

BVS Covenant

2021

The following covenant outlines expectations for the project, volunteer, and BVS. Please read it carefully. Volunteers are asked to sign this covenant prior to coming into BVS. Projects are asked to sign this covenant on an annual basis.

1. Term of Service

Volunteers taking an assignment in the United States commit themselves to a one-year term of service beginning on the date they arrive at their project. This does not include BVS orientation. Volunteers who are assigned to an international placement (outside the United States) are committed to BVS for two years from the date of arrival in the foreign country. Only one-year assignments are possible in Northern Ireland due to UK visa regulations. One- or two-year assignments are possible in the Republic of Ireland. Older adult volunteers may choose a six-month assignment. There may be some exceptions to this for international volunteers serving in the United States, depending on their visa arrangement.

2. Orientation

Each volunteer will be a member of an orientation unit prior to project assignment. Details on the orientation will be sent to volunteers approximately one month prior to the starting date.

3. Project Placement

- A. The goal of the project placement process is to find the best match between a volunteer's strengths and skills and a project's needs and requirements. Not all projects listed in the project book are available at the time of a given orientation.
- B. Most placements are determined during, not prior to, orientation. Exceptions to this general rule are considered by the staff of BVS.
- C. International assignments may be arranged prior to orientation. These placements may take longer to confirm, and participation in orientation is the final stage in the placement process. Applicants interested in international assignments should be in phone contact with the BVS staff. (See Common Questions section of project book "I want to serve outside the United States.") International assignments are available for U.S. and Canadian citizens only.
- D. During orientation, project files with background materials are available to assist with selecting placements. Volunteers have the responsibility of considering their skills, interests, and goals and of identifying several project preferences.
- E. The volunteers meet with BVS staff during orientation to discuss their project choices. The director of BVS, along with the orientation staff, will talk with volunteers to determine whether their qualifications match the needs of the project.
- F. Volunteers serving outside the United States must be at least 21 years old and be a college graduate (with bachelor's degree) or have equivalent life experience. Staff responsible for international placements will interview the volunteer. Almost all placements in Latin America require fluency in Spanish and experience in Latin American issues.
- G. The volunteer's project choices must initially be approved by the director of BVS. If, during orientation, it is determined that a volunteer lacks the necessary qualifications for service, the BVS staff reserves the right to cancel an assignment. This rarely happens.
- H. Following the interviews, the director of BVS or staff representative for international placements contacts the project directors to recommend volunteers for service. Project directors give final approval for assignments. The volunteer's application (without essay questions) may be shared with the project director. In some cases, the whole application is shared with the project.
- I. In most cases, volunteers are expected to begin their assignment immediately following

orientation. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis.

- J. Some assignments, particularly international assignments, may require a waiting period between orientation and placement. Interim assignments may be arranged for persons waiting for these assignments. Patience is encouraged.
- K. The BVS placement process requires flexibility, communication, and trust. Project assignments are made with the input and consent of the BVS staff, the project director, and the volunteer. The final choice is mutual.

4. Volunteer Fees - These fees are used to support transportation to assignments and other administrative costs.

- A. Those serving in an international assignment will be charged \$1,000 (\$750 for Church of the Brethren members).
- B. Those serving in a domestic assignment will be charged \$500 (\$250 for Church of the Brethren members).
- C. Volunteers coming to the U.S. through the EIRENE program in Germany will be covered by the EIRENE program. Any non-EIRENE volunteer coming from outside the U.S. will be charged the \$500 fee to serve in the US.
- D. BVSers accepted at international assignments in countries requiring a visa or pre-clearance process will need to provide the funds for the initial set of fees. Ask staff for details, as fees vary by region. Subsequent visa fees after the BVSer has been on project will be covered by BVS, the project, or other sources.

