



STUDENT MISSION TRIP PARENT GUIDE

This guide is designed to help parents walk alongside their student in the decision to answer the call to go on short-term mission with a Custom Student youth mission team. This guide addresses the following:

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Should you have any questions regarding student missions, please contact the trip leader listed for the trip your student is interested OR contact the student ministry missions director:

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1. Is This the Right Year for Your Student to Go on Mission?

We are passionate about showing God's love to others! Mission trips are one way we do that here at Custom Students. Mission trips are not something that you just jump in to because all your friends are going. Going on mission trips require a lot of prayer, preparation, and spiritual maturity.

How Do You Know If Your Student Is Being Called to Missions?

Prayer and discussion are the best way to decide if you feel called. Speak to God and He will speak back. Pray with and without your student asking God if this is what he wants for your family. If this is something that your student wants to do and can't get it off their mind, then it might be the right time for a mission trip. Are they interested in serving others and making a difference or are they looking at the trip more as a vacation? Questions like this help you determine if they are being called to go. If your student has a calling into missions because they want to spread the Gospel and make a difference in the lives of others, then this is the year for your student to take the next step in their faith.

How Do You Know If Your Student Is Mature Enough for Missions?

Each trip will require a different amount of spiritual maturity based on where we are going. If your child is willing to share his or her faith with other people, they are showing signs that they could be ready for missions. Your child will see and experience some powerful acts of God while on the trip. If they are mature enough to understand what is happening and why, your child could very well be ready for a mission trip.

There is also the question of emotional or physical maturity. For the most part, if your student is in middle school or high school, then we have developed a trip for them! Trips are designed with specific age groups and development in mind. If your student has never been on a mission, then they are probably not ready for Africa, but Central America is a great option too. Is your student ready to go out of the country? If yes, awesome! If not, there are trips in the United States! We can help you process questions like these for each individual student.

2. Is Your Student/Family Ready for the Commitment of Missions?

Missions require lots of commitment and hard work, but the personal development and life-changing experiences make missions so worth it! The

biggest decision factor that we see when it comes to commitment is whether the student and your family have time to commit to the mission preparation and whether they will commit to raising the funds. Missions really are a family commitment, so we ask that you look at your schedule for not only the trip dates but for the spring semester to raise funds, attend meetings, and prepare for the mission trip.

Does Your Student Have Time for a Mission Trip?

Is your student actively attending Custom, participating in a small group and stepping up to serve when opportunities present themselves? If not, then missions may not be the next best step. The missions experience will include requirements to attend at least 80% of One Nights and mission trip meetings and at least 80% participation in small groups. If your student's (and family's) schedule will not allow this between February and June, then this is probably not the year for student missions. But don't worry...we will still have plenty of local outreach events and other opportunities for your student to continue to put feet to their faith and serve.

What Are the Financial Obligations for a Mission Trip?

Trip costs are listed on the website (seacoast.org/missions) for each trip and range from under \$1000 to \$3400. This cost includes transportation, lodging, meals, mission project and a \$50 non-refundable deposit. You pay the deposit when you are accepted on the team and raise funds for the rest of the amount due.

While you are responsible for the costs of the mission, it is the goal that you would put in as little money of your own as possible into the trip. We provide the tools for students (and parents) to reach out to family, friends, and co-workers through missional support letters. This is the best way to raise funds and to get more people involved in the prayer and support of your student's trip. While you can babysit and mow lawns to help raise money (great for building ownership!), this should not be the key approach to going about raising funds. Your student will be most successful taking on the posture of a missionary and asking for funding and prayer support.

There will be target funding dates for each trip. The goal is to work hard to hit these dates. Missing them does not disqualify you from the team; however, you will be approached before the ticket purchase date if there are not enough funds to purchase airfare. You can decide at that time if you want to add funds to the

mission. Once tickets are purchased, you will need to commit to completing raising funds for the entire amount of the trip as the church will have committed to spending money for the ticket and for the spot with the mission partner.

Are There Other Costs That You Have to Cover for the Mission Trip?

Yes. If your student is going out of the country and does not have a passport, you will need to start that process as soon as possible. In addition, any immunizations are your responsibility. We provide a list of CDC travel requirements and recommendations for each country. Both passports and immunizations are costs in addition to the listed trip costs on our website.

We recommend \$100-\$200 spending cash for international trip (\$50-\$100 for U.S. trips). This covers meals in airports and purchases at markets for gifts. You can send if you want. Please note that each student is responsible to hold onto and manage their spending cash. This is in addition to the trip cost and cannot come from money raised that is donated to Seacoast Church on behalf of your trip.

3. Which Trip Is Best for Your Student?

There are multiple trips available for your student! Now it is time to pick the best trip, but what trip is best? The answer is usually the simple one...the trip that your student most wants to go on.

Here are the questions you should ask to help them process:

Where Is Their Heart?

- Where does your student's heart lie? This is the most important question. Your student's heart needs to be where they decide to go.
- Why do you want to go there? They should be able to explain this, and yes, it is ok if it is because some of their friends are going.

