



Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-term Mission

- 1. Mission is about God's plan, not ours*
- 2. The approach: partners working together*
- 3. The first priority: needs in the mission field*
- 4. God expects no less than the best*
- 5. Success begins with strong leadership*
- 6. But every participant must be prepared*
- 7. After it's over, time for follow-up*

These standards are meant to assist churches and mission communities as they prepare and engage in short-term missions. The Worldwide Ministries Committee of Shenandoah Presbytery commends them to all who are undertaking short-term mission trips. The standards will be used by the Worldwide Ministries Committee as it evaluates grant requests for mission endeavors and assesses ongoing mission-trip programs.

They are drawn from an interdenominational study in 2001-2002 which may be accessed at <http://www.soe.org/explore/the-7-standards>. Also, in mission trip planning be sure to check out these very helpful resources: www.pcusa.org/missiontrips and www.pcusa.org/missiontrips/tools.

benefit from (1) cross-cultural training about the mission site, (2) training about how to interact with other team members during the mission trip, (3) provision of details about travel arrangements—such as documents needed, immunizations, health, and hygiene, housing, transportation, food, dress, packing, risk and liability issues, customs and immigration policies, (4) preparation for mission-site activities, and (5) guidance on handling trip financial issues such as budget planning, fund-raising plans, money management, and funding deadlines.



- Before the trip, organizers will work out financial arrangements with the hosts and assure that the hosts are prepared to house, feed, support the mission-trip team and guide it toward goal-oriented activities at the mission site.

- Experienced and knowledgeable

trainers must be provided for all phases of the short-term mission trip.

- Mission-trip participants will be provided guidance about returning-home before they depart the mission site.

7. After the mission trip, follow-up must occur.

- Participants will be afforded an opportunity to discuss and assess the experiences and outcomes of their ministry-- to apply lessons learned, to nurture their continued growth, and to bear spiritual fruit.
- After the mission trip, a candid evaluation of achievements must be made, and results of evaluations will be provided leaders (both the travelers and the hosts), so that future short-term mission trips can benefit. The process must assure confidentiality, integrity, and accuracy.

The Seven Standards

1. Mission is about addressing God's plan, not ours. It's all about God's work in the world.

- Participants should be clear how objectives of the trip and the whole way that the trip is conducted will be in harmony with God's purposes as we can best figure them out. Whatever we do is for God, and God's glory. As we hope and pray for success of our trip's outcomes, what do we imagine would be desired by God? What are we open to?
- Earnest prayer before, during and after a trip is a way to submit ourselves fully to God's will and direction. Participants should be open to the possibility that God may have called them to this mission opportunity in order to change them.
- God's Word is the guidebook for everything we do.
- The people we interact with during the trip most likely will be different from us—culturally or otherwise—and we will try to work faithfully within the context of what is comfortable and makes sense to them.
- We trust God to bless and use our efforts on the mission trip.

2. Mission trips are all about partners working together. There are two parties to mission trips—those who go and those who welcome—the

“sending side” and the “receiving side.” In short-term mission, the two sides work as partners, considering the needs and possible benefits to all participants and praying always to discern God's plan



- The focus is first on what benefits the “receiving side”—the people and organizations the team travels to assist in the work of their discipleship.
- Every participant, whether going or welcoming, and whether leading or following, should desire and expect to draw closer to the Kingdom of God within his or her life through the activities and experiences of the mission trip.

- And during the trip, both sides will share faithfully and fully their desired goals and assessment as to the progress in reaching agreed-upon goals. Any conflict will be dealt with in a timely and Christian way.

3. A good question as mission trips are being planned: “What does God want where we’re going?” Every activity of the mission-trip program will be jointly planned by the “sending side” and the “receiving side”—once again, with attention to assuring that the program benefits the “receiving side” in its ministries for Christ.

- Mission team participants are screened and prepared so that they are likely to achieve the trip's objectives with humble, servant, teachable hearts. Leaders and participants on the “receiving side” also are to be encouraged to focus on their own long-term objectives and also to participate with humble, servant, teachable hearts.

4. Mission teams must do their best for God. God expects no less.

- Mission travelers must demonstrate truth, transparency, and integrity with everyone they meet, before and during the trip. This includes promotion, advertising, recruiting, screening, training, budgeting, financial reporting, and contracts. The team promises to concentrate on doing what it says it will do—and to repent if it fails to do so. Reports about the unfolding events, experiences and outcomes of the mission trip will be made to sponsoring congregations and all who have a role or interests.
- Travel and ministry always face possible risks. So, while the team strives to spread Christ's love boldly and wisely, everything reasonable must be done to provide safety and security for all participants on both the sending and receiving sides. Sensitive always to the mutually designed plan, the team will pledge to carry it out with awareness of and openness to the Spirit's leading. It will be flexible in adapting to changing circumstances.

5. Success begins with strong leadership.

- It is vital to recruit competent servant leaders who are spiritually and personally wise and discerning, who possess Spirit-led flexibility and sensitivity, and who are working within their spiritual gifts.
- Leaders must be equipped to handle cross-cultural challenges that can be expected in the course of the mission trip. They must be willing to prepare themselves spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually for the mission trip.
- Using a team approach to ministry, leaders will provide participants with guidance, mentoring, and opportunities for growth—enabling them to test, develop, and exercise their unique gifts and abilities within the purposes of the trip.

6. Every mission-trip participant must be prepared. So training is crucial. Training occurs before travel, during the trip itself, and even afterward.

Appropriate training of all participants fosters understanding, growth, and spiritual fruit while helping to prevent offense, misunderstandings, and poor stewardship.

- Working in an intercultural context, trip participants' character traits, knowledge, skills and attitudes all will play essential roles. Participants will