

# Good Shepherd Volunteers International Handbook



## Embrace the World!

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# Contents

## **GSV Mission and Philosophy**

### **I. Introduction**

- History of Good Shepherd Volunteers
- Profile of GSV

### **II. Characteristics and Qualifications**

- Desirable Characteristics
- Collaboration
- Specific Qualifications

### **III. Recruitment and Training**

- Selection Process
- Application
- Acceptance
- Orientation
- Re-Orientation upon Return to the U.S.

### **IV. Pre-Departure Preparations**

- Personal Belongings
- Medical
- Visas and Passports
- Taxes
- Student Loan Deferment
- Living Will and Last Will and Testament

### **V. In the Host Country: Program**

- Orientation
- In-Country Support
- Retreats/Days of Reflection
- Vacation/Family Visits
- Donations to Country/Host Site
- Travel
- Renewal
- Emergency Procedure

### **VI. In the Host Country: Personal Behavior**

- Living Within Stipend
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Dating and Personal Relationships
- Housing/Utilities

### **VII. Financial Matters**

- Stipend
- Insurance
- Re-Entry Retreat
- Program Budgeting and Funding
- Fundraising Efforts
- Summary of Cost Allocation



# GSV MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

## **Good Shepherd Volunteers Mission Statement**

Good Shepherd Volunteers collaborates with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to provide full-time Volunteers with the opportunity to work in social service ministries and to use their God-given talents serving women, adolescents, and children affected by poverty, violence, and neglect. Developing relationships with the marginalized of our world empowers volunteers to grow in knowledge and faith that inspire them to lead lives seeking justice.

Good Shepherd Volunteers commits to the philosophy of the four tenets described below.

### **Social Justice**

Volunteers have the opportunity to better understand the realities of poverty in our community and world through developing relationships with those they serve. Through increased knowledge and understanding of systemic challenges, volunteers will be a voice for positive change in our world.

### **Community**

Volunteers live in an intentional community where they provide support to one another, share their experiences of service, and commit to building open and honest relationships. Volunteers work together to set community goals and challenge one another to live a life of simplicity in solidarity with those they serve.

### **Simplicity**

Through personal commitment and creative use of resources, volunteers have the opportunity to develop a lifestyle that is socially and economically responsible. Volunteers may challenge one another to redefine their needs and live a conscientious lifestyle.

### **Spirituality**

Volunteers have the opportunity to enhance their spirituality through reflection and action throughout their service experience. Through retreats, community reflection and other gatherings, volunteers can challenge themselves to put their faith into action.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **HISTORY OF GOOD SHEPHERD VOLUNTEERS**

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 by St. Mary Euphrasia and has grown into an international religious community, living and working in sixty-seven countries. St. Mary Euphrasia knew the pain and brokenness of humanity. Her vision was of human wholeness and insight

into the dignity and worth of each person. This vision and insight inspires the worldwide efforts of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd mission today that extends mercy and care to people suffering injustice, oppression and alienation. Their spirit of reconciliation seeks to heal broken relationships and promote peace and justice despite the many conflicts in our worldwide community.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd collaborates with a variety of professionals and those who share their values and commitment to uphold the dignity of each person. In this work, the sisters and volunteers have the opportunity to express their faith and spirituality through action while sharing in the compassion and care of those most in need.

In this spirit, Good Shepherd Volunteers (GSV) was established in 1992 to invite lay volunteers to share in the charism of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd by working in social service programs in the United States founded and/or managed by them. From its early stages Good Shepherd Volunteers has been international, attracting volunteers from Europe and Africa. In 1996, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd challenged themselves to “make full use of our internationality. . . by networking with local, national, and international interfaith organizations in order to influence and change structures that create an ever- widening gap between the poor and rich.” With the support and encouragement of the congregation, Good Shepherd Volunteers extended its outreach to Paraguay, and later to other countries in Latin America. Today, the volunteers who serve internationally work closely with the sisters in their ministries of outreach to those most in need. In solidarity with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, the volunteers build relationships with people in the local community. Through these experiences and interactions, the volunteers begin to grasp the complexities of global poverty and assist in meeting the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of women and children internationally.

