

# Service Adventure Participant Policy Handbook

*Revised June 2025*

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## Introduction to Service Adventure

Service Adventure, established in 1989, is a program for post-high school young adults, ages 17-20. Service Adventure is a program of Mennonite Mission Network of the Mennonite Church USA. Administrative responsibility is housed in the Global Partnerships department of Mennonite Mission Network.

Participants live together in community with up to five other young adults, placed in local community agencies for 35-40 hours per week, and become involved in the ministry of their hosting congregation, all under the guidance of a unit leader. The unit leader serves as a non-traditional pastor who mentors young adults in the unit.

### Program Objectives

- Service Adventure participants and leaders will join the congregation in engaging with their community.
- Service Adventure provides participants opportunities to explore Christian faith and what a relationship with Jesus means to them as they live in community with others and as they become part of the local faith community.
- Service Adventure provides participants and unit leaders the opportunity to see where God is at work and invites them to be a part of that work.
- Service Adventure participants, unit leaders, hosting congregations and communities are expected to offer each other gifts of service and to receive gifts of insight and perspective.
- Service Adventure participants continue to develop lives of Christian leadership and compassion.
- Service Adventure provides tools and training opportunities for participants and leaders to build intercultural competence and grow in their ability to see and offer faithful resistance to discrimination/oppression as they learn about God's work in the world.

### Program Commitment

Service Adventure has been developed with the expectation that participants will become involved in issues and activities of a local community and a local Mennonite congregation, share in a household where a sustainable lifestyle is affirmed and caring relationships are nurtured, and demonstrate compassionate service which honors and imitates Jesus Christ's love for all people and his special concern for those who suffer from injustice.

Four essential components of the Service Adventure experience are unit life, service, church and community.



## Service-learning components

*“A method and philosophy of experiential learning through which participants expand their knowledge of society; develop abilities for critical thinking; develop commitments, values and skills needed for effective citizenship; and contribute in meaningful ways to addressing social problems.”*

Service Adventure has been intentionally developed as a service-learning opportunity. While it is expected that participants will contribute to their hosting communities in significant ways, it is also expected that participants will come away from their experience with much new knowledge and insight. To facilitate participants' learning, a number of components have been put in place.

- **Household/unit** - group of three to six young adults (participants) plus one or two leaders, who reside in a common residence and who live in community, sharing the various responsibilities of doing so.
- **Service assignment** - part- or full-time, stipended or volunteer placements in the hosting community, which are held by participants for their Service Adventure term.
- **Host congregation** - one or more Mennonite churches that have a vision for Service Adventure as a ministry in their community. Congregations provide financial and other support to Service Adventure units. Units are accountable to their host congregations. Units are encouraged to worship weekly with these congregations and are encouraged to get involved in the congregation's other ministries.
- **Learning component** - a weekly unit activity designed to create deliberate opportunities for participants and leaders to learn from each other and those in their community. These sessions are to be structured as times of teaching or introducing the household to new activities or ideas. Planning responsibility should be shared between leaders and participants.
- **Worship night** - a weekly unit activity intended for the unit to enter into spiritual discussion, reflection, exploration and expression. Planning responsibility should be shared between leaders and participants.
- **Life skills** - similar in nature to the learning component; however, typically the initiative of the household leaders. May take the form of instruction in housekeeping, food preparation and nutrition, finances and bookkeeping, etc.
- **Journaling** – journaling is encouraged as a meaningful daily practice for participants to reflect on relationships, challenges, growth experiences, and more. These reflections can be valuable to share during bimonthly check-ins with leader(s), offering insight into your personal journey and experiences in the program.
- **Check-in** - monthly meetings between individual participants and unit leader(s) for discussion and exploration of participant's Service Adventure experience in terms of relationships, challenges, growth experiences, etc.

## Length of term

One complete Service Adventure term is 10 ½ months. Locations may have differing start and end dates. Confirmed participants will receive information regarding official start dates in the confirmation packet sent to them by the program office. End date information

will be discussed during unit orientations. In general, most units begin during the month of August and end during the month of June/July.

