



FLOATING DOCTORS



Volunteer Handbook

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I. Floating Doctors

Mission Statement

The Floating Doctors' ongoing mission is to reduce the present and future burden of disease in the developing world, and to promote improvements in health care delivery worldwide.

Goals

Our goals include:

1. Providing free acute and preventative health care services and delivering donated medical supplies to isolated areas.
2. Reducing child and maternal mortality through food safety/prenatal education, nutritional counseling and clean water solutions.
3. Studying and documenting local systems of health care delivery and identifying what progress have been made, what challenges remain, and what solutions exist to improve health care delivery worldwide.
4. Using the latest communications technologies to bring specialist medical knowledge to the developing world, and to share our experiences with the global community and promote cooperation in resolving world health care issues.

II. Scope of Work

Mobile Clinics

The mobile clinic is the backbone of our project and not only acts as acute treatment and long-term patient management, but also as our introduction to the community. The mobile clinic forms the basis of the community acceptance that make our activities possible, and most of our other projects evolve from situations we encounter during mobile clinics.

Our patients can't 'just go to the hospital.' Oceans, mountains, jungles, politics, economics, and bigotry separate our patients from their basic human right of ACCESS to care, so we come to our patients' communities and to their homes, initially traveling in our ship the Southern Wind. Currently we travel by panga, a fast open boat, dugout canoe, horse, bus, and foot.

Mobile Imaging

Since our very first mission to Haiti in the wake of the 2010 Earthquake, our portable ultrasound has consistently been one of our most invaluable tools. Small enough to fit in a backpack and with enough power to run all day, the ultrasound has helped identify breach births, partially detached placentas, twins, and other potential problems that require intervention early to avoid a poor outcome. The ultrasound is also regularly used to examine gallstones or cholecystitis, kidney stones, bladder stones or tumors, ovarian cysts, tumors of the uterus, liver and abdominal problems, aneurysms and testicular lumps. It was the first piece of mobile diagnostic equipment carried by Floating Doctors and has become a symbol for our commitment to making the paradigm of 21st century medical technology available to the developing world.

Public Health Research

In 2011, we instituted a new program of data collection during our regular clinical activities. In Panama, where we visited more than 25 communities multiple times in rotation, we re-designed our patient treatment records to include detailed health and demographic data, and began ongoing subjective community assessments.

Health Education

The biggest problem we see causing health problems everywhere we have worked is lack of health knowledge. Every individual patient is an opportunity for the caring clinician to impart health knowledge, but we also recognize the need to extend health education into communities. Knowledge is power, and health education puts the power and responsibility for health back into patients' hands. Education can be held and passed on in communities, saving lives many miles and many years from where it was first given.

Professional Training

An important part of fulfilling our mission to reduce the burden of illness and disease is to create sustainable improvements in health care capacity. Improved knowledge and performance of existing health professionals, or the creation of health professional where there are none, is a high-value method for achieving this goal. Professional development by Floating Doctors includes working with local community midwives (*parteras*) and Red Cross or other local health workers to improve their knowledge base and skill sets, and tailoring the focus of our training on the most needed and most practical aspects

possible. In cooperation with Peace Corps, we are also creating a Community Health Worker training program to develop a new type of health worker in this region, with a skill set specifically matched to local needs. We also promote learning and professional development for all our volunteers, with an emphasis on improved tropical medicine/resource limited medicine knowledge, greater confidence with clinical skills, and more patient-focused consulting. In 2016 we also commenced hosting Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses in partnership with the University of Minnesota (<http://www.cme.umn.edu/>) and RemoteCareEducation (<http://www.remotecareeducation.com>) to provide a training resource for physicians engaging in overseas medical work.

Patient Chaperoning

We believe that an important job of primary care clinicians is to help patients understand what care is available and how it can be accessed. In more developed nations, this may require only a few minutes of explanation, but our patients operate at significant disadvantages—distance, bigotry, poor quality of care, and expense all separate our patients from successfully receiving care.

For those patients requiring more advanced care than we can provide in the field, we coordinate patient transport, make appointments and accompany patients to existing health services, microfinance costs of surgeries, procedures or examinations, and provide aftercare and follow-up for patients after treatment.

Ethnomedicine

Since 2011, we have been developing relationships indigenous natural healers, or ‘Curanderos’ in the Bocas del Toro province. They make hundreds of different preparations for every ailment, but these indigenous medical preparations have not been systematically studied, primarily due to mistrust of foreigners. Because of our ongoing relationship with the communities we serve, the Curanderos are willing to share their knowledge, including being allowed to document methods of preparation, dosing, and treatment outcomes.

Asilo

The Asilo, a government nursing home in Bocas del Toro, was one of the facilities that we had first been invited to Panama to assist. We found a unit without regular medical care, but with a wonderful staff of no more than a cook, cleaner and nurse on each of the two day shifts and two on the night shift. There are 27 patients there, all elderly, ranging from totally mobile to totally bedridden, some without sight, some without limbs, many with varying degrees of dementia—and they all have to be fed, bathed and changed, the floors cleaned, meals prepared and cleaned up after.

Community Projects

We engage in numerous community projects, recognizing that there is a lot more to community health than just handing out antibiotics. Painting schools, building wheelchair walkways or physiotherapy equipment or specialized bathing tables for handicapped children, helping make homes more handicapped-accessible, repairing and equipping dilapidated rural birthing rooms, obtaining training equipment for a police boxing club for at-risk youth here in Bocas, or whatever we see around us that could use a little time and effort to improve. We involve all levels of the community to achieve our projects, helping reinforce one of our primary messages—YOU are your own PRIMARY care provider!

III. Pre-Arrival Information

Bocas del Toro

Floating Doctors is located in Bocas del Toro, Panama. Bocas del Toro is a province of Panama that is situated against the Caribbean and on the border of Costa Rica. The province of Bocas del Toro is predominantly comprised of larger towns, Almirante, Guabito and the Changuinola District, as well as the majority of the La Amistad International Park, all located on the main land of Panama; however, perhaps the most notable part of this particular province is the Bocas del Toro Archipelago. Both the remote nature of the towns on the mainland as well as the grouping of islands in the Caribbean creates the complication of access to healthcare. For these reasons Floating Doctors is stationed near the largest and perhaps most inhabited island, Isla Colon, located across the bay from Almirante and the mainland. Isla Colon holds the capital city of the province of Bocas del Toro known as Bocas Town. Bocas Town is a beautiful dichotomy of local indigenous residents and a diverse population of tourist and expatriates. There is a unique quality and energy in Bocas and the surrounding areas that can only be described and understood by spending time in the region and forming relationships with it's inhabitants.