The growth of GSV has responded to St. Mary Euphrasia’s call to “embrace the world” and assist women, adolescents, and children most in need. Collaborating with lay people to provide community care and outreach around the world strengthens the sisters’ mission and identity. Today, GSV has over 100 alumni throughout the U.S. and overseas. Many GSV alumni continue to share in the charism of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd through work in Good Shepherd-sponsored programs and in the fields of social work, education, and advocacy.

## **PROFILE OF GSV**

Good Shepherd Volunteers is incorporated as a nonprofit organization sponsored and funded by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and governed by a 12 member Board of Directors comprised of Sisters of the Good Shepherd, former volunteers, nonprofit administrators, and skilled professionals. GSV staff in New York, NY implements the daily administration of the program.

GSV manages two different programs of voluntary service: the domestic program that has opportunities for service in the U.S. and the international program that has opportunities for service abroad.

## **II. CHARACTERISTICS and QUALIFICATIONS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER**

GSV staff screens applicants carefully, and encourages candidates to be honest in examining their motives, their suitability and their readiness to serve internationally.

## DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS

- The Good Shepherd Volunteer must be prepared to participate in a culture that is completely different from that of the United States. This requires a high degree of *self-awareness*, and recognition of the peculiarities of one's own cultural background. It also requires *receptivity* to people who do not share, and might not understand or even respect, that background.
- Good Shepherd Volunteers work in communities that suffer from extreme poverty, and each volunteer is expected to share in that experience of poverty. The Good Shepherd Volunteer must have the *flexibility and freedom* to be effective and satisfied while working without familiar material advantages and modern comforts.
- Idealism and energy are essential to any service experience. With regard to the complexity of the problems people face, the slow pace of social change, and the lack of resources for development, GSV looks particularly for *realistic expectations* of what can be accomplished. Part of this realism is an understanding that the greatest changes to result from a Good Shepherd Volunteer's mission might occur in the mind and heart of the volunteer rather than in the objective social situation for which they are working. GSV looks for *humility* in the face of such changes.
- Finally, because the Good Shepherd Volunteer is being sent to engage in social work (and not, for example, engineering or scientific research), *strong social skills* are essential. These include a *genuine interest in other people* (and not just in their problems or potential growth), a *collaborative style* of working and playing, and a well developed *sense of humor*.

## COLLABORATION

A central concept in our international program is collaboration. We do not assume that we know what is best for the communities in which we serve, or that we are here merely to give to people in need. Rather, we recognize that each community has a unique set of cultural practices, gifts, and needs. By observing, inquiring, and building relationships, volunteers can more fully understand the local community and their place in it. Through this learning process they are able to collaborate with others to meet the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of women and children.

GSV encourages opportunities for volunteers to learn more about local culture. This can include meeting with local historians or authorities, reading about the country's history, politics, and society, and getting acquainted with local churches, classes at universities or schools, or other international organizations based in the country. And, of course, the most important people to build relationships with are the people whom the volunteers work in their worksites.

The staff of GSV also works collaboratively with the Sisters and lay people within each country. Together with the receiving communities, we are in an ongoing dialog about how to constantly improve our program. When there are changes in the GSV program, those changes occur through a collective decision-making process involving GSV staff, the Sisters and lay people, and input from current and former volunteers.

As a whole, collaboration allows for a more sustainable, long-term vision for change in the community. Through relationship-building, we aim to help the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd build their capacity over the years to come. This spirit of solidarity is very much alive in the history of the Good Shepherd

mission. In the words of Saint Mary Euphrasia, Foundress of the Good Shepherd, “I am no longer French. I am Italian, English, Spanish, African...I belong to every country where people need to know God’s saving love.”

