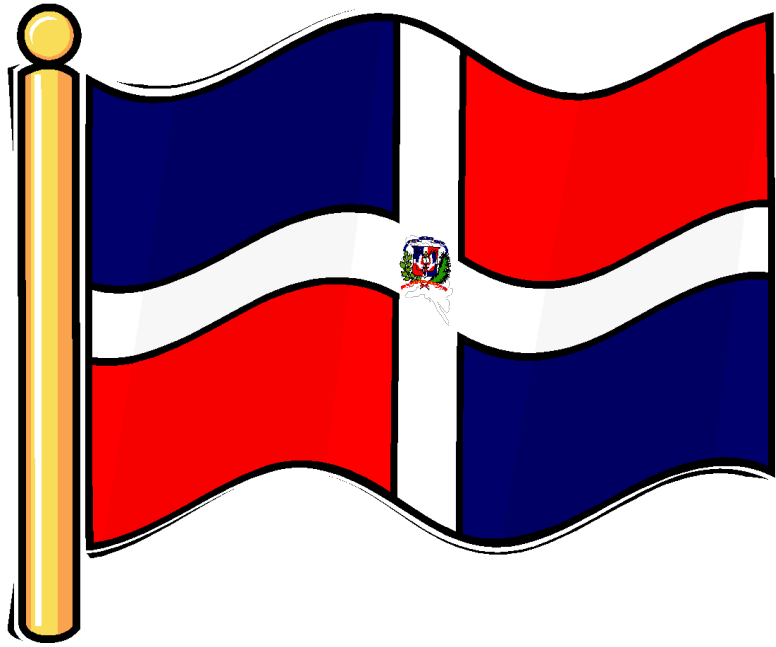


**University of Southern Maine
School of Nursing & Office of International
Programs**



**Dominican Republic Health Outreach
Program
Orientation Manual**

Revised December 2019
Mary Berg & Keiko Kurita
Board Members

Bienvenido!

Welcome to the Dominican Republic Health Outreach Program. You are about to embark on a trip that offers many rewards. For students, it is a chance to hone clinical skills alongside experienced nurses and providers, as well as to experience life and work in a different culture. The project gives volunteers a chance to share their knowledge with student nurses and to serve people in need; in some cases, patients who have been treated for years. The perspective you gain may well change the way you think about your own culture. Everyone's experience will be unique.

This manual is meant to help you plan for your trip. It is by no means complete. Please share your suggestions for additions or revisions with faculty.



The Project's History

This project is the result of a meeting between Dr. Anne Keith, then a member of the College of Nursing's faculty, and Dr. John Consoli, a physician who works as a Catholic missionary, at a restaurant in Santiago. Keith was in the Dominican Republic on a mission organized by Intercultural Nursing Inc. Their conversation about the area's health needs turned into a partnership that now spans over 20 years. It began with eight USM nursing students and several interpreters traveling to the Dominican Republic in 1995. Theirs was the first group to stay at Fusimana, the missionary center that Dr. Consoli and his wife, Jessica, operate in the village of Lajas.

That first venture has turned into a twice-a-year program. USM nursing students and faculty, along with a host of volunteers, now provide medical care, personal care and health education to more than 1500 patients in 20 rural villages. Each day, the team – often made up of as many as 50-70 people – works out of homes, schools or chapels.

They treat injuries, infection, and chronic health problems. They also teach nutrition, dental hygiene, and health education. Students must raise about \$4,500 to buy medical supplies for each trip.

To date, USM's Dominican Republic Health Outreach Project has served more than 15,000 patients.

Lodging is at Catholic Retreat Center

The program is headquartered at a Catholic retreat center in Lajas, called Fusimaña. Fusimaña is located in the mountains on the border between the Puerto Plata Province and Santiago Province, 32.4 miles south of Puerto Plata Airport. It is about an hour drive to Puerto Plata. While at Fusimaña you are asked to respect the religious nature of the center. Someone may say grace before the evening meal. Mass is offered weekly at a nearby church and occasionally at Fusimaña, though you are not required to attend. Our village clinics serve people of all faiths. Church leaders are accountable for the results of our work, and we respect their guidance and culture at all times. We use the model of promoting public health in faith communities.