San Cristobal

In 2016, we began operating from a new base of operations we built on Isla San Cristobal, a ten minute boat ride south of the town of Bocas del Toro in Western Panama. With a 9-room dormitory and additional rooms in small 'casitas' over the water, our capacity for our leadership and volunteers has greatly increased. The facility also has a separate bathhouse, large communal building and kitchen. Meals are prepared in our kitchen, and separate refrigeration and cooking facilities are available for volunteers to use as needed.

Our facility is completely off-the-grid, relying on solar power and rain catchment and biotreatment of waste on site. Rather than trying merely to reduce potential negative environmental impacts, we believe that projects should always strive to increase an area's biologic carrying capacity. To that end, we continue to terraform our base, planting fruiting and flowering plants to create more habitat and more food resources for local wildlife, placing artificial reef structures to promote coral growth, and sharing our home with the birds or animals that come to visit. With greater capacity to accommodate and deploy our teams, we look forward to extending our reach to many more communities in this vast underserved area.



Packing List

The following is a list of items to pack, as well as what we recommend you don't bring. Due to shared living space, packing lightly is encouraged. Please limit yourself to no more than two small duffel bags or one travel backpack for clothing and personal items, and one small daypack (a school backpack is fine) for clinic days. We request that you do not bring any hard suitcases, due to space constraints.

Clothing (Pack clothing that can- and probably will- get dirty)

- Hot Weather Clothing (T-shirts, Tanks, Shorts, Lightweight Jeans or Cargo Pants, Undergarments, Pajamas)
- Swimsuit (for swimming as well as bathing on multi-day clinics)
- Quick-drying shorts/pants
- Lightweight, Full-Coverage Clothing for Sun/Bug Protection
- Hat
- Sunglasses (it is recommended that you do not bring any expensive sunglasses)
- Sandals that are easy to wash and good for wear in wet/muddy conditions
- Sturdy Shoes Good for Hiking
- Rain Poncho/Jacket
- Watch WITH Second Hand
- Scrubs for Clinical Work (not necessary, but useful if you have them)

Important Documents

- Valid Passport (be sure you have AT LEAST six months before expiration)
- Travel Insurance
- Immunization Record
- Color Photocopies of your Personal Documents (Passport x2, Driver's License x2, Bank Cards, Travel Insurance, Prescriptions, Etc.)- *leave a copy of all these with someone you trust back home*
- Money for Personal Incidentals

Electronics/Entertainment

- Computer (You are welcome to bring your own laptop, but we highly recommend you back up all your files prior to joining us.)
- Thumb Drive to Share Documents, Music, and Photos
- Camera
- Books to Read

Toiletries (Most of these items can be purchased in Bocas, as well)

- Bug Spray (with DEET) There are many no-see-ums/sand flies and they are fierce!
- Calamine Lotion to Soothe Itchy Bug Bites
- Sunscreen
- Aloe Vera/After Sun Lotion
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Toothbrush/Paste
- Soap
- Deodorant
- Brush/Hair Ties
- Shaving Gear
- Glasses, Contact Lenses, & Solution
- Prescribed Medication- Make sure to bring more than enough for your entire stay
- Towel

Clinic Items

- Any Personal Medical Equipment you might prefer to use (stethoscope, otoscope, etc.)
- Water bottle Small Daypack
- To-Go Coffee Mugs
- Waterproof Bags

Multi-Day Clinic Gear

- Travel/Small, Easily Packed Hammock
- 30 Feet of 3/8 Inch Rope for Tying Hammocks
- Sleep Sheet or Sleeping Bag
- Bug Net
- Travel Towel
- Head lamp or flashlight
- Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)

Do NOT Bring

- Hard Suitcases or Trunks
- Weapons of Any Kind (pocket knives, field tools, etc are ok)
- Illegal or Recreational Drugs

Traveling To Bocas

All volunteers are required to arrive on a Sunday. This is usually a non-clinic day for us, and doing so helps ensure we have someone to meet you when you arrive. Additionally, we require all volunteers to attend an orientation, held every Sunday evening, prior to living and working with us. Should you choose to arrive on a separate day, you will be responsible for your own accommodations until you meet Floating Doctors the following Sunday. Until you attend an orientation, you will not be able to work with us.

Volunteers may depart on either Saturday or Sunday. While, it is possible for volunteers to depart mid-week, we strongly advise against it. Volunteers requesting to depart mid-week will be responsible for the volunteer donation for that week and may be responsible for their transport to Bocas Town unless there is a pre-arranged FD boat traveling to town on that day.

There are two ways to travel to Bocas Town, by air and by sea. Both options are available through Panama City, Panama or San Jose, Costa Rica.

Getting from Panama City to Bocas

Plane: All international flights into Panama come in to Tocuman International Airport in Panama City. All flights from Panama City to Bocas (airport code BOC) fly out of Albrook Airport (about 30 minutes in a taxi from Tocumen Airport). To get from Panama City to Bocas, there is one airline: Air Panama. Air Panama flies multiple flights daily from Albrook directly to Bocas (usually about \$116 with tax one-way). Flights can be booked online (although not less than 24 hours in advance), by phone, or in person at the airport. Prices are pretty much the same either way. The cab ride from Tocumen into the center of Panama City should cost you no more than \$40. Cab rides to Albrook Airport from downtown are around \$5-10.

Weight Restrictions: Each passenger has a 14-kilogram allowance for luggage (approx 31lbs). If your bag is overweight you have the option of checking bags in as cargo. As long as you go through checking and get your boarding pass, the cargo is shipped at \$1 per kilogram. The cargo office is on the side of the airport (attached to the building- the employee at the check in counter can direct you). The only requirement is that **the bag must be locked prior to shipping** so you may need zip ties or a lock. Any big grocery store or hardware store should have zip ties. In Spanish zip ties are "grapa plastica". Also make sure you ask them when the cargo will arrive in Bocas. It usually comes in on the same flight but check just to make sure.

Bus: Another option is to take an overnight bus from Panama City to Bocas (\$25). The overnight express bus is an air-conditioned tour bus that leaves Panama City around 7 PM (and another around 8 PM) and arrives in Almirante, across the bay from Bocas, around 6 in the morning. This bus may be very cold so we advise you carry on a sweatshirt, long pants, socks, and a travel blanket. A cab ride of less than \$3 (about 5 minutes or less) from the bus terminal in Almirante to the Bocas Marine Tour ferry dock, then a \$5 water taxi ride to Bocas. Once in Bocas you can either walk or take a taxi to the airport where we will meet you at 9am.

Accommodations in Panama City: Some of our younger volunteers have happily stayed at Luna's Castle (\$14 for a dorm style bed) in the old part of the city (tel. 262-1540, <http://lunacastle.com>); other hotels range from \$45-\$95 or more. Other volunteers have had success finding inexpensive lodging with AirBnB. We recommend staying with Speak Easy (David)

or Monica Yanet (found via AirBnB listing search). Monica and David can also arrange pickup from the airport.