## **Preparing for Service Adventure**

### **Advocate**

Being a part of Service Adventure is a wonderful experience for young adults, but it can also be a frightening time as persons venture away from their families and friends. It is extremely important for participants to feel connected with their home and with people they know care about them. Because we value this connection Service Adventure asks each participant to ask someone in their home congregation/community to be their advocate, help them stay connected, and ensure there is a support network for the participant while they embark on this journey. An advocate's tasks could include keeping the local congregation aware of how the participant is doing, keep the participant in the congregation's prayers, and help ensure contributions from the participant's church are sent to MMN.

### **Insurance and medical coverage**

All Service Adventure participants are responsible for making provisions for and paying costs of their health insurance coverage. Participants must provide verification of insurance (name of company and policy number) two weeks prior to beginning their term.

Upon receipt of confirmation of acceptance into the program, applicants who are Canadian residents or citizens are instructed to contact their provincial health care program, to make necessary arrangements.

Other international participants, who are entering Service Adventure with the help of an international service agency, should make necessary arrangements for health care through said agency.

### **Optical and dental coverage**

The Service Adventure program will not be responsible for any costs related to optical or dental expenses incurred by participants.

### **Other insurance coverage**

The program does not provide life or personal property insurance. Participants are responsible for obtaining their own personal property insurance to insure their personal belongings (i.e., computer, camera, etc.).

### **College credit**

A number of Mennonite colleges are willing to make special arrangements for individuals wishing to earn college credit for service. In many cases, the Service Adventure program meets their stated requirements. Participants should make arrangements with their respective institution prior to beginning their term.

**Educational financial assistance**

It is possible that one's Service Adventure experience may meet qualifications for grants, scholarships, etc. Participants are encouraged to explore this possibility with their respective educational institution prior to beginning service. The program office is available to assist by way of letters of recommendation or other documentation if needed.

Matching funds may be available from Everence to help with a scholarship to pay for loans or future study. Please contact Everence at 574-533-9511, or the Service Adventure program office for additional information.

Service Adventure may meet criteria for loan deferment with some lending institutions. Participants entering Service Adventure with college loans, and who are interested in pursuing deferment, should first contact their lending institution for a loan deferment application. Participants should complete all applicable sections, then submit the application to the Service Adventure program office. Mennonite Mission Network staff will complete the "agency" portion of the deferment application and provide supporting documentation to be submitted with the application. Mennonite Mission Network staff are also available to give counsel on this matter if needed.

**Basic needs***Program provisions*

The Service Adventure program provides financial and other support that meets the basic needs of each participant. Provision includes housing, food, local transportation and a monthly cash stipend.

*Household provisions*

A number of items are provided for participants and are to remain the property of the Service Adventure household. Such items may include, but are not limited to, bed and bathroom linens, furniture, etc. Additional provisions supplied by the household's budget are toiletries such as soap, toilet paper, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, shaving materials, and feminine products. In the event that special uniforms are required by an employer and will not be used following an assignment, this will be provided for from the household budget.

*Participant provisions*

Clothing and other personal items are the responsibility of the participant. Participants should take along clothing that is suitable for the work they will be doing. While participants are encouraged to take items to their location that will add a personal touch to their bedrooms, participants are also encouraged to keep the number of personal items taken to a minimum. Appliances, furniture and large decorative items are not appropriate. Participants are not permitted to have pets in their Service Adventure locations.

**Serving outside place of citizenship**

Participants who will be serving in the United States and are not U.S. citizens shall receive a letter from the Mennonite Mission Network staff requesting the issuance of a B-1 permit.

This letter must be in the participant's possession when going through customs and should be presented to the U.S. immigration officials, at which time a B-1 permit should be granted. It is important that the Service Adventure program office receive a photocopy of your B-1 permit. They will provide you the necessary forms for B-1 renewal. It is your responsibility to initiate the renewal process in a timely manner.

### **Travel to and from location**

Travel arrangements from participant's point of origin to assigned location, and all travel costs, are the responsibility of the participant.

## **Unit issues**

### **Orientation**

Participants in each unit will spend the first week of their term together on location, going through an orientation led by their unit leader and other local persons. Orientation is developed to assist in participants' transition into Service Adventure by acquainting them with the program and its various expectations, their new community, their host congregation, their service assignment, and with each other. MMN staff will lead some orientation sessions in the fall for anti-racism training.

