

You are gearing up to lead a team to serve with Habitat in a new culture. Team newsletters provide an opportunity for coaching and making sure volunteers are prepared for their upcoming journey.

### 5 quick tips for effective newsletters

- **Be purposeful**- Ensure the content is valuable and engaging for volunteers. Effective updates build excitement, cover key details every volunteer should know and boost confidence that traveling with Habitat is a good choice.
- **Be mission focused!** Along with sharing logistics, be sure to connect volunteers to the mission and the important role they play by joining Habitat trips.
- **Be visual**- Share photos, videos and links to articles to help volunteers learn about the host country and Habitat's work there.
- **Be consistent**- Map out how often you will update the team and stay on track by creating a schedule. Save time with newsletter templates that can be updated with new information and used repeatedly for different trips.
- **Be concise**- Avoid lengthy documents that volunteers might not make time to read. Newsletters should be 3-4 paragraphs max. You can always include a snapshot of what is covered in the next update.

### Sample newsletter timeline and topics

**Invitation to join the team:** use template on [team leader resources page](#).

**Initial newsletter:** send as volunteers are added to the team, after they've submitted their deposit.

- Brief trip overview- where the team is headed and why.
- Payment guidance and links to payment sites/fundraising resources.
- Visa and passport application/renewal information.
- Booking flights guidance- suggested arrival time, encourage trip cancellation insurance and airport location.
- Links to State Department and CDC- sign up for STEP program, see required vaccinations
- Team member bio request
- Inspirational quote, photo or video. Here are a few videos to include:
  - Strengthening families: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fi1jhiSrDyA>

- Every hand makes a difference: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPSNaX29z\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPSNaX29z_4)
- Global Village trips offer transformational volunteer abroad opportunities: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JML6wISWWIs>

### **3 months prior to departure**

- About the culture, language and customs of the host country.
- About the team's work- volunteer tasks and how we are making a difference.
- Gift giving guidance- what participants can do and what should be avoided.
- Description of cultural activities.
- Pre-trip reflection. Some sample questions are:
  - What do you think life is like for the families our team will serve?
  - What are some problems and challenges they face?
  - How will your service during this Habitat trip support the community?
  - How do you think this experience will change you?

### **2 months prior to departure**

- Payment deadline and visa/passport reminder
- Hotel and meal information.
- Travel tips
  - Safety practices/alcohol policy
  - Local time, currency, electricity and climate
  - What to pack, and what not to pack, as well as appropriate dress in-country
  - Airport arrival and team meet-up instructions.
- Inspirational quote or video. Some sample video content:
  - The Shelter Effect: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lf2z38u2djA>
  - Through shelter, we empower: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuUhl18fB8>

### **1 month prior to departure:** get the team excited to travel!

- Introduce team members and share bios.
- Introduce host program coordinator and family profile.
- Promote potential team roles and expectations.
- Reminder about gift giving policy and volunteer code of conduct.
- Emergency contact information.
- Inspiration quote or reflection on teamwork. Some sample questions are:
  - What important skills and strengths will you bring to this team?
  - How would you characterize a team player?

### **Helpful resources:**

- Volunteer handbook- included in your confirmation email.
- Team leader resources page- [here's the link.](#)