



# MINISTRY

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Program Nuts and Bolts

What is the mission of DVUSA? Dominican Volunteers USA invites men and women to serve in mission as volunteers. DV's live out the Dominican mission of proclaiming the gospel through ministry, common life, prayer and study within diverse, intergenerational communities.

What are appropriate ministries? DV's are engaged as activists, teachers, program coordinators for social service agencies, nurses, and even as organic farmers. Preferences are made for positions that focus on social change and are centered on the needs of the marginalized. Preference is also made for ministries in which Dominican sisters and friars are already engaged, and for those that are in urban areas where public transportation is readily available.

How long is the program year? The volunteer "year" is ten months, from August-June. Some sites may negotiate a term of service up to 12 months, and some volunteers opt to do a second term of service.

Where do volunteers live? Dominican Volunteers live in community with vowed Dominican sisters or friars, and in most cases, with other volunteers. Placement with your organization will also depend on securing a spot for the volunteer in an appropriate community.

### Training, Supervision, and Evaluation

What are the expectations of site supervisors? Sites are expected to provide full-time positions, with specific responsibilities, regular evaluation, and necessary training. Overall, the position should be engaging and challenging. The best situations are also flexible, allowing room to discover and utilize the particular gifts of the volunteer.

Do volunteers get other training? The volunteers participate in a week-long orientation and training in August. The orientation program may include training and preparation for specific job categories, such as for religious organizing or teaching, depending on the mix of sites for a particular program year. The volunteers also re-gather in February for a mid-year retreat, which provides time for reflection and goal evaluation. A final retreat provides program closure in June.

What is the time-off policy for volunteers? Employers are expected to provide time off for the DVUSA orientation and retreats, as well as to fulfill essential local community

responsibilities. In addition, volunteers should receive the same vacation and sick time benefits as full-time, first year employees.

## Cost to Sites

General Philosophy: The program is intended to have a neutral financial impact on the volunteer and the hosting community, and at the same time to provide ministries with low-cost staff that they otherwise could not afford. Although they are referred to as “volunteers,” it may be more helpful to think of them as mission interns.

Cost for Budgeting Purposes: The total cost for 10 months will likely be around \$10,000. Variance depends mostly on transportation and health insurance costs. We recommend that organizations consider a budget of \$15,000 a year, as an amount ample for virtually all situations.

What does this cover exactly?

Room and Board:	Usually around \$400/mo.
Stipend:	\$100/mo. (after taxes)
Health Insurance:	Must cover accident and hospitalization. Some volunteers will require a COBRA co-pay.
Transportation:	A monthly transit pass or mileage related to work, in places where a car is required. Note: most DV’s will not have a car, and ministries may need to provide one if they want a DV.
Other:	\$300, at end of service to ease the transition \$800 by October 1 to DVUSA for administrative expenses and travel costs.

## Process

How do we become a site? Contact the DVUSA office and/or return a volunteer request form. The matching process starts February 15 and goes through July 1. Sites that apply and are approved of early have the best chance of getting a match.

Once we are approved as a site, are we guaranteed to have a DV? No. Matching depends on a variety of factors, including finding an appropriate volunteer fit for your needs, securing a spot in a local Dominican community, and mutual agreement once a site is recommended.

Once a DV is recommended to us, what then? Staff will contact both you and the volunteer, share the information, help make the connection, and work closely in moving forward. Staff recommend that all prospective DV’s meet in person with their ministries if possible. All must agree before a match is finalized.

What happens when a match is “finalized”? Once everyone agrees to move forward, DVUSA staff will discuss the three-way contract in more detail and issue a confirmation letter. In the first week of ministry (mid-late August), the site will discuss the 3-way

contract with the volunteer in person, make appropriate changes, sign it and return it to the DVUSA office.

What do volunteers do after the program ends? For many, the DVUSA experience is the beginning of a life-long commitment to working for justice and peace. Some volunteers continue on as salaried employees at their placements, while others seek positions in other agencies. Others go on to graduate school to pursue careers of service (social work, education, law, medicine, Seminary). There is also the opportunity for a second year of volunteer service. In general, volunteers gain valuable work and life experience that is well respected and helpful in whatever they choose to do next.

**Dominican Volunteers USA**  
7200 W. Division, River Forest, IL 60305  
(708) 524-5984/5; [dvusa@dom.edu](mailto:dvusa@dom.edu)