

Manual for Participants



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INTRODUCTION

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is eager to welcome you to the International Volunteer Exchange Program (IVEP). You have been through a difficult selection process. It is exciting that you are finally beginning your journey in the U.S. You probably have many questions about what is ahead. This booklet will answer some of those questions. Please refer to it during your year. If you have a question, check here before you ask your coordinator.

About Mennonite Central Committee

In becoming an IVEP participant, you have made the decision to join with others working for Mennonite Central Committee as a Service Worker. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, shares God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation.



Approximately 1,000 MCC workers are currently serving abroad by working for disaster relief, sustainable community development and justice and peacebuilding. They teach, promote good health care, share agricultural knowledge, do community development work, work with local partner organizations, and learn from others around the world. Thousands of others, including IVEPers, volunteer to work in Ten Thousand Villages shops, at MCC Relief Sales and in educational activities. All MCC workers are committed Christians who share Christ's love wherever they live and work.

To learn more about MCC and to see how MCC is at work in your country, go to <https://mcc.org>.

About IVEP

IVEP began in 1950, when 21 young men from Mennonite communities in Europe spent one year working on farms in the U.S. Since then the program has expanded to include women and men with various occupations and diverse backgrounds. Participants now come from Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Middle East and placements include: social service, education, trades, agricultural, retail, and computer tech work. As you know this program offers an exciting opportunity for individuals interested in participating in a one year international Christian service assignment.

The International Volunteer Exchange Program is a particularly important part of MCC's commitment to peace building internationally. Each person chosen to participate in this program officially takes on the role of a peacemaker and carries it with them throughout their year of service. It is our hope that each participant will continue to pursue this role after they return home. Individuals that participate should be interested in servant leadership and in developing leadership skills through Christ-like, humble service. They should have a willingness to learn as well as a desire to share.

IVEP is a group experience. The interests of the group should be placed ahead of the interest of the individual. Throughout this year you will have the unique opportunity to live in community and solidarity with other group members. IVEPers should take note that participants come from a variety of cultural, professional and economic experiences. MCC expects participants to be sensitive and aware of these differences. Be conscious of the way your own experience might impact the way you see things and affect the way you interact with others.

Staff titles and roles

IVEP Partner Agencies—These work places provide a meaningful volunteer work assignment for the IVEP participants

IVEP Hosts—These families, or individuals, provide food, housing and family with whom to relate. They are a connection to the local community and culture.

IVEP National Coordinator—There is a national coordinator in the U.S. They work to assign placements, prepare visa documentation, plan and facilitate conferences, support the IVEPers during assignment and follow up with alumni.

IVEP Regional Coordinators—There are regional coordinators in each of the four regions of the U.S.: Central States, East Coast, Great Lakes and West Coast. They work to find new partner agencies, assist in the placement process and support the partner agencies, hosts and IVEPers during assignment. They also periodically plan regional gatherings.

MCC Field Representatives—These are the MCC staff who work in offices outside of the US and assist in the selection process and alumni follow-up for IVEP. They also may give advice and cultural background to the national coordinators during assignment if needed.



The objectives of IVEP are to:

- Promote a theology of service that encourages growth as global citizens active in social justice and peacemaking
- Provide opportunities for learning and mutual transformation through the development of intercultural skills
- Foster opportunities for spiritual growth, appreciation of Anabaptist values and involvement in the local and global church
- Explore and develop skills while cultivating an increased sense of vocation through serving alongside a local partner organization

IVEP participants are accepted from countries where MCC works alongside local Anabaptist congregations and partners. Participants are committed to the Christian faith, single/unmarried, 18 to 30 years old, and able to speak English. Participants, both male and female, may not already parent a child or expect to have a child during the IVEP year.

While in the U.S., you may improve your English and may gain practical vocational skills. More importantly you will broaden your horizons, build longstanding friendships, be challenged to see your culture through new eyes, grow in faith and begin a journey of creating peace and understanding between nations. *Improving your English should not be the focus of your IVEP year.*

Learning through service and simple living

Major components of this program are service and simple living. You will most likely not be able to work in the same position as you did in your home country. Sometimes your work placement will not be in your vocational field or you may be asked to perform some menial tasks such as washing dishes, or cleaning up. A spirit of learning and service is essential as is a desire to live a simple life. IVEPers are encouraged to learn even from the small tasks and to do everything with love and joy in the Lord. Partner agencies and hosts are committed not to burden IVEPers with only menial tasks or that work which no one else enjoys. They are committed to treat the IVEPer with respect and love, searching for ways to incorporate the IVEPer in challenging tasks. IVEPers are, however, expected to seek out ways to serve with humility in a Christ like way.

