTR	Government Travel Rates
HCA	Host Country Agency
HCC	Host Country Contribution
HCN	Host Country National
HHE	Household Effects
HOR	Home of Record
HQ	Headquarters
HRM	Human Resource Management
IAP	Inter-America and the Pacific Region
ICASS	International Cooperative Administrative Support Services
ICE	Information Collection and Exchange
IFB	Invitation For Bid
IFO	International Financial Operation

IG	Inspector General
IP	Individual Placement
IPBS	Integrated Planning and Budget System
IRM	Information Resources Management
IST	In-Service Training
ITS	Information Technology Specialist
KAR	Key Agency Resources
LCP	Local Compensation Plan
LFCU	Lafayette Federal Credit Union
LWOP	Leave Without Pay
M&IE	Meals and Incidental Expenses
MED	Medical Separation
MOA/U	Memorandum of Agreement/Understanding
MOD	Miscellaneous Obligation Document
MS	Manual Section or Medical Services
MSI	Meritorious Step Increase
NAC	National Agency Clearances
NFATC	National Foreign Affairs Training Center
NFC	National Finance Center
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OBC	Overseas Briefing Center
OGC	Office of the General Counsel
OF-XXX	Optional Form number XXX (as in OF-306)
OG	Overseas Guide

OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPBF	Office of Planning, Budget, and Finance
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSD	Overseas Staff Development
OST	Overseas Staff Training
P&T	Programming and Training
PATS	Programming and Training Systems Manual
PBR	Periodic Budget Review
PC/W	Peace Corps Washington
PCMC	Peace Corps Medical Contractor (also known as PCMO)
PCMS	Peace Corps Manual Section
PCT	Peace Corps Trainee
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PCVC/L	Peace Corps Volunteer Coordinator/Leader
PDM	Project Design and Management
PLU	Program Learning Unit
PO	Personnel Officer
PO	Purchase Order
POV	Privately Owned Vehicle
PPA	Planning and Policy Analysis
PR	Procurement Request
PSC	Personal Services Contractor

PSR	Program Status Review
PST	Pre-Service Training
PTA	Programming and Training Advisor
PTO	Programming and Training Officer
PTQ	Pre-Training Questionnaire
PVO	Private Volunteer Organization
QTRS	Quarterly Trainee Request System
RA	Readjustment Allowance
RAU	Regional Assistance Unit
RD	Regional Director or Rural Development
RFP	Request for Proposal
RHCP	Regional Health-Care Provider
RMO	Regional Medical Officer
RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer
RPSO	Regional Procurement Supplies Office
RSO	Regional Security Officer (State Department)
RSSO	Regional Safety and Security Officer (Peace Corps)
S&E	Salary and Expenses
RVS	Returned Volunteer Services
SBD	Small Business Development
SCD	Service Computation Date
SED	Small Enterprise Development
SF-XXX	Standard Form Number XXX (as in SF-171)
SOW	Statement of Work

SPA	Small Project Assistance
SR	Special Review or Standardized Regulations
SRPTC	Subregional Programming and Training Coordinator
SSN	Social Security Number
STAU	Short Term Assistant Unit
TA	Task Analysis
TA	Technical Assistance or Travel Authorization
TCC	Temporary Continuation of Coverage
TCN	Third Country National
TCT	Third Country Training
TDY	Temporary Tour of Duty
TI	Trainee Input
TMC	Travel Management Center
TOT	Training of Trainers or Transportation of Things
TR	Trainee Requests
TSDU	Training and Staff Development Unit
TSP	Thrift Savings Plan
TSR	Training Status Review
UFR	Unfunded Request
USC	United States Code
USDO	U.S. Disbursing Office(r)
V YR. CHARTS	Volunteer Year Charts
VAD	Volunteer Assignment Description
VRS	Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

VS	Volunteer Support
VSPS	Volunteer and Staff Payroll Services
WID	Women in Development
WGI	Within Grade Increase
WHO	World Health Organization



## Appendix C

### A. Packing Up and Shipping Out

#### 1. Shipping Dos and Don'ts

There are a number of issues and logistics to consider when moving your household. The following pages provide suggestions, that will assist you in your preparations.

- **DO** schedule your departure with enough flexibility to allow for possible failure of the packer to meet the scheduled time. **Allow enough time for a pre-pack walkthrough and estimate with the moving company** (this is very important for avoiding overweight charges on your shipments).

