



COAR Peace Mission * 28700 Euclid Ave. * Wickliffe, OH 44092-2585
 (440) 943-7615 * coarpm@gmail.com * www.coarpeacemission.org

Guidelines for Mission Group Visitors to COAR Children's Village (COARCV)

Thank you for your interest in visiting COAR!!

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I. Planning Your Trip

1. Overview

Solidarity comes from identifying with the impoverished community that we serve:



"When we speak for the poor, please note that we do not take sides with one social class. What we do is invite all social classes, rich and poor, without distinction, saying to everyone let us take seriously the cause of the poor as though it were our own."

- Saint Romero, 9/9/1979

Any visit to El Salvador will confront you with poverty. A visit to COAR will bring the poor into your heart. Our children have few "things" like toys or clothes, but they have the most important things: nutritious food, safety, education. As you get to know the circumstances of the individual children who touch your heart, poverty takes on a deeper reality.

Service



Begin at least 3 months in advance...

- Make reservations with the COAR office
- Arrange flights
- Identify your group leader
- Apply for passports
- Get training to work with youth (Virtus® or similar) for all aged 18+ years
- Get legal releases from all travelers
- Schedule preparation meetings
- Consult your travel doctor

Solidarity



Preparing the group...

Experiencing solidarity requires preparation. Groups are encouraged to meet at least three times *as a group* before traveling to get to know each other, set expectations, and reflect on preparation materials. Our COAR staff will be happy to meet with the group.



Preparing the community...

Involving friends, family, and church members in your trip before you go will enhance the experience as well as provide support when you return. If asked, we will create a web page of your visit to share with folks back home

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What we will plan with you...

- Activities with the COAR children
- Visits to important and informative sites
(Romero's tomb, museums...what is reasonable to fit into each day)
- Food at COAR
- Lodging at COAR
- Local transportation (airport pick-ups, other sights, etc.)



Reading and movies...

There are many books, movies, and documentaries about El Salvador. We keep an updated list on our website:
FUN STUFF > LESSON PLANS AND RESOURCES

[\[https://coarpeacemission.org/lesson-plans-and-resources/\]](https://coarpeacemission.org/lesson-plans-and-resources/)

We encourage members of your group to view or read these and come together for reflection before the trip.



What to expect...

- Service will include teaching English – a truly life-changing service
- Solidarity will help you get to know the children with activities and conversations
- The children's school and house routines must be respected - that means early to bed and early to rise - 5 am!
- The food available at COAR is healthy and wholesome but simple. Travel by bus on poor roads will be hot, dusty, and bumpy.
- Most sites, including COAR, require lots of walking.



Mass, prayer, worship...

COAR is a Catholic school run by the Archdiocese of San Salvador. You are welcome to attend mass or organize your own prayer service or vacation Bible school with the children. We will also be happy to arrange for meeting any other Mass or Sunday or Holy Day obligations.



Donated Goods are Discouraged

We discourage drives for any tangible goods that would have to be transported to El Salvador. In addition to the transport and customs expense, a mature understanding of charity requires that we respond to economic realities: *it helps build El Salvador's economy if we buy "goods" there.*

Purchasing in El Salvador gives storeowners, truckers, and many others, jobs. It signals where there is real demand for products so that sustained growth in the economy can be recognized. It helps break the cycle of dependency.

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2. Quickies

Terms

- **COAR Children's Village (COARCV)** – located in Zaragoza, El Salvador, Central America. It was founded by a Cleveland Diocese mission team priest in 1980 as a war orphanage and continues to provide residential foster care today. It is wholly administered by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Salvador. Its 80-acre campus not only contains several small houses for the residential children (“internos”) but also contains the COAR school, clinic, guesthouse(s), large chapel, cafeteria, and various other buildings and activities such as a soccer field, basketball and volleyball court, band practice field, and a large agricultural section (corn, beans, organic/sustainable practices gardens, and sometimes chickens.)
- **COAR Peace Mission (COARPM)** – located in Wickliffe, OH (just outside Cleveland) is the outreach office for the COAR Children's Village and the primary contact for all visitors.
- **“COAR Guide”**: the COAR staff member that will accompany the group at all times.
- **“Group Leader”**: The leader of your group who will be COARPM's contact to prepare for the trip and the person with authority who accompanies the group throughout the trip.
- **“Internos”** The Spanish word for the children who live at COAR in foster care.

Currency: US\$

Electricity: US/Canada compatible

Weather: hot and humid

Time zone: El Salvador is two hours behind Eastern Standard Time in March-October. (In other words, they do not use daylight-savings-time; so, when our time shifts an hour, they move between Central Time and Mountain Time.)

Social Media, Photos, etc.

- You are welcome to take pictures and videos for personal use. Please show courtesy by asking people if you may take their picture. However, all the internos are used to pictures – they love it.
- Please ***DO NOT POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA*** any pictures or identifying stories of the COAR children or staff without the permission of the COAR Peace Mission guide. Some pictures or the child's circumstances may make it humiliating or dangerous to post to social media.
- We ask that you agree to let us take pictures of you at any time. However, we won't identify you without your permission.

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3. Reservations

Dates for Overnight Stays

Reservations to stay at COARCV must be made through the COAR Peace Mission office in Cleveland, Ohio. There is no minimum notice required. However, summer dates fill quickly.

Planning

COARPM will work with the group leader to plan the itinerary as detailed later in this document. The itinerary will include: all service and solidarity activities with the COAR children, all excursions to important (and fun) sights, guesthouse accommodations and room assignments, all meals and snacks, all transportation, and options for worship.

PLEASE NOTE: Groups can no longer organize their own trips to COAR in El Salvador. The Archdiocese of San Salvador asks that all visitors from North America organize their visit through the COAR Peace Mission office in Cleveland.

Releases

Overnight visitors are required to complete a release form and return the signed originals to the COAR Peace Mission office: ***Release forms are included in the appendix. Required attachments: a) copy of your passport information page, b) proof of training in preventing child abuse (18+ years old)****

***Child-abuse Prevention and Awareness Training**

All overnight visitors (18 years and older) are required to complete a course in child-abuse awareness and prevention training. Proof of completion is required with the release forms. All Catholic dioceses offer these training programs (e.g. Virtus). Other training is acceptable (e.g. Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries, Boy Scouts of America's Youth Protection training).

