



## **SWAP PARTICIPANT MANUAL GENERAL INFORMATION FOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

Social Work Abroad Program (SWAP) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization committed to providing international learning opportunities for US-based social work students.

[www.socialworkabroad.org](http://www.socialworkabroad.org)

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## **ABOUT SWAP**

Social Work Abroad Program SWAP is a 501 c 3 non-profit organization, is the vision of social workers who are committed to providing international learning opportunities for US-based social work students. Participants are able to practice and exchange ideas in an international setting which promotes compassion, cultural sensitivity, effective practice and competency.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

SWAP's mission is to provide enriched, supported, intercultural internships for US social work students who transform both personally and professionally, through meaningful exchange. SWAP further seeks to enhance US social workers knowledge of international social work in order to foster global citizenship.

**Vision:** Transforming social workers into global citizens.

## **ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF SWAP PLACEMENT/SERVICE LEARNING**

The field placement/service learning is the heart of SWAP. The experience offered by SWAP is an opportunity for participants to integrate and apply theoretical knowledge and social work practice and intervention skills in an international setting under the **supervision of SWAP Facilitators**. The host country organization and SWAP Facilitators plays a major role in the personal and professional development of the participants, providing a range of learning opportunities including direct, indirect or macro experiences, orientation to the role of the professional worker in agencies, and exposure to the dynamic service needs within the organization and the community. The Participant exposure to an international field placement/service learning allows for:

- Integration of classroom theory and knowledge and practice skills in developing professional competence and identity.
- Application of social work theory in real-life practice situations, skill building, upholding professional standard of social work ethics and values.
- Experiencing new and challenging opportunities for practice.
- Capable reflective, self-evaluating, knowledgeable and developing social worker.
- An analytical and self-reflective approach integrating US social work practice within the cultural context of the host country using creative retooling to fit the needs of the culture and the community.

## **SELECTION PROCESS**

Selection of Participants: The participants selected by SWAP are students from university or college institutions, community members and professionals. The following factors are taken into consideration when selecting participants:

- Completion of a minimum of 6 months or one year of professional placement/practicum.
- The participant is in good standing academically and/or practicum.
- Submission of SWAP application, participation in the interview process, attendance of an Orientation and reunion and submission and compliance of SWAP administrative requirement forms and international travel documents.
- If applicable, submission of letter of recommendation and approval by the participants current practicum and/or a university/college representative approval.
- Optional: Spanish fluency, read and write.
- Final selection of participants is made by SWAP Board of Directors.

In order for participants and host organization to have a mutually beneficial experience, it is vital that Participant is matched with a project that meets their needs, skills, and interests. SWAP has developed the following guidelines for participants:

1. Submit SWAP Application online at [www.socialworkabroad.org](http://www.socialworkabroad.org) (attach required resume online)
2. Complete required program forms: 1) Photo and Video Release, 2) Release of Liability and 3) Emergency Contact and Medical Information. Forms are submitted on Orientation. Access form online. Drop menu to "Forms" at [www.socialworkabroad.org](http://www.socialworkabroad.org)
3. Interview of participant by the Board of Directors/Facilitators to determine that the participant interests and skills match the needs of the community, and a chance to review the program with the participants and come to a mutual decision of a good fit.
4. The participants are matched (in teams) with other participants in developing a Placement Planning Guide and homestay matching.
5. Attend SWAP 1) Orientation, 2) develop a Placement Planning Guide outline 3) assist the participants team in determining how the Plan will be carried out and in obtaining necessary materials and work plan for any special projects. Placement Planning Guide and Sample Placement Planning Guide are accessed at [www.socialworkabroad.org](http://www.socialworkabroad.org) drop menu to "Forms".
6. Participants are expected to familiarize themselves to the Helping Information section - These reading materials are found to be helpful in orienting and preparing participants readiness for an international experience. Drop menu to "Forms" at [www.socialworkabroad.org](http://www.socialworkabroad.org)

### **SWAP'S PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

- Communication: Participants are expected to communicate effectively and respectfully with others orally and in writing in all communication modes.

