

Floating Doctors



Panama

Would You Like to Join the Floating Doctors in the field?



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Thank you for your interest in joining the Floating Doctors in Panama. Floating Doctors grew out of the efforts of volunteers and we continue to rely on volunteer support to accomplish our mission. This packet will provide you with the information necessary to begin your application to join us.

We ask that you review the information within this packet carefully, complete the required documentation, and submit it through our website on our [Volunteer Page](#).

During your application process, please do not hesitate to contact us at volunteerinfo@floatingdoctors.com with any questions. Your willingness to share your skills with Floating Doctors and the communities where we work is invaluable. In return, we can promise you the opportunity to experience the trip of a lifetime, the chance to travel within Panama, improve your Spanish, and hone your clinical and tropical medicine skills while positively impacting the lives of the people you will meet.

Enclosed:

1. Who Can Apply
2. Groups
3. Length of Stay
4. What to Expect
5. Costs
6. Application Process
7. Application Requirements
8. Vaccinations

1. Who Can Apply

While we aim for a variety of doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, we accept anyone with a positive attitude, a willingness to work hard, and a desire to help others. Please familiarize yourself with our programs and clinic locations on our website at www.floatingdoctors.com. As you prepare your application, please consider the skills and abilities you may bring to our mission, regardless of the certifications you may hold.

2. Groups

Floating Doctors regularly hosts groups from schools, hospitals, Rotary/Service clubs, etc. Each group member will be required to provide individual documentation as per the appropriate headings listed for individual applicants (Provider, Student, Non-Medical.) In addition, we ask that a group application also be submitted so that we can confirm availability for the group size and begin to plan the schedule surrounding the group's arrival.

For every eight (8) volunteers, Floating Doctors requires the group to have a minimum of one (1) group leader, who will be responsible for making sure information is disseminated to group members and will be the primary contact for the group.

Please note: For every five (5) medical student volunteers, we require a minimum of one (1) licensed physician to join the group. For every five (5) nurses or nursing students, we need a minimum of one (1) licensed Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Specialist, or physician.

3. Length of Stay

Through the years, we have found that it takes at one (1) week to get acquainted with our operations and comfortable with our processes. Volunteers who stay longer are able to work at their highest capacity and get a much richer experience.

Once you have submitted all your paperwork and have received notification that your application has been received and processed, you may begin making travel arrangements.

All volunteers are required to join us 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 arrive into Bocas on a different day, you will be responsible for your own accommodations until you meet begin working with us the following Sunday.

Please maintain contact with Floating Doctors throughout your planning process to ensure that we are aware of you arrival and departure times, as well as to be sure there is space available during your desired stay.

4. What to Expect During Your Stay

While working with the Floating Doctors team, you will participate in all aspects of our operations. Successful volunteers are flexible and able to take charge of their individual projects as well as willing to jump in to help others.

There are a variety of ongoing projects that form the core of the Floating Doctors presence in Bocas.

All volunteers are expected to participate fully in all of these activities:

1. *Mobile clinics*: About 3 times per week the Floating Doctors board our launch boat and head out to a rural clinic site. We usually set up the clinic and start seeing patients by 9AM and finish up around 4 PM in time to return to Floating Doctors housing before dark. During clinics, physicians, nurse practitioners, and other advanced specialist nurses acted as our providers. Allied health professionals and non-medical volunteers will triage patients, working in the pharmacy, and assisting the providers in the clinic. These clinics provide an invaluable experience of seeing unusual disease presentations and advanced cases of conditions that are treated earlier in the developed world.
2. *Multi-Day clinics*: About twice a month, the Floating Doctors team runs multi-day clinics in the larger communities that we service. These clinics provide our volunteers with a wonderful opportunity to get to know the community that they are working in beyond the boundaries of a clinical setting. You will be sleeping, eating, and working along side the community members you are treating, which allows for engagement and conversation that is informative and fun for both volunteers and residents. Sleeping accommodations range from outdoor ‘ranchos’ with hammocks to enclosed concrete building floors so bring an open mind and can of bug spray!
3. *Asilo*: The Asilo is a geriatric live-in facility in downtown Bocas. This government-funded facility serves people suffering from mental or physical illnesses. The Floating Doctors make regular visits to provide medical attention and companionship to the residents.
4. *Boat maintenance*: Working with boats means there is a constant list of maintenance projects to be done, including cleaning, sanding, constructing and repairing old parts. All volunteers are expected to take part in these projects.