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4. Budgeting

Your Responsibility

- **Airfare** - COAR *cannot* help you arrange flights or airfares. Airline deadlines will likely drive your timeline for sign-up and payments. We have never done it, but with COVID, earthquakes, and other developing world challenges, COAR reserves the right to cancel your trip at any time (with a full refund) so plan your flights, cancellation insurance, and travel plans accordingly. You must plan to arrive before 6pm.
- **Photocopy of your passport information page:** Carry this with you in El Salvador and leave your actual passport locked in the COAR guesthouse. It is also useful to leave copies with your emergency contact person.
- **Health Insurance** - proof of US/Canadian health insurance coverage required.
- **Travel Health Insurance** - You can purchase travel health insurance which must include emergency evacuation coverage from most travel agents or a variety of sources. We have used: <https://isabrokers.com/>. Costs vary with the options selected.
- **El Salvador uses US currency:**
- **Visa \$12** – You will be entering the country as tourists (not to work, volunteer, etc.) The fee for US and Canadian passport-holders for a tourist visa is US\$12 and must be paid in cash at the airport in San Salvador upon arrival. Have exact change! This fee is NOT included with your fee to COAR. Passport-holders from other countries should check the fees with your local El Salvador consulate or embassy.
- **Shopping** – Depending on your group's itinerary we may visit markets or artists' co-operatives. Souvenirs and crafts of all types (hammocks, shirts, decorative and religious objects like painted wooden crosses or plaques) range from \$5 - \$50 and more. Like most things (food, clothes, drugstore items) prices are similar to North American prices, or a little lower.
- **Outside Donations** - Some visitors have felt uncomfortable when they did not bring cash to a site or to place in the collection basket at masses. However, a donation from your group is included to all sites visited. While it is not expected, you can give directly to projects or other mission groups that you visit, or you can arrange a gift to them through the COAR Peace Mission office. Donations made within El Salvador are **NOT** deductible on US tax returns. Typical amounts for collection at mass are \$1-\$5.

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COAR Peace Mission Fee

\$150/person/day (including arrival and departure dates): will cover all the following services. The COAR office will work with your leader to arrange the details:

- ***Guide***
 - COAR Peace Mission supplies one guide who will stay with the group at all times to facilitate the visit including translations, meals, accommodations, local travel, and time with the COAR children.
 - The guide will meet your group at the airport in San Salvador.
- ***Guest house accommodations***
 - Capacity: 10-18 (depending on whether you can use bunk beds.)
 - It is on the residential campus behind our security fence, patrolled by armed security guards 24/7/365.
 - *NOTE: We can accommodate larger groups at a nearby retreat house, but the experience is somewhat different. Please contact the COAR office to discuss this option.*
- ***Meals***
 - All meals are included and depending on the itinerary will be from the COAR cafeteria, groceries (for weekends and snacks), and the occasional restaurant.
- ***Itinerary***
 - Teaching English at the school most weekday mornings.
 - Afternoon half-day excursions (most weekdays) and one or two full-day excursions, especially on Saturday and Sunday.
 - We will happily work with you to accommodate the types of excursions you want for your group.
- ***Solidarity and Service with the COAR children***
 - In addition to teaching English, we will work with your group leader to organize activities with the children that are appropriate to your group's:
 - Numbers
 - Spanish-language level
 - Interests (e.g.: playing soccer, doing crafts, cooking)
 - Excursion schedule
- ***Local transportation.***
 - The COAR Peace Mission office will reserve local transportation, including airport pick-up/drop-off. Planners should identify how many people will go on any excursion so that the right sized vehicle is reserved. The Children's Village does have a few vehicles and drivers for emergencies, but these cannot be driven by guests and should not be used for planning activities.

Payment Schedule and Refunds

- Full payment is due to the COAR office in Cleveland **two months** before arrival at the COAR Children's Village.
- Payment must be made with one check payable to "COAR" sent to the Cleveland office. (Individuals should not send their fees separately to COAR.)

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- Cancellation and refund policy:
 - If your group cancels or any individual cancels, the refund schedule is:
 - 100% refund for cancellations more than two months before the start date of the trip.
 - 80% refund from two months up to one day before scheduled arrival.
 - *If fewer than 5 members of the group remain uncanceled, then COAR reserves the right to cancel the trip and will refund 80% of the fees paid.
 - The group leader must notify the COAR office in Cleveland in writing of the cancellations.
 - If COAR cancels:
 - COAR reserves the right to cancel at any time before arrival. We will not be responsible for other losses incurred by our cancellation. We have never done it and hope we never will, but with earthquakes, floods, and other uncertainties of the developing world we must reserve this right. ***Please purchase your airline tickets and other services with this in mind.***
 - If COAR cancels for any reason other than too few participants (see above*), 100% of fees will be refunded.

Additional Gifts and Donations

- Please do not make donations directly to the COAR Children's Village:
 - They cannot issue a receipt valid for U.S. tax deductions.
 - Your group should not carry more cash than is absolutely necessary.
 - It can encourage a false impression of the wealth of your group, North Americans, COAR itself, and it can encourage a sense of dependency.
- The COAR Peace Mission office can create a dramatic ceremonial check to represent a donation for a great photo-op and presentation to the staff at the Children's Village.
- Please do not assume you can give candy to the children. Too many people do this, and it has become a problem for their teeth! Ask your group guide to check whether it is OK and when and how it should be handled.
- Gifts of "things" (coloring books, T-shirts, school supplies) that express to the children that you care are great. But...we discourage goods generally:
 - You'll need to bring a lot, enough for every resident child or classroom (30-100 "things".)
 - It is expensive to transport these to El Salvador.
 - It is better for the economy of El Salvador that goods be purchased in the country.
 - When large quantities of goods arrive at the Children's Village it gives the employees, children, and surrounding community a false impression of wealth that COAR does not have.
 - However, occasionally there are special needs that are hard to fill in El Salvador. You can contact the COAR Peace Mission office to find out if there are any special needs at the time of your visit.

