



PUENTE DE AMISTAD

Team Member's Manual

January 2020

****Open Bible Churches requires that all team members read and sign the “Waiver of Liability” Form, which acknowledges that they have read and will comply with all rules and policies put in place by Puente de Amistad, that are written or implied by Puente in this manual or on Puente de Amistad’s website.***

About Puente De Amistad:

Puente De Amistad is a ministry of Global Missions of Open Bible Churches. Puente de Amistad is a base in Tijuana, Mexico for short-term, cross-cultural outreach. It is an innovative approach to missions, providing a location for youth, adults, and family groups to experience missions by visiting a foreign country, evangelizing the lost, ministering to the hurting, and strengthening local churches. Puente De Amistad means “Bridge of Friendship.” It is a Christian bridge of love between the first and third-worlds that meet at the U.S. / Mexico border.

Puente de Amistad has a variety of ministry opportunities that can be arranged for visiting groups. Some of these can include visiting children’s feeding kitchens, orphanages, churches, and opportunities for street ministry. Groups can use mime, skits, puppetry, singing, and evangelizing with the help of translators. There also may be construction projects available for helping local ministries and house-building projects for low income families. The selection of your ministry activities will depend on the skill of your group members, your resources, and your creativity. The base staff in consultation with the team leader will arrange the best ministry opportunities for your group.

What to Pack:

Team members arriving at the base should have enough clothing to last the length of their stay without needing to do laundry. However, laundry facilities are available at the base at a cost of \$2.00 to wash and dry. Clothes should be suited for the planned activities of the week.

Appropriate Clothing:

- **Males:**
 - Knee-length shorts may be worn for all activities except church.
 - No clothing with worldly themes (Alcohol advertisement or suggestive statements).
 - No Speedo swimsuits.
 - For Church please dress nicely:
 - A nice shirt, polo, or button down (no t-shirts).
 - No shorts – Nice slacks or jeans.
- **Females:**
 - No clothing with worldly themes (Alcohol advertisement or suggestive statements).
 - For Church please dress nicely:
 - A dress is preferred
 - Nice dress slacks

Appropriate Footwear:

Because there are needles and trash that carry various bacteria and viruses, closed toed shoes are required at all job sites and ministries. Only around the base or at the beach are open toed shoes permitted. Flip-flops are okay for lounging around the base, but are not appropriate for church, ministry, and construction sites.

Recommended Personal to be brought by Team Members:		
Passport	Bible	Picture I.D.
Notebook/Journal/Pen	Canteen/Water Bottle	Ministry Tools
Glasses & Contacts (Cleaning Sol.)	Medication (in original container)	Swimsuit
Shampoo	Deodorant	Brush / Comb
Soap	Casual & Work Clothes	Shoes: Dress & Work
Sunscreen 50 SPF or higher	Sunglasses	Dress Clothes (Church)
Flashlight	Tissue/Baby Wipes	Camera
Gifts for New Friends	Snacks	Hand Sanitizer
Pocket Spanish Dictionary	Spending Money (Small Bills Only)	Chapstick
Anti-Diarrhea Medication		
*Food for Special Dietary Needs		

****Please contact Puente de Amistad about your special dietary needs. In most cases, it's recommended to bring specialty items along or purchase them in San Diego on the way to the base. Puente staff will do their best to accommodate your needs but it is not their responsibility. It is up to the individual team member to be prepared for their special dietary needs.***

Recommended Construction Tools for Team Members:		
Tool Belt	Hammer	Sunscreen
Work Gloves	Screwdrivers	Sunglasses
Tape Measure	Cats-claw	Water bottle
Construction Square	Hand Sanitizer	Hat

Ministry Items:

*It is the team's responsibility to bring and provide all ministry items for their team. It is not the responsibility of Puente de Amistad to supply ministry items for the team.

