

MISSIONER MANUAL

FOR



Mi Casa
FOUNDATION

*“What does the Lord require of you?
To act justly, to love tenderly,
And to walk humbly with God.”*

Micah 6:8

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MI CASA FOUNDATION MISSIONERS

1. Introduction

The Mi Casa Foundation (MCF) extends an invitation to men and women to respond to a call to mission, to make commitments of one or more years to live a simple lifestyle, and to participate in ministry with the needy children and elderly of Mexico.

2. Ministry to the Needy and Community living

Missioners serve needy children and elderly of Mexico. These are children who have been abandoned, abused, neglected or orphaned. Most of the elderly have been abandoned and will live out the rest of their lives at the missions.

The missioners' living arrangements depends on the particular mission, each with a simple, safe, and secure lodging for the missioners.

Missioners will have a cross-cultural experience.

3. Is the Mi Casa Foundation the right place for me?

Two of the most important criteria for being a MCF missioner are a *sense of call* and a *desire to do this as part of a community*.

When persons serve in mission, the emphasis is on listening to what the members of the community tell the new missioners are their reality and their needs. Missioners do not go into a community to tell the members of the community what they think they need or what they have to offer. They go to walk with the community in a way that is liberating and respectful of the dignity of the people.

People apply to the MCF for a wide variety of reasons. Some have a strong desire to

serve and are open to doing whatever type of work is needed. Others who apply come with a definite agenda, either regarding the type of work that they wish to do or personal needs that they are seeking to fulfill.

Each applicant will fall somewhere on the following spectrum regarding where his or her *emphasis* is, i.e., is one's emphasis on being open to whatever types of service the mission site indicates is needed or is one's emphasis on offering a specific type of service and/or meeting personal needs?

Focus on one's own agenda _____ **Focus on needs of mission**

In discerning whether or not to become a MCF Missioner, it is important that a person first decide for himself / herself where one is on the spectrum.

If a person is over on the left hand side and has a very clear agenda about what he or she wants to do, the question to be asked is: "*Am I willing to let go of most things and move in the other direction on the spectrum, and if so, how far? Am I truly willing to participate in the MCF's mission? Can I honestly make a commitment to this for 1 or more years?*"

This is certainly a challenge for many candidates, especially for those from First World countries. If after reflecting on one's motivation, one decides that he or she does indeed have a rather definite agenda, this is probably a good indication that the MCF is not the organization where one would be happiest and most fulfilled.

Besides an openness to focusing on the needs of the mission site, another important consideration is one's philosophy. All missioners are expected to *share a vision of Church which encompasses Christian-based communities and a desire to serve the needy.* In other

words, is one willing to participate in processes where the community reflects on the Word of God and decides what it is being called to? Is one willing to look at reality from the perspective of the needy?

SOME REFLECTION QUESTIONS

TO HELP IN YOUR DISCERNMENT PROCESS

1. *Do I have a desire to serve Christ in the needy?*
2. *Am I willing to be evangelized by the needy children and elderly of Mexico?*
3. *Am I open to living in and/or working in a Christian-based community?*
4. *How willing am I to let go of my own agenda and put my time and talents at the service of the needy?*
5. *Am I willing to participate in the mission site and to share in its charism?*
6. *Am I committed to serving the needy?*
7. *Can I commit myself to critically analyze the causes and effects of the needy and to work for their alleviation?*
8. *Am I sensitive to and respectful of other cultures?*
9. *Can I commit to living a simple lifestyle in community?*

4. Additional Requirements

A) Age

Candidates must be at least 21 years old. They can be either single or married, but MCF is not able to accept persons with dependents, or with outstanding debts that cannot be deferred.

B) Religious Denomination

Because one is called to participate at the mission and share its spirituality, there is a faith dimension to being a MCF missionary. Thus, there is an expectation that candidates be Christian: Catholic or Protestant.

C) Length of Service

The mission term is for one year for missionaries serving with MCF. The length of time may be extended annually with the approval of the missionary, Mission Director, and MCF.

D) Language Skills

The missionary needs to have a *working knowledge of Spanish BEFORE beginning*. A phone interview is used to establish one's proficiency in the language. The interviewer may then recommend language classes, depending on the person's level of fluency. *The cost of language study is assumed by the candidate*. Language study is completed *before* starting as a MCF missionary.

5. Application Process

A) Persons wishing to become a MCF Missioner should fulfill the following requirements:

- a. Complete and returning the *application form*.
- b. Write an *autobiography*.
- c. Send a recent *photo* of yourself to the MCF Office.
- d. Have 3 references listed on application fill out and return the forms provided them

by the MCF office.

