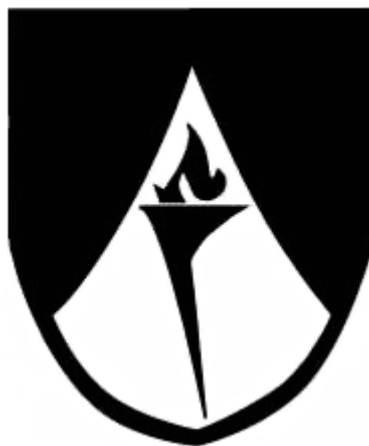


DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA



PROGRAM HANDBOOK 2008-2009

*All I want is love.
If you are bound by My love,
you will do everything you can
to be of service wherever you are.*

-God speaks to St. Catherine of Siena, *Dialogue*

Dominican Volunteers USA
1914 S. Ashland Ave, 2nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60608
(773) 524-5984/5 <http://dvusa.org>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Program Description	3
Ministry	3
Community & Spirituality	4
What to Bring	4
Financial Considerations	5
Stipend	5
Room & Board	5
Health Insurance	5
Transportation	5
AmeriCorps Education Award	6
Student Loan Deferment information	6
Policies	7
Non-discrimination and Non-harassment	
Drug and Alcohol	
Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment	
Confidentiality	
Conflict Resolution	
Grievance	
Emergency Procedures	10
Appendices	11
Criminal Background Check	
Signature Page	
Sample Contract	



Welcome to DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA!

Thank you for considering volunteer service with DVUSA this year. This handbook provides information about volunteering, ministries and communities as well as our policies. If you choose to serve with DVUSA, this book will remain helpful during the volunteer year.

Please join us for this experience of a lifetime!

Mission Statement

Dominican Volunteers USA searches for new frontiers for the faith by inviting men and women to walk with us in mission as volunteers. Together, we respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers, especially those who are poor and marginalized. We live out the Dominican mission of proclaiming the gospel through our ministry, common life, prayer and study within a diverse, intergenerational community.

History

DVUSA was established in June of 2001 by several congregations and provinces of Dominican sisters and priests around the United States. The Dominicans – also known as the Order of Preachers – are an international order committed to the preaching of the gospel. Prior to DVUSA, there were several other Dominican sponsored volunteer programs in the United States, including the Apostolic Volunteers and the Southern Dominican Volunteers. These regional programs merged to form one national Dominican-sponsored organization serving the United States.

Contact Us:

Regina Botterill, Executive Director
1914 South Ashland Aveune, 2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60608
(708) 524-5984
rbotterill@dvusa.org

Anthony Butler, Assistant Director
1914 South Ashland Aveune, 2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60608
(708) 524-5985
dominicanvolunteers@gmail.com
<http://dvusa.org>

About the Program

DVUSA is a domestic program, offering a full-time ministry experience to our volunteers. We place up to 25 volunteers around the United States each year. Our volunteers serve in a variety of ministries and live in intergenerational Dominican communities. Volunteers commit a minimum of ten months, and usually serve from mid-August to mid-June.

The DVUSA experience has three basic tenets: ministry, community and spirituality.

Ministry

Ministry is at the heart of the volunteer experience. It is your desire to serve that has brought you to us. We honor you for choosing to spend your year ministering to others. Your presence and commitment are a powerful witness to the gospel. Whatever your abilities and experience, we want to place you in a ministry that is challenging and rewarding to you, provides a much needed service, and brings about positive change in our world.

We place volunteers in peace and justice organizations, schools, adult learning centers, social service agencies, parishes, organic farms and other community based organizations. Volunteers work as community organizers, peace and justice organizers, nurses, case workers, teachers or teacher's aides, adult education instructors, environmental educators, farmers, and other positions. Each volunteer is called to preach the good news of Christ's justice and peace through his or her ministry.

