

•IVEP

International Volunteer Exchange Program

Manual for Hosts and Partner Agencies



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INTRODUCTION

About Mennonite Central Committee

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. We work in more than 50 countries around the world, usually partnering with local organizations. Approximately 1,000 MCC workers are currently serving abroad by working for disaster relief, sustainable community development and justice and peacebuilding.

Thousands of others donate their time by volunteering at MCC Relief Sales, in Material Resource Centers, with mobile meat canning, in thrift stores or by getting involved in educational activities. To learn more about MCC and to see how MCC is at work both locally and globally, visit mcc.org/IVEP.

About IVEP

The International Volunteer Exchange Program is a particularly important part of MCC's commitment to peace building internationally. Each of the individuals chosen to participate in this program—and each of their hosts and partner agencies—takes on the role of peacemaker, and carries it with them through their year of service, and beyond. Individuals, families and organizations that participate should be interested in modeling servant leadership. They should have a willingness to learn as much as a desire to share.

IVEP began in 1950, when 21 young men from Mennonite communities in Europe spent one year on farms in the US. Since then the program has expanded to include women and men with various occupations, from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe who are placed in the U.S. Placements include: social service, education, trades, agricultural, retail, and computer technology work. It has become an exciting opportunity for those individuals interested in sharing their gifts by participating in a one year international Christian service opportunity.

IVEP is an experience that is intended to connect people from around the world with each other in genuine relationship. IVEPers live and work with hosts and volunteer with partner agencies for 11 months. IVEPers and hosts are Christians and this experience of communal living provides the opportunity for an enriching spiritual experience for participants, hosts and partner agencies (as appropriate). We hope that those close to the IVEPer will benefit through the mutual sharing of their faith journeys, seeing their own worship community through new eyes, and learning more about Christianity around the world.

MCC believes that IVEP offers as much opportunity for learning and growth for the hosts and partner agencies as it does for the participants. The objectives of IVEP are to:

1. Promote a theology of service that encourages growth as global citizens who are active in social justice and peacemaking
2. Provide opportunities for learning and mutual transformation through the development of intercultural skills
3. Foster opportunities for spiritual growth, appreciation of Anabaptist values and involvement in the local and global church
4. Explore and develop skills and cultivate an increased sense of vocation through service alongside a local partner organization.



Staff titles and roles

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

IVEP Hosts—These families, community houses or individuals provide food, housing and family with whom to relate. These hosts 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 MCC offices outside of the U.S. and assist in the selection process and alumni follow-up for IVEP. They also may give advice and cultural background to the national coordinator during assignment if needed.

Participant selection

IVEP participants are accepted from countries where MCC works alongside local Anabaptist congregations and partner organizations or in countries where MCC personnel are present. Participants are Christian, unmarried and between the ages of 18 to 30.

Representatives in the country promote the program, receive applications, check references, interview candidates and send recommendations of suitable candidates to the IVEP national coordinator. The IVEP national coordinator reserves the right to make final selections. When the selection process is complete, country office representatives help participants obtain documents and conduct a pre-program orientation. They also follow up with them upon their return home.

Service and simple living

A major component of this program is service. IVEPers will most likely not be able to work in the same capacity as they did in their home country. We ask that all of our participants enter their year with a spirit of learning and a desire to serve. Partner agencies and hosts are committed not to burden the participant 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 and exposing them to the broader organizational structure.



PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Partner agencies and hosts

MCC seeks partner agencies and hosts who can offer IVEPers a wide variety of experiences and hosts who are open to learning and growing themselves. Partner agencies and hosts have the opportunity to broaden their view of other cultures and gain a better understanding of their own country as they see it through the eyes of someone experiencing it for the first time. Please contact your IVEP coordinator if you have questions regarding the following points.

Partner agency requirements:

- Provides the IVEP participant with meaningful volunteer work experience a maximum of 40 hours per week.
- Accepts the IVEPer as a staff member, or apprentice, keeping in mind the broader program goals. It is appropriate to consider “work” to include language study if appropriate; visits to other area businesses, agencies or institutions related to their professional interests, or relevant speaking engagements in the community.
- Covers the costs of the IVEPers hosting expenses, the IVEPers spending money and a contribution to MCC (See Finances, pg 14).
- Allows the IVEPer two weeks of vacation in total, to be spread throughout the year. We recommend encouraging the IVEPer to take half of their vacation time before the February conference and half after. IVEPers are to plan their vacation in consultation with their work supervisor.
- Arranges/provides transportation to and from work for the IVEPer.
- Provides a cell phone and/or SIM card to use during the term.
- Finds a Christian host for the IVEPer near the workplace with networking assistance from the regional coordinator.
- Completes a monthly evaluation provided by IVEP staff.
- Holds regular check in conversations with the IVEPer providing them with feedback on their work performance and allowing time for them to ask questions and offer feedback. We recommend meeting every week for the first 3 months, then every other week, then as needed throughout the year.

