

**PROPAPA MISSIONS AMERICA
PROPAPA ORGANIZATIONAL MATERIALS
BRIGADE VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

This Booklet contains the manual to be used by volunteers joining ProPapa Missions America (ProPapa or PPMA) on a service Brigade to Honduras or other third world location.

It is ProPapa's best effort to include the necessary information for a Volunteer to understand what is expected of them during a Brigade.

Of course additional information will have to be drawn from your experienced Brigade Captain in exchanges during pre-trip Orientation Meetings.

This is a policy manual, thus it is made available only in PDF format.

If the user has any suggested improvements in any aspect of the manual, we would enjoy hearing your suggestions. Please email it to scribe@propapa.org .

Thank you in advance for your involvement in ProPapa and your willingness to serve the poor of the Americas.

**PROPAPA MISSIONS AMERICA
BRIGADE VOLUNTEER MANUAL
Brigade Volunteer**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Trip of a Lifetime; you are about to embark upon a journey that you will remember for the rest of your life. Many of our volunteers are so moved by this experience, they ask to go back, time & time again. Others tell us, "Once was enough!" Even if they choose not to go on another brigade, to a person, they say they won't soon forget the experience.

This manual will help you have a safe and rewarding trip. However, let yourself go within the boundaries of these guidelines. Try to speak the language...even if your Spanish is rudimentary. Greet the people and work to put them at ease. Take time for yourself. Gaze at the night sky, introduce yourself to the unique flowers, get to know your teammates from elsewhere in the U.S. And yes, as you're gasping with the cold water shower in the A.M., savor it. Make a memory that at least that day, you had a shower, which few of those you serve will have had.

II. HISTORY

A. A Brief History of Honduras; "Honduras is a vibrant country, brimming with clear turquoise ocean waters, pristine beaches, lush jungles, breathtaking mountains, challenging rivers, and fascinating ancient ruins," boasts the travel brochures. And indeed it's true. But behind those truths, lay some other truths that are a good deal uglier.

Christopher Columbus touched the shore line in 1502, and was followed by several Spanish explorers and conquistadors throughout the early 1500's. Of course they held little reverence for the some 200 indigenous tribes that had lived throughout the Honduran region for eons. It seemed as if Christopher Columbus' ordering his explorers to celebrate the first catholic mass on Honduran soil, could just as well served as the announcement to launch the conquistadors on a quest to overpower, enslave, convert, and strip the native tribes of both their cultures and their wealth.

Remnants from the ancient Mayan, Toltec, Aztec, Chibcha, Lenca, and Corquin civilizations, heretofore living independently from each other, had little chance to resist the Spaniard's onslaught.

In 1537 the great Lenca Chief Lempira accomplished an unbelievable feat of organizing over 200 indigenous Indian tribes and villages to mount an organized resistance of the Spanish invasion. A brilliant leader and military tactician, Chief Lempira was successful at defeating the Spanish in several battles. Only through treachery, inviting the Chief to a peace conference and then assassinating him, were the invaders able to put down the resurrection.

Honduras was dragged through over 300 years of domination and oppression at the hands of the invaders. Only with Mexico's independence, the Spanish American War, Napoleon's defeat in Europe, and other tumultuous events did

Central America move toward self rule. The Honduran territories joined the confederation known as the United Provinces of Central America in 1823. In the 1850's, as Honduras struggled with their quasi independence, they suffered another invasion...from the Americans. Not the government, nor the military rather from the very powerful American banana, fruit, sugar and lumber corporations. Seeing tremendous natural resources, coupled with very cheap labor, the multi-national corporations rushed into the territories. Facing little resistance from a weak government, the companies basically bought the politicians and then bought Honduras. Huge tracks of land were put into plantation-like production, while the poor were pushed off the good land where they had been living for generations.

The land was stressed by very aggressive harvesting practices which has dealt a long lasting blow to the rivers, top soil, etc. Worse yet, the poor have been relegated to "unfavorable land" [not suitable for production]. Thus, the poor tilled the steep sloped mountainsides, denuded the forests for firewood, and wiped out the natural game for food; delivering another environmental blow to a country once nearly covered with a dense, lush rain forest.

Graft, corruption, incompetence, a marauding national military, plus land baron militias, coups, international opportunism, and corporate greed pretty much defined the next hundred years for Honduras.

In summary, indigenous cultures that once built some of the first known metropolises and produced glorious items of ancient art in gold, stone, and turquoise; suffered under 300 years of Spanish domination, and then suffered at the hands of corporate America, for another 150 years.

In the modern era, authoritarian governments and near dictatorships vied for power from the 1950's into the 70's. Only after a brief war with their Salvadoran neighbors, that was again most devastating on the poor, did the populous begin to clamor for an professional military, independent of any regional boss or individual political party. In addition, the first public demands began to be heard for a truly democratic government, independent of banana company control. The military seized control and showed some benevolence in beginning to build infrastructure across the nation...only after huge investments in the military modernization were made. Only after very real threats of destabilization from the Sandinista conflicts in El Salvador & Nicaragua at the close of the 70's, increased public sentiment; plus, the prompting of the U.S. did the military rulers begin to move to embrace civilian rule.

With many fits, sputters, and setbacks... a new Honduran Constitution was approved in 1982 that signaled the Honduran's commitment to a democratic government. Since that time, a peaceful transition of governments has occurred. Huge problems still confront the elected officials; staggering poverty, graft & corruption, a call for massive land reform, environmental issues, and a need to be productive and competitive in world markets, and many more. There is great promise on the horizon, but until it can be realized, we come to help the very poor.

