



The Toolkit

How to Evaluate an Organization or Provider: Checklist for Students

When choosing a health-related volunteer or internship for your experience abroad, there are a number of things to think about. The following list of questions helps you determine how to assess the quality of an organization or provider. (The term “provider” refers to the organization or provider that you might contract with to provide the experience abroad.)

Mission and On-Site Activities

- What is the provider’s mission and purpose? Was it created strictly to provide students “hands-on” patient care experiences?

Note: If the organization promises to provide you direct patient care, then that organization is not following ethical practices as identified in GAPS.

- Does the provider offer you formal training before you go into a patient care setting to ensure that you are not providing medical care?
- How does the provider follow best practices in protecting you from unethical and potentially harmful situations?
- How does the provider restrict volunteers from engaging in activities beyond their scope of training (such as providing medical care, diagnosis, prescriptions etc)?
- Does the provider promote alternative learning opportunities that focus on non-clinical settings and reinforce global health competencies?

Compliance and Community Relationship

- Is the provider registered to run their programs locally?
- Is the organization or provider integrated into the community and especially into the healthcare or public health system?

Reputation and Student Experience

- Has the provider been around long enough to earn a quality reputation?
- Does the provider have a track record of success in serving pre-health students?
- Does the provider allow you to communicate with students who have participated in past programs?
- Does the provider evaluate the volunteer opportunity using input from the students and the volunteer organization?

Preparation and On-Site Support

- How does the provider prepare students before they leave the US?
- Does the provider train volunteers so they are practically and psychologically prepared to learn and serve in the community?
- Does the provider have a formal relationship (MOU, contract etc.) with the organization where students will be volunteering that clearly identifies what students can and cannot do?
- Does the provider conduct staff training in the on-site locations where students will be volunteering?
- Is the provider sufficiently staffed to ensure a high level of service?

Health and Safety

- What services and provisions for health, safety, and emergency support does the provider offer?
- Does the provider have sufficient health and safety protocols to protect volunteers who will be engaging with patients?
- Does the provider have a process in place to deal with emergencies and patient safety issues?