

•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 in Ten Thousand Villages stores, at MCC Relief Sales, 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 mcccanada.ca in Canada, and mcc.org in the U.S.

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 both Canada and 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 international peace and reconciliation
2. help participants understand themselves and others
3. promote international goodwill, understanding and friendship
4. increase a sense of personal involvement and responsibility in a world of interrelated peoples
5. strengthen bonds of Christian fellowship
6. broaden horizons and views
7. correct stereotypes and misconceptions about other peoples
8. help participants gain vocational skills through a volunteer work placement
9. equip young adults for service in their home communities following their return from service in the U.S. and Canada



Staff titles and roles

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

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

IVEP National Coordinators—There are national coordinators in both Canada and 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 Provincial Coordinators—There are provincial coordinators in six provinces of Canada: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Saskatchewan. They work to find new partner agencies and hosts, assist in the placement process and support hosts, partner agencies and IVEPers during the term. They also plan provincial gatherings.

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 sponsors, 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 Canada and 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 coordinators 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 IVEP national coordinators. IVEP national coordinators reserve the right to make final selections. When the selection process is complete, field 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. Sometimes their volunteer placement may not be in their vocational field. 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 host families

MCC seeks partner agencies and host families who can offer IVEPer a wide variety of experiences and 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 his/her professional interests, or relevant speaking engagements in the community.
- Covers the costs of the IVEPer's room and board, the IVEPer's 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. IVEPer's are to plan their vacation in consultation with their work supervisor.
- Arranges/provides transportation to and from work for the IVEPer.
- In the U.S., finds a Christian host family for the IVEPer near the workplace. In Canada, the provincial IVEP coordinator is responsible for locating a host family however recommendations and suggestions are welcome.
- Completes a monthly evaluation provided by IVEP staff (see Reporting, pg 9).
- 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 other week for the first 6 months, 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 an institutional 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 (See [Reporting](#), pg 9).
- 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 form has been prepared and needs to be completed each month.

In the U.S., the report should be sent to the IVEP U.S. Coordinator in Akron along with your remittance checks. In Canada, send your report to the IVEP Provincial coordinator. Do feel free to call or write coordinators between reports.

IVEP staff use reports to write updates to the MCC Field Representatives in their home country to help maintain accountability between IVEPers and their communities and to monitor any problems that might arise. 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 Canada and IVEP U.S. newsletters. These, and other information, can be found on our website at ivep.mcc.org



IVEP participants agree to the following conditions:

1. To do my best to promote goodwill and better understanding between my country and Canada 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 Canada and 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. and Canada.
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. If an individual's misconduct is severe MCC may choose to decline future participants from that country for two years.

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 Canada or 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 Canada or 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 Canada 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 in Canada or the U.S. as part of their application process and not return for an extended amount of time for 2 years following the end of their program year. This commitment is based on the programmatic goal of equipping young adults for continued service in their home communities. We hope that all IVEPers will broaden their horizons and vocational skills during the year and return home to settle into their communities with renewed zeal and a deeper faith that will benefit themselves and their communities.

There are times when Canadians and Americans who don't understand the program say, "Wouldn't you like to stay here?" This is a difficult question for the IVEPer to handle. The program is not meant to lure young people away from their national churches, communities and homes. In fact, the program has been closed in some countries because the allure of staying in Canada or the U.S. is too great. Should a participant decide to remain or return to Canada or the U.S. for an extended period of time during the two years following their participation in the program, MCC will close the program in that participant's country. This is due to the sending countries desire to retain their strong young adult leadership, our program goals and sometimes a government requirement.

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. The assumption is that those who are deeply rooted in their home communities will more likely be committed to returning home to share the knowledge, skills and impressions they received from their IVEP experience. It is remarkable how many IVEP alumni are impacting their communities and churches.

We ask each of you not to encourage any IVEPer to remain in Canada or the U.S. following the end of the program nor to return to Canada or the U.S. within two years of their program end date.

