

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

M O L D O V A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



January 2007



# A WELCOME LETTER

Greetings from Moldova, and congratulations on your invitation to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Your decision sets in motion what will be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of your life. The Peace Corps/Moldova staff and Volunteers look forward to meeting and working with you over the next two years.

Your exposure to the culture will start quickly. Upon arrival in Chisinau, staff will take you to your training site, where you will live with a Moldovan host family for the first 10 weeks of your stay. You will find the people friendly and gracious and interested in learning more about Americans and the United States. Our program has been active here since 1993 and has developed a solid reputation with local officials and citizens, and this history means that Volunteers are warmly welcomed into their communities. Plunging right into Moldovan life and adapting to the food, smells, sounds, language, and routines of a new culture will be both surprising and exhilarating.

Our staff will provide the best support they can to make your experience productive. In addition to organizing the pre-service training, they match the needs of Moldova with the Peace Corps' mission and capabilities, carefully screen and select work sites and host families, and support Volunteers during times of adversity and frustration. Peace Corps/Moldova also provides excellent in-country health services, coordinates a myriad of administrative and financial details for Volunteers, and serves as the liaison between local government officials and Peace Corps headquarters.

Of course, Volunteers themselves are the key to the success of any program. Your success, and the experiences you take

home at the end of service, will depend greatly on the attitude you bring, your level of commitment, and the intensity of your spirit of collaboration with Moldovan colleagues, fellow Volunteers, and the Peace Corps staff.

Safety is very important to us all. Moldova has a relatively low crime rate, but life as an American in an impoverished village does present some security challenges. Our staff will work with you on ways to be proactive on safety and health issues, and the record to date has been very good. Still, safety begins with each of us as individuals, and one of the most challenging factors for Volunteers is the use of alcohol. Moldova is a major wine-making region, and alcohol is prevalent throughout the culture. Volunteers need to be capable of controlling their intake in an environment where they are being urged to drink more and more. As anywhere, staying safe here starts with placing ourselves in safe situations.

Throughout your service, you will learn a great deal about Moldova and about yourself, so be prepared for one of the most exciting experiences of your life. Bring your optimism, patience, a willingness to learn and to be challenged, and enthusiasm for new experiences. And be sure to pack a sense of humor. It doesn't impact that precious luggage limit, but it is one of the most valuable things you can bring with you.

*Pe curind and Do svidania ! (See you soon!)*

Jeff Kelley-Clarke  
Country Director

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# PEACE CORPS/MOLDOVA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## **History of the Peace Corps in Moldova**

In 1993, the government of Moldova invited Peace Corps Volunteers to come to Moldova. The Peace Corps' first assignment was to help expand the English-teaching capacity of Moldovan educators. Government representatives believed that well-developed English language skills would help Moldovans participate in the international community and global economy by helping them gain access to a wealth of information, resources, and markets. Current English education Volunteers also incorporate environmental issues into the curriculum.

Recently, Peace Corps/Moldova has added projects in organizational development, agriculture and agrobusiness, and health education to assist the Moldovan government in addressing the country's economic and social development needs. Currently, Peace Corps Volunteers are working in about 100 towns and villages throughout the country. Since the program's inception, more than 650 Volunteers have served in Moldova.

## **History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in Moldova**

Peace Corps/Moldova works in four major project areas: teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), health education, organizational development, and agriculture and agrobusiness. Project plans are jointly developed by Peace Corps staff, Volunteers, and Moldovan partners.

Peace Corps Volunteers assigned to the TEFL program work at three levels: with students, teachers, and the institution. They work as full-time, regular classroom teachers of English and teach in compliance with the requirements of the Moldovan National English Teaching Curriculum. Working both inside and outside of the classroom, Volunteers help students to improve their English language, critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills and to develop greater environmental awareness. They also broaden students' awareness of issues affecting their local communities, Moldova, and the rest of the world. Working directly with their teaching colleagues, Volunteers implement training workshops that enhance the ability of teachers to include content-based instruction in their classrooms. At the institutional level, Volunteers work with their schools and communities to improve the quality and the quantity of resource materials available for teaching and learning the English language.

During the Soviet era, the Republic of Moldova's healthcare system focused on curative and clinical care provided by the state as opposed to health promotion and disease prevention. In 1995, health education was introduced as an optional course in the Moldovan school system. Education in basic life skills forms the framework for all health education conducted by the Peace Corps in Moldova. Volunteers are assigned jointly to secondary schools and local medical units or health-related nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Volunteer accomplishments have included assisting teachers in developing long-term plans and lesson plans for health education classes and youth clubs, helping community health staff develop and conduct health education activities for adults, developing materials for health education activities, and facilitating health campaigns and community health projects. Additionally, Volunteers have helped develop

youth-oriented health centers and health education resource centers. They have also worked to develop and distribute educational materials in Romanian (the country's official language) on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs), breast cancer prevention, and the dangers of the substance abuse.

The community and organizational development project assigns Volunteers to work with local NGOs and municipal offices. These organizations are often seeking greater institutional capacity while struggling with the difficulties of poor internal financing, limited community outreach abilities, and overworked and overextended members of the organization. Volunteers have worked alongside their Moldovan partners in the promotion of small enterprise development, the enhancement of women's and children's rights, minority rights issues, youth development, and senior citizen care.

Volunteers in the agriculture and agribusiness development project collaborate with local organizations which provide services in the area of information dissemination, consulting, training, and extension in agriculture, micro-credit institutions and saving and credit associations, and community economic development organizations. All partner organizations are locally registered NGOs working to become self-sufficient and self-sustainable. Volunteers are involved in a range of activities targeting organizational development (needs assessments, training skills, extension methodology, organizational management, customer services, transparency, and representation) and directly assist small businesses and private farmer clients of these organizations through strengthening production knowledge, training in financial management and business planning, and assisting in development of marketing skills and ideas. In addition to

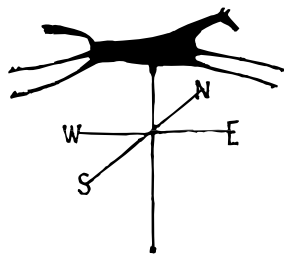
their primary tasks, Volunteers engage in a wide variety of secondary projects. Volunteers have been involved in English clubs, development of a Moldovan branch of the Special Olympics, the promotion of Little League baseball, organizing self-esteem and leadership weekends, development of summer camps for youth with a focus on gender and development, sports, life skills, and business education, working with Junior Achievement programs, training peer education groups, conducting health education activities in kindergartens and promoting non-violence in the family. They have also helped their assigned communities obtain small grants for the renovation of school gymnasiums, school kitchens, dormitories at orphanages, the establishment of libraries and resource centers, the construction of hothouses for winter farming, and the provision of heating for rural schools.

The Peace Corps is committed to working alongside its Moldovan partners in meeting the country's economic and social development challenges. Peace Corps/Moldova will continue its emphasis on placing Volunteers in small towns and rural villages, where the need is greater than in Chisinau and other large cities.

## NOTES



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: MOLDOVA AT A GLANCE



## History

Moldova is uniquely located at the frontier of Eastern and Western cultures. This has contributed to a long and difficult struggle by the indigenous Moldovan people to maintain their cultural and political sovereignty. During the Middle Ages (as in modern times) Moldova, like other principalities in the region, engaged in efforts toward the maintenance and recognition of its independence, the defense of its territory, and the preservation of its borders.