B. ProPapa's History; Sister Laurinda Mayer, a catholic nun with the American Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, felt a strong calling to assist the poor

in Honduras. Sister Laurinda was there during the unstable ramp up to civilian rule, and was quite an activist. She partnered then, and still does, with a hard working native Honduran farmer, entrepreneur, and natural leader Benigno Ramirez. The needs of the poor were unfathomable at the time. These two were so moved to help they essentially left their past lives behind to devote all of their efforts to relieve the suffering of the poor. Sister left her traditional order which focused on education, so that she could do her brand of missionary work in rural Honduras¹. Benigno left his fields behind to also work with the people. On a brigade trip in 1994 Sister met William Casey, who was a CEO of a hospital in Johnstown, PA. After sharing dreams about ways to expand her works, Sister and Casey agreed to initiate a formal Charity Foundation in the States. Hence, ProPapa Missions America was born with Sister & Casey as the co-founders. ProPapa Missions America is an American charity patterned after the Honduran Charity created in 1998...”ProPapa Honduras”. Simple prudence requires the two foundations remain separate entities. Mr. Ramirez remains as the President of PPH.

Thus; ProPapa Missions America [PPMA] relies heavily on Sister as our International Liaison, but PPMA does perform ventures elsewhere. ProPapa Honduras interacts often with PPMA, but they also perform services independent of our charity.

For a small charity, PPMA’s reputation is one of the little charities that would, could, and will help.

ProPapa’s core services are supporting healthcare for the poor in the way of building and operating small hospital/clinics, and running medical, dental, eye, and specialty brigades out to the rural poor.

However, PPMA also channels a lot of effort into scholarships, water projects, and other initiatives.

Over the years supporters of our efforts have helped build two hospital/clinics, run up to four brigades per year, construct regional water projects, build scores of houses for the poor, perform corrective surgeries, provide scholarships for hundreds of children, provide hurricane relief, establish food for work programs, and on and on.

ProPapa’s volunteers come from many different states. Plus, small chapters of committed volunteers in Johnstown, PA, Port Jefferson, NY, St. Louis, MO, and St. Joseph, MO have been established over the years.

ProPapa Missions America is a 501c3 charitable foundation, registered and recognized as a faith based, but ecumenical philanthropic organization. PPMA is registered in Pennsylvania, with its operating headquarters on Long Island, NY. The Board of Directors hail from several different states, backgrounds, and religions; yet all have a sense of mission to aide the impoverished in Central America.

So this is an overview of Propapa’s history and background. If you run out of stateside stories & yarns as you recuperate and relax at the end of a hard day on a

¹ Sister Laurinda Mayer now is a member of the Sisters in Christian Community that is based in San Diego, CA, USA. This order does not require it’s members to live in community, and is supportive of women religious, like Sister Laurinda, who’s calling takes them far and wide in their mission works.

brigade, ask an alumnus to expand on ProPapa's history. There are many stories and adventures worth sharing.

III. CO-RESPONSIBILITIES

A. What Pro-Papa Will Provide to the Volunteer

1. Leadership; the brigade volunteer will likely interact with three levels of ProPapa leaders.

a. The **Director of Brigades** is someone who guides the overall direction of the ProPapa brigade mission. Mr. Bill Swope, St. Joseph, Missouri, is responsible for setting the overall brigade policies. In reference to brigades, if a policy or procedure needs further clarification, Mr. Swope serves as the final referee. Your Brigade Captain will be in close touch with Mr. Swope.

b. You'll get to know your **Brigade Captain** well. He or she, as the title implies, is the "captain of the ship", for your brigade. They bear full responsibility for the planning and execution of the trip. They are bound by policies and procedures, developed over the years to insure a positive experience and a safe one. However, there will always be scores of decisions they must make before departure, while you're in-country, and on the way home.

Please respect their decisions. They are responsible for the group, and their decisions stand.

c. The next leader you'll have a lot of contact with is the **Team Leader**. He or she makes the day-to-day decisions that insure the field clinic runs well, that the dentists have what they need, etc. Typically these Team Leaders are at the helm of a specific brigade service, at a specific site. For example; if a large M.E.D. Brigade arrives in country, it often splits up. The "Red Team" may go to the highlands, and the "Blue Team" may head for the lowlands. The dental service should have a Dental Team Leader for the Blue Team and another for the Red Team, as they could be hundreds of kilometers apart. And this is the outback. Things will go a rye. Perhaps a bin of pain medication inadvertently went with the other dental team. Should a car be sent on a grueling road trip to retrieve the meds, or should each patient receive one less pain reliever after an extraction...the Dental Team Leader will make the call.

There will also be an overall team leader for each team; such as, the "Blue Team Leader",

2. In-Country Planning; whether your brigade trip is taking you to Honduras or some other overseas location, ProPapa has gone to great lengths to select and interact with an in-country team of leaders that is experienced in guiding American brigades. They share ProPapa's desire to relieve the suffering of the underprivileged of Central America. These advance teams, for the most part, live permanently in-country.

They will have been in close touch with your Brigade Captain to understand the objectives of the brigade, medical, dental, construction or otherwise, and have planned accordingly.

They travel into the poor rural areas, speak with mayors, community leaders, and elders to select the right villages that can benefit from a brigade trip.

You can always seek advice from our International Liaisons or other leaders on the advanced team. [But don't forget, any operational decision is to be run by a Team Leader.]

Also remember, you will see and hear from the Brigade Captain the most, as she will lead most of the orientation sessions. But the Brigade Captain may go with the other team; he may not be on your site. So get to know your Team Leader before you leave the U.S.

3. Patient Volume; The Advance Team does their level best to work with the regional and village authorities to identify populations that seriously need our help. Then they work to select where the Brigade Teams can set up shop. And most importantly the Advance Teams try to communicate to the citizens in the area what day and time of day they should present themselves for care. It is amazing that in regions with such low tech communications available, most often this works well. But there will be days when there are swarms of patients, and possibly a day when there are too few patients. Volunteers just have to roll with the punches in either case.

4. Deserving Patients; the village leaders and the Advance Team try hard to insure all patients that present themselves are in need of care, and have little to no funds. But just like America, politicians sometimes give out favors to family and friends. Be patient with this tendency, and refer the issue to your Team Leader if it persists.