### **SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS**

- **Spanish Language Skills.** For Spanish-speaking placements, GSV requires a foundation of speaking and writing ability in Spanish, and this ability must be demonstrated to GSV staff. There are sometimes other local languages spoken (such as Quechua and Guarani in Latin America, for example). The Good Shepherd Volunteer should be prepared to make an effort to learn at least some of the local indigenous language and to develop as much additional Spanish fluency as possible while in the host country. This includes obtaining necessary learning materials and studying during free time.
- **International Experience.** The volunteer must have some international exposure to another culture through a study abroad program, working abroad, and/or international service experience.
- **Age.** All volunteers must be 21 years of age or older. There is no maximum age limit.
- **Education.** The volunteer must be a high school graduate. Also, the Volunteer needs to have some college education or two years relevant work experience.
- **Religious Orientation.** GSV welcomes volunteers of all religious backgrounds. Volunteers must be open to working side-by-side with Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who are of the Catholic faith.
- **Health.** The volunteer needs to be of good health with nothing that could hinder the completion of his or her service commitment. The Medical Form in the GSV International Application helps to determine this.

## **III. RECRUITMENT AND**

International volunteers with GSV make a commitment to work in solidarity with the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Volunteers have the opportunity to work with the sisters and lay associates in the ministry of outreach and care of those challenged by poverty and injustice. While cross-cultural ministry is intense and challenging, the experience will also be one of growth and self-awareness.

Committing to international service is a generous gift. GSV invites candidates into a process of mutual discernment where candidates and GSV staff have the opportunity to reflect on the process and the potential experience through dialogue and discussion. The process for selecting international volunteers is composed of several elements outlined below.

### **SELECTION PROCESS**

GSV has a responsibility to itself, to its supporters and benefactors, to those applying to become volunteers, and to the people with whom collaborators will work with in-country, to do everything possible to select and prepare volunteers with great care. From the beginning of the selection process,

the GSV staff attempts to engage the applicant in the process, hoping to make it not just a mechanism of selection or rejection, but a mutual learning experience.

## **APPLICATION**

Candidates for GSV initiate the selection process by submitting a completed application form and references. A copy of the application form can be downloaded from the GSV web site at [www.gsvolunteers.org](http://www.gsvolunteers.org). The GSV staff is available to assist with any questions raised by the application form or the selection process.

The GSV staff reviews each application carefully, contacts references where appropriate, and seeks additional information from the applicant when needed. After the initial screening, the GSV Admissions Board reviews the application in its entirety. A member of the GSV staff will interview applicants that meet the program requirements. The interview may be in person when convenient; otherwise the interview will be conducted by telephone. Frequent exchange between the staff and the applicant even at this first stage is expected and encouraged. After the interview, the candidate may be invited to participate in a follow-up interview by phone. Also, they are asked to complete the NEO-PIR psychological exam.

## **ACCEPTANCE**

Following the application process, GSV staff considers all the information available regarding each individual applicant, and decides whether to accept that applicant into GSV.

Candidates accepted into GSV will receive an acceptance letter, and will be asked to sign the GSV International Site Placement Agreement based on the terms and conditions listed in the GSV International Handbook. The signed letter will confirm his or her acceptance into GSV.

*GSV emphasizes that acceptance into the program is necessarily conditional. GSV, in fulfillment of its responsibility to various parties in the program, retains the right to terminate any accepted candidate's preparation for mission because of developments during formation/orientation, new information about the candidate from another source, inappropriate behavior of any sort prior to departure, while on mission or, in the discretion of the GSV staff, or for any other reason.*

## **ORIENTATION**

The GSV volunteer term starts with Orientation for both domestic and international volunteers for one week during August. This provides volunteers with the opportunity to meet each other, learn more about the congregation of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and about the GSV mission and philosophy. Domestic and international volunteers are formally commissioned at a liturgy at the closing of orientation. Volunteers are responsible for travel expenses to the GSV Orientation.

Following Orientation, there is a short (3-5 days) International Orientation that takes place immediately afterward. At that point, volunteers travel to their placements abroad.