One of the country's most glorious eras occurred during the reign of Stefan cel Mare (Steven the Great) between 1457 and 1504. During these years, Moldovans won impressive victories over the Turks, Tartars, Hungarians, Poles, and other invaders. This temporary success, however, was no guarantee of the nation's future stability. Under the permanent threat of invasion, the principalities of this region unified as a means to resist aggression. The first unification—of Transylvania, Moldova, and Muntenia—took place during the rule of Mihai Viteazul (1593 to 1601). Although short-lived, this event served as a precedent for the union of the principalities of Tara Romaneasca and Moldova to form a new country, Romania, in 1859.

Following the Crimean War, political stability in the area was fleeting. In 1856, Russia lost the southern region of Basarabia to Moldova, only to gain it back from Romania in 1878 at the Congress of Berlin. With the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1918, this area, made up of part of the present territory of Moldova and part of Ukraine, declared its

independence and reunited with Romania. The newly formed Union of Soviet Socialist Republics refused to recognize this reunification, however, and in 1924 created the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In June 1940, after Hitler and Stalin signed the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of nonaggression, the Soviet Union annexed additional territory to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). In the early 1940s, as World War II raged in Europe, Romania again claimed the territory of the MSSR. As the war came to a conclusion, the Soviet Union annexed the region again for a final time.

Subsequently, in an attempt to create a uniform culture among the Soviet republics, the leadership of the Soviet Union began a period of intense Russification, replacing Moldovans' traditional Latin alphabet with the Cyrillic alphabet and Romanian with Russian as the official language.

The tone of Soviet leadership changed in 1986 with the introduction of a policy of glasnost (openness) by President Mikhail Gorbachev. This new policy permitted the pursuit of traditional culture by the Moldovan population and leadership and set the stage for the republic's independence. On August 27, 1991, Moldova declared its independence, an event that is now celebrated every year on that date. To restore the cultural heritage of the majority of its citizens, the Moldovan government reestablished Romanian, using the Latin alphabet, as the national language.

## **Government**

In the early 1990s, the government was distracted and weakened by a proclamation of secession by ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians in the Dniester region (primarily on the left or Eastern bank of the Nistru River) and Gagauzis



in the southeast. The Moldovan government announced the declarations invalid and armed conflict ensued in the Transnistria area. The fighting stopped in 1992, but a final settlement for Transnistria is still under negotiation, with both sides officially committed to a peaceful resolution. The conflict with Gagauzia has been resolved through elections and the establishment of the semiautonomous region of Gagauzia.

The first multiparty presidential elections were held in the fall of 1996 and were generally regarded as fair. The winner, Petru Lucinschi, assumed office in January 1997. Since July 2000, the president has been elected by Parliament for a four-year term under a parliamentary system modeled on Italy's. The parliamentary elections held in February 2001 were won by the Communists with 71 seats. In April 2001, Vladimir Voronin, head of the Communist Party, was elected as president; in April 2005, following a second Communist Party victory in Parliamentary elections, he was re-elected for a second term. The Communists have declared that there will be no change in the progress of reforms and that they will continue the privatization of state assets. The political orientation of the Communist Party in Moldova is akin to that of the Social Democrats in Western Europe.

## **Economy**

With fertile soils and bountiful sunshine, the Republic of Moldova is primarily an agrarian country. Because of its plentiful natural resources, Soviet Moldova was assigned the role of supplier of foodstuffs for the rest of the Soviet Union. More than half of its population still lives in rural areas, and approximately 40 percent of the workforce is engaged in horticulture, viticulture, or animal husbandry. The agricultural

sector accounts for about 15 percent of the gross domestic product. If agribusiness is included, the degree of dependence on agriculture becomes even greater, as food processing contributes some 50 percent to industrial production. Jointly, these sectors constitute a third of the GDP and more than half of all merchandise exports.

Other industries, while never as significant as agribusiness, tend to be concentrated in Transnistria and therefore suffered disproportionately during the civil war in 1992. This is particularly true for heavy industries such as machinery. Consequently, the proportion of employment and output accounted for by industry is low, and most industrial companies still have underutilized capacities.

Disparities remain between the economic development of urban and rural areas. Currently, some 14 percent of Moldova's economy is agriculturally based and 17 percent is based on manufacturing industries, half of which are related to agriculture. Six to 8 percent is based on construction, 11 percent on trade, and 12 percent on transportation and communication; the remainder is defined as "other." After the recession of the 1990s, which cut GDP to almost a third of its pre-independence level, the Moldovan economy has been experiencing years of steady growth. However, that growth has been driven by the stability of the Russian market (still Moldova's main trade partner); high consumption fueled by remittances from Moldovans working abroad; and low inflation. In 2006, growth has fallen as a result of Russian bans on imports of Moldovan wine and agricultural products combined with higher tariffs on natural gas imports- Moldova is totally dependent on Russia for gas and primarily on Ukraine for electricity.

Moldova's GDP per capita remains one of the lowest in Europe at USD 812 (2005).

## **People and Culture**

Despite Moldova's small size, its population is quite diverse. The majority of the population (64.5 percent) consists of Moldovans or people of Romanian descent. Other significant ethnic groups include Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauzis, Bulgarians, and Jews. Small numbers of Belorussians, Germans, Poles, Turks, and Romany also live in Moldova.

The official language of Moldova, as specified by the Constitution, is Moldovan (Romanian,) written in the Latin alphabet. Although Russian is no longer the official language, many Moldovans, especially in urban areas, are more familiar with Russian. Several years ago, the issue of declaring Russian as a second official language was the subject of great national debate and political demonstrations. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Moldova, you will need to exercise a large degree of diplomacy when dealing with the language issue. Although certain regions or communities are predominantly Romanian or Russian-speaking, there is considerable intermingling of the two, which can present linguistic challenges. You will also meet people who understand both languages but do not want to speak one or the other for personal or political reasons. English is spoken by increasing numbers of younger people, but fluency is still rare in most areas, and proficiency in Romanian or Russian is vital for Volunteers to be effective.

Moldovans are open, warm, friendly, and generous people and are renowned for their hospitality. However, living and working in a culture that is not your own can be frustrating and uncomfortable at times. As a guest in Moldova, you will be expected to respect the country's culture and traditions and make any necessary adaptations to fit in. If you are willing to be open to all the good things that Moldova has to offer and to tolerate the problems of a country undergoing difficult

economic and political changes, you will be rewarded with one of the greatest experiences of your life.

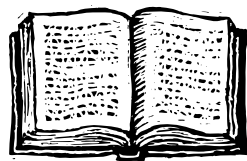
## **Environment**

Strategically located at the crossroads of central, southeastern, and Eastern Europe, the Republic of Moldova is the second smallest of the Newly Independent States. Situated along the Danube, Prut, and Nistru rivers, Moldova occupies 13,000 square miles and has a population of approximately 4.4 million. The country borders Romania in the west and Ukraine in the east and south. Its central region, the Basarabian Plateau, consists of forested highlands (up to 1,300 feet in elevation) and is known as the Codru. Most Volunteers easily adjust to Moldova's geographic environment.

## NOTES



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Moldova and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way. Former (or serving) Volunteers may post information about Peace Corps/Moldova policies that may be either outdated or simply wrong. If you want accurate information about post policies and practices, please contact Peace Corps headquarters.

