



Frequently Asked Questions Volunteering with Faith In Practice in 2021

As many of you know, Guatemala closed her borders with the onset of COVID-19 last March and Faith In Practice was forced to suspend mission teams for several months. Since that time, the need has continued to grow. And while the pandemic has allowed us to serve in new ways, we look ahead to 2021 with renewed hope as we prepare to return to country with our volunteer teams.

We are so grateful for your interest in serving our patients in the year ahead. As we prepare to resume mission teams, we are making every effort to keep volunteers, patients, and staff safe and healthy, and to ensure that the teams run smoothly.

Serving on a Faith In Practice team in 2021 will be different. There will be new guidelines and protocols in nearly every area of the mission experience, from entry requirements, to patient numbers, to hotels and transportation.

This document is intended to answer the most frequently asked questions about our teams, and what it will be like to serve under these changed circumstances.

The new guidelines have been put in place to meet requirements from the Ministry of Health and our partner hospitals, and to prioritize health and safety. Should you decide to serve, we ask for your cooperation and understanding, as well as your flexibility. This is an evolving environment and protocols may change before or during your mission.

Many things have changed, but one thing that remains constant is our commitment to serve the poor of Guatemala, and to do so with respect and empathy for our patients and each other.

Thank you for your willingness to consider serving. May God bless you.

Health and Well-Being

What if I experience COVID-19 symptoms in Guatemala?

COVID-19 testing (Antigen/PCR) will be provided. Surgical Team members will be tested on site at the hospital; Village Team members will be tested at the nearest clinic.

What if I test positive in Guatemala?

Staff will assist in making arrangements for team members who test positive to quarantine in a hotel room in Antigua. If care is needed, staff will arrange for transportation and admission to a private hospital in Guatemala City, where standard treatments for COVID will be available.

I know there are many protocols and measures in place, but I'm still nervous. Should I come? There are many factors to consider and we will be making every effort to help keep volunteers, staff, and patients healthy, but we cannot guarantee anyone's health or safety. If you decide you're not ready to serve this year, we will be ready for you in 2022!

Application Process, Fees, and Cancellation

Are there any changes to the application process?

The online application process will remain the same, however, we ask you to first talk to your team leader. Team leaders will have up-to-date information on specialties and team composition and can share more about the plan for your team.

Is Sponsorship still available?

Yes, we will continue to offer sponsorship for those facing financial hardship. Talk to your team leader for more information on how to apply.

What if I have to cancel?

We understand that, at time, situations occur which may require a participant to cancel. We therefore strongly recommend participants obtain their own trip cancellation insurance to protect against this possibility.

If I need to cancel, will Faith In Practice refund my trip fee?

If a volunteer cancels 45 or more days before the trip departure date, Faith In Practice will refund 100% of the paid trip fee. If the request is made 44 to 16 days before the departure, we will refund 75% of the paid trip fee. There will be no refund for cancellations made 15 days or less prior to the departure date unless the volunteer has been exposed to COVID (see below). The application fee, which supports pre-trip administration costs, is not eligible for refund.

I may have been exposed to COVID but do not have symptoms. Can I still go to Guatemala?

We ask that volunteers withdraw from the trip if they have been exposed to a confirmed or suspected case of COVID within 14 days of the trip departure date, or if they have experienced COVID symptoms and have not received medical clearance. In these cases, the trip fee will be refunded if cancellation becomes necessary.

Travel Requirements and Flights

Is COVID testing required for travel?

In order to enter the country, travelers are required to provide proof of a negative COVID test within 72 hours of arriving in Guatemala. Those unable to provide a negative test result will not be permitted to enter. Please note: In order to avoid difficulty upon arrival, please ensure that the name on your negative COVID test paperwork matches the name in your passport.

Are there any other requirements for entry into Guatemala?

At this time, there are no new requirements. A visa is not required to enter Guatemala from the US. A valid passport that will expire no less than 6 months from the date of entry is still strongly recommended.