Getting from San Jose, Costa Rica to Bocas

Plane: International flights into San Jose, Costa Rica land at Juan Santamaria International Airport. All flights to Bocas from San Jose leave from Tobias Bolanos Airport aka Pavas Airport (about 10 miles from Juan Santamaria). To get from San Jose to Bocas, there is one airline: Nature Air. Nature Air flies to Bocas four days a week: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, one flight per day. Flights can be booked online (although not less than 24 hours in advance), by phone, or in person at the airport. Prices range from approx. \$170 to \$220 each way. International Nature Air passengers connecting to or from SJO to Pavas may reserve a \$5 private transfer in advance with the Nature Air Vacations department by calling 1-800-235-9272. There are also plenty of taxis available.

Bus:

The Easiest Way

There are private tour companies offering non-stop ground transportation between San José and Bocas del Toro; one of which is [Costa Rica Just For You](#) (Tel: 866-598-3956 (United States and Canada) or 2273-8000 (Costa Rica)), which charges \$51 to take tourists from San José to Bocas in an air-conditioned shuttle. The shuttle leaves San José and will pick you up from your hotel.

The Cheapest Option

By far, the least expensive way to get from San José to Bocas del Toro is by public bus. In general, the buses are clean, on time, safe and frequented by tourists. There are two main bus companies offering transportation between the two destinations:

Mepe (Tel: 2257-8129 or 2758-1572): From the Caribe station, take the bus heading to Sixaola at 6 a.m. This bus takes six hours and stops in Cahuita and Puerto Viejo. The fare is around \$11. If you take any later buses, you risk not making all the required connections and might find yourself in an undesirable place to stay the night.

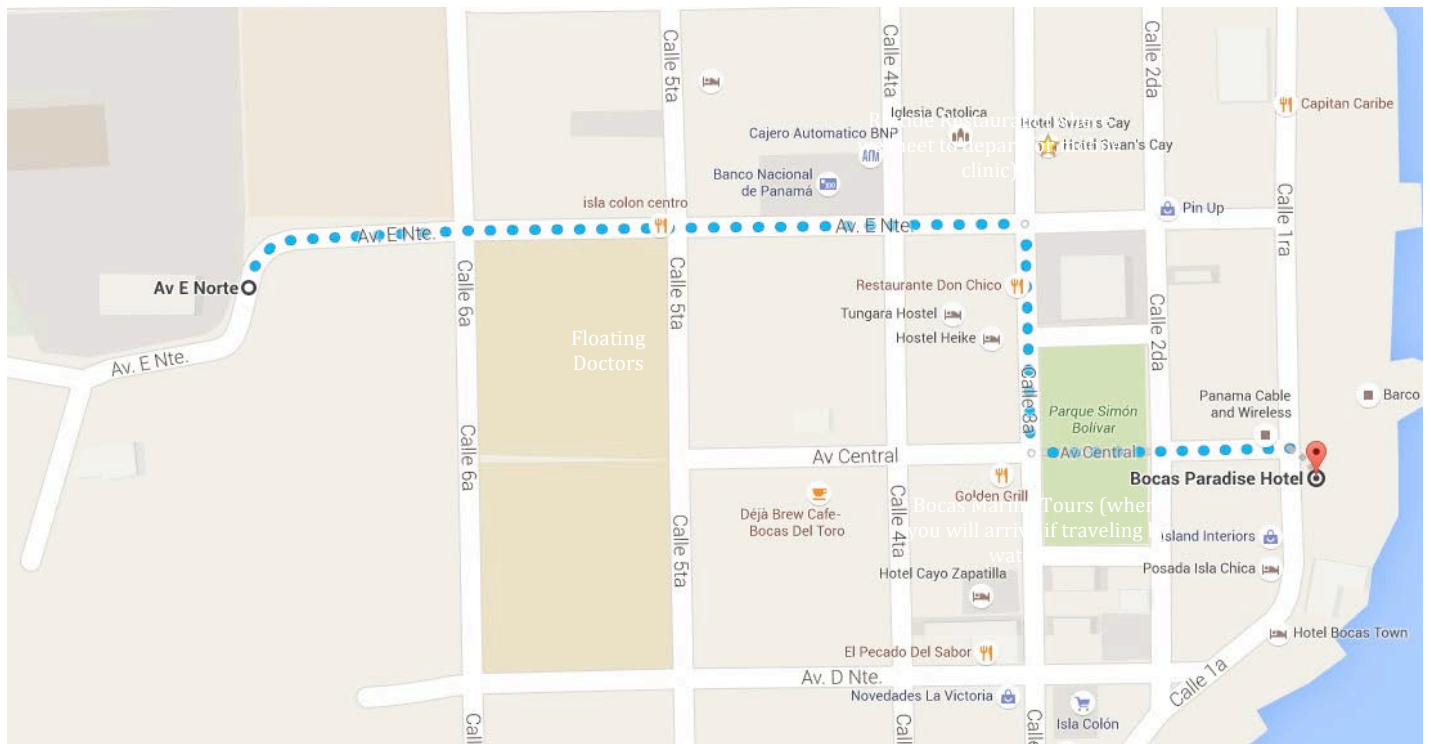
Transportes Bocatoreños (Tel: 2758-8511 (Panama) or 2227-9523 or 2259-1325 (Costa Rica)): The station for Bocatoreños is just north of the Coca Cola Bus Terminal in downtown San José in front of the Hotel Cocori. Buses leave at 10 a.m. and arrive at the border around 3 p.m.

Once at the border, you'll have to get an exit stamp from Costa Rica and an entrance stamp from Panama. At the Panama side of the border, look for the vans lined up at the foot of the stairs. For \$10, these will take you the hour-long trip to Almirante, where you catch the ferry to Bocas del Toro. There are two ferries in Almirante to take you the rest of the way to Bocas del Toro. Each has boats leaving every half hour (or whenever they fill up) and costs between \$4 and \$5.