DVUSA makes every effort to find the right match between you, your ministry site and your community. Starting with your skills, interests, and geographical preferences, DVUSA works closely with Dominican sisters and priests to find ministry sites that provide volunteers with an opportunity to serve a marginalized community, to work for peace and justice, as well as pursue personal and professional development.

In trying to find the right match for everyone involved, the placement process can take time. We ask you to be open to the many possibilities and to be patient and flexible during the placement period. You will be interviewed by the site via phone before the placement process is complete. Volunteers are encouraged (but not required) to visit the site ahead of time. However, DVUSA does not assist with these travel costs.

The volunteer makes a minimum ten-month commitment to his or her ministry site. Start and end dates are negotiated directly with your site. You are expected to work full-time (at least 40 hours/week) at your ministry. While you are a volunteer, you are expected to have the same commitment and responsibilities as a full-time staff member of your site. As such, you will be evaluated by your site at least once during the year. Time off is determined by your supervisor and should be agreed upon early in the year.

Volunteers are encouraged to take the ministry opportunity to participate in creating a more just world, learn new skills, seek mentoring, and discern future career possibilities. You are strongly discouraged from taking courses, and are prohibited from taking any outside employment during your volunteer year. And because of the intense immersion element of the experience, volunteers are discouraged from taking multiple trips. You are expected to complete your ten-month commitment except for cases of personal or family emergencies.

Community

Dominican Volunteers live in intergenerational Dominican communities. Communities are primarily made up of sisters or priests who are excited to open their homes to volunteers. These communities provide a strong spiritual life for you to participate in as well as mentoring relationships. Your community is there to support you in your ministry, relationships, and of course, to have fun! Most volunteers find that they form life-long friendships with their host community members.

The volunteer is expected to participate in community life, usually through evening meals and daily or weekly communal prayer, social activities, celebrations and house retreats. There are many opportunities for spontaneous community building through the year. While volunteers are not treated as vowed members, they are expected to participate in all local community activities. At the heart of community life is mutual self-giving. We ask you to give deeply of yourself and to give time to the cultivation of relationships within your community.

Volunteers are also encouraged to develop peer relationships outside the house. Every effort is made to connect you to other volunteers living and working in your area. Volunteers are encouraged to invite family and friends to visit during the year. (Be sure to ask your community about guest policies.)

Volunteers are often placed singly in a community, though occasionally there are 2-3 volunteers living in a community together. Some major cities have more than one host community (i.e. New York and Chicago) and the volunteer may have some choice about the community with which she or he lives. In most cases, the volunteer is placed in the available local community. You will have the opportunity to visit with your new community on the phone before deciding to commit to DVUSA. One Dominican member of the community serves as the program contact person, and can provide support for you as well as liaison with the DVUSA office.

Spirituality

There are a number of opportunities for spiritual growth and development. Volunteers attend **three retreats** during the year. Orientation occurs in early August and usually lasts 6 days. We come together for a long weekend in January or February, and celebrate the closing of our year in early June. Our retreats are held in different locations around the United States and feature many wonderful speakers and prayer leaders.

These gatherings give the volunteers a real break, a change of scenery, time to reconnect with each other, and the benefit of many wonderful speakers and retreat directors around the United States, as well as exposure to the diverse nation-wide Dominican Family.

Your community also provides opportunities for spiritual growth and sharing with weekly or daily prayer, as well as shared meals. House retreats are encouraged. If you are interested in seeking spiritual direction, we may assist in finding someone in your area. Opportunities for meeting mentors are usually plentiful during the volunteer year.

What to bring? You should bring clothing and personal items you need to feel at home for the year. Check with your site supervisor regarding appropriate work attire. All communities will provide you with a furnished bedroom. Ask your local community what else is necessary. Many communities have internet access, but you may want to inquire with them about bringing your personal computer.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The volunteer year is intended to have a neutral financial impact on you, the volunteer. However, only you can decide if volunteering is the right financial decision for you.

Room and board will be paid directly to your community and will cover all your rent, food, household, and some personal expenses.