## **General Information About Moldova**

### **[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)**

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Chisinau to how to convert from the dollar to the leu. Just click on Moldova and go from there.

### **[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)**

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

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

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Moldova and learn more about its social and political history.

**[www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm](http://www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm)**

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

## **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**[www.rpcv.com](http://www.rpcv.com)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the "friends of" groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities. There is also a Moldova RPCV site at: <http://moldrpcv.tripod.com/>.



**<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>**

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

**[www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

**Online Articles/Current News Sites About Moldova**

**<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/mdtoc.html>**

A Library of Congress Federal Research Division study of Moldova

**[www.news.ournet.md](http://www.news.ournet.md)**

A Moldovan Web portal

**[www.ngo.md/index\\_eng.html](http://www.ngo.md/index_eng.html)**

A listing of nongovernmental organizations in Moldova

**[www.moldova.md](http://www.moldova.md)**

The official website of Moldova (in Moldovan)

**International Development Sites**

**[www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)**

Site of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**[www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/cp2000/eni/moldova.html](http://www.info.usaid.gov/pubs/cp2000/eni/moldova.html)**

A Web page with information on the U.S. Agency for International Development's work in Moldova

## Recommended Books

1. Kaplan, Robert D. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. NY: Picador: distributed by Holtzbrinck Publishers, 2005.
2. King, Charles. *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 2000.
3. Kokker, Steve. *Lonely Planet Romania and Moldova*. Footscray, Victoria; London: Lonely Planet Publications, 2004.
4. Mitrasca, Marcel. *Moldova: A Romanian Province Under Russian Rule : Diplomatic History from the Archives of the Great Powers*. New York: Algora Publishing, 2002.
5. Smith, Hedrick. *The New Russians* (revised edition). New York: Random House, 1991. (Note: this book does not refer specifically to Moldova, but it does provide a good framework for examining issues in the former Soviet Union.)
6. Townson, Annabelle. *We Wait for You...Unheard Voices from Post-Communist Romania*. Rowman and Littlefield Press, Hamilton Books, New York, 2004
7. Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. New York, Crown, 2004.

## Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. Sarge: *The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

### **Books on the Volunteer Experience**

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint)



# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



## **Communications**

### ***Mail***

Mail service in Moldova is not completely reliable., Letters to and from Moldova typically arrive in two to three weeks, but there is a high rate of letters and flat mail never reaching Volunteers. Advise family friends not to send anything of value via flat mail. Packages generally arrive safely, although they are often opened at Customs and some contents are occasionally lost in transport. During pre-service training, letters should be sent to you at the following address:

“Your Name,” PCT  
Corpul Pacii  
Str. Grigore Ureche 12  
2001 Chisinau  
Republica Moldova

Packages sent to Moldova by airmail arrive as quickly as letters but can be quite expensive, costing as much as \$7 per pound. During pre-service training, packages can be sent to the same address as letters. Once you move to your site, you can make arrangements to receive mail and packages there, or continue to receive mail at the Peace Corps office. Deliveries to the Peace Corps address tend to be more reliable.

### ***Telephones***

Communication by telephone, both domestically and internationally, is more complicated in Moldova than in the United States but is still manageable. There are a number of ways to call the United States, but the cost can be

high. American calling cards will not work in Moldova, but international phone cards can be purchased that will give you enough time to give your family your phone number and instructions on when to call you back. Normal calls to the U.S. can cost about 50 cents per minute; phone cards can be purchased that will cost about 15 cents to 20 cents per minute; phone calls via computers (Skype, etc.) can cost about 2 cents per minute or free for PC to PC (other than the cost of connecting to the Internet),

Your home will have a phone, and you will find that many people (Moldovans, Volunteers, and others) have cellphones... International lines are clearest early in the mornings and on weekends. Moldovan time is seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

Cellphones are not purchased for Volunteers by the Peace Corps. In most cases a cellphone purchased in the U.S. will not work in Moldova.

### ***Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access***

The computerization of Moldova is progressing rapidly, so e-mail is the common way to stay in contact with friends and family in the United States. If you have a laptop computer, you should consider bringing it, although Internet service in villages is usually limited to dial-up service, which costs about 50 cents (U.S.) per hour. Volunteers can access e-mail at the Peace Corps office, and the number of cybercafés around the country is growing.

Note that the Peace Corps does not provide any reimbursement for lost or stolen computer equipment and cannot provide technical support or assistance with maintenance. Insurance against theft is a good idea.

## **Housing and Site Location**

You will live with one host family during pre-service training and with another family for the first six months at your site. During training, the family is selected for you. However, at your site, several families will be identified for you to select from. You will have your own room but are likely to share bath and toilet facilities. There is seldom indoor plumbing in more rural areas, so you may not have running water. After your first six months at your site, you will have the option of finding other housing if it is available, meets the Peace Corps' safety requirements, and is within the Peace Corps' housing allowance. Many Volunteers choose to live with a family throughout their two years of service and find the experience a rewarding one. Peace Corps/Moldova will inform you of the trade-offs involved in housing decisions, including matters of safety and security, but the ultimate responsibility for finding housing after your first six months of service will be yours.

Life in Chisinau, the capital, varies considerably from life in villages, where the pace is slower, the atmosphere charmingly rustic, and the people generally more polite. But along with the great appeal of a gentler pace, villages in Moldova offer a somewhat arduous lifestyle. The primary forms of entertainment are socializing with friends and watching television. People live the life of a farm family even if they work in a profession such as teaching. Each household usually has a very large vegetable garden and all kinds of farm animals to care for. There is generally no running water, outhouses are the most common toilet facilities, and bathing is usually done once a week in a bathhouse or using buckets of water in a tub. Despite this lack of amenities, however, life in a village will be rich in traditional Moldovan customs and friendships with Moldovans.

Towns or regional centers may lack the compelling appeal of rural Moldova, but the pace is somewhat faster. There are more local resources and more forms of entertainment, and there is usually running water. Running water does not necessarily mean an indoor toilet, however, as the first priorities are the kitchen and the garden.

Streets and sidewalks are muddy for a large part of the year in towns and villages alike. Heating in winter can be problematic, as many municipalities cannot afford to turn on the heat until long after the weather has turned cold, and even then heating may be minimal or nonexistent for periods of time. For this reason, host families are required to have independent heating sources. Most families in villages rely on ceramic stoves built into the walls, known as sobas, which burn wood, coal, or corncobs. In larger towns or cities, houses may have their own gas boiler.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

After pre-service training, you will receive a monthly living allowance in local currency that will allow you to maintain your health and safety while living at a standard comparable to your Moldovan counterparts.

Moldova has a cash economy, and Moldovan banks and currency exchange offices are stringent about the condition of the U.S. banknotes they will accept because of concerns about counterfeit currency. Make sure that any U.S. currency you bring is not worn, torn, or written on and that the bills are fairly new ones. A few banks accept traveler's checks; others allow cash withdrawals via credit card or ATM card. ATM crimes are common, but there are increasing numbers of the machines in both Chisinau and regional centers. Volunteers are advised to be cautious about which machines they use. We discourage you from having cash sent to you from home,



as sending money through international mail is risky. In an emergency, you can have money sent through Western Union or international bank transfer. Most businesses, including restaurants and hotels, do not accept traveler's checks or credit cards. Those that do most commonly accept Visa.

