

Updated 06/24/12



PEERCORPS TRUST FUND

Policy on Abuse, Maltreatment and Neglect

PeerCorps Trust Fund
352/64 Makunganya Street
Co-Architecture Building, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 22499, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
www.peercorpstrust.org

i. BACKGROUND

In light of recent and historical reports regarding human abuses in various peacekeeping and volunteer organizations, especially that of children and women by foreign volunteers, caregivers, and other persons in positions of relative power, a policy was developed by the Peercorps Trust Fund to address and effectively reverse this issue and be a leading advocate for community awareness and responsibility regarding abuse.

ii. DEFINITIONS

iii. PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY STATEMENT

- To protect the lives, and physical and psychological wellbeing of vulnerable youth, women and children in the care of volunteers of the Peercorps Trust Fund.
- To educate prospective volunteers on the types of abuse and how to recognize abuse.
- To develop a rigorous set of guidelines for prospective volunteers to follow when reporting abuse.

iv. PURPOSE STATEMENT

v. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

All polices, actions, and definitions hereunder defined, are to be recognized as common practice internationally for all staff, volunteers and all affiliated in name with the Peercorps Trust Fund, its Executive Director or constituents.

vi. EFFECTIVE DATE

All polices, actions, and definitions hereunder defined, are to be recognized and positioned into action on the FIRST DAY of JULY in the YEAR TWO-THOUSAND and EIGHT.

vii. RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of each Peercorps staff member, volunteer or affiliate, be it in name or by way of its Executive Director, to be aware of the existence, understand, and reciprocate in practice the organizational policies and directives which follow below. It is the responsibility of the Executive staff and trustees to honor, revise when necessary, and uphold the original Peercorps mission and recognize this document as a subset of that mission.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. TYPES OF ABUSE

Abuse is defined as “a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person or persons”. This general definition is subdivided into physical, psychological, sexual financial,

discriminatory abuse, and neglect and specifies that abuse is either an individual or a repeated act or omission of practice or care which sustains life and well-being¹. This definition has since been expanded to include spousal, systemic and ecological abuse as well as loss of respect for or abandonment²

Abuse includes all types of mishandling and maltreatment. This can mean any action which could hurt a person physically or emotionally. It is considered abuse even if the individual does not appear hurt or complain. Failure to prevent the person from being hurt is also considered abuse.

1. PHYSICAL ABUSE:

Physical abuse includes such acts as hitting, slapping, pinching, kicking, strangling, shoving, unauthorized or unnecessary use of physical interventions, and in general mishandling an individual. Physical contact which is not necessary for the safety of the person and causes discomfort to the person may also be considered to be physical abuse, as may the handling of a person with more force than is reasonably necessary.

2. SEXUAL ABUSE:

Sexual abuse is defined as any forced sexual activity between and among staff, volunteers, interns, or consultants who work with them. Sexual abuse is never and will not be tolerated. Sexual contact between program participants who are incapable of consent due to age, physical, mental situational handicap is also considered to be sexual abuse and must be reported as an incident. Sexual abuse includes any touching or fondling of an individual directly or through clothing for the arousing or gratifying of sexual desires. It also includes encouraging an individual to touch another person for the purpose of arousing desires. Any sexual contact with individuals under the age of consent will be cause for immediate expulsion from all Peercorps programs and warrant the summoning of appropriate legal action.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE:

Regardless of the age of program participants or whether they are fully proficient in the language(s) of volunteers, staff should always assume that he/she understands what is being said about him/her and should include him/her in the conversation. The type of language that staff uses to describe an individual is important. Staff should not refer to a person as being “dumb”, “slow”, or “difficult” or any other term which focuses on learning or social difficulty.

Any type of ridicule, sarcasm, humiliation, scorn, contempt, dehumanization, name calling or otherwise denigrating or socially stigmatizing is psychological abuse. Telling someone to “shut up” is not acceptable. Tone and volume of voice are important, for example excessive loudness, shouting or screaming at an individual can be considered psychological abuse. Even individuals who are non-verbal can understand and feel what is being said about them by the tone of a person’s voice.

¹ Guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse. Available from:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4008486

² Situation and voices. The older poor and excluded in South Africa and India. United Nations Population Fund. Available from http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/72_filename_ageing_voices.pdf

It is important to be respectful, calm and supportive toward youth at all times. When staff are soft spoken and supportive, the individuals with whom they work are generally calmer and more controlled themselves. The goal is to teach children to do things for themselves rather than telling them what to do. The approach is important. Even when you are trying to be helpful, be aware that how you say something to a child who is sensitive about a particular issue may make the difference between his or her feeling respected or belittled.

Something as simple as the difference between saying “would you...” instead of “You will...” can help individuals feel like they are being treated with respect. The tone and loudness of voice can be as important as what you are saying. Sometimes the tone of voice is even more important than the words. It is also important to be aware of body language and gestures when working with children. Be aware of emotionally charged issues for children and young adults that might upset them. It is really important for volunteers to speak and act calmly in situations in which the individuals need reassurance, for example, during a fire or a transportation accident.

There may be times when individuals are impolite or aggressive. Staff and volunteers need to understand that they should not take these behaviors personally. Even if an individual yells or speaks at you in a disrespectful manner, you must learn how to control your anger and frustration. If you keep your voice calm and quiet, most people will respond to your calmness and calm down themselves. You are a role model for the individuals and they will learn from your example how to speak and behave.

4. NEGLECT:

Neglect occurs when children receive insufficient, inconsistent or inappropriate services to meet their needs. Failure to provide an appropriate and/or safe environment for children is neglect. Neglect is also inattention or ignoring an individual during times when he or she may need assistance. It is neglect to leave individuals who need supervision alone in potentially unsafe settings, e.g, city streets, beaches, recreation trips, school buses, residences, emergency rooms, etc. It is also neglect to leave household cleaning supplies or other poisonous substances in the reach of individuals who could eat or drink them.