Are you ok with the dangers of each country/U.S. city?

- Unfortunately, there are small dangers of mission trips including illness, injury, the possibility of pickpockets, travel issues, and even being homesick.
- We do our best to plan and manage every trip to minimize this potential, but things do happen sometimes.

Will you put in the time to raise the funds and attend the meetings?

- Trips have funding target dates, training, and preparation meetings that your student will need to commit to if they want to go on mission.
- If your child has never fundraised before, an expensive trip may not be the best option to start with unless you feel they are committed to the time to raise funds.
- If your child is not willing to reschedule work and prioritize meetings (i.e. missing a sport practice or even a game), you may want to consider it is not the right time to go on mission.

4. Completing the Student Mission Application and Paying Trip Deposit.

Once your student has decided to go on a mission trip and knows which trip, it is time to fill out the student mission application and pay the trip deposit.

Applying

- Fill out a student mission application:
customstudents.com/missions
- Select the mission trip of interest and select the Apply for Trip button to open the application.
- Complete the application and click submit.
- Pay the \$50 deposit when prompted.

Things to Know/Consider

- Each trip has a limited number of spots and trips fill up fast, so apply early.
- Have a 2nd choice in mind if the trip is full.
- You don't have to go on mission every year, so if a trip you really want to do is full, wait until next year.
- If you want to travel with friends, talk to them and get them to apply the same time so you can both be on the team!

Next Steps

- Once you apply, be patient and wait to hear back from one of the trip leaders. They will either contact you to discuss the application OR contact you to let you know you are on the team.
- This process can take 2-3 weeks.

5. Passports and Immunizations (*international trips only*)

Passports

- Passports should be obtained as soon as you decide your student is going out of the country! Don't wait for meetings to start; get the process moving as quickly as possible.
- The price of the passport IS NOT included in the trip price and must be paid for personally.
- Without a passport, your student's plane ticket will not be able to be purchased and they will not be able to go.

Immunizations

- Custom Students follows the basic CDC recommended immunizations/vaccinations for the country.
- There are not a lot of required vaccinations. Togo does have a Yellow Fever vaccination requirement currently.
- The trip leaders will send more information on what is needed for your trip.
- The price of immunizations IS NOT included in trip cost.
- It is your choice as a family on whether you will take part in recommended vaccinations. Required vaccinations are not optional.

6. Required Forms

Code of Conduct

- This form outlines the general requirements for being a team member of the mission trip both prior to the trip as well as while on the trip.
- The form must be read carefully and signed by the student and a parent.

Release and Waiver of Liability

- This form outlines important information that indicate that the student is volunteering to go on mission, has language regarding waiving liability, and includes a medical release for emergency treatment if needed.
- The form must be read carefully and signed by the student and a parent.

Minor Consent to Travel

- This form is required for all students who are 17 years of age and under and NOT traveling with a parent. It shows that you have given permission for the student to travel with the mission team and to travel across state lines (domestic trips) or out of the country (international trips).
- This form needs to be signed by the parents and notarized. We will use the mission partner form if they have one; otherwise, we will use the Seacoast form.

Packing List Expectations Form

- This form outlines the basic requirements for packing for travel on mission – it has a required list, optional list, and a do not pack list.
- Since there is specific language on illegal/disallowed items that cannot be packed, carried, or acquired while on the mission trip, this form must be signed by the student and a parent.

7. Funding / Fundraising

This is one of the biggest parts of trip preparation and can be one of the more stressful parts if you don't start early and don't make this a priority in prayer and in preparation. We are often asked what is the best

What's the best way to raise money?

The number one way to raise money is send letters and post the donation link online on social media accounts. This is taking on the heart of a missionary and asking for family and friends to support your short-term mission trip both through prayer and through financial donations.

- **Who should I send letters to?**
Send to friends, family, teachers, and Sunday school teachers. Those are the people that will be most proud of what your student and will want to support. We recommend doing this early and often during the mission process. Ask frequently and create urgency by posting shorter goals with timelines that are close. For example, telling people you need \$500 in the next 2 weeks is better than saying you need \$2000 for a June trip.
- **Fundraising Goal**
Each trip has goals to reach. The main one is the ticket purchase, which is usually around April 1. There must be enough money in the account to purchase the ticket. Hitting these goals will set you up to be fully funded before the trip. Note: spring break trips will purchase in February.

- **What happens if my child isn't fully funded by departure?**
If your child is not fully funded by the departure date, you can continue to pay off the trip through fundraising when your student returns.
- **Are there other ways to raise money?**
Students can earn money through chores and other activities. The team may opt to do a fundraiser; however, please know that these may not be done AND do not net much money per student usually.

Tracking Money Raised

Each student has a profile set up on the mission team website (Go Method). Your student can go to the website, click the log-in option, and once logged in, see the following by click on their name:

- Edit option to add a photo
- Edit option to add a description – this is where they can tell why they are going and ask for support (like a Go Fund Me page)
- See the short link to their funding page to share with family and friends in letters, emails, texts, and social media posts
- See the amount and percent raised towards their goal
- See a list of donors who have given to their trip

It is the responsibility of each student to go to the website periodically to check their funding. It is recommended that at least 1 hour per week be dedicated to checking funding, who has given, and sending out new requests.

