



General Program Questions

1. Why should I volunteer with the Serve to Learn Program in Egypt?

Volunteering in Egypt is a unique experience, offering opportunities to gain new perspectives on child poverty and ongoing issues facing Egyptian communities. You will develop new skills, make friendships that cross borders, and be inspired on a daily basis. In addition, with Serve to Learn, you will also experience the blessing of serving God's children, an exciting summer abroad, interaction with authentic Egyptian culture and a rewarding experience. And that's just the beginning. Your contributions while in Egypt will help the community in which you are placed.

2. Am I eligible to be a Serve to Learn volunteer?

To be eligible for the Serve to Learn Program you must:

- Be at least 17 years of age
- Commit to a 3-week volunteer term
- Be fluent in English; working knowledge of spoken Arabic is preferred but not required
- Be willing to work with a Christian, faith-based organization and be hosted by the Coptic Orthodox Church while in Egypt
- Fill out Form 500: Serve to Learn Application Form

3. What are the selection criteria?

- Strength of your reference letter
- Your answers on Form 500: Serve to Learn
- Demonstrating a heart for children
- New applicants are highly encouraged to apply - as are people who've done Serve to Learn before!

4. Do I need to have teaching experience?

Volunteers are not required to have teaching experience. However, previous teaching experience is preferred.

Training will be given to all volunteers prior to their departure on classroom management and other helpful areas.

5. Do I need to be able to speak Arabic?

Volunteers are not required to be fluent in Arabic. However, those with a working knowledge of Arabic are more likely to have a more enriched experience within the Egyptian community.

6. Can I apply if I am not from the United States?

Yes. Serve to Learn welcomes applicants worldwide, with the exception of those living in Egypt. We do require that all volunteers speak excellent English.

Please be sure to consult with the Egyptian embassy in your home country for visa requirements.

7. What are the program dates? The three-week program runs twice every year, from mid January to early February, and July. Program dates are set based on the academic schedule in Egypt and are subject to slight change. Dates for each session are available with the release of the Application Form.

8. Why do I have to pay to volunteer? Volunteer fees are used to cover program costs provided such as local housing, meals, in-country transportation, pre-departure and in-country orientations, administrative and logistical support.

9. How much does the program cost?

The application fee is \$35 and is due at the time of submitting a completed application. Upon approval of application, selected volunteers will be required to pay a program fee of \$500 within 30 days of acceptance.

10. Does Coptic Orphans provide any financial support to the volunteers?

No we do not. However, volunteers are encouraged to fundraise for their trip on their own using <http://www.razoo.com/> or other tools available.

Traveling to Egypt

1. Where will I be in Egypt?

1. Where will I be in Egypt? As a Serve to Learn volunteer, you will travel to any one of several sites throughout Egypt: from bustling metropolises along the Mediterranean Coast and Nile Delta to the rugged villages deep in the heart of Egypt.

2. What will the trip cost me?

In addition to the US\$500 program fee, volunteers will have to arrange for and pay their round-trip international air ticket, passport, vaccination fees, and visa. It is recommended that volunteers bring US\$350 – 450 to cover incidental expenses including long distance phone calls, medicine, taxi cabs, souvenirs and other non-program expenses related to in-country travel.

3. How should I dress?

Egypt is a conservative country, especially about the way women dress. Volunteers need to respect the prevailing customs by their attire. Bring clothing that is easy to wash and difficult to ruin. Light-weight, loose-fitting, all-cotton clothes are coolest and the most comfortable in the summer. Volunteers are strongly advised to bring ankle-length skirts, loose long pants, and loose blouses or shirts. Short sleeves are acceptable. Capri and crop pants are not recommended for men or women. Keep in mind that modesty is the best policy. For more on the Egyptian culture, please visit this [tip sheet](#).

4. What is the food like? Do I have to cook myself? Volunteers do not have to cook as there will be a variety of food types provided by the host at breakfast, lunch and supper. Local Diocese will do their best to accommodate volunteers with any special diets or allergies (vegetarian, allergic to peanuts, etc.).

