

## **Policies for Visitors And Visiting Teams at Amor del Niño**

*I am not the same having seen the moon shine on another part of the world.* Author unknown

*A child is the only known substance from which a responsible adult can be made.* T.Lickona

All visiting team members need to complete an application, either on-line or in paper, provided to Amor Del Nino prior to arrival. This enables a follow-up communication advising the team members of house rules and limits.

Visitors and visiting teams bless and are blessed by the children and staff of Amor del Niño. Mission trips can provide life-changing opportunities to partner in building God's kingdom and make a difference in a child's life. Jesus' ministry was full of such opportunities as He went from place to place meeting both the physical and spiritual needs of the people.

To make the most of your trip to us we have put together some information about our home.

### **General Guidelines**

Times for visits: Monday through Saturday 9 am-4 pm. Sundays, the Osborns would like to try to keep a "family day" and would like as much as possible to not host teams in our home on that day. Exceptions could be made based on extenuating circumstances. Saturday outings may be pre-arranged in advance if the children's schedule and weather permits.

Maximum number of people – Teams with up to 25 people can be accommodated when the weather is nice.

Children under 16 must be accompanied by a parent and must be under the parent's control at all times. Children are counted as a Visitor or Visiting Team Member in determining the maximum number of Visitors at any one time.

All professionals who are formally assessing the children (e.g. occupational , physical therapists, speech pathologists etc.) must first submit their CV to the Director, Shyrel Osborn, for professional vetting before working with the children. Professionals must also complete chart comments on findings, observations, assessments and action plan/recommendations before leaving.

Health issues: See your doctor 4-6 weeks before your trip to give time for the immunizations.

If you are sick please do not come as infections spread rapidly to many children and can be quite serious for some of our medically fragile children.

Recommended immunizations- Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, MMR booster, chicken pox and updated tetanus.

### **Etiquette/Behavior**

Visitors must arrange for the visit before arriving at Amor del Niño. Permission is needed and the Director, Shyrel Osborn must be notified in advance.

Children and staff should be treated with respect. Staff should be greeted and their schedules in caring for the children not impeded. Do not interfere with the routine and activities of the home. Remain sensitive to the needs of the caregivers and children for their established routines.

**A key treatment for children who have been traumatized is the emphasis on the child's sense of safety.**

**Routines and rules are like promises to a child and are essential to a child's sense of safety and security. It is important to maintain the child's schedule to build trust**

Permission should be requested when entering bedrooms and other private living spaces. Visitors must refrain from smoking and use of inappropriate language.

Be sure to introduce yourself to the staff and children. Do not wander into rooms without permission. Do not look through drawers, cabinets or other closed spaces without permission.

The children will look up to you and model your behavior so remember to set a good example in hygiene, appearance and language.

Clothing should be modest and comfortable e.g. no short shorts/skirts/dresses. Avoid tight fitting or revealing clothes (don't show too much skin). No spaghetti straps, tube tops, halter tops, backless/bare midriff, or see through shirts. No clothing with wording or pictures that can be construed as inappropriate for young children.

Some of the children come from sexually abusive backgrounds so the child may misinterpret behavior that is innocent to you.

Wear minimal amounts of jewelry as babies can pull on earrings and necklaces.

Body piercing, clothing, jewelry and nail length should allow you to bend, stretch, get down on the floor, sit and play or work with the children comfortably.

A safe place that is out of reach of the children will be provided for storage of personal items. Do not bring materials into the children's room such as purses, back packs, tote

bags because these are often put down and forgotten resulting in things being lost or misused by others and may contain things that are dangerous to young children.

When leaving, thank staff and say good-bye to the children and adults. If you are spending several days tell the children when it is your last day.

### **Donations/Gifts for Amor del Niño and the Children:**

The giving of your time to share activities with the children in our home is a wonderful gift. However we often get inquiries from folks about donations for the children, and we offer the following suggestions.

#### **Items we could use:**

##### **Household:**

Diapers

Wipes

Formula (like Similac), no liquid formula and please check expiration date

Diaper cream

Baby Shampoo

Baby Lotion

Q tips

Underwear

Socks (white only)

Crib sheets

Twin sheets

Plastic covers for twin beds

Regular size pillows

##### **Toys/Games:**

Tennis Balls

If you wish to donate an item that is not on this list, please contact us to see if we have a need for it. With so many children space is very limited.

Please check with us **before** you bring or pass out treats to the children. For example passing out cookies just before lunch will disrupt the appetite. Some of our children are very underweight and healthy eating is essential for their physical recovery. We may request that you give the treats to the caregivers to give out to the children at a more appropriate time.

### **About the children**

There is an essential part of our being that is fulfilled by loving a child. However most of us lack the understanding and skill to deal with the emotional needs of children who have histories of trauma, neglect and abuse.

Effects of trauma and abuse:

Traumatized kids are hypervigilant and overinterpret neutral cues. It can be difficult for them to handle new challenges in a healthy way. These children are at higher risk for being overwhelmed and confused by new experiences. Post traumatic symptoms can persist indefinitely and can lead kids to react very strongly to minor stressors. It is important to introduce new people and things gradually. This is the main reason that the number of folks visiting at any one time must be limited.

Children who have lived in multiple places have experienced a series of major losses of everything that is familiar. They have often been precipitously placed in new environments that are utterly strange and confusing. Every one of their senses tells them that the familiar is gone and the world is new, different, strange and potentially dangerous. These children are confused, disoriented, often subdued and grieving in the early weeks and months—even children that come as babies. Some are more temperamentally vulnerable than others but all suffer the losses.

**About “attachment”:** Attachment is the deep and enduring connection established between a child and caregiver in the first several years of life. In the first year of life basic trust and security develop through the consistent, appropriate and reliable fulfillment of an infant’s needs. By the first birthday a child has an internal working model of attachment relationships encoded in his brain based on his experience of caregiving. Children who experience prenatal drug and alcohol exposure, neglect of physical and emotional needs, abuse, violence, multiple caregivers begin life with compromised and disrupted attachment.

Abuse and neglect have profound effects on a child’s ability to regulate emotions, behaviors and impulses.

Our children, like people all over the world, have many different personality types. Some children will be slow to warm up and hesitant. Others will be immediately and overly friendly. Go slowly and watch the child for clues. Make lots of eye contact but give the child time to relax now and then. Allow relationships to develop at the child’s pace. These children have histories of many boundary violations, both emotional and physical. You have an opportunity to present a healthy model to them of mutual respect and reciprocity.

If you are bringing health professionals to provide service to the children, please read the section below:

Visiting teams with special expertise can be an invaluable source of care for our children. So that we may reap the benefits of your expertise, each time a child is seen by a health professional e.g. occupational therapist, speech therapist etc. a brief note on findings, observations, assessments and action plan/recommendations should be entered in the file signed and dated. This is critical so that future and disparate professionals can use and build on past diagnoses, therapies, impressions, surgeries, and management plans.

Should any child become eligible for adoption these records will be important for the adoptive family also. Many of these children come to us with little or no past medical information so it is important that we begin to build a medical home for each child's records that will help them receive much needed therapies.