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Developing a Short-Term Missions Trip Policy for Your Church



CANADIAN COUNCIL *of* CHRISTIAN CHARITIES
ADVANCING MINISTRY TOGETHER

A WORD FROM OUR CEO



It seems that every day there are more and more regulations affecting Christian ministries. Keeping up with important developments can be overwhelming and time-consuming.

Since our founding in 1972, church treasurers, pastors, administrators, and board members have relied on expert help and training from the Canadian Council of Christian Charities.

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Our member support team answers thousands of questions each year on topics like

- receipting, accounting & finance;
- human resources, payroll & policies
- clergy residence deduction;
- church board governance;
- stewardship;
- charity regulation.

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Rev. John Pellowe, MBA, DMin
CEO

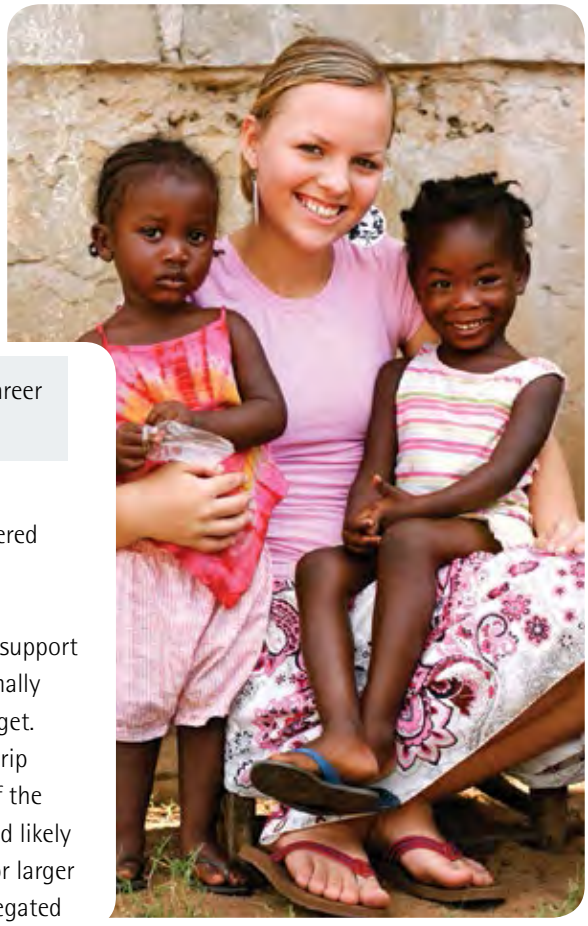
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DEVELOPING A SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIP POLICY FOR YOUR CHURCH

BY HEATHER CARD, COO, CCCC



Short-term missions trips are important in the life of many local churches. These trips can be an effective means of fulfilling the mission of your church and engaging people in life-changing experiences.



Pastors, missions committees, church boards and administrators will be interested in this article that will cover the essential elements of a short-term missions trip policy. All churches are different and therefore the policy will need to be customized to meet the specific needs of your church.

Purpose

The short-term missions program should be part of the larger framework of the overall missions strategy of the church. There are many opportunities to engage in short-term missions work. To help focus resources and impact, an effective policy will outline the types of short-term missions work in which the church wants to engage. Some examples could include

- encouraging missionaries through special projects and practical help;
- meeting a need, such as disaster response or other relief work;
- developing leaders;
- stimulating people to explore career missions opportunities.

Project Approval Process

A key element for maintaining registered charity status for the church is to demonstrate that it is directing and controlling its activities. One way to support this concept is for the church to formally approve the trip's objectives and budget. The body authorized to approve the trip will be dependent on the structure of the church. For smaller churches, it would likely be the board of deacons or elders. For larger churches, the authority might be delegated by the board to its Missions Committee or to a pastor who oversees missions activity.