## **RE-ORIENTATION UPON RETURN TO THE U.S.**

GSV provides a re-entry retreat/workshop for all international volunteers who have completed their service commitment. Typically, the workshop is not offered earlier than three months after the date of re-entry. This opportunity allows the returned volunteers to share and process their experiences in

mission and assists in the transition on the new journey after international service. Other topics at the re-entry retreat include transitioning to employment, making sense of experiences, creating continuity for what has been learned, possibilities for future service work, etc. Attendance at the re-entry retreat weekend is mandatory and constitutes formal completion of the volunteer's service. GSV will cover the costs of transportation to and from the retreat as well as the retreat fees.

## IV. PRE-DEPARTURE

### PERSONAL BELONGINGS

In preparing for departure, the Good Shepherd Volunteer should keep in mind the entire context of the experience that is about to begin, including the GSV Mission and Philosophy. In particular, when considering what to bring, the guiding principle should be that "community implies simplicity of life and solidarity with the poor". A simple lifestyle helps focus on what is important. Attempts to create community with people living in poverty may be harmed by the appearance of wealth.

Due to the level of poverty, statistics show that a third of volunteers internationally are victims of significant thefts of their personal property. There is the additional risk of accidental damage or loss of personal property. In many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair are not available.

Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. GSV does not provide insurance coverage for personal items and will not reimburse volunteers for damages or losses of items. GSV recommends that volunteers not ship or take high value items such as jewelry, expensive watches, radios, and photography equipment. In addition, volunteers are not permitted to have computers/laptops, cell phones, video cameras, and other items of this nature during their service.

### MEDICAL

**Each Good Shepherd volunteer is responsible for making proper medical preparations prior to departure on mission.** GSV staff will provide as much information and assistance as possible, but the volunteer is responsible for the following:

- A **detailed medical examination** by a doctor who is aware that the collaborator intends to spend one year or more internationally.
- **Immunizations and other vaccinations.** The volunteer should consult the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) to obtain a list of any required vaccines and immunizations.
- The volunteer must discuss **current medical needs** with his or her doctor such as asthma medication, allergy treatment, personal prescriptions, etc. as **the health insurance coverage provided by GSV does not include coverage of pre-existing conditions.** Existing dental problems should be treated prior to departure. Eyeglass or contact lens prescriptions should be brought up to date. Volunteers should bring copies of existing prescriptions with them to their host country.

The volunteer's current health coverage may cover some or all of the preparations listed above. The insurance provided by GSV covers the period beginning with departure, but not pre-departure medical costs.

Each volunteer must obtain and present to the GSV staff his/her yellow immunization card from his or her doctor in order to keep track of the administered vaccinations. The staff will make a copy of the card for the office records.

## **VISAS AND PASSPORTS**

**Each Good Shepherd volunteer is responsible for obtaining his or her own passport and visa.** GSV staff will pay for the expenses of obtaining a Visa. Useful travel information and regulation is posted at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. Embassy contacts for obtaining visas are listed below.

Embassy of Bolivia  
3014 Mass. Ave NW  
Washington DC, 20008  
Tel: (202) 483-4410

Embassy of Paraguay  
2400 Mass. Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20008  
Tel: (202) 483-6960, 6961, 6962

## **TAXES**

Volunteers remain responsible for their own personal U.S. tax liability (e.g., income taxes owed on wages earned prior to and/or following the completion of the term of service, on Social Security or pension payments, or on investment income.) Each volunteer is fully responsible for filing any required U.S. tax documents before, during, and following his or her term of service. To the extent possible, arrangements should be made before departure to minimize any effect these responsibilities might have on the volunteer's attention to service during the mission.

## **STUDENT LOAN DEFERMENT**

Good Shepherd volunteers might qualify for deferment or repayment of their student loans during their term of service. Each volunteer is responsible for determining the eligibility of his or her student loans for deferment, for obtaining and completing the relevant forms and for submitting the forms to their lender(s) for processing.

## **LIVING WILL AND LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT**

GSV strongly suggests that the volunteer consider a Living Will. If the volunteer decides to do so, it is recommended that he or she consult with their doctor. GSV also encourages the volunteer to consider establishing a Last Will and Testament prior to departure.

