



September 19

The purpose of this communication is to explain and to give operational details regarding the attached policy (see Addendum below), adopted by the Annual Conference at its recent meeting and to be implemented January 1, 2012.

**NEW
CONFERENCE
POLICY ON
SHORT-TERM
MISSIONS**

NEW CONFERENCE POLICY ON SHORT-TERM MISSIONS EXPLAINED WITH POLICY ADDENDUM

Introduction

1. The purpose of this communication is to explain and to give operational details regarding the attached policy (see Addendum below), adopted by the Annual Conference at its recent meeting and to be implemented January 1, 2012.
2. The language of the policy document itself is necessarily formal. It is our desire to help our churches in applying the policy by explaining its contents and also giving churches step-by-step guides to implementing it locally.
3. Please ensure that copies of the two attachments are given to or made available to any and all who already lead short-term mission teams in your church(es) or would plan to in the future, including your church's youth leadership.
4. Kindly direct any questions to the OKVIM office. In the first instance, please contact Kristin Terrell-Wilkes at (405) 530-2029 or kterrell-wilkes@okumc.org. The Director, Rev. Jeremy Basset, is also always available for you, too. He can be reached at (405) 530-2028 or jbasset@okumc.org.

Training Events for Team Leaders

The OKVIM staff is planning a number of training events to ensure that each person who wishes to be trained and certified as a team leader can have an opportunity to do so.

We have one more training event in 2011: Saturday, November 5, in Oklahoma City.

We have also set the following dates so far for 2012:

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| January 21 | A combined Enid and Stillwater District event, to be held in Stillwater at First UMC. Priority booking for churches from those two districts until Dec 23 rd ; thereafter, all-comers on a first-come-first-served basis until we reach our maximum. |
| March 3 | Oklahoma City; open to all |
| September 15 | Oklahoma City; open to all |
| November 3 | Oklahoma City; open to all |

Please note: we will come to your district to do training upon request. Our only criterion is that we need a guarantee of at least 20 trainees to make it viable. It would be best to plan this in cooperation with the District superintendent. Please contact our office for more details.

Mission Boot Camp for Youth Leaders/Pastors and Wesley Foundation Staff

OKVIM recognizes the important role of short-term mission in the life of our churches' youth groups and college ministries. We are, therefore, in the process of developing curriculum for a comprehensive "boot camp" on mission planning for this particular constituency.

The curriculum will include: selecting projects and sites; preparing the group for mission; reflection on the mission experience prior to, during and after the mission; putting the mission experience in context, including cross-cultural issues, relational faith-sharing, justice and advocacy, and spiritual formation through mission; and the full team leader training module that will certify attendees as OKVIM leaders.

Dates for this Camp will be released towards the end of 2011, with multiple options available for those desiring to attend.

Team Leader Certification and Renewal

To be certified as OKVIM Team Leaders, individuals will need to attend an authorized training event and subsequently submit an application for certification. The application needs to be signed by the individual's church Mission Council Chair and, in the case of a lay person, his/her pastor, or, the case of clergy, his/her District Superintendent.

The certification is valid for FOUR years. If the Team Leader has actually led a team within that four-year period, he/she may recertify by going online to complete the recertification process through a simple exercise designed to ensure compliance with the latest policies and practices of OKVIM and the Annual Conference. If the Team Leader did NOT actually lead a team since he/she was last certified, he/she will be required to attend a Team Leader Training event in person so as to reacquaint himself/herself with the work of OKVIM.

What counts as a Short-term Mission?

Not all short-term mission activities need to be registered through the OKVIM office.

If your church is sending out a group to work for just one day or to overnight (i.e. just one night) within Oklahoma, that does not need to be registered as an OKVIM team. It does, however, need to follow any policies and procedures of your own church, of course.

If your mission group is going out of state but returning the same day as you depart, it is also not required to register the team with OKVIM. Again, local church policies and procedures apply. You need only register your team if the following criteria are met:

- Your mission team will spend two nights or more within Oklahoma on mission
- Your mission team will spend one night or more out of state.

If this is the case, you will need both a certified OKVIM team leader and will need to submit a registration form for your team to the OKVIM office.

What insurance do I need?

If your mission team is staying within the USA, your local church's insurance policy and/or the conference insurance policy will cover your travels, with no extra insurance coverage being necessary.

If you are traveling outside the USA, the OKVIM travel policy will need to be purchased, or proof shown to the OKVIM office that you have equivalent coverage through your own sources. The policies purchased online through GBGM or the SEJ office of UMVIM are not recommended by our office as they do not include liability coverage or the medical coverage our policy offers.

