

2016

-

# Volunteer Safety Manual

Volunteer Safety Manual





## Table of contents

### **Form A: Safety Overview**

This document describes the sources of safety information, the chain of command within the Olancho Aid Foundation in case any emergency, the distribution pathway for informing volunteers of threats, and the phone list for all members of the chain of command.

### **Form B: Emergency Procedures in Case of a Local Emergency**

This document describes step by step the procedures in case of an emergency affecting the Juticalpa area (natural disaster, lack of electricity for an extended period of time, political unrest, extreme violence, etc). It contains the evacuation plan for emergencies involving all volunteers.

### **Form C: Emergency Procedures in Case of a Medical Emergency**

This document describes step by step the procedures in case of a medical emergency or sexual assault of an individual volunteer, from minor medical issues to life-threatening ones.

### **Form D: Risk Assessment**

This document details the process of risk assessment, which teaches volunteers how to identify vulnerabilities, and strategies to reduce said vulnerability.

### **Form E: Identifying Risks in an Unfamiliar Environment**

This document details the process of risk assessment specifically in the context of Honduras, describing specific situations that have resulted in safety-related incidents for previous volunteers.

### **Form F: Transportation Safety**

This document describes the various forms of transportation available in Honduras (airplane, bus, taxi, informal transportation, motorcycle, bike) and details the risks for each. Clearly highlighted are acceptable and unacceptable forms of transportation.

### **Form G: Dealing with Unwanted Attention**

This document details the various situations in which a foreign volunteer will likely experience in Honduran culture. Clearly delineated are the ways in which gender roles and cultural assumptions play a part in attracting undesirable attention, and what measures can be taken to mitigate such attention.



## Form A: Safety Overview

### 1. What are sources of safety information?

- a. Locals – Carlos, administrators, fellow teachers.
- b. American embassy: <http://honduras.usembassy.gov/infotravelers.html>
- c. Volunteers of other organizations (ex. Peace Corp)
- d. Others

### 2. How will safety information be distributed?

- a. Will be by email for non-imminent threats or information about recent events
- b. Will be by cell phone for imminent threats
- c. If cell phone and email service are unavailable, volunteers will be notified in person at volunteer residences.
- d. Types of threats
  - i. Weather (hurricane, earthquake)
  - ii. Civil unrest
  - iii. Criminal activity
  - iv. Political problems

### 3. Distribution pathway

*Emergency during a work day:*

Executive director -> Main office employees -> Administrators of schools -> Volunteer teachers

*Emergency outside of work hours:*

Executive director -> Main office employees -> Volunteer coordinator -> All volunteers

A member of the following list must be on call all the times. In the event of their absence or inability to act, the following person on the list takes the place of contact person.

Contact person	Position	Cell phone number
Megan Conley	Volunteer coordinator	
Carlos Najera	Executive director	9990-9771
Oscar Fuentes	Mission team coordinator	87348704
Francisco Barahona	Comptroller	9897-0610
Wendy Varela	Scholarship Project Coordinator	9786-6740
Andrea Cerrato	Bilingual teacher, IBSC	31784972
American Embassy		(504) 2238-5114
		(504) 2236-9320, extension 4100



## Form B: Emergency Procedures in Case of a Local Emergency

In case of a serious emergency affecting the area of Juticalpa and/or Honduras (such as earthquake, lack of electricity for more than 24hours, political unrest, extreme violence, etc), the following procedure will be following according to the geographic location of the volunteer homes.

1. The Foundation has determined the central meeting point to be Escuela Nazareth, located on road passing Hospital San Francisco. The central meeting point will be used to keep all volunteers safe during the time of risk and to make a decision with all volunteer present.
2. The decision to call a “state of emergency” will be made by any one of the members of the main office, who will give the order to move all volunteers to the central meeting point.
3. Depending on the circumstances, volunteers will arrive in Escuela Nazareth however they can (ride, taxi, bicycle, walking, etc).
4. Volunteers should take ONLY the basic necessities to travel – passport, underwear, pants, walking shoes, T-shirts.
5. Upon the arrival of all volunteers in Escuela Nazareth, the decision will be made based on the circumstances (evacuation to Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, El Salvador, etc).

Escuela Nazareth must have the following emergency materials at all times.

1. The Nazareth school bus will always be kept full of fuel on the weekends. There will also be a reserve of 20 gallons of diesel fuel in case fuel is not available. Gasoline for use with the generator must all be stored there.
2. There will be a safe containing cash for various situations as needed.
3. In the case of volunteers using Nazareth as shelter for several days with no electricity, the generator will be used as need for bathrooms, showers, and Internet.
4. The following OAF staff members will arrive at Nazareth in case of emergency: William Jimenez, Tony Bonilla, Oscar Fuentes, Victor Murillo, Francisco Barahona, Carlos Najera, and two security guards from the SIES security firm. The SIES uniform is a grey shirt and black pants.
5. If Carlos Najera is not present, the plan must continue as listed. The next in command is Francisco Barahona, and if he is not present, Oscar Fuentes is third in command. Any one of the three will travel with the group in case of evacuation.