### **Unit life**

Participants live with other young adults and are supervised by a unit leader(s). Unit leaders are selected and prepared by Mennonite Mission Network to provide structure and guidance to unit life. Choosing to be a Service Adventure participant indicates a commitment to live simply, in community with fellow participants and leader(s). Tolerance, flexibility, and a willingness to work diligently at maintaining healthy relationships are required.

Unit members are expected to share in household responsibilities and activities, participate in learning experiences with the household, meet regularly with household members for worship or business meetings, have opportunities to worship and participate as a household with the unit's host congregation(s), work at a service assignment(s) in the community, journal regularly, and meet twice per month with unit leaders for individual check-ins.

### **Electronics**

Service Adventure encourages living in community, and modern methods of communication can take away from the community that you are in. Each unit during orientation week will discuss appropriate guidelines for cell phones, laptop computers, and other electronics.

Each Service Adventure household has a computer along with access to the Internet. The purpose of this is to provide participants with a way to stay connected to family and friends back home. It also provides a way for participants to find resources regarding worship nights and learning components. Having WiFi access should in no way take away from

unit life experiences. Time spent on the Internet should be limited so that there is still time for participants to get to know each other and learn to communicate with each other.

### **Periodical subscriptions**

Households are encouraged to subscribe to one newsmagazine and one local newspaper using the household's budget. Any periodicals beyond those designated above are the financial responsibility of individual participants.

### **Unit vehicles**

Not all locations have a unit vehicle. Provision of a vehicle is the responsibility of a unit's host congregation(s).

The unit leader is responsible for or delegating the following:

1. Ensuring that tags and plates are renewed annually.
2. Keeping vehicle titles in a secure place locally.
3. Ensuring that insurance bills are paid in a timely manner.
4. Discussing vehicle insurance policy with participants.
5. Advising the support committee of any problems related to the vehicle.
6. Seeing to the regular upkeep/maintenance of the vehicle.
7. Documenting all maintenance and repair done to the vehicle in order to pass on to the next unit.

Unit vehicles have collision coverage beyond a certain deductible amount. In the event of an accident, the Service Adventure unit will reimburse the deductible amount, unless the driver is at fault. Should the driver be at fault, responsibility for the cost of the deductible shall be theirs. Only those individuals whose names appear on the vehicle's insurance policy are authorized, and therefore permitted, to operate said vehicle.

Ultimate decision-making authority regarding unit vehicle use is that of the local support committee, in that they are representatives of the organization(s) that owns said vehicle.

*Personal use* of the unit vehicle, outside of above-stated guidelines, may occur contingent upon prior approval from unit leader and under one of the following conditions:

- Twenty free miles per month, after which participant reimburses the unit at the IRS standard rate.
- Reasonable radius predetermined by local support committee and leader. Within "reasonable radius," participants are not charged for personal unit vehicle use; outside said radius, participant reimburses unit at IRS standard rate.

Some units have location-specific *personal use* guidelines, in which case said guidelines supersede those listed above.

*Unit bicycles* are available to participants for traveling to and from service assignments. Maintenance, repair and security costs for said bicycles are to be taken from the household



budget. In the event of damage or loss as the direct result of a participant's negligence, that participant is to provide restitution to the unit for the damaged or lost bicycle.

### **Personal vehicles**

*Automobiles* are not to be kept by participants in their Service Adventure location.

*Bicycles* are permissible in the event that discussion and arrangements occur prior to participants reporting to their location. Any costs associated with maintenance, repair or security of personal bicycles are the owner's responsibility.

### **Public transportation**

Travel to and from service assignments, or for group activities, or for other unit-related business shall be paid for from the unit's travel expense budget.

### **Visitors**

Friends and family are welcome to visit Service Adventure units. All overnight visits must be discussed and agreed upon as a household. If guests will be lodging in the unit house, visits are to be limited to no more than three nights. It is the responsibility of the respective household member to make preparations for arrival and necessary cleanup upon guests' departure.