- e. Get a *physical examination* (if requested).
- f. Get a *psychological evaluation* (if requested). This does not mean a full psychological battery of tests because this can be very expensive and sometimes unnecessary. There should be a clinical interview with a written report sent directly to us. Although one purpose of the psychological examination is to know that one is psychologically healthy, it is even more important that a person be in touch with his or her strengths and weaknesses, as well as coping mechanisms. Mission life can be stressful, especially initially, and the more self-knowledge a person has the better one is able to cope.
- g. Send an official copy of your *university transcript(s)* to the MCF Office (if requested).
- h. Sign an *authorization* for a background check, including but not limited to: National Criminal File, Sex Offender, County Level, Motor Vehicle Report, and Social Security Number Verification.

B) Persons wishing to continue as MCF Missioners

MCF Missioners who wish to extend their time of service must complete an “Extension of Service” application (See Appendix A) as well as receiving a satisfactory evaluation from the Mission Director.

Information related to long-term mission service is found in Appendix B.

DEADLINE FOR CONTINUING APPLICATIONS IS APRIL 1st.

DEADLINE FOR NEW APPLICATIONS IS MAY 1st.

C) Upon receiving all correct documents the process followed is as follows:

The MCF Missioner Director reviews all applications submitted. The MCF Director then invites accepted applicants to become or to continue as MCF Missioners. Accepted applicants will need a current Passport from their home country.

Missioners usually begin about August 1st with an orientation program that lasts approximately ten days. The orientation starts in San Antonio, TX and finishes at the mission site.

6. Missioner Commitment

A) Missioner Covenant

After being accepted, the missioner signs a covenant indicating his/her length of service, willingness to abide by the guidelines of the MCF Manual and to participate as a responsible team member at the mission, and if necessary, attend the language study which the missioner agrees to complete *before* starting as a MCF missioner.

B) Conflicts

Normally, missioners complete the full term of service at their original mission site, unless there are compelling reasons for a change. Both MCF missioners and the mission staff are expected to contact the MCF Director should serious problems develop, but before they reach the critical stage.

When notified that there is a problem, the MCF Director or other appointed person will communicate with the mission staff and with the missioner in order to understand the reasons for the difficulty and to work toward resolving it.

If the intervention process does not prove satisfactory, the Mission Director can require that the missioner be removed from the mission site.

If the MISSIONER chooses to terminate early from his/her commitment, a minimum of two weeks notice must be given to the Mission Director and to the MCF Director.

7. Orientation

The orientation usually begins about August 1st in San Antonio, TX. Costs for room, board, and transportation in San Antonio are paid by the MCF.

The orientation consists of the following:

- 1) Initial Retreat
- 2) Basic Orientation
 - sharing one's personal history
 - spirituality; sharing forms of prayer, daily devotion time as a group
 - social gatherings as a group
 - reflection exercises
- 3) Workshops on the following themes:
 - Holistic health
 - culture and culture shock
 - Bible history overview and bible study techniques
 - popular religiosity
 - journaling
 - living in community
 - self care
 - understanding of MCF and the missions we aid
 - sharing of experiences of former lay missionaries
- 4) Opening a bank account with MCF bank to access stipends
- 5) Acquiring a Mexican FM-3 working visa.
- 5) Evaluation of Orientation
- 6) Sending Forth Ceremony
- 7) On-site introduction to the mission and surrounding area

8. On-Going Formation

On-going formation may be offered to MCF missionaries in Mexico.

If funding is not available from the mission for a workshop or course, the missionary may apply to the MCF office for assistance. Since funds are limited, each missionary will need to be selective about what is requested.

9. Money Matters: Food, Housing, and Stipend

A) Food and Housing

The mission provides room and board for missionaries.

B) Stipend

Each missionary receives a stipend of \$100 per month for personal needs. This is paid by the MCF.

C) House Fund

Depending on the mission site, a monthly house fund may be given for household needs. Amount depends on site.

D) Summary chart of money matters. See Figure 1, p. 11.

10. Transportation

Whenever transportation costs are paid by the MCF, *the least expensive mode of transportation is the norm.* Often, this means traveling by bus.

- a. From home to orientation site (San Antonio, TX): Paid by the missionary.
- b. From orientation site to mission: Paid by the MCF.
- c. Work-related transportation: Paid by mission.
- d. Roundtrip from mission to Mid-Term Retreat: Paid by MCF
- d. From mission to home: Paid by MCF at the end of completed term of service.
- e. Roundtrip from home to Re-Entry Retreat: Paid by MCF at the end of completed term of service.

f. Special Situations:

(1) *If a missionary withdraws from the mission before the end of the agreed upon term of service, and in the judgment of the MCF Director, this is due to nonperformance, breach, or fault of the missionary, or that the missionary has terminated without sufficient cause, MCF is under no obligation to pay transportation costs home. After consulting with all parties involved,*

the MCF Missioner Director will make a decision in this matter.