# **V. IN THE HOST COUNTRY: PROGRAM**

## **ORIENTATION UPON ARRIVAL IN HOST COUNTRY**

The volunteer is given time to acclimate and transition to life in the host country. To soften the effects of cultural shock, there should be time to adjust to the time difference, climate, geography, and food. Volunteers will also be welcomed by the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd, friends, and staff, and introduced to the Good Shepherd work site(s) and the local area in which they will live and work.

It must be noted that while there is an expectation for the Sisters and Good Shepherd community to provide an orientation to the volunteers, *the details of orientation vary from one placement to another*. GSV encourages a spirit of flexibility, adaptability, and sense of humor during orientation.

## **IN-COUNTRY SUPPORT**

GSV volunteers have a support network in-country that usually consists of Sisters and lay people. There is a main coordinator, most often a Good Shepherd Sister, who oversees the overall GSV volunteer experience and is in contact with the GSV staff. In addition there is a supervisor at the work site(s) who oversees the volunteer in their work responsibilities. There may also be friends, spiritual directors, or other social supports in the community.

The exact nature and character of this support varies according to placement. In placements where GSV has only recently been established, these supports are few, and the volunteers need to play a role in finding resource people.

## **RETREATS/ DAYS OF REFLECTION**

GSV encourages the volunteers to initiate reflection days with the sisters, lay associates and co-workers in country. In some instances, the sisters may have a community where regular gatherings and retreats occur. In other situations, more initiative will have to be taken by the volunteers and the support person to initiate such retreats or find them in other groups, parishes, etc. GSV staff will facilitate days of reflection/retreats with the volunteers during their GSV site visits. We can also help provide materials for self-guided retreats.

## **VACATION/FAMILY VISITS**

To complete the process of cultural adaptation, and to establish solid positive relations with the local people in the host country, the Good Shepherd volunteer is strongly encouraged to stay at or near the placement site for six months after arrival.

After six months the volunteer is free to take vacation, assuming that both work supervisors and the host community of Sisters of the Good Shepherd agree. Periods where there is a low level of activity or "down time" at the work sites are the preferable times for vacation. A total of 3-4 weeks of vacation per year is allowable for volunteers. Requested time off should be coordinated with the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd and/or site supervisors one month prior to the vacation time. During the last 1-2 months of the service commitment, volunteers are usually very busy with good-byes and finishing projects, and these months should not to be used for vacation.

In the spirit of solidarity and simplicity with the local community, GSV strongly discourages return visits to the U.S. during the term of service. In case of death or family emergency, the volunteer may return home.

GSV encourages family and friends to visit the volunteer during his/her years of service. This can be a beautiful opportunity to welcome family and friends into the experience of service and solidarity and will also give family members and friends the context for understanding the volunteer's life abroad as well as the realities of the local community. However, the visits of family and friends should coincide with planned vacation time and not occur within the first six months of service.

The volunteer must notify the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd well in advance regarding any visits – preferably two months prior to the expected arrival of guests. Guests are solely responsible for their own needs, and neither the host Sisters nor Good Shepherd Volunteers can accept responsibility for their health or safety. Guests are also responsible to pay for their own accommodations while visiting.

### **DONATIONS TO COUNTRY/HOST SITE FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

GSV understands that the volunteer will share thoughts and reflections throughout his/her experience regarding his/her service, the situation of those they are serving, and the challenges of poverty. Upon learning about the volunteer's experiences, family and friends may want to directly provide assistance to specific ministries of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd or to other collaborating groups in the local area. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to discuss and abide by the following:

- Learn about the cultural implications that donations may have on local ministry/outreach.
- Discuss any donations received by family members or friends with GSV staff and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.
- Give any donations volunteers receive directly to the administrator of the program for distribution per normal procedures. The volunteer should refrain from distributing any donations directly to recipients unless discussed and reflected upon at length with the local support person and/or Sisters of the Good Shepherd and to learn about its implication on the ministry or expectations of the volunteer or sisters. (Also, for example, if a volunteer receives school supplies or items for students or children involved with the Good Shepherd ministries in-country, the volunteer should not use donations for her personal ministry use, but turn them into school/house/center so that other staff and beneficiaries may have access to the supplies).