Do I have to speak Spanish?

No, although it's certainly a great advantage. Interpreters from the United States and the Dominican Republic participate on the trip, so it is possible to go without knowing the language. However, we strongly recommend you learn some Spanish before the trip. Knowing some Spanish words and phrases can make a difference when working with patients and interacting with drivers and Fusimaña staff. There are Haitian communities within many of the villages that we visit, so there some patients that speak Creole and French.

Learning Spanish

For those in the Portland area, The Language Exchange offers Spanish classes at various levels, including private and semi-private classes:

<http://www.immersionprograms.com/index.php/info/Spanish>

An Introduction to Spanish for Health Care Workers: Communication and Culture, Fourth Edition, by Robert O. Chase and Clarisa B. Medina de Chase (Yale University Press) is a terrific book written by two health care workers, one of them Dominican-American, that includes online audio and video resources. yalebooks.com/medicalspanish
ISBN: 9780300212976

McGraw-Hill Education Complete Medical Spanish: Practical Medical Spanish for Quick and Confident Communication, Third Edition (2015) by Joanna Rios, Jose Fernandez Torres, and Tamara Rios. ISBN-13:9780071841887

Duolingo, Learn Spanish for free via an App on your phone. <https://www.duolingo.com/>

Active Participation

This is a demanding work experience. You will find yourself lifting box, climbing in and out of vehicles, walking over various types of terrain, and working 10-hour days. We recommend that you walk one to two miles each day at least a month prior to the trip. A medical history, physical exam performed and signed from a provider, and emergency contact form is required by USM/PRHDR. Please include any physical limitations.

Preparing for the Trip

Orientation

There will be an Orientation at USM prior to the trip for volunteers and students. Volunteers are highly encouraged to attend orientation to meet the students, other volunteers, and USM staff. There will be presentations on safety in the Dominican Republic and packing for the trip, as well as packing of medical equipment.

Passport

You need a passport that is not expired. Non-U.S. citizens must also have current documents, and some will need a special visa from the Dominican Consulate in Boston. PRHDR will need a copy of the photo page of your passport.



Get Your Passport ASAP!

For the most up-to-date information as well as all the appropriate forms, visit the U.S. Department of State's website at travel.state.gov. Routine processing time for a passport is six to eight weeks, start the process now.

In a nutshell, if you're applying for a passport for the first time, you'll need to appear in person at a passport processing center, typically a post office or courthouse (you can search for them by zip code at the State Department website). You'll have to bring photographs of yourself that meet passport requirements; you can have it taken at places like a Fed Ex Office, Wal-Mart, or even some post offices for a nominal fee. You'll also need to bring proof of U.S. citizenship, such as an original birth certificate, not a photocopy, and a valid form of photo identification, such as a driver's license. As of November 2019, a first-time passport costs \$145, payable by credit card, check, or cash. Routine processing time for a passport is six to eight weeks. Expedited service is available and takes approximately two to three weeks, but you'll pay about \$60 extra plus the cost of shipping.

If you have a passport that has expired, you can renew it by mail or online provided it was issued within the last 15 years. Details are at travel.state.gov.

What immunizations do I need?

The College of Nursing requires that you follow recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control. That means that you must be up to date on the following:

- Diphtheria–tetanus (with pertussis if booster is due)
- Typhoid (either oral live vaccine or killed injectable vaccine)
- Hepatitis A (the USM Campus Health Centers offer an inexpensive vaccine)
- Hepatitis B (series of three with new option if departure is soon)
- Polio and MMR (if you had this as a child long ago, a booster is recommended)
- Tuberculosis screening within one year (recommended.)