Host requirements:

- Interested in learning from, sharing with, and attempting to understand the needs and challenges facing international young people.
- Committed Christians open to discussing large and small issues. Host homes should be free from tensions.
- Serve as a bridge for the IVEPer to church and community, activities and places of interest. If hosting is in a community setting, a family or person in the community must be found to serve as that bridge.
- Provide time and opportunity, particularly on weekends, to enable the IVEPer to develop social and cultural contacts in addition to the work experience.
- Maintain contact with IVEP staff through monthly reports.
- Be intentional about checking in with the IVEPer.



Length of term and reporting

Participants arrive in August and depart in July, unless alternate arrangements have been made with the IVEP coordinator.

We do not want you to feel burdened by reports, but we do need to stay in close communication with you to ensure a successful IVEP year. To make it as simple as possible, a report will be sent to you and needs to be completed each month.

The report should be sent to the National and Regional coordinators. Do feel free to call or contact coordinators between reports.

Remember that these reports are meant to update us as staff on how the placement is going. You should also hold regular check in conversations with IVEPers to provide them with feedback on how they are doing and discuss problems that may arise.

A good way to see what other hosts and partner agencies are doing is to look at our IVEP newsletters found on our website at mcc.org/IVEP.



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 IVEPer is an ambassador for their country and for the future of the program in their country.

Hosts and partner agencies are expected to encourage participants to live up to these commitments and not to encourage IVEPers in a way that contradicts the expectations of the program.

IVEPer and use of 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 IVEPers in case of an accident. Please do not offer to loan IVEPers cars, or assist them in the rental or purchase of an automobile while in the U.S.

Furthermore, renting or driving a car can also create tensions in the IVEP group between those that have the wealth and access privileges and those that do not – creating a situation of ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’. As a part of our program we strive to promote equality and solidarity between and among group members, as well as a commitment to simple living. We also strive to increase awareness of how each individual’s actions impact others around the world, as well as the unfair privilege differentials between and among participants. Consider:

1. While some countries’ citizens do benefit from a reciprocal driving agreement between governments which legally permits them to drive in the U.S. without having to obtain a special permit, most countries do not. Based on place of birth, some participants are automatically privileged (and able to drive), while others are unfairly penalized. This creates immediate inequality in the group.
2. Car rental agencies require a credit card before renting out a vehicle. Only a few IVEP participants are wealthy enough to have a credit card. This creates a clear division between participants. As a result, renting a car can also create tension in the IVEP group between the “haves” and “have nots”.



Return home

The IVEPers commit to return home at the end of the year of service as part of their application and visa process. We hope that all IVEPers will broaden their horizons and vocational skills during the year and use them in a way that will benefit themselves and their communities.

There are times when US connections who don't understand the program say, "Wouldn't you like to stay here? We can help you!" This is a difficult question for the IVEPer to answer. Should a participant decide to leave IVEP, but remains undocumented in the U.S., MCC will close IVEP in that participant's country for a period of time. As long as an IVEPer returns home first, we are happy for them to explore other work or schooling options around the world after IVEP.

IVEPers are carefully selected and screened by local committees in their home countries. One of the screening criteria is the extent to which the IVEP candidate is integrated into their home community and church. In the past, some churches or countries have canceled their participation in IVEP when they have seen some of their young people participate in IVEP, return home only to later immigrate to the U.S. Helping one IVEPer might limit the chances of other young people to participate in the program. It is remarkable how many IVEP alumni are impacting communities and churches around the world.

Early terminations

Some IVEPers are unable to finish the IVEP year. In some cases, for medical or family reasons an IVEPer might choose to return home. These arrangements will be made in consultation with the IVEP national coordinators, the IVEPer, Human Resources, the host and partner agency. In other cases, the IVEPer is asked to return home because of disregard for the program and its conditions. This conversation should take place over a period of time with the host family, partner agency and IVEPer being aware of this possibility and being a part of the discussions.