In all instances, national and international, the individual's personal health insurance policy is the primary coverage. However, if the individual does not have coverage, our policies become the primary coverage.

Teams not registered through the OKVIM office will not be able to purchase travel insurance for their teams through the OKVIM office.

What forms do I need?

In every instance of registering an OKVIM team with our office, the following documentation will be needed, as per the OKVIM Team Leaders' Manual (these forms can be viewed on OKVIM's website at the following URL: <http://www.okumcministries.org/VIM/Team.asp>):

- The Team Registration Form
- The Team Leader Accountability Checklist (prior to departure on mission)
- OKVIM Insurance Registration Form
- The Team Leader Reflection Form (submitted to the OKVIM office after the mission)
- The Site Reflection Form (which the team leader gets filled in by the mission site coordinator and brings back after the mission)

Additionally, the team leader gets each team member to complete a Team Member Reflection Form on the mission experience. This is reviewed by the team leader and shared with the church pastor.

How does the OKVIM office help?

There are TWO ways team leaders can work with the OKVIM office and these are described in detail in the Team Leaders' Manual (see web link above). In summary, they are:

- A. The Team Leader requests OKVIM to help in the team's arrangements (accommodation, transportation, contact with the site coordinator, etc.). There is a small fee attached to this, currently \$5 per team member with a minimum of \$75.
- B. The Team Leader chooses to do the above work himself/herself.

First-time team leaders will be required to work as an “A” team through the OKVIM office *unless* they have support from an experienced and currently certified team leader and/or staff at their home church whose job it is to support OKVIM team leaders in their mission preparation.

In both cases, the team needs to register with the OKVIM office and pay the registration fee (currently \$25).

Additionally, either A or B teams can ask for assistance in airline arrangements. The current fee for this is \$50.

At any time, team leaders are encouraged to call the OKVIM office if they need assistance in selecting a site for mission service. The OKVIM office maintains an extensive list of projects and contact information. While OKVIM does not dictate where and when teams can serve, we do offer information on where we are active across the country and the globe within the Methodist family as well as offering opportunities in places where we have on-going partnerships in mission.

Why was this policy necessary?

There are a number of reasons this policy was deemed necessary by the Annual Conference. We believe that it is appropriate to set and maintain the highest possible standard in our mission practices, both for the protection of our participants and our churches as much as for the maximization of the mission experience. Thus, the effect of this policy is to:

- Maximize the mission experience for our participants by providing well-trained, informed and culturally-appropriate leaders who can ensure that the efforts expended in mission redound to the benefit of the team members as well as the local church itself and the community among whom we minister;
- Uphold best practices for all our mission teams, ensuring that leaders are properly equipped for their work on behalf of our churches and that our team members enjoy maximum legal and operational safety throughout their mission experience;
- Build upon the constantly accumulating knowledge of short-term mission experiences and convey this to all our leaders and teams through our training events and advisory and support services;
- Minimize liability through the above best practices and, thereby, protect the Annual Conference and its churches from unnecessary legal action;
- Enable the OKVIM to seek appropriate travel insurance for our teams at the most favorable rates as we are able to demonstrate best practices to potential policy providers;

ADDENDUM:

OKVIM POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES REGARDING STMS

A. In General

The following is a brief, summarized outline of OKLAHOMA VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION (“OKVIM”) policies, procedures and guidelines regarding SHORT-TERM MISSIONS (“STM”). It is the intent that these policies provide guidance to member churches of the OKLAHOMA CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (“*Conference*”) and their congregations when undertaking and planning STMs.

B. OKVIM’s Role

Typically, OKVIM’s role in the STM process in Oklahoma is:

- To facilitate STMs for Conference churches and their congregants;
- To train, and upon successful completion of training, certify STM Team Leaders;
- To provide a list and current information on possible STM sites to Conference churches and their congregants;
- To serve as a liaison between those persons seeking to serve on teams and certified OKVIM Team Leaders;
- To use its best efforts to maximize the STM experience by resourcing Team Leaders in the preparation of their teams for mission service, and reflection (and communicating accomplishments) upon their return from the STM; and
- To facilitate securing insurance coverage for all persons on a registered STM.

OKVIM DOES NOT provide permission for churches to undertake mission, nor does OKVIM mandate Conference churches or their congregants where to serve or what to do on the STM. This decision, at all times, remains left to the Conference churches themselves and between them and their partners in the proposed STM.