- Self-awareness and Reflection: Participants are expected to increasingly self-monitor to assess their own suitability for professional practice and engage in self-correction to change behavior that interferes with professional performance.
- Judgment: Participants are expected to apply sound professional and personal judgment and effectively attend to professional roles and boundaries.
- Cross-Cultural Skills: Participants are expected to acquire cross-cultural insight and awareness sufficient to successfully work in a wide variety of diverse groups and communities. Cross-cultural proficiency includes eliminating displays of personal bias and imposition of personal values on others, as well as approaching differences with an attitude of humility and respect, acknowledging the importance of cultural differences in shaping life experiences.
- Emotional Management and Coping: Participants are expected to discreetly handle any personal emotional distress in a manner that enables them to remain consistently engaged, attentive to duties, and professional in conduct and attitude.
- Physical Abilities: Participants are expected to have sufficient physical and mental capacities, with or without accommodation, to meet the demands of a professional international program, including concurrently attending seminar/lecture series and completing special projects.

## **PARTICIPANT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Accept and abide by policies and guidelines established by the host organization and SWAP. This includes the agency hours of operation, documentation requirements, participation in required agency meetings, agency policies on confidentiality and protection of agency, staff and client rights.
- Accept and abide by policies and guidelines established by SWAP for the educationally focused placement/service learning experience.
- Participate in SWAP seminar/lecture series.
- Complete additional related assignments, meetings and activities.
- Participants must possess sufficient emotional maturity, ability to succeed in the service learning environment/placement and professional manner consistent and in conformity as outlined in the NASW Code of ethics, International Federation of Social Worker and SWAP's professional conduct and performance expectations. [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) and IFSW.org
- Demonstrates professional demeanor in behavior, appearance, and communication.
- Demonstrate suitability for the profession and commitment to the profession's core values of service, social justice, honesty, and competence.

- Maintain constructional interpersonal relations with all SWAP Board of Directors and Facilitators, organization representatives, fellow students, and other professional colleagues and homestay families and the locals with whom they have contacts.
- Deal with conflict and disagreement in a respectful and forthright manner.

## NUTS AND BOLTS

### MONEY

The currency in Costa Rica is the *colon*, which has an exchange rate of around 500 *colones* per dollar. (2019) Costa Rica can be expensive, but there are ways to experience the country on a budget. Two hundred dollars (\$200) of extra spending money is more than enough to cover the costs of personal expenses within the program. Please make sure to have enough cash with you while in the rural areas. All participants should bring a credit card for emergencies. All medical expenses are the responsibility of program participants.

Participants should take their money in the form of cash, credit and or ATM cards. A combination of all three is recommended.

- ATM cards - ATM machines are common in Liberia, but may be difficult to find in other areas. There is one ATM machine at Playa Hermosa and none in Ortega. Major grocery stores and restaurants take credit cards. Most machines dispense either dollars or *colones*. Banks in Liberia: Scotiabank and Banco de Costa (BCR) all close to Best Western Sitio, our lodging in Liberia. Exchange minimal money at the airport, enough for official airport taxi \$20 US (4 passengers maximum) or bus 70 cents (2019). Credit cards are used in Liberia in popular restaurants, not in central market. Try not to use your DEBIT card.
- Cash US Dollars - It is also recommended that participants bring a small amount of cash with them. Smaller denominations are easier to exchange (\$1, 5, 10). Dollars with markings or tears will NOT be accepted. Most businesses will accept payment in dollars, however the exchange rate varies.

### PASSPORT-VISA REQUIREMENTS

All visitors to Costa Rica must have a passport valid for at least six months following the end of your program. Visas are not required for US, Canadian, or European visitors. A passport entitles visitors to remain in the country for three months. While in Costa Rica, visitors must carry a photocopy of their passports at all times and kept separately.

For more information on obtaining a passport, visit the U.S. Department of States website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### STAYING HEALTHY

Participants should consult the CDC website for current health updates ([www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org)) and vaccination information. More on this is discussed during Orientation.