Malaria prophylaxis should be considered based on CDC recommendations, though we have seen no cases in our area of the Dominican Republic. Malaria is sensitive to chloroquine in the DR. Dengue viral fever, Chikungunya fever and Zika virus have been reported in DR. DEET insect repellent and cover-up clothing can reduce your exposure. For more information, read the CDC's advisories for travelers at www.cdc.gov/travel/. You should allow at least two months to complete the required immunizations. The USM Campus Health Center located in Gorham offers a travel clinic. For more information, call USM Health Services 207-780-5411.

Call the City of Portland Public Health, which offers an excellent vaccine service as well as tuberculosis skin tests through its Infectious Disease Program at 103 India St. This service is open to everyone, regardless of residence, though an appointment is required. Call 207-874-8446 for an appointment or up-to-date information on fees.

Other Travel Medicine Clinics in Maine can be found at Maine.gov.

Do I need to carry special health insurance?

Yes. You must have coverage specifically for health care and medical evacuation abroad. If you are injured, it is important to have a means to secure safe and reliable medical care and transport home. You will be exposed to tropical diseases and the potential for accidents, as is always true when traveling in third world countries.

Volunteers are asked to have current health coverage. The Volunteer Fee covers emergency evacuation through On Call International.

Packing

What should I bring?

Here's the short answer: not nearly as much as you might think. The lighter you pack, the more comfortable you and your roommate(s) will be in your room – and the more medical supplies you can carry when you board the plane. It's a good idea to talk with your roommate first to decide who will bring what. You might also want to pack your bags with the idea that you'll leave behind some items when you leave, such as bedding or shoes that are in good shape, toiletries, bugspray, and unopened snack foods. Anything we leave behind is gratefully accepted by the Peace Corps volunteers who serve as our interpreters, as well as the Fusimaña staff.

Three days' worth of clothes, max. You'll need suitable clothes for working in the clinics (more on the dress code to follow). One of the perks of Fusimaña is the terrific laundry service provided by the center's staff. Make sure you've labeled your clothes. The staff will do all of the wash and have it back to you within two days, often within 24 hours. They do ask that you wash your own underwear, so you might want to bring a small bottle of cold water detergent and a universal stopper for scrubbing in the sink. (By the way, gratuities for the staff are included in the fees you pay.)



Packing List:

Personal Items

- Make sure you pack a \$10 bill
- Backpack to take personal items to clinic.
- Fanny pack or small bag that can be on your body at all times for passport, money, etc.
- Passport (must carry on you at all times in case of emergency evacuation).
- Copy of your Health Insurance Card and passport
- Camera with memory card and batteries (there is electricity to charge batteries, but sporadic)
- Two water bottles
- Ziploc bags for personal use
- Hand Sanitizer (for your daypack/fanny pack or your room)
- Towels and washcloth (your laundry is done for you so you may want 2 of each so you don't go without waiting for yours to return)
- Underwear, socks, night wear (it can be cool)
- Sneakers, and perhaps hiking boots for home visits, and/or comfortable sandals. It can rain so prepare with footwear appropriate for walking on muddy ground and being wet.
- Swimsuit (Beach Day attire)
- Flip-flops to wear in the shower
- 3 scrubs (You are only required to wear a minimum of one scrub article each clinic day, but full scrubs are great too, not to mention very professional)

- 3 sets of casual clothing when not in clinic. This includes t-shirts, modest tank tops, shorts, capris, sundresses, skirts, one “fun” outfit for party night.
- Light fleece and/or fleece vest is recommended as the evenings in the winter can be cool (60’s °F).
- Poncho, umbrella and/or pocket-size raincoat (expect some rain, guaranteed)
Note: pack umbrella in your check in bag, they are not allowed in your carry-on
- Toothbrush, Brush/Comb (leave hair dryers at home – you often won’t have electricity, anyway)
- Tampons, sanitary pads, razors
- Sunglasses & hat
- Roll of Duct Tape
- Ear plugs (roosters and neighbors can be quite loud at night with concrete walls.)
- Flashlight and batteries (preferably head lamp for clinics and to get around at night)
- Clipboard & several pens for your assessments
- Snacks (such as energy bars, crackers, dried fruits, candy, cans of tuna – though don’t forget a can opener and mayo packets)

Coordinate with your roommate for items that can be shared.