## **Expectations**

### **Responsible behavior**

Service Adventure participants are representatives of their unit, of their host congregation(s), of their home congregation, and of the program and its intentions in the larger community. Service Adventure is a 10 ½-month commitment for participants. During that term of commitment, participants are expected to make a good-faith effort to conduct themselves in a manner that maintains a lifestyle that protects and respects the health and well-being of others, themselves and the environment. Participants are expected to be open to counsel regarding what is perceived as addictive or emotionally unhealthy behavior.

It is expected that participants will:

- Live in accordance with and reflect Christ-like standards in personal and professional conduct.
- Nurture trust and maintain and restore right relationships in the communities within which they live and serve.
- Demonstrate mutual respect and integrity in sharing and fulfilling their responsibilities.
- Respect and celebrate diversity of backgrounds and nurture acceptance in our Christian community.
- Live in accordance with sound ecology, good health, and wise stewardship.
- Conduct themselves in ways and in settings which will not harm their witness, service, or personal health.

- Reserve sexual intimacy for the marriage covenant.
- Strive to be free from lies, manipulation and deceit, be faithful in keeping promises, and trustworthy in managing resources.
- Serve and learn, ready to have their lives broadened as they open themselves to explore new insights for Christian growth and service.
- When they fail to live in accordance with these commitments, they will be honest about their actions and motives and will accept responsibility for them.

Disregard for any of the above stated expectations shall be brought to the attention of the local support committee and program director, and if found to be of a severe enough nature may result in early dismissal.

### **Romantic relationships**

Establishing a romantic relationship during Service Adventure, either within or outside of the household, has been shown to significantly distract participants from the objectives of the program. Such relationships are strongly discouraged. Should such a relationship develop, it is expected that participants will:

- Continue to conduct themselves in line with the *responsible behaviors* guidelines.
- Continue to maintain a commitment to *unit life* expectations.
- Be open to and available for honest discussion with their unit regarding the implications of said relationship on unit life.

Disregard for any of the above stated expectations shall be brought to the attention of the local support committee and program director, and if found to be of a severe enough nature may result in early dismissal.

### **Substance use**

Use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs in Service Adventure households, as a part of Service Adventure activities, or during one's Service Adventure term of commitment is strictly prohibited. In the event that participants are found in violation of this policy, said infraction will be brought to the attention of the local support committee and program director. Violation of this policy may result in dismissal from the program.

### **Harassment prevention policy**

Mennonite Mission Network strives to provide a work environment where relationships are empowered by respect, where power is not abused and where no one will be subjected to harassment and/or bullying. Our staff, workers and program participants go through regular harassment and discrimination prevention training. Mennonite Mission Network will not tolerate workplace bullying or harassment of any kind, or the use of racial, sexual, gender-biased, age related, sexual-orientation related, ethnic, or disability related innuendos, slurs, or jokes.

Mennonite Mission Network does not tolerate any abuse of children, and actively works to prevent child abuse in all its forms. Our staff, workers and participants are trained in how to create a safe environment for children and youth.

Mennonite Mission Network asks all staff, workers and program participants to be aware of situations where intervention is warranted, especially when others condone, overlook, or actively ignore the offending situation. If you experience harassment, intimidation, bullying or abuse, or if you observe another person being harassed or bullied, it is very important to report this conduct. To report harassment of any kind, please contact your Service Adventure Leader, your local support committee chair, Service Adventure Director, MMN Care Specialist or MMN Human Resources Director. Staff contact information can be found in the [staff directory](#).

You can find the full Mission Network Harassment and Abuse Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures [here](#).

## **Support systems**

### **Chain of communication**

In the event that participants have concerns regarding any part of their Service Adventure experience and are in search of counsel, they are encouraged to utilize the following chain of conversation:

- Unit leader
- Support committee
- Service Adventure director

### **Unit leader(s)**

Each unit has a single person or a couple who serves as the unit's local leader(s). Service Adventure leaders have been prepared by Mennonite Mission Network to provide structure and guidance to unit life. A unit leader's term is two years in length and may be extended.