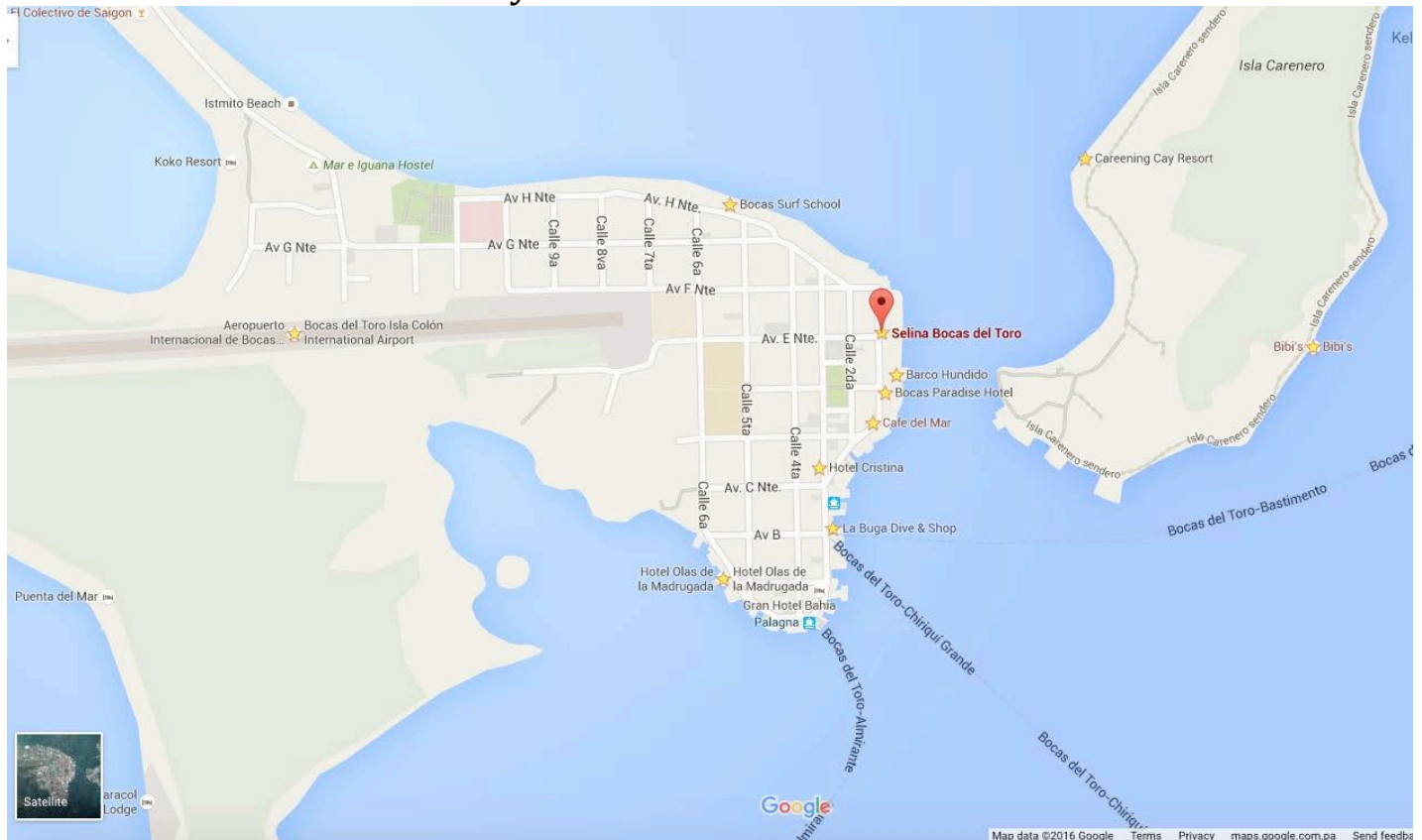
Arrival in Bocas

Upon your arrival to Bocas del Toro, please make your way to **Bocas Paradise Hotel**. All volunteers will be picked up from the dock at this site at **5:15 PM**, regardless of the time or manner in which they arrive. Should you arrive early, you may drop your luggage at Bocas Paradise Hotel (see map with directions below). Let the Bocas Paradise staff know you are with Floating Doctors and request to leave your baggage in their storage room. Here you can change clothes if need be, leave all your things in a safe place, and are more than welcome to grab a bite to eat at their restaurant.

It is essential that you send us your correct travel information so we know when and where to find you should you not arrive in time at the pick up location. In the unlikely event that we cannot find you, please get in contact with the leadership listed in section X of this handbook.



Starred below: Recommendations for places to eat or visit in Bocas Town. WIFI is also available at many restaurants in town.



IV. Volunteer Policies

The following represents the roles responsibilities of all Floating Doctors crewmembers. As a volunteer, you are Floating Doctors' primary representative to our partners, the public, and the people we serve. All crewmembers are expected to maintain these standards throughout their entire commitment to Floating Doctors, both whether participating in or outside Floating Doctors-related activities.

Work Standards

All Floating Doctors volunteers are expected to maintain high standards of cooperation, attendance, efficiency, and responsibility in fulfilling their commitment with Floating Doctors.

Due to a variety of reasons, the nature of our operations requires some fluidity. Volunteers are expected to remain flexible to changes in daily operations, and to assist the management team in carrying out programming, understanding that there is no task too small.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to Floating Doctors' code of conduct. Every volunteer is responsible for both the integrity and the consequences of his/her own actions. Violation of the code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including being sent home and removed from any future volunteer involvement with Floating Doctors.

Crew Code of Ethics and Conduct

Floating Doctors volunteers are expected to abide by various guidelines and stipulations set by Floating Doctors management team. The following provides reference points and general explanations of the various acts that may negatively affect Floating Doctors and its mission. Volunteers who violate the Crew Code of Ethics and Conduct are subject to disciplinary action up to, and including, release from service and being prohibited from future service with Floating Doctors.

Anti-Harassment

Floating Doctors is committed to an environment and climate in which relationships are characterized by dignity, respect, and cooperative treatment. We expressly prohibit all forms of unlawful or unwelcome harassment, including implied or expressed forms of sexual harassment.

Any volunteer who feels that she or he has been subjected to harassment of any type, whether by another volunteer, management team member, staff, or community member, should promptly report the incident to another management team member. Floating Doctors will investigate and take appropriate action.

Divisive/Inappropriate Behaviors and Communications

Floating Doctors volunteers shall not participate in public disturbances that potentially place other members, Floating Doctors partners, the mission, and/or the organization at risk. No volunteer may undertake any activity while involved with Floating Doctors that is, or gives the appearance of, being improper, illegal, or immoral, or that could in any way harm or embarrass Floating Doctors.

Drugs and Alcohol

Floating Doctors strictly prohibits the possession, use, manufacturing, or distribution of illegal drugs during any portion of the volunteer's involvement with Floating Doctors.

Likewise, although the consumption of alcohol is not prohibited during a volunteer's term of service with Floating Doctors, volunteers are prohibited from consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while engaged in Floating Doctors work-related activities.

Volunteers also assume responsibility for their own behavior while consuming alcohol outside of their Floating Doctors-related activities. Floating Doctors is known locally, nationally, and internationally, and we expect all volunteers to keep our reputation clean. Volunteers must understand that being under the influence of alcohol in no way reduces their accountability to the Floating Doctors community. Floating Doctors will not excuse acts of misconduct committed by volunteers whose judgment is impaired due to substance abuse.