5. Do I need a visa?

If you have a non-Egyptian passport, you are required to get a visa by contacting the Egyptian Embassy in their home country. Because of the short duration of the program, you will enter the country on a tourist visa. Volunteers with American or European Union passports may purchase their visas at the Cairo International Airport after they land. We highly encourage obtaining your visa before your arrival.

6. Can I drink the water?

We do not recommend drinking tap water, but bottled water is readily available and inexpensive.

Program Logistics

1. How will we get to our assigned sites?

Volunteers are responsible for arranging their own international travel to and from Egypt as well as transportation to the Coptic Orphans Egypt office in Heliopolis, Cairo. After the orientation, staff will transport you to and from your host site and will accompany you to and from your local destination. When you complete your volunteer assignment, staff will also arrange to pick you up from your location and transport you back to Cairo. Volunteers are responsible for arranging with relatives and/or friends the transit from the Coptic Orphans office in Cairo to the airport or to the place where you plan to continue your stay in Egypt. In the case that volunteers do not have family or relatives willing to assist in their travels, Coptic Orphans will provide logistical support in locating and securing safe and cost-efficient transportation for the volunteer to the airport. The volunteer will be responsible for any incurred transportation fees to the airport.

2. What are “pre-departure,” “in-country,” and “debriefing” sessions?

There are pre-departure and in-country orientations as well as a debriefing session at the end of your STL program. A pre-departure orientation will provide you with an opportunity to meet other volunteers embarking on the same journey and Coptic Orphans staff. Coptic Orphans staff will also answer any questions you might have, discuss what to expect on the trip, go over some ideas for activities in English, as well as review details specific to your site. At the end of the three weeks, you will brief Coptic Orphans about your experience in Serve to Learn. This debriefing will take place in Cairo on the last day of the program. We use the information you provide and your feedback to further develop our program.

3. Where will I stay for the duration of the trip?

Your hosts will provide you with the cleanest facilities available to them. The sites where you will be staying have clean toilets, showers, beds, and fans. Some may have washing machines while others do not. Your rooms will be clean upon your arrival, but volunteers are expected to keep their rooms clean throughout their stay. At schools, bathrooms are available, but their level of sanitation is not known. Your hosts will do their best to accommodate your specific needs. Wet wipes and hand sanitizers are recommended to be kept handy.

4. Can I see my relatives in Egypt during my service?

Serve to Learn volunteers have a more positive and rewarding experience when they spend their entire three weeks at their sites and visiting children. In addition, hosts spend a great deal of time arranging trips for the volunteers and would like to see you enjoy them. We therefore strongly advise that family time is scheduled before or after your Serve to Learn assignment.

5. Why do I need to keep a journal?

You are encouraged to keep such a journal for your personal benefit so you can keep track of what you have learned throughout your trip. We also encourage you to take photos and videos to document your trip. We would appreciate you sharing such videos and pictures so we can educate future and potential Serve to Learn volunteers about the program. We use some photos and videos in Coptic Orphans' presentations and publications and also compile a yearbook for you and your fellow volunteers.

Program Activities

1. What are the volunteering dynamics?

As a volunteer, you will pair up with another volunteer and work together to teach classes as a team. Ideally, Coptic Orphans looks to pair up volunteers with some Arabic language proficiency with those who may have none. You will also be accompanying Coptic Orphan reps on home visitations to the children every evening.

2. Who sets the curriculum?

Coptic Orphans provides you with a teaching guidebook that will help you and your teaching partner plan and organize your own lessons. As the English education in Egypt focuses on reading and writing, we recommend that you gear your lessons toward speech and conversation. You might be the first native English speaker with whom these children have spoken.

3. How many sessions will I be teaching?

Sessions will be held Monday through Friday between 9am and 2pm. Sessions typically run for 90 minutes three times a day and will be team handled. In the evenings, you will have the opportunity to visit the homes of the children in Coptic Orphans' Not Alone Program. Your hosts may also ask you to participate in informal activities with young adults in the community so they may practice their conversational English skills.

4. How many children will be in each group and what proficiency levels will there be in the class?

Coptic Orphans will do its best to limit the number of children in a group to 25; however, you might have up to 30 children in each session. Additionally, children will be divided in classes by age and/or English proficiency. Volunteers should be prepared to instruct students at various levels-- from early beginners to intermediate levels of English proficiency. Most of your students, however, will be at the beginner level. In some situations, you may have students who are illiterate in Arabic. Teaching them English will be a special challenge.