A project or trip proposal should be submitted for approval and include the following elements:

- overview of the mission as well as the goals and activities to be carried out
- project location and responsible contact person at project location
- project start and end date
- evaluation of risk, health, and safety considerations
- estimated number of participants
- required travel documentation and immunizations
- estimated total budget for the trip
- outline of fundraising plans

DID YOU *Know?*

THAT MINOR CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIP RELEASES SIGNED ON THEIR BEHALF BY PARENTS WITH CUSTODIAL RIGHTS?

Both parents have custodial rights unless those rights have been modified by a separation agreement or court order. Older children, possibly in their late teens, should also consent on their own behalf by signing the release along with their parents. *(CCCC Members may download a sample Release of Liability Form at www.cccc.org/members_sample_documents_view/html/38)*

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Applicant Approval Process

Engaging volunteers in a short-term missions trip requires the same diligence and discernment used for programs within the church. They are carrying out a program and advancing the ministry as representatives of the church.

In order to protect the church from the risk of receiving a human rights or privacy complaint, we suggest that information about the applicant be collected in two stages. Most provinces are subject to federal privacy laws for "commercial activity"; however, the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Québec have specific provincial privacy laws which apply to charities.

The first stage provides basic information about the applicant. If the applicant is approved, they proceed to the second stage where passport, date of birth, and medical information are collected.

This protects the church because an applicant cannot allege that the church did not accept them because of their age/citizenship/country of origin/medical condition (human rights) or that the church breached privacy laws because it gathered sensitive personal information before it was needed.

The missions trip application (stage one and two) should cover

- basic contact information;
- experience and skills;
- spiritual character ;
- references;
- expectations of trip participants;
- applicant certification;
- parent certification (if a minor child);
- medical information;
- passport and date of birth.

A sample short-term missions application is available for CCCC members to download at www.cccc.org/members_sample_documents.

Applicants should undergo background checking if they have not already been screened as a church volunteer. They should also submit a note from their physician indicating that, in the physician's opinion, the applicant's participation in the trip is unlikely to result in any harm to the health of the applicant or any other person.

As part of the application process, churches should consider whether there will be a requirement for the participant to be a Christian. On one hand, the church may view the missions trip as a way to reach out to others and involve them in work that could be life changing. On the other hand, some churches believe that a certain level of Christian maturity is required to participate in the ministry. This is a philosophical question that must be decided by each church. If there are any particular requirements, they should be included in the application under expectations of trip participants. You may also wish to include the statement of faith of the church as a reference document.

Fundraising

Churches have different methods of raising funds for short-term missions trips. Some may collect a general offering to be used for the trip. Others engage team members in fundraising efforts, such as auctions and dinners. A short-term missions policy should include fundraising guidelines including the

- approval process for fundraising events;
- process for soliciting funds via support letters or social media networks.

Team Training & Orientation

Effective trips require preparation, both spiritually and in practical terms. A policy should speak to this issue, and ideally participants should be encouraged (or even required) to attend all team training and orientation sessions.

Orientation and training should include

- travel arrangements;
- project overview and planned itinerary;
- team building activities;
- local customs and traditions;
- language study of the host country for basic communication;
- risks associated with the trip;
- team member expectations and roles;
- prayer and spiritual preparation;
- health and safety issues.

Releases

When planning a short-term missions trip, due diligence requires anticipation of the worst case scenario, then planning to prevent that outcome through risk management measures. It is imperative that each



DID YOU *Know?*

THAT THE DEFINITION OF A MINOR CHILD VARIES ACROSS CANADA?

A minor child is defined as under the age of 18 in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Québec, and Saskatchewan. A minor child is defined as under the age of 19 in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and the Yukon.

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DEVELOPING A SHORT-TERM MISSIONS TRIP POLICY FOR YOUR CHURCH

participant sign a release prior to the trip.

The wording of the release must be sufficiently broad to cover all potential risks, but specific enough to be easily understood. The release must include details of the activity, acknowledgment of training provided, the risks assumed, the date and location of the event, names of the parties, and any other special circumstances.

A sample release is available for CCCC members to download at www.cccc.org/members_sample_documents . Additional guidance on preparing releases can be found in the CCCC Bulletin article Releases from Liability, Issue 4, 2008.