- If purchasing small appliances through a catalog service, **DO** order far enough in advance to have delivered before pickup of effects from your house. If new items are being sent to the packer after he has picked up your effects, you must furnish the packer—**in writing**—a list of items ordered and the names and addresses of the vendors. The list of new items will not delay packing the goods on hand, even though all the ordered items have not been received at the warehouse. Items received late will be packed as a separate shipment.

- **DO** be sure that agreements between you and the packing company are in writing.

- **DO** make a video or photographic inventory of your effects, especially valuables, before they are packed. Make certain you have adequate insurance on your shipment and storage. This is helpful should you need to make any future claims.

- **DO** be sure that the packer provides you with a complete and descriptive inventory showing the correct number of items stored and shipped.

- **DON'T** put valuable items, such as silverware, heirlooms, furs, jewelry, and important documents and papers in storage with the rest of your effects. They are best protected in a safe-deposit box, bank vault, or with responsible relatives.

- **DON'T** leave money or other valuables unprotected during the packing process.

- **DON'T** offer alcoholic drinks to packing company employees. You may want to have nonalcoholic refreshments available.

- **DO** be sure to note on the inventory or delivery receipt provided by the mover all problems, such as loss or damage immediately upon receiving your effects at post.

## 2. Before The Packers Arrive

- Sort out those things for storage and those you wish to ship. Do not include anything you do not really need at your post or items that won't stand rugged climates and/or handling en route.
- Dismantle outdoor play equipment, stereo sets, etc. which may be prepackaged in the original cartons, if you have saved them.
- Take down electrical fixtures that are to be packed. Remove pictures and mirrors from walls and group them.
- Have your rugs cleaned before placing them in storage or shipping them overseas.
- Separate personal effects and tag or otherwise identify as "accompanied baggage," "sea freight," "air freight" and "storage." Consider moving them into different rooms to avoid any possible confusion.
- To the extent possible, divide items to be placed in "fragile" and "heavy" groups. A large table is a good place to put all fragile items, such as art objects, china, crystal, lamps and shades (each shade should be packed in its own carton), small pictures, etc. You can also use any tables or the tops of chests, since the packers do their wrapping on top of cartons, and large pieces of furniture are the last items to go.
- Remove utensils from drawers and cupboards and place them on the counters or kitchen table for easier access.
- Collect all books in one room for sea freight or storage effects.
- Many people prefer to pack unbreakable items such as clothing, linens, and personal papers themselves in order to get them out of the way before the packers arrive. Owner-packed cartons will be listed on the moving company's inventory as PBO (packed by owner) and the carrier will disclaim any responsibility for damage unless there is visible external damage to the box. The moving company can furnish appropriate cartons, tapes, and labels in advance if you wish to pack some items yourself.
- Personally pack small, high-value items such as cameras, watches, and jewelry and include them in your accompanying baggage.
- Request that the packers bring a scale for weighing your air freight as it is packed and confirm their packing materials and methods comply with packing instructions from travel.

## 3. When The Packers Arrive

- Carefully supervise the entire packing process. Watch the packers closely to see that

they understand exactly which items you want shipped and which stored. It is preferable to pack air freight first (stopping when your weight limit is reached), surface freight next, and finally the storage items. Remind your packers to load crates carefully; many packers don't understand the beating a crate can take at distant port facilities. Try to have someone help you. Do not leave the house until the packers leave unless you have a friend acting on your behalf.

- The packers will place a number on each item or carton and list their inventory sheets as: "1 carton linens," "1 carton china," "1 carton kitchen," etc. You may also wish to number with your own marking system each carton as it is filled and sealed. In a notebook, record a brief description of the contents; that will make it easier to locate specific items upon arrival at post. If any cartons are lost, it is then possible to determine quickly what is missing.
- Be certain that every container or loose item has the packer's inventory tag or tape on it and that each item is listed legibly on all inventory copies. The contents should be listed separately on the inventory (e.g., if a carton contains two lamps, the inventory should read "two lamps"). The packer's inventory will not be as detailed as yours.
- Mirrors, paintings and similar items easily damaged or broken should be specially crated by the packers. Dishes and glassware should be packed vertically to minimize breakage.
- Note the condition of your furniture—marks, scratches, worn places—on your inventory to accurately judge the state of the shipment upon its arrival.

## **B. Suggested Items for Accompanied Baggage**

Please keep in mind these are suggestions. Use this list as appropriate based on your own personal/family needs and weight allowance.