You will receive a monthly **stipend** of \$100 (after taxes) directly from your site. You will also receive \$300 at the end of your service to assist you in traveling to your next destination.

Health insurance will be provided to you through your agency. However, you may want to inquire with your parents or employer about your current health insurance policy. If you choose to stay on your current policy via COBRA, the site may reimburse you or your family for the premium. We recommend that you not cancel any insurance policy until September 1st, or when you have received new proof of coverage.

You will be reimbursed for your daily **transportation costs** to and from your ministry site. This may take the form of a bus/train pass, or mileage reimbursement. Volunteers are encouraged to use public transportation whenever possible. Most ministry/community sites do not have extra cars available to the volunteer, though many are willing to allow volunteers to borrow cars on weekends. If you own a car and would like to bring it with you, you are responsible for your own insurance. If a car is *required* by your ministry site, arrangements will be made for the ministry site to assist with part of your car insurance costs. Personal travel on weekends and holidays is your financial responsibility.

Other Benefits: Volunteering for a year can seem like you are giving up a lot, especially in terms of financial income. Bear in mind when making a decision that volunteering gives you concrete work experience. Graduate schools and employers tend to respect volunteering very highly, seeing it as genuine work and life experience and demonstrating strong character traits. The benefits you gain from volunteering will likely far exceed anything you gave up for the year!

Joining DVUSA gives you the opportunity to meet and network with Dominicans around the United States. The Dominican Order sees itself as a family with many different kinds of membership. Volunteers are a part of that family. Our ministry and community models allow our volunteers to develop close relationships to the Dominicans, bringing friendship, mentoring opportunities, and contacts for the future.

Student Loan Deferment Information

Many Dominican Volunteers are faced with the repayment of student loans upon graduating from college and joining our program. You should be aware that many borrowers are able to allow deferment or forbearance on their school loans. Both loan deferment and loan forbearance allow borrowers to postpone loan payments during the deferment or forbearance period.

Deferment is typically available for federal loans. During a typical deferment period, interest does not accrue. During forbearance, interest will accrue. If your loans only qualify for forbearance, you still may be able to get your interest reimbursed through the Corporation for National Service (www.nationalservice.org), as long as you successfully complete your year of service and complete an accrual form.

NOTE: The options and requirements will vary from lender to lender. You must contact your lending or education institution to explore your options for student loan repayment postponement. We recommend calling an agent by phone. This is not something that DVUSA staff can arrange. If your lender requires proof of participation in the program, or other DVUSA materials, please contact Tony Butler to gather that information.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Non-discrimination and Non-Harassment Policy

DVUSA does not discriminate in program admission based on race, color, sexual orientation, military discharge, sex, national origin, age, disability, religion or any other characteristic unrelated to the ability to perform the essential functions or basic tenets of DVUSA, or any bona fide occupational qualifications.

DVUSA is founded and rooted in the tradition of the Order of Preachers. The program has a distinct Roman Catholic heritage, which all applicants will understand is the spiritual foundation of DVUSA. Individuals of any Christian motivation are welcome to apply.

DVUSA will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with known disabilities who can perform the essential functions of a placement, as long as the accommodation does not impose an undue hardship on DVUSA. This policy governs all aspects of the program, including selection, placement assignment, compensation, and access to benefits and training.

DVUSA makes every effort to ensure that its placement agencies have similar non-discrimination policies. Any volunteer with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in his or her placement workplace is encouraged to bring these issues to the director. If the placement agency is found to be engaging in such activities, removal of current volunteer(s) (and denial of future volunteers at that agency) can result.

Discrimination on the part of fellow Dominican Volunteers will also not be tolerated. Anyone found to be engaging in any type of unlawful or harassing discrimination will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

Dominican Volunteers are prohibited from unlawfully manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing or using a controlled substance. Additionally, the volunteer must notify DVUSA immediately if she or he is arrested or detained on suspicion of any criminal drug statute violation. Drug convictions may impact your eligibility to receive an AmeriCorps Education Award.