B. What ProPapa Expects from the Volunteer

1. Meetings and Orientation; each Brigade Captain will insist that Volunteers attend several orientation sessions. They consist of cultural sensitivity lectures, slide shows, etc. All are held to give you a realistic idea of what you will be facing. After all, these trips cost you money, yet they can be hard work. These exchanges with ProPapa Brigade Alumni will help you confirm your commitment to help the poor in this manner.

a. Getting to Know You; PPMA will first ask you to fill out PPMA Form-8 the Volunteer Information & Interest Form. This gives the organizers their first introduction to you, your motivations, skill sets, and general background. This information will be key in "packing the teams." That is deciding who, with what skills, is placed on what team.

b. Getting to Know Your Teammates; on your brigade you'll often have a family member and/or a friend or two along on the trip. Certainly you would want to spend time with those close to

you. But don't overlook the opportunity to meet and get to know others from other walks of life. Yes the days will be long and hard, but there is plenty of time to chat as you bounce around in the back of a banana truck for an hour or two. And the evenings can be great opportunities to share how the day's efforts have impacted you.

c. Preparations; the Brigade Captain and his or her helpers will schedule several sessions to discuss the upcoming trip. You'll learn about the culture, be given advice on how not to offend, learn a great detail on what each team will accomplish, etc., etc. It is imperative that you attend these briefings. If you live a great distance from the preparation sessions, talk to your Brigade Captain. Perhaps some conference calls between those few that can't attend and the Brigade Captain would be warranted. The Brigade Captain might even hand out assignments to those coming from a far. These tasks need to be accomplished in your local community. Everybody helps prepare for the trip; physicians, dentists, executives, students...everybody pulls their own weight. This group effort is what keeps the cost down and the pre-trip interaction high, which is by design.

d. Pill Packing Parties; medications are critical to a M.E.D. Brigade. They are donated by hospitals, doctors' offices, pharmaceutical companies, other charities, etc. Some are purchased outright in the States, and some are purchased in Honduras. Virtually all of these medications come heavily packaged. Packaging is weight and packaging is disruptive in the field.

Thus, your Brigade Captain must find a way to strip these meds of unwanted packaging and repackage them for ease of dispensing in a field pharmacy. Therefore, at some point in time you will need to attend a "pill packing party." These can be arranged concurrently with an orientation meeting, separately, or you can recruit family and friends, and host a "pill packing party" while your clan watches a Sunday football game on TV...just keep the Nachos out of the Advil!!

2. An Ambassadorial Attitude; what is perhaps most subtle is what is most important to come from the Volunteers. That is an ambassadorial attitude. How you interact with those we care for leaves a lasting impression. If long hours, or a flat tire changed in the blazing sun leaves you cross with your teammates or those we care for, great harm can be done. ProPapa is well thought of and respected in Honduras. Why, because we do good work, but of equal importance we treat the poor with great respect, kindness, and courtesy. A solid sense of humor and patience will also be greatly appreciated, for this is the third world and Murphy's Law abounds in rural Honduras.

- a. Crowds;** in most clinic locations, large crowds will gather. ProPapa has had a lot of experience with managing these crowds, but the effort is never cookie cutter. Listen to your team leaders, and follow their instructions in trying to manage the crowd.
- b. Village Officials;** periodically village officials express their appreciation for the Brigade's efforts by holding a community thank-you ceremony. These are sometimes held at the end of the day, where the Volunteers just want to get back to base camp and crash. But participating in the ceremony, with a smile in place, is a very important part of our good relations with the mayors and local officials.
- c. Military, Police, & Rent-a-Cops;** in years past Americans were fascinated by the site of uniformed guards brandishing weapons openly in Honduras. Now that we have military and police openly carrying weapons, perhaps it isn't as much of a novelty. But never-the-less; running up to such a security guard to have your picture taken, is not the greatest idea.
- d. International Etiquette;** every culture and country have their own distinct traditions, mores, and nuances. Honduras is no different. Some typical American gestures may be seen as rude in Honduras. Your Brigade Captain will review some do's and don'ts so your gestures can be seen as respectful and sensitive to the Honduran culture. Embrace the diversity of mores, but also the diversity in people and teammates!
- e. Effort;** Yes it's true, we expect you to pay a trip stipend and then work hard during the Brigade. This is a unique working vacation.

3. Gift Giving; it is natural to think those that have so little would appreciate some candy for the little ones, or tennis balls for the toddlers etc. However, throwing candy out to the village kids is some what contradictory to our good dental health and hygiene message to the children. Plus it draws an instant horde of youngsters looking for their handout.

And a "**handout**" is in itself a troubling concept. If our brigades do nothing else, they hopefully convey good will and a hope for a better future. Children groveling on the ground for candy, tossed out by the Gringos, is demeaning and therefore distracting.

Thus, handouts are a sensitive subject and should be a topic of discussion among your teammates at an orientation session.

ProPapa's strong preference is for uplifting items; such as, tooth brushes, school supplies, soccer balls, etc. to be handed out in an orderly fashion to the children in school after they have sat through a public health lecture. Or better yet, re-enforce leadership by "awarding" substantive gifts to teachers, or village mayors so they can distribute them in an orderly fashion.

a. Substantive Gifts to In-Country Advance Team; this is a difficult question as most teams develop a strong relationship with their translators, drivers, helpers, in-country clinicians, etc. It's only natural that some may want to buy them gifts of appreciation. However, some on your team are of limited means, and such ad hoc expenses can put pressure on them. Plus if the "Red Team" chose to give gifts, and the "Blue Team" did not, there will be hurt feelings when all assemble at the departure banquet [despidida]. Therefore, it is recommended that gifts not be given. Even inviting helpers & translators to the R&R hotels is problematic. Some have been paid a fee and the added expense of hotel stays may not have been factored in. Discuss these issues among your Brigade. Your Brigade Captain will be very clear with what is to take place.

4. Patients Paying for Services Rendered; in the spirit of showing respect and minimizing the feeling of a handout, most of our in-country advance teams believe patients should "pay" something for the care received during our Brigade visit. In a village that is based upon coffee cultivation, a judgment may be made that each person should pay one Lempira [around 19c U.S.] to see the doctor. The money may go to ProPapa Honduras or to the village coffers for future projects. In a village that is so poor the average person could not even pay one Limpera, the advance team asks the Village to "pay" for the care through feeding the Americans while they are on station. In some cases the village is so poor they couldn't even feed the Brigade. Thus, we supply the food stuffs, and they, under supervision, prepare meals for the Americans. This gives them a sense of pride.

