

# MS 271 Handling of Volunteer/Trainee Allegations

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**Date:** February 3, 2011

**Responsible Office:** Office of Safety and Security and Office of Global Operations

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[Issuance Memo](#)

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### 1.0 Authority

The Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2503 (b); Executive Order 12137 (1979)

### 2.0 Purpose

This Manual Section sets forth Peace Corps policies on the handling of allegations by Volunteers or Trainees of misconduct, mismanagement, or violations of law or policy by Peace Corps staff, contractors, or other Volunteers or Trainees or in connection with Peace Corps programs or operations; and on the handling of allegations or other concerns of Volunteers or Trainees about the conduct of other individuals or organization, including host country nationals regarding behavior and other matters that are beyond the legal jurisdiction of Peace Corps.

### 3.0 Policies

- (a) Volunteers/Trainees (V/Ts) must be informed of their rights and Peace Corps expectations with respect to bringing to the attention of Peace Corps allegations of misconduct, mismanagement, violations of law or policy that relate to Peace Corps staff, contractors, other V/Ts, programs, and operations.

- (b) V/Ts must also be informed that they may discuss with Peace Corps staff allegations or concerns on topics or issues that are beyond the legal jurisdiction of Peace Corps, such as behavior by a local national with whom the V/T has regular contact but who does not work for Peace Corps or participate directly in a Peace Corps project or program.
- (c) V/Ts must be provided open access and appropriate channels in which to raise the types of allegations and concerns referred to in subsections (a) and (b) above, with an understanding and commitment that their allegations and concerns will be given appropriate attention; that no V/T will be retaliated against by Peace Corps staff for bringing forth allegations and concerns; and that management will take every step necessary to ensure the safety of any V/T.

#### **4.0 Inspector General**

With respect to the rights and Peace Corps expectations referred to in Section 3 (a) above, V/Ts must be informed that they should report to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) any activity which they reasonably believe constitutes (1) a violation of federal law, rule, or regulation; (2) mismanagement; (3) serious misconduct; (4) gross waste of funds; (5) abuse of authority; or (6) a substantial and specific danger to the public health and safety relating to the programs and operations of the Peace Corps. *See* MS 861. Such reports will be handled by the OIG as set forth in MS 861.

#### **5.0 Handling Allegations and Concerns**

- (a) V/Ts may report allegations and concerns referred to in Section 3.0 to senior staff at post, the appropriate Regional Director, Associate Director for Safety and Security, Associate Director for Global Operations, or other appropriate officer at Headquarters.
- (b) Any Peace Corps staff member who receives or has knowledge of a V/T allegation or concern must treat the information with the utmost discretion and confidentiality consistent with appropriate handling of such information and applicable law, including where appropriate, referral to the OIG or other legal authorities.
- (c) Based upon the nature of the allegations or concerns and the totality of available facts, appropriate measures must be taken to ensure the V/T's safety. If there is any uncertainty, it is critical that managers err on the side of caution and take every measure to ensure V/T safety.
- (d) No Peace Corps staff person may retaliate in any manner against a V/T because the V/T reported an allegation or concern under this subsection.
- (e) All allegations or concerns identified by V/Ts will be given serious consideration and review and will be handled, resolved or disposed of, as appropriate, by management and/or the OIG.
- (f) Nothing in this Manual Section should be construed to exempt a V/T from the requirements to follow the rules and policies set forth in MS 204 *Volunteer Conduct*, or to

preclude the Peace Corps from taking appropriate action against persons who knowingly or recklessly make false statements or accusations.

## **6.0 Effective Date**

The effective date is the date of issuance.