The legal use of prescribed drugs is permitted on the job only if it does not impair a volunteer's ability to perform the essential functions of the placement effectively and in a safe manner that does not endanger other individuals in the placement site.

Violations of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal from the program. Such violations may also have legal consequences. Volunteers are subject to all state and local laws regarding drug and alcohol use, and the drug policies of their ministry sites. DVUSA will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of criminal conduct of any kind and will cooperate in their investigation.

Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment

DVUSA is committed to providing a community and placement environment that is free of discrimination and unlawful harassment. Actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, age, religion or any other legally protected characteristic will not be tolerated. As an example, sexual harassment (both overt and subtle) is a form of employee misconduct that is demeaning to another person, undermines integrity of the ministry or community relationship, and is strictly prohibited.

Any volunteer who wants to report an incident of sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly report the matter to her or his supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or the volunteer believes it would be inappropriate to contact that person, the volunteer should contact the DVUSA office.

Anyone engaging in sexual or other unlawful harassment will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program. DVUSA will comply with all applicable civil laws with respect to the reporting of allegations of criminal conduct of any kind and will cooperate in their investigation. The DVUSA director has the discretion of removing volunteers from a placement where sexual or other unlawful harassment is taking place.

Confidentiality

The protection of confidential information is vital to the interests of Dominican Volunteers USA. Volunteers who improperly disclose confidential information (of fellow volunteers, students or clients, ministry site co-workers or members of the community) will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Conflict Resolution

DVUSA makes every effort to maintain an open and communicative environment for all involved in our program. Volunteers are encouraged to work out any conflict on their own within their ministry site and their community.

If there is a conflict between the volunteer and the site supervisor, the volunteer should set an appointment with the supervisor, name the complaint and seek resolution. If resolution does not occur, the volunteer should set an appointment with the site administrator, name the complaint, and seek resolution. If resolution does not occur, contact the director of DVUSA to discuss the matter and consider options.

If there is tension in the community with one or more persons, the volunteer is expected to address the situation directly with the community member. If the issue pertains to the entire house, the volunteer should address the issue during an appropriate community meeting. The volunteer is encouraged to speak to the community contact person regarding questions or issues in the house.

The site visit by the director is a good opportunity to bring conflicts to the surface. The director is happy to facilitate conversations between the volunteer and her or his employer

and his or her community. The staff is always available to listen and lend support during difficult (and good!) times. The director may be able to make an additional visit during the year if absolutely needed.

Dismissal Policy

In rare cases, a volunteer may be asked to leave the program. Such an action will only be taken after careful deliberation among the ministry supervisor, the community, and DVUSA staff.

The following constitute reasons for dismissal from a particular ministry:

*Unsatisfactory performance: this includes failure to engage at the most basic level that the ministry requires, inability or unwillingness to meet prescribed goals and objectives, and unprofessional representation of the ministry.

*Misconduct: this includes deliberate and willful violation of job procedures and policies, dishonesty, theft of property, substance abuse, or sexual harassment.

In situations of unsatisfactory performance, a warning discussion must have taken place between the supervisor and the DV to assure that the DV was made aware of the problem and required steps for improvement. If a work re-assignment is possible, then this may also be considered in this context. Also included in the warning will be an outline for where and how performance fails to meet standards, the length of time in which these standards must be met, and that the DV may be asked to leave the ministry if the criteria are not achieved. A written summary of this warning conversation will also be sent to the DVUSA office. In situations of misconduct, a DV may be asked to leave without utilizing the warning process.

Grievance Procedure

A grievance is a complaint regarding the violation of policy or procedure, or a decision that is considered to be unjust, oppressive or discriminatory. If the volunteer has a grievance toward DVUSA, the volunteer is welcome to contact the director to attempt resolution. If that meeting is unsuccessful in resolving the matter, the volunteer is welcome to submit the grievance in writing within five business days and request a meeting with the DVUSA President of the Board of Trustees. The outcome of the meeting with the President will be issued in writing and considered final and binding. All grievance proceedings will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those individuals who have a need to know about it.