IV. SAFETY AND SECURITY

A. The Rigors of a Brigade

Each volunteer is responsible for reading the following descriptions of what a experience is like and what hardships may be before you. In signing your PPMA Form-3 Waiver of Responsibility, you are attesting to having read and understood these trip challenges. If any of them give you pause, speak to your Brigade Captain in private.

B. Physical Demands

This realistic overview of working conditions is provided to inform the Employee, Volunteer Staff, or Volunteer of what they could face in Honduras. The Brigade Captain will insure these are discussed with you, the volunteer. By signing your Waiver [PPMA Form-3] the Volunteer is representing to PPMA that he or she has reviewed this list and understands the rigors of volunteering in a third world environment.

1. Standing: lengthy periods of standing may be required.
2. Walking: transportation to work areas is provided, but sometimes walking or hiking to the job site is required.

3. Climbing: walking to a work site may require traveling up inclines. Volunteers should not rock climb for any reason. A vehicle break down could require walking a substantial distance. Climbing stairs and ladders on work sites or to meals can be required.
4. Sitting: for significant blocks of time can be required. Road travel will be required. Often road travel is in uncomfortable buses, trucks, or pick up beds with vibration, rocking and jostling.
5. Lifting: all Volunteers should be able to lift luggage pieces of 50 lbs or more. Those physically able will be asked to move these supply crates from place to place, preferably with two people on each crate.
6. Pushing: all Volunteers should be able to push packages of 40lbs. on a cement floor from place to place.
7. Balancing: work sites may have uneven ground and floor surfaces. Construction Volunteers will not be asked to leave the ground on ladders, scaffolding, or other risers unless they deem themselves fully able to do so and on their own volition choose to do so.
8. Stooping, Kneeling, and Bending: full movement, stooping, bending, and rotation will occur many times a day. Good back health is strongly recommended for all in country volunteers.
9. Crawling: crawling would not normally be required of volunteers.
10. Reaching: low reaching is often required, while high reaching will be asked periodically.
11. Hands, Fingers, and Wrist: full movement, some repetitive, is required regularly.
12. Legs: as walking and even hiking could be required, normal leg strength is required.
13. Coordination: as the nature of field brigades is dependent upon site set up and breakdown, movement and placement of supplies and equipment is required often in rural even rugged environments. Thus eye, mental, and muscular coordination is necessary.
14. Oral communication: all brigades require significant verbal communication in English with teammates. Spanish is very desirable, but not required.
15. Hearing: one must hear the instructions from teammates and leaders. Ability to hear, even above background noise, is necessary.
16. Site: ability to see in unfamiliar and often poorly lit surroundings is necessary. Reasonable depth perception is required. Team and Squad Leaders should be told if one is color blind.
17. Operation of Cars, Trucks, Vans, or other Major Equipment: the Brigade Captain will arrange for experienced drivers. One should not drive unless it is previously discussed with the Team Leader and Brigade Captain. In country experience is strongly preferred. Possession of an International Driver's License is recommended. Operation of earth moving or other equipment is prohibited.

C. Working Conditions

1. Outside: even if work sites are planned for indoor venues, Volunteers must be able to work outdoors.
2. Sun Exposure: the Team Leaders will discuss protection from sun exposure, but persons with unusual sun sensitivities or allergies should not attend brigades.
3. Heat Exposure: Volunteers will regularly be exposed to heat between 80 and 95 degrees F, and rarely between 95 and 110 degrees F. If with proper rest and hydration, those exposures would present a problem, attendance should be reconsidered.
4. Cold: rarely does the air temperature drop below 50 degrees F. However, after a day of heavy exertion, and periodically being placed in sleeping situations exposed to the night air and mountain mist, Volunteers should be able to withstand this environment.
5. Wetness: heavy thunderstorms are likely. Volunteers may rarely be asked to work having been rain drenched. Volunteers will often be asked to work when wet with sweat.
6. Dry Atmosphere: Volunteers could work in very dry conditions, during times of high heat. Planners will make every effort to provide necessary water supplies.
7. Confined Spaces: clinics and habitat sites can often be in difficult locations. One may be asked to work in small spaces crowded with supplies.
8. Heights: habitat crews are strongly encouraged not to climb high up on structures.
9. Noise: rarely are workers exposed to continuous noises above 85 db.
10. Fumes: sites are typically in open air settings. Never the less, chemicals, aerosols, and some chemical gases are used in clinical settings and insuring sites are well ventilated is everyone's responsibility.
11. Dust: transportation is often in open air trucks, pickups, and buses. Volunteers will likely be exposed to dusty conditions.
12. Chemicals: rarely are chemicals used in the construction or clinical areas. However, cold sterilization and some construction materials can be harmful. Full precautions are to be taken.
13. Machinery: there will be some machinery in the construction areas. Only those well trained in its use should be anywhere near it.
14. Long Hours: it is likely teams may choose to work over 8 hours per day. This is up to Team Leaders and will be discussed with the group.
15. Patient contact: clinical teams will have patient contact. "Universal Precautions" are used at all times when dealing with patients. No exceptions. Team Leaders will be sure that lay Volunteers are fully trained to use universal precautions.

D. Protective Equipment Necessities

1. **Gloves-surgical:** quality latex gloves will be provided. Volunteers with any allergic reaction to latex should discuss this with the Brigade Captain.
2. **Gloves-work:** it is recommended that construction crews bring two pair of strong leather work gloves.
3. **Gloves-rubber:** heavy mil thickness, puncture resistant gloves are required for cold sterilization work.
4. **Gown:** in appropriate clinical settings, disposable surgical gowns will be provided and should be worn.
5. **Eye Wear:** is needed for many tasks on construction brigades and when in close proximity to dental and medical patients; plus the cold sterilization process.
6. **Masks:** are necessary to fulfill universal precautions standards and will be provided.
7. **Hard Hat:** a hard hat is needed on construction teams if any team member is doing high work and you are to be nearby.
8. **Ear Protection:** is rarely needed on a construction squad. (However, they can offer some quiet during sleep.)
9. **Boots:** the medical, dental, and specialty brigade squad leaders will specify when OR booties are required. Open sandals are NOT recommended while in medical, dental, or specialty clinic areas; nor should they be worn in construction venues. Firm boots or walking shoes are recommended for construction sites.