## Form C: Emergency Procedures in Case of a Medical Emergency

1. In the main office and in the offices of the two bilingual schools, a written copy of the volunteer medical release forms will be kept, with up-to-date contact information. The document will also be available in the GoogleDocs of the emails of Carlos Najera, Francisco Barahona, Oscar Fuentes, Megan Conley, and Andrea Cerrato.
2. The volunteer who is ill should call Megan Conley (9504-7372). If Megan is not available they should call Carlos Najera (9990-0771) or Francisco Barahona (9897-0610).
3. An OAF representative will arrive at the residence or place where the volunteer is.
4. Initially, the volunteer will be taken to the Trochez Montalvan clinic, where minor medical attention is given: prescribing medication, intravenous treatment, ultrasounds, X-rays, CT scans, casts, etc.
5. If in the clinic a satisfactory treatment is not available, the volunteer will be transferred to the Hospital San Francisco. More advanced medical attention is available there, including X-rays, laboratory exams, surgery, etc.
6. If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached at the hospital, the patient will be transferred to Honduras Medical Center, a well-respected private hospital in Tegucigalpa, to continue treatment.
7. The transfer to Tegucigalpa will be authorized in writing by the volunteer and use an OAF vehicle.
8. Depending on the severity of the case, the organization will do everything possible to be able to move the volunteer to the United States, after the volunteer's family has been notified and agreed to the medical evacuation. It is highly recommended that a family member or other emergency contact travel to Honduras to accompany the volunteer to the United States.
9. At Honduras Medical Center, a guarantee of payment is required upon arrival. This is done with a deposit of \$500 on a credit card. In the emergency release form of each volunteer, the name and number of each volunteer's medical insurer is also available.



## Form D: Staying Informed About Risk

**Source:** Peace Corps

### Learning objectives

- Identify the elements of a crime
- Know the anatomy of assault
- Avoid becoming a target
- Identify different techniques criminals employ to carry out crimes in Honduras
- Identify types of scams frequently used in Honduras
- Learn how to keep yourself informed about risks

#### 1. Identify the elements of crime: desire, opportunity, and ability

Three elements that distinguish a crime environment – DESIRE, ABILITY, and OPPORTUNITY. All three elements need to be present for the crime to take place. Remove one element and the crime is eliminated. While one may try to prevent “desire” and “ability”, “opportunity” is the one element over while the individual has the greatest influence. Do not offer opportunity to the criminal and you will go a long way to avoid becoming a victim.

**DESIRE:** While removing the desire from an individual to commit a crime seems hard, there are some things to consider that may at least defer an individual’s desire to choose you as his or her victim. These may include:

- Don’t be flashy.
- Try to blend in with the rest of the population.
- Don’t present yourself as a target (i.e. not walking with a purpose, displaying valuables at home, walking around with too much stuff – backpack, iPod, camera, etc.)
- Setting limits in your house
- Arranging your house in way that if you have visitors, they won’t know that you have valuables in your home. This may include putting your electronics away (computer, iPod, camera, etc).
- Having curtains in your home as a deterrent (individuals won’t be able to see what’s inside).
- Good outdoor lighting makes it difficult for an offender to hide themselves (cutting the lawn, trees, and bushes).

**ABILITY:** Although this factor is more difficult to pinpoint, planning and preparation can make a difference. When volunteers are on the move, it is when they are at a greater risk of an incident. Here are some examples of preparation when going on a trip:

- The type of clothing you are using (pants with zipper, tops covering your pockets)
- Spreading your money in different places.
- Using a paper clip on the zipper tags of your bags (padlock is even better).
- Taking a bike lock with you, to wrap it around your bag if you are placing it on the overhead compartment of a chicken bus.
- Elaborating a plan in your head for “What if?” scenarios.



**OPPORTUNITY:** Prepare a story in case you come across an individual that is harassing or threatening you (for example, a suspicious-looking cab driver or someone you know just robbed you). Calmly approach the person with a smile on your face, saying something like “Thank you, it must have fallen out of my pocket.” This will catch the offender off guard. For planning, the important part is that you take enough time to elaborate in great level of detail the activities you are going to be involved in; this may include:

- Establish the routine you will follow.
- Determine the bus companies you would use.
- Determine the hotel or place you will be staying.
- Determine the personal documents you will need.
- Determining a plan of action for different “what if” scenarios.

These things are critical for your safety, particularly if you are traveling to Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, or another tourist area like Copan, Tela, La Ceiba, or the islands.