Please keep your responsibility to Floating Doctors and your team members in mind when going out or taking part in the nightlife scene. Bocas del Toro is a small community and word travels quickly.

V. Health and Safety

Purpose

Floating Doctors is committed to promoting the safety and well being of all volunteers. Owing to the tourist nature of Bocas del Toro, crime may be more prevalent than in your home community. While safety and security incidents are very rare in our community, the following guidelines should be followed to help ensure you have a fun and safe experience with Floating Doctors.

Staying Healthy

Water

As in all developing countries, the water in Bocas del Toro is not always clean. The water at the Floating Doctors Headquarters is treated and safe to drink. While in town, we recommend purchasing filtered water. You are responsible for bringing your own drinking water (we recommend at least 2 liters) on all mobile clinics.

On clinics, we carry at least one water tank for drinking water, but you are responsible for bringing your own drinking water (at least 1 liter) on all mobile clinics. Other sufficient water treatment options include iodine tablets, filtration water bottles, steripens, and pump filters.

Food

Most of your meals will likely be provided at our base or on our overnight clinics. However, there are many options for eating in Bocas Town from amazing restaurants to street food. You may wish to try the street food (many of it is delicious,) but keep in mind that ice used in drinks and smoothies may not be made with purified water (just ask). You may also ask the management team about specific places to eat—some street food is known to be undercooked before a certain time in the evening. Be open to trying new things, but know your stomach. Everyone has different sensitivities.

Personal Hygiene

Hand washing, before and after meals and after using the lavatory are essential precautionary measures. Sometimes, there aren't facilities allowing you to wash your hands with soap and water. On all mobile clinics, and especially multi-day clinics, you should travel with toilet paper, wet wipes, and hand sanitizer.

Sun Safety

The sun is particularly strong nearer the equator, so it is essential that you take precautions to protect you from the sun's rays. Be sure to wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 15 and continue to reapply throughout the day. Wearing a broad-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing will also help. ***If you do get a sunburn and feel sick, be sure to tell the management team as soon as possible.***

Biting Insects

There are many no-see-ums/sand flies (chitras) in Panama. Mosquitoes are also present in the area and can spread diseases such as dengue, Chikungunya, or Zika (currently no identified cases in Bocas del Toro). To reduce the chances of being bitten, you should cover exposed areas with clothing (do not forget your feet) .We highly recommend using an insect repellent with DEET and, when on multi-day clinics, sleeping under a mosquito net. To increase the efficacy of your bug net, you may want to treat it with permethrin.

Safety Considerations

Be aware of your surroundings

Stay vigilant and aware of your environment. It can be easy to stop paying attention when you're part of a large group. The management team members are most familiar with the community; follow their recommendations.

Follow the Buddy System

Security incidents are more likely to occur if you are alone. Always stay with at least one other team member, and let the team know if you leave the group at any time.

Take Extra Precautions after Dark in Bocas Town

After dark, if you are in town, go only to familiar locations and with others. The nightlife in Bocas is a big scene, and the town can look quite different at night.

Taxis in Bocas are plentiful and cheap. It costs between \$0.60 and \$1.00 to get anywhere in town. The main water taxi terminal is at Bocas Marine Tours (the purple and yellow building downtown.) Water taxis typically cost \$1-\$2. See the phone list for taxi driver numbers.

Keep a Low Profile

Leave your valuables at home. A good rule of thumb: take it on your trip only if you're willing to part with it. This isn't just a safety precaution from theft; it can be easy to lose items to the sea while taking a taxi.

Carry Photo ID

Always carry a **COPY** of your passport or other identification. Keep your passport and large sums of money locked in your room and only carry as much as you need at a time.

VI. Financial Guidelines

Volunteer Contributions

As a volunteer-based charitable organization, Floating Doctors requires a donation to cover the costs associated with your stay.

Your full donation, or your first month if staying longer than one month, is required prior to your arrival in Bocas del Toro. You will not be permitted to stay with Floating Doctors unless your donation has been made. Please contact Karine Tchakerian at karine@floatingdoctors.com if this is not a possibility.

Your donation can be made by selecting “Volunteer Contribution” on our website, www.floatingdoctors.com, or going to floatingdoctors.com/volunteer-donations/ and providing a note indicating that you are volunteering with us. If you prefer to donate in cash, contact karine@floatingdoctors.com to organize this.

Please note: Your \$25 application donation is non-refundable. Should you be unable to join us, any donation in excess of the application donation may be refunded if a request is submitted by email within 60 days of the donation or one week prior to your start date with Floating Doctors, whichever comes first. Otherwise, your donation may be applied to a future volunteer stay.

Floating Doctors Contributions

Floating Doctors will provide lodging, transportation to clinics, accommodations and meals Sunday through Friday, bed linens and pillows, and access to Wi-Fi.

Personal Expenses

There are some items that will come at an additional cost to you. We recommend you estimate approximately \$50 per week for your additional expenses.

Panama has two official currencies, the Panamanian Balboa and the US Dollar, they are kept at a 1:1 ratio at all times. Panama does not print any paper currency; all paper is US currency. There is one ATM machine in Bocas del Toro, located about 3 blocks from the airport. Typical ATM charges are only \$3.00 (not including your bank's charge.) If it is out of cash (which can happen), Supermarket Cristina also gives cash back on credit/debit cards at a rate of about 10%. The best time to withdraw cash is in the morning on Monday – Thursday.

NOTE: Very few places in town take credit cards.

You are responsible for the following costs:

- Airfare/Transportation to/from Bocas del Toro, Panama
- Non-clinic-related transportation
- Personal travel insurance (optional)
- Laundry (facilities are not currently available on site, but a large bag of clothes averages \$5 in town.)
- Extracurricular activities (Floating Doctors volunteers are eligible for some great discounts!)
- Phone service (you are not required to carry a phone, though some find it very helpful, particularly for those staying longer than a couple weeks. Cell phones with pay-as-you-go minutes are readily available.)

While we cover the cost of transportation to clinics, there are a few destination clinics that we combine with an amazing adventure for everyone after our clinical work is completed. There is a small additional cost per volunteer for the fuel and food for the recreational portion of this deployment. Therefore, this clinic is optional if people are unable or unwilling to pay the additional cost for the recreational excursion. Activities at the Asilo and follow-up work will be available for voluntary non-participants in these excursions.

VII. On-Site Logistics

Community Guidelines

There are a few guidelines to be followed that are important to maintaining a pleasant living environment for all the volunteers. As a security precaution and courtesy to your fellow volunteers, do not bring anyone into the living facilities not associated with Floating Doctors.

Additionally, please keep your activities and noise level in the bunkhouse hall and communal areas to a minimum in the evenings as fellow team members may be sleeping.