(2) *Missioners are able to bring their own motor vehicle*, but the missioner is responsible for all for all expenses incurred, including but not limited to any damage (whether caused by a resident, staff member or another missioner), gas, insurance, permits, etc. The MCF or the mission cannot be responsible for the missioner’s vehicle.

3) *Missioners are not allowed to take vehicles into Mexico* that are not the property of said missioner without the express consent of the MCF Director.

SUMMARY CHART OF MONEY MATTERS – FIGURE 1

EXPENSES	PAID BY MCF	PAID BY MISSION	PAID BY MISSIONER
Language Classes			X
Food		X	
Housing		X	
Stipend	X		
Transportation to Orientation			X
Orientation (room, board, & transportation)	X		
Transportation from orientation to mission	X		
Work-related transportation		X	
Roundtrip transportation from mission to Mid-Term Retreat	X		
Transportation home after commitment is fulfilled	X		
Re-Entry Retreat	X		
Roundtrip transportation from home to Re-Entry Retreat after commitment is fulfilled	X		
Vacation			X

Emergency leave			X
Health Insurance	X		
Insurance deductible & coinsurance			X

11. Spanish

Each MCF missionary must have a working knowledge of Spanish.

In order to assess one's level of Spanish, an interview will be conducted by phone in Spanish. If the results of the interview indicate that the person does not have a sufficiently good command of the language, he/she will need to consider *intensive language instruction* before beginning with the MCF Missioner Program. THE MCF IS NOT ABLE TO COVER THE COST OF LANGUAGE TRAINING.

Persons who wish information about intensive language training in Mexico should contact the MCF Missioner Director. Discounted rates for school and housing are available. This would be an immersion experience.

12. Cultural Adaptation

A) Dress and Appearance

It is important that missionaries be SENSITIVE TO THE DRESS STANDARDS of the people with whom they work.

1) It would be inappropriate to wear stylish clothes and jewelry that would set one apart as the "rich outsider." 5-7 sets of simple clothes (not ragged and torn) should be quite adequate.

Customs such as body piercing, earrings on males, more than one pair of post earrings on earlobe for females, and visible tattoos are not appropriate for mission work.

2) Slacks and long shorts generally are acceptable in informal settings. Pants or skirts should be worn for all religious services. Halters, short shorts or skirts, sleeveless shirts, low-front or short shirts (cleavage or stomach showing), or minimal bathing suits are not acceptable at the mission. Conservative clothing should be worn at all times. *MCF missionaries are role models for those they serve.*

3) The missionary should have a set of clothes for more formal meetings and social gatherings.

4) Rain protection should also be brought.

5) AMOUNT OF CLOTHING TO BRING: Regardless of where one works, *if the missionary plans to bring more than 3 suitcases, it would be wise to rethink his/her wardrobe.* He or she is bringing too much.

B) Food & Water

1) In Mexico, even in the poorest of homes, sharing food is very often an integral part of the culture. Sometimes in visiting homes, missionaries are hesitant to accept something, seeing how poor the family is and realizing that often the best food is given to visitors. Missioners are encouraged to find ways to graciously accept at least part of what is offered to them.

In rural areas of Mexico, it is considered a personal rejection to refuse food when it is offered. Therefore, missionaries should accept food when offered in a home, even if not all of it is eaten. Only purified water and sodas should be drunk.

2) VEGETARIANS: *At our missions, one can avoid eating meat.* In First World countries, being a vegetarian is not viewed as something unusual and seldom creates real problems. In Latin America, though, the situation is different. If one decides to visit families

outside the mission, he or she is likely to be eating with people. To not eat meat, fish, or eggs will not only seem strange to them, it may also be perceived as impolite. There is a good chance that they will feel rejected in some way and perplexed as to what they can offer the person. If a person is a strict vegetarian, he or she will need to give this issue serious consideration.

C) Popular religiosity, traditions, and customs

Popular Religiosity

MCF Missioners will find themselves working in cultures other than their own, even if the language is the same and even if they happen to be from Mexico. This would apply, for example, to people/children with a different socio-economic level.

If a person has never had the opportunity before for a cross-cultural experience, he or she might find himself or herself falling into ethnocentrism, i.e., using one's cultural experience as the norm for viewing reality.

Although missioners will be looking at this in detail during the orientation, it is important that candidates prepare themselves to be open to other cultural perspectives and not judge them from their own perspective.

