

## Physical and Mental Health Criteria for Participation in AMIGOS Programs

### **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’ communities will be principally in rural locations with limited, immediate access to specialty medical procedures.
- iii. AMIGOS cannot guarantee electricity in all host communities, which may impact personal self-care for participants.
- iv. 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.
- v. Participants will be exposed to dietary changes that may affect and/or exacerbate any existing health conditions.
- vi. Not all project areas can accommodate a vegetarian diet. A vegan diet cannot be supported. Please disclose these and any special diets and food allergies on any relevant health forms.
- vii. 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.
- viii. 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:

- 1) Successful completion of the pre-summer training.
- 2) 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.
- 3) The extent and availability of necessary medical treatment, monitoring, or physician follow-up in country for the disclosed conditions or illnesses.
- 4) 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, anti-psychotic drugs, mood stabilizers, anticonvulsant medication, stimulants for the treatment of ADHD, etc.