

Sponsor visit guidelines

Congratulations! You're about to have the experience of a lifetime as you visit your sponsored child!

These guidelines are to help make your visit a great one – both for you, your sponsored child and his or her family. While some of the guidelines might seem obvious, we want to make sure you're as prepared as possible for a journey into another culture with its own unique norms and traditions.

Most importantly, we want you to be informed to ensure that you and our sponsored children are protected.

Protecting the kids

The safety of our sponsored kids is our top priority. So we've developed child-protection policies that cover the kids' interactions with both CI's staff and with you, their sponsors.

Here's how these policies apply to your visit:

- A staff member and a member of the child's family must be with you at all times during your visit.
- Visits should always be coordinated with CI staff, even if you and your sponsored child live in the same country.
- To maintain privacy and security, don't share your personal contact information with your sponsored child or family.
- To minimize disruption to your sponsored child and his or her family, visits are limited to one really great day.
- To ensure that local staff can accompany and assist you, visits must occur during the working hours of our agency in the community you visit.
- If you share any photos, particularly on social media, make sure to disable *geotagging* on your phone or camera so you don't publish the exact location of your sponsored child.
- Be mindful of other location-revealing clues in information you share, such as signage in your child's neighborhood or the community center.
- Never post identifying information such as your child's full name or ID number.

No matter how much travel experience you have, our local staff has specific expertise about the community you will be visiting. Follow the staffer's lead. (And, please, don't ask him or her to make exceptions to any policy for you.) Our experts know best and make decisions with both your safety and the safety of your sponsored child and family in mind. Thanks in advance for your understanding!

Protecting you

- **Being culturally aware**

What is seen as appropriate can vary drastically across cultures. The local staff accompanying you can explain local norms and expectations to help ensure you're aware and respectful of what's appropriate.

Physical contact can be one of the trickiest subjects to navigate. The easiest way to ensure that your child and his or her family are comfortable during your visit is to allow the child to maintain his or her personal space. Any physical contact with your child, such as hugging or holding hands, must be initiated by the child.

In some parts of the world, the lines of acceptable behavior are quite strict, so ask the staff member accompanying you for guidance. For instance, it is culturally unacceptable in Zambia, India and the Philippines for visitors to:

- suggest or allow a child to sit on one's lap
- place one's hands on a child's shoulder or head
- hold a child's hand while walking or talking
- kiss a child.

While norms are generally more flexible in Central America, South America and the United States, refrain from holding hands with a youth (age 12 or older) or allowing him or her to sit on your lap, even if the child initiates it.

In addition, avoid discussing religious and political views out of respect for those of your sponsored child and his or her family.

- **Dressing for success**

While standards of dress vary around the world, there's one rule that tends to work everywhere: Keep it simple and modest. Conservative clothing such as jeans, khakis, T-shirts and polo shirts are great for both comfort and appropriateness.

The opposite is true with shorts, shirts with low necklines, halter-tops, miniskirts and excessively tight clothing. Such clothing is especially inappropriate in Zambia, India and the Philippines, where local customs require pants or skirts that fall below the knee. Shorts are definitely a no-go.

Alcohol, drugs and smoking

Visitors may not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when visiting a sponsored child. If you smoke, please do so when you're not in the presence of sponsored children. (Thanks!)

Bringing guests

Bringing a friend or loved one with you? Great! We're glad you want to share the joy of sponsorship with a travel companion. Just make sure the individual is familiar with these guidelines and is committed to following them as you are.

Oh, and no matter how much you love that travel companion, keep in mind that public displays of affection are not culturally acceptable in most of the countries we serve.

Giving gifts

Want to bring a gift along for your sponsored child? No problem. Just make sure to run them by a CI staff member before you give them to your sponsored child and his or her family.

Why the fuss? Basically, we've got some important restrictions we need to follow. That means the following gifts — while generous — are automatic no-nos:

- Cash, in any amount, which can cause a number of problems for the family within the community (jealousy, risk of theft and more).
- Clothing items that are not age-appropriate or contain questionable designs or labels. (Staff can help you determine whether clothing is suitable.)
- Music containing profanity or other offensive language.

As an alternative to giving your child or family cash, you can take them shopping during your visit, or make a donation before or after your visit. Simply visit children.org or call our Care Team for assistance at 800-888-3089. You'll receive a follow-up letter with full details on what items were purchased for your sponsored child.