Missioners working in Latin America, especially in rural areas, will encounter what is known as "popular religiosity." i.e., the faith expression of the people. Customs and practices will be quite different from what one experiences in a middle-class parish in a First World country. A noted anthropologist in Mexico has pointed out that it is disastrous for the people, if pastoral teams do not value popular religiosity and do not participate in it, as it is with all of its particular symbols and rites. It is imperative that missioners learn about and gradually deepen their understanding of popular religiosity and respect and value its expressions.

Traditions and customs

One of the gifts of being in a cross-cultural milieu is experiencing the richness and beauty of other traditions and customs. However, it can also be a real challenge when new customs clash with one's own values.

An example of this is provided in the following reflections of a previous missionary in Latin America:

“A lot of volunteer women find it difficult to accustom themselves to the amount of whistles, catcalling, comments, and general hassling they receive from men in Latin America. It is difficult to know how to respond, and even though no response is probably the most effective, it may depend more on how you are feeling and how many other comments you have received that day as to how you actually respond.

It is important to be aware of this as a part of the reality you will face as a woman and take it into account in your decision to work in Latin America.”

Women should not experience this at our missions, but may experience it in the town where the mission is located and other areas of the country.

13. Missioner Support Systems

Some of the support systems available to MCF Missioners are the following:

1) The MCF Missioner Director or other appointed person will introduce the missionary to the mission site and the surrounding community.

2) Every month, the MCF Missioner Director has contact with each missionary via a phone call, email, letter, or personal visit. Missioners are expected to email the MCF Missioner Director monthly and advise how and what they are doing. An email is expected by the 25th of

the month.

3) The orientation at the beginning of a missionary's term of service provides an initial opportunity for bonding and support. Missioners can continue this process by communicating with each other through weekly gatherings with other missioners of MCF in the area.

4) The mid-term retreat provides an opportunity for bonding among missioners as well as re-assessing their commitment to serving the needy.

5) At the end of a MCF missionary's term of service, a Re-Entry Retreat is provided to help facilitate the re-entry process. This program provides an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the missionary's experience and to look for ways to carry that experience into one's life.

In addition to the above support systems, missioners are expected to be assertive in reaching out to others and developing their own support systems.

14. Sharing Information Via "Mi Casa Noticias" (MCF Newsletter) and Other Sources

During the time of mission service, it is hoped that missioners will reflect on issues such as the following:

- What does it mean to be needy?
- Why are people in today's world needy?
- What is the message of the Gospel for society today?
- Am I helping to empower people (careful not to cause conflict) or am I just "doing for" people?
- What is happening to me as a person? How am I being evangelized by these needy children and elderly and the people of Mexico?

Missioners are encouraged to share their reflections and experiences as a MCF missionary.

One way to do this is through submitting articles, poetry, photos, drawings, and other items to the publication “Mi Casa Noticias” which comes out periodically. Space is limited, so be concise.

Another way is submitting items to be posted on our website. Space is not as limited.

If a missionary would like to publish information about his/her experience in a public forum such as a personal website, blog, bulk emails, article in a newspaper or magazine, etc., and that information contains information about the mission site, its employees or residents, the information must first be approved by the Missioner Director before it is publicized. Individual emails and letters are not considered public forums.

By consciously reflecting on and sharing one’s experience, hopefully it will not only deepen it for each person, but also enable others to understand what the missionary is going through, and to help them to look at reality from perhaps a different perspective.

For those who do not especially enjoy writing letters, the newsletter and the website are a way to communicate with others in a relatively easy and effective manner.

15. Retreats

There is a Mid-Term Retreat in December and a Re-Entry Retreat in July. All missionaries are expected to participate in these retreats.

The retreats are a time of rest, personal reflection, integration of experience, and discernment. They are also a renewal and strengthening of relationships among missionaries. No other activities or commitments should be planned during this time.

16. Work Schedule

Missioners are “full-time,” which means that they will probably have a work schedule of

a 5-day work week, unless other negotiations have been made between the MCF Director, the Mission Director, and the missionary. All days off should be coordinated with the Mission Director or designated person. Due to visa restrictions, missionaries are not allowed to work for an income for themselves or for the mission.

17. Holidays and Vacation

Missioners follow the holiday policy of the mission. Missioners may coordinate two weeks of vacation during the longer holidays of Christmas and Easter. Dates should be negotiated with the Mission Director before arranging travel plans. Need for sufficient staff should be considered when making requests. It is the missionary's responsibility to inform the MCF Director of vacation plans.

It is also very important for missionaries to take one day a week to rest. All vacation expenses are assumed by the missionary.

18. Emergency leaves

All emergency leaves are to be approved by the Mission Director in consultation with the MCF Director. Expenses are generally assumed by the missionary.