Recommended Ministry Materials for Team Members:		
Costumes	Puppets	Sound Equipment
Spanish Tracts	Drama Props	Coloring Pages
Crayons	Markers	Craft Materials

What to not bring:

- Puente de Amistad provides sheets, blankets, pillows. You don't need to bring your own bedding.
- Puente also provides towels & washcloths.
- We have an ample number of fans available so please don't bring yours.
- Do not bring unnecessary valuables. Anything that is irreplaceable is better kept safely at home.
- Valuable jewelry should be left at home.

Insurance:

Since most insurance carriers have poor coverage outside the United States, **supplemental medical coverage is required by Puente de Amistad**. Several insurance providers can be found by searching the internet for "travel medical insurance". Also, you can find several suggestions on our FAQ section on the Puente de Amistad web site.

Safety:

The safety of your mission team is Puente de Amistad's number one priority. We are confident that you and your team will be safe when we go out to minister in the neighborhoods of Tijuana. To ensure this safety, there are a few rules that must be followed at ALL times:

- No one should ever go off alone. A lonely walk may be a good time to talk with the Lord but it isn't wise for those unfamiliar with the area and the language.
- If you do need to go somewhere make sure there are at least three of you. Always advise your team leader and Puente staff of your destination and estimated time of return.
- Leave unnecessary valuables at home. Theft happens frequently and pickpocketing is common.
- Obey all Mexican laws. Mexican authorities follow the Napoleonic code, which states that you are guilty until proven innocent.
- Firearms, fireworks, and pocket knives will result in jail time. Do not bring them to Mexico!

Health:

At Puente de Amistad we desire that you get the most from your cross-cultural experience and that you gain a firsthand knowledge of daily life of the local people. However, our bodies are accustomed to the lifestyle at home and adapting quickly to a foreign environment can prove difficult. Localized germs (which we've not yet built immunity to) and change in climate can sometimes overtax those who are not acclimated to the environment. That is why we do our best at the base to give everyone a taste of Mexico while still addressing health and safety concerns that may otherwise negatively impact your experience.

- Purified drinking water is provided at the base.
- Non-purified water should not be consumed at all and not used even for brushing teeth.
- Showering water is not purified and should not be drunk.
- Restaurants in Mexico use purified water.

Immunizations:

It is highly recommended that all team members complete their hepatitis vaccinations, bring anti-diarrhea medication, and make sure they are up to date on their tetanus shot. Consult your local U.S. Health Department for current shot recommendations for Mexico, since they do change from time to time.

Be sure to bring sufficient quantities of any personal medications that you may need, especially prescriptions. Mexican pharmacists may have trouble duplicating your medication because of the language barrier and varying names of drugs.

****If you do forget your medication, it is not the responsibility of Puente de Amistad to find you alternate medication. We will do our best to help you, but the responsibility is on the group member.***

Individuals with respiratory ailments, such as asthma, should be warned that Tijuana is a dusty place. Be sure to bring your aspirators. It is a good idea for each group to bring a comprehensive First Aid kit to take care of minor medical needs. In case of serious illness or accident, U.S. hospitals will be used if time permits.

Attitudes:

Groups coming to Puente de Amistad must function as a team. ***Teamwork requires a servant's heart.*** Each person's motivation should be to serve Christ and other team members. Attitude changes everything! It can build a team up or tear it down. Do all that you can to weed out your own negative attitudes. Here are some examples:

- **A complaining attitude is contagious and can ruin the trip for the whole group.** Paul said, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" Philippians 4:11 NIV. No pity parties allowed.
- **Faultfinding is harmful.** It is not one member's role to correct teammates or to help improve the Mexican culture.
- **Cliques destroy team unity.** Individuals should not keep to themselves or try to isolate other members. Be inclusive.
- **Unwillingness to cooperate burdens the team.** Every team member should be willing to take on any task, from sharing a testimony in church to cleaning toilets. No one is along just for the ride. When staff or leadership asks you to get on the bus, do it quickly.
- **Romantic involvement diverts the purpose of the team.** Romantic involvement with another team member or a Mexican national could be cause for a team member to be sent home.

