

Mission Team Leader Handbook

Thank you for your interest in the Olancho Aid Foundation. The enclosed information will be helpful for both current and prospective team leaders. It includes details leaders should consider before, during, and after the trip as well as guidance for preparing team members for a successful experience. An additional guide for team members will be provided.



missionteam@olanchoaid.org

(781) 423-3701

www.olanchoaid.org

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Mission

Our mission is to plant and nurture the seeds of FAITH, HOPE, and LOVE by delivering **Catholic-based education** and **purified water solutions** to God's beloved people in Olancho, Honduras.

The Olancho Aid Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization creating a sustainable future for Honduran families through faith-based education and service. From clean water projects that improve community health to schools that serve children including those with special needs, our team of international volunteers and Hondurans are dedicated to providing hope as we work to transform the future and life of the Olancho community.





Introduction

More than 150 mission teams have traveled to Juticalpa, Honduras, through the Olancho Aid Foundation since the early 1990s. Each group comes with a unique perspective and experience. Yet they all have at least one thing in common: a willingness to go to the peripheries to walk alongside the marginalized in Honduras. This resource may be used as a guide through each phase of the team leader experience.

Team Leader Timeline

1. Before you make a reservation

There is much for a team leader to consider when discerning if Olancho Aid Foundation's program is a good fit to meet the needs and goals of their group including faith & reflection, accommodations, cost of room and board, and project budgeting. Also consider the responsibilities of the leader to ensure you, or your leadership team, are willing and able to complete them. [Pages 4-6]

2. Prepare for your trip

Make your reservation at least 4 months in advance. Keep in mind that prime weeks are often reserved 10-12 months ahead. The larger the group, the sooner planning should begin. Preparation will include recruiting team members, reserving group flights, collecting waivers, gathering donations, making full payment to Olancho Aid Foundation and selecting service projects with the help of the Mission Team Coordinator. [Pages 7-9]

3. Manage the In-country Experience

When you arrive in Honduras, the bilingual Mission Team Coordinator handles transportation, project preparation, visits, meals, and security. The Coordinator assists the team leader with any situation that arises during the trip to ensure a meaningful and safe experience. [Pages 9-11]

4. When you return home

You may want to share stories about your experience, create a support system for your team, and spread the word about the good work happening in Olancho. [Pages 12-14]

1. Before you Make a Reservation

Faith & Reflection: Olancho Aid Foundation is a Catholic institution and wishes to provide teams with an opportunity to experience spiritual growth and prayerful re-centering through the mission experience. Each team is unique in its approach to sharing in their faith as a group. The team leader must work with the OAF Mission Team Coordinator to determine how work time, down time, and activities might all fit the leader's expectations in regard to faith and reflection. *Each year, the Board of Directors sets its priorities for mission team projects based upon consultation with the Diocese of Juticalpa.*

Please note, there is daily mass at 5:00 p.m. at St. Gertrudis Parish Church across the street from the Volunteer House and team members are encouraged to attend.

Accommodations: The Volunteer House accommodates groups of up to 30 people. The house has bathrooms, showers, a kitchen, gathering areas, a chapel, and several rooms furnished with bunk beds. There is electricity, running water, and internet, though all of these services are interrupted when local utility companies sporadically stop service for various reasons. *We recommend limiting access to the internet in order to enhance the retreat or mission experience.*



The house sits at the entrance of a cul de sac, in a small (ungated) complex owned by the Catholic Church. Neighboring the house is a children's home, retirement home, kindergarten, convent, gymnasium and a bakery that helps the aforementioned projects through their sales. With permission from the nuns, team members may spend time with the residents of the



children's home, daily from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm. They may also use the gym or spend time with residents of the retirement home. The house is 400 meters from Nazareth School for children with special needs, a favorite place to visit for many groups.

Mission Teams are provided with the following:

- Transportation to and from Toncontin International Airport in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- Room and board at the Volunteer House (Includes linens, pillows, and towels).
- Security guard on duty 24/7.
- Lunch & dinner prepared by a cook at the Volunteer House. Groups may make their own breakfast (milk, coffee, cereal and fruit will be provided). Dietary restrictions are accommodated to the extent possible. Team leaders should discuss how food allergies must be addressed with the OAF Mission Team Coordinator in advance of the trip.
- Snacks.
- Purified drinking water.
- A driver, bus, and fuel for travel to the daily worksite.
- A bilingual Honduran who will assist the group with daily projects and communication.
- International phone: The Volunteer House has a phone with a U.S. number, there are no fees to the caller or recipient (it works as if you were inside the U.S.). The number is (781) 261-0117.
- Internet access at the Volunteer House. Keep in mind that electricity in Honduras is not reliable and this could affect consistency of internet access.

