



RESPONSE volunteering in Puerto Rico

Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico on September 20. The federal government declared the entire island a national disaster. Many hundreds of people lost their lives and many thousands of homes were destroyed or damaged.

The government and voluntary organizations are still in a “sustained” response period, meaning that there remains response work yet to be done. This includes but is not limited to maintaining or restoring power, providing humanitarian assistance, cleaning up debris, mucking out homes, and providing emotional and spiritual care.

Presbyterian Church USA volunteers typically engage and partner with PDA during the longer-term recovery period, which often begins around three to six months post-disaster and can continue for years thereafter. However, due to the extensive damage throughout Puerto Rico and the unique challenges presented by its location, the response period is longer than is often the case. Some volunteer groups are eager to assist now during the response period.

PDA has been on the island actively communicating with possible host sites and potential work partners for these groups. (A host site is where the group rooms and boards; a work partner is an organization that assigns and supervises the volunteer group’s actual endeavor.) If you are interested in volunteering in this sustained response period (between now and mid-summer), a list of Frequency Asked Questions is attached, including the names of the contact people for the host sites and work partners.



RESPONSE Volunteering in Puerto Rico

Frequently Asked Questions

Q .1: Why is the word “response” above capitalized?

A: Response is capitalized to designate a specific period in disaster work and to distinguish it from the long-term recovery period. Response volunteering is work done immediately following a disaster and entails humanitarian aid, muck and gut, debris removal, roof covering, etc. Its duration depends on the severity and scope of the disaster. The bigger the disaster, the longer it takes to respond to it. In Puerto Rico, because Hurricane Maria was so devastating to the entire island, the response period may continue into the summer of 2018.

Q .2: Why is PDA involved in the response period? Doesn't PDA usually engage with volunteers during the recovery period, which can last for years following the response period?

A: PDA does indeed usually wait to engage until the recovery period. However, due to the enormous need, the interest of volunteer work groups to respond and the extended length of the response period in Puerto Rico, PDA wants to facilitate connections between Presbyterian Church USA groups and possible host sites and work partners.

Q .3: Is PDA's engagement and relationship with the volunteer groups the same during this response period as it is the long-term recovery period?

A: No. Groups wanting to volunteer in the long-term recovery period call the PDA Call Center. The PDA Call Center functions as a “broker” between the volunteer group and fully vetted host sites and fully vetted work partners. In this response period, the volunteer groups acts as their own broker with a host site and work partner. Though PDA has communicated with potential host sites and work partners about their availability, PDA only offers basic (or partially vetted) information about them.

Q. 4: What are the practical implications of the above?

A: You should not under any circumstances make any travel plans until you have secured commitments from, and agreed to terms with, both a host site and a work partner. Further, it is not the host site's responsibility to secure a work partner, nor is it the work partner's responsibility to secure a host site.



Q. 5: What are some questions we should ask of the host site?

A: Here's a good starting list:

- Is there a minimum and maximum number of volunteers we can bring?
- What is the minimum age allowed?
- Housing: What is the adult-to-youth ratio? What type of housing? What type of beds? What is the showers to bed ratio? Are linens provided? Is there on-site laundry?
- Food: Are meals provided? Which ones? Is there a kitchen for self-cooking?
- Costs: Is there a registration fee? What is the per diem per person? Does the per diem include meals?
- Are there amenities such as green areas, a pool, a basketball court, etc.?

Q. 6: What are some questions we should ask of the work partner?

A: Here's a good starting list:

- What is the project, who sponsors it, what does it entail, and where is it located?
- Who is the project manager and is there a supervisor on-site? Full- or part-time?
- Does the sponsoring work partner carry liability insurance?
- What is the minimum age for a volunteer? What is the adult-to-youth ratio?
- Will the project be for the duration of the group's visit?
- What are the expectations for the daily schedule?
- Does the project require specialized skills? General skills? A combination?
- Does the project require tools? Who is responsible for the tools?

Q. 7: Assuming we have made the appropriate arrangements with the host site and work partner, what about ground transportation once in Puerto Rico?

A: Ground transportation to and from the host site, and to and from the work site is your responsibility. Note: large van rentals in Puerto Rico may be difficult to obtain.

Q. 8: Will we need to make any adjustments for our data and email service?

A: Ordinarily cell, data and email services work well in Puerto Rico. Be prepared for inconsistent coverage. Check with your provider for information to ensure the best coverage while in Puerto Rico.

Q. 9: Will someone from our group need to speak Spanish?

A: Though not absolutely required, it would be highly desirable if at least one of your volunteers is bi-lingual.



Q 10: Who are the potential host sites and work partners in Puerto Rico with whom PDA has communicated?

Volunteer Host Site	Work Partner
<p>First Presbyterian Anasco 65 de Infanteria #80 Anasco, PR Ada Lis Luciano, Church Administrator 787-826-3677 adalislucianoandujar@yahoo.com</p>	<p>Bruce Bailey, Director AmeriCorps-NCCC 314-651-6225 bruce@americorps-stl.org Brenna Thompson (in lieu of Bruce) 603-852-3938 Brenna.thompson@fema.dhs.gov</p>
<p>Camp El Guacio Carr 119 Km 44.6 Barrio Brisas del Guacio San Sebastian, PR 00685 Wimari Vargas, Camp Director (Spanish interpreter needed) 787-315-2691 Nenay13@gmail.com</p>	<p>Pastor Victor Vianna San Sabastian Long Term Recovery Group 787-448-8573 Proyecto-hombre@hotmail.com Bruce Bailey, Director AmeriCorps-NCCC 314-651-6225 bruce@americorps-stl.org Brenna Thompson (in lieu of Bruce) 603-852-3938 Brenna.thompson@fema.dhs.gov</p>
<p>La Casona de Monteflores 352-372 Calle Ismael Rivera San Juan, PR 00912 Rev. Arelis Cardona, Pastor 787-409-3964 LaCasonaDeMonteflores@gmail.com</p>	<p>Rev. Arelis Cardona, Pastor (Cardona can also secure work partners) 787-409-3964 LaCasonaDeMonteflores@gmail.com Bruce Bailey, Director AmeriCorps-NCCC 314-651-6225 bruce@americorps-stl.org Brenna Thompson (in lieu of Bruce) 603-852-3938 Brenna.thompson@fema.dhs.gov</p>
<p>Lutheran Camp Eduardo Roig Carr. 694 Km. 2.0 Barrio Maguayo, Dorado, PR 00646 Rev. David Guadalupe, Director 787-364-8394 dguadalupe@elcalcs.org</p>	<p>Bruce Bailey, Director AmeriCorps-NCCC 314-651-6225 bruce@americorps-stl.org Brenna Thompson (in lieu of Bruce) 603-852-3938 Brenna.thompson@fema.dhs.gov</p>