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ADVENTIST VOLUNTEER SERVICE

R 05 Adventist Volunteer Service

The Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS) plan for the world-wide Church is designed to provide service opportunities for Seventh-day Adventists who want to share in the joy of taking the gospel to the world, matching their talents, gifts, resources and professional expertise with defined needs. It includes both the intra-division and inter-division plans.

R 10 Adventist Volunteer Service Within the Division

R 10 05 Adventist Volunteer Service Plan—1. Unions/attached fields desiring to adopt an Adventist Volunteer Service plan for their territories may do so following the guidelines outlined in the Inter-division Adventist Volunteer Service policy.

2. *Service within the Union*—When a local Adventist Volunteer Service office proposes sending volunteers to projects within the Division, it will do so according to a financial and insurance coverage plan mutually agreed upon by the sponsoring organisation and the field to be benefited by the service.

R 15 Inter-division Adventist Volunteer Service

R 15 05 Inter-division Adventist Volunteer Service Plan—

1. Seventh-day Adventist Church members, 18 years of age and older, may offer their services as volunteers under this plan.

2. *Definition of a Regular Seventh-day Adventist Volunteer*—A regular Seventh-day Adventist volunteer is an individual who offers his/her time, talent, gifts, resources, and services to assist with the spreading of the gospel, without remuneration, but who may receive reimbursement for some expenses.

3. *Definition of a Supported Seventh-day Adventist Volunteer*—A supported Seventh-day Adventist volunteer is an individual who offers his/her services on a volunteer basis, but who has all expenses paid and who receives an additional living allowance.

4. The most common needs are for volunteers who are able to minister in the following areas of service: lay evangelism, church planting, door-to-door work, preaching, Bible studies, pastoral counseling, teaching, medical and dental care, building and construction, office work, etc. Retired denominational and non-denominational personnel are also needed for short-term programmes or for temporary (relief) positions.

R 15 10 Selection and Assignment Procedures—1. Carefully selected volunteers may be offered the opportunity of serving in the Adventist Volunteer Service plan.

2. The essential factors considered in assessing the eligibility of an Adventist Volunteer shall include, but not be limited to, the following: confirmation of membership in a Seventh-day Adventist church, references (including screening for unlawful conduct), educational qualifications, a health certificate, Accident and Sickness Protection for Volunteers insurance, satisfactory financial support, and compliance with immigration requirements.

All applications shall be sent through the regular channels to the Division Volunteer Service Director.

3. The service of volunteers shall generally be for periods up to two years. Volunteers serving less than two months shall not normally be required to complete the regular health evaluation but may be required to agree to minimal screening. Organisations should be discouraged from taking advantage of volunteers, such as encouraging them to stay for long periods of time.

4. Retirement credit and/or retirement contributions are not generally provided for those who serve on a volunteer basis. Exceptions are made in specific cases if recommended by the requesting organisation and approved by the base division, and if allowed under the retirement plan policies of the base division and applicable law.

5. Volunteers shall not receive a salary but may receive an allowance/reimbursement to meet certain expenses incident to the volunteer service, provided it does not contravene the employment laws of the country of service. Compliance with taxation laws is the responsibility of the volunteer and the requesting organisation.

6. Because marriage is a God-ordained institution and its sanctity must be guarded, volunteers and their spouses are expected to live together in the field of service. A married volunteer shall not be recruited to serve without his/her spouse for a period longer than three consecutive months. However, should the spouse join the volunteer prior to the end of the three-month term, the assignment may be extended if the spouse remains in the field for the extended period. If, on the other hand, the spouse of a volunteer leaves the field for a period longer than three consecutive months, the volunteer shall be required to terminate his/her service and return home.

R 15 15 Inter-division Adventist Volunteer Service Procedures— Organisations sponsoring volunteers for inter-division service shall be guided by the following:

1. The General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre, in consultation with the General Conference International Personnel Resources and Services (IPRS), shall give direction to the Division Adventist Volunteer Service programme. The Division shall appoint a director to co-ordinate its Adventist Volunteer Service programme and to serve as the liaison person with the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre. The General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre shall:

a. Publish electronically all officially approved volunteer requests from the Division Adventist Volunteer Service office on the General

Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre Web site
<http://www.adventistvolunteers.org>.

b. Assist the Division in its responsibility with promoting, recruiting, and processing Adventist Volunteer Service volunteers within its field.