Think about the things that you are leaving behind, like your households, the things you will encounter (bus breakdowns, hotel did not keep your reservation; the hotel was suspicious-looking, an illness or accident, the loss of your personal documents, etc). Obviously a key part of your plan would be communication – besides your cell phone, what other options do you have. Having emergency numbers written down in a specific plan (or memorized) is important.

## 2. Anatomy of an assault

The 3-T probes before an actual assault consist of:

Targeting -> Testing -> Touching -> Assault

**TARGETING:** Criminals normally choose those individuals who offer the least resistance and the greatest chance of success. Discourage them by:

- Maintaining a self-assured posture.
- Demonstrating a confident demeanor.
- Looking like you know what you are doing.
- Not traveling alone – strength in numbers.

Unfortunately, gender does play a difference; in both cases, incidents have their own issues. Female volunteers may be targeted not only because they look like foreigners but also in a “machista” society, women do not represent a threat and are therefore more targeted. In the Peace Corps, for example, more than 70% of incidents are perpetuated against female volunteers; however, the most violent incidents are perpetuated against male volunteers (such as a male volunteer being threatening with a gun, being forced to get on the ground).

**TESTING:** This is the criminal’s attempt to determine the levels of resistance that potential victims are likely to put forth. Testing often seems like an innocent encounter, with the assailant starting casual conversation (asking for the time, directions, etc). A volunteer should always:

- Be alert and vigilant.
- Set a clear boundary.
- Be assertive (unequivocal responses).



- Give “NO” responses.

**TOUCHING:** A potential attacker attempts to make physical contact with the potential victims in order to test the limits of permissibility. A test might involve a lingering handshake, “scratchy palm,” light squeeze, body rubbing etc. A volunteer should:

- Discourage further touching.
- Firmly voice displeasure.
- Move away and create more space.
- Call attention to the behavior.

The best example of where something like this is likely to happen is inside a bus or getting in a bus, as other passengers will be bumping into you.

**ASSAULT:** If criminals determine that an individual is not likely to resist or draw attention to an assault or that the assault will not be otherwise detected, they will proceed. Understanding the anatomy of an assault can help individuals act in a way that discourages a potential assailant.

### 3. Considerations to reduce risks and minimize impact.

- **What you take with you when you shop:** Bring only minimal belongings (is the iPod, purse, wristwatch, wallet, cell phone, USB, backpack, laptop, etc. really necessary?). Going out shopping with these items, while common in the States, is not necessarily an essential here in Honduras.
- **Honduran paydays:** Most Hondurans get paid bimonthly, on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup>. These are normally the dates when people go out shopping, so expect large numbers of people and therefore larger numbers of thieves looking for victims.
- **Open markets:** While open markets are a great opportunity to interact with locals, get to know customs, learn how to bargain, etc, they are also places that fulfill the “desire, ability, opportunity” factors. Make sure to be on the look-out for pickpockets, inebriated individuals, etc.
- **Banking:** Keep in mind time of day, location, and day when doing any banking-related business. In the beginning and middle of the month and weekends, you are more likely to become a victim of a robbery after leaving the bank or using the ATM.

### 4. How crimes could occur

Identify the ways in which criminals may assault a victim.

- **Using kids:** Children in Honduras are not subjected to the normal legal system, therefore they may walk free in almost every case, including murder or rape.
- **Public phones:** An individual acts like he is making a phone call on a public phone in a transit area/street. His partner is just standing by his side, as if he is waiting for him to finish up the phone call. Once the victim passes by them, one of the individuals will threaten with a weapon (normally a gun) while the other one is patting down the person, and stealing all his/her belongings. This only takes a few seconds and the individuals rapidly run from the crime scene, normally taking a taxi or using a motorcycle; or running towards the area that is more



isolated or into more populated places. These types of events happen in daylight and even though many people witness the incident, due to lack of trust in the legal system, no one is willing to come forward and testify nor to help you during the assault, as many people have been seriously injured or even died trying to help someone that is being assaulted. In cases like this, DO NOT PUT UP ANY RESISTANCE, if theft of property is the assailant's only motive, just give it up. At the end it will be nothing else than a difficult moment and a couple of things stolen. If you see one or two individuals using a public phone, ALWAYS consider it a threat, cross the street or turn around.

- **Motorcycle:** two men riding a motorcycle; normally the passenger may get off the motorcycle, demand money and property; usually a handgun will be used. The assailant may force you to lay on the ground looking for more valuables and money. You should stay still and facilitate the process so that these individuals leave ASAP. DO NOT PUT UP ANY RESISTANCE.