Special Considerations for Children and Youth

Some insurance providers recommend or require that the only acceptable way to conduct short-term missions trips with children or teenagers from a legal liability standpoint is to stipulate that they remain in the care of a parent or guardian on the trip. In more and more cases, insurers will not provide general liability coverage for short-term missions trips involving minors as participants without a parent or guardian. Charities should consult with their insurance providers prior to finalizing a policy position in order to determine whether their liability policy has a worldwide coverage scope and understand specific risk management requirements that will apply to their situation. Organizations can encourage participation of children and teenagers by focusing on family-based outreach with children accompanying and in the care of parents.

When dealing with participants who are minors, there are special considerations. In terms of the application form itself, there should be parental consent. Both parents and participant need to fully understand and sign the trip release form.

For a trip that will take place out of the province of residency, a parental authorization must also be obtained. Minor children must not be removed from the province of their ordinary residency without written, parental authority. A sample authorization for this purpose is available for CCCC members to download at www.cccc.org/members_sample_documents. These documents must be witnessed by either a notary public or a commissioner for taking oaths. Whether the witness should be a notary or a commissioner, depends on the destination. If the participants will cross an international boundary, they will require notarized parental consent forms. If the participants remain in Canada, they can use commissioned parental consents.

A notarized signature is valid internationally. The notary public will observe the signing of the document, sign as a witness, and affix the notary seal, which makes an impression in the paper. A red seal sticker may be applied prior to impressing the paper. Lawyers are sometimes, but not always, notaries.

A commissioned signature is valid within the province where the document was signed, or from province to province within Canada. A commissioner will observe the signing of the document, sign as a witness, and stamp the document with an ink pad, confirming the commission. Law firms, court houses, and municipal offices frequently have employees licensed to commission signatures.

Debriefing

At an organizational level, debriefing brings closure by completing the documentation required for the books and records of the church. The team leader should complete a written report on the activities. Log books and receipts are submitted to support expenditures. Photographs and videos provide a visual of the work completed.

From a stewardship perspective, Christian charities should evaluate whether the program or activity achieved the desired results. Did the program move us toward fulfilling our mission? Did we spend the funds wisely? What can we learn to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these kinds of trips in the future?

Debriefing should also occur on a personal level with trip participants both during the trip and after returning home. This process can help participants to interpret and apply their experiences.

Set debriefing dates in advance to ensure that they are considered a priority.

Conclusion

By developing a short-term missions trip policy, churches will be able to plan more effective trips and mitigate risks to both participants and the church.

See Sample Short Term Missions Policy on pages 6 & 7.

Resources

Bulletin Articles *(available for members at www.cccc.org/members/bulletin)*

Short-term Missions Trips & The Local Church - Part I	CCCC Bulletin Issue 4, 2007
Short-term Missions Trips & The Local Church - Part II	CCCC Bulletin Issue 5, 2007
Short-term Missions Trips & The Local Church - Part III	CCCC Bulletin Issue 1, 2008
Debriefing Strategies for Short-term Missions Trips	CCCC Bulletin Issue 4, 2009
Fundraising Support Letters for Short-Term Missions	CCCC Bulletin Issue 2, 2010
Releases from Liability Form	CCCC Bulletin Issue 4, 2008
Evaluating Ministry Effectiveness	CCCC Bulletin Issue 5, 2006
Risk and Insurance for Overseas Missions	CCCC Bulletin Issue 5, 2008

CCCC Sample Forms *(available for members at www.cccc.org/members_sample_documents)*

- Parental Authorization for Minor Child to Temporarily Leave the Jurisdiction of Residency
- Release of Liability Form
- Short-term Missions Trip Application Form
- Short-term Missions Policy

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SAMPLE SHORT-TERM MISSIONS POLICY

ABC CHURCH

Purpose Statement

This policy provides the process for overseeing short-term missions trips and projects of ABC Church. Short-term missions work can take many forms, but it will always connect back to the mission of the church.