E. Water Safety; the water supply throughout the country is very inconsistent. Therefore these rules must be adhered to closely.

1. **Commercially Bottled Water;** is safe, inexpensive, and in ready supply. Volunteers are encouraged to buy bottles as often as they feel they may need to.
2. **Tap Water ;** is not dependable. It should not be consumed. You shouldn't even use it for brushing teeth, or inadvertently swallow it during a shower. The only exception is in a modern hotel in Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula, and at the invitation of the Advance Team Leader.
3. **Drum Water;** the advance team will purchase five gallon drums of water for the Brigade while it's in the field. Each year the processing plants that bottle these water drums become more and more reliable. Some Volunteers fill their water bottles from these drums and consume it directly.
However the recommendation is that even water from these drums should be filtered before consumption.
4. **Water Filters;** often water needs to be filtered before personal consumption. It is recommended that one in three or one in five volunteers bring a high quality water filter, to re-filter water from the water drums. The Brigade Captain will discuss what types of filters are available for purchase in your community.

F. Food Safety

- 1. Commercially Packaged Food;** is safe to eat.
- 2. Roadside Food;** is plentiful and often appealing. None of it is safe to eat. Only if fresh fruit, like pineapple, is purchased and the vendor doesn't touch the meat, and the Volunteer is careful not to touch the meat is it safe to eat.
- 3. Home Cooked or Restaurant Cooked Meals;** the advance team will carefully screen and select restaurants and private homes where Volunteers can eat safely. Eating elsewhere is very unwise, no matter how gracious the offer.

G. Contagions

- 1. HIV/Aides;** is certainly present in Honduras. It is very prevalent in the large metro areas, but far less common in the outlying villages. Having no way to know, all members of the M.E.D. Brigades are **required to follow UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS!** If you are not a clinician and are not familiar with these precautions, they will be discussed in detail during your orientation.

After the educational session, if you have questions, please ask them.

If a volunteer, physician, dentist or lay helper, declines to follow these procedures they will be excused from service for the day.

- 2. Malaria, Dengue Fever, Cholera;** Malaria & Dengue Fever are mosquito born infections. This is one reason we prefer not to hold Brigades in the midst of the rainy season. Even so, it is recommended to use a repellent with a DEET base. If you are DEET sensitive, coat clothing collars, helms, cuffs, socks, and hat brim.

Long sleeved shirts and slacks are recommended for after dusk.

And follow your preventive medication instructions closely.

Rarely are there cholera outbreaks in Honduras. If there is any cholera outbreak in-country the advance team is VERY likely to give the region a wide berth and the Brigade Captain will discuss whether the trip should go forward with all participants.

- 3. Other Contagions;** there are many germs and viruses present that our immune systems may not be used to seeing; hence, the requirement to honor Universal Precautions. Hands should be washed often.

When that's not possible antiseptic baby wipes or Purell antiseptic drops are good to have handy.

H. Medications; Personal & Prophylactic

- 1. Personal Medicines;** Volunteers are asked to bring a supply of their personal medications. One cannot depend upon being near a pharmacy during the in-country stay. If medicines need refrigeration, this can be a challenge and should be discussed with your Team Leader.

Also, critical medicines should be split between your main bag, and carry on luggage. Please even consider giving a teammate a backup supply of meds to place in their bags.

2. Prophylactic Medicines; the volunteer is required to take these medications prophylactically, to protect their personal health. If you intend to deviate from the specific regimen communicated by the Brigade Captain (And prescribed by the ProPapa's Medical Director) it must be discussed and approved by the Brigade Captain.

- a. An anti-malaria drug will be taken the Monday before departure, and each Monday thereafter until you return home.
- b. A stomach anti-nausea medication will be taken daily, preferably in the AM.
- c. An anti-parasitic will be taken the day after your return.

I. Personal Safety

1. Buddy rule; ProPapa has never had an incident where one of our volunteers was met with anything but respect and courtesy, and we would like to keep it that way. Not only because one may get lost, but also for other reasons, **NO Volunteer is allowed to go anywhere without a partner.** Preferably, volunteers will travel in a group.

- a. M.E.D. Volunteers are highly recommended to wear their scrubs while in the field. All in the village will know the Gringo medical team is in town, and will respect your presence.
- b. The Construction teams while on the job site are encouraged to wear whatever highly visible symbol they have chosen for their team; ball cap, T-shirt, handkerchief, or other.

J. Travel Insurance

PPMA requires each and every volunteer to take out travel insurance [PPMA Form-11]. This couple dollars-a-day expense is included in the overall trip expenses. It is designed to be used in an emergency if a Volunteer needs to rush back to the states for medical reasons. The Brigade Captain will have other details of the policy's features.

F. Securing Property

1. Personal Belongings; Honduras is a third world country with most of the rural areas we visit gripped by poverty. They view most American's as wealthy. Even if you had to stretch to pay the Brigade Fee, you are still much better off than those you will serve. So they might think that its no great loss to replace your camera. Thus, **crimes of opportunity are very common.** If you leave your camera, sunglasses, or favorite Nikes around...they will get pilfered.

The advanced team will do their level best to select a base camp location that affords Volunteers the opportunity to safely leave their belongings behind for the day.

But pay attention to the “Packing List.” The Brigade Captain will recommend you bring a day bag with you for items you don’t want to leave behind for the day.

2. ProPapa Property; the same warning holds true for PPMA Brigade equipment, property, and instruments. Even if there would be little use for the item in a rural village, it still may be pilfered. Secure equipment.

L. Weapons

No weapons of any kind are allowed on the trip. Pepper sprays and/or mace is outlawed in many Honduran states and should not be brought into the country. No knives large enough to be interpreted as a weapon should be brought along. Only a modest size pocket knives are allowed, and they should stay in your luggage.