### *Responsibilities*

- Live in or near Service Adventure unit house with three to six participants.
- Help provide structure and direction to all aspects of unit life.
- Offer counsel and support to participants as they experience this time of change and growth.
- See to the occurrence of weekly learning component and worship nights.
- Have individual check-ins twice monthly with participants.
- Organize periodic unit business meetings.
- Keep support committee and program director abreast of relevant unit issues and status.
- Meet and maintain communication with support committee.
- Serve as contact person to participants' service assignments.
- Be available for at least monthly phone check-ins with the program director.

**Host families**

Host families are families within host congregations, which are joined with one Service Adventure participant or leader(s). These families involve participants or leaders in their lives via varied activities, at least monthly, and serve as a surrogate family away from home. Local support committees are responsible for identifying and linking host families with participants and leaders at the beginning of each term and for planning a beginning-of-term social/gathering. In order to better orient host families with the objectives of the program, each host family should be given a policy in summary sheet, which will be provided by the program office. Host families should be instructed to make contact with their respective participant/leader within the first month of the term.

There may be occasions when the participant has an issue that they bring to the host family. The host family is encouraged to assist the participant in working towards a resolution.

**Local support committee**

The local support committee is a body comprised of a number of individuals from the host congregation(s). Local leaders are partially accountable to this body as well as the host congregation and Mennonite Mission Network. This body provides guidance and support to unit leaders regarding any and all unit issues, helps to foster communication between the host congregation and unit regarding pertinent issues, and works at fostering relationships between the host congregation and unit. This chair of this committee serves as the primary source of contact between the committee and the program office.

One of the primary responsibilities of the local support committee is to provide emotional support for the unit leaders. This entails regular check-ins with the unit leaders to see how things are going on a personal level for them. The local support committee also serves as the “business manager” for the local unit. It is their responsibility to meet with the unit leaders on a regular basis to review the budget as well as other household items.

The following is a list of responsibilities for the local support committee.

**Relational support:**

- Keep in touch with unit leader; be aware of their issues of concern and be available to talk and think through unit issues with them.
- Assist with on-site orientation for unit leaders and participants
- Meet at least monthly as a committee with the unit leader.

**Operational support**

- Be knowledgeable of all current program policy.
- Receive monthly financial reports from the unit leader.
- Quarterly communication between support committee leader and program director.
- Participate in the evaluation of the program.
- Assist with needed maintenance work on unit house, appliances and vehicle(s).
- Ensure that the unit has access to necessary resources, such as housing, transportation, etc.

- Present periodic reports regarding the state of Service Adventure, in that location, to the host congregation via council, church life, or members' meetings.
- Assume responsibility for, or ensure that necessary arrangements are made, to preserving unit life in the absence of unit leaders or in the event that leaders are unable to complete their term or service.

Responsibilities along with the local leader:

- Establish and review annual budget.
- Review service assignments and seek out additional assignments in the community.
- Procure host families for all participants and leaders.
- Review applicant files of, and accept or reject, potential participants and leaders for that location.

### **Program director**

This individual is employed by Mennonite Mission Network and is accountable to Mennonite Mission Network and to the constituents of said agencies. The program director reports to the Global Partnerships department director.

The director provides supervision and support to unit leaders and holds administrative responsibility for the overall program.

The director works with participants once they are in the program (i.e., responding to policy questions, etc.). Participants submit mid-year and end-of-year evaluations, as well as two narrative reports per term, all of which are read, and responded to when appropriate, by the Service Adventure director.

Unit leaders have at least monthly check-ins with the program director by phone. Also, leaders complete and process, via discussions with the director, pre-term and mid-year leadership development tools. As well, outgoing leaders complete and then process, via discussion, exit evaluations with the director.

Local support committees maintain contact with the program director via quarterly check-ins

The program director travels to each Service Adventure location, at least, once per year. This visit is for the purposes of:

- Meeting, interacting, and checking in with participants.
- Spending time with participants in their service assignments
- Encountering leaders in the context of their leadership roles.
- Connecting with support committees.
- Maintaining relationships with host congregations.

# Finances

## **Unit finances**

Each unit has an annual budget for local expenses. Units deposit funds in a local checking account, from which the local leader and an appointed support committee member are authorized to conduct transactions. Adequate communication concerning activity on the unit account is the responsibility of the unit leader and designated support committee member. Communication of these matters to the unit is the responsibility of the unit leader.