In rare cases, usually after warnings have been given and not heeded, termination might be immediate, with little advanced warning. However, IVEP National Coordinator will make efforts to inform all involved of the immediate termination as well as details about the departure.

FINANCES

The financial arrangement is not a salary or wage based on the value of work done but is required to help cover MCC's administrative costs. Since the program is not fully self-supporting due to mounting transportation, medical and other costs, the partner agency's contribution to MCC helps to meet only some of the program expenses.

The IVEP stipend is to be used for personal items such as: entertainment with friends, clothing, specialty items like a specific shampoo and other personal expenses. The host stipend is to be used for living expenses and things you do as a family such as going out to eat, family trips, basic toiletries, women's hygiene items, etc. The administrative fee is used to run the program.



United States

The partner agency is responsible for the following financial arrangements, due the first of the month:

In the U.S. a monthly partner agency cost will be \$718. A monthly breakdown is as follows:

- \$118 U.S. stipend for the IVEPer (adjusted for COLA yearly)
- \$450 U.S. for the host family to help with room and board
- \$150 U.S. MCC for administrative fee
- Provide a US cell phone and/or SIM card to use during their term.
- Transportation (Bus pass or alternative means of transportation as needed for placement)
- If you wish to make alternate arrangements for sending fee payments (bimonthly, or biannually), please contact your IVEP U.S. coordinator to make these arrangements.

If the IVEPer lives in a community house instead of a private home there may be additional costs needed. Partner agencies should send all 3 fees to the MCC office in Akron. MCC Akron will, in turn, pay the IVEP participant and host directly.

Note: Both the partner agency and IVEPer have an ID number assigned by MCC for the use of the MCC financial services department. All checks to MCC must have both of these numbers so that the proper account is credited. A purple payment slip will be provided for you to include with the check.

Summary of program costs

MCC will provide:

- transportation costs from a designated city in the home country to a designated site in the U.S.
- 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 the IVEP participant completed and returned the appropriate forms to MCC when they began service.
- dental and optical expenses for emergency procedures. For the complete health plan, please consult IVEP staff.
- transportation back to the same airport from which the IVEPPer departed in their home country upon completion of the program.

Tax, social security

Businesses and institutions will not normally list the IVEPPer on their payroll because they are not regular employees; they are vocational trainees, interns or apprentices. Each bookkeeping system is different, however, and you will have to determine how best to handle this in your situation. For specific questions please contact your regional coordinator, the IVEP national coordinator or a tax consultant.

Hosting payments for IVEP participants

The following is intended to provide general tax guidance to IVEP hosts who receive hosting payments. This should not be considered professional tax counsel. If expert assistance is desired, it is suggested that the services of a qualified tax professional be sought.

Payments made to hosts for hosting represents income to the host, and should be classified as part of the host's gross income for tax purposes.

The above does not hinge on whether the income is reported on IRS Form 1099. It is also our opinion that host families can use IRS Form C or C-EZ to report this income, and to deduct expenses incurred related to this income. If deducting expenses, IRS documentation requirements should be followed.

MEDICAL

IVEPers have medical, dental and optical exams before coming to the U.S. Should the IVEPer get sick while in service, MCC pays all medical expenses for illnesses and injuries that arise during the year in the U.S.

The IVEPers are NOT insured by MCC for disability or for dismemberment benefits. If your work has high accident risk, we ask that you take out an accident insurance policy on the IVEPer to cover accidents at work including care for injury, liability, and dismemberment indemnification.

*If your workplace has worker's compensation please register your IVEPer.

What MCC is able to cover

Medical coverage: 100% of eligible medical expenses are covered. Contact IVEP staff or HR as soon as possible for any significant medical procedure.

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. There are limits to what MCC can pay so contact IVEP staff or HR before completing non-routine services.

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 U.S., hosts should contact the IVEP U.S. national coordinator or regional coordinator 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.



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 for any time there is risk of contact with bodily fluids of any other person. 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.

VALUE OF WORK

Hours

The IVEPer will work a maximum of 40 hours per week and should be considered an intern or apprentice, not a regular employee, and certainly not “cheap labor.” The work of an IVEPer should follow a training schedule, where new techniques and information are presented as time progresses. The IVEPers work should not be comprised of all the odds and ends no one likes to do. IVEPers are not allowed to provide clinical or medical care and they cannot have duties that include more than 20% clerical work. The work presented to the IVEPer should be challenging, interesting, and definitely a learning experience.