Flashlight with new (and extra) batteries	Toiletries
Travel alarm clock	Prescription medicines
Soap (in a plastic box) and washcloths	Travel-size detergent
Towelettes	Blow dryer
Rope or stretch plastic for hanging clothes	Magazines/paperbacks
Plastic bags (for laundry)	Aspirin, antacids, Band-aids
Swiss Army knife or small paring knife	Copies of passports/health records
Folding umbrella	Credit card numbers/addresses

Plastic rain-gear	Traveler's check numbers
Extra checks	Collapsible cup
Safety pins	Address book
Shampoo, conditioner	Instant coffee or tea bags
Heating implement for cup of water	Screwdriver
Kleenex/toilet tissue	Bottle/can opener
Sweaters, slippers for plane travel	Spouses' employment papers (resumes, etc.)
Cleaning/shoeshine fluid in individual packets	Camera and supplies
Sewing kit: needles, thread, buttons, snaps, hooks, and eyes	

### 1. If Traveling with Children

Healthy snacks	Children's books
Coloring books, crayons	Walkman/story tapes
Small games, cards	Favorite toy/stuffed animal
School records	Children's aspirin/Tylenol

### 2. Traveling Medical Kit

To treat specific health concerns please check with your physician.

Thermometer	Dental floss
Scissors, tweezers	First-aid manual
Eye dropper	Dry-skin lotion
Adhesive tape	Band-aids, ace bandage

Cotton, roll of sterile squares	Foot powders and ointment
Aspirin/Tylenol/laxatives/Pepto-Bismol	Anti-fungus ointment
Antacid for stomach (e.g., Rolaids)	Motion sickness pills
Calamine lotion for rashes, insect bites, etc.	Anti-diarrhea medication
Antibacterial ointment for burns, cuts, abrasions	

For certain climates and areas also include: malaria prophylactic medication, insect repellent, sunscreen preparations, and Globaline or Potable-Aqua.

### C. Suggested Items For Unaccompanied Baggage

Please keep in mind these are suggestions for your air freight shipment. Use this list as appropriate based on your own personal/family needs and weight allowance.

Alarm clock	Bed linens, pillows
Sewing kit and scissors	Bath towels/washcloths
Toys, games, books, cards	Candles and holders
Cosmetics and toiletries	Portable radio/tape recorder/CD player, CDs
Table linens	Flashlight
Spices and condiments	Iron
Salt-and-pepper shakers	Extension cords and plugs
Nonbreakable dishes, glassware	Coat hangers
Silverware	Rope/clothesline and pins
Dish towels and cloths	Cameras
Sponges, scouring pads	Potholders
Rubber gloves, flat sink stopper	Decorations for kids' rooms
Cookbooks	Assorted baking pans

Plastic water pitchers, mixing bowls	Plastic ice-cube trays
Refrigerator containers	Egg beater
Can opener, corkscrew	Funnel, sieve
Kitchen knives, stirring spoons, meat fork, spatula	Coffee pot/tea pot
Dish-draining rack, rubber mat	Tool kit (e.g., hammer, nails, etc.)
Medium-sized plastic scrub pans, double boiler	Plastic/Ziploc bags
Measuring cups and spoons	Extra business/calling cards
Small appliances (toaster, blender)	Stationery
Baby equipment	Clothing needed before household effects arrive
Seasonal decoration if a holiday comes before your HHE will arrive	Personal computer, surge protector, UPS, transformer, English dictionary and other reference materials, software, and extra supplies

## D. Suggested Items for Surface Shipment

Please keep in mind these are suggestions for your SEA FREIGHT shipment. Use this list as appropriate based on your own personal/family needs and weight allowance.

Clothing that is difficult to find and/or very expensive overseas, such as shoes for narrow feet, swim suits, underwear	Photograph albums, home movies/projector
Hypoallergenic cosmetics and toiletries	Shower curtains, hooks, bathroom organizers
Favorite sports equipment, bicycles	Linens: Sheets, towels, pillows, mattress covers, tablecloths, dishcloths, placemats, napkins, kitchen