V. DOCUMENTS

A. Preparatory

1. Volunteer Information & Interest; the Brigade Captain will ask you to fill out a form that will help PPMA get to know you, your interests and your desired level of involvement. Form-8 Volunteer Information & Interest should be turned over to the Brigade Captain, Team Leader, or sent to the main PPMA office.

2. Release & Waiver of Liability; As you have decided to go on a Brigade trip you must fill out the Release and Waiver of Liability, Form-3 and insure it gets back to the Brigade Captain or you will not be allowed to go on the Brigade.

3. Clinical Preceptor Responsibility; If you are a clinician-in-training, you must discuss your status with the leadership, and complete the Form-2 Clinical Preceptor Responsibility. It must be duly signed and authorized well before departure to insure your expectations are met, and a preceptor relationship is pre-arranged.

4. Medical Clearance; If you are burdened with any medical problem that might affect your ability to meet the rigors of a Brigade, you must discuss the situation with the Brigade leadership and have duly authorized a Medical Clearance, Form-5. Again this should be done well before departure.

5. Medical Treatment for Minors; If you are a minor, discussions are necessary about oversight or chaperone needs. Whatever the understanding with the Brigade Captain, a Medical Treatment for Minors, Form-7, must be in the possession of your Team Leader before departure AND while on site in-country.

B. Other Forms

1. PPMA Forms; Your Brigade Captain will discuss other forms and documents that may have to be addressed before your trip. A complete list of PPMA forms is found elsewhere in the “For Volunteers” section.

C. On Your Person In-Country

1. Passport; You must have a valid U.S. Passport well in advance of departure. If you do not have one, ask about how to get one at your very next organizational meeting! They can easily take 8 weeks to secure. If yours is not in your possession, well in advance of departure, the Brigade Captain may be forced to seek a replacement for you on the Team.

Your passport is your most important possession on this trip. Keep it with you at all times. Leaders at the orientation meetings will discuss neck pouches, fanny packs, money belts, and ankle pockets. Wherever you store it, just make sure it's secure! Also there must be more than six months left on your valid passport before renewal is needed!!!

If you are not an American citizen, if you have dual citizenship, or plan to present a non-U.S. passport; your Brigade Captain should be told. Anything unusual, upon re-entry, will be very closely scrutinized.

2. U.S. Driver's License; you are welcome to bring it to add to your identification packet. However, it is also a sought after item by criminals. Be careful to keep it secure. Do not give it up to an "in-country official"!

3. Credit Cards; yes the markets take major American credit cards and they will accurately re-state the bill in U.S. dollars on your statement. However, bringing multiple cards is not recommended.

4. Other Cards; it is recommended that wallets be cleared of excess cards and important papers.

5. International Driver's License; if you are an experienced driver with a U.S. Commercial &/or Truck license, speak to your Team Leader or Brigade Captain. If a back up driver is deemed necessary, one may secure an "International Driver's License." In an incident, only yield that license to in-country traffic officials.

6. Clinical Credentials; Honduras and other Central American countries are really clamping down on Americans that, however well intentioned, come into the country and practice invasive medicine, dentistry, etc. at a level above what their license would allow in the States.

Therefore, your Brigade Captain pull the clinicians aside and give explicit requirements on what **training, credentials, or license materials must be presented** and WHEN they are due [Honduras will not approve the Brigade's entry until all clinical materials are complete and in their possession.].

7. Itinerary & Brigade Roster; Each Volunteer will be given a trip itinerary by the leadership before departure. It will be last minute as some un-avoidable changes will undoubtedly occur right before departure.

The Leadership will also supply you with a roster of all attendees.

It's helpful if you try to keep these forms with you in the field. It helps avoid 20 people asking the Team Leader, "When do we leave for the next site?" See section on Itinerary & Calendar.

VI. LOGISTICS

A. Brigade Type, Configuration and Balance

1. Classic Brigade Configuration; no Brigade is ever standard, and each one has its own personality. That is one of the reasons Alumni tell us they come back year after year...no two trips are ever just alike. Never-the-less there are some standard configurations. These are the classic configurations that ProPapa works toward for each trip:

2. M.E.D. Brigade; the standard Medicine, Eye, & Dental Brigade or MED Brigade is the typical set up. Although at times a focused team for dental services or eye (refraction) does go down, ProPapa prefers the services go as a group. Why? Because sending a small group takes almost as much advanced planning as it takes to send a large group. And a large group can car for more people.

a. Primary care medical team; most of the MED Brigades that go down are focused upon primary care. A group of primary care physicians can see up to hundreds of adults and children per day in rural Honduras. They can deal with well baby care, to minor illnesses and injuries that have not resolved themselves mostly due to the poverty situation. That is, the lack of knowledge, medical products, and/or physicians. They will come across a small number of serious life threatening illnesses that often require more intervention than can be given safely in the field. The caregiver here has to make a call whether to initiate care or make every effort to get the patient from the Brigade site to a hospital. A few patients will present, that are in the last stages of irreversible or terminal illness. They and there family members will be counseled by the doctor on what to expect and what might be done to make them comfortable. It seems every now and then, the locals learn of the presence of ProPapa, and they surprise us with a serious emergency or trauma case. These are difficult and greatly disrupt the operational flow, but must be dealt with, as best as possible. The physicians will be supported by nurses, lay helpers, and translators.

b. Dental extraction team; this service is best built around three dentists. The majority of what they do, given the severity of the dental disease that is seen, is to extract the badly decayed teeth. Recently, the ProPapa Dental Director has introduced “field restoration.” That’s where two dentists focus on extractions, and the third sets up a station to do fillings. The dentists are supported by trained dental assistants, lay helpers, and translators.

c. Eye refraction team; this service consist of a machine that measures the degree of sight correction a patient needs. Then pre-measured (donated) glasses are fitted to improve the patients’ sight. Ideally an optometrist leads this team, and is flanked with

lay helpers and translators. However PPMA has trained lay volunteers to measure the needed refraction and to fit the glasses. [This service is not to be confused with a specialty eye surgery brigade that can go into Honduras.]