This is not a formal academic training program. You will not receive a diploma at the end of the year. You will receive a "Certificate of Participation" from MCC at the Year-End Conference that designates the type of training that you received.

Earning wages

As an IVEPer in the U.S., you will receive a personal monthly allowance from your partner agency. Do not expect to accumulate money.

IVEPers may not seek a salaried job in addition to their IVEP placement. An IVEPer who does accept a paid position outside of their IVEP placement is in violation of their program agreement, and their visa arrangement with their host country. Their participation in the IVEP program will be immediately terminated and they will be sent directly and immediately to their home country.

It is okay for you to earn money for **irregular** jobs done during free time like baby-sitting or shoveling snow. You may also accept money for giving a talk or taking part in a program. It is not appropriate to ask your host or partner agency for money or gifts. If a large gift is offered, reflect on whether it is appropriate for you to accept. IVEP is a program of service and simple living and IVEPers should not be focused on personal financial gain.



IVEP participants agree to the following conditions:

1. To do my best to promote goodwill and better understanding between my country and the U.S. on a person-to-person basis.
2. To take an interest and participate in the life and activities of the Christian church and community in the U.S.
3. To be responsible to the sponsor and/or host family where I am assigned, accepting new social and work patterns.
4. To cooperate with Mennonite Central Committee, placing aims of this program above personal desires and interests.
5. To work for the one-year period without pay other than the IVEP stipend.
6. To return to my home country at the end of one year by the most direct route. The goal of IVEP is to equip young adults for service in their home communities following their return from service in the U.S.
7. To use the experience and insights gained from the program upon return home to help promote a strong Christian community and better international understanding.
8. To abstain from the use of alcohol and tobacco when the use of either one compromises MCC's witness, in the eyes of local church and community. (MCC recommends that personnel abstain from the use of tobacco and alcohol in all situations).
9. To provide statements from my doctor, dentist and optometrist certifying that my emotional and physical health is good and that my teeth and eyes are in good health and repair and have the proper corrective lenses.
10. To assure that MCC will not be held responsible for benefits in case of accidental dismemberment or death.
11. To remain celibate and not to marry during the IVEP year.
12. To not take classes for credit during the IVEP year.

When the IVEP participant signs the application, they promise to fulfill these twelve conditions during the year they participate in the program. Failure to uphold one or more of these conditions may result in their termination from the program and their direct return to their home country. Each IVEP'er is an ambassador for their country and for the future of the program in their country. If an individual's misconduct is severe MCC may choose to decline future participants from that country for two years.

Program costs

MCC will provide:

- your transportation costs from a designated city in your home country to a designated U.S. site
- lowest cost of transportation to the mid-year and year-end conference and meals en route
- medical, dental, and vision care that becomes necessary during a term of service provided the IVEP participant completed and returned the appropriate forms to MCC when they began service. MCC must give approval before surgery or psychiatric treatment is undertaken
- transportation back to the same airport from which you departed in your home country upon completion of the program
- MCC assistance for repayment of educational loans will be given on a monthly basis, up to the maximum annual amount of \$1,000, not to exceed 100% of the actual loan. Loan assistance payments will be handled by the home country office of the IVEP service worker. Amounts will be paid in the currency of the country where studies occurred.

Your partner agency will provide:

- a volunteer placement
- room and board payment to your host
- a monthly administrative fee to MCC to help cover program costs
- \$118 U.S. per month stipend and worker renewal to the IVEPer (adjusted yearly for COLA)

The IVEPer will provide:

- pre-term costs (passport, visa, medical examinations)
- travel between their house and the airport (before leaving and upon returning to their home country)
- long-term treatment and/or rehabilitation costs after finishing IVEP for an injury or illness sustained while in the program
- indemnification costs in the event of loss of finger, limb or any other part of the body

MEDICAL

What happens if I am sick and can't go to work?

At times everyone gets sick. You are allowed to stay home from work when you are feeling sick, but you **MUST CALL** your partner agency and tell them that you are sick and cannot come to work. You should be careful not to abuse sick days. If you are not actually sick, you do not have the right to use a sick day. If you are sick for a long period of time or are frequently sick you may be asked to provide a note from a doctor verifying your condition.

