



# How to Verify Eligibility for Coverdell Fellows

## Who is eligible to be a Coverdell Fellow?

All returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) who satisfactorily complete their service have lifetime eligibility for the Coverdell Fellows program. Most returned Volunteers fall into this category:

- Volunteers who completed the full [2-year tour](#) of Peace Corps service (with no more than 90 days of emergency leave)
- Volunteers granted "early close of service"
- Volunteers granted "interrupted service" status because of circumstances beyond their control
- Volunteers who were medically separated
- In addition, returned [Peace Corps Response](#) (PCR) Volunteers and [Global Health Service Partnership](#) (GHSP) Volunteers who serve a full 12 months are eligible.
  - This can come through one 12-month tour or a combination of shorter tours.
    - **Exception:** The 12 month requirement was waived for all Peace Corps Response Volunteers evacuated in March 2020 due to COVID-19.

## Who is *not* eligible?

- RPCVs who "early terminate" (ET) from Peace Corps for any reason not listed above, including administrative separation and voluntary resignation
- Peace Corps Response and GHSP Volunteers who have not served 12 months with Peace Corps, regardless of the reason why (presuming that they did not already complete a satisfactory 2-year tour through Peace Corps' primary program)
- Individuals who are not returned Peace Corps Volunteers (even if they completed similar service abroad)

## How to verify an applicant's eligibility

Most Peace Corps, Peace Corps Response, and GHSP Volunteers create a formal "Description of Service" (DOS) that is signed by their Country Director in their final days of service. This is the official account of their service, and will include the beginning and end dates.

- We recommend that all Coverdell Fellows programs request applicants to submit a DOS.
  - If applicants cannot find their DOS, they may solicit a copy following the steps on Peace Corps' website, [click here](#).

Some RPCVs receive a DOS even if they did not satisfactorily complete their service, so the DOS should be reviewed, checking the dates of service.

- If the RPCVs served at least 2 years (or if they are PCR or GHSP Volunteers who served at least 12 months), they are eligible!
- If the RPCVs served *less* than 2 years, you'll need to ask a follow-up question: *Why did your service end early?*
  - If the rationale is that they were "medically separated," granted "early close of service," or granted "interrupted service" (e.g., because Peace Corps evacuated the country), they are eligible!
  - If the rationale does not fall into one of those categories (e.g., because they "had to go home to care for a family member"), then they are not eligible.

*Note:* For confidentiality reasons, Peace Corps cannot disclose the terms upon which an RPCV ended service, so your team needs to solicit this information. Please do not ask Peace Corps to verify eligibility.

If applicants are still in service and have not yet received a DOS:

- We recommend that you request confirmation of their current service (such as a letter from the Country Director) and then inform them that their Coverdell Fellowship is contingent upon successful completion of service and submission of their DOS prior to beginning classes.