Cancelling your trip

If you discover the need to cancel your trip, please call our Care Team as soon as possible at 800-888-3089. If you are already in the country where your child lives, please contact the agency directly.

With these guidelines in mind, you're ready to have an amazing visit. We know it will strengthen the bond between you and your sponsored child. Enjoy!

I have read and will follow the Sponsor Visit Guidelines during my visits with my sponsored child (children).

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

This is a duplicate of the "Sponsor visit guidelines" you will be asked to read and sign when you arrive for your visit. You may keep this copy for yourself.



Helpful tips for your trip

We're excited you're planning a trip to visit your sponsored child! The guidelines and procedures here will help you make the most of this amazing experience.

Know, by the way, that our staff members in the country you are visiting are experts in making sure you have a safe and enjoyable trip. You can rely on them to be by your side throughout the day!

So get ready for some excitement! After all, sponsor visits are a big deal in the neighborhoods where our kids live, so don't be surprised if you attract some extra attention and maybe even some curious crowds eager to see a "foreigner." Consider it part of the fun!

Because of the added attention, however, there may be times when it won't be advisable for you to visit your sponsored child's home. That decision will be made by the CI staffer in charge of your visit based on his or her local knowledge and experience. Trust that whatever is recommended is what's best for the situation.

Staying safe

International travel is incredibly exciting, but when visiting areas suffering from extreme poverty and the problems that come with it, that excitement comes with the need for added vigilance and precautions. Our field staff know the communities you'll be visiting best and will inform you of any extra steps needed to stay safe. Trust their recommendations and don't hesitate to ask if you're not clear on what to do.

While our staff will help you navigate issues in the local community, we've got some tips to help you minimize the chances of being a target of theft during your visit:

- Avoid wearing conspicuous clothing or jewelry.
- Do not carry excessive amounts of money.
- Do not leave unattended luggage in public areas.
- Do not accept packages from strangers.
- Ask someone to call a taxi for you, or arrange one through your hotel, instead of hailing one on the street.

Specific country considerations

Many of the countries CI serves suffer from elevated levels of crime and violence. This is often the case in Honduras and Guatemala. Be sure to consult the State Department (travel.state.gov) for more information on specific travel concerns in the country you'll be visiting.

In addition to their tips, follow these additional guidelines to avoid trouble during your visit (especially in areas experiencing any type of unrest):

- Avoid areas where political, religious or other demonstrations, processions or large public gatherings are in progress. These activities can pop up with little notice. While most are peaceful, they have the potential of quickly becoming violent, and criminals often target crowded areas.
- Resist the temptation to be on the streets alone at night. Though the nighttime sights and destinations may be tempting, the risk of becoming a crime victim is increased on darkened streets.

Trust CI staff

We'll say it one more time, because it's important: Follow the lead of the CI staffers accompanying you and trust their judgement. They're with you to keep you safe and ensure your visit is a success. And if you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to let them know.

If you need more information as you prepare for your visit, check out children.org/make-a-difference/sponsor-visit-planning/before-you-go. You can also call the Care Team at (800) 888-3089 with your questions.

Ready to roll? You've got the info you need to have a safe and rewarding trip to meet your sponsored child and learn about his or her life and community. Have an amazing journey!



Sponsor visit checklist

3 weeks before your trip: Confirm details with the CI office in the country you'll be visiting.

Please call office hours to speak directly to staff. (Note: Their hours may be when you're normally sleeping. So check the following pages of this doc for time zones and set your alarm.) Note: This step is really important. We can't finalize arrangements until you call, and if we don't hear from you, we'll assume you aren't coming and will cancel all arrangements.

Get vaccinations. Consult your doctor or local health department about necessary vaccinations where you'll be visiting. Note: Some vaccinations should be received several days or weeks in advance of a planned trip.

Check international travel alerts.

Visit the following websites (or call) for additional information about your destination:

- The U. S. Department of State: travel.state.gov/travel or (888) 407-4747
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: cdc.gov/travel
- The World Health Organization: who.int/countries/en
- The U. S. Department of State's "Tips for Traveling Abroad": travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html

Review "Sponsor visit guidelines" again, as well as "Assumption of risk" form. (You'll be asked to sign both forms at the beginning of your visit.)

Review "Helpful tips for your trip" one more time.

Contact the CI Care Team with any questions: (800) 888-3089 or children@children.org