Please keep rooms clean, especially on departure. It is important that we all do our part and make sure our living space is pleasant for your bunkmates and the incoming volunteers.

Curfew

Sunday night through Thursday night, volunteers are expected to stay at the Floating Doctors Headquarters.

On Friday and Saturday evenings, volunteers may elect to stay on Isla Colon (in town.) Staying separate from Floating Doctors Headquarters is at the volunteer's additional expense. Volunteers staying in town must give notice of their intent to stay separately to the Volunteer Coordinator or Relief Volunteer Coordinator, including the name and location of their lodging and the time they plan to return. Volunteers should return no later than 8 PM on Sunday evening.

For volunteers and leadership staying on Isla Colon, curfew is 2 AM Friday and Saturday evening. This means that all volunteers must be back at their lodging by this time. This is an important protective measure for our team. Years of experience in Bocas del Toro have proven this measure necessary as criminal activity increases dramatically at night.

Volunteers spending time in town but staying at the Floating Doctors Headquarters MUST return to headquarters by no later than 10 PM. This is a preventive measure to ensure A) that you will be able to get a water taxi from town to base, and B) the safety of your ride. We want all volunteers to have a very positive experience with Floating Doctors, and to take advantage of the nightlife that Bocas del Toro has to offer. For the safety of all volunteers, we feel this is a strong compromise.

Laundry

There are several laundry services around town, usually \$4-\$5 per bag of laundry.

Security

Keep your room doors locked at all times. Theft, unfortunately, is always a possibility. You can minimize your risk by keeping your valuables in the lockbox in your room, our safe, and/or the locked cabinets in your room.

Resources

Turn off all lights and fans when leaving the bunkhouse room, bathroom, or communal building. All electricity is produced through our solar micro-grid on the island and is limited.

Water supply is dependent on rain, so please exercise water discipline and limit showers to conserve our supply. Turn off the shower whenever possible: for example, while lathering, shaving, or brushing teeth.

Please make sure toilet handles are all the way up and toilets are not left to run and that faucets are not left dripping (this can empty our tanks overnight.)

Please immediately notify the Operations Manager and the Volunteer Coordinator should there be a water leak on the property, an electrical outlet that gets hot or sparks, or anything else that may be missing or broken in our headquarters. This enables us to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for our team.

Trash and Recycling

Please dispose of trash properly. There is a system in place on our island for trash disposal:

- Compostable food waste must be separated and tossed into the compost bin in front of the bunkhouse or in the kitchen.
- Paper/cardboard waste must be placed in the “Burnable Waste” bins in each room, bathroom, or communal building.
- All other trash must be placed in the “Non-Burnable” waste bin.

All trash produced on the island must be transported by boat to Isla Colon and then sent to a dump. Burning paper waste when appropriate and composting saves funds that could otherwise be directed toward operations.

VIII. Living in Bocas

Floating Doctors Discounts

A few generous business owners offer discounts to Floating Doctors volunteers. Simply ask with a smile and usually they are more than happy to oblige. Your leadership team will have the most up-to-date information on where you can receive a discount.

Groceries

There are many small markets around Bocas. They vary slightly - you can find most things you need providing you are willing to ask and look at several stores. There is a small kitchen space for volunteers to prepare their own meals, if desired, and you can store any food you like here.

Tropical fruit is abundant and delicious, and you can get great deals on produce at any of the fruit stands. If you are looking for a specialty item, Super Gourmet carries a large selection of “touristy” groceries as well as kosher products.

Restaurants

There is a wide variety of places to eat out in Bocas del Toro. You can eat for \$4 or \$40, depending on what you’re looking for! Many volunteers enjoy:

- Chitre (\$) – Local Panamanian
- Kiosco Rostizado (\$) – Rotisserie Chicken
- Bocas Blended Batido Bus (\$) – Fresh smoothies and wraps
- George’s Empanadas (\$)
- Panadería y Dulcería la Alemana aka The German Bakery (\$) – Breakfast, sandwiches, salads, desserts
- Raw Sushi (\$\$) – Japanese inspired
- OM (\$\$) – Indian Food
- Maracuya (\$\$) – Thai and Asian Fusion
- The Cosmic Crab (\$\$) – Across the bay on Isla Carenaro (\$1 water taxi), excellent sea food and famous Sunday brunch!
- Ultimo Refugio (\$\$\$) – One of the best in Bocas for seafood and classy dining
- Casbah (\$\$\$)

Internet

The Floating Doctors Headquarters has WIFI. Additionally, there are many restaurants in town, that offer WIFI with purchase. These include:

- Bocas Blended (also known as the Batido Bus)
- Golden Grill
- La Bugita
- Mana
- Rum Runners
- The Wine Bar

Claro Sticks

Additionally, wireless internet service is also available to purchase (called a Claro Stick) via a USB stick and service. These are about \$75 initially, plus monthly data usage, and available at the pharmacy.

To add monthly data usage to Claro Sticks: You will need a claro phone OR an unlocked smartphone, AND a \$15 claro prepaid card. With the phone off, open the claro stick, remove the claro sim card, put the sim card into the phone, and turn on the phone. Then do the following:

- 1) dial *106*PIN# then send (the PIN is the prepaid scratch number)
- 2) dial *103# then send (will confirm that you have \$15 in credit)
- 3) send a text message to 464, with the message "p30" with no quotations.
- 4) dial *103# then send (there should no longer be \$15 in credit)
- 5) power down the phone and swap the sim back into the claro stick

For troubleshooting speak with Tony from Supermercado Isla Colon located on the main street.

Phones

Cell Phones

Panamanian cell phones can be very helpful, especially for long-term volunteers. They usually cost about \$30 dollars to begin with, and then you can add credit any time after that. Phones are available at most pharmacies as well as specific phone stores downtown. Many volunteers use Movistar or Mas Movil. You can buy recharge cards at most pharmacies and grocery stores. This is an excellent way to reach other Floating Doctors volunteers.

Additionally, if you have internet access on your phone, apps like Viber and WhatsApp are excellent ways to keep in contact, with Floating Doctors leadership as well as abroad.

International Calls

How to call Panama from a U.S. phone:

- 011 – US exit code; dial first for international calls made from US or Canada
- 507 – Country code for Panama
- Phone number - 7 digits for landline, 8 digits for cell phone
- U.S. to Panama international dialing format: 011-507-???? ????