It is also recommended that you keep a U.S.bank account with ATM capabilities to access money from home. It will be the easiest way to deposit your readjustment allowance when you complete your Volunteer service (versus having a check mailed to your home of record).

It is important to recognize that your Moldovan co-workers and friends will not have large sums of money or credit cards and that conspicuous displays of wealth on your part could drive a wedge between you and them. The Peace Corps strongly discourages you from living beyond your monthly allowance.

## **Food and Diet**

Moldovans love to cook, and they love their guests to eat a lot. Many traditional Moldovan dishes have roots in the Slavic and Romanian cultures. Pork is the meat of choice, followed by chicken and turkey. Beef, although becoming more popular, may not be of the quality you are used to. The pork, however, tends to be tender and tasty.

The national dish of Moldova is *mamaliga*, which is made from cornmeal and tastes somewhat like polenta. It is served with soft cheese, meat, eggs, butter, or fish. Another interesting dish is *achituri*, which consists of chicken pieces in a brothlike jelly made of bone marrow and is usually served cold. *Coltsunashi*, which is similar to ravioli, is usually filled with potato, cheese, cabbage, and meat (or sometimes

cherries) and served with butter or sour cream. *Friptura* is a beef or pork stew, sometimes baked with dough on top and usually served with vegetables. Similar to Greek dolmades, *sarmale* consists of grape leaves, green peppers, or cabbage stuffed with rice, meat, and vegetables. Moldovan barbecue is called *frigarui* or *shashlik*. Borsh is made with cabbage and other vegetables, and *chiorba* is made with meat, beans, and pasta. *Zeama* is a tasty chicken soup. *Placinta*, a baked or fried pastry, is filled with potato, cheese, cabbage, or fruit. Foods that should taste more familiar include *brinza* (a soft cow or sheep cheese), *cashcaval* (a hard, mild cheese), *smintina* (similar to sour cream), pilaf (rice with meat and vegetables), *clatite* (similar to crêpes), and *tocanista* (cooked vegetables).

Vegetarians may find it challenging to maintain their usual diet. It may also be difficult to explain why you are a vegetarian in a meat-and-potatoes culture. Although the concept of vegetarianism will not be entirely new to most Moldovans, you should expect some surprise and confusion. You will have to be clear about what you can and cannot eat (e.g., most soups have meat-based broths). You will also have to be sensitive and gracious when Moldovans try to prepare special food for you. If you offer to cook your own food, Moldovans will be curious to see how someone can actually prepare a dish with no meat. Yet many Moldovan dishes can easily be made without meat, so there is no reason why you cannot maintain a healthy vegetarian diet in Moldova. Vegans will have a more difficult time maintaining their diet and should consult the health unit in Moldova about their situation.

## **Transportation**

Operation of motor vehicles of any kind (i.e., cars, motor scooters, and motorcycles) is prohibited for Peace Corps Volunteers. Violation of this policy will result in termination

of your service. Although you may ride a bicycle, Peace Corps policy mandates the use of a bicycle helmet, which the Peace Corps provides, at all times.

You will rely mostly on public transportation in Moldova. All the towns and villages in which Volunteers are placed have regularly scheduled bus or “maxi-taxi” service to Chisinau and other towns. In the case of an emergency, Peace Corps staff can get to any site within four hours by car.

## **Geography and Climate**

The landscape of Moldova consists of hilly plains with an average altitude of about 150 meters (495 feet) above sea level, which flatten gradually toward the southwest. Old forests called *codrii* cover the central part of the country. Moldova is in an earthquake zone connected to the Carpathian Mountains. The last major earthquake occurred in 1989.

Moldova’s two major rivers are the Nistru and the Prut, and a short span of the Danube crosses the extreme southern part of the republic. There are more than 3,000 small rivers or tributaries, of which only seven are longer than 50 miles. Moldova has more than 50 natural lakes and is rich in mineral-water springs.

The country has a temperate climate with four definite seasons; some Volunteers liken it to Minnesota. Summers are warm and humid, with an average high temperature in July of 80 degrees Fahrenheit; hot days in the 90s are not unusual. Winters are cold. Temperatures can remain below zero degrees Fahrenheit for weeks, and although snowfall is not extreme, it can remain on the ground for a month or more. Some offices and classrooms are poorly heated during the winter, requiring Volunteers to dress warmly for work. Spring and autumn are usually beautiful with mild temperatures.

## **Social Activities**

Chisinau, the capital, offers a wide variety of cultural and entertainment possibilities, such as opera, ballet, theater, circuses, and nightclubs (at which Moldovans love to dance). The options decrease, however, in proportion to the population of the community. In towns, there are cinemas, community centers, and universities at which plays, concerts, and other cultural events are occasionally presented. In villages, people socialize with relatives and friends, getting together in someone's home for fun and relaxation.

There are also a growing number of cafes and bars in Moldova, which offer alcoholic drinks ranging from vodka to champagne, and Coca-Cola, Sprite, Fanta, cigarettes, and snack foods like pizza.

It is extremely important to develop groups for social interaction, whether you live in a town or a village. Generally speaking, you should not expect to socialize with many single people of your own age. Moldovans tend to marry young and to stay married, so many young adults are likely to be married and have small children. Any single friends will probably be students.

## **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

One of the challenges of being a Peace Corps Volunteer is fitting into the local culture while maintaining your own cultural identity and acting as a professional all at the same time. It is not an easy situation to resolve, and we can only provide you with guidelines. As a member or representative of a school faculty, business development center, nongovernmental organization, farmers' association, or health center, you will be expected to display sensitivity and respect toward your supervisor and colleagues in order to develop mutually beneficial working relationships.

As a rule, Moldovans give a lot of attention to the way they dress. Dressing professionally and neatly is regarded as a sign of respect toward others and is important for gaining credibility with Moldovans. This cannot be overestimated. In general terms, Americans tend to dress casually and place more emphasis on what a person knows and what a person can do rather than on outward appearances. It can be difficult for Americans to understand the cultural significance of dressing appropriately and dressing well. Nonetheless, it is an expectation for Volunteers in Moldova to dress professionally when at the workplace. The more quickly you can adapt to this norm, the more easily you will integrate into your living and working communities in Moldova. Please plan the wardrobe you will bring with you accordingly. Obvious and multiple facial piercings are not acceptable for Volunteers serving in Moldova and highly visible tattoos may also need to be covered. Please contact the country desk if you have any questions.

Teachers in Moldova tend to dress more formally than teachers do in the United States. Business casual is the appropriate attire for men, whether working for a nongovernmental organization or a school. Most women may wear professional-looking dresses or skirts and tops, but nice slacks are also acceptable in most places.

Another cultural issue that you will need to manage is the drinking of alcohol. This is an extremely delicate issue in Moldova because you must strike a balance between being an active participant in Moldovan culture while appropriately representing Americans and the Peace Corps. Many Moldovans make their own wine, and they will want you to try it. Being very good hosts, they will make sure that your glass is always full and insist that you keep drinking. You will have to decide for yourself how much it is appropriate to

drink or learn to refuse politely but firmly if you do not want to drink at all. While cultural sensitivity and social graces are important, it is more important that you know your limits and not endanger your health or your safety, or those of others.