While GSV appreciates the generosity of family and friends who want to be supportive and involved in the ministry in which the volunteer is engaged, it is also necessary to consider all implications and expectations of the receiving community and beneficiaries should financial resources/supplies, etc. be shared. The volunteer is sharing her/his time in service and solidarity with those most in need and to live a life of simplicity. Receiving an abundance of donations and/or supplies from external contacts may hinder the spirit of solidarity and simplicity and place a burden of expectations on current volunteers and/or sisters. It also can have dangerous implications in terms of expectations of volunteers who come afterward.

GSV asks that the volunteers remember their purpose of serving to live and learn in solidarity and in the spirit of mutuality. This, above all, should guide the volunteer in any and all actions. GSV staff is happy

to discuss any questions about the above with the volunteers prior to departure and throughout their service.

## **TRAVEL**

GSV pays for the original journey to the placement site and for the return journey from the mission site at the end of the term of service. Travel unrelated to the mission is at the volunteer's personal expense.

In the event of voluntary termination the volunteer forfeits any entitlement to return travel expenses. In the event of termination initiated by GSV or host country/site the return travel will be covered by GSV as stated above. The volunteer will not be eligible for the readjustment allowance as a result of voluntary or involuntary termination.

## **RENEWAL**

The Good Shepherd volunteer is expected to fulfill the entire service commitment on which the program is based.

Each volunteer has the option of extending the period of service for one full year beyond the original commitment. GSV strongly suggests that any volunteer considering such an extension seek the assistance and advice of the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd, supervisors, and co-workers by March 1 of the next year of service. Additionally, in making the decision to extend his/her service, the volunteer should renew the process of discernment learned during the original selection process, as well as take into account the knowledge and experience during the first term of service. GSV staff with the help of the local Sisters and co-workers will make the final decision

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURE**

GSV reserves the right to terminate the mission for the volunteer in cases of political/social instability. Should any emergencies occur such as accident, serious illness or natural disaster, the GSV staff must be notified as soon as possible. During situations of in-country conflict or any emergencies, GSV staff will be in regular communication with local Sisters of the Good Shepherd to facilitate any decisions.

# **VI. IN THE HOST COUNTRY: PERSONAL BEHAVIOR**

International Good Shepherd volunteers are mature, responsible, and caring adults. While GSV cannot create a complete system of guidelines for behavior in the diverse and unpredictable circumstances of Good Shepherd Volunteer service, it is expected that international volunteers act responsibly and respectfully in all situations. GSV espouses one firm and unqualified rule: in every instance the volunteer's conduct should reflect the Mission and Philosophy of the Good Shepherd Volunteers program as expressed in the introduction to this handbook. Following that rule is the volunteer's responsibility to GSV and its supporters and benefactors, to fellow volunteers, to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd locally and internationally, and to the people to whom the volunteer is sent on mission.

GSV staff will make every effort to understand and resolve problems that might arise in regard to a volunteer's conduct. Ultimately, however, a volunteer's failure to behave in keeping with the GSV Mission and Philosophy may result in the GSV staff terminating the volunteer's service.

### **LIVING WITHIN STIPEND**

The Good Shepherd volunteer works deliberately and by choice among the poor, and with churches and other organizations struggling to obtain justice with the poor. The volunteer is therefore expected to live within the limitations created by the stipend provided. For the same reason, salaried part-time jobs and additional education, aside from training relevant to the volunteer's placement, are not permitted.

### **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL**

The use of any substance that is illegal in the area where the volunteer is living is strictly forbidden. Equally important is that the *abuse* of any such substance, legal or not, with resulting illness or diminished judgment, is strictly forbidden.