What MCC is able to cover

Medical coverage: 100% of eligible medical expenses are covered. **Dental/vision coverage:** MCC's dental coverage includes dental work that cannot or should not be postponed. MCC intends to provide necessary quality dental care but not cosmetic dental care. MCC vision care includes the replacement of lenses and frames or contact lens and examination fees. MCC will not cover a change from glasses to contacts or vice versa unless there are valid medical reasons for the change.

For additional information ask staff to see the summary plan description (SPD) for the MCC medical plan and the dental/vision plan policy #7569.



MCC's health care plan

MCC has a self-funded medical plan that is not actual insurance. MCC's third-party administrator is Everence and all IVEPers are on this plan. IVEPers will receive a medical card to be used for medical care and prescriptions. Medical providers should call to pre-certify expenses when necessary. Details are on the medical card.

MCC belongs to the Mutual Aid Sharing Plan (MASP) which is composed of 18 Anabaptist agencies. The MASP is not an insurance company; it is a mechanism by which self-insuring member agencies pool their losses which exceed a designated retention.

The MCC dental/vision plan is completely separate from the medical plan. The medical card should not be used for these expenses.

Medical in the U.S.

In the US, MCC should be informed before any medical procedure that requires hospitalization.

The preferred provider organization (PPO) for our medical plan is Cigna. When accessing medical care, try to find an in-network provider. To find a provider, go to www.Cigna.com and click "Find a Doctor." Be sure to select the "PPO, Choice Fund PPO" network. The medical card should be used for all medical care and prescriptions. You should not have to pay anything at time of service. For dental and vision care, the partner agency/host should pay the bill, then send it to MCC with a note stating who paid it. MCC will reimburse that person. Ask the provider if they can bill MCC directly or bill it through Everence insurance. If you receive a payment request in the mail, please forward it to IVEP staff for processing.

There are three levels of medical care in the US:

- **Level 1: Primary Care:** Set up an appointment with a local primary care physician (PCP). This often takes several weeks to get an appointment. Use this for non urgent concerns. You can register as a new patient with a PCP before a health concern arises. To see a specialist you need to have an appointment with a PCP and get a referral.
- **Level 2: Urgent Care Clinic.** Use this service if can't get an appointment with a PCP and it's not an urgent emergency. You usually do not need to make an appointment, but can walk in and be seen by a doctor that day.
- **Level 3: Emergency Room (ER):** Use this service for any severe illness or injury.

Universal health precautions

When welcoming someone into your family and community, it is important to be intentional in creating a healthy and safe environment for everyone. The Universal Precautions listed below have been drawn up by healthcare professionals for use in the workplace and the home. Anyone who might have or be exposed to a communicable disease can protect themselves and others by using these guidelines.

Universal precautions

To avoid getting infected with communicable diseases like chickenpox, Hepatitis, HIV, salmonella, strep throat or others, when you come into contact with any body fluids or fecal matter:

Cover Cuts: If you have cuts or open sores on your skin, cover them with a plastic bandage.

Wear Gloves: If there is any risk of coming into contact with blood or other body fluids, wear latex gloves. Gloves should only be worn once and disposed of in a plastic garbage bag.

Wash hands: Wash your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds after you have had contact with blood or other body fluids, after going to the bathroom, before preparing or eating food, and after removing latex gloves. Use hand lotion to help keep your hands from becoming chapped or irritated. Intact skin is your first defense against infection.

Discard garbage: Use caution when disposing of garbage and other waste that may contain infected materials or used needles. Discard material soiled with blood or other body fluids in a sealed plastic bag.

Clean up: Spills of blood or other body fluids should be cleaned up with a fresh mixture of household bleach (1 part) and water (9 parts). Paper towels should be used and disposed of in a plastic garbage bag. Remember to wear latex gloves during clean-up.

Wash clothes: Soiled items should be stored in sealed plastic bags. Wash soiled clothing separately in hot soapy water and dry in a hot dryer, or have clothes dry-cleaned.