## **Personal Safety**

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although the vast majority of Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents.

The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in Moldova. These policies include limits on your travel within Moldova, when you can be out of the country, and the need to keep Peace Corps informed of your whereabouts. Such policies can be frustrating for Volunteers, but they are meant not only for your safety, but to ensure that your service is productive and rewarding. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

## **Rewards and Frustrations**

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Moldova is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Because of financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support they promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change long-held practices and traditions, including some stemming from the Soviet era.

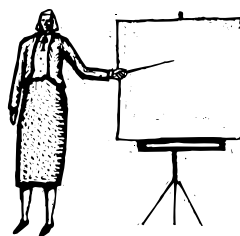
You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your counterparts with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from, or without receiving feedback on, your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To overcome these difficulties, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Moldovans are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the rewards of service are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Moldova feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer.





# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Pre-service training begins the day you arrive in Moldova, lasts for about 10 weeks, and ends when you are sworn in as a Volunteer. The days are full with plenty to accomplish, so training is nothing like summer camp.

Peace Corps/Moldova uses a community-based training approach. Trainees live in small villages with five or six other trainees from their project area. Language classes occur daily, and afternoons are usually devoted to self-directed activities and homework assignments. Once a week, trainees in each project area meet together at a cluster site for technical sessions. Also once a week, all trainees come to a central hub for administrative, medical, and other special sessions.

The structure of Moldova's pre-service training requires married couples to live apart in different villages during training. While this may seem like an obstacle for some, most married couples have actually found the arrangement to be beneficial because it allows them to focus on their own training needs and to develop a degree of independence they would otherwise not experience. Couples see each other at the central hub and are free to stay together with their respective host families on weekends and other times that work with the schedule of training activities.

Assessment criteria, which you will be informed of early in pre-service training, will help measure your progress toward acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary to live and work effectively in Moldova. Certain competencies are set for each of the training components (language, health and safety, cross-cultural, and technical). You will have

periodic interviews with staff during training to discuss your progress in gaining these competencies and, if necessary, develop a plan of action for improvement. Failure to gain the competencies may prevent you from becoming a Volunteer.

The members of the training staff are Moldovan, and most of them have worked with the Peace Corps for several years. They are a valuable resource for getting to know the Moldovan culture and language, and you can and should rely on them for advice and support.

### ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in Moldova by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, Moldovan experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the general economic and political environment in Moldova and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Moldovan agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

### ***Language Training***

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance,

they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Experienced Moldovan language instructors teach formal language classes four or five days a week in small groups of four to six people. Most trainees will study Romanian as their primary language, but a few will study Russian.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

### ***Cross-Cultural Training***

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a Moldovan host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families participate in an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Moldova. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures. You will also have opportunities to take field trips to historic sites and to learn traditional songs and dances.

### ***Health Training***

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Moldova. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other STIs are also covered.

### ***Safety Training***

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces your risks at home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

### **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides Volunteers with continual opportunities to strengthen their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there are several types of training events. These include:

- *In-Service Trainings (ISTs)*: Provide an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months. Throughout the first year of service you will be provided with a

number of in-service trainings including Technical ISTs, Language ISTs, and Language Weekends. The in-service trainings vary in length from 1.5 days to 4 days.

- *All Volunteer Conference*: An annual conference organized with the participation of Volunteers from all sectors and including health and safety sessions as well as cross-sectoral technical training and activities.
- *Close-of-Service Conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.



# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN MOLDOVA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in Moldova maintains a clinic with two full-time medical officers, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and consultations with specialists, are also available in Moldova and will be arranged by the medical officer if they become necessary. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## **Health Issues in Moldova**

Major health problems among Volunteers in Moldova are rare and are usually the result of a Volunteer's not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems are ones that also exist in the United States, that is, colds, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, constipation, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, STIs, adjustment disorders, emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Moldova because certain environmental factors here raise the risk of or exacerbate the severity of certain illnesses and injuries.

Under local law, foreign residents are required to have proof of a negative HIV/AIDS test to receive a residency permit. The law requires that the test be done in Moldova; any HIV

test done in the States cannot be used. The first or second day after your arrival in Moldova, the Peace Corps medical officers will draw blood in collaboration with the local health department and send the blood for analysis anonymously. Copies of the negative results will be sent to the governmental agency responsible for issuing the residency permits.

## **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in Moldova, you will receive a medical handbook and a medical kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During training, you will have access to some medicines and basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring at least a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it will take several months for shipments to arrive.

As part of your medical care, you will have a physical exam at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Moldova will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Moldova, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.



## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The adage “An ounce of prevention...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in Moldova during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STIs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STIs. You will receive more information from the medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

## **Women's Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions that require medical attention but also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps' medical and programmatic standards for continued service during pregnancy can be met.

A wide variety of feminine hygiene products are readily available in Moldova, and female Volunteers receive an increment in their living allowance to cover the cost of purchasing them.

## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a medical kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the Peace Corps medical office.

### ***Medical Kit Contents***

- Ace bandages
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Adhesive tape
- American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*
- Antacid tablets
- Antibiotic ointment
- Antifungal cream (Clotrimazole)
- Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
- Band-Aids
- Butterfly closures
- Condoms

Cough lozenges  
Dental floss  
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)  
Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil)  
Insect repellent  
Water purification tablets  
Lip balm  
Oral rehydration tablets  
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Scissors  
Sore throat lozenges  
Sterile gauze pads  
Sun Screen (SPF15)  
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)  
Tweezers

### **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in Moldova.

Bring at least a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, it will order refills of your prescription medications after you arrive in-country and supply them throughout your service.

While awaiting the shipment of your ordered medications—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. The Peace Corps discourages you from using contact lenses during your service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply

or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless an ophthalmologist has recommended their use for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 Peace Corps Volunteer Survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections

on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

### **Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk**

*There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.*

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2004, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.

- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

## **Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk**

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors

- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

## **Support from Staff**

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer’s work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments,

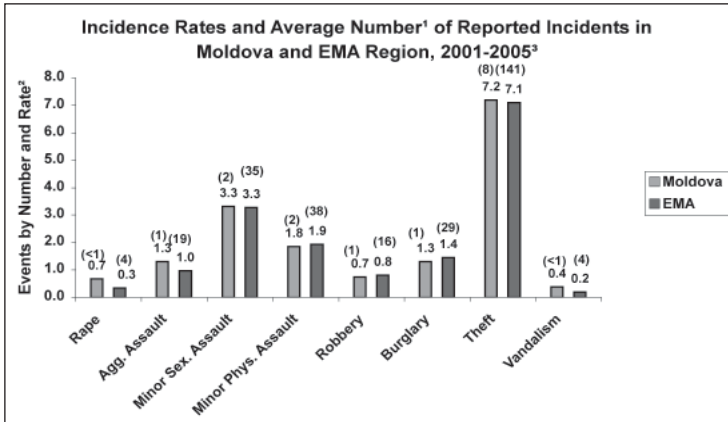


as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in Moldova as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 2001–2005. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



<sup>1</sup>The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2001–2005.

<sup>2</sup>Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup>Data collection for Moldova began as of 2001

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS); the information is accurate as of 12/13/06.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to

successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

### **What if you become a victim of a violent crime?**

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at [violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov](mailto:violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov).