How to call internationally from a Panamanian phone:

- 00 – Panamanian exit code; dial first for international calls made from Panama
- Country code for the country you are calling (<http://www.howtocallabroad.com/codes.html>)
- Phone number
- Examples:
 - Panama to US international dialing format: 00-1-phone number
 - Panama to Canada international dialing format: 00-1- phone number
 - Panama to Australia international dialing format: 00-61- phone number
 - Panama to UK international dialing format: 00-44- phone number
- Panama to Ireland international dialing format: 00-353- phone number

IX. Basic Weekly Schedule

Typical Weekly Schedule

The following is a typical weekly schedule with Floating Doctors. Be aware that this is just one example of a week in the life of floating doctors. Typically, there is a multi-day clinic every other week. Floating Doctors maintains a fluid schedule to allow for efficient, effective use of its resources.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Off, New Arrivals, Orientation	Mobile Clinic (9-6)	Prepare for mobile clinic, Asilo, Public Health Projects	Mobile Clinic (9-6)	Prepare for mobile clinic, Asilo, Public Health Projects	Mobile Clinic (9-6)	Day off (rarely, there is some work on Saturday for a few hours)

What to Expect on a Clinic Day

On our clinic days, we follow a specific schedule (weather permitting) that allows us to hold clinic for most of the day. We are always back before nightfall. The schedule usually is as follows:

- 8:30-9 am: Carry pharmacy bags to dock; load cayuco/panga
- ~ 10 am (Dependent upon the clinic location, and the type of boat used): find clinic site, unload gear and set up at the clinic location
- 10:30 am: Start taking patient names, patients seen by Intake station
- 11 am: Providers start taking patients after seen by intake personnel
- Lunch: Clinic manager will tell volunteers when it is okay to eat. Not everyone can eat at the same time, as this would put a hold on our clinic!
- ~ 4 pm (Dependent upon how many patients need to be seen that day): pack clinic gear, put away desks and chairs used, and clean. We want to leave the community better than the way we found it!
- 4:30 pm: Load boat, go home!
- 5-6 pm: Get back to Headquarters, unload pharmacy bags as directed by Pharmacy or Clinic Manager. Then relax!

A clinic manager will take care of the logistics of the clinic and always runs a normal clinic. The medical supervisor will be your go to for medical questions.

The following is a list of supplies you should bring for mobile clinic:

- Any medical equipment you might prefer to use (stethoscope)
- Enough food for a lunch (PB&J) and a snack- there are plenty of stores in Bocas to buy food and drinks
- AT LEAST 2 liter of water
- Sunscreen and bug spray
- Hat and sunglasses
- Shoes that can get stuck in mud (sandals)
- Clothes that can get dirty! Scrubs are welcome. Everyone must have shoulders covered and shorts that are at least knee length.
- Rain jacket
- Camera for memories!

What to Expect on a Multi-Day Clinic

Multi-day clinics are a lot like day clinics, but do take more planning, and logistical work. The management team will always brief you on what to expect during a multi-day clinic, as each is unique. You will always receive breakfast, lunch, and dinner while out on multi-day. Most of the time the schedule is as follows:

- Day 1- Morning: Take medical bags downstairs, load taxi, meet at marina, load boat
- Afternoon (Dependent upon the clinic location, and the type of boat used): find clinic site and sleeping site (usually in the community school or a rancho), unload gear and set up at the sleeping location
- 6 pm: Dinner!
- Night: Most people talk to locals, play card games, listen to music, stargaze, and enjoy the night!
- Day 2- 8 am: Breakfast
- 8:30 am: Begin setting up clinic, normally runs like a day clinic
- 9 am: Begin clinic
- 5 pm: Pack up clinic, store for next day clinic
- 6 pm: Dinner
- Day 3- same as Day 2
- Day 4- 8 am: Breakfast
- 9 am: See last minute follow up patients, pack bags to go home
- 10 am- Load bags into boat, set off for Bocas!
- Afternoon: Get back to Bocas, load taxi, and bring gear back into Room 1.

The following is a list of supplies you should bring for the multi-day clinic:

- Same list as single day clinic AND:
- Headlamp/Flashlight
- Aloe Vera
- A 3 liter water bottle
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving gear, soap, deodorant, toilet paper, wet wipes, etc.)
- Extra glasses or contacts and solution
- Prescription medications
- Travel towel
- Enough clothes for the length of the multi-day (remember swimsuits and for women-bathing t-shirt and shorts to cover up. Bikinis are culturally inappropriate in the communities we serve.)
- Bug net, hammock
- Sleeping sheet or sleeping bag as it can get cold at night
- Book to read
- Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)

X. Phone List

Panama Based Support Staff

Founder and Medical Director

Dr. Benjamin LaBrot benlabrot@gmail.com 6912-7022/US 818-943-2488

Director of Operations/Director of Volunteer Resources

Karine Tchakerian karine@floatingdoctors.com US 310-428-9351

United States Based Support Staff

Co-Founder and CEO

Sky LaBrot floatingdoctors@gmail.com US310-422-9082

Leadership Contact Information

- Operations Manager: Samantha Rugamas 507-6423-6413 WhatsApp
- Medical Lead 1: Luis De La Parra 57-320-2686098 WhatsApp
- Medical Lead 2:
- Dental Lead: Philippe Martin 507-6969-9791
- Volunteer Coordinator: Ai Koshirae 507-6733-4832 and (403) 667-0588 WhatsApp
- Relief Volunteer Coordinator: Kellie Hall 626-215-5354 WhatsApp
- Financial Controller: Kira Speer 919-618-2572 WhatsApp
- Clinic Manager 1: Alexis Milinski 507-6811-6175 WhatsApp
- Clinic Manager 2: Kinman Bailey
- Pharmacy Coordinator: Erin Jennings 484-788-4861 WhatsApp
- Asilo Coordinator: Jean Sohmer 6378-7910

Emergency Contact Information

Emergency Numbers

- Bocas Police: 104
- Bocas Police: 757-217
- Bocas Police: 757-9485
- Sergeant Sanchez: 6649-7581
- Bocas Fire: 103
- Bocas Hospital: 757-9230
- Red Cross: 6818-2602 or 6919-5063
- BEN (Bocas Emergency Network): Radio Frequency 69

Appendix I: **Emergency Action Plan**

I. **Bloodborne Pathogen (BBP) Exposure**

For all exposure to blood borne pathogens (BBP), report the incident immediately to your supervisor (Volunteer Coordinator and Lead Medical Provider) for documentation and follow up medical care.

Eye Exposure

1. If your eyes come in contact with blood or body fluids, flush immediately with water for at least five minutes. It is best to rinse under clean running water

Exposure by Mouth

1. If blood or any body fluid gets into your mouth, rinse your mouth with a 50/50 mix of hydrogen peroxide and water, and rinse with plain water

Needle Sticks

1. If you get a needle stick or puncture wound, the wound should be milked to induce bleeding.
2. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water.