Even the proper use of alcohol or other substances that are legal in that place (whether or not they are legal in the U.S.) raises many difficult issues. The cultural meaning of the behavior in question, and the conclusions that local people may draw from that behavior, will rarely coincide with familiar notions within the United States. The volunteer must be alert to these challenges and willing to follow the guidance of the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd and/or co-workers to avoid misunderstanding.

### **DATING AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

The Good Shepherd volunteer is sent on mission to an entire community of people. Strong individual friendships will naturally form as well, and will be a great source of strength and support for the volunteer. It is also possible that cultural adjustment and loneliness could make the volunteer susceptible to excessive involvement or dependence on one person. This is an understandable development, but one that can damage the volunteer's mission and ability to choose a balanced and healthy lifestyle. The same may be said about an inability or unwillingness to be open and helpful to one person or group of persons. No matter how justified, the unwillingness to be open to mutuality in relationships can damage the volunteer's mission and relationship with the host community.

Romantic relationships do tend to have a profound effect on community life, and sometimes on volunteers' work experience. For this reason volunteers should feel open to share if they are in a relationship. That said, GSV respects volunteers' personal privacy and recognizes the responsibility of volunteers to make mature, adult decisions.

Good Shepherd Volunteers requires its volunteers to maintain professional and ethical boundaries in all dealings and interactions with participants both at the service site and outside of work. Policy of Good Shepherd Volunteers prohibits volunteers from engaging in any type of dating and/or sexual/intimate relationship with participants in Good Shepherd clinical, counseling, and other programs. Such involvements interfere with service delivery and are considered serious conflicts of interest.

In all events, the important guideline for behavior in personal relationships is the one stated at the opening of this section: the volunteer is sent on mission to an entire community of people. This is the fundamental principle that a Good Shepherd volunteer in service should always be remembered.

## **HOUSING AND UTILITIES**

In most cases, the host community of Sisters of the Good Shepherd will provide housing for international volunteers. The volunteers live in community with one another and possibly with other associates who are volunteering/working in ministries sponsored by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in their community.

Good Shepherd volunteers are accountable for the cleanliness and upkeep of their living quarters. Maintenance problems or needed repairs should be reported to the local Sisters of the Good Shepherd. Pets are not permitted in Good Shepherd Volunteer communities.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd are responsible for providing the volunteer with a stipend for food (in some places, the volunteers will eat most meals with the Sisters or at their work sites). The Sisters and/or GSV assume the costs of utilities (water, electricity, gas, and basic telephone charges) and travel associated with service work. The volunteer pays for all international phone calls. The GSV staff recommends that volunteers obtain an international calling card, or if possible utilize online calling services such as "Skype accounts" for making such phone calls to their home country.

## **VII. FINANCIAL**

### **STIPEND**

The Good Shepherd volunteer works alongside the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, their lay associates and co-workers in structured social service and educational programs. This is a form of employment and is a serious responsibility. In recognition of this employment, the volunteer receives a stipend equal to approximately US\$100 dollars per month, usually paid in three-month installments. This amount may vary depending on the site where the volunteer is placed, but the intention is to provide enough for the volunteer to sustain themselves in a healthy, albeit simple, lifestyle.

### **INSURANCE**

GSV assumes responsibility for the volunteer's medical insurance coverage from the day of departure to their international site and, where eligible, for up to three months following completion of the service period. GSV uses the Atlas International plan through Insurance Services of America. This coverage is designed specifically for U.S. citizens living abroad. It provides emergency medical coverage and is not intended for routine primary care during the term of service. Volunteers are required to complete all primary care needs at their expense prior to departure including any eye or dental care expenses, thorough physical examination, and all required vaccines/immunizations.

*Pre-existing medical conditions are not covered by this medical plan; therefore the volunteer is responsible for the cost of any prescription medications related to a pre-existing condition. If such costs prove prohibitive to a volunteer's ability to serve with GSV, the volunteer must discuss his/her concerns with GSV staff before beginning service. It is imperative that the volunteer disclose medical history and current medical conditions/needs to the GSV staff during the application and discernment process to*

mitigate any unforeseen complications. Any expenses related to undisclosed pre-existing conditions will be the responsibility of the volunteer.