## **Security Issues in Moldova**

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with anywhere in the world, crime does exist in Moldova. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Markets and buses in large towns, for instance, are favorite work sites for pickpockets.

## **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely victim of crime. In coming to Moldova, do what you would do if you moved to a new city in the United States: Be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware. You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Moldova may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. In addition, keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch. Do not keep your money in the outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. And always walk with a companion at night.

Most security incidents involving Peace Corps Volunteers in Moldova involve alcohol. These incidents also tend to occur when Volunteers gather in Chisinau or other large towns late at night, when their awareness may be lowered as a result of alcohol consumption. It is important that Volunteers recognize the danger of being in places where people are consuming (often overconsuming) alcohol and where a group of Volunteers may receive unwanted attention.

## **Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in Moldova**

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: Information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for reporting and responding to safety and security incidents. Moldova's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Moldova office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

**Volunteer training** will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in Moldova. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection is based in part on

any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; housing options and living arrangements; and other Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Moldova's *detailed* **emergency action plan**, which is implemented in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in Moldova will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the Peace Corps medical officer. The Peace Corps has established protocols for addressing safety and security incidents in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.





# DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling its mandate to share the face of America with host countries, the Peace Corps is making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In Moldova, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Moldova.

Outside of Moldova's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misconception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Moldova are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Moldova, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

### **Overview of Diversity in Moldova**

The Peace Corps staff in Moldova recognizes the adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

### **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

The comments below are intended to stimulate thought and discussion. They come from a cross-section of Volunteers who have served in Moldova. The issues discussed may or may not be relevant to your own Volunteer experience; they are here simply to make all Volunteers aware of issues that various groups may have to deal with.

### ***Possible Issues for Female Volunteers***

Traditional or stereotyped gender roles are more prevalent in Moldova than they are in the United States. One estimate stated that Moldovan women do 300 percent more work in the home than men do. And it is common for a man to enter a room and shake every other man's hand while completely ignoring the women who are present. Although Americans are often bothered by such behavior, women do not have a subordinate role in Moldova. Historically, they have been a vital part of the workforce, taking on both managerial and supervisory positions. Moldovan women work as school administrators, business owners, doctors, local government officials, and members of Parliament.

Female Volunteers should not expect, however, to be able to continue all of their American practices in Moldova. Adapting to local mores and customs is a necessity for Peace Corps Volunteers wherever they are. Moldovan women generally lead more restricted lifestyles than American women do. For instance, Moldovan women do not go out alone at night, and jogging or walking alone for exercise is uncommon. Women in villages do not usually smoke in public, and all Moldovans tend to speak more quietly than Americans do in public places. While these activities are not forbidden for Volunteers, sometimes they have to make compromises and alter their behavior. Female Volunteers are advised to avoid eye contact with men who are strangers, especially on buses and in the street.

### **Volunteer Comment**

“As a female Volunteer, expect to be kissed on the hand a lot, as hand kissing is a traditional greeting here in Moldova. You should also be prepared to answer repeated questions regarding your marital status. In my work, I have

encountered situations where older men have considered me to have a diminished capacity for business or work because I am a woman. Despite this, I have managed to carry out many successful projects in my community and have enjoyed my time in Moldova.”

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color***

African-American Volunteers often express frustration and disappointment at being asked where they are from because when they answer “African American” or “black American,” some Moldovans react with surprise or disbelief. Although they may be the subject of constant stares and questions as well as occasional insults, most African-American Volunteers say they are well accepted in their communities after an initial settling-in period. There is a small population of students and businesspeople from Africa in Chisinau, and some African Americans are assigned to the U.S. Embassy.

Hispanic American Volunteers have found that some Moldovans stereotype them as similar to the characters they watch in the popular Latin American soap operas on TV. Because there is a small population of Romany (Gypsies) in Moldova, some Volunteers have been misidentified and have been the subjects of verbal harassment.

Asian-American Volunteers often find that they stand out more than Caucasians, as there are relatively few East Asians (i.e., Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asians) in Moldova. People often assume that such Volunteers are from China, and may be skeptical that they are Americans and speak English. While much of this extra attention is not intended to be negative, it can be tiresome. The situation soon goes away in your host village, but may recur when you visit other cities and towns. Several Asian-American Volunteers have been stopped by police to check identification papers much more frequently than their counterpart Caucasian Volunteers.

## **Volunteer Comments**

“As an African American, I found the responses to me annoying and frustrating the first few months, but I invented my own ways of survival and won my way into people’s warm hearts. I was quietly assertive, outgoing and determined to talk about diversity and my Afro-African American heritage. My experience in Chisinau was different than when I lived in the village during training, and having some diversity in Chisinau did make a difference. My advice is to be positive, educate the people and let them know that everyone deserves a chance no matter the color of their skin.”

“As a Native American serving in Moldova, I found it to be rather disheartening at first. Because I am darker in complexion than Moldovans, I was often called racial names, which bothered me greatly at first. I am also pierced in several visible places (eyebrow, lip, and ears) and am constantly being stared at and talked about. However, with a little education, for both myself and Moldovans, I found these behaviors to decrease over time. They can be tiresome and irritating, but in the end the benefits outweigh the temporary discomforts.”

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Respect comes with age in Moldova. Younger Volunteers may have to work harder than their older colleagues to be accepted as professionals. It is not uncommon for younger Volunteers to look to older Volunteers for advice and support. Some seniors find this a very enjoyable part of their Volunteer experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Overall, senior Volunteers are highly valued for the wealth of experience they bring to their communities and counterparts.

## **Volunteer Comments**

“At this time of your life, you have much to offer Moldovans, more in many ways than the younger Volunteers. You know business in depth, you know life in depth, and you can be a solid, steadying influence in the Peace Corps and in Moldova. Saying that this is the ‘Toughest Job You’ll Ever Love’ is not just a quaint, patriotic slogan; it’s true—perhaps even more so at our age. You no longer fear life, and you have good, practical, and tried ideas.”

“Do not worry about being older than many or most of the other Volunteers. From the first day, you will see that Peace Corps Volunteers are as wise, caring, hardworking, generous, tolerant, and fun to be with as we seniors believe we are. If you sometimes lead, sometimes follow, and are always willing to participate at some level, you will be effective and enriched. As an older Volunteer in Moldova (I’m 70), I know that while I may have added years to my life while being in the Peace Corps, I have truly added life to my years!”

### ***Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Volunteers***

Homosexuality is misunderstood and generally not accepted by most Moldovans, and discussing the issue of sexual orientation may be problematic. It is advisable to use discretion because you may experience difficulties if your community becomes aware of your sexual orientation, compromising your ability to be effective. The Peace Corps staff in Moldova can provide you with information on organizations in Moldova that are working on issues concerning sexual orientation. Additionally, there is a Volunteer gender work group of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and supportive straight Volunteers; its coordinator can provide you with information. You may also find helpful information on

serving in the Peace Corps as a gay or lesbian from a group of returned Volunteers affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association (for more information, go to [www.lgbrpcv.org](http://www.lgbrpcv.org); for country-specific information, go to [www.gay.md](http://www.gay.md)).