Within the household, a system should be developed to appoint an individual responsible for monitoring and recording activity on the unit account, and for completing monthly financial reports. Necessary training regarding accepted program bookkeeping protocol is to be provided by the unit leader.

### *Food allowance*

The food allowance, based on three meals per day, is set by the local support committee.

### *Recreational allowance*

Each month, \$6 per participant is available to households for recreational activities. Recreation money is to be used to enhance group life through monthly activities in which all unit members participate. Under no circumstances may these monies be given to an individual to be spent as personal funds. Money from this account may not be carried over from one month to the next.

### *Learning component allowance*

It is each unit's responsibility to make this monthly budgeting decision. Three confines put forth by the program office regarding expenditures for learning components:

1. Learning components are considered unit activities; therefore, all unit members are to be involved.
2. When planning activities, remember Service Adventure's emphasis on sustainable living.
3. It is a great opportunity for Service Adventure participants to practice talking with others about things they are passionate about!

### *Worship resources*

It is each unit's responsibility to make this monthly budgeting decision. There are two confines put forth by the program office regarding expenditures for worship resources:

1. Worship nights are considered unit activities; therefore, all unit members are encouraged to be involved.
2. When planning activities, consideration should be given to Service Adventure's emphasis on sustainable living.

### *Extra income*

In line with the program's emphasis on sustainable living, and because participants are expected to function within the financial confines of their monthly stipend, participants receiving monetary gifts from family or friends are to employ one of two options:

1. Place monies in a personal savings account, not to be used except in case of emergency or until the end of their term.
2. Place monies in a unit fund. In the event that a unit fund is established, the entire household is to agree upon its use.

Regular part-time employment is not permitted. Any income from occasional part-time employment is to be placed in the unit fund.

Participants are not permitted to undertake any private business while serving in the program.

### *Credit cards, personal accounts, and phone cards*

In line with Service Adventure's emphasis on sustainable living, and because participants are expected to function within the financial confines of their monthly stipend, participants are expected to refrain from use of personal credit cards, funds from personal savings or checking accounts that have not been purchased with participants' monthly stipend.

### **Monthly stipend**

Each participant is entitled to a monthly personal stipend. Participants should receive their monthly stipend in cash at an agreed-upon time each month. This money is to be used at the discretion of the participant. The program office, in consultation with key local persons, determines stipend amounts. Disbursement of monthly stipends is not to be subject to arbitrary retribution. Stipends may, however, be subject to withholding in the event of financial restitution owed to the household by a participant.

Participants shall receive \$40 (U.S.) monthly, or the equivalent thereof.

## **Service assignments**

### **Service assignments**

Participants are to serve 35-40 hours per week. In order to meet this requirement, participants may hold either one full-time or up to three part-time placements. Most assignments pay a stipend to the unit for services rendered by the participant; however, some assignments will be volunteer positions.

### **Service assignment check-ins**

Unit leaders are responsible for maintaining periodic contact with service assignment supervisors. Leaders are to meet with and conduct check-ins with service assignment supervisors at least three times during the course of the term.

### **Changes in service assignment**

As a representative of Service Adventure, participants are expected to put forth a reasonable effort in maintaining good working relationships in their service assignments, and to remain in their assignments the entire duration agreed upon in the *memo of understanding*. Participants are to keep unit leaders informed of problems that might necessitate changes in assignment. In the event that a change in assignment becomes necessary due to changes in that agency or due to the welfare of the participant or the assignment, changes will be made with consideration given to all relevant factors, and in consultation with unit leaders. The support committee and program director should be apprised of all such changes.

## **Communication**

One possible way for you to process your discovery and learning from the year is to write/record things that are happening in your daily life. Reflection allows space to slow down, think about recent experiences and relationships, and share how these experiences and relationships are shaping and reshaping our lives and the lives of those around us. Reflection also allows space to use what we have learned to make choices to engage in new ways. Because this is such an important part of growth and change, there are several ways that this reflection/writing is encouraged and Service Adventure recommends a couple of them.