5. What kinds of supplies will be available? What should I bring?

Schools will have blackboards, but chalk and erasers may not be available. You should bring all materials you plan to use for your activities including: chalk, educational games, construction paper, glue, and scissors. You should also bring small educational gifts such as colorful pencils, erasers, stickers, and so forth as encouragement for the children. Some basic materials are available in Egypt for purchase; however, if you wait and want to make your purchases in Egypt, please do so before the Serve to Learn In-country orientation. A list of other necessities will be provided in the Volunteer Manual.

6. Will I be teaching only Copts? Is this a mission trip?

The schools where Serve to Learn is conducted serve Coptic children, and are administratively run by the Coptic Orthodox Church. Feel free to utilize Christian songs, verses, and activities in your classroom lessons. However, evangelizing to non-Christians is illegal in Egypt and has harsh repercussions. You can talk about Christianity with Christians only. Discussing Christianity with non-Christians can put you, and even more so, your hosts, at great risk.

7. Is there any personal free time?

Yes. Aside from personal free time in the evenings, weekends are dedicated to leisurely trips that Coptic Orphans arranges so that volunteers spend more time in fellowship as they visit historical and cultural sites of Egypt. Volunteers must attend Holy Liturgy on Sunday mornings, but are not required to participate in the Sacrament of Communion.

8. What are home visitations?

A big part of the Serve to Learn experience is visiting some of the children in the Not Alone Program in their homes. Volunteers visit homes in small groups and are accompanied by Coptic Orphans field staff. Volunteers will visit 3-4 homes every evening, with visits ranging from half an hour to an hour at most. These visits are planned and arranged well in advance so that volunteers know which home they will be going to each day. A tentative schedule is usually available before volunteers arrive in Egypt.

9. What is the purpose of these visits? What's expected of me?

Home visits make a big impact on both the children you serve as well as the volunteers themselves. Volunteers get to see first-hand the environment that their students live in, the obstacles they face, the overwhelming generosity of their hosts, and a side of Egypt they may not have seen before. As for the children, they are so affected by idea of someone caring for them so much that they would travel so far to come see them. This is why nothing is expected from volunteers during these visits except for love,

humility, and understanding.

Safety

1. Is it safe to travel to Egypt right now?

Coptic Orphans first concern is the safety of the volunteers. There are inherent risks and dangers associated with all international travel and Serve to Learn volunteers who travel to Egypt must sign an Agreement and Release of Liability Form once they are accepted into the program. Volunteers also agree not to leave the STL site and diocese grounds as a precaution to your safety. Check the State Department site regularly to keep informed on new developments. To get up-to-the-minute information, we encourage you to download the State Department Smart Traveler App for [iPhones](#). (An Android version exists, but the State Dept. links to it are down; a Google search at a later date may turn it up.)

2. What kinds of safety precautions should I take?

In Egypt, Coptic Orphans takes additional precautionary steps. This includes planning and undertaking all travel by daylight. The organization also closely monitors the political situation near program sites, and working closely with local volunteers and diocese personnel, adjusts plans accordingly. Finally, Coptic Orphans staff and local staff do not leave any Serve to Learn members unaccompanied and, for the participants' own safety, do not allow them to leave the program or diocese sites. We also recommend that you notify any relatives and friend in Egypt of your presence and whereabouts in the country, and obtain an Egyptian cell phone to keep on hand at all times.

3. What kind of medical precautions should I take?

Check to see if you already have insurance that will cover you for illness or injury sustained abroad. If you do not have insurance coverage, it is advisable that you purchase traveler's insurance from your home country. Bring all necessary medications with you, such as allergy medications. Volunteers should check with their doctors and the [Center for Disease Control](#) for any necessary immunizations.

4. Will there be mosquitoes and bugs?

Mosquitoes are rampant in Egypt during the summer season. In the homes of some poor families you visit, you may also encounter fleas. Volunteers should come prepared with insect repellents and spray repellents for the room and clothes. Supermarkets in Egypt also sell mosquito repelling products. You are likely to find these in Cairo and should plan to purchase them before your volunteer tenure.