We also ask that partner agencies and hosts not assist IVEPers to return to Canada or the U.S. Due to the goals of the program, we discourage IVEP participants from immigrating to Canada or the U.S. and using the connections they make while they are on IVEP to return. Some may still do so. In an effort to remain true to program goals and to clarify the existing policy, in 2003 it was decided that MCC would not place an IVEP participant with a partner agency or host who has assisted an IVEP participant to return to Canada or the U.S. within 2 years of the end of their IVEP term. Having a returned participant in the workplace sends conflicting messages to the incoming IVEP participant. In the past, countries have cancelled their participation in IVEP when they have seen some of their young people participate in IVEP, return home only to later emigrate to Canada or the U.S. Helping one IVEPer will limit the chances of other young people to participate in the program.

Early terminations

Some IVEPer 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 Coordinators 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 room and board 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.

Canada

The partner agency is responsible for the following financial arrangements. Please speak with your IVEP provincial coordinator to set up a payment process.

In Canada a yearly sponsor cost will range from \$8,000–\$9,500 CAD. A monthly breakdown is as follows:

- \$100 CAD stipend for the IVEPer
- \$400-\$500 CAD hosting fee (depending on region)
- \$200 CAD MCC Administration fee (\$35 Provincial, \$165 Program)
- Transportation (Bus pass or alternative means of transportation as needed for placement)

*Cost will vary slightly by province to cover various costs such as cell phones, cultural activities and workplace safety and insurance fees.

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 \$612.

A monthly breakdown is as follows:

- \$112 U.S. stipend and worker renewal for the IVEPer (adjusted yearly for COLA)
- \$350 U.S. for the host family to help with room and board
- \$150 U.S. MCC for administrative fee
- Provide a cell phone and/or SIM card with phone plan
- 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.

Partner agencies should send all 3 fees to the MCC office in Akron. MCC Akron will, in turn, pay the IVEP participant and host family 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.



Summary of program costs

MCC will provide:

- transportation costs from a designated city in the home country to a designated site in Canada or 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 provided 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 IVEPer departed in their home country upon completion of the program.

Tax, social security

Businesses and institutions will not normally list the IVEPers 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 provincial or regional coordinator, the IVEP national coordinator or a tax consultant.

Room and board payments for IVEP participants

The following is intended to provide general tax guidance to IVEP host families who receive room and board 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.

It is our opinion that the payments made to host families for room and board represent income to the host families, and should be classified as part of the host family's gross income for tax purposes.

U.S. ONLY 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 Canada and 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 Canada or 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.

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 #569.

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 Canada

In Canada, hosts should contact the IVEP provincial coordinator before any procedure that requires hospitalization.

In some provinces, the IVEPs are covered by the provincial health care plan which the provincial coordinator will register them for when they arrive. If they are not, the MCC medical care should be used for all medical care. Expenses for dental and vision care should be billed directly to MCC provincial office. If the provider cannot or will not do so, the host or partner agency should pay the bill and send it to the IVEP provincial coordinator immediately, indicating to whom the reimbursement should be directed. MCC will issue a check reimbursing that person.



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. 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.

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.” 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 he/she is expected to work and when he/she is free.

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. The work presented to the IVEPer should be challenging, exciting, and definitely a learning experience.

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.

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. The monthly stipend, room & board amount and MCC administrative fees should continue as usual during the vacation period. Vacation time should be arranged between partner agency, host and IVEPer. IVEPers must then inform their provincial or 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.

Holiday time is when the workplace is closed. These days do not count as vacation.

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 we Americans or Canadians go abroad we 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.

BIG PICTURE

Gifts, extra earning

The IVEPers must not have a wage-earning job while in Canada or 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 Canada or 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 (laptops, Ipods, etc) 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 of Canada and 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 Canada and 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 donate.mcc.org.

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.