Gay and lesbian Volunteers can (and do) have a very productive service and a positive experience here in Moldova. However, there are some issues you will face in Moldova that may be quite different from what you were used to in the States. There is a small community of gay, lesbian, and bisexual Moldovans in Chisinau, which is becoming increasingly active and hosts social events, but there are few other social activities or meeting places. As a result, many gays and lesbians experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. This is especially true for those who choose closeted lives in communities outside of Chisinau. As a result, you will encounter bias and prejudice about gays and lesbians. You will need to be cautious about who you come out to amongst your Moldovan friends. However, you are encouraged to be out with Peace Corps staff and Volunteers to lessen the feeling of isolation. Peace Corps/Moldova is committed to ensuring an environment that is safe, secure, and accepting of all forms of diversity, and gays, lesbians and bisexuals should feel comfortable talking about whatever issues they are facing. You will find staff and your Volunteer peers to be very supportive.

### **Volunteer Comment**

“Moldova is no different from other Peace Corps countries in that homosexuality is feared, judged, and misunderstood. There is pressure on everyone here to get married and have children. I recommend extreme caution in choosing whom you come out to. On the other hand, the other Volunteers are very supportive, and a small but friendly gay, lesbian, and bisexual community exists in Chisinau.”

### ***Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers***

There are no official or societal restrictions with regard to religious belief in Moldova. The primary religion is Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which is divided between those affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Church and those affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church. There are also congregations of Jews, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Mormons, and others. Religion is an important part of life for many, but by no means all, Moldovans. Most towns and villages have at least one Orthodox church, and some also have small Baptist churches.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“The Romanian Orthodox Church does not recognize Roman Catholics as communicants, so full participation in services here can be difficult. There are not many Roman Catholic churches in Moldova, and they will most likely not be close to your site. You may wish to bring books or other materials to help you maintain your spiritual practices when attending church is not possible. However, a positive side of this for me has been that when I can join in on the Eucharist, I am often more grateful and attentive than when I took its availability for granted.”

“As a Jew in Moldova, I have been open in my Jewish observance. I pray every morning and have a religiously restricted diet. Both of my host families were aware of this and were accommodating, though rather perplexed. If there is a religious event that I am uncomfortable attending, I just plan ahead and make an excuse to avoid it. There is a small, but active Jewish community in Chisinau, and I have attended holiday, Sabbath, and daily services there. Unfortunately, many other activities are scheduled on Saturdays, which has often made participating in services difficult.”



“As a Mormon, I find a great amount of curiosity from the community I live in. Exposing yourself to religious experiences in Moldova isn’t hard, but be aware that church attendance by those with faiths other than Eastern Orthodox is difficult. At times, you may feel like the only Mormon, Catholic, Jew, etc. in the whole country. It is not impossible to meet people of your own faith, however. For example, I can take an hour’s bus ride on Sunday to meet with other Mormons. Most Moldovans don’t know about the vast number of different religious denominations in the United States, so discussing one another’s religious beliefs is a great way to exchange ideas and culture.”

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities***

As a disabled Volunteer in Moldova, you may find that you face a special set of challenges. In Moldova, as in other parts of the world, some people may hold prejudicial attitudes about individuals with disabilities and may discriminate against them. In addition, there is little of the infrastructure to accommodate individuals with disabilities that has been developed in the United States.

Nonetheless, as part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, of serving in Moldova without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of your service. The Peace Corps/Moldova staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Moldova?**

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds those limits. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The Peace Corps' allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 100 pounds total with a maximum weight of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

## **What is the electric current in Moldova?**

The current in Moldova is 220 volts. If you bring American electronics (which generally run on 110 volts) with you, you will need both a transformer to convert the 110 volts into 220 volts and a converter to fit the American-style plug into a Moldovan outlet. Transformers come in varying wattages, but they are designed to be used primarily with blow dryers, irons, and the like; they are not designed for more sensitive equipment like laptops. It is important to read the

documentation carefully before buying a transformer for use in Moldova.

### **How much money should I bring?**

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs. There is no restriction on how much money you can bring into Moldova, but make sure you claim it or any undeclared money may be confiscated. You will be able to deposit this money in a U.S. dollar bank account.

### **When can I take vacation and have people visit me?**

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

### **Will my belongings be covered by insurance?**

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company;

additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry, watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

### **Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in Moldova do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks and lots of walking.

### **What should I bring as gifts for Moldovan friends and my host family?**

While this is not a requirement, it is culturally appropriate. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

### **Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?**

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until approximately the eighth week of pre-service training. This gives Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. You will have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, and living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers

live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some Volunteers are assigned to the regional centers, and two or three are assigned to the capital. Some sites require a five- to six-hour trip from the capital via public transportation.

### **How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For nonemergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

### **Can I call home from Moldova?**

The cost of international calls can be high. American calling cards will not work in Moldova, but international phone cards can be purchased that will give you enough time to give your family your phone number and instructions on when to call you back. Moldova CyberCommunity calling cards for calling the United States from Moldova are readily available at kiosks in Chisinau for a reasonable price. If your home does not have a phone, you should be able to use a neighbor's phone or the local telephone office. International lines are clearest early in the mornings and on weekends. Moldovan time is seven hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

### **Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

Moldova has cellular phone service that covers most of the country. All Peace Corps staff members are equipped with

cellphones to attend to emergency calls, and many Volunteers buy phones. However, differences in technology make most U.S. cellphones incompatible with the Moldovan systems. The GSM network is available here, but such phones need to be unlocked. Volunteers who want to own a cellphone will need to buy it and pay for the service plan themselves.

**Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?**

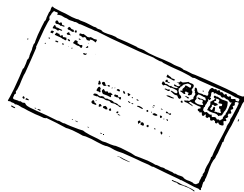
There are a number of Internet service providers in Chisinau, including America Online, but the cost of service, which the Peace Corps will not pay for, can be expensive on a Volunteer's budget (the basic charge is approximately \$10 to \$25 per month). You may be able to access e-mail at your work site, and there are several Internet cafes in Chisinau that you can use when you are in the capital. Several of the larger towns in Moldova also have Internet access.

Volunteers who have brought a laptop with them generally are glad they did. If you plan to bring a laptop, there are some things to consider: You must have a computer that is able to handle 220 volts because you cannot use an external transformer with a laptop. You also need a converter that will allow you to plug into local outlets (converters are available in Moldova). Because Moldovan phone lines are slow, you will be unable to connect at high speeds, so a slower modem should suffice. Bring a good carrying case for lugging your computer around. It is a good idea to check your warranty to see what options are available in Europe for any needed repairs. Load your software on your computer before you leave and bring only the manuals and disks you believe will be critical to have in Moldova. You should also insure your computer.





# WELCOME LETTERS FROM MOLDOVA VOLUNTEERS



Greetings and welcome to Moldova! My name is Selby Stebbins. As a health Volunteer, I'm assigned to both a school and a community organization. During pre-service training, I didn't want to be a health education teacher in a grammar school. I only wanted to work at the community organization. However, as preparation for working in schools, we had a two-week "practice school" with children in our training village. To my surprise, I fell in love with teaching after the first class. A year later, it is one of the most rewarding things I do here. I also work with a group of peer educators at the school and have really enjoyed helping them put on after-school, health-related activities for their classmates.

Health education classes are taught in Romanian. I thought it would be impossible to learn enough Romanian in 10 weeks of training. Have faith! The language program here in Moldova is excellent, and you'll be proud of yourself, just as I was, when at the end of the first day of school you realize you just successfully taught several classes in a language other than English.