VACATION

Vacation policy

You will receive two work weeks (10 work days) of vacation for the year. Plan to use half of that time before mid-year conference in February, and the other half after. The mid- and year-end conferences do not count as vacation. You are responsible to pay your own vacation expenses. IVEPers whose placement is in a scheduled setting (such as a school) must take their vacation during scheduled holidays (e.g. Christmas vacation and spring break). IVEPers assigned to summer placements (e.g. teacher's assistants) must take their vacation before arriving at their summer placement. Please ask your partner agency for permission to take vacation at least a month in advance and fill out and submit an IVEP Vacation form to your coordinator.

When you take a trip or vacation, remember to inform MCC about the details of your trip. For example: dates, flights, location, lodging address, contact information, etc. See the Vacation Itinerary Form.

Planning your vacation

Feel free to ask your host or partner agency to help you plan your vacation. They may offer advice on realistic expectations for your vacation travel. They may also be able to help you find inexpensive lodging and other accommodations. When traveling, make certain you have cash or a credit card. We strongly discourage an IVEPer to travel alone with one other member of the opposite gender. Traveling as a group with mixed genders is more appropriate.

The purpose of IVEP is to learn about the varied cultures and places within the United State. We believe that God has called you to serve and learn here in the United States and your vacation time represents a valuable and unique time for learning. However, do remember that you are a member of a group. Be aware that IVEPers come from many different backgrounds with different levels of resources. Be sensitive towards your fellow IVEPers.

A holiday is when your workplace is closed for times like Christmas, Easter and national holidays. A vacation is when your workplace is open, but you take off work to do personal things.

TRAVEL

Inform your IVEP coordinators of any travel plans that you make in advance. You must submit an IVEP Vacation Form before travelling. We need to know where you are so that we can contact you in case of emergency.

Travel and vacation during IVEP should be used to see and learn more about the US. If you are considering travel to a neighboring country (Canada or Mexico), you must be in contact with your IVEP coordinator. Travel to your home country for vacation is not permitted. Remember that you should take 1 week vacation before the February conference and 1 week after.

IVEP participants are not permitted to travel outside of the continental United States during their holidays. (Travel to Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Alaska, back home, or to any other continent is not permitted for the duration of your IVEP year.)

Vacation on a budget

If you want ideas of how to take a vacation without spending a lot of money, talk with your IVEP coordinator, host and local friends for ideas.

Some ideas are:

- Megabus.com
- OurBus.com
- Visit another IVEPer
- Combine travel with a MCC conference
- Do a “stay-cation”
- Join a church service trip or youth trip
- Mennonite Your Way (lodging)
- Travel with a friend to share costs

To/from conferences

MCC covers travel to/from conferences, using the least expensive means of public or chartered transportation. If there is a place for you on the chartered bus or van and you choose not to travel with it, you are responsible to pay for your own transportation to/from conferences.

Use of a car

IVEPers are not permitted to drive any automobile while in the U.S. MCC does not have automobile insurance for IVEPers or its workers and will not cover you in case of an accident. Do not ask to borrow, buy or rent cars while in the U.S.

IVEP Vacation Itinerary Form

- * Please return this form to your provincial/regional coordinator and supervisor 1 month **before** your travel.
- * You must take 5 days of vacation before Feb conference and 5 days after Feb conference of your IVEP year.
- * If you are a teacher, your vacation time will take place at the same time your students are on vacation
- * You must request vacation time from your supervisor before booking travel

Name: _____

Leaving Date and time: _____

Mode of transportation (car, train, airplane): _____

Flight number and time: _____

Return Date and time: _____

Mode of transportation (car, train, airplane): _____

Flight number and time: _____

Places traveling to:

Who you will be visiting: _____

Address(s) of where you will be staying:

Contact Phone Number: _____

Have a nice trip!

ACCOUNTABILITY

Professional and ethical standards

MCC is committed to serving with integrity and respect in personal and organizational practices and demonstrating ethical behavior. MCC board members and personnel are expected to live and serve justly and peacefully in each relationship, incorporating listening and learning, accountability and mutuality, transparency, and integrity. MCC personnel are expected to respect, abide by, and not disparage all applicable MCC policies and procedures.

MCC board members and personnel are expected to conduct themselves professionally:

1. Abide by MCC's policies and procedures for ensuring worker safety and security.
2. Commit to preventing sexual violence and fostering an environment in which sexual violence is not tolerated. Ensure that all children and youth who interact with MCC are safe from abuse at all times. All personnel have a duty to report any known or suspected abuse or harassment.
3. Treat sensitive information, confidential information and information protected by privacy legislation with appropriate confidentiality.
4. Strive for the highest standards of ethical conduct and stewardship. Be honest and transparent in all dealings with and on behalf of MCC

As part of MCC's ethical and professional standards, we agree that we will not use my power to hurt people. We will...