5. Project Fees

- A. BVS does not charge a fee to be listed in the Project Book.
- B. The following is the placement fee schedule for 2021:
CoB projects (congregations, camps, homes, etc)\$3,150/vol/yr
Projects with annual budgets up to \$500,000\$3,400/vol/yr
Projects with annual budgets from \$500,001 to \$1,500,000\$3,900/vol/yr
Projects with annual budgets from \$1,500,001+\$4,400/vol/yr
- C. Projects provide a monthly stipend of \$100 (net) for each volunteer. Volunteers will receive \$125 (net) in their second year in BVS and \$150 (net) in their third year of BVS. Stipends are the volunteer's personal money to use at their discretion.
- D. Projects provide room and board (housing and food) for the volunteer. In the event that a volunteer must purchase food, BVS recommends a weekly amount of \$25 to \$50 depending on the living situation. In some cases, all food will be provided on site by the project.
- E. Projects cover all transportation expenses to and from one BVS retreat per year. (See #11 In-Service Retreats.)
- F. Projects cover transportation expenses for the volunteers to return home, to their next project, or to their point of entry upon completion of the volunteer assignment. This includes costs for food while traveling. (See #6 Transportation.)

6. Transportation

- A. The volunteer is responsible for transportation and food costs to orientation.
- B. BVS pays travel, food, and lodging expenses from the orientation site to the assigned project. The general rule for BVS is to use the least expensive mode of transportation.

1. Food expense allowances:	\$4.00 (Breakfast)
	\$5.00 (Lunch)
	\$6.00 (Dinner)
	\$15.00 Total per day

2. All lodging arrangements en route to project are made by the orientation staff. Overweight baggage costs will be paid by the volunteer.
- C. Transportation home or to the point of departure (i.e., port city for those living outside the U.S.) at the end of the term of service is provided if the BVS term is completed. These expenses are covered by the project. This includes costs for food while traveling.
- D. If a volunteer withdraws from BVS before the end of the term of service, expenses for transportation home (or to the point of departure) are covered as follows:
 1. For up to one half of the term served, no return transportation expenses are paid. Travel costs will be paid by the volunteer.
 2. For six to nine months of service, the project pays half of the transportation expenses. For more than nine months of service, expenses are paid in full.
- E. If the volunteer leaves the project early without consultation or approval from the project and the BVS director, the volunteer will be responsible for their transportation costs home.
- F. If the project director, BVS director, and volunteer mutually agree to change project assignment at any time during the term of service, transportation costs will be negotiated.

7. Volunteer Stipend

Volunteers in the U.S. receive a stipend of \$100 net (after taxes; some taxes may be taken out by a project's pay system) per month for the first year of BVS service, \$125 net for the second year of BVS, and \$150 net for the third year of BVS. This stipend should be provided at the beginning of each month or on the project's regular pay schedule.

8. Room and Board (Housing and Food)

Volunteers will be provided room and board by the project while in BVS. BVS recommends a food allowance of \$25-\$50 per volunteer per week depending on the location, project setting, and living situation. In some cases, all food will be provided on site by the project.

9. Work schedule

- A. The work schedule should average 40 hours per week unless the volunteer and project director agree to a different schedule.
- B. No part-time, income-producing jobs may be accepted by a volunteer.
- C. BVS expects the project to provide a minimum of 10 working days off as vacation during the volunteer year. Time off will be negotiated between the project director and the volunteer according to project guidelines. All vacation expenses are assumed by the volunteer. The BVS retreat is not to be considered vacation time.
- D. Some projects require volunteers to work over the holidays. BVS expects that the volunteer will follow the holiday and comp time off schedule of the project. For example, if employees receive Thanksgiving Day and the day after off, the volunteer will get comparable days off.

10. Supervision

- A. BVS is responsible for the volunteer from the time of arrival at the orientation site until the time of the volunteer's termination date. The director of BVS is ultimately responsible for volunteers while they are in the program.
- B. BVS relinquishes direct supervision of the volunteer only after arrival at the project site. At this point, the volunteer is under the supervision of the designated project staff.
- C. While serving in BVS, volunteers are representatives of the Church of the Brethren and are part of a Christian program with a long tradition of volunteers since 1948. As representatives of BVS, volunteers are strongly discouraged from using tobacco and alcohol (the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference urges abstinence). Volunteers are encouraged to work responsibly in a spirit of compassion, caring, and mutuality with all

persons at their project and in their community.