If the IVEPer needs to work occasional weekends, they should be given equivalent time off either before or after. Occasionally there may be an event or activity happening in the community, or something of interest happening in the area during work hours; we hope there is latitude to permit the IVEPer to take advantage of such opportunities. When working hours are more irregular, such as on a farm or church work, it is important to set up a schedule so the IVEPer knows exactly when they are expected to work and when they are free.

Transportation to/from work

The partner agency is financially responsible to arrange transportation for the IVEPer to and from their work assignment, in consultation with the host and the IVEPer. This can be arranged with the host, with another employee of the partner agency living close by, or through providing the necessary means for the IVEPer to use public transportation. If the IVEPer needs to take public transportation, the partner agency is responsible to pay this expense. If you have questions or need ideas, talk with your regional coordinator.

Vacation

Each IVEPer should have 2 work weeks (10 days total) of vacation time during the year. We recommend encouraging the IVEPer to take half of their vacation time before the February conference and half after. IVEPers are to plan their vacation in consultation with their work supervisor and their host. IVEPers must then inform their regional coordinator of their plans and fill out the vacation request form (see appendix). IVEPers who are in teaching settings must take their vacation during the school’s vacation schedule and in consultation with their supervisor. The monthly stipend, hosting amount and MCC administrative fees should continue as usual during the vacation period.

Holiday time is when the workplace is closed. These days do not count as vacation. MCC retreats and events do not count as vacation time.

IVEPers like to go places and do things. They want to do and see as much as possible in this year. At times they may seem unrealistic in the amount of territory they hope to cover on a vacation trip. Just remember that when many people travel, they tend to do the same thing. Often IVEPers are not aware of how great the distances they hope to travel really are. Hosts and partner agencies can provide helpful advice as they plan their vacations, which are an important part of their time here.

If IVEPers are traveling out of state for work, please inform your MCC contacts of the details before the trip. Any work related travel will need support from the worksite (meal stipends, housing, taxi, etc) so the IVEPer doesn't need to spend their personal money.



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 all personnel, like IVEPers, 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



BIG PICTURE

Racism and safety

Unfortunately, in our society some people are uncomfortable with people of diverse backgrounds. There is suspicion instead of curiosity. Please introduce the IVEPer to your neighbors, colleagues and church family within the first week of their arrival. Let others know that they will see the IVEPer around and they are living at your house with you. Give the IVEPer your address, name and phone number on a card in case they get lost or questioned by someone. Help them understand any public transportation systems and what to do in case an incident occurs. Talk to them about your neighborhood and how to stay safe as someone who is new to the area. Check in regularly with the IVEPer regarding how things are going and ask if any uncomfortable situations have occurred. Take their concerns seriously, brainstorm together to solve any problems and also reach out to your MCC supports and regional coordinators so everyone is comfortable and safe in their daily routines.

As you explore these topics together, you can learn more by reading the book *Foreign to Familiar*, taking the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment, working on your own development plan and learning more about what it is like for a new person to enter your community.

We strongly recommend that all new hosts and supervisors take the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment and have a debrief with a Qualified Administrator. This is done through MCC systems. If you have already taken the IDI previously, we recommend re-taking the assessment every 3-5 years.

Gifts, extra earning

The IVEPers must not have a wage-earning job while in the U.S., but MCC does not discourage them from earning extra pocket money for doing odd jobs such as babysitting or lawn-mowing in their free time.

We also recognize that many partner agencies and hosts want to honor their IVEPer by offering them gifts or money during their time in the U.S. We cannot regulate gifts, of course, but we encourage hosts and partner agencies to consider these gifts carefully and to choose gifts that are appropriate and will not make it difficult for the IVEPer to fit in happily again at home. Monetary or conspicuous gifts are not appropriate, often making it difficult for an IVEPer once they return home. As well, gifts of this sort create unrealistic expectations on the part of future IVEPers or their communities, when they see what other IVEP participants have returned with in the past and hope for something similar in the future. It

is a good idea to check with IVEP coordinators before offering gifts to the IVEPer, to be sure that you are not inadvertently offering the IVEPer a gift that will make their reintegration more difficult once they return home.