## 5. Common scams in Honduras

As a volunteer you may encounter several types of scams here in Honduras. Below are some examples:

- Cell phone scams are very frequent; scams may include:
  - Soliciting cash deposits in order to claim a prize.
  - Soliciting cell phone recargas to claim a prize.
  - Soliciting bank information, pretending it is an official call from your bank confirming your personal information.
- **Counterfeit:** There are has been issues with local currency, especially 500 lempira bills, but bills of smaller denominations have also been used to commit fraud. Honduran bills have the same safety features as most bills around the world: water mark, microprinting, fluorescence, marks, etc.
- **Extortion:** The key here is to differentiate between a real threat and an individual just dialing random numbers to catch an inattentive person. Once you have determined that the offender has no clue who they are calling, hang up and save the number as "THREAT – DO NOT ANSWER" or something that will prompt you to not answer further phone calls.
- Report any of these incidents to the volunteer coordinator and executive director.

## 6. Keeping yourself informed

Volunteers may find important safety information, especially about strikes, meetings, weather, criminals, crime trends, etc. from the following sources.

- Asking coworkers about safe/unsafe places and people.
- Heeding warnings from the executive director about safety alerts and incidents.
- Asking fellow volunteers in the city about unsafe places and people.
- Reading the paper.
- Watching TV
- Listening to the radio.



## Form E: Identifying Risks

**Source:** Peace Corps

**Rationale:** People are vulnerable when they are in periods of transition. Volunteers initially entering the experience are more vulnerable as they are being placed in new physical settings and living within new cultural norms, with which they are not familiar. This lack of knowledge and familiarity may inadvertently place them in threatening or dangerous settings without their knowledge.

### Learning objectives:

- Know how to conduct a risk assessment in the volunteer environment.
- Identify those threats to which volunteers in Honduras are most vulnerable and which have resulted in safety and security incidents.
- Identify strategies to reduce vulnerability.
- Demonstrate different Honduran culture-specific ways of dealing with situations in which a volunteer is vulnerable.
- Identify specific risk factors associated with assault.
- Demonstrate strategies to reduce risk.

### What is risk assessment?

A risk assessment is a careful examination of what could cause harm to people so that you can weigh whether or not you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

- Define threat: “Threat” or “hazard” is anything that can cause anyone harm.
- Define risk: Risk is the chance (high or low) that someone will be harmed; also thought of as vulnerability; the likelihood of suffering injury, harm, or loss of possessions.

### Direct vs. indirect factors that affect vulnerability

- Volunteer’s background and activities may place him/her in an increased risk situation. These situations may be caused by indirect and direct factors. Here are some situations:

#### Indirect factors:

- New to the country, lost, want help, look, stand out, looking vulnerable
- Not being able to speak the language
- May be preoccupied with the new home and new culture and not with safety issues.
- May often use public transportation while commuting.
- May not yet know how to say “No” in the new culture.



#### Direct factors:

- Being out after dark
- Being alone in an isolated area (day or night)
- Getting on a bus late at night
- Being drunk
- Sleeping without locking the door
- Being in a place where a lot of liquor is being consumed.
- Hitchhike

#### Threats to volunteers in Honduras

1. Robberies
2. Assault – physical and sexual
3. Thefts
4. Burglary
5. Intimidation
6. Vehicle accidents
7. Bike accidents

#### When are volunteers most vulnerable in Honduras:

The following circumstances have contributed in one way or another for an incident to occur: some of them are listed below:

1. Being in bars at night, especially alone or in the wrong part of town (i.e. Comayaguela is a highly discouraged area for volunteers to be in).
2. When a volunteer is inebriated.
3. Riding on buses at night or early morning (1 am, 2 am, etc).
4. At bus stations
5. Riding in “taxis brujos” in Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula
6. Having a backpacker image.
7. When walking out and about in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula.
8. Not being aware of your surroundings
9. Riding in the backs of trucks or hitchhiking with strangers.
10. Walking or jogging.
11. Weekend nights
12. Being out alone or even in a group at night
13. Leave the house with doors or windows unlocked.
14. While in tourist destinations such as Tela, La Ceiba, the Bay Islands, Santa Rosa de Copan, Comayagua city, Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, etc.



## Form F: Transportation Safety

Source: Peace Corps

**Rationale:** Transportation has always been a great challenge for volunteers; a lot has to do with the kind of transportation that is available, the criminal activity that occurs not only inside of vehicles, but on the roads; also with poor capability of the authority to supervise drivers and vehicle conditions. The Observatoria de la Violencia 2009 Report indicates that vehicle accidents results in 1,200 fatalities (a slight decrease of 0.6% compared to 2008). A much higher number of injuries resulted from these accidents. Other issues such as road conditions, poor visibility, nonexistent road signs and reflectors, weather conditions, etc. impact volunteers' safety while they are traveling. Therefore it is necessary to learn how to minimize risk and reduce impact to successfully travel in and outside of Honduras.

### Learning objectives

- Know the types of transportation that volunteers typically use in Honduras.
- Know the Foundation policies related to different forms of transportation.
- Know how to prepare for your trip and travels safety using different forms of transportation.
- Know what to do if you experience an accident while traveling.