- D. If either the volunteer or the project director has real concerns about the assignment, the director of Brethren Volunteer Service should be contacted. If a volunteer is not doing an adequate job, the project director can require that a volunteer be removed from their specific project but does not have the authority to dismiss a volunteer from BVS. Two weeks' notice must be given to the volunteer and the director of BVS. The director of Brethren Volunteer Service has the responsibility of deciding whether the volunteer will be transferred or terminated.
- E. If a volunteer engages in conduct that endangers staff, volunteers or clients; is dishonest or fraudulent; violates the BVS prohibition against fraternizing with clients; or otherwise constitutes gross misconduct; he or she may be subject to immediate dismissal by a project director or the BVS director. BVS reserves the right to determine when someone needs to leave BVS.

Examples of gross misconduct include:

- possession, use, purchase, distribution, or sale of illegal substances, or reporting to the project under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
 - knowingly damaging property of the project or another volunteer;
 - carrying a concealed weapon at the project site when performing volunteer duties;
 - intentionally failing to perform assigned duties;
 - fraternizing with clients or guests, such as forming relationships that go beyond a normal working relationship, including dating or sexual involvement;
 - engaging in sexual harassment of others;
 - violating a known policy or procedure;
 - falsifying the BVS application;
 - excessive absenteeism;
 - fighting;
 - dishonesty or theft; and
 - insubordination or intentionally failing to follow instructions from a supervisor.
- F. A performance review with the volunteer is suggested approximately three months after arrival on project and at regular intervals thereafter.

11. In-Service Retreats

- A. For those volunteers serving in the United States, BVS provides a retreat for each year of service given. Round-trip expenses for food (\$15 a day) and travel are provided by the projects. The retreat brings volunteers together and provides opportunity for relaxation, reflection, and renewal. All volunteers are expected to attend the retreats.
- B. Retreat time is not to be considered vacation time by the project.
- C. Retreat dates for 2021 are as follows: March 22-26, 2021 for the Summer and Fall 2020 units.
- D. Retreats are held annually for volunteers in Europe and occasionally for volunteers in other international regions.

12. Volunteer Support

Volunteers can expect the BVS staff to care about them as a person and provide support for personal and spiritual growth. A period of adjustment is to be expected after arriving on project. Like any new adventure in a new setting, it is essential to reach out to persons in the local church or community and establish support. BVS staff are available to talk by calling (800) 323-8039.

- A. It is expected that an initial contact person will be assigned by the project director to greet the volunteers upon arrival and to acquaint them with resources in the community, such as church, shops, transportation, etc.

- B. Generally, the choice of church or other faith community and the kind of involvement is left to the volunteer's discretion. However, BVS encourages participation in a faith community so that one's spiritual life may be nurtured. Some projects may expect church participation as a part of the placement.
- C. Volunteers will receive support calls from the BVS staff.
- D. If possible, BVS staff will make personal visits to volunteers on project.
- E. In-service retreats are designed for volunteer support and enrichment.
- F. Volunteers are discouraged from soliciting extra funds for support from friends or their local church during their term of service. This does not apply to securing funds for their initial volunteer fee. Extra income is contrary to the spirit of equality and simple living among volunteers. Instead, volunteers might ask for letters or other kinds of support when persons offer money or suggest a contribution to the Church of the Brethren, designated for BVS.

13. Cars at Project

- A. BVS strongly discourages bringing a car to project. BVSers can't afford them. BVS encourages volunteers to live simply during their term of service. If the volunteer wishes to have a car on the assignment for personal use, please discuss this option with the director of BVS. The volunteer will need to cover the expenses for the car. An exception is made for older adults, who are invited to have a car if they choose.
- B. If a project expects a volunteer to use a personal car for work-related purposes, the project will cover transportation expenses such as mileage and insurance.