1) When an applicant has been approved, the Division Secretary/Adventist Volunteer Service Director shall send a copy of the application forms and references to the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre. The General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre shall notify the requesting and sending divisions of the listing number assigned to the volunteer or, if required, shall contact the requesting division, sending copies of the application forms and references to verify the assignment before notifying the sending division of the assigned listed number.

All volunteer requests and assignments shall be authorised at each level of the organisation but not by committee vote. Adventist Volunteer Service directors shall approve volunteer requests and assignments on the basis that committees record these at a later time. Requesting organisations shall be granted authority to send volunteer requests directly to the Division Adventist Volunteer Service Director, provided that each level of the organisation receives a copy by facsimile or e-mail. Assignments shall be cared for in a similar manner. However, adequate time must be allowed for all levels of the organisation to object to the request or assignment. If no one objects within the specified time set by each division, the request or assignment proceeds without further deliberation.

2) The Division shall assist the volunteer in obtaining all travel documents and shall apply for the Accident and Sickness Protection for Volunteers insurance coverage through Adventist Risk Management. The Division shall also have the option to advise volunteers how airline tickets should be purchased.

c. Approve and produce a variety of forms for all divisions as required, such as: Adventist Volunteer Service Health Certificate, Adventist Volunteer Service Request Form, Adventist Volunteer Service Reference Form, and Adventist Volunteer Service Application Form.

2. Volunteers should have been members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church for no less than one year, and in regular standing.

3. Volunteers should be in good health and shall be required to undertake a medical examination by a qualified practitioner if the appointment is for two months or more.

4. All requests for college and university volunteers for the ensuing year shall be approved by the Division committee and shall be sent to the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre approximately eight months prior to the departure date. Other requests for volunteers, approved in a similar manner, may be submitted at any time. All such requests shall include the following:

a. The level of education and skills required of the applicant.

b. The time period the volunteer is required to serve.

- c. The financial benefits offered, if any.
- 5. For Adventist Mission projects, the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre, in co-operation with the General Conference Adventist Mission office and the administration of the Division, shall select an unentered territory within that division and
 - a. Select the type of activity to be used to establish a church presence.
 - b. Promote the evangelism project.
 - c. Recruit and train an international volunteer team (the size to be determined by the project directors).
 - d. Determine the length of service for the project (one year or longer).
 - e. Recruit and train a new team to complete the project as deemed necessary by the directors.

The General Conference Adventist Mission office shall share in the funding of volunteer projects in harmony with the General Conference Adventist Mission Operating Committee's funding criteria.

6. All volunteers shall be screened for their suitability for a particular assignment and for their commitment to the mission of the Church. Should the requesting organisation fail to follow normal screening procedures or choose to ignore the advice of the home division regarding volunteers, the home division is not responsible for resolving any difficulties that may arise during the period of service.

7. In the event that volunteers need to be disciplined and sent home prior to completing their terms of service, it shall be the responsibility of the requesting organisation to arrange for their repatriation, which may include the cost of air fares. The home division shall not be responsible for any repatriation expenses.

8. In cases where the volunteer assignment is expressed in contractual terms, the requesting organisations are bound to honour such agreements.

9. The programmes, activities, and supervision of volunteers while in the field shall be approved by the requesting division.

10. Volunteers who participate in Adventist Development and Relief Agency projects may do so under special arrangements.

11. Volunteers who do not receive missionary orientation on a Seventh-day Adventist college/university campus shall be required to complete the *Passport to Mission* course.

R 15 20 Basis of Division Volunteer Requests—1. The division requesting the services of volunteers shall do so on the following basis:

- a. Work assignments for volunteers shall be limited to short-term programmes or to temporary (relief) positions.
- b. Volunteers who are serving currently and who wish to extend their term of service may be granted approval to do so after the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre and the sending division have been notified by the requesting division.

c. The General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre shall publicise the Adventist Volunteer Service plan and the list of service opportunities submitted by the divisions.

R 15 25 Financial Responsibility—Division—1. The division which sends volunteers shall:

a. Ensure that all volunteers have been provided with Adventist Volunteer Service (AVS) insurance coverage prior to departure.

b. Be responsible for any claims incurred by the volunteer which are normally met by AVS insurance if the division, after being properly notified, fails to arrange for insurance coverage for an approved volunteer.