Canadians and Americans are casual

Canadians and Americans are casual in relationships compared to people from some other countries. Many people from outside Canada and the US interpret this as coolness and lack of acceptance and love. They are impressed with the spontaneous hospitality in Canada and 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. Ask the IVEPer if you can also read the book – it's a good way of starting open discussion about 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. While not all generalizations hold true you may find this site helpful. www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercuspays-eng.asp

Safety

Safety measures in the U.S./Canada 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. Canadian and 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 his or her country, family, interests, church and occupation. Be patient if they have trouble speaking in English. Also, 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 using a phone card. 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 a phone card – and assist them in finding an appropriate phone card for calling 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!

Use of internet

It is highly advisable to set clear limits on internet use at the beginning of their stay. In the Participant Manual we have stated that they should not spend more than 1 hour a day on the internet. While it is important for IVEPers 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 IVEPers to use their time and the opportunity to build relationships with people in Canada and the U.S., which will ease their home sickness or feelings of loneliness.

It is also advisable that if you intend for the IVEPer to have access to the computer, it should be in a place that is easily accessible. It is also a good idea to set some basic rules that your family follows with regards to computer use. 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. Canadians and Americans 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 Canada and the U.S.

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 Canadian and American young people. 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 Canada and the U.S. feel we have a child-dominated system because Canadian and American children 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 Canadians or Americans 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.



Becoming part of the family

The IVEPer is to become part of your family, but do not rush this or go overboard in trying to make him or her 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.

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 family 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, etc.). Occasionally try to cook a meal from their home country, or invite them to cook a meal.

Bed and bedroom

It is best if you can offer the IVEPer a 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. We tell the IVEPers that it is customary for everyone to make their own bed in the morning and to keep their bedroom in order. Show the IVEPer how your beds are made. The Canadian and American 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.

If you have a lot of visitors in your home, it is advisable to offer the IVEPer a room with a door that locks to offer them a sense of security.

Laundry

Describe how laundry is handled in your family. 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.

If the IVEPer works outside your home, 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 Canada and 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. Whatever you decide let the IVEPer know so they don’t have to guess.

Educational opportunity for children

If you have children, having an IVEPer in your home is an excellent opportunity for them to get to know someone from another culture. It will give them new knowledge and help them become flexible, open-minded people. Encourage your children to interact with the IVEPer as a brother or sister might.

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

There has been an increase in the number of family members or friends visiting IVEP participants while in Canada and the U.S. Some IVEP hosts have expressed concern about the number of visitors coming and the costs involved in hosting them.

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. This payment is not optional.
- 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, 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

A number of hosts have asked IVEP staff to set out guidelines if an IVEPer's boyfriend or girlfriend wishes to visit during the term. It is difficult to set guidelines for every situation but the IVEP participants are expected to comply with and inform their boyfriend or girlfriend of the following principles and guidelines, as outlined in their participant manual:

- 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. 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 with your boy/girlfriend or visit them in their hotel room. Doing so could damage your reputation as well as the reputation of IVEP and MCC. 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.

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 Canadians and Americans talk about their faith or how private they keep their beliefs. Sometimes IVEPers may become concerned because the Canadian and 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.

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 distributing the attached pamphlet 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 IVEPer to try new things
- introduce IVEPer to potential friends at church, help them build social connections
- encourage IVEPer to journal to write about what's going on

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 not permanent, 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
- eat lunch with the IVEPer (if you are from the Partner Agency)

- 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 Provincial or Regional IVEP coordinator for help
- make sure the IVEPer is dressing warmly
- check in with the IVEPer about their vacation plans

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

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

8

STAGE EIGHT: Re-adjustment (this is experienced by the IVEPer alone, but if hosts know about it they can help prepare the IVEPer)

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 or Canada
- take an interest in what others have done while you were gone

IVEP vacation request form

- Please return this form to your provincial/regional coordinator and sponsor 1 month before your travel
- You must take 1 1/2 weeks vacation before the February conference and 1 1/2 weeks after.
- 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 partner agency 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!

ivep.mcccanada.ca
ivep.mcc.org



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