Bites, Scratches, Lesions

For any bites, scratches, or lesions that may have had blood or body fluid exposure, do the following:

1. Wash the area thoroughly with soap and water, or pour a small amount of hydrogen peroxide on the wound.
2. Cover the wound with a sterile dressing.

Spills

1. Ensure any spills are removed following proper procedure and universal precautions in place.

II. **Building and Site Evacuation**

Site evacuation should be initiated by the supervisor (Volunteer Coordinator) or authorities when risks warrant evacuation- please refer to posted diagram for exits.

1. Contact EMS or Police
2. Notify staff to assist with ensuring complete evacuation and headcounts at meet site.
3. Remain calm and avoid panic and a surge to the exit. The stairs can be slippery.
4. Check rest rooms to be sure everyone is out of facility.
5. Until relieved by authorities, Volunteer Coordinator or other leadership must stand by exits to be sure no one re-enters.
6. Secure doors and assemble outside the airport across the street from the warehouse.
7. Follow the instructions and direction of authorities.

III. Earthquake

Inside

1. In the event of an earthquake, drop to your hands and knees.
2. Cover your head and neck with your arms. This position protects you from falling and provides some protection for vital organs.
3. Because moving can put you in danger from the debris in your path, only move if you need to get away from the danger of falling objects. If you can move safely, crawl for additional cover under a desk or table. If there is low furniture, or an interior wall or corner nearby and the path is clear, these may also provide some additional cover. Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
4. Hold onto any sturdy shelter until the shaking stops. If it moves, and you are able to move, move with it.
5. If you are in bed: Stay there and cover your head and neck with a pillow. At night, hazards and debris are difficult to see and avoid.
6. Stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. DO NOT exit a building during the shaking.
7. The Volunteer Coordinator or other Lead will check on health and safety of all occupants after the threat has passed.
8. The Volunteer Coordinator or Lead will check utilities for disruption/damage (gas, water, sewer, if available)
9. The Leads will document the incident.

Outdoors

1. If you can, move away from buildings, streetlights, and utility wires.
2. Once in the open, drop to your hands and knees.
3. Cover your head and neck with your arms. This position protects you from falling objects and provides some protection for vital organs.
4. Stay there until the shaking stops, keeping away from glass, bricks, and power lines.
5. If you are near a building and there is no safer location, you should duck inside a building to avoid falling debris.

IV. Electrical Storm (Lightning)

Indoors

1. Notify Leadership (Volunteer Coordinator or other Lead) of visible lightning
2. Clear all wet areas including showers and sinks.
3. Turn off all computers and unplug appliances (fans, chargers, coffee makers, etc.)
4. Avoid contact with plumbing. Do not wash your hands, do not take a shower, do not wash dishes, and do not do laundry. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.

5. Do not lie on concrete floors and do not lean against concrete walls.
6. Stay indoors away from windows and doors.
7. Avoid contact with anything metal.
8. Remain inside at least 30 minutes after the threat has passed or until cleared by Leadership

Outdoors

1. If with Leadership, notify them immediately of visible lightning.
2. Immediately seek shelter. Avoid isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
3. Avoid hilltops, open fields, the beach or a boat on the water.
4. Suspend all water activities.
5. Avoid contact with anything metal.
6. Wait at least 30 minutes after threat has passed before resuming activities.
7. If you were not with Leadership during the storm, be sure to notify them as soon as you are able.

V. Fire Alarm/Emergency

If smoke or fire is seen

1. Activate fire alarm if available
2. Notify Leadership immediately and evacuate everyone in the facility.
3. Drop and crawl to avoid smoke and close doors behind you.
4. Contact EMS or Police
5. Notify staff to assist with ensuring complete evacuation and headcounts at meet site.
6. Remain calm and avoid panic and a surge to the exit. The stairs can be slippery.
7. Until relieved by authorities, Volunteer Coordinator or other leadership must be sure no one re-enters.
8. Secure doors and assemble outside the airport across the street from the warehouse.
9. Follow the instructions and direction of authorities.

If no smoke or fire is seen

1. Follow steps above AND:
2. If safe to do so, search the building for anyone missing
3. Leadership will check area of concern and use fire extinguisher if safe to do so
4. Follow Site Evacuation Procedure if appropriate
5. Leadership will communicate with emergency response/authorities.
6. Leadership will Document incident.

VI. Intruders in Facility

Unfamiliar persons at the headquarters may range from someone lost and looking for directions to a person with a medical emergency to a person with intent to do harm to persons or property. Some judgment must be made, and will be done by our employed night watchmen and our Leadership.

To avoid unfamiliar people within the facility, the facility doors are required to be locked at all times.

1. Night watchmen and/or Leadership will question persons to ascertain who they are and why there are here. Intruders must not be antagonized. Be polite and give assistance if possible. Observe that the person leaves site.
2. If the appearance of the unfamiliar person makes you uncomfortable, only approach them with a member of Leadership. Leadership will most likely request the presence of another person in all interactions with intruders.
3. If the person seems threatening in any way, do not approach them. Remove yourself and others from the area, notify Leadership, and observe the whereabouts of the person.
4. If you see or suspect an intruder at night, immediately and quietly notify Leadership. If requested, assist Leadership in checking sleeping areas with a head count.
5. Leadership will complete an incident report and any other reports requested.

VII. Power Outage

It is not uncommon to have power outages in Bocas del Toro. In the event of a power outage, the following procedures should be followed:

1. Volunteers should immediately obtain their head lamp or flashlight and activate them. For the duration of the power outage, volunteers must always have their flashlight or headlamp on their person.
2. Notify Leadership immediately.
3. If concerned about a fire or safety hazard, Leadership will contact emergency response personnel.
4. Leadership may require that facility is evacuated and secured if power has not returned after 30 minutes.
5. Leadership will document incident.

VIII. Shelter in Place (Lockdown)

Plans for reaction to the atmospheric or environmental release of chemical, biological, or other hazardous materials may require the following Shelter-in-Place procedure.

When to activate a Lockdown

1. When notified to do so by local police, government, or Leadership as informed by local authorities.
2. When an armed person is identified in the facility or on the grounds

3. When the sound of a discharged firearm is heard
4. When notified through the Bocas Emergency Network (BEN) or other communication system

Who activates a Lockdown

1. The Leadership may activate a Lockdown when an appropriate emergency is evident (see above).
2. Any immediate life-threatening situation must be reported immediately to Leadership.
3. Anyone observing or suspecting a dangerous situation must immediately notify Leadership.
4. Leadership will immediately notify the authorities upon activation of a Lockdown.

During an emergency

1. Leadership will identify meeting room, possibly the hallway for all in the facility to assemble.
2. Leadership may identify an individual to assist in notify all occupants.
3. Leadership will secure the facility
4. Move to meeting place/room.
5. Wait for further instructions and/or until Lockdown is cleared.