2. The organisation which receives volunteers shall be financially responsible for the following:

a. Insurance Coverage

1) For any claims normally met by AVS insurance, incurred by the volunteer if the organisation fails to follow proper calling procedures, resulting in the failure to provide AVS insurance coverage for the volunteer.

2) The cost of premiums for AVS insurance which provides the following:

a) Accident and Sickness Protection for Volunteers insurance policy (limited accident and sickness coverage as outlined in policy brochure)

b) Worker's Compensation for volunteers

c) Personal Effects Baggage Insurance (Personal Effects Floater)

3) Insurance deductible under the Accident and Sickness Protection for Volunteers insurance policy.

4) Ensuring that insurance coverage is in place for all volunteers extending their service beyond the limit of initial coverage.

5) Ensuring that a minimum of 21 days coverage is provided to the volunteer for homebound travel.

6) Any claims normally met by AVS insurance incurred during this period should the receiving organisation fail to ensure that coverage has been arranged.

In the event that a volunteer returns home earlier than expected, the division where the volunteer is serving shall be responsible for notifying Adventist Risk Management and the Adventist Volunteer Centre.

b. The cost of airfares, if indicated.

c. The liability of the denomination shall be limited to the cost of the insurance premiums and deductibles for the above coverage. (See R 15 25, paragraph 2.a.) Volunteers who are 21 years of age or older (parents or legal guardians if under 21) shall sign the Adventist Volunteer Service Release of Liability and Beneficiary Form absolving the denomination from any liability arising out of any loss, injury, illness, disability, damage or death sustained while serving in the Adventist Volunteer Service programme or resulting from service in the Adventist Volunteer Service programme.

d. Additional medical coverage not included in paragraph 2.a. above may be provided to the extent specified in the contract or Volunteer Service request listing.

e. Lodging provisions and a living allowance to cover food and local travel may be provided.

f. Travel and other financial arrangements shall be approved by the requesting division or the General Conference Adventist Volunteer Centre. The financial arrangements for supported volunteers shall normally be expressed in the form of a written agreement between the volunteer and the requesting organisation and shall include a list of allowances provided.

R 15 30 Relationship to Other Organisations—The Adventist Volunteer Service Plan includes all projects operated by Seventh-day Adventist-owned entities. Projects owned and operated by other organisations shall not be included in the programme.

R 15 35 College/University Volunteers—1. Each Seventh-day Adventist college/university shall direct the Adventist Volunteer Service programme on campus. It shall provide instruction and general orientation materials for the volunteers. The Adventist Volunteer Service screening committee in each college/university shall be composed of both faculty and students and shall be responsible for approving the candidates' fitness for service. The college/university campus ministries director or Adventist Volunteer Service sponsor shall be the chair of the screening committee and shall be the liaison officer between the college/university and the division Adventist Volunteer Service director in processing the volunteers for inter-division service. Volunteers who apply from non-denominational colleges/universities, or who are no longer students, shall be screened by the pastor/elder of the church where they are members or are in regular attendance. They shall be required to complete the *Passport to Mission* course.

2. Volunteers may be sent out by each college/university Adventist Volunteer Service office on the following basis:

a. The college/university, through its related Adventist Volunteer Service office, shall be responsible for:

1) Satisfactory financial arrangements for round-trip transportation, with the students providing as much as possible through personal financing and the balance provided from a campus Adventist Volunteer Service pooling fund, unless provided for by the requesting organisation. All arrangements for ticketing shall be made through the travel office connections of the division unless otherwise authorised.

2) The cost of passports, visas, inoculations, and health certificates.

b. The requesting organisation shall be financially responsible for the cost of insurance premiums (to be arranged by the home division prior to departure).

3. The raising of funds for the Adventist Volunteer Service programme in each college/university shall be in harmony with the policies of the local and

union conferences/missions and the division in which territory the college/university is located.

R 15 40 Service by Secondary School Student Volunteers (13 to 18 years of age)—When projects similar to college/university youth volunteer activities are requested for secondary/academy students, these shall be operated as group undertakings and supervised by adults personally acquainted with the youth and who have Criminal Records Bureau clearance or appropriate equivalent.