19. Fundraising

A) To support MCF Missioners

Missioners are encouraged to participate in the fundraising process in order to help MCF meet the expenses which are not covered by the mission. (Average cost for each missionary is \$7-9000/yr).

Missioners may wish to talk at their Church, help with the writing of a grant, approach potential donors (family, friends, acquaintances) or provide information for them to be contacted,

participate in a fundraising project sponsored by the MCF. This gives the Church/donors an “ownership” in the missionary work that is being done, builds an “external” support system for the missionary, and helps spread the mission of the MCF.

All fund-raising efforts are coordinated through the MCF.

B) To support a project at the missionary’s mission site

Often missionaries from First World countries are surprised and dismayed that people in Third World countries do not have many of the things that they (the missionaries) consider “necessary.” One response is for the missionaries to want to raise money in order to provide what they perceive as “lacking.”

Although the desire may spring from the best of motives, it may not be in the best interests of the community in the long run. It is easy to create false needs and build up a dependency when one is trying to “help” people. Tensions may also develop if one project is funded and another is not.

For these reasons, *the following process is to be used by missionaries wishing to raise funds for projects:*

1) The missionary consults with the Mission Director and the MCF Director before initiating fundraising. Aspects to be considered are the following:

- What is the perceived need?
- How will the project meet the need?
- Are there any negative implications?
- Will funding this project create a dependency?
- Is this project in effect creating a “mini First World environment?”

- What is the recommendation of the Mission Director?
- Who will disburse the funds raised?

2) The missioner completes the “Project Fund-Raising Form” (see Appendix C) and forwards it to the MCF Director.

3) Finally, the missioner sends a report to the MCF on how funds were dispersed, copies of receipts, and the impact of the project on the community within one week of completion.

20. Evaluations

There are several times during the year, both formally and informally, when there are opportunities for missioners to share their perceptions of their mission experiences:

1) Experiences during Orientation: The MCF Director or other person will meet with the missioners to assess how the initial experience has been.

2) Orientation: At the conclusion of the orientation, each missioner is asked to give an evaluation of the orientation.

3) At different times of the year, the MCF Missioner Director communicates with the missioner and mission staff to assess ministry and other aspects of the mission experience.

4) Final: At the end of the term of service, there is an evaluation by the Mission Director. The missioner also does an evaluation on the whole mission experience.

21. Governance of MCF Missioner Program

The Mi Casa Foundation Missioner Program is coordinated by the Director who operates under the governance of the MCF Board of Directors.

MCF Missioner Director

–Coordinates administrative functions of MCF Missioner Program

- Plans, coordinates, and evaluates missionary positions with the Mission Directors
- Coordinates travel of the missionaries to the mission site
- Develops orientation, retreat, and re-entry program for missionaries

22. Health Concerns

A) Insurance

All MCF Missioners are covered by medical insurance, which is provided through the MCF. Coverage through the MCF continues one month beyond completing a year of service, if allowed by the policy. Information about the medical insurance is given at orientation.

B) Medical/Dental/Optical

1) Medical: The MCF provides health insurance for missionaries. Coverage starts after the missionary enters Mexico. Coverage is determined by the rules of the plan. Deductibles and coinsurance are paid by the missionary.

2) Dental: Missioners are required to have dental work up to date prior to entry into the MCF Missioner Program. If dental work is not completed, missionaries must sign a waiver releasing MCF from responsibility. Preventive dental work (cleaning, checkups) is covered after first year for multi-year missionaries by the MCF.

3) Optical: Missioners are required to have optical work up to date prior to entry into the MCF Missioner Program. If optical work is not completed, missionaries must sign a waiver releasing the MCF from responsibility.

If a missionary loses or damages his/her glasses or contact lenses, the cost for repair or replacement is covered. Only one replacement per year of service is provided. For multi-year missionaries: If the eye doctor requires a change in prescription after one year of service, the cost

for this expense, including eye exam, is covered by the MCF.

4) The following expenses *ARE NOT COVERED BY MCF* (including but not limited to):

- a) Medical expenses related to a pre-existing condition
- b) Expenses for orthodontic work
- c) Expenses already covered by medical insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid.
- d) Expenses related to pregnancy costs
- e) Chiropractor expenses above \$100/year

5) *Unless it is an emergency, it is recommended that missionaries consult with the MCF Director before medical/dental/optical treatment is undertaken.*

6) *Time frames for turning in medical bills to the insurance company depends upon the rules of the company. Make sure you know what your company's requirements are. The MCF will not be responsible for oversights or mistakes made by the missionary.*

C) Serious or Chronic Illnesses

Generally, a clean bill of health is required, but each applicants situation will be considered individually.

i.e. Typically, a person who is in remission from cancer, must be in remission for 5 years or more to be considered. However, individual cases will be considered for those with less than 5 years remission but feel a strong call to serve, if they, in the case they are selected, are willing to provide their own insurance (if none is available through the Foundation).