### *Diarrhea*

Most visitors do experience some type of stomach problem while adjusting to changes in their diet. To prevent more serious problems from food and waterborne diseases it is recommended that travelers observe the following precautions:

- Ask about water in each community we visit.
- Do not eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Only consume pasteurized dairy products.
- Use caution with raw vegetables and salads.
- Eat food that is hot and well cooked.

In the event of illness, a simple exam can determine whether the diarrhea is a result of a bacterial or parasitic infection. Once diagnosed, treatment is easy and widely available. It is only recommended to take anti diarrheal medications such as Immodium-AD for emergency or travel situations. Maintaining hydrated with oral rehydration salts is critical.

### *Mosquito borne illnesses: Dengue, Zika, Malaria*

Prevention is key; apply insect repellent every four hours and always sleep with a fan.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

All participants must have health insurance. Participants should check with their insurance company to see what international coverage they provide and their reimbursement policies.

We recommend that participants purchase some type of international health insurance. The following companies offer international coverage for travelers:

- [www.allianztravelinsurance.com](http://www.allianztravelinsurance.com)
- [www.travelguard.com](http://www.travelguard.com)
- [www.cjetglobal.net](http://www.cjetglobal.net)
- [www.internationalplans.com](http://www.internationalplans.com)
- [www.oncallinternational.com](http://www.oncallinternational.com)
- [www.hthstudents.com](http://www.hthstudents.com)
- [www.internationalsos.com](http://www.internationalsos.com)

When you purchase your airline ticket, a travel insurance is generally offered to cover your travel. The major criteria for pricing are your age, travel destination, duration. Some companies insures for risky type of travels such as sports adventure with more safety risk. Generally, activities within the SWAP program, participants select the general type of travel. Unless, the participant decides to participate in adventure sport activities outside the program e.g. paragliding, parachute etc. Read the fine prints.

Additionally, it is recommended that students carry and International Student Identity Card (ISIC) which provides some emergency medical coverage. For more information, visit [www.myisic.com](http://www.myisic.com). Having this card might be able to give you some discount in museums etc.

### **ADDITIONAL TRAVEL INFORMATION**

US State Department [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) / [SMART TRAVEL](#)

Center for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

CIA factbook [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)



## WHAT TO PACK

### DOCUMENTS

- Your passport which must be valid at least six months past the end of the program. Make sure you have a copy that you carry separately from your original.
- Your airline ticket or voucher.
- Credit cards, and ATM cards
- International Student Identity Card (ISIC)
- Medical Insurance information

### PERSONAL HEALTH

- Prescription medications, glasses, contact lenses, and contact solution.
- Sunglasses
- Over the counter medications including Pepto Bismo and Immodium A-D, cortisone or other anti-itching and anti-inflammation topical cream or gel.
- Anti-bacterial hand wash
- Sunblock
- Insect repellent

### LUGGAGE

- Money belt
- Day pack/Backpack

### CLOTHING

Temperatures are very warm so make sure to pack accordingly.

- Nice, comfortable clothing for internship/volunteer site, especially if working in a formal setting or clinic such as the CEN/CENAI Clinic and EBAIS. For the EBAIS - Healthcare placement, wear comfortable shoes and clothing for bicycle riding (More on this on Orientation)
- Jeans
- Shorts
- Shirts, dress and casual
- Underwear
- Socks
- Close toed shoes
- Sandals and walking shoes
- Dress shoes

- Umbrella or light weight raincoat
- Bathing suit/towels
- Water shoes

## **PERSONAL ITEMS**

Most items are available in Costa Rica. If you use special brands, its best to bring them with you.

- Soap
- Razors
- Feminine hygiene products
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Lotion
- Deodorant
- Aloe Vera (to treat sunburn)
- Tissue

## **OTHER ITEMS**

- Cell phone (electric chargers and portable chargers)
- Wrist watch
- Earplugs
- Travel alarm clock
- Flashlight
- Batteries (recycle them when you're done!)
- Notebook and pen and pencil, highlighter
- Water bottle with large mouth (let's minimize our environmental footprint!)
- Spanish-English Dictionary
- Camera
- Books
- Binoculars
- Gift for homestay family (something from your cultural heritage e.g. candies, cookies)
- Toys, games, school supplies, and any items you might want to donate
- First aid kit – antibiotic and pain relief ointment (Neosporin brand), different size bandages e.g. band aid, ankle wrap
- Insect repellent
- Anti-itch medications (Hydrocortison or cortison)
- Personal use of over the counter and prescribed medications.