### 1. Types of transportation commonly used by volunteers in Honduras

Typically, you will find a variety of travel options:

- Foundation vehicles
- Buses: first class, regular, chicken buses, etc.
- Taxis: regular cabs, taxis de punto, collective taxis, mototaxis, radio taxis.
- Informal transportation: pick-up trucks and trucks (mainly rural communities)
- Water transportation: ferry boats (going the Bay Islands, Cayos Cochinos, La Moskitia, Amapala)
- Air transportation: commercial aircrafts

Volunteers may only travel in the daylight hours. Night service or before dawn buses are constantly targeted by assailants; failure to comply with this rule only increases the risk of a bad assault to occur.

### 2. Buses

**Urbano buses:** Volunteers are not permitted to ride on "urbanos" (inner-city buses). These offer service within the city limits, but given the fact that they are constantly targeted by gang members and petty theft, it is a Foundation policy that you not ride on them.



Travel between cities: If you are traveling from major cities (i.e. any department capital city towards San Pedro or Tegucigalpa) you may find different types of bus service:

**Directo:** it means a non-stop service. Highly recommended, not only provides comfort but also less likely to be targeted by assailants. Note that this type of service is not available in every type of city, but when it is available, you should use it. Ticket price can vary but not by much.

Some examples of direct service:

Transportes Discovery (Juticalpa to Tegucigalpa): buses running on the hour, 6 am to 4 pm

Transportes El Rey y El Paisano (Tegucigalpa to San Pedro), buses running on the hour, 5:30 am to 6 pm.

Transportes Cristyna (Tegucigalpa to La Ceiba)

**Regular service:** the bus will be picking up passengers along the course of the trip. This is the most common service throughout the country.

If you want to get a direct service, make sure you ask if it is, not only to the drivers and bus station office but to local passengers.

#### Inside a bus:

How do assailants operate on buses in Honduras? These are real stories from Peace Corps volunteers serving in Honduras:

- PCV gets on a bus, while he walking down the “pasillo” (aisle), two individuals are making their way out of the bus. Both individual obstruct the PCV’s path, and are close enough that they are able to pickpocket the PCV. Individuals leave the bus and by the time the PCV finds out, the bus is far from the thieves.
- A fake “ayudante” (bus attendant) offers the PCV help with his bags. The PCV accepts the offer and the “ayudante” gets in the bus, puts the bag on the seat to reserve a seat for the PCV. In the meantime, PCV is outside having a cigarette and no longer paying attention, while the fake “ayudante” takes the PCV’s bags and leaves.
- While sitting on the bus, an individual that sits next to you assaults you and gets off at the next town.
- At pit stops (for example, Siguatepeque), while you are in the bathroom or buying water, thieves get on the bus and pull any bag from the baggage racks. Bags in the luggage compartment are out of their range.
- While you are standing in line to purchase a ticket or get on the bus, you can be pick-pocketed, especially if you have your bags hanging over your back and not held in front.

#### Recommendations for volunteers while riding on the bus

- When an assault takes place, there is no good or bad place – anywhere you are, just sit and remain calm and do what the assailants tell you. Remain with the group at all times – if you are being pulled away from the group, do whatever it takes to remain with the rest of the passengers (yell, scream, spit, vomit, punch, etc).
- The “best” seat on the bus: While most accidents are front-back crashes, sitting in the aisle and the middle can really help to avoid serious injuries. Fatal results have far greater impact against the people that were sitting in the front or back on the bus.



- Women should try to sit with other women.
- Whenever possible, ride with a friend.
- Ideally, hold on to your luggage or put it in a visible spot. Use a bike lock or hook it to the bus rack.
- Don't leave your backpack on the bus if you get off to stretch your legs or use the restroom.
- When in line to buy your tickets or get on the bus, put your backpack in front of you, not on your back.
- Do not use iPods, CD players, MP3s, etc.
- Do not use the phone, either to make phone calls or text messages. You make think you have been unnoticed, but since you had to raise your voice to make the call, you attract attention.