D) Prescription Medicines

If a missionary is on a prescription drug, he or she should bring a complete supply along or have the means to purchase it on their own. Missioner should research the internet for donations

or discounts (i.e.: Patient Assistance Programs).

Make certain that your name, the physician's name, and the directions (when possible) are typed onto the label of the prescription bottle. This may save time and trouble if one is searched at customs and found with drugs of "unknown origin."

E) Health concerns for missionaries in Mexico: See Appendix D for important health info.

23. Miscellaneous

A) Participation in Partisan Political Activities

In general, missionaries would be ill-advised to participate in partisan political activities in a foreign country. Although the missionary may want to be inclusive and want to attend activities of all political parties, casual observers will not know this and may well identify the missionary with a particular political party. Also, political parties in Latin America have been known to misinterpret and even misuse someone's presence to further their own agendas. This could prove detrimental to the work of the missionary and even of the mission. In Mexico, it is illegal for non-citizens to get involved in politics.

B) Banking

After being accepted, the MCF will open an account for the missionary at a bank where the MCF maintains an account. The missionary will be issued an ATM card so that he/she can access his/her stipend each month.

The account will be opened as a joint account with the MCF Missioner Director as a co-signer on the account. In case there are problems or discrepancies with the account, the MCF Director can solve them more easily.

There are ATM machines located throughout Mexico. It can be difficult to set up a bank

account in Mexico, so this is the easiest way for missionaries to access money. Missioners are able to have other moneys deposited into the account. The name of the current bank for accounts is:

Randolph Brooks Federal Credit Union
PO Box 2097
San Antonio, TX 78148

(210) 945-3300
Routing # 314089681

Account number will be issued when account is opened at Orientation. The account is opened with sufficient money to cover the cost of 12 monthly withdrawals. Each month, the MCF will deposit the monthly stipend into the missioner's account.

C) Email Address

Each missioner will be given an email address on the MCF website server. Missioners may set up an email account with a free online provider (Hotmail, Yahoo, etc.). Email will be the primary mode of communication with family and friends in the USA. The missioner should be careful to check the required usage rule of the email provider. Some free email providers terminate service if the email is not accessed for more than 30 days. MCF email has no required usage rule. Most of our mission sites have internet access. If not available, there are internet cafes located throughout Mexico that cost \$1.50 to \$3.00USD per hour to use.

D) Mail

Missioners are able to send or receive mail through the Mexican postal system. Normal delivery is 2-4 weeks. It is recommended to use DHL, UPS, or FedEx for more secure and prompt delivery of mail or items. Check with Customs rules before sending or receiving items.

E) Appreciation Updates

Missioners are expected to write appreciation updates to their sponsors on a regular basis.

These updates should be cc: to the MCF Director at info@micasafoundation.org. This will help to maintain relationships with sponsors of the MCF.

F) Important Items

It is recommended that you bring the following items with your personal effects: flashlight, pocket calculator, wash cloth and towel, CDs and player, other enjoyable activities, warm sleeping clothes, and an alarm clock with a battery backup.

G) Visits to USA

Missioners are required to advise the MCF Director of any trips back to the USA as soon as they are made. This is due to health insurance requirements and the possible need to send items to the missions and other missioners.

H) Reimbursement of Expenses

Missioners are required to get pre-approval from the Executive Director for all expenses that they want to get reimbursed. At that time, instructions will be given for obtaining the reimbursement.

IMPORTANT ADDENDUM

This Manual may be revised or updated by the MCF Director at any time and will be communicated to the current missioners in service.

APPENDIX A: REQUEST FOR EXTENSION OF SERVICE

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

_____ I request an extension of another year with the Mi Casa Foundation.

My reasons for the request are: _____

THIS REQUEST IS DUE IN THE MI CASA FOUNDATION OFFICE BY APRIL 1ST.

PLEASE SEND TO: info@micasafoundation.org or (210)499-1192-fax

APPENDIX B: LONG-TERM AND PERMANENT MISSIONERS
(Missioners with 3 or more years experience with MCF)

1. Terms of Commitment

One-year initial experience

Followed by 1 or more years extension (More than 3 years is considered *long term*)

Followed by a permanent commitment, meaning lifetime

2. Requirements for Permanent Commitment

- Satisfactory work record
- Adequate relational ability
- Recommendations from another missioner, the on-site missioner support person, and the Mission Director
- Formal application to the MCF Missioner Director

3. Formalization of Commitment

On acceptance, the missioner makes a public commitment at a liturgy witnessed by the wider MCF community, in which the person concerned, states intention to live a simple lifestyle in accordance with the principles and values of the MCF.