- Insect repellent (preferably w/DEET) for your skin – essential!
- Insect spray for ants, roaches and bed bugs
- Toothpaste
- Sunscreen
- Alarm clock
- Shampoo & Soap or Body Wash (unscented if you’d like to deter mosquitos)
- Command hooks and Para cords may be useful for managing your mosquito netting and other things in your room.
- Deck of Cards/Travel Games/Cribbage (you will have down time at night)
- Bathmats/towel (showers can leak – these will help keep your floor clean)

Optional

- Battery Operated Fan
- Thin sleeping bag/light blanket, and pillow (a compressible down one is great because the pillows tend to be very thin there)
- Stethoscope (not required, but you may want your own. Clinics can get loud and not all of our stethoscopes are of the highest quality)
- Solar Water Bag (if you require hot showers)
- Books, Journal
- Bubbles, Connect the dots, Stickers, Baseballs, Colored pencils, markers. (This is Optional – it’s not possible to bring enough treats for all the children you’ll see but if you’re feeling generous and would like to bring something, you’re more than welcome. Anticipate between 20-30 children in a given village)

What do I need to work in the clinics?



Medical professional students, staff and volunteers:

You must wear a scrub top and/or scrub bottom while at clinic. A modest, plain shirt with no writing, or a t-shirt (PRHDR shirts are perfect) as your other article of clothing on clinic days. You should look like a medical professional. Pants or capris, NO shorts at clinic. Watch with a second hand. Bringing your own stethoscope is optional but recommended due to limited quality stethoscopes. A head lamp is helpful for clinical assessments as well as getting around at night. You'll need hand sanitizer for frequent use at the clinic, so you might want to buy it in a container that can be clipped on to your fanny pack. Be sure to bring pens and a clipboard. Water bottle. Snacks.

Non- medical staff and volunteers:

A modest, plain shirt with no writing, or a t-shirt (PRHDR shirts are perfect) as your other article of clothing on clinic days. Pants or capris, NO shorts at clinic. Bring a shirt with a collar for some occasions. Dressing modestly and neatly shows respect for the clients with whom you will be interacting. Hand sanitizer. Water bottle. Snacks.

What about when I'm off duty?

Modest shorts, T-shirts, thick strapped tank tops, modest sun dresses. You will be relaxing on the grounds at Fusimaña. There will always be local people present and they look to us as professional role models. Reading, journaling, card and board games, jogging, walking the grounds, chatting with your mission members are all part of the mission. Always remember to repack the bins you are assigned to for the next clinic day.

Should I pack any food?

Yes. You'll want to pack snacks as shopping is *very* limited in Lajas, and our meals will include frequent beans and rice. Two suggestions: Pack all food in Ziploc bags unless you enjoy visits from bugs and rodents. Don't pack anything with a lot of chocolate in it unless you enjoy melted chocolate. You might want to pack small cans/packages of tuna fish or potted meats, peanut butter and crackers, energy bars, cereal, candy, dried fruit or trail mix. Bring high-fiber cereals if you need this in your diet. Can opener and mayo packets are handy.

How much luggage can I take?

You can take two pieces of carry on items, one carry-on piece of luggage and one smaller personal bag/backpack. Your checked bag must weigh less than 50 pounds each. This bag will be a large duffel bag packed with medical supplies; this bag will be supplied by USM. There will be ample room and consideration for you to pack some of your own personal items. Not everyone will have a medical bag. You should pack two days' worth of clothing in your carry-on bag (in case your luggage is delayed or lost), as well as any supplies or medications you may need. Luggage is sometimes delayed. For the latest

packing regulations, visit the Transportation Security Administration's website at www.tsa.gov.

Medical Supplies



All medications are purchased in the Dominican Republic.