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5. Service

Child Care...The most under-rated service in the world

The children who live at COAR, like children everywhere, never get enough attention! Your first gift will be yourself, your interest in them, their lives, and their country. Because the children are minors and do not speak English, we will plan activities within the itinerary that are appropriate to your group and the schedule at COAR at the time of your visit. This can include soccer games, cooking together, an evening of questions and answers, and everyone's favorite: "the Despedida", the good-bye party on our last night.

Special events: If your group has ideas for special activities with the children, the COAR Peace Mission office is happy to organize these with you

COVID. The uncertainty and constantly changing circumstances of the pandemic may alter our ability to interact with the children in residence.

Teaching English

Knowing English is not only no barrier - it is a plus! Your group will teach English in our high school most mornings. Any amount of conversation in English helps the students learn a valuable skill. We will supply lesson plans and supplies (like flash cards) and teach you how to teach English. As your group gets more familiar with teaching, we can introduce fun activities like learning the same song in English and Spanish and then having a simple conversation with the vocabulary learned. Bring your own ideas - the more fun and creative the better! You will be amazed at how quickly members of your group start talking, really talking, with the COAR students.

Manual Labor

One of COAR's main services to our community is to provide good jobs to local laborers. We have a maintenance staff. None the less, sometimes there are needs at COAR to clean, repair, and paint. Your group can give the added service of raising the funds for the materials needed, too. Working with Salvadorans, who desperately need unskilled jobs, will add solidarity to your service.

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6. Solidarity

See a sample itinerary in the Appendix.

There are many things to see and do in El Salvador while staying at COAR. Summarized below are common attractions and things to know about them that will help set an itinerary for a group. However, operating hours and accessibility to destinations can vary unpredictably. It is likely that your guide will need to finalize parts of the itinerary once your group arrives.

- We will develop the daily itinerary as we learn your group's interests.
- Most weekday mornings we will be teaching English in the high school.
- Most weekday afternoons and weekends we will visit sites important to COAR's history, El Salvador, or other interesting sites.
- At least one day will be a "campo" visit. See below.

Must-See Sites

St. Romero's Residence at Divina Providencia - San Salvador

Saint Romero was assassinated while saying mass at the convent chapel on the grounds where he lived. His residence is a museum of his personal effects. There is a small gift shop.

UCA/Museum of the Jesuit Martyrs, Their Housekeeper, and Her Daughter - San Salvador

The UCA (University of Central America) has a small, lovely campus in San Salvador. The residence where the six Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter were murdered in 1989 is maintained as a museum. The campus chapel also contains compelling art inspired by these events. There is a place to buy posters at the museum.

Shrine of the Four Church Women – near San Pedro Nonualco

The site where the bodies of the four North American Churchwomen, murdered in December 1980, were found is located in a lovely rural area about a 2-hour drive from COAR. There is a small chapel.

La Libertad and Beaches

The coastal city of La Libertad is approximately 30 minutes from COAR. While famous as a surfing destination, it is dangerous for swimming. After a tour of the town, we might visit a beach club up the coast to experience the beautiful beaches of El Salvador and the restaurants that overlook them. This is not frivolous. Salvadorans are proud of their country's beauty, and it informs a comprehensive picture of the opportunities and challenges that our COAR children face when they enter into their economy as adult citizens.

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Campo Visit and Mass

“Campo” means country, or countryside. We will travel to see the types of impoverished towns and neighborhoods that the COAR children come from. This may be either in the hillside towns served currently or historically by the Cleveland Latin American Mission Team (La Libertad, Teotepeque, Chiltiupán) or neighborhoods near Zaragoza, depending on how the agenda develops.

Cleveland Mission Team

Members of the Cleveland Mission Team, in El Salvador since 1964, are currently working at three parishes in El Salvador. Their time is heavily committed to their ministries but a visit with them during the day, if they are available, will be the highlight of the trip. The COAR Peace Mission office can often arrange a full or half day with them.

Romero's Tomb at the Cathedral - San Salvador

Saint Romero is buried in a crypt under the Cathedral in the heart of downtown San Salvador. Traffic in the capital can be quite congested. Therefore, it is usually best to visit on Sunday when there is less traffic.

Other Important Sites

Cultural Museum - San Salvador

The cultural museum is small but well worth a trip. It contains pre-Columbian artifacts, antique pictures, and other evidence of a vanished past and generally charts the anthropological, cultural, and historical development of El Salvador.

Ruins - Joya de Cerén, the Mayan Pompei

Joya de Cerén is a Unesco World Heritage site and one of the most important archeological discoveries in the Mayan world in recent history. Joya de Cerén was suddenly buried 1,400 years ago by the ashes of a violent volcanic eruption that left the whole Mayan village frozen in time.

Ruins – Casa Tazumal

Similar to most Central American countries, El Salvador has pyramid ruins from earlier civilizations. The grounds are lovely and it has a small museum.

Izalco Volcano

Two hundred years ago Volcán Izalco was nothing but a hole in the earth from which columns of black sulfuric smoke would rise. Then a cone began to form and within a short time it grew to its present size of 1,910m (6,265ft). Izalco continued to erupt into this century, sending out smoke, boulders and flames that became such an impressive sight by night or day it earned the reputation as 'the lighthouse of the Pacific'. The volcano is about two hours west of San Salvador near Cerro Verde national park.

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Buying Crafts and Shopping

Salvadoran crafts can be purchased in many places. Organizations committed to a fair wage to the artisans include CIS and CRISPAZ in San Salvador, as well as many smaller, regional cooperatives. We can select an appropriate shop within your itinerary.

There are several large, opulent (by Salvadoran standards) shopping complexes around San Salvador. Many shops sell typical crafts as well as some more expensive, high-end craft items. It can be very instructive to contrast these malls with the other excursions and the lives of the COAR children.

A unique shopping experience is the gallery of El Salvador's world- renowned artist, Fernando Llort, in San Salvador. Moderately priced prints, cards, and other merchandise are available along with fabulously expensive original art works.