Mission Team Room and Board Rate: For teams including between 10 and 30 individuals, the cost for 8 days is \$320 per person.* **Travel days are included in the 8 days.** If a group chooses to reserve the Volunteer House and has fewer than 10 people or wishes to schedule a shorter stay, the cost for the group is \$3,200. Groups under 10 people that wish to join another team or consider alternative room and board options facilitated by Olancho Aid Foundation should consult with the Mission Team Coordinator. Reservations for the Volunteer House are secured with a \$1,000 deposit, dates will not be held without a deposit beginning on January 1, 2020. Deposits are refundable until 6 months before the reservation. If the team leader cancels within 6 months of the first day of the reservation, the deposit is not refundable. Olancho Aid Foundation reserves the right to modify or cancel reservations in the case that unexpected safety concerns arise before or during a trip. If Olancho Aid Foundation initiates the cancellation of a reservation,



the deposit and payments will be refunded. Olancho Aid Foundation is not responsible for travel expenses incurred due to cancellation. *This cost is considered payment for goods or services and by law is not a tax-deductible contribution. **

Deposits may be made mailed to: Olancho Aid Foundation, PO Box 15, Rockland, MA 02370. Make checks payable to Olancho Aid Foundation. Write *Mission Team Deposit* in the memo line. Or, pay with Paypal, credit card, or debit card: <https://olanchoaid.kindful.com/?campaign=1032799>

Project Budgeting: The room and board rates above do not include the costs of projects that groups choose to complete during the trip. Before making a reservation, the team leader may consult with the Mission Team Coordinator to determine the types of projects that would suit the group's skills and their budget. Project planning begins after reservations are made and projects are generally finalized two to three weeks before the trip. The Mission Team Coordinator may make adjustments to projects due to any circumstance he or she deems warranted. *Project costs paid to Olancho Aid are considered donations and are therefore tax-deductible.*

Team Leader Responsibilities: Team leaders are responsible for working with team members and the Olancho Aid Foundation (OAF) Mission Team Coordinator to prepare and organize plans leading up to the trip. Some team leaders prefer to manage the responsibilities themselves, and others have created small leadership groups of 2-3 people. Team leader responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Providing information regarding the challenges faced by the population that they will be serving.
- Providing prospective members with information about the Foundation and its Mission.
- Communicating all information with team members effectively. The team leader is the main contact point with the OAF Mission Team Coordinator and is responsible for ensuring that team members receive all important information. Team meetings are necessary leading up to the trip.
- Coordinating and purchasing group transportation to and from Honduras.
- Planning projects with the help of the OAF Mission Team Coordinator, who will facilitate all of the preparations in Honduras.
- Ensuring payment for both room and board and project costs.
- Distributing and collecting waivers from team members.
- Distributing the Olancho Aid Foundation Team Member Guide to each participant.
- Supporting enforcement of Volunteer House rules.

2. Preparing for Your Trip

Reserving Group Flights

Leaders should seek flights that land in Tegucigalpa before 2pm local time. Delta, American, and United are suggested. Pay careful attention to baggage policies when booking flights, oftentimes restrictions apply when flying to Central America during the summer months. Travel insurance is recommended to cover costs related to trip cancelation, medical emergencies, and evacuation due to weather or civil unrest.

Collecting Release Forms

Olancho Aid requires team leaders to distribute release forms to every team member and to scan and send a copy of the signed forms to the OAF Mission Team Coordinator before the start of the trip. If release forms were not sent in advance, they will need to be turned in to the Coordinator before work on any projects begins.



Types of Projects

Flexibility is the key to enjoying your mission trip. Olancho Aid Foundation will send a list of potential projects for your group along with cost estimates and the anticipated number of beneficiaries. You must work with the OAF Mission Team Coordinator to select the projects or types of projects that seem to be a good fit for your group and will meet the goals of the Foundation. Projects are subject to change depending on the needs of the Foundation, the community, and the group, all of which can vary from day-to-day. Some projects may include



physical labor, painting, distributing donated items, spending time in community with local people, etc. Project selection and adaptation will be made based on the strengths and abilities of the group. Special projects may be designed specifically for your team based on team preferences as well as members' skills and abilities.

