

OSSO'S CODE OF CONDUCT

OSSO's first priority is the safety of the volunteers. To help ensure individual safety and program integrity, each OSSO volunteer is expected to abide by a strict code of conduct while serving with OSSO. Any volunteer that willfully breaches any part of the Code of Conduct, and/or exhibits any behavior that reflects poorly on the integrity of OSSO, may be removed from the program and returned home at the volunteer's own expense, e.g. consuming alcohol, breaking curfew, taking pictures when prohibited, violating confidentiality policies, and engaging in inappropriate relations with the opposite sex. Please make up your mind now that you will observe all the rules for everyone's sake as well as the future of OSSO. Remember, while participating with OSSO you will serve as an ambassador representing OSSO and your country.

Dress and Grooming Standards: The dress and grooming (including hairstyles) of both men and women should be modest, neat and clean. Clothing should be modest in fabric, fit and style. No shorts, short skirts, tank tops, sleeveless or revealing clothes will be allowed. Visible body piercing is not allowed aside from earrings (though this cannot be extreme). The people of Ecuador are very conservative and formal in dress and grooming. Grungy, immodest or very casual attire is not worn in public. While you will see tourists who do not dress according to this local standard, you will lose the respect of the local people and will not be a proper role model for the children you serve if you dress inappropriately. Modest clothing must also be worn in the OSSO house.

OSSO and Religion: We are a nondenominational organization. Most of our volunteers and staff are LDS (Mormon), but we are not "through" the LDS Church. We do believe in God, and we pray that He will help us in our efforts to better the lives of the children we care for. Meetings of the volunteers and Project Directors usually begin and end with prayer and may include some singing of either hymns or other uplifting songs. We expect everyone to be tolerant and accepting of the religious beliefs of other volunteers and the directors of the orphanages we work with (most of the orphanages are run by Catholic nuns or Christian groups). OSSO leaders try to support the volunteers physically, emotionally and spiritually. OSSO's leaders, employees or volunteers are not to use their participation with OSSO to proselytize or advance any particular religious doctrine or agenda. This is taken most seriously in the orphanages and other service sites. Volunteers may be sent home for promoting a religious agenda against the will of the orphanage leadership. OSSO's leaders, employees or volunteers are not to discriminate against, belittle, hassle or speak poorly of anyone in or out of the OSSO program for their religious beliefs or opinions. OSSO will make every reasonable effort to allow volunteers the opportunity to participate in the church services and practices they wish to participate in, but some of the work in the orphanages needs to be done seven days a week. No involvement is allowed with the LDS Church Institute or Single Adults Program as local LDS church authorities have requested this because it's been disruptive in the past.

No Dating: Volunteers are not allowed to date while participating in the program. The group must work closely as a team and dating within the group could disrupt the harmony of the group. Dating outside the group is also prohibited. Because of exposure to movies, TV and books, many Ecuadorians have a stereotype of Americans as being immoral and promiscuous. This, plus the fact that there are many complex, cultural differences in dating and romantic relationships, makes dating outside the group unwise, confusing and even dangerous. Hugging, kissing or other intimate behavior, flirting or being alone with someone of the opposite sex is prohibited. We strongly recommend that you do not make eye contact or talk to men on the street, in internet places or restaurants or talk to or associate with men who have not been introduced to you by people who know their background and character. You are not to be in the bedroom of a member of the opposite sex.

Safety Guidelines: You must be with at least one other volunteer at all times outside the OSSO house during daylight hours. From 6:15 pm in Cuenca and 7pm in Quito until 9:30 pm groups of volunteers (four or more) can be outside the OSSO house at approved locations. You must be inside the OSSO house from 9:30 pm until dawn the next day. No traveling on public buses or trolleys. When using taxis, they must be official, registered taxis. Take a taxi for transportation or, if walking, stay on main streets and avoid unpopulated or vacant areas (e.g. side streets, parking lots). Always sign out and only travel to approved locations. Always keep the house doors and gates closed (and don't slam them or let them slam shut from the wind as this causes damage). No going to any place that is a bar or that has karaoke or dancing or any place that you wouldn't feel comfortable taking a young child or your mother. No travel outside the city limits of Cuenca or Quito without the Project Director's permission. No traveling outside city limits after dark. No hitchhiking. There are rules for those who wish to go running, and they're different for each city. Close the blinds on the windows in your rooms before changing clothes and during the night. If someone is unexplainably absent from the house or a work assignment, meeting or class, you should do everything reasonable to make sure they're okay. If you're unable to determine that they're okay within three hours of their missing it, you should notify the Project Director.

OSSO Assignments: Understand and follow any site-specific orphanage rules or expectations. OSSO has made service commitments to various orphanages and other institutions. We rely on our volunteers to fulfill these responsibilities. Volunteers will be given scheduled work assignments. Volunteers are expected to fill these assignments or make arrangements for someone else to do so. If someone fills in for you, you should do the same for them. Any desired or necessary schedule changes must be approved by the Sites Coordinator and/or Project Directors. Volunteers who bring children from the sites (if allowed) into the OSSO house are responsible for tending to the needs of the child at all times (i.e. watching the child constantly, cleaning up after the child, feeding the child, ensuring the overall safety of the child, etc.). You're to attend all scheduled classes and meetings or notify someone attending that you will not be able to attend and why.