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II. Participating in a Trip to COAR

1. *Emergency Contact Information*

- Emergency phone contact (dial them as normal US/Canadian numbers):
 - +1 (440) 943-7615 (COARPM office, M-F, 9am-6pm)
 - +1 (216) 269-1710 (US 24-hr access)
 - +1 (234) 380-7527 (our mobile phone with the group in El Salvador)
- Your COAR guide will carry a mobile phone that receives and can call internationally. HOWEVER, as in all developing countries cell service can be intermittent and can go down for hours or days.
- Most North American smart phones will work in El Salvador. Check with your carrier on details and prices.
- If circumstances arise where you need to use or contact a Salvadoran phone the country code is +503. If you are trying to dial a Salvadoran phone from the US you will need to first enter the "+" plus-sign on a smart phone or dial 011-503- . . . Conversely, if using a Salvadoran phone in El Salvador, you must enter "+1" to access the US or Canada before entering the area code and number.
- E-mail: The guesthouse does NOT have wifi. Depending on your mobile plan you may be able to access the cell signal for email/data. If email or internet access is required in an emergency, we can use the computers in the COARCV office. HOWEVER, access is always intermittent.

2. *Medical*

As with most developing countries, care must be taken with hygiene and food. There are also special considerations in tropical climates.

- Consult your own physician or medical travel specialist for medications, vaccinations, etc. General information can be found at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov>
- COAR cannot tell you what is appropriate for your situation and comfort level.
- Emergency situations: travel insurance for emergency medical evacuation to the US is required of every overnight visitor.

Common sense health precautions:

- Do not eat raw fruits or vegetables, ice, or food from small vendors unless advised to do so by your guide. Most cooked food from reputable restaurants or preserved food from stores is acceptable; however, check with your guide. All food served at the COAR cafeteria is washed and prepared hygienically.
- Do not leave food in your luggage. In the guest house, use the kitchen containers provided for that purpose (bugs!)
- Bring bug repellent in case flies or mosquitoes become annoying and to help prevent mosquito-borne diseases.

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- Bring hand-sanitizers and disinfectant wipes for excursions
- Check your shoes before putting them on (spiders and scorpions)
- COAR has access to the local government clinic, ambulance service to hospitals in San Salvador. If you feel sick in any way, alert your guide.

3. Security

Violence from the war ended with the peace accords of 1992. However, as with most poor countries, criminal violence and other random crimes are prevalent.

- El Salvador has a high rate of violent crime.
- Never leave the COAR grounds without the permission of your group leader.
- Group leaders MUST confirm for the guards, every day, when the group is leaving and expected back.

Security in El Salvador:

- Details of the security situation in El Salvador can be found at the U.S. Consulate's web site: <http://travel.state.gov>
- An article from the New York Times that talks about the difficulty of assessing security according to your own comfort level is reprinted as an appendix to this document. It is old but still relevant.
- Security at COAR:
 - COAR is patrolled 24-hours a day by several armed security guards. Both vehicle entrances have heavy locked gates. The guards will not allow anyone into the COARCV campus without permission from the group guide or the administration of COARCV. (In other words, someone in El Salvador wishing to visit a member of the group must call or contact the group leader first to arrange the visit – no surprise visits!)
- Common sense security precautions:
 - Do not wear expensive jewelry (leave it at home) or wear flashy or faddish (like trousers that droop to reveal underwear) clothing that attracts attention to you as a wealthy tourist
 - Do not carry more cash than necessary
 - Be aware of your surroundings and belongings at all times
 - Do not become isolated from the group
 - Do not take public transportation, taxis, or otherwise take excursions separate from the group without consulting your guide
 - Give any valuables to the COAR guide to store for you in the administration office
- Do not give your phone number or US address to a Salvadoran unless you *want* to be contacted directly by that person and his/her family members in the US when you return.

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4. Legal Requirements

COAR asks visitors to sign a release form and acknowledge some basic guidelines that protect the COAR children, staff, and fellow visitors.

- You must have a valid passport (which expires MORE than six months after your travel dates)
- The COAR office in Cleveland must have a signed release form
- Under 16 years old must be accompanied by a parent or guardian
- Over 18 years must provide proof of training to recognize and prevent child abuse.

Legal checklist:

- COAR Release Form - located in the appendix of this document
Return a signed and dated copy (and the required attachments) to:
COAR Peace Mission
28700 Euclid Ave
Wickliffe, OH 44092
- Photocopy of your passport information page:
Carry this with you in El Salvador and leave your actual passport locked in the COAR guesthouse. It is also useful to leave copies with your emergency contact and with the COAR office in Cleveland.
- Your group or organization's release form, returned to your group leader, as instructed.

5. What to Pack?

El Salvador is HOT, and sometimes also rainy (during May - November, it rains heavily once or twice a day.) Pack light. Wear socially appropriate clothing - you will stand out no matter what you wear, and you will represent your group, COAR, and your country.

- Make sure to check latest airport security measures for what you can carry-on, etc.

Packing Guidelines

- Do not pack shorts, uncomfortable shoes, or overtly sexy clothing. Despite the heat Salvadorans rarely wear shorts or overtly sexy clothing. It will be interpreted as a sign of disrespect or an invitation for unwanted attention.
- Pack a flashlight, bug spray, sunscreen, hat, personal water bottle
- Pack light-weight pants (like khakis), capris, or skirts (not too mini)
- Pack good walking shoes; do not wear open-toed sandals except around the guest house - there is lots of muck in the streets
- Pack something nice for mass on Sunday (polo shirt and khakis are OK; ties or blazers unnecessary; women can wear nice pants)
- Pack an umbrella – lightweight and compact. Check current regulations regarding checking umbrellas (vs. carry-on). You will probably find it too hot to wear a raincoat.
- Pack a swimsuit (reasonably modest - no string bikinis) (towels are provided)

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- Bring shampoo, toothpaste, etc. - COAR has a limited supply of the basics in case you forget, but there is no place to buy these near COAR
- Pack light - the only clothes storage in the guest house is a small closet for hanging clothes. You will be living out of your suitcase for most of the time.
- Do not pack a hair-dryer; electricity at COAR is expensive and the circuits will overload
- There is an iron and ironing board in the guest house – Salvadorans' clothes are always clean and pressed
- Laundry:
 - Washing machines and dryers are not available. Laundry must be done by hand, the traditional Salvadoran way using a pila - you'll love it! A pila is a large concrete tub with side counters (outside the guesthouse), used to store water for a variety of washing purposes. Drying in the rainy season can take more than 24 hours - plan accordingly.