You may request donations of miscellaneous supplies from local churches, pharmacies, doctors' offices, and hospitals. You may also request cash donations from organizations and members of your community. Some members will receive more donations than they can carry, while others will not receive as many. At our orientation we will organize the supplies so that everyone will have a fairly equal amount to take with them. Each volunteer is strongly encouraged to raise approximately \$300 in order to provide the medications and supplies needed.

Miscellaneous supplies in need include non-latex gloves, 4-by-4 sponges, kerlex bandages, wound and ulcer care materials, cast shoes, ortho supplies such as soft support knee braces, wrist splints, hand splints, muscle rubs, walkers, wheelchairs, cushions, crutches and reading glasses.

We also need supplies to perform lab tests for pregnancy, urine leukocytes. Glucometers are accepted if they have at least 25 strips and are a standard type. We urgently need large supplies of strips with matching meters. Please consult with the team before bringing.

What to Review before the Trip

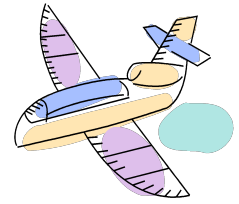
- *Physical assessment skills, especially chest, skin, and children's ears.
- *Dermatology, especially fungal diseases, scabies, infections, and leg ulcer care.
- *Formulary of medications used in clinic. Volunteers, contact Volunteer Coordinator for a list.
- *Treatment of intestinal parasite infections (pinworms and ascaris)

"Helping Health Workers Learn," by David Lerner. Available in bookstores or amazon is strongly recommended.

At Last, Fusimana!

What happens when we arrive at the airport?

We fly into Santiago. A tourist card for \$10 which is valid for 30 days will need to be purchased. ****make sure you pack a \$10 bill****. Next we collect luggage and pass through customs. You will complete an application for entry into the country. When asked to list your reason for entering the country, mark “pleasure.” Everyone helps to move all of the baggage, and you will be responsible for your own luggage, including the medical bag assigned to you. We will pack the luggage into trucks and drive in a private bus about an hour from the airport to Lajas, the village that is home to Fusimana. Be sure to take care of toileting needs before you leave the airport. Roads are bumpy. No stops.



What is Fusimana?

Fusimana is a Catholic mission retreat center for prayer. There are triple rooms with bathrooms, including flush toilets, sink and showers. Be prepared for numerous little breakdowns. Use only bottled water to brush your teeth. You can refill your water bottles from 5-gallon water jugs in the dining hall. Please help refill water jugs. **Do not put any paper in the toilet.** You'll be given plastic bags for disposal. Plumbing is very fragile!

What will we typically eat?

Breakfast: bread, ham and cheese, hot cereal, coffee, fruit, cold cereal with boxed milk, or eggs.

Lunch: Making peanut butter and jelly or cheese sandwiches for yourself is done after breakfast and you carry your own. Fruit juice will be available.



Dinner: rice and beans, chicken soup, cabbage salad, fried chicken or stewed meat, eggs, fresh local fruits and vegetables, fruit juice.



What if I am a vegetarian?

Many vegetarians have successfully completed the trip. However, it is important to be flexible. The beans may be prepared with some meat broth, but they do not have any chunks of meat. The food is served buffet-style so that you will be able to pick and choose. Vegans will not have any problem as few foods are prepared with dairy products.

Will I have a roommate?

Yes. At Fusimana the rooms are mostly triples, with metal bunk beds. If you have a roommate in mind, your request will be honored as much as possible. If you do not have

a roommate, talk with faculty or volunteer coordinator. They can help you connect with other participants. A sign-up sheet will be passed during Orientation/Packing at USM.

Are there bugs in the room?