### 3. Taxis

- **Radio taxis:** The most reliable service are radio taxis; however, they only operate in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro. Besides the characteristics of normal cabs, they carry a sign that says RADIO TAXI. You may also find them outside any major shopping center like Mall Multiplaza in Tegucigalpa or City Mall in San Pedro Sula. These cabs may have a slightly higher fee, but they should also have a sheet listing prices. Ask to see it.
- **Taxis at the airport:** the cabs at the airport are not marked, but their license plates always start with an A (for example, A PQ-1207). These are the only public transportation vehicles that are allowed inside the drop-off/boarding area. Any other taxi is not allowed inside. You can also look at the driver's nametag which should indicate his membership in the airport taxi service. Vehicles are not only the sedan type; mini-buses and vans are also common.
- **Taxis at the bus stations (taxis de punto):** This is another reliable type of taxi service. These are regular cabs, marked just like other taxis, but you will only find them in specific spots. When you get off the bus, a dispatcher will ask where you are going and direct you to a specific driver. You will pay as if it was a direct service, but many times your fellow passengers are accommodated if they are going in a similar direction. That is acceptable. The driver will charge each person individually.
- **Collective taxis (taxis colectivos):** These are taxis that operate in predetermined spots in major cities like San Pedro and Tegucigalpa, and follow a specific route to a specific area (ex: downtown or residential area). This is a service that allows up to four passengers in the same taxi for a low price (Lps. 12). NOT RECOMMENDED as this method is often used to assault passengers.
- **Direct taxis:** These are regular cabs you flag in the street, with non-stop service. You may question/stop the driver if he attempts to pick up more passengers. This is a method used to assault passengers.
- **Taxis Brujos (illegal cabs):** These only operate at night or late afternoon/evening and are highly dangerous. Volunteers should never get in this type of taxi. They do not have any tag, number on the door, plate does not start with A. They normally turn on a light (red, blue, green) on the upper left hand corner of the front windshield, and typically operate in only the poorer areas of San Pedro and Tegucigalpa.
- **Mototaxi:** These are three-wheel motorcycles that come with a covered back seat for two passengers. The provide a low-price service (Lps. 10) within small towns and rural communities. Up



until now, these have not posed a threat to volunteers or the general population, but use common sense. Make sure the driver isn't drunk. Use them only within city limits. Though they sometimes operate between nearby smaller communities, it is not recommended due to dangers such as disrespectful drivers, underage and poorly skilled drivers, drunk drivers, etc.

#### **Recommendations for volunteer taxi use:**

- Vehicle has a registration number apart from the license number.
- Make sure that it is actually affixed to the dash and not just a magnet.
- Use recommended taxi company (mall radio taxis).
- Do not share taxis.
- Well-dressed, older looking taxi driver (majority of assailants are young men in their 20s and 30s).
- Vehicle appears to be in good working condition.
- Build "confianza" with the driver.
- Flaunt your ability to speak Spanish (pretend to call your friend informing them that you are in the taxi, saying the taxi number, provide time of arrival, etc). These are good deterrent for the possible assailant assessing you are a victim.
- Know the area that you are going to.
- Lock your doors and roll up the windows so that assailants can't reach in and steal your stuff.

#### **4. Informal transportation**

**Truck:** This service is normally provided in very remote and rural communities. It usually consists of a pick-up truck, which will have a couple of pieces of hard wood across the bed of the truck, where you will sit. This is NOT RECOMMENDED.

**Hitchhiking (*jalón*):** You are strongly discouraged from using this method of transportation. Riding with strangers in Honduras is a serious threat, especially if there are only men in the vehicle. Even if it is only one man, it can still pose a threat, particular for female volunteers (risking sexual assault). Male volunteers are still at risk (mugging). Jaloning with an acquaintance is still not recommended, especially for female volunteers. Never go in delivery trucks, as they are constantly targeted by assailants.

If you absolutely have to *jalón*:

- Don't get a ride a *jalón*.
- Make sure the driver isn't drunk (no visible drunken zig-zag style; beer or rum bottles rolling on the floor of the car; smells like alcohol; fuzzy look, etc).
- Vehicle looks safe and is not falling apart. Sit in the safe part of the vehicle (not in the center with strangers or on sides of the truck bed).
- Driver is with his family (you can see a wife and kids)
- An NGO or government vehicle (look for a logo) and at least one woman in the car.

#### **5. Water transportation**

This service is provided in the following sites:

*North Coast:*



La Ceiba – Bay Islands (Roatan and Utila)

Trujillo-Bay Islands (Guanaja)

La Ceiba-La Moskitia (Puerto Lempira)

Puerto Cortes-Placencia (in Belize)

La Ceiba-Cayos Cochinos

Tela-Jeannete Kawas National Park

*Southern region:*

Coyolito-Amapala

It is of course recommended that you use only water transportation in which you have a life jacket.

## 6. Bikes

Use extreme caution when bike riding in Honduras, including the following: You are sharing the road with other cars, large trucks, other bikes, livestock, and pedestrians.

- Do not bike and listen to music in headphones.
- Never bike in an area in which there is not traffic or people (to avoid possible assault or possible accident).
- Obey traffic laws when biking in the city (do not bike against traffic).
- Watch out for dogs!
- Never bike at night.
- Weekends are times when drivers are more likely to be drunk. Be especially vigilant during this time.

## 7. Motorcycles

You may occasionally travel by motorcycle in the event that the Foundation car is unavailable. It is Honduran law to wear a helmet as a passenger. Make sure to grip tightly on to the driver of the motorcycle.

## 8. Air travel

Commercial air lines are perfectly acceptable forms of transportation (Isleña Airlines, TACA, Aerolineas SOSA, etc.).

