



## General Health Criteria for AMIGOS Participants

AMIGOS places the highest priority on keeping the “participants”, defined as Volunteers and Project Staff, safe and healthy during their time in Latin America. Program policy and guidelines on health and safety are rigorously enforced. Participants undergo intensive training to maintain their physical and mental health during their summer with AMIGOS.

However, an applicant with a significant history of some chronic illnesses, acute psychiatric conditions, or some kinds of physical disability may be subject to heightened vulnerability due to the living and working conditions on AMIGOS projects. Given certain health conditions, AMIGOS therefore may not be able to effectively guarantee safety or provide sufficient support. While participants with a variety of health issues have had very successful project experiences, it is important to be realistic about the project demands and potential impact on existing health conditions. Overall expectations include, but are not limited to the following:

- i. Participants will be expected to have the physical and mental capacity to independently perform all duties associated with their role.
- ii. Participants will be exposed to dietary changes that may affect and/or exacerbate any existing health conditions.
- iii. Participants’ communities will be principally in rural locations with limited, immediate access to specialty medical procedures.
- iv. AMIGOS cannot guarantee electricity in all host communities, which may impact personal self care for participants.
- v. Participants will be responsible for independently carrying out physically taxing activities. This will require the ability to physically engage in the project unaided, such as, but not limited to carrying one’s own 40-50 lb. duffel bag, as well as other personal items and project related materials.
- vi. Given the significant contributions of host communities and host families to AMIGOS, it is crucial that we consider how they may be impacted by a participant’s health conditions and physical and mental capacities.
- vii. AMIGOS reserves the sole right to determine eligibility for our programs through an extensive health screening process.

Additionally, to be eligible for acceptance into the AMIGOS program, applicants must meet both the physical and mental health criteria described below at the time of application. Participants may have a change in their physical or mental health status before leaving for the field. In this case, the International Office and local chapter, if applicable, must be informed of the change and a reassessment of eligibility will occur. Participants may re-apply the following summer if they believe their health status has changed significantly.



### **Physical Health Criteria:**

In order to participate safely in the AMIGOS program, a participant must be able to perform the following “major life activities” as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:

- Caring for one’s self
- Performing manual tasks
- Walking
- Seeing
- Hearing
- Breathing
- Speaking
- Learning
- Working

In addition, the following variables will be given serious consideration when determining the eligibility of an applicant to the AMIGOS program.

- Successful completion of the pre-summer training.
- The ability to be independently mobile, such as but not limited to, walking on uneven terrain for distances of multiple miles and maneuvering elevations unaided.
- The extent and availability of necessary medical treatment, monitoring, or physician follow-up in-country for the disclosed conditions or illnesses.
- Possible undue burden on the host family or community due to accommodations required for the health and safety of the applicant in question.

### **Mental Health Criteria:**

- No acute psychiatric diagnosis or episode, or psychiatric hospitalization within the past year, prior to the current application to AMIGOS.
- No new \*psychotropic medication(s) within six months of departure for country assignment.
- No major changes of existing psychotropic medication(s), including sudden stoppage, within three months of departure for country assignment.
- Relative stability (verified by the treating clinician) over the last year, if a history of chronic depression, anxiety, or other psychological or behavioral diagnoses exists. ***Some diagnostic categories will be ruled out depending on AMIGOS' assessment as to whether these Volunteers constitute more risk for health and safety than the program staff can manage.***
- Willingness by the participant to sign a Self-Care Agreement which holds them accountable for administering their own prescribed medication(s) (antidepressant, stimulant, anti-anxiety agent, etc.) and monitoring their mental health, reporting immediately any new or familiar symptoms.

\*Psychotropic medication: Any medication capable of affecting the mind, emotions, and behavior such as antidepressant/anti-anxiety agents, antipsychotic drugs, mood stabilizers, anticonvulsant medication, stimulants for the treatment of ADHD, etc.



## Letter of Health Disclosure

Your physical/mental health and safety are our top priority. AMIGOS is a challenging program that requires a lot of stamina and independence in often stressful conditions. The work and living conditions may be quite rigorous, and since you will not have your usual support network, you will need to rely on your own strong coping skills.

For the following sections of the application, please be candid in disclosing health history, and any current conditions for which you may have been treated within the last 2 years. Disclosure of chronic medical or psychological diagnoses *does not automatically disqualify you*, but will necessitate careful screening to assess whether you can be adequately supported in the AMIGOS Latin America program.

If you note on the “Confidential Health Form I” a medical or psychological condition, then an AMIGOS medical or mental health professional with contact you or your parents/legal guardians (if you are under 18) to ask so me specific questions and to get release to speak to your treating clinician. After careful screening of all the data, the International Office of AMIGOS will decide whether or not to accept your application.

Please be aware that intentional non-disclosure or minimization of important health history (physical or psychological) may result in disqualification from the program, even if the participant is already in Latin America. Participants and/or their families will be responsible for fees associated with a re-issued plane ticket home plus an additional \$250 administrative fee. If an AMIGOS participants under age 18 needs to return home from the AMIGOS program due to a mental health issue, AMIGOS reserves the right to determine that the participant is not safe traveling alone and may request that a parent/legal guardian accompany the participant on their travel home. In addition, *any change in health status throughout the training year must be reported to the International Office*. Further screening will be performed when a new issue, or change in physical or mental health status arises.

AMIGOS has many participants each year who have histories of physical and mental health challenges, for which they have been adequately treated. There are some applicants each year for which we cannot provide adequate support and safety, given the status of their current health. Any decision to defer an applicant's participation because of medical or mental health challenges is made out of concern for the applicant's health and safety while in Latin America. *AMIGOS retains the right and responsibility to defer any applicant who cannot adequately be supported with our current staff capability and medical/ mental health consultation even if the applicant's own treating clinician is endorsing their participation*. AMIGOS would welcome another application in the future, once their medical or psychological health status meets our health criteria for participation. Please understand that your acceptance into the AMIGOS program is "provisional" until all health screening has been completed. You can facilitate this process by being honest and forthright in completing the “Confidential Health Form I”. If you are under 18, this form must be signed by your parents or legal guardian. You will also be required to complete “Confidential Health Form II”, which requires your physician/clinician's signature, and the “Confidential Health Form III”, which is due closer to departure for Latin America.

**I have received, reviewed, and understand the Letter of Health Disclosure.**

Participant’s Full Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_