

Mental Health Procedures

Introduction & Self Care Agreements

As with medical conditions, all prospective Participants are screened for compliance with our mental health criteria for participation in the AMIGOS Program. The criteria is the following:

- No acute psychiatric diagnosis or episode, or psychiatric hospitalization within the past year, prior to the current application to AMIGOS.
- No new psychotropic medication(s) within six months of departure for country assignment. (Jan. 31st)
- No major changes of existing psychotropic medication(s), including sudden stoppage, within three months of departure for country assignment. (Apr. 1st)
- Relative stability (verified by the treating clinician) over the last year, if a history of chronic depression, anxiety, or other psychological or behavioral diagnoses exists.
- Willingness by the participant to sign a Self-Care Agreement which holds them accountable for administering their own prescribed medication(s) (antidepressant, stimulant, mood stabilizer etc.) and monitoring their mental health, reporting immediately any new or familiar symptoms to their project supervisor.

In the event that an applicant meets the above criteria and is cleared for participation, there may be the need for a Self Care Agreement (SCA) to be completed and signed by the Volunteer and his/her parents (if under 18). The rationale and use of the SCA is explained in detail during the screening process & is reviewed after completion by the MH Coordinator. The completed and signed SCA is placed in the Participant's project file and is reviewed by the Project Director and the Participant's Project Supervisor, during their briefing period. It is the responsibility of the supervisor and the Participant to jointly monitor compliance with the SCA during the weekly supervisory meetings or as needed. The supervisor must bring any infractions of the agreement to the Participant's attention to work out a solution in the form of an action plan. The IO Mental Health Consultant is available to provide guidance and support to the project staff to ensure the success of the SCA process. In the event the action plan is not adhered to, or is otherwise not successful, more serious measures will need to be taken to ensure the health and safety of the Participant. The action plan may include the need for an early return if sufficient progress to address the problem is not made.

Mental Health Situations

AMIGOS has a professional Mental Health Consultant on call 24 hours a day during the summer to help respond to any mental health concerns that may arise during the summer. Additionally our Participants receive training in coping mechanisms for dealing with common mental health issues. We have an extensive health screening process that includes mental health. AMIGOS requires participants to sign a self care agreement in cases where it is determined beneficial by our mental health professionals. Mental health situations that may arise during the summer include:

1. Cultural Adjustment
2. Anxiety
3. Depressed mood
4. Eating Abnormalities
5. Attention/Focus/Concentration problems
6. Impulsivity problems
7. Sexual Abuse (infrequent)
8. Psychotic episode (very rare in our long history.)

The most common situation is a range of cultural adjustment issues. It is important that Participants are prepared to experience a level of cultural adjustment and stress due to the change of environment. In training they will complete a mental health module that includes anticipatory guidance and a personal coping inventory in preparation for dealing with feelings of cultural adjustment during the summer. If a Participant experiences feelings that may reflect any of these mental health concerns or witnesses such behaviors in their partners, they should immediately discuss this with a member of their Project Staff.

Additionally, it is **CRUCIAL** for each Participant's health and well-being that they **FULLY** disclose any and all mental health concerns during the AMIGOS screening process and that if there is any event or update in this status that the AMIGOS I/O is advised about the details as soon as possible, prior to the summer experience so that the case can be re-screened if necessary.