## 9. If you are involved in an accident...

If you are in a position to call, contact the volunteer coordinator or executive director immediately. If they are unavailable, follow the phone list listed in the volunteer handbook.

If the bus cannot keep going but you are OK, take your bags and get on the next available bus. Inform the Foundation contact person of this action. Be careful of accepting help from other people. You might be held liable if your actions (however unintentional) further harm the injured person. In the chaos of the event, your stuff may be stolen.



If you are injured and are able to make phone calls, contact the volunteer coordinator or executive director immediately.

If you lose your phone in the accident, it is a good idea to have written the emergency numbers in a separate area so you can borrow a phone. Pay for the call.

If you know that you are being driven to the hospital, ask the people driving you where they are taking you. Contact the volunteer coordinator or executive director immediately so they can possibly give further instructions as to where to take you (as opposed to going to the public hospital).

If you are hit by a car, if at all possible pay attention to the different characteristics (type of vehicle, brand, color, plate number [3 letters and 4 digits], stickers, logos, special features).

If you need to hire someone to take you to the hospital, do it. The Foundation will reimburse you later.

## Form G: Dealing with Unwanted Attention

**Source:** Peace Corps

**Rationale:** While some volunteers may blend in perfectly, others do not due to race, gender, age, and other characteristics. Your habits may need some adjustment while serving as a volunteer in Honduras. In this session, we will provide guidance on the type of relations and interaction that are culturally appropriate in different settings such as your work place, social events, in your home, and on the street.

**Learning objectives:**

1. Define “unwanted attention.”
2. Identify at least five potential warning signals/behaviors that demonstrate unwanted attention is happening.
3. Describe at least five preventative approaches that a volunteer can do to avoid unwanted attention.
4. Articulate one coping method that does not negatively impact your attitude or mental health.

**Define unwanted attention**

Volunteers are likely to experience a great deal more attention – some of it unwelcome during their life in Honduras. Many behaviors that may be defined as unwelcome, harassing, or unacceptable attention/behavior in the U.S. are commonly practiced in Honduras.

**How can unwanted attention affect the volunteer’s mental health?**

Volunteers need to learn to cope and manage their feelings about this attention and behavior. Developing an effective coping strategy is important for their positive mental health and attitude. This is a process and it takes time to experience and develop.



## Unwanted attention in the work place

Potential warning signals/behaviors that demonstrate unwanted attention is happening includes:

### Overfriendliness:

- You're the only one in the workplace that the supervisor kisses on the cheek.
- The supervisor/coworker always wanted to drive you home, even though it is out of their way.
- When traveling for work-related activities with coworkers, one of them wants to drive in one vehicle with the volunteer and have the rest ride in a separate vehicle.
- When dropping everyone else at home after an activity, you are the last one to be dropped off, even when you could be dropped off earlier.
- Your coworker tells you about his problems at home with his wife, and also says he is feeling lonely.
- Your coworker openly proposes that you hang out or "be with" him/her, even though s/he has a spouse and children at home.
- Being touched unnecessarily: lingering handshake, "scratchy palm," light squeeze, body rubbing, etc.

### What is an appropriate response to this behavior?

#### *Inhibitive/preventative approach*

- Dress professionally. Be conservative with your clothing.
- Behave professionally and act with confidence, even if you don't always feel it.
- Behave respectfully and project a demeanor that says you expect respectful behavior from others.
- Don't be overly familiar, at least at the beginning, when you are building credibility.
- If someone makes a pass at you or suggests a sexual encounter or affair, say "no" clearly.
- Use *usted* instead of *tu* or *vos*. This is a very effective way to set limits.
- If you choose to drink, be careful. It can be a real issue for women and create unwanted assumptions about your character. Volunteers (male or female) should never get an image as "good drinkers."

Remember that there is a stereotype of Americans that many Hondurans have, especially the less educated. It is an image created by Hollywood and the TV industry. You need to make sure you are projecting a professional image so that your actions cannot be misinterpreted. If you act and dress like the men and women seen on "Wild On" and "Sex in the City," it will contribute to preserve those stereotypes.

How to deal with unwanted attention in your workplace?

#### *Responding action:*

- If there is an imminent threat, immediately call the executive director for an immediate evacuation.
- Tell the person to stop, firmly enough for him to understand that NO means NO.
- If it keeps happening, report it to your supervisor and the volunteer coordinator. If the supervisor does not acknowledge the situation, report it immediately to the director of human resources.
- If the offender is your supervisor, report it to the director of human resources directly.

## Unwanted attention in a social setting

Gossip can be an integral part of life in Honduras, especially in a small town like Juticalpa. People pay close attention to every movement you make and will talk about it. Keeping a professional attitude even when having fun and setting



boundaries from the very beginning will be integral to being able to have a successful volunteer year. Some indicators to consider when going out:

- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Too many people clearly intoxicated due to the amount of alcohol consumed.
- Violence is occurring (shooting guns off, aggressive behavior, fist fights, local police are beginning to arrest party attendants, generally improper behavior). Volunteers should leave immediately. Forget about being polite and do whatever necessary to get to a safe place quickly.