GSV will cover the volunteer's \$1,000 deductible applicable to medical expenses that are covered under the Atlas International plan. The volunteer is responsible for filling out and filing all claim forms in order to ensure that the insurance company keeps accurate records regarding payments made toward the deductible. The volunteer should submit copies of all receipts for medical expenses to GSV staff after filing the claims (with original receipts) with the insurance company so s/he can be reimbursed accordingly.

If the volunteer chooses to remain on his/her current health insurance plan, s/he must discuss the financial and medical coverage implications of this decision with the GSV staff prior to placement.

Also included in the health insurance plan is accidental dismemberment and death insurance that will cover the volunteer should the need arise.

### **RE-ENTRY RETREAT**

After 3 to 6 months of being home in the US, returned volunteers are invited to a re-entry retreat facilitated by From Mission to Mission, an organization that specializes in cross-cultural adjustment. This retreat can be very beneficial in the GSV's re-entry into their home country in dealing with the challenges therein. GSV will cover the registration for the retreat and will cover the volunteer's travel expenses to and from the retreat.

### **PROGRAM BUDGETING AND FUNDING**

It costs more than \$8,000 to send a Good Shepherd Volunteer abroad for a one-year term of service. Insurance and transportation to/from the placement site account for nearly half of these costs. Selection and training cost several thousand more, as does the administration of the program. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd in the United States provide much of the funding of these costs. Friends and benefactors of the program and former volunteers also contribute funds. These are some of the people whom the volunteer represents, and to whom the volunteer is responsible.

### **VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING EFFORTS**

GSV asks the volunteer to help meet the program's costs as well, by raising funds from family, friends, educational institutions, parishes and other organizations. Fundraising will organize contributors into a network of support and interest in GSV and in the volunteer's mission particularly. Perhaps more importantly, the volunteer then multiplies the good effects of service by reporting back during the term of service and creating a link between the support network at home and the people served at the volunteer's service site.

Volunteer fundraising should begin as soon as possible after acceptance into the program, normally in late spring. We ask that each volunteer raise **\$4000** in contributions before departure. GSV staff is prepared to assist fundraising efforts with brochures, suggestions based on previous experience, and, when possible, the help of former volunteers.

*Please note that contributions are made to GSV, not to the volunteer in whose name they are given.* Checks should be made payable to Good Shepherd Volunteers with the volunteer's name on the memo

line. Funds contributed will be applied generally as needed to achieve the goals of GSV, not necessarily to the mission of that particular volunteer. Consequently, in the event that an accepted volunteer chooses not to depart on mission, or is prevented by illness or other unforeseen circumstances from doing so, or even if the GSV staff finds it necessary to revoke admission to the program before departure, funds contributed as the result of that volunteer's fundraising efforts cannot be reimbursed to the contributors, but will be used to support the efforts of other volunteers.

## **SUMMARY OF COST ALLOCATIONS**

The list below includes all information regarding anything that has been discussed in the Handbook regarding financial matters.

*The **volunteer** is expected to pay for:*

- All medical examinations, inoculations and certifications (except in the case of 2<sup>nd</sup> year volunteers in which GSV covers the cost)
- Travel to GSV Orientation
- International phone calls
- Vacation and other travel not related to the mission assignment
- Any discretionary return travel to the U.S.
- All other expenses of a personal nature

***GSV and/or the host site** will pay for:*

- Visa expenses (however, GSV volunteer is responsible for completing all paperwork in obtaining the Visa)
- Transport from the U.S. to placement site and return transport to U.S. at the end of service
- Medical and life insurance coverage from the date of arrival in the host country to the date of departure from the host country. Short-term medical insurance coverage *where eligible* available for up to 3 months upon return.
- Housing and utilities
- Work-related travel
- Stipend
- "Mission to Mission" Re-Entry retreat