Each volunteer brings his or her own strengths. We encourage thinking about the type of project you want to accomplish before you arrive so that you are able to jump right in and effectively use the time you spend in Panama. We have had a variety of smaller projects conducted by volunteers.

1. *Health Education*: First-aid education for local firemen and sailors
2. *Natural Medicine*: Ethnobotany projects with local medicine men
3. *Public Health*: Public health research projects and data collection

Typical Weekly schedule:

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Off, New Arrivals, Orientation	Mobile Clinic (9-4)	Projects and Asilo visit in morning	Mobile Clinic (9-4)	Projects and Asilo visit in morning	Mobile Clinic (9-4)	Day off (rarely, there is some work on Saturday for a few hours)

*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.

Accommodations:

As a volunteer organization, accommodations are basic. Floating Doctors headquarters is located on a small, protected island just off Isla San Cristobal, just a 10-minute water taxi ride from Bocas Town. The facility provides a bunkhouse with dorm-style accommodations, each room sleeping up to four, with separate bathroom and communal buildings.

5. Costs

Working with Floating Doctors is a unique experience. As a volunteer-based charitable organization, Floating Doctors requires a financial commitment to cover the costs associated with your stay:

- \$600 for one week of stay +\$100 application fee (\$700 total)
- \$550 per week for two weeks of stay +\$100 application fee (\$1,200 total)
- \$500 per week for three weeks of stay +\$100 application fee (\$1,600 total)
- \$450 per week if volunteering for one month or longer +\$100 application fee (\$1,900 for 4 weeks; \$450 each additional week)

Please note that this is not required to complete your online application; only the \$100 application donation is required at this time.

There is a \$100 application fee that helps offset some of the administrative costs associated with running a volunteer program.

The full contribution, or the first month if staying longer, is due by 30 days from arrival. At this point your fee is non-refundable, but may be applied to a future stay with Floating Doctors. Please contact volunteerinfo@floatingdoctors.com if this is not a possibility.

Your contribution can be made by selecting the “Donate Once” button on our website, www.floatingdoctors.com, and providing a note indicating that you are volunteering with us. If you prefer to make your payment in another format, contact volunteerinfo@floatingdoctors.com to organize this.

Please note: Your \$100 application fee is non-refundable. Should you be unable to join us, any donation in excess of the application and reservation fees may be refunded if a request is submitted by email within no less than 30 days prior to scheduled arrival. Otherwise, your donation may be applied to a future volunteer stay.

Your donation will cover the following:

- Lodging
- Clinic Transportation
- Multi-Day Clinic Food
- Bed Linens and Pillows
- Access to Wi-Fi

Your contribution will also assist in the purchase of medicines and consumables used in clinic.

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, though it is certainly possible to spend much less.

****You are responsible for the following costs:**

- Airfare/Transportation to/from Bocas del Toro, Panama
- Non clinic-related Transportation
- Your own travel health insurance
- Laundry
- 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. Cell phones with pay-as-you-go minutes are readily available throughout Panama.)

We cover the costs of transport and day clinics, as well as accommodations and food on all multiday clinics. However, there are a few destination clinics that we combine with an amazing adventure for everyone after our clinical work is over. 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 we organize afterwards. Activities at the Asilo and doing follow-up will be available for voluntary non-participants in these excursions.

6. Application Process

1. Required Documents are collected and submitted on our [Volunteer Page](#).
2. Initial donation of \$100 is submitted via our website (<http://floatingdoctors.com/volunteer-contributions/>) to begin application process.
3. Floating Doctors notifies you of receipt of completed application and approves your requested timeframe.
4. Floating Doctors begins processing your information for the Ministry of Health (you may now begin making travel arrangements.) Floating Doctors will send helpful documents to review (treatment guidelines, information on travel, practicing medicine in Bocas, etc.)
5. Your full financial commitment, or your first month if staying longer than one month, is required 30 days prior to your arrival in Bocas del Toro. This can be processed through the Floating Doctors website (<http://floatingdoctors.com/volunteer-contributions/>).
6. Welcome aboard!