6. Food and Accommodations

The COAR Children's Village has a guest house nestled in the heart of the campus near the houses of the children that live at COAR. You will wake when you hear the children wake (5:00 am!). It has several bedrooms, a large common room, and a kitchen. There is running water (usually), toilettes, and electricity - but with limits, read on...

- Visitors usually need to exercise extreme caution with food and water in El Salvador.
- COAR requires lots of walking up steep hills.

Food

Meals are planned in your group's itinerary. While special dietary needs and allergies are generally not well accommodated in the developing world, we will work with your group leader to make the food as acceptable as possible. The options you will see are these:

- COAR Cafeteria:
 - Serves a variety of hot and cold meals and snack foods. The cafeteria is open from 7:00 am - 1:00 pm, Monday - Friday. Food is prepared to high sanitary standards and should be acceptable to group members.
 - Many of the COAR staff and school day students who use the cafeteria daily will greet you warmly.
 - The cafeteria may prepare take-out meals for evenings or excursions.
- Guesthouse kitchen:
 - The group can prepare meals or snacks in the kitchen from food bought at grocery stores (e.g.: spaghetti, sandwiches, peanut butter, yogurt, milk and cereal, fruit, etc.) A trip(s) to the grocery store will be built into the group itinerary.
- Store-bought food:
 - Your guide will help the group select safe food in stores. Packaged food bought in stores is safe only if it was packaged safely. Some foods in water that were packaged in El Salvador or surrounding countries should be avoided. Foods

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such as brand-name bread, peanut butter, yogurt, and milk are generally safe. Fresh fruit and vegetables must be disinfected by soaking in iodine (supplied at the guesthouse.)

- Restaurants:
 - Your guide will help you with restaurant selections. While eating in reputable restaurants is generally safe, avoid ice or raw foods.
 - Food sold by street vendors should only be eaten with the guide's approval.

Special Section – Table Manners – “Buen Provecho”

- Salvadorans have *excellent* table manners:
 - They chew with their mouths closed.
 - They NEVER blow their noses at the table and NEVER into the table napkin. (They excuse themselves to another room to blow their noses.)
- Salvadorans *never* leave food on their plates:
 - If you aren't sure if you will like it, don't take much onto your plate or order it in a restaurant.
 - Do not disparage the food. It will offend the cooks and Salvadorans who take pride in their national cuisine.

If you are eating, Salvadorans will greet you with the phrase, “Buen provecho,” both approaching the table and leaving. Loosely translated it means, “Take advantage.” In severe poverty food is not taken for granted, thrown out, or criticized. They always thank God for what they have.

Accommodations

Things to know about your COAR guesthouse:

- Rooms
 - There is one single room with one twin bed.
 - The other four rooms are shared and contain bunk beds.
- Water
 - There is running water in the guest house.
 - Drinking water is provided in large water bottle dispensers.
- Electricity
 - El Salvador uses US-style plugs and current.
 - The guesthouse has electricity, lights, and a few fans. Brief power failures are common (sometimes daily) and prolonged failures of 24+ hours happen occasionally.
 - Circuits cannot withstand hairdryers or other high-voltage equipment. If you have special needs in this area, check with your guide or the COAR office in Cleveland.

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- Bathroom
 - There are two shared bathrooms.
 - The bathrooms have flush toilets. Plumbing in most developing countries is **fragile - do NOT flush the toilet paper – the toilet will jam**. Please place it in a receptacle provided.
 - Running water occasionally gets shut-off due to the general shortage of water in El Salvador. Salvadorans (and your group) will store water in buckets, drums, and concrete tubs. When water is shut off, you must flush "manually" by pouring water from a bucket into the bowl of the toilet.
- Showers and washing
 - Both bathrooms have sinks and showers.
 - There is no hot water at COAR (that is OK most times because it is HOT.) Running water for showers and washing occasionally gets shut-off due to the general shortage of water in El Salvador. When the water is shut off you'll take a bucket shower – you'll love it.
- Kitchen
 - The guesthouse has a kitchen: stove (propane), microwave, refrigerator, dishes and silverware, food storage containers, sink and drain board (sorry - no dishwasher!)
- Hygiene
 - Leaving food around will draw bugs; please store food in the kitchen and sweep-up crumbs and wrappers and clean dishes promptly.
- Beds and bedding
 - Sheets and towels (one per guest) are provided. Twin and bunk beds are comfortable but not luxurious and there is little privacy. If you have special needs regarding sleeping accommodations, talk to your guide or the COAR Peace Mission office in Cleveland.
- Storage
 - There are no closets or dressers. You will be living out of your suitcase, so plan accordingly.
- There is an iron and ironing board in the guest house – Salvadorans' clothing is always clean and pressed
- Laundry:
 - Washing machines and dryers are not available. Laundry must be done by hand, the traditional Salvadoran way using a pila - you'll love it! A pila is a large concrete tub with side counters (outside the guesthouse), used to store water for a variety of washing purposes. Drying in the rainy season can take more than 24 hours - plan accordingly.

