



SOLACE
FOR THE CHILDREN

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How many children can we host? How will translators/chaperones be assigned to work with the children?

The first year will be an important year for any new adventure, especially one that has the potential to change lives. Solace for the Children is about a respite from the conditions of war that so greatly impact the children's lives. It is also about offering a new level of health and well-being. Finally, it is about peace. These children often learn to fear and mistrust Americans, as is natural with U.S. troops apparent in every province and bombs or tales of bombs going off all around. However, they also grow up learning to fear and mistrust fellow Afghans of different tribes or sects. When the children have an opportunity to get to know each other, wonderful things begin to happen. They become friends, respected friends that hold each other dear. We are asking that no fewer than 5 children be placed in any one community for that reason. We have also seen that a group of more than 20 can be difficult for a community logistically. Groups of between 7 and 15 are ideal. Through the activities they share and mutual experiences within homes and doctor's offices, these children go back with a different perspective concerning both American and Afghans. What far reaching potential this has!

Translators are assigned for any group of children. For groups hosting 5 to 12 children, one translator would accompany the group to the final destination. With 13 to 20 children 2 translators could be assigned. Roughly, you could expect a 1:10 ratio depending on the nature and severity of the medical conditions.

2. Can you define the role of the national organization versus the role of the local organization? Are there any mandatory requirements or exclusions on local programs?

We have operated as a local organization since 1996 with our own international contacts and plan of action. With our transition to a national organization we have many pieces in place, yet there will certainly be adjustments that will be made. We would value your partnership as we continue to develop the model that will serve our families and the children of Afghanistan best. We strive to work in collaboration, never leaving any branch to operate in isolation. We strive to work through inclusion, holding dear Christ's command to love one another.

Responsibilities of both the national organization and the branch communities....

National responsibilities:

- international communication
- identification and selection of children based upon official Solace guidelines and applications from Afghan families combined with branch or host family requests
- transportation arrangement between Afghanistan and the American host community
- arranging all paperwork, insurance, passports and visa necessary for travel

- setting standards of care and safety for the visiting children
- recruiting and training branch coordinators
- maintain non-profit, tax exempt status umbrella under which branch groups could file as an associate group
- Provide interpreters/chaperones based upon the number of children requested by branch
- Collaborate with branch groups to write grants
- Produce informational packets for medical professionals, volunteers, and host families
- Provide references and contacts for medical professionals, volunteers and host families that may be able to offer support or answer questions
- Produce recruitment and training material, presentation materials, informational brochures, press releases
- Coordinate and maintain follow up support as needed for children as they return to Afghanistan – placement in English immersion classes, support for education, supplying orphanages and schools with basic needs, etc.
- Maintain a web presence with forms, documents, evaluation surveys, newsletters, organizational information, links for each branch group
- Assist and support each branch with all that is within our power

Branch Responsibilities:

- Cooperate with Solace USA to provide a safe and nurturing environment for each visiting young person
- Using Solace USA materials and guidelines, recruit and train host families and volunteers (for instance, each applying host family must have reference checks and a background check on file that supports their ability to protect and nurture the child)
- Speak with the local medical community about partnering with you to provide pro bono medical care (It's easier than you think! We have found our medical community to be very quietly generous)
- Coordinate interpreter's schedule according to guidelines – visit each child in the home, accompany children to doctor appointments, etc.
- Coordinate one recreation activity per week to bring families and children together
- Fund the expense of bringing any hosted child
- RETURN EACH CHILD! 😊

3. What is a breakdown of the 2010 cost of \$3,000.00 per child to the east coast? (Additional cost may be necessary for air travel cost to the mid-west or west coast.)

First, \$3,000 is the estimated cost for 2010. We have been conservative in this estimation. If the cost is less, the actual cost is what we would expect from the branch. This estimate is for the purpose of your initial fundraising.

The lion's share of this covers the travel expenses.

• Airfare alone will be between \$1,500 and \$2,000 per ticket. We are still working hard to offset this.

- In Afghanistan you must have an identification card before you can apply for a passport. Most citizens do not have an identification card, so if needed this is an expense that seems to vary depending on the place and time of application, yet under \$100.
- Passport expenses often include some travel for the family to go to the nearest passport application location. We estimate \$150 per child.
- Insurance is about \$150 per child
- The funds also cover the visas at \$130 per person plus necessary travel for each child to present personally at the Embassy in Kabul.
- Cost of Interpreters – small stipend and travel expense divided equally among all children
- Administrative cost within Afghanistan, including travel to interview families and coordinate the paperwork and medical record transfers. As you can imagine within a country at war, this is a dangerous process. The cost will vary depending on the number of children within any given province. Right now we have qualified children waiting for us to find hosts within about a third of the 34 provinces. We are absorbing the majority of this cost yet would request at least a small amount per child depending on the overall costs.