Special projects

Sometimes IVEPers will request funds for projects in their home areas. These requests often come when they see the affluence the U.S. and compare it to needs at home; suggesting a special project is a natural reaction and the needs in their home areas are legitimate.

The project may be a good one, and we are glad if individuals or congregations are interested in needs overseas. However, we ask that you contact MCC before agreeing to support a project. Sometimes there are special channels to observe or implications to be aware of that the IVEPer does not know about. MCC overseas directors are in close contact with different countries, and are able to offer advice for special projects. If people in the U.S. are interested in promoting educational development overseas, we encourage them to look for ways of sponsoring in educational institutions in the IVEPer's home or neighboring country instead of sending money directly to the IVEPer since this causes tensions in their home communities. You might consider giving to one of MCC's projects. For more information visit mcc.org/donate.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LIVING AND WORKING WITH AN IVEP PARTICIPANT

The following thoughts and suggestions will be applicable in most cases, though each situation differs. In relating to the IVEPer, use good judgment and loving sensitivity. Remember that MCC staff are available to offer guidance whenever you may need it.

Americans are casual

Americans are casual in relationships compared to people from some other countries. Many people from outside the US interpret this as coolness and lack of acceptance and love. They are impressed with the spontaneous hospitality in the U.S., but are often disappointed in the casual coolness they sense in human relationships. They sometimes fail to understand that much of this is a cultural difference. You can help by trying to express in tangible ways that you care about and accept the IVEPer.

Culture shock

Culture shock is real. Most everyone traveling abroad experiences it to varying degrees. Often the shock comes two or three months after arrival. During their orientation IVEPers reviewed the stages of culture shock. You may also find this resource helpful. (appendix) Another resource we have found helpful is the book *Foreign to Familiar* by Sarah A. Lanier. It discusses ways one might be able to assist someone going through culture shock. The IVEPers each receive this book at orientation to read throughout the year. Supervisors and hosts also receive it in the mail from MCC. Consider reading the book together and discussing cultural differences.

While the IVEPer is the one taking the biggest cultural leap, as a host or partner agency you too are opening yourself to new ways of understanding. Learning some more about the IVEPer's home culture may help you to better understand their view point.

Safety

Safety measures in the U.S. may be different from the ones the IVEPer is used to in their home country. Please take some time to talk to the IVEPer about safety procedures in your context. Suggestions include covering emergency contacts such as 911, knowing who it is safe to approach for directions, which areas of the city or town are safe or unsafe, and what to do in case of an accident or other emergency such as an earthquake or fire.

Communication

It will be important to keep the lines of communication open. American concepts of time, language, space and thought patterns may be quite different from that of the IVEPer's. Talk with an IVEPer, not only about work, but also informally on personal matters. Leave the door open to easy communication so that if problems arise, you will both feel free to talk about them.

Ask the IVEPer about their country, family, interests, church and occupation. Be patient if they have trouble speaking in English. Remember it takes a lot of concentration and work to live and operate in a new language or new accent. Be aware that they may feel uncomfortable asking you to repeat things that they don't understand; they may just say "yes" when they didn't really understand the question or comment.

Use of telephone

IVEPers are told during orientation that they are NOT to make long distance calls on their host or partner agency telephone without verifying the cost ahead of time. Please respect this rule. We have had a number of cases where an IVEPer, a host or a partner agency calls us because their IVEPer has made long distance calls on their phone, with their permission, but didn't realize quite how expensive the calls would be. IVEPers are left with a phone bill that they are unable to repay, and others are left feeling guilty that they offered the phone to begin with. PLEASE do not let IVEPers make long distance calls without being aware of the cost - assist them in finding an appropriate way to call home. Please monitor this carefully, as MCC cannot take responsibility for the phone charges incurred by an IVEPer during their IVEP year. They add up fast! Various applications like WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger are good for making international calls home and are also free.

Use of internet

The internet is a big part of most people's lives and is used for work and personal connections. Please discuss household expectations and potential differences for phone use at the beginning of your time together. While it is important for IVEPer to connect with people at home, it is not advisable for an IVEPer to spend hours on the computer with people from home, especially as a way of dealing with homesickness. This kind of internet use only exacerbates the loneliness. It is important for IVEPer to use their time and the opportunity to build relationships with people in the U.S., which will ease their home sickness or feelings of loneliness.

If an IVEPer is spending lots of time online or alone, this might be an indication of an underlying struggle and may indicate a need for additional support or connection.

