

# AMIGOS Standards of Conduct for Gap Programs

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The AMIGOS Standards of Conduct are an integral part of building and growing your leadership skills as you assume the accountability that comes with being the face of our organization in host communities and while carrying out different initiatives. The Standards of Conduct come from many years of Participant experiences and recommendations. Understanding and upholding these standards will help ensure that you and the many AMIGOS stakeholders and future participants will have the opportunity to safely and successfully complete the AMIGOS experience.

AMIGOS Programs require that Participants act responsibly to keep themselves safe and maintain a strong reputation for AMIGOS with all of our host organizations, communities, host families, and other constituents in Latin America.

In all situations and environments while enrolled in the program the AMIGOS participant will act respectfully and will take into account the cultures, beliefs, customs and traditions of those with whom they interact. The AMIGOS participant will act professionally for the duration of the program. Participants will review and comply with all of the policies and procedures of the program and abide by the AMIGOS Standards of Conduct for Summer Programs.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The following are a list of strongly discouraged or disallowed behaviors. If a participant engages in any of the below behaviors they are subject to the standards of conduct investigation and review process which, upon assessment of the circumstances and severity of the violation, will result in an official designation of: warning, incident or dismissal from the program.

The AMIGOS participant will not:

1. *Engage in any detrimental behavior* that may be harmful to the health and safety of the participant or others, nor will the participant engage in any behavior that may be detrimental to the program. This includes violating the laws of the country in which the participant is placed or the norms of their host family/community placement.
2. *Use or possess any drugs* which are illegal under the laws of the United States or the host country. They will also not self-administer any prescription medications which have not been authorized and prescribed to them by an AMIGOS approved physician.
3. *Leave their assigned work area* without prior permission received directly from a member of the AMIGOS Gap In-Country Staff Team. During approved travel the participant should continue to communicate their whereabouts to both AMIGOS Gap In-Country Staff Team and their host family.
4. *Operate any motorized vehicle* or ride on any motorcycle.
5. *Handle firearms* or possess any other item which could be considered or used as a weapon.
6. *Engage in any acts of disrespect, harassment, aggression, or bullying* (as defined by the organization) towards other participants, Gap In-Country Staff, host agency contacts, or host community/ country members.
7. *Engage in the consumption of alcohol* in an irresponsible or excessive manner. When consuming alcohol, participants will obey all local laws relating to alcohol consumption and possession. They will be responsible for their own actions and choices and will take full responsibility for their behavior and safety. AMIGOS participants will follow cultural norms in their placement associated with alcohol consumption and will not engage in the consumption of alcohol if it does any of the following: puts themselves or others at risk, negatively affects the relationships between the participant and their host family or agency, or risks the reputation of AMIGOS or its partners.
8. *Engage in intimate or amorous relationships that interfere with the AMIGOS program's success in carrying out the mission and vision.* Participants will not engage in a relationship with any of the following: member of a host agency placement, host family/host community member, or In Country Staff. Participants will not engage in any relationship with another participant that interferes with

the group dynamic or have a negative impact on programming in any other way. In any intimate relationship that a participant choose to engage in, the expectation is that they will always practice safe and healthy behaviors and abide by the laws of the host country.

9. *Use or possess tobacco products* during official AMIGOS events/activities or in the presence of host agency contacts, clients and/or affiliates. If a participant choose to use tobacco products outside of official AMIGOS events they must do so in accordance with local laws and cultural norms.

## **UPHOLDING THE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Upholding the Standards of Conduct is crucial for:

### **Development of Youth leadership**

A primary focus of the AMIGOS' mission statement is the development of youth leadership. As an AMIGOS participant, you should lead with positive examples, be the first to uphold the Standards of Conduct, and be stronger than any pressure to act otherwise. This is what being a leader is about. Take initiative. Be responsible. Be amazing and do great things.

### **Accountability to all AMIGOS Stakeholders**

As an AMIGOS Participant you are the face of AMIGOS – the leaders of our vast organization. This makes you accountable to all the AMIGOS stakeholders and your actions (positive or negative) will impact all the stakeholders and all those individuals who make your participation in the AMIGOS outreach programs possible this year. This includes your parents, chapter leaders, your trainers, your partners, your host family, and anyone who donated or helped you in some way to be a part of the AMIGOS program. You signed a document saying you would uphold the Standards of Conduct and you are accountable for that.

### **Preserving the Legacy of Both AMIGOS Outreach and Your Involvement**

You are now a part of the AMIGOS legacy. It is up to you how your actions will be remembered and connected with our organizations. You are ambassadors of the organization here and abroad. Your actions will be noticed and remembered accordingly. Your personal legacy is now entwined with that of Amigos de las Americas. This truly is an opportunity of a lifetime, as there are so many ways you can stay involved in AMIGOS and continue contributing to our legacy on many levels.

### **Personal Health & Safety**

AMIGOS has been conducting programs in Latin America since 1965. We have learned some lessons from past participant incidents and the Standards of Conduct help to ensure that you don't repeat these painful experiences.

## **POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

The following disciplinary actions are guidelines for standards violations. AMIGOS reserves the right to dismiss any participant for any violation of the Standards of Conduct at any point during the AMIGOS experience. The Standards of Conduct are in place to protect all of our participants and constituents. As an organization, these Standards are taken very seriously and all participants are required to sign an agreement as a part of their application process to uphold these Standards prior to acceptance into our programs. AMIGOS Standards of Personal Conduct apply during all phases of AMIGOS participation including training and travel to and from the project. College only programs may have modified expectations around the Standards of Conduct.

- Standards Violation Warning – This will be administered for minor, first-time violations that do not represent a threat to the health and safety of the individual, their partners, or the reputation of the partner agency/AMIGOS organization. Standards Violation Warnings are typically given for inadvertent violations or minor incidents in which there was no premeditated intent or in which

there were extenuating circumstances.

- *Examples of offenses are:* leaving the host community as a result of lack of direction from staff on boundaries, isolated incident of culturally insensitive behavior, or unknowingly consuming an alcoholic beverage.
- Standards Violation Incident – Standards Violation Incidents are given for more serious and “intentional” violations that could be potentially damaging to the individual, their partner(s), host family, community, partner agency, or the organization. An individual receiving a standards violation Incident Report is not eligible to participate as a In Country Staff Team member or participant for the following project year.
  - *Examples of offenses are:* intentionally leaving the host community/assigned area without prior permission, failure to notify staff about unsafe situations in the community or with partners, taking medications without prior approval, or repeatedly rude and/or culturally insensitive behavior.
- Standards Violation Incident and Dismissal from the Program - Participants will most likely be dismissed from the program in situations of repeated or severe violations that are potentially dangerous or harmful to the individual, their partner(s), or the organization. Individuals who are sent home will also be charged for actual costs of flight changes in addition to a \$500 servicing fee to AMIGOS to cover the cost of additional in-country expenses for travel, food, and lodging to accommodate an early return. The total costs for an early return can sometimes be well over \$1,000.
  - *Examples of offenses are:* violations involving illegal drugs, excessive and intentional consumption of alcohol, inappropriate or unsafe intimate sexual relationships, driving motorized vehicles, repeated leaving of host community without prior approval from the In Country Staff Team, or handling firearms.
  - Individuals can also be dismissed for non-disclosure related to medical or mental health issues. See *Letter of Health Disclosure and General Health Criteria* for more information on health related issues.