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Appendix

1. Sample Itinerary and map
2. HEADS UP: TRAVEL WARNINGS; Safe or Not? It Depends on Whom You Ask, *New York Times*, January 28, 2007
3. COAR Release form

1. Appendix - Sample Itinerary and Map

Saturday --

11am – arrive at airport, get visas, get bus to COAR
1pm – room assignments and get settled and lunch
3pm – tour of COAR grounds
5pm – mass in Zaragoza
7pm – return to guest house for dinner, evening reflection, prepare for teaching English
Meals:
Breakfast – n/a
Lunch – cook at guesthouse
Dinner - cook at guesthouse / carry back pupusas from Zaragoza

Sunday -

9am – leave for San Salvador
10:30-11:30am – visit Cathedral and Romero crypt
12-2pm – explore the ruins of Tazumal
4-5pm – explore the town center of Santa Ana
Meals:
Breakfast – cook at guesthouse
Lunch – get Pollo Campero for picnic at Tazumal
Dinner - cook at guesthouse

Monday --

7am-12pm – teach English (grade school)
2pm-5pm – Divina Providencia and the UCA museum and campus tour
Meals:
Breakfast – 6:30am - COAR cafeteria
Lunch – 12pm - COAR cafeteria
Dinner- 5pm - COAR cafeteria

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Tuesday --

7am-12pm – teach English

2pm-5pm – Fr. David's Calle Real and Nuevo Horizonte projects

Meals:

Breakfast – 6:30am - COAR cafeteria

Lunch – 12pm - COAR cafeteria

Dinner- 5pm - COAR cafeteria

Wednesday –

8am – 4pm – all day with Fr. John Ostrowski and Cleveland Mission Team in Teotepeque and canton mass

Meals:

Breakfast – 6:30am - COAR cafeteria

Lunch – Fr. John

Dinner- 5pm - COAR cafeteria

Thursday --

7am-12pm – teach English

2-8pm – prepare dinner and invite the older COAR girls to the guesthouse for the evening

Meals:

Breakfast – 6:30am - COAR cafeteria

Lunch – 12pm - COAR cafeteria

Dinner- 5pm – cook at guesthouse

Friday --

8am-12pm – visit Chapel of the Four Church Women with Fr. Paul Schindler

12pm – 4pm – lunch and fun at the Barriles beach club

4-5pm – COAR high school soccer game

6-8pm – despedida with the internos

Meals:

Breakfast – 7:30am - COAR cafeteria

Lunch – 12-4pm – at Beach Club

Dinner- 6pm - despedida

Saturday --

8am – leave for airport

Meals:

Breakfast – 7:30am – cook at guesthouse

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<u>Main Sites:</u>	<u>Drive times (approx):</u>	<u>Minutes:</u>
✦ San Salvador Airport (SAL)	Airport – La Libertad	60
✦ San Pedro Nonualco – Chapel of 4 Churchwomen	La Libertad – COAR	30
✦ Zaragoza – COAR Children's Village	COAR – San Salvador (central)	30
<u>In the city of San Salvador:</u>	La Libertad – Teotepeque	45
✦ University of Central America (UCA)	Teotepeque – Chiltiupán (no direct route)	45
✦ Cathedral and Romero tomb	San Salvador – San Pedro Nonualco	60
✦ Romero home and museum	La Libertad – San Pedro Nonualco	90
<u>Cleveland parishes:</u>		
✦ Teotepeque		
✦ Chiltiupán		
✦ La Libertad		

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2. Appendix - HEADS UP: TRAVEL WARNINGS

Safe or Not? It Depends on Whom You Ask

New York Times, January 28, 2007

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

IN the days after Bangkok's New Year's Eve blasts, which killed three people and came on the heels of a military coup, many travelers seemed confused about how to respond. Some travelers appeared unfazed; one Briton hurt in the bombings, Paul Hewitt, quickly told reporters, "I can't see why this would deter me from coming back." Expatriate friends of mine wrote that Bangkok seemed normal, and they planned to spend New Year's Day engaged in one of Thailand's favorite activities, cellphone shopping.

Some travelers trying to decide whether Thailand was truly safe looked to the old standby, the State Department's travel information, which is broken down into Public Announcements, Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings, all available at travel.state.gov. The Public Announcements "disseminate information quickly" about short-term threats to security abroad; the Consular Sheets provide detailed, broad background on safety and other issues in foreign countries; and the Travel Warnings advise Americans to avoid a country or to take significant precautions while visiting.

Yet the State Department's reports, while useful and thorough, can also prove confusing. The most serious category, Warnings, includes nations like Indonesia where there are real terrorist threats but generally low levels of violent crime against foreigners. Warnings do not include countries popular with tourists like South Africa that have high rates of assault and murder, which are more likely to affect travelers than terrorism. The Public Announcements sometimes seem too broad to follow: One recent announcement warns of terrorist threats on nearly every continent. Consular Information Sheets offer serious cautions about so many relatively peaceful countries, from Greece to Vietnam, that they can lose their impact.

But savvy travelers know not to rely solely on the State Department reports. Many look to the Web sites of the United States embassy at their destination, which tend to be more detailed. Travelers also turn to the advisories of the British and Australian governments. Australia offers nuanced advisories that use factors ranging from terrorism to crime, to grade nations' safety on a continuum from one to five, with five being the most dangerous. Australia's advisories are available at www.smartraveller.gov.au, and tourists can sign up for a handy e-mail service that automatically sends Australian updates about a particular place. (Britain's advisories are available at www.fco.gov.uk -- travel advice is available on the left-hand side of the page.)

Local English-language newspapers can prove even more vital, and the Web sites www.thebigproject.co.uk/news/ and world-newspapers.com offer links to Web sites of English-language publications from The Times of London to The Times of Central Asia. Often, the local papers offer early warnings of events that later threaten tourists. In Thailand, The Bangkok Post and The Nation, English-language dailies, reported credible talk of a coup well before the Thai military actually seized power in September.

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"This had been predicted in the press for weeks," a Bangkok Post editor, Songpol Kaoputumtip, told me just after the coup.

Many of the local papers' Web sites also contain discussion forums, which travelers can use to assess the state of local concern about anything from avian flu to air safety. Local news media also cover mass emigrations, the best sign that people in that country are genuinely afraid. After the 2002 Bali bombing, Indonesian papers reported few exoduses of middle-class Indonesians to Singapore, suggesting that locals thought the nation remained stable. By comparison, during rioting in Jakarta in the late 1990s, many Indonesians fled the country.

Conversely, the local press often understands best when seemingly disturbing developments should merit a yawn rather than a canceled vacation. While I was visiting the Philippines last winter, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had declared a state of emergency, warning that the government feared a coup attempt. But when I wandered the crowded streets of Manila's shopping district, I noticed that virtually no one seemed worried. Later, local reporters told me few Filipinos feared a real coup.