14. Evaluation

At the end of the term of service, the project director or supervisor will be asked to evaluate the volunteer's work performance and send the information to the BVS office. Volunteers will also be asked to evaluate the project and their experience.

15. Grievance Procedures

If the volunteer has a grievance that cannot be resolved through conversation with the immediate supervisor, project director, or the director of BVS, they may contact the manager of Human Resources of the Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Illinois, by calling (800) 323-8039 or (847) 742-5100. Project sites that do not have written grievance procedures agree to follow the Concerns Resolution Procedure as established by the Church of the Brethren (policy number 515).

16. Sexual Harassment

The Church of the Brethren has a policy statement on sexual harassment (policy number 514). A volunteer who is being sexually harassed should contact the director of BVS or the manager of Human Resources of the Church of the Brethren. Volunteers engaging in sexual harassment or misconduct will be dismissed from BVS.

17. International Policies

- A. U.S. volunteers serving overseas:
 1. Volunteers serving outside the US are charged a \$1,000 (\$750 for Church of the Brethren members) fee to help cover transportation costs.
 2. Return transportation to the U.S. is covered by the project or one of the programs within the Church of the Brethren.
 3. BVSers accepted at international assignments in countries requiring a visa or pre-clearance process will need to provide the funds for the initial set of fees. Ask staff for details, as fees vary by region. Subsequent visa fees will be covered by BVS, the project, or other sources.

4. Brethren Volunteer Service will not be held responsible for any volunteer who chooses to remain overseas after their termination date.
- B. International volunteers serving in the U.S.:
1. International volunteers serving in the U.S. are charged a \$500 fee.
 2. Transportation costs to the U.S., and from the point of departure for the return trip home are the volunteer's expense.
 3. Visa arrangements: Volunteers who come to the U.S. enter with an extended visitors exchange B1/B2 visa. This is not intended to be an avenue for immigration. The visa is valid only for service in BVS. International volunteers have the option to serve a second year in BVS, depending upon the approval of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service. After that time, the volunteer will need to leave the U.S.

18. Emergency Leaves

All emergency leaves are to be approved by the project director in consultation with the director of BVS. Expenses incurred will be assumed by the volunteer. Financial assistance may be given if the leave is the result of the death of an immediate family member (parent, sibling, grandparent).

19. Transfers

It is expected that the volunteer will complete the full term of service at one project unless problems arise. If a transfer becomes necessary, the transfer will be arranged by the director of BVS after consultation with the project director and the volunteer. Arrangements for the move will be made by the BVS staff.

20. Guests

Visits from relatives and friends are welcomed but are not to interfere with the work assignment. Volunteers should consult with the project director for policy and guidelines, especially when living on project premises.

21. Extension of Term of Service

- A. Volunteers who wish to remain at their assignments beyond the initial year (or six-month assignment for older adults) should first seek approval from the project director. With the approval of the project director, the volunteer should then contact the director of BVS. The volunteer and the project director should send a letter that outlines the extension to BVS.
- B. A volunteer who wishes to extend the term of service for an additional year but wishes to go to a new project must contact the director of BVS first.

22. Hostage Policy

In the event of volunteers or other staff being taken hostage, the Church of the Brethren policy states that no ransom will be paid. The Church of the Brethren will instead seek alternative nonviolent means of resolving the issue.

23. Student Loans

Participants in BVS may be eligible for deferment of government student loans for up to three years. Volunteers will likely have to claim economic hardship status when filing for deferment. Volunteers who have loans that must be deferred should contact their lender to initiate the process. If the volunteer needs assistance, contact the BVS office. New loan deferment forms are required from the lending agencies each year.

24. Communication and Social Media Policy

Church of the Brethren events are routinely covered by denominational communication staff. *I release Brethren Volunteer Service to use pictures and stories from my BVS experience for promotional purposes by Brethren Volunteer Service, Global Mission and Service, and the Church of*

the Brethren, including print and electronic resources.