Will Faith In Practice provide PPE for the flight?

Faith In Practice will provide PPE for your use after you arrive in Guatemala, but we ask that you prepare to bring PPE for traveling to and from Guatemala.

When should I book my flight?

Your team leader will share the official team flight information once you have been approved and placed on a team. Please do not book your flight until you are officially placed on a team.

Can I come in late or leave early?

Due to safety and security requirements, all team members must arrive in Guatemala on the same official team flight. All teams will arrive on Saturday: Hilario Galindo Surgery Teams must arrive by noon; Obras Surgery Teams and Village Teams must arrive by 9 pm. Your team leader will share more information with you about flights. When leaving Guatemala, team members must depart on flights within the same timeframe and ride the team bus to the airport.

In-Country Logistics

Will I still have a roommate?

Volunteers will stay in single rooms, with the exception of volunteers who are currently members of the same household, such as married couple or roommates.

How will COVID affect our in-country transportation?

Guatemala currently mandates that transit, including shuttle buses, be occupied at 50%. Faith In Practice will adhere to current guidelines. All team members must be on team transportation.

We will still have a free day? Can I shop and go to restaurants in Antigua?

Yes, teams will still have a free day on Friday. With regard to activities in Antigua, staff will advise you of the current policy based on the situation at the time of your trip.

Serving Our Patients

How many patients will we see?

Surgery Teams: We expect you will see approximately 30 patients between Monday and Thursday. This number is based on the volume of patients we can accommodate while adhering to the disinfection protocols and other policies mandated by the Ministry of Health.

Village Teams: We expect each team will see approximately 100 patients per day between Monday and Thursday. This number is based on the volume of patients we can accommodate while adhering to the protocols mandated by the Ministry of Health.

All Teams: This number may fluctuate based on infection rates in the country. We will always see the greatest number of patients we can see while still adhering to the necessary requirements.

Based on this patient volume, we expect to have 18-20 volunteers per team. Your team leader will provide more information on your team composition and specialties.

How will patients be screened before I see them?

Surgical patients will receive a COVID test at the hospital on the day prior to surgery. Patients and team members will have a temperatures check/symptom screening before they are allowed entry into the Obras, Hilario Galindo, and the Village Medical Clinics.

What if patients come to the clinic or hospital with COVID symptoms?

Patients with COVID symptoms, or previous exposure, will be sent to the nearest public health center or public hospital for care.

Will there be any changes to our medical and surgical program?

All Teams: We will not have a dental component on any teams in 2021. Mobility Clinics will be determined as teams are recruited, based on the total number of team members.

Obras Teams: There will not be a GI component this year.

What kind of PPE will be provided?

Faith In Practice is using the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines and Guatemala guidelines for proper PPE use. We will provide in country the required amount of PPE for each mission team. Each team will have access to N95 masks, ear-loop masks, gowns, gloves, and face shields. In addition to PPE, there will be acrylic screens or other bio-security measures taken to protect volunteers and patients.

Are you looking for donations of PPE?

Faith In Practice is grateful for generous donations of PPE from Henry Schein Cares, Providence, and others. We will have ample PPE for your team, but please let us know if your hospital or clinic would like to make a larger donation of PPE.

What supplies and medications will Faith In Practice provide for teams?

Surgery Teams: We will provide the same surgical packs and basic surgical supplies as in previous years.

Village Teams: The formulary and supplies will remain the same.

Can I bring supplies or medications?

Speak to your team leader if you normally bring supplies or medications. Team leaders will be working with Faith In Practice staff to ensure each team has what it needs to successfully complete its mission week.

I have questions that you have not addressed here. What now?

Talk to your team leader or reach out to our Volunteer Program staff at teams@faithinpractice.org.

We will strive to keep the Answers to these Questions updated.

Please note that the situation remains fluid and flexibility is important.

In any situation where Faith In Practice and Guatemalan law and regulation are in conflict, Guatemalan law and regulation will supersede.