Orphanage Guidelines: (Any of the institutions in which we work will, for the sake of these rules, be considered orphanages.) No religious discussion is allowed in the orphanages. Obey requests of nuns or orphanage workers, as long as they are not contrary to OSSO's rules. No donations, gifts or presents can be given to the children or workers of any site without consulting the Project Directors. Clothing policy for working in the sites: please DO wear good, nice casual clothes; you CANNOT wear grungy, gross clothes, badly stained or ripped clothes, pajamas or cut-offs. Nice sweat pants that are not tight fitting are acceptable to be worn. iPods/mp3 players, or similar devices are not allowed to be listened to by volunteers at any of the orphanages unless its use is part of the activity being done with the children or used in benefit of the children themselves (the music must first be approved by the Project Directors and done at your own risk of your property if you choose to do this); volunteers can listen to them in the van going to and from shifts, but when working a shift, you're there to interact and play with the kids and work, not listen to music. We've occasionally had problems with things being stolen at the orphanages out of volunteers' bags or backpacks. Please try not to take anything to the orphanages you don't have to, and what you do take be careful with and watch. When they (workers or children) steal from you, not only do you lose your things but they lose their honesty and self-respect. Let's not tempt them. You are not to invite visitors of any kind into the orphanages without the permission of the Project Directors and orphanage staff. You are never to be alone with a child behind a closed door in the orphanages. You are never to physically or severely discipline the children in the orphanages; if severe discipline is needed it will be brought to the attention of the staff. There will be no sexually explicit behavior or discussion inside the orphanages. No sex education will be permitted without specific and detailed permission from the orphanage staff.

You need to be professional and polite in your relationships with the orphanage workers and volunteers from other organizations, however, in the past we've been asked by the orphanage staff to not have personal friendships with the workers or other non-OSSO volunteers outside of the orphanages. Part of the reason for this is when close personal friendships have developed between our volunteers and the workers or other volunteers there have been problems. One of the problems has been that other workers or volunteers have felt left out and not part of the group. Another reason is that volunteers have gotten quite sick when invited to eat at workers' houses. Another is that we don't want to run the risk of them taking advantage of your friendliness and so that they don't start asking you for "things" or being irresponsible in their work since you're there and could "do it for them." Another is that non-OSSO volunteers usually have very different rules than our volunteers, and there have been some safety issues with our volunteers hanging out with them. We're not completely prohibited by the orphanage staff at this point from forming these friendships, but we can see some reasons for concern still, and because of these reasons we discourage this. Because of this, we have a rule that you need to be polite and friendly in the orphanages, but you need to talk to the Project Directors before doing anything with workers or non-OSSO volunteers outside the orphanages.

You should never talk to the children about wanting to adopt them or wanting to try to find someone to adopt them. You cannot invite them to the U.S. or tell them that you'll help them get there. This could cause many problems and harm our ability to work in the orphanages. You cannot help anyone get to the United States of America illegally. We're not capable of getting anyone visas or otherwise helping them, and we cannot provide sponsorship. We have no connections with the Embassy and have no pull in helping anyone come to the U.S. Those who try to do this will only complicate relationships here for everyone.

Pictures: There are specific rules for picture taking (including video) of children in orphanages in Ecuador. Many of the orphanages have their own separate rules that must be followed regarding what's allowed, when it's allowed, etc., including privacy/restrictions of those pictures/video. These detailed rules/policies are made known before working in the orphanages.

Conduct/Other: Be honest. Use clean and appropriate language. No inappropriate movies. No movies that would be rated R or worse in the U.S. No pornographic, indecent or inappropriate material or conduct via internet or otherwise. No possessing, serving or consuming alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs. Respect the culture and beliefs of others. Obey the law and all program rules. Respect quiet time (10 pm to 7 am) in the OSSO house. Do not leave personal belongings in common areas. Always wash your dishes and clean up after yourself when cooking or preparing food in the kitchen. Do not give gifts or money to the house employees without consulting the Project Directors first. Take proper care of house supplies, appliances, electronics and machines. Replace or pay for any OSSO property that you damage or break through irresponsibility or misuse. If you see anyone doing anything that might damage something in the OSSO house or doing anything that might be harmful to themselves or others, regardless of whether it's an employee's child or someone else, please take the initiative to say something and stop the behavior. If an employee needs to be talked to about her child's behavior, please notify the Project Directors. Though this seems like a really dumb rule to have to have, you must shower at least once a week; unfortunately, there have been disgusting competitions to see who could go the longest without showering, and this will not be allowed to happen any longer.

These rules may be added to at any time. If they are, all volunteers currently in-country will be notified.

Revised July 21, 2010