

## *Detailed Responses to Frequently Asked Questions*

***What are my child's circumstances?*** The Salvadoran Government launched a major initiative in 2009 to identify at-risk children throughout the country, especially those suffering from abuse and neglect. Their goal was to place children with relatives who are able to care for them. However, in some cases, there is no appropriate relative able to care for the children, so they are placed in a residential foster-care facility. COAR, under the direction of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, is considered to be a model facility in the country, and is able to offer long term housing, education, healthcare, spiritual formation, and social and psychological support to children from infancy through high school graduation - all in a loving and family-styled environment. To protect the privacy of the children, we are not allowed 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.

***What will I receive from my sponsored child?*** 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 compose the letter together and the housemother is simply the one who puts pen to paper.

***Can I write back to my sponsored child?*** Of course! **But don't feel pressured to do so!** The children are happy to receive your letters, but don't expect them. If you do wish to write to your sponsored child, please consider the following guidelines.

1. *Send letters and pictures (or emails) to our Cleveland office.* Given the cost of international delivery and the possible delays due to customs in El Salvador, we send a packet of letters every couple of months: January 15th, April 15th, June 15th, September 15th, November 15th. If you choose to email, send your letter to [coarsponsors@gmail.com](mailto:coarsponsors@gmail.com) and we'll print that and include it in the packet of letters.
2. *We will never share your home address with your sponsored child.* All correspondence must go through the Cleveland office. Please do not use stationary that has your address printed on it. We value your support and solidarity with the children, but most Salvadorans have relatives somewhere in the USA and, given the strong ties in Salvadoran families, 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.
3. *You can write in English or Spanish.* When your letters arrive at the COAR office, volunteers help to translate them before sending them to the Children's Village. When the children write back, we will translate those letters into English for you.
4. *Please don't send large gifts.* We try to discourage gifts of any real value. Anything that isn't flat tends to become stuck in customs and it can take months and substantial fees for it to get released. Gifts can also create an awkward situation among the children. We thank you for your generosity, but please check with us before buying any gifts.

***Can I visit my child?*** Absolutely! COAR welcomes visitors and encourages you to think about joining our summer Open House or visiting with a parish/school group. If you are going on your own, 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.



***What does sponsorship cost?***

*Give a Child a Home: \$25/month or \$300/year*

Helps to provide a home, food, clothing, counseling, security, and comprehensive health care.

*Give a Child a Chance: \$15/month or \$180/year*

Helps to provide for education related expenses (tuition, uniforms, books), counseling, and security.

Remember, sponsorships cover only a portion of the cost to care for a child. The full cost to educate, clothe, feed, and house each child currently averages \$8,000 per year.

***Where do the funds go?*** Your sponsorship donation goes entirely to educate, clothe, feed, and house the children. Regardless of how much or how little you are able to donate, your donation is put into a fund that pays the grocery bill, school tuition, salaries for the housemothers, healthcare costs, 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?*** 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 a cake, decorations, a special dinner, and a gift. Some sponsors send small gifts such as a package of stickers or a book - something that can be shared. Please note, anything not flat is carried to COAR by staff during our visits, due to issues with customs.

***Does COAR bill me for sponsorship?*** Since we are a charity, we won't send you a bill, but we will help you remember to make your contribution!

- Each semi-annual letter comes with a payment record so you can see where you stand with your recent donations and decide if it is time for you to make another donation
- Enclosed with every mailing is a sheet explaining various payment options (including a recurring credit card payment, direct debit payment (US only), and PayPal)
- We can "remind" you to renew an annual or semi-annual contribution. Use the enclosed form or drop us a note to tell us when you'd like a reminder.
- Every sponsor gets a yearly calendar, with tear-off envelopes that can be used for monthly donations.

***Where do I send any payment?*** Send donations payable to "COAR Peace Mission" at the address below. We collect all donations for the Children's Village and transfer regular monthly payments. All gifts are fully tax-deductible.

***What happens if my child leaves COAR?*** The Salvadoran courts review all cases regularly to ensure that children are being appropriately served. If a 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 at any time, but the longer a child is in our care, the more unlikely it is 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.

***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.