Online donations are the easiest and fastest way to see money get to your student's account. If they have checks made payable to Seacoast or cash, they can turn that in at team meetings OR get to their campus youth pastor for deposit. These may take up to 2-3 weeks to process and show up online.

When is Money Due

Each student has a profile set up on the mission team website. Your student can go to the website, click the log-in option, and once logged in, see the following by click on their name:

- \$50 deposit at time of application
- 25% due by Mar 1
- 50% due by Apr 1
- 75% due by May 1
- 100% due by Jun 1

The above targets are just that; goals for your student to aim for when it comes to funding at different times of the preparation months. With that said, the 50% April 1 date is very important as it is when we usually try to purchase air tickets for trips. We need enough in each person's account to buy the ticket.

8. Helping Your Students Prepare Spiritually

This is perhaps the most important part of the mission trip preparation process. Your student is going on a mission not a vacation. This is important for them to understand early in the process. This means there are spiritual disciplines that they need to remain focused on in addition to the important aspects of funding and getting to know their team in meetings.

- **Prayer**
Encourage your student to pray regularly. Pray for their spiritual preparation. Pray for their funding support. Pray for their team. Pray for the mission partner and those we will serve. This will get their heart aligned with the mission when we go.
- **Scripture**
Encourage your student to stay focused on their devotion and quiet time. This will help keep them centered on Jesus and prepare for spiritual attacks that are sure to happen as they prepare to go.

The team leaders will provide a devotion book and will go through it together as a team as they get closer to departure.

9. What Will Your Student be Doing on the Mission Trip?

Every trip is different but somewhat the same. We will be serving. We will be learning. We will be flexible. We will be the hand and feet of Jesus. And we will be helping others see Jesus and the mission partner/local church. Here are some important things to help your student prepare:

- The main things are service, discipleship, and evangelism.
- Students may have opportunities to do light construction, put on VBS for kids, visit schools, share their story, teach/preach the Gospel, lead worship, and more. We will help students discover their gifts and where they will best thrive in these mission roles.
- We will help students prepare for the specifics through **Team Training** and **Team Meetings** – their attendance in these 2 are VERY IMPORTANT to the success of the mission trip experience for them.
- Help them see the importance of making as many meetings as possible.

- Specifics of what we do may not be available until late April or May depending on when we get the details from the partner – be patient with not knowing these...we will share when we know.
- Travel logistics will be shared as soon as we have them.
- Once we depart for the trip, communication will be limited. Our Global Mission Team will always have access to us through the mission partner. You will be informed when teams have arrived safely at the destination.
- Teams will do their best to post updates daily through the texting app used (i.e. GroupMe or WhatsApp).
- Remember, no news is good news when it comes to mission travel. If there are issues, the Global Mission team will communicate to the parents and emergency contacts.

10. How Can You Help Your Student When Coming Home?

This is going to be an amazing experience for your student! When they return, be ready to greet them at the airport and celebrate their return and their wins on the mission field.

Here are some important things for you to consider:

- This has been a spiritual high experience for them. Be willing to carve out time for them to share with you...a lot.
- Every student is different. Some will share everything at once. Some will share pieces of the trip over a few days. Be ok with either. Let them go at their pace.
- They will be tired. Let them rest the first day or two.
- Your student may experience slight depression and guilt because of the poverty level and them feeling like they have too much. These are normal for some students. Help them process that they can thank God for the blessings in their life and still have compassion for those who do have much. They may miss the mountain top experience of serving at such a high level or even miss their team. Let them know these are all ok. Encourage them to take time to pray, process with someone, and journal.
- Encourage your student to serve – not immediately – but let them know they can continue to make a difference in the church and in the local community through their youth group.
- Encourage your student to stay connected to the mission team for the summer. There will be a team get together to celebrate, share photos and stories, and have some fun together. Encourage them to attend this.
- ***Please note for international trips:*** Your student has been out of the country for a while and there will be some struggles. Your child will be very sensitive to food. Their bodies will be sensitive to any processed food and grease. Encourage them to ease back into American fast food.

Encourage your student to let their trip leader or youth pastor know if they need to talk or if they feel there are next steps to take. We encourage you to reach out as well if you need or want to process anything about the trip.

Parents, thank you for partnering with us in this journey to prepare your student for one of the most amazing and exciting experiences they will have as a student in our ministry. Mission trips can be transformational. We hope to see every student in our ministry answer the call to go on mission at least once. We do not take lightly the responsibility we have as youth pastors and adult mission trip leaders to prepare, encourage, coach, disciple, and protect your student in this process.

Should you have any questions along the way, while the students are on mission, or after they return, please do not hesitate to reach out to the mission trip leader, to your campus youth pastor, or to the Central Student Pastor (contact info on page 1 of this guide) who oversees all student mission trips.