4. Faith communities are usually at the center of the local organizations, yet the culture and religious beliefs of the children is to be respected. To that end, would there be any reason that we could not partner with a local synagogue and mosque, or community school to develop a program?

While we are a Christian organization, we have no restrictions against partnering with others that can show the love of God to these children. Working through churches has always been one leg of our screening process with pastors acknowledging the family as an appropriate host family. Another important item to keep in mind is that these children can not go home with any Christian symbol, such as a cross. To have this in their possession within the Afghan Muslim culture could put the child and his/her family in grave danger. Our job is to model Love and leave the rest to God.

5. I noticed that most of the children that you included have specific medical issues. Is the intention that they should have medical treatment when they are here? Are you looking for groups to partner with local medical professionals for surgical or diagnostic procedures as a standard part of the program?

Absolutely, yes! This is the part that seems the most daunting, yet is the most rewarding! And like the host families often have fears and concerns about their ability to communicate with a child who speaks a different language, this concern vanishes quickly with a little experience.

While some of the children need mostly dental care and others need physical therapy, a few of the children do need surgery. We have found the medical

community to be very generous. We have 5 hospitals and dozens of physicians, dentists, and optometrists in the Charlotte area that quietly work with us each year. Most say it is something they look forward to very much and that it rejuvenates their practice.

We always begin by holding a medical and dental screening the first weekend the children are here. We have one physician that helps to coordinate this effort in one office. (Ask your own pediatrician or one in your church) This screening includes blood work and urine analysis. We can help with the planning and scheduling of that important time.

Our coordinating physician reviews the results and begins to make calls to colleagues that may be interested in helping out. Physicians respond very well to their colleagues and usually a call is all it takes. Procedures that require a hospital take more planning. So far, we have not been disappointed. It doesn't take long to develop a core of professionals that are always willing to help.

Dentists work the children into their schedules and we are careful to prep the host families to understand that the dentist and his staff are volunteering. The host family must bend to the dentist's schedule in order for the work to be pro bono.

Our optometrist usually takes the children on a day her office is usually closed and screens their vision. She works with her vendors to provide the glasses that are needed or helps to make referrals if more in-depth treatment is required.

6. How are local groups voices carried into the national group's decision process? We are currently evaluating our organizational structure to be sure this important piece is included. (If you have suggestions, we would love to hear them.) We have operated with a small executive board of 9 to 12 people and literally hundreds of volunteers. Each year we request host families and some volunteers take a few minutes to speak with us or complete a survey to help us evaluate the success of the program. We have found that carefully listening to the ideas and suggestion promoted in this survey has made us a stronger program that is constantly improving. We will certainly continue this survey process and include appropriate sections for any branch.

We also believe the branch leaders will have important ideas and feedback for us. How would you like for your voice to be heard? Would you want to serve on an advisory board which could have virtual meetings? What are your ideas for having a voice?

7. Is the cost of bringing the children the only cost to a branch group from the national organization?

Yes, it should be. The cost of identifying and processing identification documents, passports, visas and insurance is all figured into the 2010 estimate of \$3,000.00 per child. Again, this is an estimate. In 2009, we were able to make everything happen for a little more than \$2,800 per child. All sponsorship money is due by March 31, 2010. If we find the actual cost in 2010 to be less than the estimated \$3,000 the amount owed by the branch will be adjusted.

8. Does support of any kind continue after the children return to Afghanistan?

We are definitely going offer continued support in various ways to the children, in-country projects such as sign language classes for the children of the deaf school, a hearing aid lab for the care and maintenance of their equipment, and humanitarian supplies/goods - coats, hygiene items, first aid items, school supplies, etc. Branches will always be informed and invited to participate, but not required to participate. We also hope that branches will see other needs and filter those through the national organization for more punch.

Another way we provide in-country support for the children is through programs such as SOLA - School Of Leadership, Afghanistan. We recommend Solace participants to this NGO for the purpose of education. Many of the Solace children will have the opportunity to learn English and eventually be placed in an American high school for one year. If they do well, we work to find scholarship opportunities for them to continue to study at the university level.

9. If a child participates in the 2010 program, can he/she return in 2011?

If there is a clear medical need, any child may return. While we allow any child to be a part of the program for the second year, if the child has no clear medical need, we encourage the family to invite a new child.