d. Pharmacy service; when a MED Brigade goes in-country they always have a field pharmacy to dispense meds to the post dental patients and to the primary care clinic patients. It is ideally staffed by a pharmacist or pharmacy tech., but with stateside oversight by a pharmacist and experienced clinician [nurse or nurse's aide] can run the dispensing station while in the field. The lead pharmacy person needs the help of a couple lay helpers, one of which can speak Spanish.

e. Central sterilization & supply service; perhaps one of the most important stations when out in the field is the lay persons who take care of the field sterilization of dental instruments and surgical instruments, as well as overseeing supplies. They have to insure all stations are well supplied, that supplies are clean, well displayed, secure from pilferage, appropriate for that day's trip, packaged properly, and that the total supplies last the entire brigade outing. Plus, at the end of each day, contagions must be bagged and disposed of properly. These tasks are managed by a lay team.

e. Public Health & Education Team; we would like to say that each & every MED Brigade also has attached to it a team that plans and delivers Public Health Information lectures. Alas, PPMA has not been very successful in designing and delivering this much needed information to children or adults. If you have this interest or skills, please make it known to your Brigade leadership.

3. Construction Brigade; PPMA has helped on several unique projects to better particular villages, however, most construction Brigades focus on building modest homes for the very poor.

a. Habitat Home; the Director of Construction with input from those in the field approves a standard design for modest habitat homes for very needy families. The advance team carefully screens village locations and the needs of each family that has expressed interest in a cinder block home. They are chosen on the basis of need, ability to help, clear land title, safety from flood damage, and some discernable ability to pay the modest reduced mortgage over time. An experienced project foreman will be present on site, and will have put many details and preparations in motion before the Construction Team's arrival.

The construction team does not have to be skilled...just possess willing hearts and able backs! However it does help move things along if there is someone on the team with masonry, carpentry, and construction experience.

The cost of materials is covered in advance by ProPapa donations or the Construction Teams fund raising efforts in advance of the trip.

Why doesn't ProPapa just work with Habitat for Humanity? That door certainly remains open. However, Habitat has very strict home specifications, from which they will not deviate. They concentrate on urban construction sites. If a house of those specs. were built in some of the villages PPMA serves, it would be the nicest house in the region. Hence, we follow the advice of our in-country advisors. The Director does recommend improvements in our designs, from time to time. ProPapa hopes to reach its 100th home in the very near future.

Construction Brigades typically travel with MED Brigades, and then are referred to as a MEDIC Brigade (Medical, Eye, Dental, Including Construction). Again this is done to achieve a critical mass for expense purposes, and to make the best use of in-country resources.

b. Public Works; ProPapa will also send Teams that wish to build schools, and other public works. PPMA does shy away from building churches, since there are several other charities that attend to such missions.

4. Specialty Brigade; periodically, surgeons and other clinicians are able to address the need for specialized surgical intervention for the poor. These trips take significant planning and are often unique in their focus. They can target rural area, but most often have to be coupled with regional hospital or large urban hospitals. They have a different feel than the rural brigades, but have the ability to bring surgery to the poor who without the Specialty Brigades would not have the chance for corrective surgery.

B. Packing

1. Be Prudent & Practical; everything that you pack, not only will you lug it around airports, but your teammates at one time or another will be trying to hoist your bags into the back of a truck. Please pack light. Bring only what is needed. This is a third world experience, not a tropical fashion show.

2. Baggage & Bins; Each year ProPapa is trying to ship as many of the needed supplies down in advance of the Brigade, but for now, you will be needed to help transport medicines and medical supplies. Your Brigade leaders will discuss this in detail at your orientation meetings. Unless you are told otherwise; this is what you are allowed to bring:

- A large luggage piece for your personal belongings, kept under fifty pounds. Used is best. Limited to 62 linear inches.
- A second luggage piece or PPMA bin will be reserved for medicine & supplies. Limited to 50 lbs. & 62 linear inches.

- A carry on bag that will fit in the overhead bins will be for your personal items; plus perhaps some select medical handheld equipment or instruments. Forty pound limit & 45 linear inches.
- Also, you are allowed a personal bag; a small daypack or shoulder satchel.
- ProPapa recommends a neck pouch, ankle safe, or small fanny pack for your passport.

3. Managing Lost Bags; at times it does happen that bags are misrouted by the airlines. This can become ore than a small annoyance when you're heading out to the hinterlands. Thus pack personal medications, a change of underwear, and essential toiletries in your carry on bag.

4. Customs; can be a burden arriving in-country and/or returning to the States. Do not jeopardize the processing of the entire team by pushing the limits on any disallowed items. Make sure all personal meds are well labeled. Adhere closely to the requirements and instructions. Carry your passport on your person during flights, as you will be asked to fill out information from your passport during flight.

5. Packing Lists; suggested packing lists will be handed out by your Brigade Captain or you may go to the ProPapa website and click on the navigation button marked "For Volunteers." Locate the packing list, PPMA Form-1, and download it. Also download and review Form-9, Current Departure Instructions with your Brigade Captain.

C. Communications

1. **Phone Service;** Volunteers are not likely to have access to a phone in the field. At various stop over points there will be public pay phones. One can try and use calling cards that have international service between Central America and the States.
 - a. Calling home collect can be done fairly easily. Operators do speak English.
2. **Cell Phones;** Your Brigade leaders will have cell phones for emergencies. You are strongly urged NOT to bring cell phones. They are easily lost, stolen or damaged. And in fact, their use disrupts the communication between you and your teammates that should occur during your Brigade experience. Cell phones are also viewed by the disadvantaged Hondurans as another obvious symbol of American wealth & excess.
 - a. **CELL PHONES ARE ABSOLUTELY NOT TO BE USED AT THE WORK SITE.**
 - b. If the Brigade Captain & the Volunteers allow them on the trip, the narrow window for their use is at night, after the work day is completed, after the evening meal, after the Team Meeting and before 10PM local time. It's preferable to use them outside, a distance from the sleeping quarters.
 - c. They also can be used during R&R days.
 - d. They also can be used during the trip into Honduras and the trip home.