- *I understand that I may be pictured on the website and have my work-related information (e-mail address, phone number, and project site) included.*
- *I understand that my personal address, phone number, and other similar information will be included only if specific permission from me is granted.*
- *I understand that if non-BVSers are photographed or named in a story, they may be identified by name or may remain anonymous.*
- *I understand that children under the age of 18 will not be identified in pictures or stories.*

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become part of everyday life, and BVS supports their responsible use by volunteers. BVS wants volunteers to understand the implications of their online activity and to be reminded that these sites are public and permanent. BVS expects volunteers to follow these guidelines while part of BVS:

- Volunteers are encouraged to share stories from their BVS experience online, making sure to respect the privacy of clients and staff of their project and of BVS.
- Volunteers should treat social media like a public place and should not write or post anything that they would not say in public.
- Posting false or denigrating statements about BVS or a project may affect the volunteer's assignment.

25. Criminal Background Checks

BVS requires a criminal background check and a motor vehicle report on all incoming volunteers. In the event that a response is returned to BVS indicating some past criminal history, BVS will be in communication with the volunteer regarding how this information will be handled and how it might affect a placement. BVS reserves the right to not place a volunteer in a particular assignment due to results from a background check.

INSURANCE COVERAGE

1. Liability Insurance

BVS expects that the project site carries appropriate and adequate liability insurance.

2. Medical

Volunteers in BVS are provided medical coverage, if needed, beginning the first day of orientation. This is a Cigna plan that aligns with requirements of the Affordable Care Act; it is set up in such a way that the volunteer will not be expected to pay most medical costs. The plan also includes medical evacuation coverage for those serving internationally.

Special notes about the plan are as follows:

- The volunteer will be given detailed information about the plan while at orientation and will receive more information after arriving at project.
- Projects have the option to place the volunteer on a medical plan provided by the project. BVS will work with the project to ensure that the medical plan provides adequate coverage.
- If the volunteer is currently covered under a family or independent medical plan, BVS encourages continuing that coverage if possible. Volunteers who maintain their own medical coverage will be responsible for all medical costs.
- If the volunteer has other coverage such as Medicare or a retirement medical plan, enrollment in the BVS medical plan is optional.
- The volunteer will be responsible for medical expenses that are not covered under the medical plan.
- Volunteers will be covered to the end of the month of their end of service date. The medical plan is not available for purchase after their term of service.

3. Dental and Optical Assistance

The medical insurance plan does not cover dental and optical costs; however, limited dental and optical assistance is provided through BVS. BVS will pay 50% of any dental and optical needs up to \$100 per volunteer year. (Example: if optical costs are \$150, BVS will pay \$75; if optical costs are \$250, BVS will pay \$100.) BVS will pay up to \$100 for dental and \$100 for optical expenses.

4. Personal Items

BVS does not carry insurance to cover theft, loss or damage to personal items including but not limited to cell phones, computers, cars, bikes, and cameras.

Project Signature Page

This is a covenant between you and Brethren Volunteer Service, a Church of the Brethren program.

By signing this covenant, I acknowledge that the project carries adequate and appropriate liability insurance.

Please indicate your annual budget to determine placement fee (circle one).

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. CoB Project (congregation, camp, home, etc): | \$3,150 |
| 2. Annual Budget up to \$500,000 | \$3,400 |
| 3. Annual Budget \$500,001 to \$1,500,000 | \$3,900 |
| 4. Annual Budget \$1,500,001 + | \$4,400 |

This covenant is effective during: _____

Your signature and the signature of the director of Brethren Volunteer Service are necessary for this covenant to become a reality and for you to officially become a project of Brethren Volunteer Service.

Project number

Project name

Date signed

Project director

Date signed

Director, Brethren Volunteer Service

Note: The volunteer will have signed the following statement in their covenant:

My signature below confirms my intent to enter BVS as a volunteer. In addition, I confirm that I have read the policies and the misconduct statement (section 10.E) detailed in the Volunteer Covenant and that I agree to abide by these policies during my service as a volunteer. I further acknowledge that violation of any BVS policy may result in my immediate dismissal from a project and from BVS.