	towels
Multi-system television/VCR/video cassettes	Notepaper, greeting cards (insert strips of waxed paper under envelope flaps if shipping to the tropics), gift wrapping
Vacuum cleaner or carpet sweeper (and extra bags)	Pictures, wall decorations, art objects
China, dishes, glassware	Books (perhaps a few extra for gifts)
Lamps and lamp shade	Card tables and chairs
Kitchen equipment, including: heavy-duty pots and pans (cast iron are most durable), large pot for boiling water; slow cooker; toaster; blender; mixer; pressure cooker; cookie cutters; hot tray; large measuring items; baking pans for muffins, cakes, pies, cookies; cookbooks; oven, meat, and candy thermometers; canisters; serving trays; toaster; rubber dish drainer; flat rubber sink stopper; ice-cream freezer.	Camping and picnic gear, ice chest, outdoor grill
Desk supplies: scotch tape, glue, pencil sharpener, stapler, etc.	Sewing supplies
Furniture, including bookcases (Check with CDU on what is at post)	Clothes hangers, towel rack, organizers
Radios, stereo equipment, DVDs, tapes (have them adapted to 50 cycle and appropriate voltage, if necessary)	Seasonal decorations (perhaps an artificial tree for Christmas)
Pet supplies	Gifts suitable for friends' and children's parties
Household tools, staple gun and supply of staples, cleaning cloths, silver and brass cleaner	Toys, gifts for your own children's first Christmas away from home
Musical instruments (processed for humid climates)	Typewriter and supplies

## **E. Electrifying News!**

Most countries of assignment have power systems that differ from those found here in the United States. Voltage is 220 almost everywhere else in the world (as opposed to 110 found here), which means you will need transformers for all your electronic equipment, or you will need to purchase 220-volt items. Televisions and videocassettes also operate under different systems than ours. If you would like to watch local television or locally available video cassettes at post, you will want to purchase a multisystem television and VCR. Check with your country desk unit to find out what system is used at your post.



## Appendix D: Suggested Readings

### **Available from the Peace Corps**

*A Few Minor Adjustments* by Craig Storti (ask your CDU)

*Culture Matters* (from ICE in the Center)

*On the Home Front* by Craig Storti (ask your CDU)

### **From the Overseas Briefing Center (of the Department of State)**

*Foreign Service Assignment Notebook*

*What Do I Do Now?*

*Where in the World Are You Going?* (work book for young children)

*Employment Options for Foreign Service Family Members*

See [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) for a cross-cultural bibliography with more titles. Check the articles section for articles that you can download.

### **Available Commercially**

*Culture Shock! Successful Living Abroad—A Wife's Guide* by Robin Pascoe

*Moving Your Family Overseas* by Rosalind Kalb and Penelope Welch (Intercultural Press)

*Parenting Abroad* by Ngaire Jehle-Caitcheon (Aletheia Publications)

*Raising Children Overseas* published NY Global Nomads

*The Art of Crossing Cultures* by Craig Storti

*Transitions* by William Bridges (Perseus Books)

See [www.interculturalpress.com](http://www.interculturalpress.com) for more titles.

# EVALUATION

**How are we doing?** *Working for the Peace Corps: A Guide for Overseas Staff and Their Families* has been designed to help you, and we hope it has been—and will continue to serve as—a valuable resource. As mentioned in the introduction, it is a work in progress, so please take a few minutes to give your feedback so that we might continue to improve it with future editions. Should you have any questions about the Guide, or issues covered in the Guide, you may contact the overseas staffing specialist in HRM for further information and direction. Thanks in advance for your help and input!

## Your Background

1. **Are you:**
  - a) CD or APCD
  - b) Family Member
  
2. **What is your post of assignment?**
  
3. **Where are you coming from?**
  - a) Peace Corps HQ
  - b) Other Government Agency
  - c) Private Sector
  - d) Other (please explain):

## The Guide

4. **Please rate the sections of the Guide on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest:**

- I. So You've Been Offered a Job at Peace Corps
- II. Getting Ready to Go Overseas
- III. Getting to Post
- IV. Life at Post
- V. Departure From Post and Peace Corps

**Please rate the overall effectiveness of the Guide:**

5. **What are areas in which you would have liked additional information?**

6. Do you have any suggested readings that could be added to our list of resources?

7. Additional Suggestions/Comments:

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Please mail or fax your completed evaluation to the following:

**Office of Human Resource Management**  
**1111 20th Street, NW**  
**Washington, DC 20526**  
**Fax: (202) 692-1201**  
**E-mail: [workingoverseas@peacecorps.gov](mailto:workingoverseas@peacecorps.gov)**

Thank you again for your help and time!