- Journals – A great way for you to think about how your day/week is going is to keep a journal. Sometimes journaling is a useful tool in worship nights as well. It gives you a chance to think through what you've been feeling and observing in your daily life. You may choose to share some of your journal entries when talking with your unit leader during one-on-ones. Journal entries are also useful as you prepare to share at church or with groups about your Service Adventure experience.
- Letters to home congregations – You are encouraged to send an update to your home congregation once a month during your Service Adventure term. People back home like to know what you are doing, what you are learning and how they can be praying for you.
- Narratives – Twice during the year, you are expected to send in a narrative. This is a way for you to communicate with Mennonite Mission Network staff about what you are experiencing and learning through your Service Adventure experience.
- Blogs/social media – Many participants enjoy writing for blogs or sharing things on social media. This is also a fun and helpful way to be in touch with a variety of people. Share stories and invite people to give you feedback!

### **Reminders for writing**

- Remember that the Internet is public space. Know that what you post on Facebook, blogs, and other sites may be viewed by anyone. This includes things written and photos. Be respectful. Remember that others may not be excited that you share stories or photos of them without their permission.



- Remember that there is more than one story. When sharing about your experiences, be sure to do your best to share of the cultures that surround you. Be mindful that photos can also depict a limited view of the area and the people.
- Share more than just your schedule! While people are always interested in where you spend your time, they are more interested in how the experiences you are engaging in are shaping you. What are you learning about yourself and others? Where do you see God at work? In what ways are you being invited to join God's mission and share God's love?
- Take time to ask others to share their stories and experiences. Many of the people interested in your reflections have stories and experiences that may help you to view your own experiences in a new light. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback on what you share.
- You'll get busy. In the first weeks you may feel like you have lots of free time (or you may be extremely busy!) but either way you'll likely be more motivated to share your experiences when so much is new. Settling into patterns of life may cause you to feel you have nothing new to share. NOT SO! Actually, much that you learn about yourself and others comes in those times when you feel "bored". This is a great time to reflect, and to share those reflections. They can often help lead you to take initiative in getting involved in new ways.
- Overall, be yourself. Don't feel pressured to fit your reflections into a box, or to neatly remove all of the floundering, questioning, and uncertainty. Be careful, however, not to allow yourself to blame others for these feelings. Use these times of reflection to center yourself and to remember why it is you are where you are, allowing yourself to be transformed.

## Reports

Participants are expected to complete four different reports throughout the course of their term.

Report	Due Date
<b>First narrative</b>	Second week of November
<b>Mid-year evaluation</b>	Last week of January
<b>Second narrative</b>	First week of April
<b>End-of-year evaluation</b>	Within two weeks of end date

### *Program evaluations*

These evaluations provide an opportunity for participants to communicate feedback directly to the program office. Program evaluations should be completed by participants. The program director will read all evaluations; unit information will be compiled without identifying information, and emailed to unit leaders and support committees to read. There are parts of the evaluations that will be confidential.

Mid-year evaluations are to be completed within the last week of January. End-of-year evaluations are to be completed within two weeks of the unit's end date.

### *Narratives*

These reports give participants an opportunity to share in any way (i.e., written, pictorial, song, etc.) about their new community, activities, significant people they've encountered, reflections about personal growth and development, etc. Unit leaders, the program director, and some Mennonite Mission Network staff will read these reports. Occasionally, anonymous excerpts may be used for program office reporting or newsletters. If you want all parts of your report to remain confidential, please write "confidential" in a noticeable place on your report.

The first narrative report is to be completed within the second week of November. The second narrative report is due to be completed within the second week of April.

### *Blogs/Social media*

Service Adventure encourages you to share what's happening during your term through blog posts and on social media. This is a fun and helpful way to be in touch with a variety of people. It also gives you the opportunity to share stories and invite people to give feedback. If you keep a regular blog, please send the address to the program director. If you do not keep a blog, you may still be asked to write something from time to time.

### **Recruitment**

Service Adventure units are asked to make at least one contact within each 10 ½ month term to share about the program and their experiences in Service Adventure. Some key venues may be Mennonite churches or high schools, mission conferences, camps, youth group events, etc. The purpose of such contacts is for recruitment and general Mennonite Mission Network program exposure. Unit leaders should make arrangements in compliance with Procedures for Speaking Engagements through the Recruitment office of Mennonite Mission Network.

