

The Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church Volunteers in Mission (VAVIM)

Policies and Guidelines Regarding Short Term Mission Teams (STM Teams)

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is the short-term mission sending agency of the United Methodist Church. UMVIM exists to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify “Christian Love in Action” through short-term mission service at home and abroad.

VAVIM provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders and by offering resources and comprehensive training for team leaders to help them prepare their teams for the mission field.

A. General Description of Policy

The following are policies of VAVIM under the direction of the Conference Board of Global Ministries regarding STM teams. It is the intent that these policies provide guidance to districts and churches of the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (Conference) when undertaking and planning STM teams.

B. VAVIM STM Teams Defined

To help VAVIM fulfill its roles and to ensure the protection of the Virginia Conference, its churches and their respective congregants who serve in short term mission, it is critical to define what constitutes a VAVIM STM team. For the purposes of this policy, STM teams include two (2) or more persons, one of whom is affiliated with a Virginia Conference church or its district. In addition, a team must meet the following criteria to be considered a VAVIM team.

1. The STM team has registered through the South East Jurisdiction (SEJ) UMVIM office.
2. The team has verified that their team leader has been trained and certified by VAVIM or another Conference or Jurisdictional UMVIM within the past 5 (five) years, has liability insurance coverage through their church, has obtained medical insurance for teams travelling outside the US (can be purchased through the SEJ UMVIM office) and followed the Virginia Conference requirements for background checks and Safe Sanctuary certification.
3. The STM team is serving a mission project or site approved by the General Board of Global ministries (the mission agency of the United Methodist Church) and/or Southeast Jurisdiction (“SEJ”) Volunteers in Mission Office and/or VAVIM; and
4. Should the mission project or site selected by the STM team not appear on an approved list of the above VIM bodies, the STM team must provide basic information on the mission project or site to be reviewed for compliance with insurance, background checks, and Safe Sanctuary certification.

C. VAVIM's Role

VAVIM's role in the STM process is to:

1. Train and certify VAVIM STM Team Leaders;
2. Provide a list and current information on possible STM team sites to Districts and Conference churches;
3. Serve as a liaison between those persons seeking to serve on teams and certified VAVIM Team Leaders;
4. To use its best efforts to maximize the STM team experience by resourcing Team Leaders in the preparation of their teams for mission service and reflection upon their return from the Short term mission; and
5. Maintain a database of STM trips that have been taken by Districts and churches which includes dates, mission project and site, team leadership, local church or district sending the team, information, and number of missionaries.

VAVIM **does not** provide permission for churches to undertake mission, nor does VAVIM mandate Conference churches where to serve or what to do on the STM.

D. Procedures for STM teams within the Virginia Annual Conference

1. **All STM teams** are encouraged to register through the South East Jurisdiction (SEJ) UMVIM office.
 - a. VAVIM will, upon request, assist any proposed STM team in selecting an appropriate mission site;
 - b. For STM teams serving a mission project or site approved by the General Board of Global ministries (the mission agency of the United Methodist Church) and/or Southeast Jurisdiction ("SEJ") Volunteers in Mission Office and/or VAVIM, additional information will not be required beyond registration;
 - c. Should the mission project or site selected by the STM team not appear on an approved list of the above VIM bodies, it will be asked to provide evidence that an invitation has been extended by an entity in the area of intended service (i.e. receiving church body, Episcopal Office, receiving church VIM office, etc).
 - d. If the mission project selected by the STM or District or Conference Church serves a population including children, youth, or at risk adults, then each individual team member 18 or older will undergo a background check and show Safe Sanctuary certification; and
 - e. Complete and submit the Host Evaluation Team Form

- f. All first time VAVIM team leaders will consult with the VAVIM office for support and resources.
2. The Team Leader shall be trained and certified by VAVIM BEFORE being allowed to lead any VAVIM team:
 - a. All Team Leader training shall be done in person for the initial certification;
 - b. Thereafter, the Team Leader will be recertified every five (5) years;
 - c. This recertification can be done online if Team Leaders have led at least one team during that five (5) year period; if not, they will be required to attend again in person;
 - d. Those who have received training prior to 2007 will be asked to attend training again in person by the end of 2013 because of potential changes in organizational issues since that time; and
 - e. All team Leaders will be required to undergo a background check and show Safe Sanctuary Certification.

E. Reporting Procedures for Non-VAVIM STM Teams

- a. The Virginia Conference Board of Global Ministries desires to celebrate **all** STM trips by our local churches and that includes all age levels. Therefore, the VAVIM office encourages all teams to inform UMVIM, VA of their trip destination and purpose.
- b. Through our connectional system of sharing information each team may be of assistance to another church team partnering in a similar project. The VAVIM office is the connecting link and helps all join hands in building up the body of Christ.

This policy was approved at the 2012 Annual Conference session of the Virginia Annual Conference.