Consider giving the IVEPer access to a computer, especially for tasks such as completing the monthly report. Talk about it ahead of time and set clear expectations for use of any technology you lend an IVEPer. Some of these might include length of time spent on the computer, priority of use (children's school work over internet chatting, for example). Having rules outlined from the start save potential confusion or conflict later on.



Time

The concept of time is different across cultures. U.S. people tend to keep a very busy schedule; even vacations are often packed with activities. Please take time to talk with the IVEPer. Although they appreciate all the activities, many comment on the need to have time to just sit and talk with their host families and partner agencies. IVEPers appreciate talking, laughing and sharing with their friends in the U.S.

Concepts of time vary across cultures. In the U.S., time is often a way to show respect. For example, we shouldn't waste someone else's time by arriving late. Talk with the IVEPer about your concept and expectations around time.

Working together

Show or tell the IVEPer exactly what you expect them to do and how you want it done; tell them why you want things a certain way whenever possible. In some cultures it is disrespectful to pose questions of an authority figure or to admit that one doesn't understand. Asking questions of the IVEPer is one way of checking to see if an IVEPer truly understands what is being asked of them.

Set up a working schedule so that they know exactly when they are to work and when they are free. This is especially important for IVEPers working in a place where they might be uncertain about your expectations and end up feeling tense and uncomfortable. Be sure that the IVEPer has adequate free time. Work days can be no longer than eight hours with a maximum of 40 hours per week.

Living together

In many ways IVEPers are like young people in the U.S. They will want space where they can spend time alone but they will also want to feel at home in the family room or kitchen. They want to be accepted and loved as a part of the family, yet be respected as an individual. They want to learn how generations interact, and also hang out with people their own age.

In orientation we go over the idea of culture being like an iceberg. Like the 90% of an iceberg that is hidden below the water line, most cultural patterns and expectations are invisible. IVEPers will likely be frustrated when they unknowingly run into those cultural norms that they can't quite name. Comments like, "make yourself at home" can be confusing. When you say this to a guest in your home what do you mean? Making oneself at home in another's house looks very different in various places around the world.

Living patterns vary between cultures. Some, for example, have strictly patriarchal systems, while others are matriarchal. Many foreigners in the U.S. feel we have a child-dominated system because children in the U.S. have many freedoms and little discipline, as compared to other cultures. IVEPers may be shocked at the permissiveness given children here. Some IVEPers may also not exhibit the same independence that U.S. young adults of their age might expect or demand. Some might not be used to having such independence offered to them, and may even wait for permission to do things such as going out in the evening, or spending time away from the home. Communication is key. Expectations should be set early in the year and revisited as they settle in. Talk about inviting friends over, when to be home in the evenings, communicating schedule changes, quiet times in the house, etc,



Becoming part of the household

The IVEPer is to become part of your home, but do not rush this or go overboard in trying to make them feel welcome. In many cultures a newcomer is treated as a guest and then gradually becomes “one of the family.” Let adjustment take place gradually and naturally through a loving and accepting attitude on your part. Be patient while the IVEP participant learns how to best fit into this bewildering new world.

You will discover that people from other cultures make acquaintances differently. Some IVEPers may be shy and reluctant to ask questions or to make their feelings known. If this is the case you may need to take more initiative in getting acquainted. Sometimes a great deal of anxiety can be relieved by simply anticipating questions they may have. The following are some of the simple things that are second nature to you, but may be new and confusing to an IVEPer. Talk about them so everyone will feel comfortable and know what to expect.

Having an IVEPer in your home is an excellent opportunity for you to get to know someone from another culture well. Explore the IVEPer's culture, background and learn more together. Encourage children in the house to interact with IVEPer as a brother or sister. It will give them new knowledge and help them become flexible, open-minded people.

Use of shower and bathtub

Bathing is universal, but methods vary. Explain how to use the bathroom fixtures and other details. Some IVEPers, for example, may not know that the shower curtain goes inside the tub, or, for men, that it is appropriate to lift the toilet seat. Show the IVEPer where to find towels and talk about any details on bathroom schedule.

Daily routine and eating habits

Tell the IVEPer about your lifestyle, schedule and eating habits so they will know what to expect. What is your policy when someone must be late to a meal? Do they make their own meal? Do they eat leftovers? Do they need to call in advance and let the family know that they will be late? How free are family members and the IVEPer to serve themselves snacks from the cupboard or refrigerator between meals? Do you take packed lunches to work? How do you divide cleaning tasks? What food is available or recommended for packed lunches? Explain your table or meal etiquette (passing food, second helpings, phone use expectations during meals, etc.). Occasionally try to cook a meal from their home country, or invite them to cook a meal. Ask them if they need or want any specific food items for snacks or meals.

