

# **MS 127 OFFICE OF VOLUNTEER SUPPORT: ORGANIZATION, MISSION, AND FUNCTIONS**

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Date: February 2, 2011

Office: Office of Volunteer Support

Supersedes: 04/04/05; 10/15/96 v.2; 09/16/94; 11/01/93

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## **1.0 AUTHORITY**

Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2506

## **2.0 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this manual section is to describe the organization, mission, and functions of the Office of Volunteer Support (VS).

## **3.0 ORGANIZATION**

OVS is headed by the Associate Director for Volunteer Support (AD/VS). The AD/VS reports directly to the Peace Corps Deputy Director. OVS also includes two sub-units, the Office of Medical Services (OMS) and the Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU). These two offices are each headed by an office director who reports to the AD. Each office is headed by an Office Director who reports to the Associate Director.

## **4.0 OFFICE MISSIONS**

### **4.1 Office of Volunteer Support**

The Office of Volunteer Support oversees the Office of Medical Services and the Counseling and Outreach Unit, which provide support services and expertise to V/Ts, their families, Returned Volunteers, and staff, through a multidisciplinary staff of professionals. These services include: a

comprehensive health care program; crisis management support to V/Ts, Returned Volunteers, family, and staff; and education for V/Ts and staff regarding issues of health, safety, and adjustment to the stresses of country assignments.

#### **4.2 Office of Medical Services**

The Office of Medical Services provides pre-service medical screening, in-service health care, and post-service medical benefits to V/Ts, and is the liaison with the Department of Labor's Federal Employees' Compensation Act program on behalf of employees and returned V/Ts. OMS also provides training for Peace Corps Medical Officers and other Peace Corps staff. The office supports its services, regions, and posts, through systematic quality improvement and epidemiology studies.

#### **4.3 Counseling and Outreach Unit**

The Counseling and Outreach Unit (COU) provides mental health evaluations and treatment to V/Ts in the field and in Washington, including medevac'd V/Ts. COU also provides consultation to the medical staff in-country concerning V/Ts who are experiencing some type of adjustment difficulties, and serves as a liaison to V/Ts and their families regarding health and welfare inquiries, family emergencies, and political unrest, and natural disasters. The Unit supports the regions and posts in matters of crisis management and Volunteer safety and provides emergency responses to a post overseas when a critical incident has occurred. The office also consults with the posts to develop strategies to help lessen the adjustment problems that V/Ts may experience overseas.

### **5.0 OFFICE FUNCTIONS**

#### **5.1 Associate Director for Volunteer Support**

##### **The Associate Director for Volunteer Support:**

- (a) Advises the Director and senior staff on matters related to the health of applicants and V/Ts, during and after their service;
- (b) Serves as liaison between VS and other Peace Corps offices on administrative and program matters that affect the programs and policies of the office;
- (c) Establishes Standard Operating Procedures for administrative functions of VS, such as time and attendance, travel, procurement requests, training requests, and claims processing; and
- (d) Conducts studies and presents strategies for containment of health care costs, enhancement of health and safety measures, and continuous quality improvement of the operations of VS.

#### **5.2 Office of Medical Services**

##### **The Office of Medical Services:**

- (a) Develops, implements, and monitors, the process for reviewing Peace Corps Volunteer applicants for medical clearance for service;
- (b) Develops and manages a comprehensive health care program for V/Ts, including the delivery of medical care and health services, and medical evacuation;
- (c) Provides clinical oversight of and training and consultation for Peace Corps Medical Officers;

- (d) Develops and provides health information and training to Medical Officers and V/Ts;
- (e) Manages and oversees care provided to V/Ts on medical evacuation status;
- (f) Provides 24-hour medical duty officer coverage for Peace Corps medical emergencies;
- (g) Manages the medical separation process applicable to V/Ts;
- (h) Serves as liaison between the Peace Corps and the Department of Labor on the eligibility of staff and of former V/Ts for Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) benefits;
- (i) Develops, monitors and maintains systems to respond to requests for information, analysis or advice on Volunteer health conditions and the effectiveness of the health care programs;
- (j) Manages the Agency's medical claims processing through a managed care contract which provides reimbursement to applicants, V/Ts, and third-party medical providers for claims submitted to Peace Corps for health care services;
- (k) Monitors and evaluates trends in health conditions of V/Ts by collecting and disseminating epidemiological data;
- (l) Conducts studies and presents strategies for containment of health care costs, enhancement of health and safety measures, and continuous quality improvement of the Volunteer health care system;
- (m) Manages the medical records system and releases medical information to V/Ts and authorized facilities and persons;
- (n) Provides orientation to new health care personnel and continuing medical education programs for overseas health care staff to maintain their skills and satisfy licensing and credentialing standards; and
- (o) Coordinates responsibility and oversight of the health care system for V/Ts with the Regions.

### **5.3 Counseling and Outreach Unit**

The Counseling and Outreach Unit:

- (a) Provides mental health counseling to V/Ts at post or on medevac status;
- (b) Serves as liaison to V/Ts and their families regarding health and welfare inquiries, family emergencies, political unrest, natural disasters, and other emergencies;
- (c) Provides consultation to V/Ts, Country Directors, and other staff at post on adjustment issues in country;
- (d) Provides Peace Corps staff overseas or in the United States with consultation, training and technical assistance on V/T support issues, in the areas of personal safety, counseling, administrative separation, and death;
- (e) Assists Peace Corps' response in the event of death, disappearance or abduction of a V/T;
- (f) Authorizes emergency leave and provides support to V/Ts on emergency leave;

- (g) Coordinates agency review of situations encountered by special V/T populations; and
- (h) Provides 24-hour duty officer coverage for Peace Corps non-medical emergencies and provides 24-hour backup to this coverage.
- (i) Provides training and consultation to Peace Corps Medical Officers on mental health issues.

## **6.0 EFFECTIVE DATE**

The effective date is the date of issuance.