- treat all people with respect and dignity and be sensitive to local customs and cultural differences.
- protect the health of people and the environment and avoid unnecessary safety risks.
- be transparent in financial management and use resources entrusted to me with care.
- follow the law and MCC policies to protect project participants, staff and partners.

IVEP participants are not allowed to be in romantic relationships with anyone under the age of 18. Participants should not be in any sexual relationships during the term.

Reporting

MCC has a reporting service called Speak Up. This is a way for people to report situations that do not meet our standards. Speak Up is managed by a third party known as NAVEX (EthicsPoint). The information you provide through Speak Up will be sent to MCC case managers by NAVEX (EthicsPoint) confidentially and each concern will be followed up on and MCC will provide supports such as counseling. We encourage you to provide your name and contact information if that is comfortable, which allows MCC to follow up with the concerns given. If you choose to remain anonymous, please be as detailed as possible, since the MCC case management response can be limited by the amount of information we receive but will follow up to the extent possible.

If you know about a situation that does not meet these standards, please talk with someone at MCC for further guidance or report it using MCC's Speak Up service as listed:

Using MCC's Speak Up Service

Online: mcc.ethicspoint.com

Toll free in the US: 844-974-5078

Mobile: mccmobile.ethicspoint.com

QR code:



COMMUNICATION

Telephone

- Buy and use pre-paid telephone cards for all your long distance calls, or use Google voice, Skype or Whatsapp. At no time should IVEPers be using their host or partner agency's telephone for long distance calls without a pre-paid card or a free internet app such as Facebook Messenger or Whatsapp.
- We strongly recommend that you use an online app such as Google voice, Skype, Facebook Messenger, or Whatsapp for free international calls.
- If you bring a cell phone from home, check roaming or international fees before using it to make calls.
- Phone plans in the US are more expensive than they are in many other countries.
- If you use a landline or your cell phone to call long distance or internationally, consider these aspects:
 - Purchase a calling card at a gas station or convenience store
 - There may be charges for long distance calling (domestic and international).
- In most convenience stores and pharmacies, you can purchase phone cards.
- These cards allow you to make telephone calls for the amount of \$5, \$10, or \$20 depending on which card you purchase.
- It is most expensive to make long distance calls on week days between 8am and 6pm. To save money, make your calls in the evenings or on the weekends (local time for the person making the call).
- Cell phone plans in the U.S. are more expensive than they are in many other countries.
- If you bring a cell phone from home, check roaming or international fees before using it to make calls.
- If you are provided with an MCC cell phone you are responsible for the charges made to it.

Internet

- Be considerate of how much time you are spending on the internet and respect your host family's internet and phone use rules.
- Use the time during IVEP to connect personally with your new community, not spending hours online.
- If you have access to a computer at work you need to use it for work tasks, not for personal use. Only download apps or programs if you have received permission from your supervisor.

- MCC's main mode of communication is your MCC email account. Check it regularly so you are aware of important information. If you have access to a computer at work do not spend your work time checking your personal account.

Telephone numbers

National offices:

MCC in the U.S.: (717) 859-1151
Toll free: (888) 563-4676
–Connects to the Akron office

Regional offices, USA:

MCC East Coast: (717) 738-0885
MCC Central States: (316) 283-2720
MCC Great Lakes: (574) 534-4133
MCC West Coast: (559) 638-6911
Emergency Services: 911



YOUR NEW HOME

Host

This is a people-to-people program. A significant part of the program is integrating into the life and activities of your host, whether you are living with a single person, a retired couple, a family with young children or in a group setting. You and the host will both need to make adjustments. As the visitor, however, you will need to make the most adjustments. You will discover many aspects of U.S. culture by interacting with your host, adjusting to different foods, participating in house chores and joining social outings. You might even have to help take care of a pet!

Food is often one of the most challenging adjustments IVEPers must make. Remember that U.S. food is as diverse as the people who live in these countries. You will not be eating hamburgers and French fries every day! You are the guest in someone else's home and as such, you are asked to eat what they are eating and to help in meal preparation and clean up. (Ask how you can help instead of waiting to be asked.) Many hosts would love if you would offer to cook a traditional food from your home country once in a while. Even if you've never done this before...don't be afraid to try something new.