7. Application Requirements

Those interested in volunteering with Floating Doctors are required to submit several items for review. Once you have collected ALL of your required paperwork, please submit them on our [Volunteer Page](#).

Files **MUST** be saved in PDF format and labeled correctly for us to process your paperwork and should be named as follows: **Lastname_Firstname_Document** (ex: Smith_John_Diploma)

A donation of \$100 is requested to begin your application process. This donation will be counted toward your overall donation for the duration of your stay and will assist us in advance processing your documents through the Panamanian Ministry of Health.

****Note: If your documents are not scanned clearly, are blurred, or names/numbers cannot be read clearly, your application will not be approved. Please double check the clarity of your documents prior to submission.***

Document Requirements—Please check carefully!

For Licensed Medical Providers (Doctors, Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Advance Practice Nurses)

Needed For Submission to the Panamanian Ministry of Health **

- 1 **COLOR** copy of your passports photo page
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your healthcare license (***NOTE: Your license MUST be valid throughout the time you volunteer with us***)

- 1 copy of your resume
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your diploma

Needed For Floating Doctors

- 1 letters of recommendation
- Medical History Form and Waiver completed

For *Allied Health Professionals* (Nurses, Physical Therapists, EMTs, etc.)

Needed For Submission to the Panamanian Ministry of Health **

- 1 **COLOR** copy of your passports photo page
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your healthcare license (***NOTE: Your license MUST be valid throughout the time you volunteer with us***)
- 1 copy of your resume
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your diploma

Needed For Floating Doctors

- 1 letters of recommendation
- Medical History Form and Waiver completed

For *Students in the Medical Field* (Medical, Nurse, Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistance, Physical Therapy, Public Health, etc.)

Needed For Submission to the Panamanian Ministry of Health**

- 1 **COLOR** copy of your passports photo page
- 1 copy of your resume
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your school identification
- 1 **COLOR** copy of any healthcare license that you may have (this is not a requirement but many students hold licenses such as EMT)

Needed For Floating Doctors

- 1 letter of intent outlining what you feel you would give to a program such as ours as well as what you feel you would take away from the experience
- 2 letters of recommendation
- Medical History Form and Waiver completed (attached)

For *Non-Medical Volunteers*

Needed For Floating Doctors

- 1 letter of intent outlining what you feel you would give to a program such as ours as well as what you feel you would take away from the experience
- 3 letters of recommendation
- 1 **COLOR** copy of your passports photo page
- 1 copy of your resume
- Medical History Form and Waiver completed (attached)

** Please note that submission of paper work for approval by the Panamanian Ministry of Health may take up to 60 days. If possible, please send all documents no later than 2 months prior to your arrival in Panama. Exceptions may be made but are not guaranteed. Please contact us at volunteerinfo@floatingdoctors.com if you are a licensed medical provider and would like to join us in less than 60 days.

8. Vaccinations

To participate in our project, we recommend vaccination coverage for Panama. For up-to-date information on recommended vaccinations, please see the Center for Disease Control's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/panama.htm>.

Typically, the following vaccines (which many people have had in childhood) should be current:

- Chicken pox
- Polio
- MMR (Measles/Mumps/Rubella)
- DPT (Diphtheria/Pertussis/Tetanus)

The following vaccines are usually recommended by the CDC for Panama:

- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B *NOTE: This vaccination takes three injections over several months; it is not required for entry into any country, but we require that the series has at least been started prior to your arrival)
- Typhoid
- Yellow Fever
- Rabies

Lastly, there is malaria in Panama. Fortunately, Bocas is not considered a high-risk region. We do not require malaria prophylaxis, but leave the decision up to you the individual volunteer. Vaccinations and prescriptions for malaria prophylaxis can be arranged either through your own GP physician or any Travel Health clinic. The best defense is to not get bitten (use appropriate insect repellent when necessary; available here in Bocas at multiple locations).

Please ensure that your vaccinations are up to date. If you are missing vaccinations, it may be unsafe to travel in regions where these diseases are endemic. Some vaccinations, such as Hepatitis B, require three injections given over several months, so plan well in advance to have your shots in order.