(In this area, include a specific purpose statement for your church or statement of faith. You may also wish to include a paragraph about how your church prioritizes applications and how you define short-term missions programs. For example, anything under two years in duration would be considered short-term missions.)

Project Approval Process

All short-term missions trips of the church must be approved by _____ (the church board, the missions committee, the missions pastor) prior to leaving on the trip and before fundraising commences.

A proposal for the short-term mission trip must be submitted to _____ (the church board, the missions committee, the missions pastor) and must include the following:

- an overview of the mission as well as the goals and activities to be carried out
- the project start and end date
- the location of the project and responsible contact person at project location
- an evaluation of risk and health & safety considerations
- the estimated number of participants
- the required travel documentation and immunizations
- the estimated total budget for the trip
- an outline of fundraising plans

Proposals will be considered in the context of the church's overall short-term missions strategy.

Fundraising

All participants will be required to assist in raising funds for the trip.

All fundraising methods must be approved in advance by _____ (the church board, church treasurer, missions pastor, administrator) and be coordinated through the trip team leader.

In the event that sufficient funds are not raised, the _____ (church board, church treasurer, missions pastor, missions committee) will determine whether the trip will proceed.

Participant Requirements

Each person participating in a short-term missions trip must complete an application form which will include:

- personal and emergency contact information
- references
- a list of experience and skills
- expectations of Short-term Missions Trip Participants
- physician medical note and background checking consent
- consent from parents or guardians, if under the age of majority

An interview may also be requested. The _____ (team leader, missions pastor, missions committee, board) will approve those who will form part of the short-term missions team, subject to appropriate funding being in place.

A release of liability form, customized for the trip, will be reviewed with and signed by each participant by the missions trip team leader.

—continued on next page

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DID YOU *Know?*

THAT GENERALLY DONATION RECEIPTS MAY NOT BE ISSUED FOR ITEMS PURCHASED AT CHARITY AUCTIONS?

Canada Revenue Agency has made this ruling on the basis that the winning bid is the fair market value of the item. However, an exception may apply where

> the value of an item is clear *(e.g., there is a retail price for the item)*;
> the amount is posted; and
> the amount is made know to all bidders prior to the item being auctioned.

If the posted value of the item does not exceed 80% of the winning bid, a tax receipt may be issued for the eligible amount *(the difference between the total paid and the posted value).*

SAMPLE SHORT-TERM MISSIONS POLICY *–continued*

Team Training and Orientation

Effective trips require preparation, both spiritually and in practical terms. All team leaders will receive mandatory training. Participants must make every effort to attend all team training and orientation sessions. If a team member is unable to attend all sessions, the missions trip team leader will determine if the team member can be permitted to participate in the project.

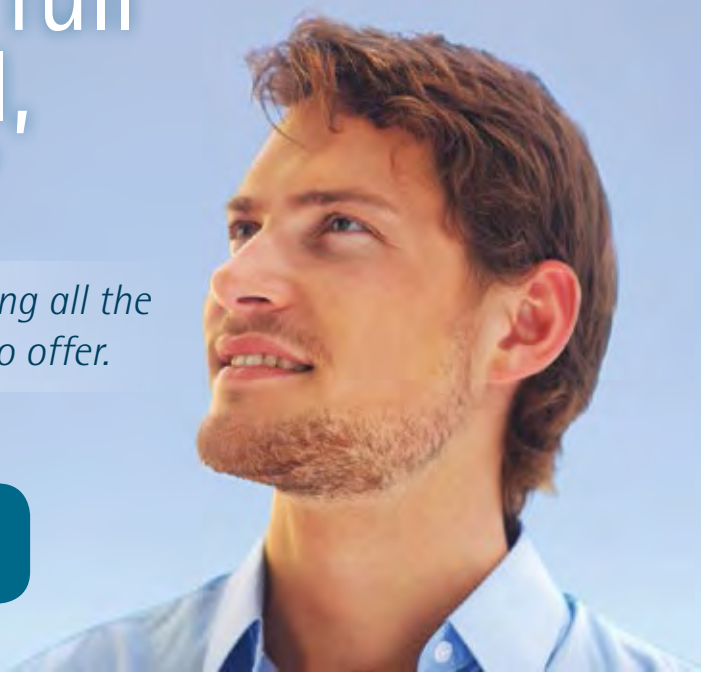
Reporting and Debriefing

The missions trip team leader is required to complete a written report to the (board, missions pastor, missions committee) on the missions trip activities within one month of returning home. Log books and receipts to support expenditures must be submitted to the (administrator, treasurer, missions pastor) within two weeks of returning home.