Team members of any skill level are welcome to serve with Olancho Aid Foundation. Groups composed of high school students, young adults, experienced adults, senior citizens, and combinations of all of these have been very successful in the past. Individuals with specific skills and experience may be able to work on specialized projects. [EX: facilities design, construction, maintenance, engineering, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, education, music, art etc.] Please let the OAF Mission Team Coordinator know well in advance if any of your team members have special skills so that we can attempt to arrange a special project for them.

Gathering Donations

Some groups choose to gather donations for their trip to Honduras. Though well intended, it can be counterproductive or even harmful to bring/send some items to Honduras. The Foundation is making every effort to stimulate the local economy through local purchases and donations for these items are gladly accepted. *Certain items should never be brought into the country for donations including expired medications.* Consider these 5 questions posed by the Center for International Disaster Information:

1. Is the donation appropriate for the local climate, culture, and religion?
2. Do they actually need the donation?
3. Are the goods available locally?
4. Will the people receiving the goods be able to afford to fix or replace the donated item?
5. Will donating this item do more harm than good?

Unsure how to answer some of those questions? Read more here: <https://www.cidi.org/5-questions-you-should-ask-before-donating-goods-overseas/#.XVsUx-hKhPY>

If you determine it is beneficial and decide to gather donations for your trip, you'll also want to consider whether to ship the items or to transport in checked baggage on your flight. Be sure to review airline baggage policies. See pages 16-17 for more information about shipping items to Honduras.

Health

Team members should bring enough of daily medications to last the length of the trip plus a couple of days in case of travel delays. They should consult their doctors or a travel clinic regarding health recommendations for traveling to Honduras including vaccinations and medications. General health and safety items are included in the packing list in the Olancho Aid



Foundation Team Member Guide. Leaders may want to bring a first aid kit for the group, there will also be a first aid kit located at the Volunteer House. Depending on the work projects, these items may be helpful: work gloves, protective eyewear, any special tools or equipment needed for a particular project. We suggest wearing ball hats or bandanas, full-length jeans, t-shirts, and work boots or gym shoes on work sites. Travel medical insurance is recommended. One option for insurance is Seven Corners, Inc.: <https://www.sevencorners.com/travel-medical-insurance>

Payments:

Team leaders are asked to send two payments to cover their team's costs; one for Room and Board and one for Project Costs. Costs should be paid in full 2 weeks prior to arrival date. Checks may be sent to **Olancho Aid Foundation, PO Box 15, Rockland, MA, 02370** WITH YOUR TEAM NAME IN THE MEMO LINE as well as note that describes your payment, "Room and Board" or "Project Fees". You can also make these payments online:

Room and Board: <https://olanchoaid.kindful.com/?campaign=256642>

Project Costs: <https://olanchoaid.kindful.com/?campaign=258728>

If you have any questions please contact the OAF Mission Team Coordinator (missionteam@olanchoaid.org).

3. Managing the In-Country Experience

Arrival

Groups will be met at the Toncontin International Airport in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, by a driver and a bilingual Honduran guide. The group may stop for lunch in the city, the cost of which is additional and paid for by the team. Then they will ride to Juticalpa, about a 3 hour drive. The driver will stop at the halfway point for a restroom break, snacks and beverages will be available for purchase.

The group will be taken to the Volunteer House and have the rest of the afternoon and evening to settle in and unpack. Dinner will be provided. The guide will give a brief overview of the Foundation, as well as the basic rules, expectations, and introduction to work projects ahead. A devotional will be shared either by an Olancho Aid Foundation staff member or your team leader.

Workdays

Average mission trips are 8 days long, the first and last day are designated for travel. Generally, the week is structured so that five of the days are work days and one day is spent experiencing Olancho through an activity, visit to a tourist destination, or cultural exchange. Workdays are from 8am to 4pm, unless other arrangements are made through the Mission Team Coordinator.



Safety

Keeping teams safe is the top priority. Team leaders are expected to enforce safety guidelines for the group, especially the points listed below. A full list of House Rules will be provided.