MCC pays hosts a hosting stipend for your basic living expenses. However, do not expect that your host has excess money to take you on lavish vacations or fancy restaurants. The money they receive is to cover basic expenses like groceries and basic toiletries. Your host will however want to help you to learn about U.S. culture beyond the family setting. They will help provide opportunities for you to get involved in the community.

It is natural to look at what other IVEPers are receiving and to compare it with what you are receiving, but try not to fall into this trap. Each host comes from a different situation and has different resources at their disposal. Each host will offer something that no other host has to offer.

Visitors from home

Sometimes family members or friends visit IVEPers while in the US.

The following guidelines have been developed for IVEP participants who are planning on receiving visitors:

- IVEP participants must ask their host's permission whether or not their family or friends can stay with them—well in advance of the guest's arrival date.
- All visitors are expected to pay for the costs of being hosted. For each person that will be staying with the host, IVEP asks that they give the host \$15 per day per person. It is expected that the IVEP participant will inform the visitor of this cost and will make the arrangements for the payment.
- IVEP participants should not expect their hosts to do any driving for their guests. (This includes transportation to and from the airport.) If hosts offer to help that is great, but don't ask. We recommend that your guests make their own arrangements (use public transportation, take a taxi, Uber, Lyft, rent a car etc.).
- IVEP participants are encouraged to visit other participants and are not expected to make a payment. However, they are still required to ask the host's permission—well in advance of the visit. Talk about the details of the visit ahead of time (where the visitor will sleep, what meals are together, transportation, etc.) so everyone is comfortable.

Visiting boyfriends or girlfriends

Here are some guidelines if an IVEPer's boyfriend or girlfriend wishes to visit during the term:

- a. Remember that you are not here as an individual. You are here as one participant of a group program. What you do and how you handle your relationship is a reflection of you, other IVEP participants, IVEP staff, MCC and your country.
- b. Be open about your relationship. Open discussions lead to trusting relationships. Hosts should not be asking you personal questions but they will feel more comfortable when you talk about your relationship as freely as possible.
- c. Check with your host to see if they are comfortable with your boyfriend or girlfriend staying in their home in a separate bedroom. If they are not comfortable with them staying there then set up other arrangements.
- d. It is not considered appropriate for you to travel overnight alone with your boy/girlfriend or visit them in their hotel room. If you have any questions about what would be appropriate, please discuss them with IVEP staff and your hosts.



ADJUSTMENT

Culture shock

Almost everyone who goes to a foreign culture experiences culture shock. It may not surface until about 6 to 12 weeks after you arrive. We will send you information on recognizing and dealing with culture shock after a few weeks into your U.S. assignment. Culture shock is normal and should be expected by even the most experienced travelers. Be sure to talk with your IVEP coordinators about how you are feeling. They have supported other IVEPers before you and might have some helpful ideas and suggestions.

Every month your IVEP Coordinators will send you a monthly evaluation form. Set aside time each month to complete this form. This is not optional. Be honest in how you are doing... no one can help you in the areas you are finding challenging if you are not telling anyone what these areas are!

Church participation

This is a people-to-people exchange, another significant cultural experience will be participating in your host's church. Many IVEPers find a strong support network and friends among their new church family and are invited to participate in the church community in a variety of ways. Other IVEPers have expressed that they cannot sense God in this new style of worship so different from their style at home. Please be respectful of every style of worship even if it does not make sense to you.

If you would like to attend a different church than your hosts (because of denominational differences, for example), please discuss this possibility with your host. Do keep in mind that your host is likely excited to have you join their church community. In most cases they will be willing and able to accommodate your request, even if it is only once in a while. We hope this year away from your home church will be a year of growth in the Lord and will challenge you to experience God in new ways.

Time expectations

Punctuality in social, professional and business appointments is expected in U.S. If you cannot keep an appointment or know you will be late (even by 5 minutes), you should telephone or send a message. Be on time for meals, social invitations, programs, concerts, theater events, church services and meetings. In the U.S. being "on time" often means

arriving 5–10 minutes before the scheduled meeting time! People living in the US consider being late a sign of disrespect. It is not tolerated in a work setting. Make every effort to arrive on time for work, and for any appointment or gathering.