#### Dancing and drinking at parties:

- There could be different interpretations to dancing: If you happen to dance with someone (especially multiple times= because you thought that s/he was a good dancer, good company, etc, you could be sending the wrong message to that person. 1) This person might think that you like him/her, more than as a friend. 2) Others in the community might observe this and talk about it. 3) Another person who “likes” the person you are dancing with could interpret this as you liking the person and be unhappy about you moving in on their love interest.
- Do not accept a drink, even a soft drink, from your dance partner or someone else paying you a lot of attention. This could be interpreted as you receiving their advances positively.
- Women in Honduras do not ask men to dance; it is always the other way around.
- It is OK to go out with friends; however, the majority of Honduran women go out with other women or in groups of women and men. It is rare to see one woman going out with several men. If you are a female, go out with other females, not with other males. If you are a male, go out with other males.
- The best advice is that it takes time to develop a relationship. Sexual norms in the United States, especially for volunteers just coming out of college are very different from Honduras. Make sure to create those ties and get to know the person very well before entering a relationship; this will be critical for your safety.
- Certainly in this situation and as in any other one, moderate drinking or not drinking at all will always make a difference between having a good time and ending up in a bad situation. The choice is yours!

#### Drinking after work:

- Although this may be a common practice for you, this will seriously damage your image in the community. People that consume alcohol on a daily basis are considered drunks and for the most part unwelcome. It is critical that you take this seriously and don't engage in this practice.

#### Unwanted attention in your house:

It is important that volunteers set limits on what is OK and what's not OK in their home. Hondurans do not understand this very well or simply don't care about it; therefore, you need to set boundaries.

- Unannounced visitors: If the sun is down, it's probably not a good idea to let in anyone unannounced or that you don't know very well. This can be neighborhood kids or the *bolo* (town drunk). Although these individuals are normally harmless, if you begin giving them food or money, be aware that they will continually return for the rest of your volunteer service. It is matter of personal choice, but often just one incidence of generosity bringing an inundation of people in need to your home. Children especially need to have rules set from the beginning. Letting them wander around the house is not a good idea. Preferably have any materials they might be using (coloring books, reading material, etc) close by the door so it can be taken to another area for the children to enjoy. Be aware that children can and will steal things from you.
- Learn to differentiate between porch friends and living room friends.
- If you are a female volunteer and let a male Honduran sleep at your house, you are sending the wrong message, not only to this person but to the community. A single female allowing a Honduran male to sleep in



her home is considered totally unacceptable in a conservative, religious society in which people's pride for the concept of virginity is highly valued.

- Be aware of "Peeping Toms." Close curtains, check doors and windows for gaps that allow someone to see inside, especially at night; cut bushes around the home.
- Underage neighborhood boys rubbing their genitals or masturbating close to your home. Report immediately to the volunteer coordinator.

**Male volunteers can also be susceptible to unwanted attention in the home setting by females. Scenarios can include:**

- Group of teenage girls arrives at your house with the excuse that they need help with their homework. One of the female teenagers will intentionally be left behind by the rest of the group. She will be looking to spend time alone with you. Do not be surprised if this happens with your adolescent students. Underage dating is prohibited by the Olancho Aid Foundation, the U.S. Protect Act, and Honduran laws.
- Female company trying to cook for you, clean your house, etc. If she starts dressing provocatively or doing her best to spend time alone with you, she is trying to make a connection.

**Unwanted attention in the street**

Unwanted attention on the street is something that is very common for both male and female volunteers. For the most part it is best not to pay attention to catcalls in the street. Some of them may be very offensive and responding just gives the offender more room to start harassing you.

What if it is a persistent harasser?

- Tell the offender to leave you alone.
- Avoid the offender.
- Report to the volunteer coordinator and executive director so they can talk to the offender.

## **How will all this attention make you feel?**

We understand that many of these behaviors are considered totally unacceptable in the States, but don't let these feelings take over your emotions and attitudes towards your work. OAF would not be here if there weren't good people that are willing to work shoulder to shoulder with you and that deserve a better future.

It is OK to be angry and upset. Everyone has their own methods to deal with these issues: read a book, write in your journal, blogging, call a friend, jogging, painting, etc. Only you know what works best for you. Find your own best way to release that steam before it blows you off. Don't let those negative feelings get in the way of accomplishing the goals you had when decided to volunteer.



Con este manual se firman los contratos, 1) Release Form, 2) Policy of Security. Este manual está sujeto a cambios en cualquier momento, para el cual se haran reuniones de emergencia para dar a conocer los cambios que se han realizado. Dado en Juticalpa, Olancho Honduras.

Version 1.2, en August 2012.