4. Termination

It is possible for a missioner who makes this commitment to terminate it after a number of years if the circumstances of one's life warrants it, e.g., family illness. However, MCF may not expel him or her without serious cause.

5. Responsibilities

The permanent missioner has the same responsibilities as the short-term missioner, that is, to work full time at a mission site. The work is seen not just as a job, but as a way of life. In general terms, inculturation is important, more so to be with, not to do for the needy, since they are considered one's teachers.

6. Marriage and Family

If a missioner, who is single, chooses to marry, he or she may do so. The married partner need not be a MCF missioner, but must agree in principle and live the simple lifestyle. If there are children, needs and requirements will need to be reassessed.

7. Expenses and Services

The following expenses are not covered in the short-term experience and are considered necessary in the long-term (after 3 years) and permanent commitments:

- Comprehensive health insurance policy which gives adequate dental and optical care
- Annual vacation expenses. If the missioner is from a country outside the U.S. or Mexico, vacation in home country will be every 2 or 3 years, but in the intervening years, he or she is entitled to a vacation in Mexico. Vacation expenses will be paid as pre-approved by the MCF Director.
- Annual retreat of approximately one week's duration, if the missioner chooses (in addition to the retreat with the short-term missioners)
- On-going formation, education, and work retraining, as needed
- Sabbatical every seventh year, of at least six months, with plans and budget to be approved by the MCF Director.

- Clothes and shoe allowance, \$100 annually
- Stipend of \$150 per month, with double stipend at Christmas and during the month of the missionary's birthday
- Consideration of time to be spent by each long-term and permanent missionary in service to the mission is important
- Each individual will prepare a budget in accordance with the MCF
- If the permanent missionary chooses to leave, the MCF is not responsible for repayment, but will provide funds for him or her to return home in a safe and comfortable manner.

These figures may be adjusted according to the needs of the individual and according to the costs of living in Mexico.

APPENDIX C: PROJECT FUND-RAISING FORM

DATE: _____ MISSIONER'S NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NAME OF MISSION _____

PROJECT FOR WHICH FUNDS WILL BE RAISED: _____

AMOUNT TO BE RAISED (in dollars): _____

Does this fund-raising have the support of the Mission Director? _____

How will funds be raised? _____

Who will disperse the funds (must be personnel from mission site)? _____

Other comments: _____

SIGNED _____

Missioner

Mission Director

DECISION OF MCF DIRECTOR: _____

SIGNATURE OF MCF DIRECTOR: _____

RESPONSE SENT TO APPLICANT ON: _____

APPENDIX D: FUND REQUEST FORM (Reimbursement limit - \$10,000 pesos)
(Missioners only)

DATE: _____ MISSIONER'S NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NAME OF MISSION _____

REASON FOR REQUESTING FUNDS: _____

AMOUNT REQUESTED (in pesos): _____

Does this request have the support of the Mission Director? _____

Detail how funds will be spent (item & amount)? _____

Who will disperse the funds (may be missioner)? _____

Other comments: _____

(If approved, MCF Director will advise how funds will be transferred)

Receipts must be sent to MCF before funds will be dispersed.

SIGNED _____

Missioner

Mission Director

DECISION OF MCF DIRECTOR: _____

SIGNATURE OF MCF DIRECTOR: _____

RESPONSE SENT TO APPLICANT ON: _____

APPENDIX E: HEALTH CONCERNS FOR MI CASA FOUNDATION MISSIONERS

You should consult your physician regarding immunizations and medications, as well as carefully considering the following:

A. IMMUNIZATION

No shots of any kind are required to go to Mexico.

However, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) makes the following recommendations:

(1) TETANUS: Recommends that you be up-to-date on your diphtheria tetanus. You will need a booster if you have not had one in the last ten years.

(2) HEPATITIS: There are 3 strains of hepatitis. Depending on the strain, it can be fatal. Most often, it is not.

Type A: is the most contagious but least serious strain; is transmitted from person to person, through contaminated water, ice, shellfish from contaminated water, or foods or water contaminated by handling. Has no long-term consequences. The vaccine for this strain, GAMMA GLOBULIN, will boost your defenses but only lasts for 3-4 months. NOTE: Gamma Globulin and Tetanus should not be taken together.

Type B: is a more serious strain; is transmitted through blood and sexual contact. Vaccination for this strain takes about one year. Understandably, most volunteers forego this vaccination.

Type NON-A, NON-B: is also a more serious strain; is transmitted the same ways as Type B. There is no vaccination.