All plans for such programmes must be approved by the local and union conference/mission/attached field in which the secondary school is located and in which the project is located.

R 15 45 Responsibility of Volunteers—1. Generally volunteers cover their own round-trip transportation costs, but on occasions transportation expenses may be provided.

2. Volunteers who are liable for national military service shall be responsible for securing deferment or clearance from the appropriate government office before leaving the home country.

3. Volunteers shall make appropriate arrangements to care for deferred educational indebtedness while absent from their home countries.

R 15 50 Adventist Volunteer Service Release of Liability—All volunteers shall be required to sign the appropriate Release of Liability and Related Beneficiary Form as approved by the General Conference Office of General Counsel.

R 20 Mediation and Conciliation Procedures for Seventh-day Adventist Volunteers

R 20 05 Rationale—The Bible emphasises the importance of proper understanding in human relationships and directs that differences should be reconciled and problems resolved in a spirit of harmony and unity. The counsel given by Jesus (see Matthew 18) calls for open communication between parties when disputes arise, in an endeavour to solve problems closest to their origin. It is assumed therefore that when a problem arises, consultation takes place in an effort to establish formative and remedial procedures. The Church acknowledges the principles of natural justice and is committed to the application of such principles in decision-making procedures that may affect an individual's position, welfare, or reputation.

R 20 10 Basic Assumptions—The Church reserves the right to engage as volunteers only those individuals who personally believe in, practice, and are committed to upholding the doctrinal tenets of the Church, as summarised in the document "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" (1980), and who by their Christian conduct preserve the character, order, and unity of the Church.

The Church also reserves the right to relieve a volunteer from a position, either by termination, transfer, or reassignment if, in the judgment of the controlling committee or board, such termination, transfer, or reassignment serves the purposes of the Church and/or the interests of the individual.

R 20 15 A Grievance—A “grievance” shall be any claimed misinterpretation, inequitable application, or violation of the policies and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church which could have adverse consequences for a volunteer and which may result in dismissal, reassignment, or variation of status, position, or volunteer benefits. Mediation is available to all volunteers who consider they have a “grievance” and must be implemented prior to requesting conciliation.

R 20 20 Exemptions—The mediation and conciliation procedures do not apply in certain situations. Examples of such cases may include but are not limited to:

1. The settlement of insurance claims.
2. Issues arising from marital differences.
3. The awarding of custody of minor children.
4. The deciding of matters involving the administration of estates.
5. Debt collection.
6. Matters involving an individual’s dispute with civil government or law enforcement agency.
7. Specific theological questions.
8. Questions regarding church discipline and the transfer or reinstatement of membership as recorded in the Church Manual.
9. Church elections.

R 20 25 Mediation—Mediation is a process in which a third party helps the disputants discuss their differences and negotiate an agreement. The mediator has power over the process but not the outcome. It is a voluntary process in which those involved in the dispute jointly explore and attempt to reconcile their differences. The mediator shall be neutral, impartial, and acceptable to all parties.

The following procedures shall be followed in the application of the mediation procedure. When a matter which is deemed to have adverse consequences for a volunteer is to be brought to a decision, the volunteer shall be given the opportunity to request that a mediator be appointed and shall be notified accordingly. This request shall be made no later than fourteen days after the decision has been made and a “grievance” has been identified and shall be made in writing, outlining the nature of the grievance. A mediator must be agreed upon by both the institution and the volunteer within fourteen days of the request for mediation. The mediation process shall be completed within twenty-one days of the mediator being appointed.

The mediator has no authority to render a decision. The mediated dispute is settled when the parties themselves reach what they consider to be a workable solution.

The disputants hold the ultimate authority in the mediation process. They enter mediation voluntarily and may withdraw at any time; they control the content and the outcome; they select a mediator to whom they entrust control of the process. The result of mediation is not binding unless the parties agree otherwise in writing. The outcomes of mediation shall be recorded by the

organisation where the volunteer is engaged and it shall send a copy to the Secretariat of the higher body.

R 20 30 Conciliation Procedure—Step 1. Formal Notification—When mediation fails and the organisation decides to maintain its original position regarding a volunteer, the volunteer shall be formally notified, both in person and in writing, by an administrator. The notification shall include:

1. The reason or reasons for the action.
2. The basis for the reason or reasons.
3. The provisions of the conciliation process.