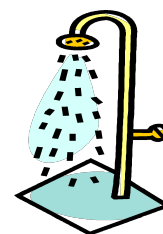
Yes, there can be ants, roaches, spiders, and centipedes. There are usually no problems with them, except for phobias individuals may have. There are also plenty of mosquitoes. You will be supplied with mosquito netting for your bed. Be sure it is tucked in on all sides of the bed and that it does not have holes (if so, duct tape is handy for patching them). You can also spray your room, bed, and net before settling in, though some students choose not to do this. We have seen a recent case or two of what we think are bedbugs.

What will I need to maintain personal hygiene?

Bring enough materials for your menstrual period. The change in temperature, along with the stress of the trip, can change your normal cycle. Even if you have just completed your menses, come prepared. Hand-wipes and a small paper bag work well when you need to change at the clinics. Although some clinics have toilets, others have outhouses. We bring TP each day to all clinics.

Can I take a shower?

Yes. The water pressure is pretty good most of the time, although it occasionally becomes low. It is often cold, so you might want to bring a solar shower bag to heat your water on the lawn while you're working in the clinic, though often at day's end a cool, refreshing shower is preferred. Remember not to get a lot of shower water into your mouth or eyes.



The Clinics

What will I do at the clinic?

Remember: We are the clinic. We will convert a school or a church into a clinic for the day. Note that this can be a very confusing time, and it is best for individuals act under the direction of the coordinator.

Students will take the patient's history, perform a physical assessment, while being mentored by professional medical volunteers, or faculty. They will review medications, findings, with the assistance of the medical volunteer, and will then consult with a nurse practitioner, physician, or rehab specialist about the course of action. Students will then deliver the meds, and education to the patient under the medical volunteer's direction. Remember to use universal precautions. Remember: You are not allowed to give out medication before consulting with the nurse practitioner or physician.

What other responsibilities will I have?

Each person is responsible for some supplies and medications. On the first day at Fusimana, you will be assigned to a specific team (GI, Pain, Cardiac, Rehab, etc) of three

to five people (students and volunteers,) unpack your supplies, inventory them, and organize them. Each day you will be sure that supplies are loaded onto the trucks. Each night you will supervise and be sure supplies are inventoried and reorganized for the next clinic. This can be a time consuming project, but it is important since most patients cannot afford to buy medications in pharmacies. They rely on us.

Everyone will be assigned dish duty for one or two meals during your stay. There will be a schedule in the dining room. This will include breakfasts and dinners. 4 people each meal. Be sure to use a cap full of bleach in both soapy and rinse water.

POD: As Person on Duty volunteers will be assigned one evening to round the grounds to ensure all doors are locked and rooms are secure. Team of 2. Bring your headlamp. This happens at about 10PM.

What is a typical day like?

We work long days. Remember, we are on Dominican time. No times are firm.

7 a.m. Breakfast in the dining room. Fill your water containers.

7:45 a.m. Start loading supply bins into trucks

8 a.m. First set of trucks leave for clinic. You are potentially at risk for accidents. There is no 911.

8:30 a.m. Arrive at the clinic site and set up to see patients.

9 a.m. to noon: See patients.

12 to 12:30 p.m.: Lunch break. If you are thirsty or hungry, please listen to your body and eat. It can be hot in the clinics and it is important to stay hydrated.

1:30 to 3:00 p.m. See patients, then break down clinic, return to Fusimaña.

3:30 p.m. Pharmacy

6-7 p.m. Dinner.

8 p.m. Daily group meeting followed by time to work on group projects. Charting is finished after bins are packed for the next day.

9 p.m. Usually we're done for the day. This is a good time to sit in the gazebo and share your experiences with classmates and volunteers.



What can I do in my free time?

You can walk around Fusimaña. There are lovely paths around the compound with places to sit and meditate. You can walk along the road and meet and talk with the local people at your leisure. You might enjoy walking to a nearby fruit stand to sample local produce. There is also a colmado, or small store, where you can buy soda and other refreshments. You can purchase internet cards at the colmado at the bottom of the hill. You will receive a code that will enable the use of internet on your device for a day or two so that you can occasionally check your email or contact home (keep in mind that Wi-Fi reception is spotty). Students and volunteers must never leave the compound alone, and ALWAYS walk single file when on foot. The roads have many turns and pedestrians do NOT have the right of way, EVER.