Cultural Differences and Similarities:

- Mexicans greet each other with a handshake.
- Church services and on special occasions, men will greet each other with a hug and a hand-shake. Women will greet one another with a kiss on the cheek.
- Culturally, refusing an invitation is impolite, so a Mexican will often accept an invitation, but never intend to show up.
- Don't compliment a Mexican's possessions too highly, or they may feel obligated to offer it to you and be offended if you refuse.

- “No” is indicated by moving the hand back and forth with the index finger pointed up, facing outward. “Yes” is indicated by pointing your index finger up, facing outward, and bending it repeatedly.
- The thumbs up sign that we use in the United States is also used in Mexico.
- Never beckon someone with one finger. It is offensive. Beckon with the whole hand turned down.
- Never throw money on the counter when paying for something. Always hand it to them.
- Mexicans greatly appreciate foreigners attempting to speak their language. It’s considered a sign of respect.
- Mexicans are very family-oriented. Family responsibility often supersedes all other responsibilities.
- Mexicans are more event oriented versus time oriented so they frequently show up 30 to 45 minutes late.

Adapting to the Culture:

Since your main purpose for coming to Tijuana is to be a witness to the local people, you have to adapt to their ways rather than expecting them to adapt to U.S. ways. Think of their ways as different, not inferior or strange. What a shame to impede the witness of your whole group by acting in a manner that offends the people you are trying to reach.

Visiting Ministries:

When visiting ministries, you may experience poor living conditions (*by United States standards*) that may cause you emotional distress. Although these conditions are unfamiliar to you, this is normal life for them. Please be aware of your facial expressions and what you are saying. We do not want our emotions to speak for us and in turn, be talking down to their living conditions. Watch that you are not making comments like:

- “How can people live like this?”
- “I could never live like this?”
- “Why don’t they try to get a job?”
- “Don’t they know that there is a better way to live?”
- “Can I adopt your children?”

**Although, you may think you would never make these statements, all of these statements have been heard from short-term mission teams coming from the United States.*

These ministries and families that we are ministering to are happy. They are content and thankful for what God has provided them with. We should be as well. Be careful to be gracious with people in their circumstances. Be happy for them in what they do have, even if it is not much in your eyes.

Remember the golden rule! Would you want someone to visit your home and then gasp at its state or lack of cleanliness? Or how would you like it if someone richer than yourself offered to rescue your children from you because you weren’t doing a good enough job providing for their physical needs?

Having Compassion:

Compassion is an emotion that can overwhelm people, especially those who have not been exposed to extreme poverty before. Matthew 14:14 tells us that Jesus healed the sick because “he had compassion on them.” It is a natural and Godly human emotion. Team members should allow themselves and others to feel it. It won’t hurt them. The danger is in getting angry with those who aren’t equally moved. We are each responsible for our own response to the needs of others, not for the response of others around us.

It is not God’s choice that there be such poverty and suffering. It is a result of sin in the world and man’s sinful nature. By sharing the Gospel in Tijuana, teams are doing more to alleviate the causes of poverty than could be accomplished by millions of dollars in aid. If some are moved to give to individual Mexicans, they should first consult a Puente staff member. If Mexicans wish to share with team members, do not refuse, this will only hurt them. “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others.” -Matt. 12:43 They gave you the gift out of their love for you and what you are doing to help them, do not refuse their gift.

Prayer:

Prayer before the trip is very important! Ask God to prepare your heart, the hearts of your teammates, and the hearts of the people you will minister to. Ask Him to reveal His will and move during your time at Puente. It is strongly recommended that each team member have prayer partner(s) who will pray for them before, during, and after the trip.

Team members are encouraged to spend regular times of prayer and worship with their teammates, their prayer partners, and alone before, during, and after the trip. Fasting before the trip also recommended.

****Open Bible Churches require that all team members complete and submit the provided “Team Member Application” and sign the “Waiver of Liability” BEFORE arriving in Tijuana.***

****Minors: All Applications and Waiver of Liability for minors must be signed by a legal parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian will not be attending the trip the Waiver of Liability must also be notarize.***