Up to two days off have been pre-arranged with service assignment supervisors for this purpose. It is preferred that these two days be used for separate appointments. Additional days off for recruitment will need to be negotiated with service assignment supervisors on a per-case basis.

## **Time away**

### **Vacations**

Each participant is entitled to eight days' vacation time. This is personal time that the participant intends to take away from his or her service assignment and/or unit responsibilities. These eight days may be utilized in any manner desired; however, participants are encouraged to take at least five days consecutively in order to minimize the periods of time away from the unit.

Vacation time away from the service assignment must be prearranged and agreed upon by the service assignment supervisor. In addition, all time away from the unit and unit responsibilities is to be discussed with the household members and unit leader.

Participants are responsible for all costs associated with vacation travel.

### **Time off**

Participants who receive time off from their service assignments, and who do not intend to claim this time as part of the eight days' vacation are to remain in their Service Adventure community. It is expected that this time be used to volunteer elsewhere in the community, at church or around the unit house.

### **Extended weekend and retreats**

Units typically take two to three extended weekend trips per term. All participants are expected to be present and participate in planning for the trip. This trip may include one day off from service assignments, and is arranged by the unit leader prior to participants beginning their assignments. Costs for this activity should be taken from the learning component budget.

### **Death in the immediate family**

Immediate family is defined, for purposes of the Service Adventure program, as a biological, step or adoptive parent, sibling, aunt, uncle or grandparent. In the event of the death of an immediate family member, participants shall be provided support from their unit leader and the program office in making travel and other arrangements.

Participants are entitled to five work days' absence from the unit during which time their monthly stipend shall not be affected. Arrangements must be made with participant's service assignment supervisor, as much in advance as is possible.

## **Concluding with Service Adventure**

### **Closure and re-entry**

Participants should terminate their service assignments one week prior to completing their Service Adventure term. The final week of the term is spent together as a unit addressing closure and re-entry issues. Closure time is intentionally structured to assist participants in preparing for their transition out of Service Adventure.

### **Early termination**

*Dismissal:* If it is found that, for any reason, it is not in the best interest of a participant and/or Service Adventure for a participant to complete their entire term, a decision shall be made in consultation with the unit leader, support committee and the program director. A variety of alternatives may be explored, including that of dismissing said participant from the program before the completion of their term.

*Request to terminate:* If a participant wants to terminate early, it will be expected they will discuss the matter with their unit leader. The program director may also ask to discuss the matter with said participant. An attempt will be made to find alternatives to termination.

If none are found, efforts to transfer said participant's responsibilities to other unit members should be made prior to the participant's departure. It will be the participant's responsibility to advise the support committee and program director of their desire.

Participants are expected to put forth all efforts to complete their Service Adventure commitment. If there are any circumstances known to the participant that may lead to early termination, said participant must inform his/her unit leader, support committee, and program director as soon as possible.

**Extension of stay**

Usually, participants in any one unit begin and end their term on the same day. However, due to the six-to eight-week interim between terms, some employers may ask participants to remain at their service assignments for an extended period of time. Housing and other necessary arrangements need to be made between said participant, the unit leader(s), and support committee. The program director should be advised of final agreements regarding additional length of stay. Despite any extension of stay, after the official unit end date, individuals shall no longer be considered participants, but Service Adventure alumni. A participant's Service Adventure term cannot be extended.

**Statement of accountability**

I understand that by accepting the invitation to be a Service Adventure participant, I am agreeing to conduct myself in line with the expectations, guidelines and policies set forth by the program. I further understand that my unit leader, fellow participants, support committee, host congregation, and program office staff are agents of the program, who are in place to assist me in being accountable with regard to my commitment to be a witness to my community and to conduct myself in line with program expectations, guidelines and policies.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the *Service Adventure Participant Policy Handbook* in its entirety. I agree to make a good-faith effort to uphold the expectations, guidelines, and policies of the Service Adventure program. I understand that violation of this agreement will result in corrective measures and may result in dismissal from the Service Adventure program. I agree to assume all the risks and responsibilities surrounding my participation in Service Adventure.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local leader signature (witness)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date