C. STMs Defined

To help OKVIM fulfill its roles and to ensure the protection of the Conference, its churches and their respective congregants who serve in STM, it is critical to define what does and does not constitute a STM. For the purposes of this policy, STMs include two (2) or more persons, one of whom is affiliated with a Conference church or its congregation and whose proposed mission trip meets one of the following criteria:

- Any mission outside of the State of Oklahoma whereby any member of the mission team is required to, or elects to, stay overnight (after 12:00 am); OR
- Any mission inside the State of Oklahoma whereby any member of the mission team is required to, or elects to, stay overnight (after 12:00 am) more than two (2) nights; OR
- Any mission designated by the Director of OKVIM, in writing, as requiring registration with OKVIM.

Missions that ARE NOT STMs include:

- Any mission inside or outside of the State of Oklahoma where no member of the mission team is required to, or elects to, stay overnight (after 12:00 am) [All mission work completed by midnight];
- Any mission inside the State of Oklahoma whereby the mission team is required to, or elects to, stay overnight (after 12:00 am) two (2) nights or fewer [i.e. weekend project]; and/or
- Any mission designated by the Director of OKVIM, in writing, as not a STM requiring registration with OKVIM.

IF A MISSION TRIP QUALIFIES AS A STM AS ABOVE DEFINED, THE CONFERENCE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERSHIP SHALL ENSURE THAT THE PROPOSED MISSION TEAM "REGISTER" AS MORE SPECIFIED IN THIS POLICY.

D. Policy and Procedures for STMs within the Oklahoma Annual Conference

1. ALL STM's must register through the OKVIM office.
 - a. OKVIM will assist any proposed STM team in selecting an appropriate mission site.
 - b. If the proposed STM team has served or is serving a mission project already approved by the General Board of Global Ministries (the global mission agency of The United Methodist Church) and/or OKVIM, nothing more will be required.
 - c. If the mission project selected by the team and/or Conference church is not on the OKVIM list, it will be required that evidence is shown that an invitation has been extended by an entity in the area of intended service (i.e. that this mission is a partnership in mission).
 - d. It is strongly encouraged that all teams make themselves aware of and sensitive to the work of our Methodist family in the area in which they will be serving.
2. The Team Leader shall be trained and certified by OKVIM BEFORE being allowed to lead any mission team.
 - a. All Team Leader training shall be done in person for the initial certification.
 - b. Thereafter, the Team Leader will be recertified every four (4) years or such earlier period as OKVIM's Director requires.
 - c. This recertification can be done on line if Team Leaders have led at least one team during that four (4) year period; if not, they will be required to attend again in person.
 - d. Those who have received training prior to 2006 will be asked to attend training again in person *by the end of 2012* because of substantial changes in organizational issues since that time, especially as it pertains to forms, insurance and to Safe Sanctuary issues.
3. All Team Leaders will be required to undergo a background check and show Safe Sanctuary certification.

4. No STM will be considered as being an official Conference / OKVIM team unless the above is fully complied with PRIOR to departure.
 - a. TEAMS NOT CONSIDERED OFFICIAL BY OKVIM WILL **NOT** BE COVERED BY CONFERENCE OR OKVIM INSURANCE (domestic or international).
 - b. Such teams, and the Conference churches they represent, will bear the full liability themselves.
5. The minimum requirement of ALL OKVIM Team Leaders is as follows:
 - a. To complete fully and send in a Team Registration Form (mail, fax or email shall suffice).
 - b. Complete and send in the Team Leaders' Checklist as contained in the OKVIM Team Leaders' Training Manual.
 - c. Complete and send in the Team Leaders' Reflection Form as contained in the same manual upon completion of their STM mission.
6. All first time Team Leaders will work through the OKVIM office in all the arrangements for their team, unless they can show that they are:
 - a. Assisted by an Oklahoma Conference church with staff who have been determined by OKVIM to have experience in such arrangements; or
 - b. Assisted by an OKVIM certified and experienced Team Leader who will be accompanying them on the team as well as helping in their arrangements.
7. All other Team Leaders may, if they so request, ask the OKVIM office to assist them in the arrangements for their team, but are not obligated to do so.
8. Team Leaders who work through the OKVIM office to arrange their team's logistics will pay the team arrangement fee.
9. Team Leaders who do the work themselves will only pay the registration fee.

E. Policy and Procedures for GBGM Individual Volunteers

1. For the purposes of this policy, "GBGM Individual Volunteers" are individuals who are trained, certified and assigned by the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM).
2. GBGM Individual Volunteers are required to undergo background checks and show Safe Sanctuary certification.

F. This policy shall take effect January 01, 2012.

(This policy was adopted by the Oklahoma Annual Conference at its session in Oklahoma City on June 1, 2011)