3. International Satellite Phones; are allowed on the trip. However, they are expensive, bulky and often require the user to go to some lengths to use them; for example, go to the roof of a building, clearing, or hill top. Thus they are not recommended.

4. Lap Tops; Volunteers are strongly encouraged NOT to bring lap top computers on the trip. Every additional pound makes a difference, and they are easily lost, stolen or damaged.

5. Handheld PDA's; Similarly, PDA's should stay at home.

6. Journals; What is strongly encouraged is for Volunteers to record their experiences, impressions, observations, and emotions during their stay. A vivid description of a day in the clinic will tug on your heart strings when back in the States or when you reflect on your experience years later.

7. Letters Home; There will be drop off points for mail at various stops. But you will most certainly beat most of the mail home. But letter writing is welcomed and stamps can be purchased at some stops.

8. Emergency Contact Person-Stateside; You will be requested to select and submit the name, relationship to you, and contact numbers for someone you wish notified in case of an emergency.

- a. The trip planners may also ask that the group ask someone remaining in the States to be the general group contact person.. This person is used as a centralized communication hub for the entire group. If there is an event in Honduras during the trip, this person maybe contacted and asked to contact **all of the emergency contact numbers**, to put them at ease that the event did NOT affect the Brigade.

9. Emergency Contact Number; In-Country; In the orientation meeting you will be given a number for those at home to contact an in-country liaison ONLY IN THE CASE OF A TRUE EMERGENCY. ProPapa does not want to have a staff person track you down so you can hear that..."She did deliver, and it is a baby boy."

D. Donations

1. To PPMA; donations outside of Brigade Trip Fees are always welcome. They are very much needed to support various missions within ProPapa. However you will not be pressured to donate as part of the brigade experience. Please do go to the PPMA website and click on the Donation navigation button to learn how you can help.

2. In-Country Handouts; please refer back to the earlier section on serving as an "Ambassador" of ProPapa and the America, III.B.3.

3. Substantive In-Country Gifts; You should not be solicited to make gifts by any of the advanced team to make gifts to sister charities. However, if you are so compelled, PPMA leader can get you the proper contact information you need.

- a. Substantive gifts to in-country helpers...please refer back to the section on being an "Ambassador", III.B.3.

4. Leave Behinds; you will be encouraged to bring used clothing, luggage, or other items so as not to flaunt our American material belongings, but also to allow

or encourage you to think about leaving clothing items behind. The in-country staff will make sure they get distributed to the needy in their work region.

E. Expenses, Payments, & Finances

1. Self Supporting: ProPapa is dependent upon the generous donations from benefactors that are put toward other mission priorities. Therefore, the Brigades must be financially self supporting. The “**trip fee**” from attendees, paid in full in advance of departure, needs to cover anticipated trip room, board, travel, and other related expenses; plus allow the Brigade Captain to have an emergency buffer.

2. Supply Help: ProPapa would be grateful if Volunteers would be willing to solicit hospitals, physicians, drug companies and others to receive donations of medical supplies, medications, instruments, etc. to defray Brigade expenses.

3. Emergency Buffer: Your trip leaders will set a tight budget. They are instructed to provide for a buffer of fees slightly over anticipated expenses to allow for coverage of unexpected in-country emergencies. If no emergencies occur on the trip; the Board will direct excess fees toward future operations.

4. Outline of Brigade Expenses Covered; Please review and discuss the outline below at your orientation meeting. You should understand the handling of trip expenses or ask questions.

ACTIVITY	PAYOR
Advance planning; in country	PPH
Brigade planning meeting(s); in U.S.	Pot Luck
Prophylactic inoculations	Self Pay.
Air Fare; coach class	PPMA
Group transportation to airport	Team Pay
Personal transportation to airport	Self Pay
Team ground transportation in country	PPMA
Overnight stays in country	PPMA
Base camp food and lodging	PPMA
Outreach village food and lodging	PPMA or Village
Team ground transportation to and from R&R location	PPMA
Lodging over planned R&R stay	PPMA
Food and entertainment during R&R days	Self Pay
Day trips; food, lodging and entertainment	Self Pay
Translator expense while supporting teams	PPMA
Inviting translators, all or none, to R&R stay	Team Pay
Prophylactic oral medicines	PPMA
Departure hotel & despedida	PPMA
Hotel upgrades; are STRONGLY discouraged	N/A
Specialty Brigades; in-city-meals	Team Pay's
Patient medicines; purchased or donated	PPMA

Medical/Dental/Eye/Surgical Supplies; purchased or donated	PPMA
Country "Exit Fees"	Self Pay

F. Flights & Ground Transportation

1. Air Carrier; ProPapa works with several airlines to select the most appropriate U.S. carrier. Price, reliability, and weight restrictions are the leading factors. PPMA will choose the carrier. If you live in the same city as the main body of Volunteers you are expected to fly the selected carrier, as this keeps the price down for all concerned.

If you are in a remote city, discuss with the Brigade Captain how you will link up with the main body while still in the U.S.

a. Miami and Houston are the preferred departure sites to leave the country.

2. Stateside Ground; the organizers will discuss with the group if a common licensed ground carrier [bus] is desired to get the group to the airport. It can be a group decision. Please be clear on whether the bus trip cost is included in the overall trip fee or otherwise.

3. Wake Up Calls; every now and then the departure is delayed because one or two people over slept. This can really disrupt the itinerary. Multiple alarm clocks and/or a wake up call tree is very much recommended. Redundancy is a must to insure all are on time!

4. In-Country Ground Transportation; will be arranged and managed by the Brigade leadership and the Advance Team. It may be a mishmash of pick up trucks, buses, banana trucks, etc., but they will get the group to where they are going.

G. Itinerary & Calendar

1. Calendar; the typical Brigades are eleven to fourteen days in length. Departures are often on Thursdays to take advantage of two weekends. One of the first group decisions must be confirming the trip length and dates.

2. Classic trip format; the standard 'MEDIC' Brigade is 1 Day of travel, 3 to 4 Days of On-Site Work, 1 Day of R&R, 3 to 4 Days of Work, and 1 Day of Travel.

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