1. Keep a close eye on personal belongings. Do not leave items anywhere outside of the Volunteer House, many people walk by the house everyday and it is very easy for items to disappear from the front porch. Keep a close watch on personal items at work sites and other destinations.
2. The gate upstairs must be locked when the group leaves the house or goes to sleep for the night to prevent theft. Leaders are encouraged to be vigilant and to ask the same of their team members. Leaders should assign someone in their group the responsibility of locking the front door and the upstairs gates in the evening prior to bedtime.
3. Individuals should remain in small groups (3-5) anytime they are outside of the volunteer house. Team members are not to walk alone during the day or night. The street in front of the Volunteer House can be dangerous, especially at night. No one should walk on this street at night (not even in small groups).
4. Leaders are asked to contact the Mission Team Coordinator if questions about safety arise before or during the trip. There are common occurrences in Honduras that may seem unusual or risky to those unfamiliar with them. There are also situations common in other countries, but may be risky or unsafe in Honduras. If a team leader has a concern, it is best to pull the Coordinator aside to discuss as to not cause undue stress or panic from the group when possible.
5. The use or possession of illegal substances, including marijuana is prohibited.
6. Possession of firearms, fireworks, or flammable materials is prohibited.
7. Inform the staff of the Foundation if you have local guests from Juticalpa. Guests not part of Olancho Aid staff are not allowed after 08:00 pm.
8. For team members' safety, they are not allowed to leave the house after 8:00 pm, the guard closes all doors at 9:00 pm and opens them at 6:00 am.
9. We recommend that the bedtime of the volunteers be no later than 10:00 pm.



Helpful Tips

- Be flexible! There will be changes, cancellations, and tests of your patience. There will also be surprises, reasons to celebrate, and unplanned opportunities.
- Help us by taking care of all facilities, tools, and equipment used while on a work site and while at the Volunteer House.
- Before leaving, please clean up by sweeping and/or mopping your eating areas, picking up trash in your work areas, and cleaning and/or putting away any Olancho Aid Foundation tools that were used. Thank you!
- Any concerns while in Honduras should be brought to the attention of the OAF Mission Team Coordinator so they may be addressed as soon as possible.
- Consider dedicating one meeting of your group to review the Olancho Aid Foundation Team Member Guide together.
- Request to join the Olancho Aid Mission Team Leaders Facebook group to share successes, ask questions, and begin discussions with other team leaders.



4. When You Return Home

Create a Support System

Team members often have deeply moving experiences during their time in Honduras. Returning home may bring unexpected challenges, even signs of reverse culture shock, especially for first-time missionaries. They may want to discuss experiences that were personally transformational, just to find that friends and family are less interested than expected. Team leaders might consider bringing members together after returning home to socialize, debrief, and reflect. Deepening the bonds made during the trip can provide an outlet for team members in need of extra support.

Spread the Word

The impact of mission teams serving through the Olancho Aid Foundation has grown because of passionate leaders who share their experiences to inspire others to go to the peripheries to serve. There are many ways to tell your story and many interested groups and organizations. Consider your network and the network of your team members to determine how you might be able to tell the good news of the work you have done and seen in Honduras.

Perhaps more importantly, at a time when people are asking why Central Americans are fleeing their home countries, you now have the opportunity to give your testimony about the people and places you have experienced personally. Here is a reflection on this topic from the President of Olancho Aid Foundation's Board of Directors:

<https://olanchoaid.org/i-feel-helpless-what-can-i-do-to-help/>

Pray for us

Pray for the children at Olancho Aid schools, that they may reap the benefits of attending a Catholic school so they may make a positive difference in their communities now and in the future. Pray for the staff, that they continue to be the hands and feet of Christ, serving the children, families, and community of Olancho, Honduras.



Sponsorship

Becoming a sponsor is one of the best ways to support the work of Olancho Aid Foundation. Sponsors give monthly or annual contributions that make high quality, Catholic education possible for children whose families cannot afford to send their children to school. For more information about sponsoring, contact Scholarship Coordinator, Wendy Varela at scholarships@olanchoaid.org.

Service Abroad

Olancho Aid welcomes both recent graduates and experienced professionals to serve in Honduras to help further the mission of the Foundation in many ways. Some of the most successful volunteers have been introduced to Olancho Aid through mission teams. Please share this opportunity with your parish and others who might be interested.

Two distinct volunteer programs help the Foundation to provide education and clean water: the traditional volunteer program and the specialist volunteer program. The Foundation recruits a cohort of up to ten foreign volunteers every semester to participate in the traditional volunteer program. The focus of this program is on community, spirituality, social justice, and simple living. It is a cultural exchange program that allows students to practice English with native-English speakers and offers volunteers opportunities for personal, professional, and spiritual growth.

The specialist volunteer program is geared toward experienced professionals and experts in their field who work to fill a specific, immediate need in the Foundation. Specialists serve as leaders and mentors within the Foundation administration.

For more information, visit <https://olanchoaid.org/ways-to-help/service-abroad/> or contact the volunteer coordinator at volunteers@olanchoaid.org.



Financial Support

Donations make the work of Olancho Aid Foundation possible. If you believe, as we do, that education will break the cycle of poverty in Honduras, you can help in creating a sustainable future for Honduran families. Sign up for the Olancho Aid email list so that you can receive communications regarding opportunities for support: <https://olanchoaid.org/connect/>

Or contact Jessica at Jsantavy@olanchoaid.org if you would like to make a contribution right away.