Local blogs in English can serve a similar function as English-language newspapers. For example, the Web site asiapundit.com has links to hundreds of blogs from across Asia, some of which contain debates about pressing political and security issues.

Travelers can provide foreign safety tips, but Web forums catering to backpacking budget tourists, who often spend more time than high-end travelers dealing with local police, aggressive hawkers, and other such difficulties, generally prove the most detailed. Lonely Planet's thorntree.lonelyplanet.com contains pages for nearly every country.

Other sites collate travel information into one accessible location. The comprehensive site allsafetravels.com compiles travel reports, warnings, and breaking news from many countries, while airsafe.com allows visitors to research many facets of air safety in foreign nations.

LESS comprehensive than allsafetravels.com but far more thrilling, comebackalive.com, the official Web site of Robert Young Pelton, author of "The World's Most Dangerous Places," offers firsthand reports from the slums of Haiti and similar places. It also has a discussion group focusing (not surprisingly) on alarming questions, like "Congo, Rwanda, or Colombia as a Solo Female Traveler?" or "How Do I Know if I've Gotten a Concussion?"

Ultimately, nothing beats old-school local knowledge -- contacting people on the ground before you go, including locals not affiliated with the travel industry. Local bloggers and journalists, identified through e-mail addresses on the Web sites of local papers, are often willing to answer e-mailed questions.

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I learned the hard way. Before embarking upon a recent trip to East Timor, I spoke with few Timorese, though I did talk to one American friend who had returned from Timor and warned me about safety issues.

Still, I disregarded her caution. Days after touching down in Dili, Timor 's capital, locals filled me in with more detail. My guide, Chico Tilman, who was receiving frequent frantic calls from his wife, told me of an upcoming clash between disgruntled soldiers.

I was lucky. Even as armed soldiers from opposing factions rumbled into Dili, the city remained relatively calm. I even had time to sneak out of town on a short snorkeling trip. Days after my plane departed Dili for northern Australia , the capital erupted into violence, with militias torching parts of the city.

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3. Appendix - COAR Release Form

Instructions:

- Print, sign (or have your parent or guardian sign) the completed release form and mail it to COAR in Cleveland:
COAR Peace Mission
28700 Euclid Ave
Wickliffe, OH 44092-2585
- If any required information is left blank, or if you cannot answer "yes" to any terms of the release information, you may be ineligible to travel to COAR. Please discuss any problems or questions with your group leader.

1. Your Personal Information (* required)

Name: * _____

Passport number: * _____ Country: _____

Address Line 1: * _____

Address Line 2: _____

City, State, Zip: * _____

* one of these phone numbers is required:

Work/day Phone: * _____ Home/evening Phone: * _____

Cell Phone: * _____

E-mail: _____

Travel Dates: _____

Group or organization: * _____

Group leader : * _____

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2. Emergency Contact Information (* required)

Emergency Contact Full Name: * _____

Relationship to you: * _____

Work/day Phone: * _____

Home/evening Phone: * _____

Cell Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Additional information:

3. Release Information (* required)

Yes	No	<i>Place a check mark in either the Yes or No box for each item*</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I voluntarily join the trip to El Salvador, named above. In that capacity, I will be traveling to El Salvador, volunteering at COAR Children's Village and visiting pertinent sites.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I grant to COAR Peace Mission, COAR Children's Village, and the Archdiocese of San Salvador, its representatives and employees the right to take photographs or videos of me and my property in connection with my visit to COAR, including preparation for the trip, while in El Salvador, and events afterward and further authorize them and their assigns and transferees to copyright, use, and publish the same in print and/or electronically.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree that COAR Peace Mission, COAR Children's Village, and the Archdiocese of San Salvador, may use such photographs and videos of me with or without my name for any lawful purpose, including for example such purposes as publicity, illustration, advertising, and Web content.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I grant to COAR Peace Mission, COAR Children's Village, and the Archdiocese of San Salvador, its representatives and employees the right to use any photos or videos that I take and give to them for any purpose such as publicity, illustration, advertising, and Web content, with or without attribution.

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Yes	No	<i>Place a check mark in either the Yes or No box for each item*</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that the COAR children are minors. As such, I will NOT publish in any way (social media, web sites, newsletters, etc.) any photos or videos of the children taken at COARCV. Note: photos or videos taken at the COARCV school or outside of COARCV may be used by me in a way that is respectful of the subject's dignity & privacy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that if I choose to share my personal information (e-mail, phone number, address, social media) with anyone in El Salvador, including the COAR children and staff, I am inviting them to contact me, stay in contact with me, and pass on my contact information to others.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I recognize and assume all risks of travel to, from, and within El Salvador, a country with extreme poverty and crime and often very difficult conditions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On behalf of myself, my family, heirs, representatives, executors, administrators and all other persons making any claim by any reason of any relationship to me, I hereby release and hold harmless COAR Peace Mission, the Archdiocese of San Salvador, COAR Children's Village, and any of their affiliates, subdivisions, officers, directors, trustees, teachers, employees, advisors, agents and representatives from any claims, damages, costs, including attorney fees, or other liabilities resulting from personal injury, property damage, or other losses of any kind in any way connected with participation in this program.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that sponsoring organizations take no responsibility for my medical care or the availability of medical services during this trip.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I understand that if my behavior endangers the children or staff of COAR, my group, or myself, or if my behavior is disruptive to the group or to COAR, as determined by the group leader or the Director of COAR, I may be asked to leave COAR and El Salvador at my own expense. I understand that if my minor child is asked to leave, he/she will be accompanied by an adult, also at my expense.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><i>(For 18 and over:)</i> I have attended training to recognize and prevent child abuse:</p> <p>Name (e.g.: "Virtus"): _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Location (e.g. Boy Scout Troop #324, Cleveland Heights, OH): _____</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><i>(For 18 and over:)</i> I have attached a certificate or other proof of child abuse prevention training.</p>

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Visitor Agreement for COAR Children's Village
A component of the Institutional Regulations of COAR-CV

COAR-CV has instituted a Zero-Tolerance Policy regarding the violation of child & teen rights.

