**Agency invitation letter to partner with MVS**

Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) is a program of Mennonite Mission Network. Established in 1944, it is an opportunity for individuals to join service units serving the local community in a lifestyle of humility and simplicity. These service units, hosted by local congregations or organizations, attempt to meet human needs and to empower communities through partnership with local agencies and Mennonite Mission Network. MVS seeks to serve in a way that is faithful to Jesus’ message and call to nonviolent action.

MVS participants serve in the United States and Puerto Rico. MVS involves people with a wide range of skills, backgrounds, and levels of education. People in MVS come from Mennonite and other faith traditions. They serve in areas such as, but not limited to, advocating for children and immigrants, home repair, community organizing, education, social work, homelessness, environmental sustainability, legal services, etc.  Participants live together in shared household settings called local service units. Within this context, participants share income, housekeeping duties, and decision making.

Costs related to the support of an MVS participant vary tremendously from community to communi­ty. [enter dollar range] per month per participant would be a very rough estimate. Each local unit is organized to be financial­ly self-sufficient. The stipends that participants receive from agencies go into a collective unit account. Since most units deal with a very limited cash flow, it is imperative that participants be paid promptly each month, in some instances the stipend is paid directly to the host congregation/organization (referred to in this document as “the Host”). Agencies with MVS participants are requested, whenever possible, to make their checks payable to the Host and not withhold taxes since all income is under the direct control of the Host.

When serving with an agency, MVS participants are responsible to that agency just as other employees or volunteers. MVS requests that:

 clear positions descriptions and work expectations be established. *(Copies of these should be filed with the Host.)*

 the same privileges given other staff be afforded MVS participants.

 in those cases in which agency and MVS personnel policies differ, a mutually acceptable policy be negotiated prior to a participant’s placement.

 special effort be made to allow participants to attend periodic retreats (one to two per year) planned by the MVS national office and/or the Host.

 two weeks of vacation be allowed each MVS participant during each year of service, beginning with the initial year.

 each person entering MVS attends an MVS orientation (five to six days long) prior or near to the beginning of their term of service.

Ongoing education and "in-service" training programs are welcomed by MVS. When "in-service" training is available or necessary, the sponsoring agency (employer) is usually financially responsible (unless it is an MVS sponsored event)

Agencies interested in exploring a relationship with MVS should contact the MVS Local Leadership. Requests for MVS participants should be made in the form of a proposal and should include: Clear position descriptions and qualification require­ments, financial support statement, an indication of when participants would be needed, and a projection of the position's duration. These requests will be reviewed by the ­MVS Local Leadership.

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