Contact Information

For further questions or concerns or to begin planning a trip, please contact the OAF Mission Team Coordinator at missionteam@olanchoaid.org or call (781) 423-3701. You can also visit our website www.olanchoaid.org



Mission Team Permission and Release Form

Permission

As a participant (or as a parent or guardian of a participant) I give permission for me (or my child) to travel with and participate in the **Olancho Aid Foundation** mission trip in Juticalpa, Honduras, Central America. I agree, individually or on behalf of my child to the terms of the following Release of Liability.

Release of Liability

In consideration of the acceptance of my application for this mission trip, I agree on behalf of myself, my heirs, assigns, executors, and personal representatives, to release, hold harmless, discharge forever and defend the Olancho Aid Foundation, the Olancho Aid Foundation Board of Directors, all leaders, staff, priests, employees, volunteers, or affiliates of any of them, its officers, directors, agents, employees, or representatives associated with the Olancho Aid Foundation, including the trip leaders / coordinators, from any and all liability, claim, loss, damage, cost or expense arising from or in connection with my participation in this trip. I (we) waive any such claims against any such person or organization arising directly or indirectly from or attributable in any legal way to any action or omission to act of any such person or organization in connection with the sponsorship, organization and involvement in all activities, occurrences and consequences, to include health, sanitation and safety exposures, related to the Mission trip. The “Mission trip” in this context includes all time related to preparation for the trip, travel to and from the Mission, and the duration of the visit in Honduras.

Release for Emergency Medical Treatment

Should emergency medical treatment be necessary, and I (or my minor) am/are not able to act on my (his/her) own behalf, I authorize the delegated agents of the Olancho Aid Foundation to act on my (or my minor’s) behalf and approve appropriate treatment.

Olancho Aid Foundation Team Member Guide

I (or my minor) have/has reviewed the Team Member Guide and agree to abide by the house rules and restrictions set forth in the guide.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant **Date**

Printed Name & Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) **Date**

Printed Name & Signature of 2nd Parent or Guardian (if applicable) **Date**



Iglesia Católica Diócesis de Juticalpa
Patrocinado por la Fundación Olancho Aid, Inc.

How to Send a Package to Juticalpa: In order to ensure reliable shipments to Juticalpa, we have partnered with a company called Rapido Cargo to reliably deliver packages from the United States. You can expect packages to arrive in 3-4 weeks.

****PLEASE DO NOT SEND PACKAGES USING AN INTERNATIONAL FREIGHT COMPANY****

Follow these steps:

1. Create a detailed inventory of contents. See inventory template on page two of this document. [Not necessary if recipient is a volunteer.]
2. Include a copy of inventory inside the box.
3. Once box is sealed, using a marker, on two sides of the box, write:
Attn: Carlos Najera- Juticalpa
Fundación Olancho Aid, Iglesia Católica
Under this, write the name of the individual or school where the box should ultimately be delivered.
4. Send via USPS, UPS, FedEx or other carriers to:
Rapido Cargo
2154 NW 23rd Ct
Miami, FL 33142
5. Ground shipping from most parts of the States to Florida takes 5 days or less. Miami to Juticalpa takes an average of 15-18 days.
6. If you have questions, contact us. **DO NOT USE AN INTERNATIONAL FREIGHT COMPANY**

Shipping Cost: In addition to the cost of postage to Miami, you are also responsible for covering the cost charged by Rapido Cargo. There are two options for paying this charge:

1. Pay Olancho Aid the estimated cost of shipment. Olancho Aid Foundation will send a receipt for your payment, but cannot provide the original receipt or exact amount from Rapido Cargo. Payment for shipping is not tax deductible. To pay through Olancho Aid:
 - a. Estimate \$10 for an envelope or \$1.50 per pound for a box or palate (minimum \$20).
 - b. Credit or debit card: <https://olanchoaid.kindful.com/?campaign=316145>
 - c. Checks can be made out to Olancho Aid Foundation and sent to: Olancho Aid Foundation, PO Box 15, Rockland, MA 02370.
2. Contact Rapido Cargo directly to determine cost, pay as instructed by Rapido Cargo.
Tel 305.631.0686 Tel 305.636.0880 or rapidocargo@bellsouth.net

Notification:

When you ship your package: Email Jessica at jsantavy@olanchoaid.org. Include the specific person or school where the package should be delivered and **attach the inventory**.