I, thereby, promise to follow the current policies documented below:

Yes	No	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Respect the visitation schedule established by the institution; ➤ Present appropriate identification upon entering the installation; ➤ Check-in with the administration or ask the guards to inform the housemothers in the houses that I intend to visit that I have arrived; ➤ Accept that the visit will be directly or indirectly supervised by COAR-CV staff; ➤ Visit with the children in a visible location, preferably, the Casa Comunal or the Gazebos. ➤ Maintain the appropriate personal space with each child or teen; ➤ Avoid using any type of inappropriate, dishonest, denigrating, or abusive language or gesture; ➤ Dress appropriately to the nature of the institution which means not revealing inappropriate cleavage or revealing clothing; ➤ Avoid lending cellphones, Ipods, or any electronic devices to the kids; this also applies to making cash loans or loans of any item of value to any of the kids or teens at COARCV. Any infraction of this policy will bar your bringing a cellphone with you to your next visit. ➤ In the event that a child or teen behaves in front of you in a seductive manner, withdraw from their presence, do not respond to that behavior in any way, and report that behavior to the appropriate authorities; ➤ Care for and respect the property and buildings on the grounds of COAR. Assist in cleaning up after your visit by placing trash in the appropriate receptacles. ➤ Respect the Communication Policies of the institution regarding communication with the children residing at COARCV: Outside communication with the children should go through the director or social worker during normal business hours. It is not permitted for children to receive phone calls placed to the cell phones belonging to their housemothers.

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Yes	No	
		<p>I agree to refrain from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Being found in a state of inebriation or under the influence of any illicit drug; ➤ Bringing into COAR any type of weapon ➤ Bringing into COAR alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or any substance that could be harmful to the health of the children and teen residents; ➤ Making any improper or violent behavior on the grounds of COARCV; ➤ Publishing through any media videos or pictures showing the faces of the children and teen residents of COARCV; ➤ Asking any of the children about their past (family) history; ➤ Giving any object of value including cell phones, Ipods, jewelry, or money to the children and teens; ➤ Entering any residence without authorization; ➤ Mistreat, abuse sexually / physically / emotionally any of the children or teens; ➤ Participating in any sexual activity with the children or teens including exposing them to pornographic material; ➤ Walking arm-in-arm, hugging, kissing, touching or carrying any of the children or teens in a way that is inappropriate or lacking cultural sensitivity; ➤ Making sexual jokes or innuendo or behaving in a provocative way towards any member of the COAR community; ➤ Disrespecting or encouraging others to disrespect any of the authorities at COARCV.
		<p>I am aware of the obligation of the Institution to report any infraction of this policy to the appropriate authorities. Further, I will abide by the sanctions imposed due to any infraction such as temporary or permanent suspension of visitation rights.</p> <p><i>“Every person possesses the same Human Dignity: when you trample on other people’s dignity, you are trampling on your own” (Pope Francis: 2014)</i></p>

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4. Medical Information (* required)

Privacy Statement:

COAR understands that privacy concerning personal medical information is important. We will make every effort to keep this information confidential.

Travel Insurance Company name: * _____

Travel Insurance policy number: * _____

Travel Insurance authorization contact phone number: * _____

Medical Insurance Company Name: _____

Policy Number: _____

Emergency Authorization Phone Number: _____

Primary Physician Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

A. Describe any existing medical condition or limitations (if none, write "none"):

B. List all prescription medications you are currently taking, or may require, and the condition(s) for which they are required (if none, write "none"):

C. List any allergies, especially to drugs or insects (if none, write "none"):

D. List recent immunizations (if none, write "none"):

Date of last Tetanus Booster ____/____/____

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5. Medical Releases (* required)

5.a Medical Release to Treat		
Yes	No	<i>Place a check mark in either the Yes or No box for each item*</i>
		<p><i>For minor children:</i></p> <p>I authorize _____ to make decisions regarding my minor child regarding admittance to any hospital or medical facility for diagnosis and treatment. He/she may request and authorize physicians, dentists, staff, technicians, or nurses, to perform any diagnostic procedures, treatment procedures, operative procedures and x-ray treatment. I have not been given a guarantee as to the results of examination or treatment. I authorize the hospital or medical facility to dispose of any specimen or tissue taken.</p> <p><i>For adults:</i></p> <p>If I am unconscious or otherwise unable to participate in my</p> <p>treatment I authorize _____ to make decisions regarding admittance to any hospital or medical facility for diagnosis and treatment. He/she may request and authorize physicians, dentists, and staff, technicians or nurses, to perform any diagnostic procedures, treatment procedures, operative procedures and x-ray treatment. I have not been given a guarantee as to the results of examination or treatment. I authorize the hospital or medical facility to dispose of any specimen or tissue taken.</p>
5.b. Medical Risk Release		
Yes	No	<i>Place a check mark in either the Yes or No box for each item*</i>
		I have completed the immunization and medical information portion of this release accurately and completely.
		I understand that travel to El Salvador may expose me to several diseases endemic to that region, including, but not limited to: dengue fever, chikungunya, malaria, and zika virus. I understand that COAR Peace Mission and COAR Children's Village cannot protect me from exposure to these diseases or offer effective treatment. I have consulted my own health professional about the risk of exposure to diseases, including, but not limited to: the possibility of transmitting these diseases to others upon my return, the risks to pregnancy, and the risks to my own health. I take responsibility for my decision to visit El Salvador fully cognizant of these risks.

Guidelines for mission groups to COAR Children's Village

COAR Peace Mission * 28700 Euclid Ave. * Wickliffe, OH 44092-2585 * voice: (440) 943-7615
e-mail: coardirector@gmail.com * <http://www.coarpeacemission.org>

I have carefully reviewed the foregoing and this form in its entirety, and by signing below agree to its terms with full understanding of its meaning and effect.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____

Parent or Guardian Information:

Print name of parent or guardian: _____

Address, Street, City, Zip:

Phone numbers: _____

E-mail or other contact information: _____

Return signed original to:
COAR Peace Mission
28700 Euclid Ave
Wickliffe, OH 44092-2585