Step 2. Hearing a Protest—In the event that mediation has failed completely, the volunteer protesting the decision of the organisation becomes a grievant, as identified in Step 3. Within fourteen days of receiving the written formal notice of the action taken, the grievant may appeal to the next higher body for a hearing before an independent review committee by presenting the grievance, in writing, to the administrator of the next higher body, a copy of which must be forwarded to the organisation where the volunteer is assigned. The written statement should include:

1. A concise statement of the grievance.
2. The circumstance(s) involved.
3. The outcome of the mediation process.
4. The specific solution or remedy sought by the grievant.
5. A request for a hearing before an independent review committee of five persons, including the chair. The allocation of the costs of calling the review committee together shall be subject to negotiation.

The organisation and the grievant shall be given access to all supporting documentation which is to be submitted to the review committee (this does not include a transcript of arguments to be presented), and each party shall receive the documentation at least seven days before the review committee convenes. Both parties must agree, in writing, to abide by the decision of the review committee. Should the grievant fail to sign the agreement, the requested hearing shall not proceed. In this event the action of the organisation shall be deemed to stand.

The organisation shall be required to submit to the review committee in writing a summary of its arguments and of events which led to its action(s) in respect to the grievant. A copy of all relevant letters, documents, and committee actions shall be included in its submission.

Step 3. Setting up a Review Committee—The higher authority shall honour the request for a review committee hearing and negotiate the appointment of said committee within fourteen days. In choosing persons to serve on the review committee, consideration should be given to keeping expenses to a minimum.

The committee shall be made up as follows:

1. An independent chair nominated by the higher authority and agreed to by both parties.

2. Two members (50 per cent) nominated by the administration of the engaging organisation, but not from the administration or executive committee or board.

3. Two members (50 per cent) nominated by the grievant.

The review committee shall be members in regular standing of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and shall not include individuals from the legal profession.

R 20 35 The Review Committee Function, Authority, and General Guidelines—1. The review committee shall hold its initial meeting within fourteen days of appointment.

2. Final disposition shall be within thirty days of the appointment of the committee.

3. The committee may invite any person or persons whom it considers may have counsel or information relevant to the grievance to any or all of its meetings. This provision excludes any legal representation. No person may demand the right to meet with the committee.

4. The grievant and the administrator or nominee of the organisation shall be required to attend an initial meeting of the review committee to present their cases in each other's presence and at other times as requested by the committee. The decision regarding the grievance shall be made in a closed meeting.

R 20 40 General Provisions—1. Agreements, consents, and understandings must be in writing.

2. A grievance may be dropped by the grievant at any time by informing the next higher body in writing.

3. Extension of time at any stage may be made by mutual consent of both parties. Such agreement should be recorded and signed by both parties.

4. Should the grievant fail to act within the prescribed time limits, the organisation is not obliged to continue with the process.

5. All participants in the process shall agree that there shall be no reprisals against other participants in the procedures.

6. All information disclosed must remain confidential.

7. When a volunteer requests that the conciliation process be implemented, the action taken by the organisation shall remain operative until confirmed, modified, or declared void by the review committee.

8. The decision shall be arrived at by secret ballot and all members of the review committee, including the chair, shall cast a vote.

9. The review committee is not authorised to award financial compensation to the grievant or the organisation.

10. Government laws shall have pre-eminence over the requirements of these guidelines.

11. The following is a summary of steps that should be followed together with the required time periods:

a. Grievant Actions:

1) Mediation Request—No later than fourteen days after the grievance is identified.

2) Mediation Outcome—Within twenty-one days of mediation appointment.

3) Conciliation Request—When mediation fails and within fourteen days of formal notification that the action against the grievant is to be maintained.

4) Supporting Material—Must be exchanged at least seven days before the review committee convenes.

b. Organisation Actions:

1) Mediator Appointed—Within fourteen days of mediation request.

2) Mediation Outcome—Within twenty-one days of mediator appointment.

3) Review Committee Appointment—Within fourteen days of conciliation request.

4) Supporting Material—Must be exchanged at least seven days before review committee convenes.

5) Disposition of Case—Within thirty days of committee appointment.