Emergency Procedures

The DVUSA office views all of our volunteers as adults capable of self-care and decision making. We make an effort not to insert our wishes or opinions except when needed, asked, or when something seems to have gone far astray from the program's basic tenets and values. We do however expect to be informed of the following issues: (this list is not exhaustive; when in doubt please do not hesitate to call the office)

- Any emergency involving "life or limb" occurs to one or more volunteers, including natural disaster, terrorist attack, accident, or other event. The DVUSA staff expects a phone call IMMEDIATELY, no matter the time of day;
- Whenever there is an emergency in the area, we expect a call to let us know your condition. For example, if there is a hurricane or earthquake in your community, but you are not affected, make a quick call to let us know.
- If you are injured or ill to the point of needing emergency care or hospitalization, but the situation is stable, please call (or designate someone to call) right away or during the next business day.
- If you are released from a placement for any reason, or are notified of a pending release, or anticipate leaving the placement, a call is expected during the next business day.
- Other situations may arise in which you feel a need to inform the DVUSA office, such as financial issues, disputes or other incidents. In these cases, we welcome the call and will assist with developing potential solutions for you to review.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

DVUSA STAFF	Tony	708-524-5985 (office) 773-793-0848 (cell) dominicanvolunteers@gmail.com
	Regina	708-524-5984 (office) 773-983-0342 (cell) rbotterill@dom.edu



**DOMINICAN
VOLUNTEERS
USA**

1914 S. Ashland Ave., 2nd fl.
CHICAGO, IL 60608
PHONE: 708-524-5984
708-524-5985

**Background Check
Applicant Release and Authorization Form**

I hereby authorize Dominican Volunteers USA or authorized representatives of the company bearing this release to obtain and release any information pertaining to my background, including any criminal history or driving history records, for employment or volunteer purposes. I hereby fully release and discharge my prospective employer or other source providing information from all claims and damages arising out of or relating to any investigation of my background for said purposes.

PLEASE PROVIDE MINIMUM OF 7 YEARS RESIDENTIAL HISTORY.

Name: _____ Alias/Other: _____
(First, Middle, Last –Print Clearly)

Date of Birth: _____ Social Sec. No.: _____

Driver’s Lic. No.: _____ State: _____

Signature: _____

1) Current Address: _____ City/State: _____

County: _____ Dates/From: _____ To: _____

2) Previous Address: _____ City/State: _____

County: _____ Dates/From: _____ To: _____

3) Previous Address: _____ City/State: _____

County: _____ Dates/From: _____ To: _____

Witnessed by: _____ Date: _____



DOMINICAN
VOLUNTEERS
USA

1914 S. Ashland Ave., 2nd fl.
CHICAGO, IL 60608
PHONE: 708-524-5984
708-524-5985

ACCEPTANCE OF PROGRAM MANUAL

Please sign and date below and return this page to the DVUSA office in the envelope provided.

I have received and read the Dominican Volunteers USA Program Manual. By participating in DVUSA, I agree to abide by all policies outlined within the Program Manual. DVUSA reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer who fails to comply with the stated policies.

Signed

Date

Received by DVUSA:

Signed

Date



CONTRACT AGREEMENT

The Dominican Volunteers USA Program offers full-time work opportunities to lay men and women. The Volunteer understands that the work is a ministry of service, rather than a mere term of employment. The Volunteer understands that s/he may live in a Christian Community of members who want to share common life and prayer together. Participation in such activities is encouraged, but not required.

