

## Detailed Responses to Frequently Asked Questions

- **What are my child's circumstances?** The Salvadoran Government launched a major initiative to identify at-risk children throughout the country. Their goal was to place children with relatives who are able to care for them. However, very often, there are no appropriate relatives able to care for the children. COAR, under the direction of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, is considered to be the model foster care facility in the country, and is able to offer long term housing, education, healthcare, spiritual formation, social and psychological support to children from infant through graduation from high school - all in a loving and family-styled foster care facility. To protect the privacy of the children, the Law does not allow us to publish the unique circumstances that brought the child to COAR. But, we hope that growing to know your child through letters and pictures will supply that intimacy, instead.
- **You will receive a handwritten letter and a picture of your sponsored child twice a year: in the spring and the fall.** If your child is very young or has learning disabilities, the letter might be written by his/her housemother. But they will write the letter together and she is simply the one who is doing the writing.
- **If your child leaves COAR:** The Salvadoran Courts review all child care cases regularly to ensure that the children are being appropriately served. If an appropriate relative comes forward and offers to care for the child, the Courts may issue an order releasing the child from our care to the relative. This can happen with any child but the longer that a child is in our care, the more unlikely that an appropriate relative will be found. However, should your sponsored child leave COAR, we will automatically assign you a new child and ask that you take the new child into your heart. You may also ask us to assign a different child, at any time.
- **DO NOT FEEL ANY PRESSURE TO WRITE TO YOUR CHILD. THEY DO NOT EXPECT TO RECEIVE LETTERS FROM YOU.** But, if you wish to write to your sponsored child, here are some guidelines:
  - **Send letters and pictures to our Cleveland office.** Given the cost of international delivery and the possible delays due to Customs in El Salvador, we try to send letters every couple of months: **January 15<sup>th</sup>, April 15<sup>th</sup>, June 15<sup>th</sup>, September 15<sup>th</sup>, November 15<sup>th</sup>.** We do not send any letters to the Children's Village in December since some children may be temporarily with relatives. If you like, you can email our office a letter for your child and we will translate it and forward it to him/her with our regular letters.

All correspondence must go through the Cleveland office. We will never give a child your address under any circumstance. Please do not use any stationary that may contain your home address. We very much value your support and solidarity with the children but most Salvadorans do have relatives somewhere in the USA and it would not be prudent to share your phone number or address with them, or encourage a visit, since a cousin or uncle could take that as an invitation to visit you.

- **Write in English or Spanish.** When your letters arrive at the COAR office, volunteers help to translate and organize the letters before sending them to the Children's Village. When the children write back, we will translate those letters into English for you.
- **Please don't send gifts.** We try to discourage gifts of any real value. Anything other than letters/photos tend to become stuck in Customs and it can take months for us to get them released and often with a substantial fee, as much as, \$25 per day. Gifts can also create an awkward situation among the children. So, thank you for your generosity but please check with us before buying any gifts.



- **Can I visit my child? Absolutely!** COAR welcomes visitors. Please let the Cleveland office know when you plan to visit so that we can make sure that the child is available to meet you that day. Please be aware that our Salvadoran employees speak ONLY Spanish. Also, keep in mind that the Salvadoran school year begins in mid-January and ends in mid-November before the traditional harvest season.
- **Can I e-mail my child? Yes, through the Cleveland office.** E-mail can be sent through our US office at [coarsponsors@gmail.com](mailto:coarsponsors@gmail.com). We will send them to COAR according to our regular mail schedule.
- **What does sponsorship cost?**
  - **Give a Child a Home** (to support the residences) **\$25/month or \$300/year**
    - Sponsorships only cover a fraction of the cost to care for a child. The full cost to educate, clothe, feed and house the internos currently averages \$8,000 per year.
  - **Give a Child a Chance** (to support the school) **\$15/month or \$180/year**
    - Education related expenses, counseling, and security varies with enrollment, the number of teachers employed, and teacher salaries. Costs vary by grade from \$153 to \$295 per year.
- **Where do the funds go? All of it goes to educate, clothe, feed, and house the children.** To bring the cost of caring for a child to a reasonable level, we suggest the monthly or annual rate shown above. However, regardless of how much or how little you are able to donate, your donation is put into a fund that pays salaries for their housemothers, their education, their healthcare and other basic needs. This is the essence of the Children's Village: to care for poor and at-risk children, and your sponsorship funds the core of that mission.
- **What about birthdays and Christmas? It varies . . .** All children that live at COAR receive appropriate birthday and Christmas presents chosen by the staff. If a sponsor sends an extra donation at Christmas or for a birthday, those funds are used to pay for the cake, decorations and a gift. Some sponsors send small gifts such as a **package of stickers** or a coloring book - something that can be shared. Please note, anything larger than a sticker is carried to COAR by us during our spring/summer/fall visits due to issues with Customs.
- **Does COAR bill me for sponsorship? Since we are a charity, we don't send a bill but this is what we do:**
  - Each semi-annual letter (spring and fall) comes with a payment record so you can see where you stand with your recent donations/payments and decide if it is time for another donation;
  - Enclosed with every mailing (and on the web site) is a sheet explaining various payment options: *including a recurring credit card or direct debit (US only) payment option, or PayPal;*
  - We can "remind" you to renew an annual or semi-annual payment. Use the enclosed form or just write the month that you want to be reminded on your check;
  - Calendar: Every sponsor gets a yearly calendar of tear-off envelopes to use.
- **Where do I send any payment? Send donations payable to "COAR" at the Cleveland office whose address is listed below.** We collect all donations for the Children's Village, sponsorship and otherwise, and transfer regular monthly payments. All gifts are fully tax-deductible.
- **Can I change my sponsored Child? Yes, certainly.** When you first sponsor a child, we randomly assign a child to you. However, we are always happy to assign a different child. Simply give us a call or email us to discuss it.