It is neglect to ignore individuals who are trying to get your attention for legitimate needs. Sleeping on the job is neglect. It is neglect to observe an individual exhibiting medical symptoms, for example, having a seizure, and not respond or call for help.

Failure to provide appropriate services, treatment, or medical care by gross error in judgment may also be considered a form of neglect. Leaving a person alone for long periods of time with no supervision is neglect. Failure to carry out program plans as written and approved by the interdisciplinary team may be neglect.

Neglect can take many forms and is not always easy to define. All allegations of abuse will be thoroughly investigated by supervisory staff to determine if it was neglect or poor judgment.

Not every failure of staff to provide a needed service should be reported as neglect. Some failures can be addressed by supervisors. For example, if there were not enough staff present to handle the needs of all the individuals at the same time, the issue may be lack of adequate staffing rather than neglect. If

one of the individuals was left behind on a bus, this would be viewed as inadequate supervision or as poor judgment. It would be neglect on the part of the supervisor if it is a pattern.

It would also be neglect if there is a major failure to provide a person with a needed service or a safe environment. For example, if a volunteer knows that an individual has soiled clothing and puts him or her on a bus without changing it; this would be a case of neglect.

5. SECLUSION:

Seclusion is the placing of a child alone in a locked room from which he or she cannot leave at will. Seclusion is a form of abuse and will not be tolerated at Peercorps.

6. UNAUTHORIZED OR INAPPROPRIATE USE OF RESTRAINT:

The use of a mechanical restraining device or medication to restrain a person, even in an emergency without the written, prior authorization of a physician is considered to be abuse. Passive mechanical restraints, such as helmets and seatbelts can be used to protect children in activities where head injury is a possible outcome or in vehicle transport. Such devices must be examined for integrity and functionality prior to use.

7. USE OF AVERSIVE CONDITIONING:

Aversive conditioning is any use of unpleasant or uncomfortable procedures when trying to change behaviors of a child. Such procedures are considered abuse and are not tolerated at Peercorps.

8. TIME-OUT:

The placement of a person alone in a room or area from which his or her normal ability to leave is prevented by someone's direct and continuous physical action or verbal/non-verbal order is considered time-out and is prohibited in all Peercorps programs.

8a. QUIET TIME:

Quiet time should not be confused with time-out. Quiet time is a procedure in which a program participant is accompanied by a staff member away from an activity for a brief period of time to help the individual regain his or her composure. The objective of removing the individual from the on-going activity is to offer a changed environment in which the individual may calm down. The use of quiet time is not considered to be an incident.

9. VIOLATION OF A PERSON'S HUMAN RIGHTS

Any action or inaction that deprives a person of the ability to exercise his or her human rights, as expressed as the "basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled" and defined under Article 1 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948³. Examples are discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, color, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, geographical or national origin, or

³ United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu6/2/fs2.htm>

age.

10. MISTREATMENT

Mistreatment is a deliberate decision to do anything to a person which goes against programming plans and is generally not considered acceptable treatment practice. An example of mistreatment would be withholding food to modify behavior or as a consequence of behavior, this is never tolerated and is considered as a form of abuse.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF ABUSE

Abuse is never acceptable. If you abuse an individual you will be subject to disciplinary action which may include removal from your post, expulsion from a volunteer program and possible legal action under Tanzanian law. There is no excuse for abuse. Even if a child hits you, you may never hit him or her back. You will be instructed on appropriate ways of handling such a situation so that you may gain control and not be hurt.

IV. AVOIDING ABUSE

It is true that there will be times when you may feel frustrated or even angry with a child under your supervision. You must learn to deal appropriately with the frustration or anger. You may never take it out on the individual. You may talk to your supervisor or a behavioral specialist who can help you understand and deal with your feelings. You may ask another staff member to cover for you while you take a break until the feelings of frustration or anger go away.

You need to learn the warning signs for yourself and do whatever you need to do to avoid expressing anger toward children or others. Abuse includes yelling at them or calling them names, handling them in a rough manner, making fun of them, and putting them down. If you find that you often feel frustrated or angry at the people with whom you work this may not be the right job for you. It is better to quit your duties and/or ask for a reassignment than to take the chance that you may abuse an individual and be removed or turned over to the police.

V. STOPPING ABUSE

If you observe someone abusing a child or other program participant in any manner, you must intervene immediately to stop the abuse and comfort the person. You should then follow the reporting guidelines outlined below.

VI. REPORTING ABUSE

If you see another volunteer abuse a child you are required to report the abuse to your supervisor and write an incident report. If a child tells you that someone abused another individual you are also required to report it. It is the job of a supervisor to investigate if the report is true.

All staff and volunteers are mandated reporters of abuse. Any allegation of abuse or neglect is a serious reportable incident and must be investigated as soon as possible. It doesn't matter whether the other volunteer is your friend, your relative or supervisor, you must report it. If you do not, you will be considered an accessory in the act. You are also required to participate in an investigation of an abuse charge. You must answer all questions honestly and completely. If you do not do this you may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from your volunteer post and being reported to the police.

Please sign, detach and return this page to the appropriate contact person.

PEERCORPS TRUST FUND

Policy on Abuse, Maltreatment and Neglect

I have read and understand the above policies and will adhere to them at all times during my involvement in any program, activity, internship or the like organized, sponsored by or in the presence of the Peercorps Trust Fund, the Peercorps Network and its representatives.

Printed name:

Signature:

Date:
