

RIO Collectove, Inc. Mission Guidelines

We have created the RIO Collective, Inc. ("RIO") Mission Guidelines, to provide information to help teams prepare for their trip and provide guidance while on the mission field. Using these resources and guidelines will help ensure a safe and rewarding experience for you and your team. New, experienced, and returning teams need to review the guidelines: as it reflects the most current information regarding the changing needs and conditions in Panama.

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**FORMS AND TEMPLATES** – \*available on riopanama.com

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RIO Collective, Inc. Contract and Acknowledgement of Risk Release Form

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RIO Emergency Guidelines

**CHECKLIST FOR MISSION TEAM TRIPS**

Congratulations, you are embarking on a mission that will have a lasting impact on your life. Thank you for volunteering your time, effort and resources. If you have NOT applied and received confirmation for your mission trip date, please return to our website and follow the directions to schedule your trip. Read the RIO Mission Guidelines for detailed information regarding our policies and additional resources to prepare for your trip.

Once approved, the following forms must be completed and submitted to RIO. (See RIO Forms)

1. Team leaders need to provide information on each team member to aid in housing and project planning. Complete the “Pre-Trip Form” and submit via email to casaparaisopanama@gmail.com. This form provides us with contact information in the unlikely event we need to reach their emergency contact while they are serving in Panama and so that we may furnish team members with information on our ministry after they return.

2. All team members must sign the “RIO Contract and Acknowledgement of Risk” form and complete the “Health History” form. Team leaders must submit their signed Contract (scan and email signed copy) to casaparaisopanama@gmail.com but retain the team member contracts and health history forms until completion of the trip. Although there are often reports of security issues, RIO has conducted trips for over 5 years without major incident. Our partners and friends in Panama will advise us if political/social conditions are not favourable. Although all efforts will be made to accommodate team requests for project and travel opportunities, no activity will be approved unless deemed safe and appropriate by our Panamanian leaders.

3. Read the Team Leader Tips for additional information on preparing for a mission trip. We encourage all team members to read the Mission Guidelines, most are applicable to all missions – a few are prepared specifically for medical teams. Even if you have been on a mission to Panama before, time and conditions change, the Guidelines will reflect the most current information. (Revisions dates included, please read the most current Guidelines prior to subsequent trips, a quick review of ALL Guidelines is encouraged).

Individual Volunteers

RIO does NOT accept individual volunteers for short-term missions but if you want to participate in a mission trip to Panama, we will make every effort to find a place for you within a team. In order to do this, your schedule must be flexible. Email us at casaparaisopanama@gmail.com with possible dates and areas of interest. Once partnered with a team, we ask that you participate with the team as much as possible and follow the direction of the team leader once in Panama. All costs and conditions remain the same as for a team. Bear in mind that many teams are at maximum size and may not be able to accommodate additional people. We recommend that you do NOT make airline reservations or other arrangements until after we have confirmed your placement on a team. If you have completed the above steps and have not received an acknowledgement within one month after submitting your request, please contact casaparaisopanama@gmail.com

Checklist of Requirements to complete for mission team/trip “approval”:

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Pre-Trip Form – email as an attachment.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Contract and Acknowledgement of Risk Form – submit leader’s form, retain members’ forms.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Health History Form – team leader retains forms.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_4. Current Passport – team members carry a copy and provide leaders with a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. (Medical teams) Current medical license - team members carry medical license and provide team leader with a copy.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Proof of short term international travellers insurance

**INFORMATION FOR MISSION TEAMS**

RIO is committed to helping you have a safe and meaningful experience. The following resources will provide the information needed to prepare for your trip (and answer the most commonly asked questions!)

Getting there: Teams are responsible for making their airline reservations and travel arrangements. Airfare fluctuates between $500 and $800 per ticket. It is best to purchase your tickets as soon as possible to obtain the best rate. Mid-week flights are often the cheapest. All team members must travel on the same flight. RIO staff will meet you at the airport and assist with transportation to your accommodations. Saturday and Sundays are transition days with many teams arriving and departing; please send us your flight number and scheduled time of arrival as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for pick up.

Passport: A current passport is required to enter Panama and for reentry into the U.S., Visas are not required. Carry a copy of your passport (separate from your passport and not in checked luggage). Remember to keep the green departure slip given to you in Panama Immigration. Green Card holders (U.S. Resident aliens) must take their green card; you will not be allowed to leave Panama without it.

Panamanian Immigration and Customs: You have to provide an address of where you are staying; use the Blanchard address: Casa 611 Espalaba, Paraiso, Ancon, Panama, Panama

Mission Trip Insurance: We recommend med-evac insurance for each volunteer in the event that a medical emergency occurs and immediate care needed. Group plans are available from most insurance agencies or from American Express. For more options, see International Travel Health Insurance Plans at www.gninsurance.com

Immunizations: CDC (Centers for Disease Control) strongly recommends the following immunizations:

 Dtap (Diphtheria-pertussis-tetanus) within 5 years. If you’ve had a Td (tetanus) booster as an adult, you still need a Dtap booster (even in the States, a pertussis booster is recommended)

 Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B

Health Protection: Get all the recommended vaccinations. Remember to bring all personal prescription and over the counter medications. Use insect repellant (DEET 30) and sunscreen; wait 15 minutes between applying sunscreen and insect repellant (some sunscreens increase absorption of Deet).

Try to stay hydrated especially if you have diarrhea or nausea. Remember to drink plenty of fluids. Heat exhaustion and in some cases, heat stroke comes on very quickly in this hot, humid climate. Be prepared and do not over exert yourself when working. Report any illness to your team leader immediately!

First Aid Kits: Each team should have an emergency kit, which should contain all the medications you need for most common illnesses, pain medication, antibiotics and bandaging materials (see Suggestions for Team First Aid Kits). Please keep this kit with you at all times!

Mission Projects: Volunteer teams collaborate with RIO to work with medical, construction, VBS, school and vocational projects. Although some teams may complete short-term projects, most will contribute to ongoing projects that require coordination between our leaders, staff and volunteer organizations. Flexibility is vital as plans may change based on current needs, resources or unexpected problems. Scheduled workdays are Monday through Saturday, with limited opportunities to complete jobs/tasks on the weekend.

RIO makes every effort to safeguard the safety and well-being of our teams and to promote the success of your individual mission trip and our ministry in Panama. RIO's Mission Guidelines are the primary means by which we provide information, please review these guidelines prior to every trip. Every volunteer is asked to honor our guidelines and respect the leadership of our Panamanian pastors and RIO staff.

Site-Seeing and Shopping: Teams are encouraged to explore Panama; opportunities are available to tour Panama City (day trips only, transportation for after-hours excursions is not available). A retail shop is located at the Causeway featuring products from the vocational program as well as local metal, stone and wooden crafts. All sales benefit the co-operative and its members.

Publicity: Photographs and videos of RIO's work in Panama may result in the use of volunteers’ and teams’ images in print and electronic publications promoting RIO. Personal data will not be disclosed and every effort is made to protect individual privacy. No image will be used for profit and no volunteer will be paid or rewarded for use of their image. We ask teams to share their mission photos to help highlight the needs and work done by RIO email photos to casaparaisopanama@gmail.com.

Copyright: No one may use RIO's name or logo on products produced for distribution without permission; please contact Jessica Cotton at casaparaisopanama@gmail.com for more information about our policies.

Contact Information: Please contact us at the email addresses below and on the website as previous contacts may no longer be associated with HOM.

In Panama : Jessica Cotton – Vonage phone: 732-749-8152

Email: jesscotton1@yahoo.com, casaparaisopanama@ gmail.com

We will provide additional contact information in your welcome letter (Email) once you have scheduled your trip. This will include the name and local phone number of the staff member who will meet you at the airport and help co-ordinate your clinic/project while in Panama.

Emergency Situations: In Panama City, the two BEST hospitals closest to us are:

HOSPITAL PUNTA PACIFICA

www.hospitalpuntapacifica.com

info@hpp.com.pa

Boulevard Pacifica and Via Punta Darien

Panama City, Panama

204-8000

Fax: 204-8010

Emergency: 204-8185/204-8184204-8000Fax: 204-8010Emergency: 204-8185/204-8184

CENTRO MEDICO PAITILLA

clininfo@psi.net.pa

Avenida Balboa and 53rd Street, Marbella

Panama City, Panama

265-8800

Fax: 265-8861

Emergency: 265-8888

Doctors’ Offices: 269-5222

Arrested or Detained:

Please notify the American Citizen Services Unit at 011-507-317-5000 or in Panama 317-5000 when you or a friend or family member is arrested or detained. Detained Americans will generally be visited by a U.S. Consul within 48 hours.

The Office of Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) at the Department of State in Washington, D.C., is the point of contact for family members in the United States who are concerned about an American citizen family member who has been arrested abroad. You can reach OCS by calling 1-888-407-4747. Family members in Panama may call the ACS Unit at 317-5030 or e-mail Panama-ACS@state.gov.

What to do if someone/a child has been abducted:

From the United States to Panama: If your child has been abducted from the United States to Panama, you should file an application with the U.S. Central Authority at:

Department of State, Office of Children’s Issues

SA-29, 2201 C Street, NW

U.S. Department of State

Washington, DC 20520

Telephone number: 1-888-407-4747

Fax number: (202) 736-9132

From Panama to the United States: If your child has been abducted from Panama to the United States, you should file an application with the Panama Central Authority at:

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores

(Dirección de Asuntos Jurídicos y Tratados)

San Felipe. Calle 3. Palacio Bolívar. Ciudad de Panamá.

Zona Postal San Felipe, Calle 3. Palacio Bolívar. Edificio 26, Panamá 4, Panamá.

Tel. (507) 511-4228

Fax (507) 511-4008

Guidance and instructions on completing the application form:

http://travel.state.gov/abduction/resources/hagueinstruct/hagueinstruct\_3857.html.

Natural Disasters or Civil Unrest:

We will be following US Embassy alerts and protocols for any of these issues. From the US your family can obtain information about any of these issues,should they ever arise from the US Embassy in Panama. They can also contact the US State Department.

U.S. Embassy Panama

Avenida Demetrio Basilio Lakas,

Building No.783

Clayton, Panama

Telephone+(507)-317-5000

Emergency After-Hours Telephone+(507)317-5000

Fax+(507)317-5568

Email Panama-ACS@state.gov

Alerts and Warnings - Bureau of Consular Affairs - US Department of State

travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

We issue a Travel Warning when we want you to consider very carefully ... This site is managed by the Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State.

**TEAM LEADER TIPS**

We are excited that you are joining us! If you have not already done so, go to “Forming a Team” on the website to begin the application process. Read “Mission Guidelines” for tips on preparing for your mission trip, even if you have been on a mission trip to Panama before, time and conditions change and the guidelines and resource material will reflect the most current information.

Getting Ready to Go: Complete the “Team Registration” form and submit to RIO. Have your team members sign the “Contract and Acknowledgement of Risks” and “Heath History” forms (see Forms), retain until after your trip. Remind team members that they need a current passport and should take a copy of their passport. U.S. Resident aliens must bring their green card. Medical team members will also need to take a current copy of their medical license(s). Encourage team members to participate in all aspects of preparation for the trip. Divide responsibilities up according to each member’s interest, time and talents.

Stay in Touch with RIO staff for current information regarding your project. Medical teams should contact us directly clinic/medical needs and order medications (see “Options for Acquiring Medications”). A phone conversation with RIO's staff is usually helpful and welcomed! If you have questions regarding available supplies, resources or policies in Panama please contact RIO: do NOT contact any Panamanian official, health care provider or supplier directly.

Prepare Your Team: Make sure team members have appropriate immunizations and malaria prophylaxis. Review CDC travel guidelines at www.cdc.gov/travel for current recommendations. Assign a team member(s) to outfit a team First Aid Kit (see “Suggestions for First Aid Kits”). The team must purchase short term or group travel insurance in the event of significant illness or injury. Rates for this coverage are very reasonable and be sure it covers medical evacuation back to the U.S. (See “Information for Mission Team” for more information)

Think of Yourself as a Good-Will Ambassador. Whether you agree or not, your team is regarded as a ministry and U.S. representatives. Encourage team members to avoid behaviors that reinforce the stereotype of North Americans as rude, arrogant, condescending, or wasteful people. Dress appropriately to avoid offense. Many Panamanians understand English, be mindful of critical comments made in the streets and on the work site. Encourage team members to use local greetings and phrases such as Buenas Dias (Good Morning) and Gracias (Thank-you). Smile and shake hands with people as much as possible. Do not bring gifts or plaques in honor or appreciation of an individual as our beliefs and those of our Panamanian friends are that all resources are for the glory of God not for individual recognition. Remember that any action of a team member can result in a lasting positive or negative impact to the ministry long after the team is gone.

Maintain a Cooperative Team Spirit. If team members cannot get along, it negatively affects the morale of the whole team and ultimately the success of the mission. Remind members to maintain the attitude that you are volunteering your time not only to give, but also to benefit, from the experience. Be prepared for the fact that some of your colleagues may have a very different work ethic than yours or seemingly act less committed. Encourage everyone to focus on his or her own experience and not the actions of their colleagues; remember everyone handles the mission experience differently.

Be Flexible. Working in any developing nation is challenging; things will change, and change again. Proposed projects may be altered or canceled as unexpected problems arise and/or priorities and needs change. Try to remember that no matter how limited the facilities or resources of the location are, this is likely the best the locals have and it works for them. Remind your team that this is not about you: it is about doing the most good for the most people in a short time. Encourage them to think of this experience as an opportunity to expand their abilities to think - and work - outside “the box” and to develop new strategies to provide good care or services with limited resources.

Have Realistic Expectations. Never promise more than your team can deliver. When planning a medical clinic, under-estimate the number of patients you can treat, if you see more patients than promised, satisfaction will be high. Construction projects often take longer than expected and may not be completed in a week’s time; encourage your team to measure success in the quality of the job done rather than amount of work completed. Recognize and accept that local people may or may not show their gratitude or recognize your hard work.

Maintain Professional Standards. Team members must practice within their scope of practice or expertise while serving in Panama. Although it may seem harmless for a non-provider to provide medical advice or distribute commonly used medications or for a non-licensed person to perform electrical or other specialized work, one bad outcome can jeopardize not only the success of your trip, but could negatively affect our medical and/or building programs. As a rule: If you cannot do it in the States, you cannot do it in Panama! Individuals or teams who do not adhere to these guidelines may be asked to leave or not allowed to return!

Enforce Security. Crowd control cannot be overemphasized. Even if you help many people, leaving an angry or dissatisfied mob at the end of the day will erase any good from earlier efforts. Good intentions but poor outcomes will only cause problems for future mission teams and the coordinating church. Never promise personal support to a family or individual. Never do “giveaways” in a crowd—this can create instant chaos! Do not allow team members to give away things such as water, food, candy, or empty water bottles; give these and other surplus supplies to one of the pastors/teachers for distribution after you leave.

Setting a Good Example: A successful mission does not just mean seeing many patients or completing projects; it is also about leaving the communities with a good impression. Taking the time to thank the RIO field and church staff and the translators helps ensure that future teams are welcome and get the help they need for their mission to be a success. Occasionally a team may wish to share or provide a lunch for the translators but we ask teams NOT to give gifts or additional money. It is impossible to ensure all RIO volunteers are treated fairly if teams single out translators for special treatment (see Tips for Working with Translators). Leaving the work site/clinic and pharmacy in a “better than you found it” condition also helps. Our field coordinators have a lot of work to do – cleaning up after your team is not one of them! An end of trip inventory of supplies and medicines is not only encouraged but is vital to RIO's ability to adequately anticipate and provide assistance for future teams.

Anticipate "Re-Entry" Culture Shock. Encourage team members to schedule extra time at the end of the trip before returning to work to unwind and digest the experience. Extra time can also provide an oft-needed cushion in the event of travel delays. Warn team members that friends and relatives may have little interest in accounts of their experiences. It is impossible to describe the day-to-day hardships of the Panamanian people to others but this experience may help you gain a lasting sense of perspective on your own challenges.

Set Aside A “Debriefing” Time. Spend time each evening as a group to discuss the day’s events and offer encouragement and praise as needed. Compare notes on the project or clinic operation and discuss problems or difficulties encountered and possible solutions so that the following day can be more efficient and successful. The medical teams should update the providers on medications that are running low. Devotions or prayers are often helpful during this time to encourage and boost team morale. Be alert to team members who may be emotionally overwhelmed by the day’s experience.

Take a Team Photograph. In addition to the compassionate nature of the mission, this is also an opportunity to see a part of the world or problems you may not have seen otherwise, and to gain insight into a different way of life. This experience may renew enthusiasm in your work environment or practice and forge bonds with your teammates unlike those you experience with colleagues in the States. Taking a photograph is a tangible way to capture some of the lessons and camaraderie you and other team members may want to remember from the mission experience.

**SUGGESTED PACKING LIST**

1. Shoes: one pair suitable for work (closed shoes recommended for safety) and one for church

2. Clothing: sleepwear, shirts, pants, shorts, socks, underwear, and modest swimsuit (for beach/ pool only)

Laundry is available so no need to pack extra clothing (clothing must be marked for easy identification).

Women: knee length skirt and shirt or dress (with sleeves) for church, shorts or slacks for clinic/worksite Men: short sleeve shirt & slacks for church/work site.

3. Hat and sunglasses

4. Contacts, contact container (and PLENTY of solution)

5. Toiletries (soap, toothbrush/paste, shampoo, deodorant) please limit curling irons, dryers, & electric razors

6. Washcloths (twin sheets are provided and towels are available in limited supply.)

7. Sunscreen - at least SFP 15 or higher and waterproof

8. Insect Repellent w/deet 30

9. Lip balm & eye drops (liquid tears)

10. Antibacterial hand wash/gel

11. Personal medications (suggest Tylenol, Imodium and antacids in addition to prescription medications)

12. Antibacterial wipes (recommended to clean the tops of bottle, cans etc. before drinking)

13. Camera and extra batteries

14. Flashlight and extra batteries (needed at night after ‘lights out”)

15. Battery operated clock (most phones will have a clock)

16. Personal battery operated fan and extra batteries (highly recommend!)

17. Earplugs for after hours (Panamanian roosters and dogs often start crowing/barking at 3 am) (other team members may snore loudly)

18. Cell phone – there is little need for multiple cell phones in Panama, we suggest only one for team use. Verizon offers a free international phone to its customers. Other companies may offer similar programs, contact the company for details and instructions.

19. Refillable water bottle

20. Personal snacks (granola or protein bars, peanut butter crackers, tuna packets - be imaginative!)

21. Copy of your passport & your PASSPORT

22. Copy of your Green Card

23. Driver’s license (needed to use a credit card)

24. Spending money, VISA & MC (accepted in some stores - consider pre-paid credit cards)

25. Bible, devotional and journal items

26. Copy of Medical license(s) for medical personnel

\*Do not bring expensive jewelry, computers and other valuable items to Panama; we cannot be responsible for stolen or lost items or damage to electronics due to electricity surges while charging the battery.

**RECOMMENDED TEAM SUPPLY LIST**

In addition to supplies needed for your project, the following items may be helpful to have while on the mission field. Although we do have access to a local grocery and hardware store, items in Panama are usually much more expensive than in the U.S. Teams often leave surplus supplies, these supplies are welcome and will be stored for use by visiting teams but we cannot hold these items for your use on future trips. We also request that all supplies be “de-bulked” as much as possible, remove all cellophane wrappers, take bottles out of boxes, etc.

GENERAL SUPPLIES

1. Batteries, 1 pack each AAs, AAAs, Cs, and Ds

2. Citronella candles (check camping/outdoor stores for mosquito coils and other insect repellants)

3. Clorox or antibacterial wipes

4. Fans: battery operated and extra batteries

5. First Aid Kit (see Suggestions for 1st Aid Kit)

6. Flashlights, extra batteries

7. Gatorade powder (very expensive to purchase in Haiti)

8. Good quality work gloves and safety glasses if involved in building projects

9. Liquid soap (for bathrooms)

Lock Boxes at Blanchard

10. Notepad (for reporting results and items/concerns that need to be addressed)

11. Padlocks (if lock boxes are brought)

12. Paper towels and toilet paper – for field work (Casa Paraiso will supply at base)

13. Project supplies: paintbrushes, small hand tools, craft supplies for VBS/schools etc.

14. Office supplies: Ink pens, sharpies, scissors, safety pens & mini-sewing kits

15. Snacks and lunches for teams (if staying at the Palms or Coconut Villa, lunches can be purchased)

16. Tape: duct and scotch

17. Thank-you cards or token from sending organization

18. Trash Bags: 2 boxes of large bags

19. Ziploc Bags: 1-2 boxes each gallon and quart (more for medical teams)

20. Two way radios or walkie-talkies \* optional (in some sites stations may be spaced some distance apart,

hand held communication devices save steps and time!)

In addition, the schools always needs drawing pads, Crayola brand crayons (Rose Art brand crayons melt!), pens and pencils, markers, glue sticks, school scissors, stickers (pictures, not words unless in Spanish) Lego or other building block type toys, puzzles (large size pieces), and hygiene kits (toothpaste, toothbrushes, and soap).

For a complete list of the most current needs, contact casaparaisopanama@gmail.com prior to your trip.

**FIRST AID KIT SUGGESTIONS**

We strongly encourage all teams to travel with a well-stocked First Aid Kit. We have been fortunate that our teams rarely encounter serious medical problem but every day mishaps and illnesses do happen. The most common illnesses are dehydration, heat stroke or exhaustion, and gastrointestinal illness due to consumption of unsafe food or water. If you get sick and do not have a team physician (or they are unable to treat you adequately), we have access to local MDs and local hospitals in Panama that offer a limited level of medical care. If necessary, medical evacuation to the nearest facility in the U. S. may be required in case of an extreme medical emergency. All team members should purchase medical evacuation insurance (see Mission Team Information). Team leaders are encouraged to have each team member complete a Health History form with current medical, allergy and emergency contact information in the event of illness/injury while in Panama. (See Forms).

SUGGESTED ITEMS FOR FIRST AID KIT

1. Antiseptic Wipes

2. Arm Slings (1-2)

3. Bandages

 Adhesive Band-Aids (in assorted sizes)

 Adhesive Tape

 Coban (in assorted sizes)

 3" & 4” Ace Wrap Bandage

 Sterile Gauze (4” x 4”, 3" x 3" pads)

4. Butterfly bandages

5. Instant Cold Compress

6. Iodine or similar prep pads

7. IV fluids and set up (one 500 ml bag per 2-3 people) \* often available, check prior to your trip

8. Medications

 Antacids

 Anti-nausea – Zofran or phenergan suppositories

 Anti-diarrheal (Imodium)

 Bacitracin Antibiotic Ointment

 Cipro 500 mg (30 tablets)

 Epi vial or pen

 Hydrocortisone Ointment

 NSAIDS – Ibuprofen, Tylenol or Aleve

 Prescription pain medication \* optional

 Silvadene ointment

9. Non-Latex Gloves

10. Re-hydration salts or Gatorade

11. Scissors - Bandage Scissors and sharp scissors

12. Suture Kit with Needles

13. Thermometer (Non-Mercury/Non-Glass)

14. Tweezers

**THINGS TO REMEMBER WHILE IN THE MISSION FIELD**

1. Protect your passport at all times. Make two copies prior to departure. Give one copy to the group leader, keep the second copy in a safe place separate from your passport and checked luggage.

2. The most common problem is petty theft. Please leave expensive jewellery at home; do not carry expensive items in your hand or on your person. Carry your backpack in front of you in crowded tourist areas. Leave passports and other documents, credit cards, and cell phones at the housing site. We cannot be responsible for stolen or lost items.

3. Do not leave the group without permission from the team leader and RIO staff. When traveling away from the group, always travel in groups of two or more team members. Never travel without a Panamanian or RIO escort. The team leader and RIO staff will make final decisions regarding group needs and activities.

4. Please listen to the team leader and RIO staff when he/she is giving directions, they are ultimately responsible for your safety. Ask questions, if you don’t understand instructions or information provided, others in the group may be confused as well!

5. As representatives of a Christian based mission organization and out of respect for the Panamanian culture, please refrain from conduct viewed as offensive: such as public displays of affection, tobacco use, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or “colorful” language in the clinics, schools, churches and communities. Conduct within the group setting should also reflect the modest and respectful character of a disciple of Christ. Group members should refrain from inappropriate displays of affection, lewd comments, racial or religious jokes, inappropriate media or games, etc….

6. Do not wear tight fitting, short or revealing clothing in the schools, churches and communities. Be mindful of wearing t-shirts with provocative language or pictures. Knee length dresses or skirts are recommended for women, long pants are encouraged for women and men on work sites due to safety concerns. Scrubs are appropriate for medical team members in the clinic and after hours. Knee length shorts are allowed in the housing area and for site seeing. It is inappropriate to sunbathe in any area except at the beach or a pool. Even teams staying off campus are representatives of RIO, it is important that we do not distract the people from the message we want to convey, and to respect cultural and church customs.

7. There is limited safe public water in Panama, outside of Panama City. Never drink water from the tap (unless approved by trip leader), always use the water provided for drinking, taking medication and filling water bottles. Carry anti-bacterial wipes to clean the contact surfaces of soda bottles, etc. Always check the source of ice prior to using it in a drink.

8. Be careful what you eat! Food served at Casa Paraiso is safe, but be extremely cautious eating from local sources.

9. Please let your group leader know if you become ill while traveling or working in Panama. He or she or we will have antibiotics and other medicines available if such a need arises.

10. Your ultimate purpose for being in the mission field is to share the love of God. Get to know our Panamanian hosts. Meet people with a smile, a handshake and a “Buenas Dias .” (good morning).

11. Feel free to take photos, but be respectful of the people around you. Remember the dignity and right to privacy of the Panamanian people. Always ask permission before taking someone’s picture. Be considerate of patients in the clinic, they may be reluctant to say no for fear of not receiving treatment. Be subtle with your photo taking in the market areas. Sometimes people photographed expect money for this privilege.

12. Keep mind that flexibility is vital; each trip is an unique experience when one considers the individual needs of the Panamanian people and the dynamics of each volunteer team.

13. Never promise anything to a Panamanian friend. We discourage individual gifts, including gifts for the children.. If you would like to give an individual gift or donation, talk with the RIO staff members or one of the pastors. If pastors or community members ask for donations after you have returned to your home country, please get approval from RIO before agreeing.

14. Don’t ever trust a stray dog or cat even if they appear friendly. Keep a safe distance from all snakes, spiders, and insects.

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RMP Discipline policy:

1. Warning from team leader
2. If behaviour is repeated, individual will be asked to refrain from missions activities
3. If individual remains defiant or divisive, plans may be made for the removal of that person from the country at the cost of the individual
4. Individual may be removed from country with no refund of trip costs.