You'll also have one free day for fun at the beautiful beach of Puerto Plata. You may choose to haggle with shopkeepers, enjoy lunch at a restaurant along the water, or simply enjoy a day by the pool. You can swim in the ocean there, but only in town. The surf is dangerous elsewhere.

The use of substances, marijuana, or drugs is illegal and forbidden. Smoking should be minimal and not near any building or home. Beer or wine is strictly limited to the hour before dinner. Hard liquor is prohibited. These policies must be followed for the good of the group and the community we come to serve.

How much money will I need?

You will need \$10 to pay for a tourist visa at the airport. You'll pay for your own meals in Puerto Plata, where lunch can range from \$5 on the street to \$20 at a nice restaurant on the beach. Typically, students also like to buy gifts as well such as jewelry, homemade baskets, coffee, and vanilla, so plan accordingly. Sometimes a local jewelry maker or basket maker will come to Fusimaña to display and sell their items, which are often more affordable than purchasing such items in Puerto Plata. We suggest at least \$100. We do not recommend that you use ATM cards or credit cards except for back up as there have several scams against our members. Lucky people may tell you otherwise, but beware. You can exchange money at the airport when we land, but if you are holding out for tourist shopping, you can often get a better exchange rate in Puerto Plata. Just bear in mind that the beach day is often not until the end of the trip, so again, plan accordingly.

How is the weather?

It is tropical and beautiful. In the winter, days are warm and sunny with temperatures ranging from the high seventies to mid-nineties. In the summer, the temperature is in the eighties or nineties, but the evenings are cooler in the mountain area of Lajas. It can rain daily.

Can I call home?



Generally speaking, yes. Some cell phone services do work in the Lajas area. Be sure to contact your provider before you leave to activate whatever international calling plan the company might offer; doing so can save you significant money. There is also Internet service at the colmado next to the compound. These sell internet cards for reasonable rates; however, keep in mind that they are not necessarily reliable as Wi-Fi connection is spotty.

There are also telecommunications stores at the beach that offer inexpensive service, and you can pay in pesos. You can also call from the airport when we arrive, though that's a pretty hectic time.

Keep in mind that you will also be given emergency numbers to share with family and friends should they need to reach you.

Cultural Concerns

Do the Dominicans have pets?

Most Dominicans cannot afford to have pampered pets. You'll see scrawny cats and dogs, sometimes roughly treated. Try not to be sentimental. Do not treat these animals like pets or try to feed or pet them. Work animals sometimes look thin and may be moved along roughly.

Do people become homesick?

Yes. It is common for people to have some degree of being homesick or to experience culture shock. It can strike at any time. You will deal with a different climate, culture, and food. The poverty may be difficult to confront. The type of care you give will be very different from what you are accustomed to, as you treat symptoms only, not the underlying causes, and of course lack technology. It is important to seek support when this happens from faculty and peers.

What is reverse culture shock?

It refers to a phenomenon that affects some students upon coming home. After immersion in such an intense and different experience, participants may have a difficult time readjusting to their life in the United States. It can be particularly helpful to seek out peers and colleagues to come to a new understanding of your experience. This experience will change you.

What happens when we get home?

We will have a post-trip gathering for all to share pictures and to process your experience. Students will complete a course evaluation. A final paper will be required of every student, but it is generally short and personal. (Graduate students are expected to produce longer work.) The due date will be established by faculty.

Policies and Forms

There are many policies and forms that must be completed. Please be sure to attend to these. Volunteers should consult with the Volunteer Coordinator if you have questions or concerns. Maintain your personal vigilance at all times and do not follow the group or peers, or even leaders, if you question your own readiness or anyone's safety.

All this and more will be presented and discussed at the Orientation/Packing Meeting. There are videos of the presentations. Be sure and contact faculty or volunteer coordinator if you live out of the area or are unable to attend.