The _____(missions trip team leader, missions pastor) will also debrief with each participant as soon as possible after returning home.

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SEE PAGE 8 & 9 TO LEARN MORE AND TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP.

A CCCC Membership has so many benefits.

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Technical Expertise & Searchable Website
CCCC staff are experienced and available to answer your technical questions. Our website facilitates topical and text searches and includes a variety of resources.

T3010 Annual Charity Information Return
We provide a fillable, saveable online T3010 Form with a step-by-step guide; plus an optional T3010 email reminder service (sign up online).

Free Recorded Webcasts
As a member you have access to recorded continuing education from our website at any time on a variety of helpful topics.

Free Canadian Ministry Compensation Survey
This survey is a national salary survey of churches and Christian agencies.

Seminars/Conferences
Members receive discount pricing.

Free Charities Handbook
Our Charities Handbook is a comprehensive resource you won't want to be without and is also searchable online.

CCCC Bulletin
Hard copies or email notification of the CCCC Bulletin available on our website keep our members current on new developments affecting charities.

Affinity and Insurance Programs
Access to affinity programs for office supplies, website development, and insurance as well as pension plan and group benefits.

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CCCC AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

TO APPLY ONLINE, GO TO WWW.CCCC.ORG/MEMBERSHIP_OPTIONS

CCCC serves over 3,200 ministries by providing practical, affordable resources that help them operate in an exemplary, healthy, and effective way. CCCC affiliate membership is valid for the calendar year. Members must be Canadian registered charities.

Date of Application			CRA Number	
Name of Church or Organization			Website	
Street Address				
Mailing Address *(if different from above)*			Organization's Email	
City	Province	Postal Code	Telephone	Fax
I heard about CCCC Membership from:	Denominational Affiliation *(if any)*		Primary Focus *(e.g., local church, counselling, youth ministry, relief & development.)*	

ANNUAL REVENUE

(from line 4700 of T3010)

is $ _____

ANNUAL REVENUE	2014 FEE
$0–$300,000	$210
$300,001–$675,000	$400
$675,001–$999,999	$525
$1,000,000 or more	$750

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Please charge $ _____ to my credit card.

I will pay by: ☐ VISA ☐ Mastercard ☐ Amex ☐ Cheque

_____ /

Card # Expiry Date

_____

Name of Cardholder *(Please print)* Signature

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Primary Contact: Name	Position
Email Address	CCCC Bulletin format: ☐ Hard Copy ☐ Email

Name	Position
Email Address	CCCC Bulletin format: ☐ Hard Copy ☐ Email
Name	Position
Email Address	CCCC Bulletin format: ☐ Hard Copy ☐ Email

CODE OF ETHICS

By joining CCCC as an affiliate member, we agree to use our best efforts to:

- Form an active governing board that holds regular meetings, creates appropriate policy, maintains effective control, and provides strategic direction.
- Establish appropriate systems for financial & internal control, transparent financial reporting, and fair treatment of staff and volunteers.
- Comply with federal, provincial, and municipal laws and regulations.
- Serve the interests of donors, members, and beneficiaries in an ethical way.
- Protect the confidentiality of personal data.
- Be open and honest in dealing with the public.

COMMITMENT TO CCCC: We affirm our organization's compliance with and endorsement of the CCCC Code of Ethics and we understand that this level of membership does not entitle us to use the CCCC logo or the CCCC Seal of Accountability, which is reserved exclusively for CCCC Certified members.

_____

Signature of Applicant Date