Bed and bedroom

IVEPers should have their own private bedroom so they don't need to constantly try to fit in and communicate in a new language. They need a place to be alone and relax. IVEPers are expected to keep their rooms tidy. Show the IVEPer how your beds are made. The U.S. system of sheets, blankets, quilts and spreads may be quite different to them. For example, they may not know that we sleep between two sheets. Show them where extra blankets can be found.

IVEPers should have a room with a lock to offer them a sense of security. This could be a regular door lock or a hook and eye latch.

Laundry

Describe how laundry is handled in your family and your expectations for the IVEPer. How often do you wash clothing? Where is dirty laundry placed? Where can hand laundry be washed/dried? Show the IVEPer how to operate your washing machine and dryer so they can use it when needed. Let IVEPers know that some laundry might shrink if placed in the dryer.

Family activities and chores

The more you include an IVEPer, the happier the relationship will be. Sometimes family chores can be interesting learning activities for IVEPers. Invite them to join you when you shop for groceries, go to department stores, pick up children at nursery school and other activities.

We have told them it is a common courtesy to help their hosts with dishes in the evening and perhaps to help tidy the house occasionally. While these tasks are traditionally done by women in many countries, including the U.S., we encourage both men and women to help with household tasks. It will also be eye-opening and beneficial for male IVEPers to see the men in their host families doing tasks traditionally assigned to women.

What to call you

Tell the IVEPer what you would like to be called. You may want to be called "Mom" and "Dad," "Aunt" or "Uncle," or by your first names. Talk together about what you would like the IVEPer to call you so they don't have to guess and feel comfortable.

Comparing IVEPers

It is not unusual to see the differences and similarities between IVEPers throughout the years, especially if they are from the same country. However, hosts and partner agencies should treat each IVEPer as

an individual, opting to not share these comparisons with the IVEPer. Comparisons may lower a person's confidence and make adjustment more difficult. No one likes to be under the shadow of another person.

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:

- a. 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.
- b. All visitors are expected to pay for the costs of hosting. For each person that will be staying with the host, IVEP asks that they give the host family \$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.
- c. IVEP participants should not expect their hosts to do any driving for their guests. If you offer to do so that is great, but it is not to be expected. We recommend that your guests make their own arrangements (use public transportation, take a taxi, Uber, Lyft, rent a car, etc.).
- d. IVEP participants are encouraged to visit other participants and are not expected to pay the same \$15 per day per person. However, they are still required to ask the host's permission — well in advance of the visit.
- e. We recommend that IVEPers do not receive international guests until after Christmas. Often times seeing someone from home only makes their homesickness worse and makes it more difficult to integrate into their new work and home situation.



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.



Worshipping together

Usually IVEPers like to become involved in church activities. Introduce the IVEP participant to your congregation their first Sunday in your church. Encourage people to take an interest in them and invite them to their homes. Encourage the young people of your congregation to involve the IVEP participant.

Be creative in ways that the IVEPer can be involved. Some ideas and examples are: help with children's classes, join the music team, be a greeter, run the powerpoint, join a Bible study or small group, join a ministry or project of the church, sing in the choir, join high school or junior high youth group as an assistant, ask congregants to sign up for inviting them to a meal or activity they enjoy.

Don't be concerned if the IVEPer doesn't speak openly and easily about his or her religious background. Some IVEPers will be taken aback by questions such as, "Are you saved?" Others, however, are alarmed by how seldom Americans talk about their faith or how private they keep their beliefs. Sometimes IVEPers may become concerned because the American style of Christianity may seem very worldly to them. IVEPers will appreciate in-depth sharing on the Bible and faith issues; sharing can be a means of spiritual growth for both of you. Many people who have served with MCC overseas have found their faith greatly challenged and strengthened by listening to and learning from people from other cultures. Not all IVEPers or hosts come from Anabaptist churches. If your church experiences are very different consider finding a local church which is closer to the IVEPer's experience and visit together.