(3) TYPHOID. There is some risk of typhoid in smaller cities and rural areas of Central America. Typhoid is transmitted by contaminated food and water; it can be prevented by using bottled/boiled water and eating cooked food. The vaccine against typhoid can be taken orally or via injection. Consult your doctor to decide what is best for you.

(4) MALARIA: According to CDC, there is only limited risk in rural areas of Mexico. Chloroquin, both the prevention and the cure for this disease, is readily and inexpensively available in Latin America. However, Chloroquin is toxic. It has a 6-month recommended dosage. Longer ingestion of this substance builds up in the liver and can affect the eyes. If you take Chloroquin, you will not be able to donate blood for three years.

B. COMMON ILLNESSES

Any number of intestinal parasites, amoebas, and bacteria may initiate your stomach into third world living.

TO PREVENT DIARRHEA:

- 1) Drink only boiled or bottled water, coffee, tea, and bottled soda.
- 2) Eat only fruits and raw vegetables that you peel yourself or wash them in an iodine/water solution.
- 3) Cooked and hot foods are generally safe. Salads and shellfish are particularly unsafe.

FOR MINOR CASES OF DIARRHEA:

- 1) Pepto-Bismol is recommended, supplemented by bananas.
- 2) Drugs such as Lomotil, Paragoric, and Kaopectate are not recommended as they can be dangerous in cases of infectious diarrheas.
- 3) There are also some very simple natural cures such as camomile tea, peppermint tea, etc. that you ought to be familiar with. Look in any natural remedy book. The book, WHERE THERE IS NO DOCTOR by David Werner is recommended reading. Also, listen carefully to the folk cures of the

people you live with.

Basically, you should stick to a light diet with lots of clear liquids to replace lost fluids. Soft drinks without caffeine, bottled or boiled water, and crackers, bananas, and/or rice should help you through bouts of diarrhea.

C. A NURSE'S HEALTH TIPS FOR TRAVEL TO LATIN AMERICA.

The most important thing for traveling to the tropics is often overlooked: **in the hotter climates an adequate intake of water is essential.** Often, because there is no safe source of water, we fail to drink enough. A rule of thumb for “enough” is that you should drink enough so that you have to urinate every 4 hours. If you are sweating a lot, you have to increase the amount you drink.

Do not trust that bottles of water in public places have been purified; they are often refilled with tap water. A good sign to look for is a number of empty and full bottles nearby, indicating that they do use purified water. Check for sealed caps when purchasing water.

Ask for “agua purificado” or “agua mineral.” In restaurants, water should be safe. Ice is also suspect. If the ice is not shaped (broken chunks), do not drink it unless you are sure that it was made from purified water. You can ask for purified water or a bottled drink without ice. Or drink coffee or tea whose water has been boiled. It is important to note, however, that caffeine-containing drinks such as coffee, tea, and some colas, will make you lose more water than you will absorb from them.

Diarrhea is unpleasant and can be avoided by taking precautions with beverages and avoiding raw foods. It is also important for you to wash your hands before eating and often during the day. If you cannot wash your hands, use a hand sanitizer.

If you get diarrhea, you have to judge how sick you are. If you are not too terribly ill, you can try the more natural cures: primarily, rehydration fluid, which is a combination of salty and sweet.

For example:

- 1) You can drink a cup of bouillon and one from sweet herb tea.
- 2) Or make an **electrolyte drink from a pinch of salt and four teaspoons of sugar or honey in each cup of water.** Baking soda is sometimes used in these drinks but is not necessary. Lemon or lime juice is good to add too, but again is not necessary.
- 3) If you can get Pericon Tea (Tenderleaf brand, in Latin American markets), make the electrolyte from that, as it is a potent antibiotic and also stops stomach cramps.
- 4) Another good remedy for stomach cramps that can be bought before you leave is **peppermint** (not spearmint) **extract**, available in spice sections of stores. A few drops of this in hot water relieves gas and cramps.

If you are really ill, with symptoms of dry mouth and excessive weakness, do not hesitate to seek medical care.

Many people take medicine as a preventative for diarrhea. A daily swig of Pepto-Bismol (or a couple of tablets) work for many people, although it turns your stools black and we don't know the effect it might have over time.

Doctors often prescribe Lomotil, an opium derivative, or antibiotics, just in case. Lomotil will slow down the movement of the intestinal tract and therefore keeps the causative germs in the body longer. Antibiotics are also questionable, since some don't work on travelers' diarrhea or may cause diarrhea themselves.

Imodium may be used if you are traveling, but should not be used otherwise.

Natural preventatives are garlic and lactobacillus capsules (the bacteria that makes yogurt). You can buy them in health food stores. Garlic with parsley smells less and lactobacillus with pectin helps firm up stools.