Counseling services for IVEP participants

Living in another culture can be very stressful. At times IVEP participants encounter emotional and mental stresses that are overwhelming. Sometimes, speaking with a professional counselor is helpful. IVEP staff will assist the IVEP participant in arranging for counseling services.

To access counseling, call WellSpan at 1-800-673-2514 and say you work for MCC. They will help you make appropriate arrangements. You are allowed to request for someone who will make you feel comfortable (male/female, language, race, etc.). If you have any questions or would like assistance, contact MCC staff.

Safety

- follow your host and supervisor’s advice for context-specific safety rules and guidelines
- call 911 for any large emergency: fire, auto accident, crime involving a weapon, or extreme physical injury
- if you have questions, ask someone in a uniform

Fitting in

You have come to the U.S. to experience new things. You have come to build bridges of understanding and to broaden your horizons. It should be an exciting year as you give of yourself, cooperate with others and try to fit in, as you share and take an interest in people around you. Your communication, understanding, love, interest and cooperation will spread. If you are open and honest about your own life experiences, others will also share with you! Your hosts, church people and others will pick up and feel your enthusiasm and will share their love with you. May God guide and strengthen you!

*Blessings on the journey,
IVEP staff*

APPENDIX

Stages of cultural adjustment

① STAGE ONE: Arrival

How long does it last?

- usually 7–14 days

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- you will be tired
- greetings will be different
- you can't understand

BUT

- it is also a honeymoon period where everything is exciting and new

Helpful advice:

- find out your hosts' routine
- ask questions
- try not to misjudge
- laugh at yourself
- be curious
- don't stay in your room

② STAGE TWO: Settling in

How long does it last?

- usually about 5 weeks
- can be from week 2–week 7

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- “things start to go a little wrong”
- host family feels like life has changed too much
- you and your host may withdraw a little
- I like some things but I don't like others

Helpful advice:

- expect to feel some resentment
- realize your own faults
- talk about your goals
- discard inappropriate ones
- try new things

- pray about difficult situations
- use your journal to write about what's going on, share with a friend or MCC staff

3 STAGE THREE: Deepening the relationship

How long does it last?

- usually 10 weeks
- usually from the one month mark to the third

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- ask questions about things you don't understand
- talk more about expectations
- realize some rules are unspoken
- "some people don't seem to care"
- people may talk about you with others

Helpful advice:

- tension comes from breaking unwritten rules
- volunteer information about yourself
- ask questions about the host

4 STAGE FOUR: Culture shock

How long does it last?

- usually three months
- usually from the end of the first month until the fourth month

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- homesick
- don't like it here
- feelings of anger and confusion
- small problems become big

Helpful advice:

- your feelings are valid and it takes time to adjust
- use your journal
- take some "time-outs"
- get extra rest
- eat well
- it's okay to think "this is stupid" but not to say it

5 STAGE FIVE: The holidays

How long does it last?

- Christmas time
- usually six weeks

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- feelings of sadness or happiness
- feelings of loneliness
- time of traditions—some are hard to understand

Helpful advice:

- ask questions about customs
- for serious problems, seek help
- dress warmly
- talk to your hosts about your vacation plans early
- remember that you have access to counseling through MCC's medical coverage

6 STAGE SIX: Culture learning

How long does it last?

- four months
- from the fourth month to the eighth

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- you start to feel comfortable
- some things start to make sense

Helpful advice:

- now that you feel more comfortable try to explore
- help others understand your culture by comparing it to what you have learned

7 STAGE SEVEN: Pre-departure

How long does it last?

- usually starts six weeks before you leave

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- irritability, sensitivity, anger
- feelings of loss
- your focus may change and look more towards home instead of your present situation

Helpful advice:

- don't wait until the last minute to talk about your leaving
- accept your feelings of loss
- prepare for reverse culture shock
- take time to say good-bye
- process your future plans with those around you while also continuing to be present in your assignment

8 STAGE EIGHT: Re-adjustment

How long does it last?

- six to eight weeks after you get home
- in some ways, for a long time after

What IVEPer should expect:

- feelings of deep sadness
- people are not as interested in you as you hoped
- feelings of not being accepted

Helpful advice for IVEPer:

- find one person to talk to
- don't complain to everyone
- give yourself time
- keep in touch with your hosts and friends in the US
- take an interest in what others have done while you were gone

mcc.org/ivep



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