The best advice I've received regarding coping with life in a foreign country is: "Be patient. The more patient you are with yourself and others, the more you will enjoy your experience." I have found this to be very true. Some days are more difficult than others, but when I have a rough moment, I try to remind myself that things in the United States didn't always go my way either. I don't regret one moment—difficult or humorous or just plain crazy—that I have spent here. The Peace Corps does many things to help Volunteers have a successful two years, but ultimately the quality of your experience rests upon your own willingness to work, to adapt, and to forgive yourself and others. Keep your heart and mind open for an incredible two years and that's what you will receive!

Here are a few things I am really glad I brought or had sent: a one-month supply of underwear, colored markers, a sun shower, lots of quality long underwear and gloves (in different weights, for winter), a waterproof jacket, waterproof boots, and good facial care products.

Things I wish I had brought (and now can't really get) include my professional books related to NGO development and health. I recommend that trainees send professional books by surface mail before they leave the United States. The books will not take up luggage space and will arrive by the time you need them.

Things I wish I had done before leaving include gathering materials related to my assignment. I wish I had visited local health organizations, the American Cancer Society, the Red Cross, and so on in pursuit of posters, toothbrushes, pamphlets, medical diagrams, and more.

—Selby Stebbins

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Today I have three sweet potatoes sitting in my living room and 75 kilograms of sand in two bags sitting outside my door. It is late, but I will do my best to get some seed potatoes out of those gifts from the United States.

The other day it was pouring down rain and I was in back of a farm truck loaded with workers going to pick peppers and tomatoes. The workers laughed at how slow I was and asked how my back felt, which ached. We picked 33 sacks of peppers and about 50 crates of tomatoes. Next time, I'll go barefoot like the rest of the workers because my sandals became like weights, with the mud raising my height a full two inches.

It is seven kilometers to the fields, and the 15-year-old son of one of the farmers and I go out together and load down our bikes with vegetables to bring back. I don't mind the exercise. I go sometimes with my counterparts at work when they measure the growth patterns of our crops. We measure the leaves, count them, and then measure the height of the plant itself. When we harvested the sweet corn last week for sale in

Chisinau, I wanted to go too just to make sure the corn was good; I even wanted to taste it before our first sale.

What I am trying to say is that life in Moldova is just life in general. It is hard and frustrating, and it is a challenge to try to figure out. Maybe the reason I like it here is that I want to drink in the whole experience, to immerse myself in Moldovans' lives, to feel their problems, and to revel in a success or two. I will always be the American. There is something different about me that I don't even recognize, but the community likes me working next to them and sharing their life experiences. I like listening and think I am learning more about what life is all about than I ever did back home.

—John Goodrick

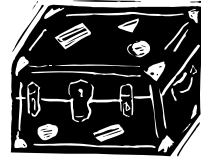
.....

I want to wish you all good luck! Training is long and arduous, but I believe in you all. Keep a positive outlook; enjoy the newness of the culture and the beginning of a great experience. When you think you can't do it anymore—around week seven of pre-service training—remember that it only gets better and others have survived it, too! So welcome to Moldova. It is a great place to work, and you will see the progress happening right in front of your eyes.

—Angie Carr



# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Moldova and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have a 100-pound weight limit on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in Moldova.

## General Clothing

Bring clothes that are comfortable, that can be mixed and matched, and that are easy to wash by hand (i.e., made of synthetics like polyester or acrylic). Dry cleaning is available (though generally not in villages), but unreliable. Moldovans place great emphasis on clothing and dressing neatly, including making sure clothes are ironed, so “permanent press” clothes are useful. Although most clothes are available locally, women who wear larger sizes may have difficulty finding those sizes in Moldova. Some specific suggestions follow.

- A variety of professional clothes for work (see earlier section titled Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior), e.g., Dockers-type pants and dress shirts and ties for men, and skirts and dresses for women
- One or two dressy outfits for special events, such as a suit or blazer(s)/sports coat(s) for men
- Two pairs of jeans

- Pullover sweaters and cardigans (wool is best)
- One or two pairs of long shorts (short shorts are not appropriate)
- Swimsuit
- Sweatsuit for relaxing at home
- One all-weather coat for spring and fall and one very warm winter coat (e.g., down)
- Warm winter hat, earmuffs, and gloves or mittens
- Socks, both wool and cotton (dark colors work best—black and brown)
- Underwear (cotton for warm weather, thermal or silk for cold weather)
- Two or more sets of long underwear for winter (Volunteers recommend Duofold and Patagonia brands and items made of Capilene, polypropylene, silk, and a silk and wool blend)
- Pantyhose and tights for women (available in Moldova but quality may be poor)

## **Shoes**

- Dress shoes for work (select comfortable styles)
- Sneakers, sandals, or other shoes that are easy to slip on and off
- Two pairs of sturdy boots, one waterproof (e.g., rubber duck boots with removable lining) and the other warm and preferably dressier. Simple rubber boots can be bought here cheaply. The dressier boots can substitute for work shoes in winter.

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Three-month supply of toiletries, as it may be difficult to find time to shop during training
- Three-month supply of sanitary pads or tampons, if you

require a particular brand (Tampax and local brands are available in-country)

## **Kitchen**

- Basic cookbook, with measurement conversions and suggested substitutions
- Plastic food storage bags (e.g., Ziploc)
- Measuring cups
- Spices (some that are popular with Americans may be hard to find locally; popular ones to bring include taco seasoning and ranch dip)
- Peanut butter

## **Miscellaneous**

- Map of Eastern Europe
- Musical instrument (if you play)
- Music and DVDs
- Power converter for electrical appliances requiring them
- Sewing kit
- Small tool kit (a Leatherman or Swiss Army knife may suffice)
- A good set of markers, including some permanent markers like sharpies (for teacher Volunteers)
- Nail care items such as clippers and emery boards
- Inexpensive, durable, water-resistant watch (replacement batteries are available here)
- Sleeping bag with stuff sack for traveling in cold weather (or it can be borrowed, although some Volunteers find the sleeping bag valuable for warmth in the winter)
- Laundry bag

- Camera (35 mm compacts are best for travel). Note that Advantix film is not available and cannot be developed in Moldova and that processing of black-and-white film is not reliable. Digital cameras are increasingly popular, and you can print digital photos in most large towns.
- Rechargeable battery set (that takes up to 220 volts)
- Money belt or pouch
- Internal frame backpack
- Small overnight bag
- Envelopes of various sizes and U.S. postage stamps
- Duct tape
- Set of towels (bath, hand, and face) – can be bought here, but quality is uncertain
- Photos from home (postcards are also good)
- Posters, picture frames, etc. (helps make room homey)
- Bandannas and handkerchiefs
- Frisbee and games (e.g., Uno, Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, chess, volleyball, etc.)



## NOTES



# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* booklet to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through the Office of Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.



# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

**Peace Corps Headquarters**

**Toll-free Number:**

800.424.8580, Press 2, then  
Ext. # (see below)

**Peace Corps' Mailing Address:**

Peace Corps  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Cynthia Downs Desk Officer E-mail: moldova@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2420	202.692.2420
	Annabelle Townson Desk Assistant E-mail: moldova@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2419	202.692.2419

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST  202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)



# PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) · 1-800-424-8580