This agreement is made by and between:

NAME (hereafter called the "Employer")

NAME (hereafter called the "Volunteer")

Dominican Volunteers USA
NAME (hereafter called the "Program")

I. EMPLOYER-VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP

A. Work Description/Responsibilities

1. The Employer agrees to provide a full-time position, complete with job description and specific responsibilities and duties. (Description is to be attached to this contract.)
2. The Employer agrees to provide the Volunteer with in-service training and on-going direction in the ministry as needed.
3. The Employer agrees to do an evaluation with the Volunteer twice during the year – once half-way through the term of service and once at the end of it.
4. The Employer agrees to honor the program's commitment to community by assuring that work hours allow for the volunteer to participate in community activities.
5. The Volunteer agrees to perform all duties listed in the attached work description faithfully and satisfactorily and to comply with and abide by all reasonable rules and regulations promulgated by the Employer.
6. The Volunteer shall devote her/his time, attention and energies assumed by him/her referred to in paragraph #1 and #4 and shall not during the time of this agreement be engaged in any other business activity whether or not such activity is pursued for profit or gain.

B. Terms and Conditions of Employment

7. The Employer understands that the Volunteer attends a weeklong program orientation in August, before the term of service, and a mid-year retreat weekend in January or February.
8. The Employer agrees to pay the Volunteer's travel expenses for an evaluation weekend in late spring.
9. **STIPEND:** The Employer agrees to pay the Volunteer a stipend of \$100 (plus applicable taxes) for each and every month of employment and \$300 at the end of the 10-month service term. In the event the Volunteer is employed for another consecutive year, the Employer agrees to pay the Volunteer a stipend of \$125 for each and every month of employment and \$300 at the end of that service term.
10. **ROOM AND BOARD:** The Employer shall pay the room and board expenses for the Volunteer.

11. TRANSPORTATION: In the event that the housing for the Volunteer is located more than one-half mile from the work site or that travel is connected with the Volunteer's work, the Employer agrees to provide transportation or reimbursement for travel expenses for each prescribed work day.
Transportation/reimbursement:_____

12. BENEFITS:

- a. The Employer agrees to provide adequate Health Insurance to the volunteer effective on the first day of employment. OR the employer agrees to pay the Health Insurance premiums for the Volunteer for each and every month of employment in the form of reimbursement to DVUSA or to the volunteer in the amount of \$_____.
- b. The Employer and the Volunteer shall negotiate sick days and vacations.

C. Termination of Contract

13. The Employer agrees to employ the Volunteer provided by the Program for the position described above for the period beginning on _____, 20____ and ending on _____, 20____.

14. The Volunteer may be dismissed from employment for cause by the Employer in which event the Employer must give the volunteer at least 14 days written notice of intent to remove her/him from the position. Said notice will be sent concurrently to the Dominican Volunteers USA.

15. The Volunteer agrees not to terminate this contract, except for causes beyond her or his control, in which event she or he must submit to the Employer a written note stating the cause. The Volunteer agrees to continue working at least 14 days after the written notice is received by the Employer or until the Employer places another person in the position, whichever occurs first.

II EMPLOYER-PROGRAM RELATIONSHIP

16. The Employer agrees to pay a \$500 fee to the Program for each Volunteer in their employment. The Employer may pay the fee in full after the first month of the Volunteer's employment or half of the fee after the first month of employment and the remainder not later than the end of the sixth month.

17. In the event a Volunteer's employment is terminated prior to his/her contract period, the Program is NOT required:

- a. To provide additional candidates for the vacated position.
- b. To return the fee paid to the Program.

III PROGRAM-VOLUNTEER RELATIONSHIP

18. The program will not be liable for loss or damage of any kind as a result of the conduct of the Volunteers, nor shall the Program be liable for any injury or death to the Volunteer while in the Program.

IV MODIFICATION OF THE CONTRACT

19. This instrument contains the agreement of the parties, including the following:

20. It may not be changed orally but only on agreement in writing signed by the party against whom any waiver, change, modification, extension, or discharge is sought.

By: _____
Employer's Signature Date

Address City State Zip

By: _____
Volunteer's Signature Date

Address City State Zip

By: _____
Dominican Volunteers USA Director's Signature Date
1914 S. Ashland Avenue, 2nd Fl. Chicago, IL 60608
Address City State Zip