Take this opportunity to expose your church to another culture and make sure that the people in your congregation know who your new guest is. Consider giving an announcement at your church prior to the IVEPers arrival. Invite the IVEPer to share about their country and church during a worship service or Sunday school class. Neighboring churches and schools might also like to hear from them.

We look forward to working with you over the coming year.

*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:

- IVEPer will be tired
- greetings will be different
- IVEPers can't understand

BUT

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

Helpful advice:

- share your routine with the IVEPer
- answer their questions
- be patient, don't judge behavior that seems strange – ask!
- laugh with the IVEPer
- be curious
- encourage the IVEPer to participate in your daily activities with you

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 IVEPer may withdraw a little
- The IVEPer will feel like they like some things but not others

Helpful advice:

- expect to feel some resentment
- talk to the IVEPer about their goals
- help them discard inappropriate goals
- encourage the IVEPer to try new things
- introduce the IVEPer to potential friends at church, help them build social connections

- encourage the IVEPer and hosts to journal, talk, or share about what’s going on 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:

- IVEPer may ask questions about things they don’t understand
- IVEPer may talk more about expectations
- IVEPer may begin to realize some rules are unspoken
- IVEPer may feel like “some people don’t seem to care”
- IVEPer may realize that people may talk about them with others

Helpful advice:

- help IVEPer understand unwritten cultural rules
- ask the IVEPer about themselves, their culture, their interests etc.
- share about yourself with the IVEPer

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:

- IVEPer may feel homesick
- IVEPer may feel like they don’t like it here
- IVEPer may experience feelings of anger and confusion
- IVEPer feels like small problems become big

Helpful advice:

- reassure the IVEPer that their feelings are valid and acknowledge it takes time to adjust
- listen to the IVEPer’s frustrations – be someone to talk to
- encourage the IVEPer to get extra rest, exercise, and eat well
- remind IVEPer that it’s okay to think “this is stupid” but not to say it
- help IVEPer meet potential friends and make community connections
- be patient, understanding and accepting
- Invite the IVEPer to visit public places and community events
- Be intentional to continue checking in with the IVEPer about how they’re doing. For example: eat lunch together, go for a walk, and set aside time to be present together.

- encourage the IVEPer to find a balance between communicating with friends and family at home and getting involved in their new community and context here. It's ok to communicate with home, as long as it's not all-consuming and preventing the IVEPer from getting enough sleep or making new friends and social connections here.

5 STAGE FIVE: The holidays

How long does it last?

- Christmas time
- usually six weeks

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- IVEPer may experience mixed feelings of sadness or happiness
- IVEPer may feel of lonely
- IVEPer will be interested in new traditions, but may find some of them hard to understand

Helpful advice:

- ask questions about IVEPer's customs and explain your own
- help the IVEPer to share one of their holiday traditions with you, their host or partner. For example, consider helping them make a special food, go to a special service, play a special game, etc.
- If you sense serious problems, contact the Regional IVEP coordinator for help
- make sure the IVEPer is dressing warmly
- check in with the IVEPer about their vacation plans
- remember that IVEPers 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:

- IVEPer starts to feel comfortable
- some things start to make sense to the IVEPer

Helpful advice:

- now that they feel more comfortable, encourage the IVEPer to try to explore
- ask IVEPers questions about what they are learning about culture

7 STAGE SEVEN: Pre-departure

How long does it last?

- usually starts six weeks before you leave

What Hosts and Partner Agencies should expect:

- IVEPer may experience irritability, sensitivity, anger
- IVEPer may have feelings of loss
- the IVEPer's focus may change and look more towards home instead of their present situation

Helpful advice:

- don't wait until the last minute to talk about the IVEPer leaving
- acknowledge their feelings of loss
- talk to the IVEPer about reverse culture shock – things will feel 'different' when they go home
- encourage IVEPer to intentionally take time to say good-bye
- help the IVEPer to plan (or even plan for them) a "good-bye party" and invite those who have built connections with the IVEPer to participate and say good-bye
- let the IVEPer know what you have valued about their service and friendship and what you have learned from them
- allow the IVEPer to process their future plans while also continuing to be present in their 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

IVEP Vacation request form

- Please return this form to your regional coordinator and supervisor as soon as it's finalized before you travel.
- You should take 5 days vacation before the February conference and 5 days after.
- If you are a teacher, your vacation time will take place at the same time your students are on vacation.
- Most workplaces require that you confirm plans with your supervisor at least 2 weeks before you go on vacation.

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!

mcc.org/ivep



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