**Note:** Many interns find that what they might typically wear at home during the summer is culturally unacceptable in Costa Rica. Your presentation is very important and maintaining a clean and professional appearance is required. Female students should note that running shorts, short skirts, spaghetti straps, low necklines, and shirts that show the midriff are not acceptable in many situations and are prohibited at internship sites. When in any type of professional situation, interns should wear a nice shirt and pants, short pants, or shorts/skirts that reach at least the knees.

## LIVING WITH A FAMILY

Some helpful tips that will contribute to an enjoyable homestay experience:

### LANGUAGE

- Don't worry if you don't understand everything. The Costa Rican accent can take a while to get used to. Be patient and don't get frustrated. If you don't understand, tell them “**mas despacio, por favor**”, or “**no entiendo, otra vez por favor**”. Your families are used to having non-native speaking guests and don't mind repeating things. Over time, you will start to understand the accent and vocabulary. Again, be patient! It just takes time!
- In order to maximize your language acquisition and cultural understanding, try to spend as much time as possible with the family. Play with the children (they are often even more patient than adults and often not as intimidating), share in household chores like preparing meals or doing dishes, watch the news or *novelas* with your families and use them as conversation starters, and read the newspaper daily. Most importantly, **TALK, TALK, TALK**; don't be afraid of making mistakes – it's the only way to learn!

### FOOD

- Meals are a special time – a time for sharing with family and friends. And, while the food might take some time to get used to – meals help to integrate you into the culture and the family.
- Most meals will probably include rice and beans either separate or mixed in *gallo pinto*. Meat is expensive and when included, it is a special treat. When served it is almost always fried. If you are served vegetables, they will most often be in a salad of cabbage, tomato, cilantro, and cucumber. The homemade cheese has a very strong sometimes smoky, sometimes salty flavor, that can take some getting used to. Homemade tortillas are a delicious and special addition to meals.
- If there is anything you don't like, or that you would like to include in your diet – don't be afraid to ask! If you feel you are getting too much or too little – speak up! Costa Ricans appreciate openness and honesty – so don't worry about offending your hosts. And remember, most families are accustomed to having foreign guests and are used to accommodating different tastes and requests (within reason).
- And don't worry – families can accommodate vegetarians, vegans, and guests with other dietary preferences or restrictions. Just let us know before hand, and we will make all arrangements with your families.

- Don't feel excluded if you sometimes eat alone – sometimes families have busy schedules or schedules different from yours. For many families, they place a priority on having your meals ready at a scheduled time – which on some days might not coincide with their schedules. If you prefer to eat with others in the family – even if it means waiting or changing your meal times – let your family know.

### **THINGS THAT MIGHT TAKE SOME GETTING USED TO...**

- Costa Rica is in the tropics, and therefore has more “life” and biodiversity than in temperate climates. Translation: insects or small mammals might cross your path but shouldn't be of any concern. They're part of “life in the tropics”.
- Machismo is very prevalent and it takes many people time to understand the strictly defined male/female gender roles. You will observe these roles and stereotypes amongst relationships between people of all ages – old and young. Women will often receive *piropos* or cat calls on the streets.
- Many families have pets – cats, dogs (often for protection), caged birds. If you are not an animal person, let us know so we can make special arrangements.

### **HOUSE RULES**

- During your first days, ask what time meals will be served. If you cannot make it home for a meal, or if you are going to be late, let your family know so they won't keep dinner waiting.
- If you are going to come home late, always call and let your family know so they won't worry. Try not to make too much noise when you come home after the rest of the family has gone to sleep.
- If you are given keys, they are your responsibility. Students will be charged \$50 for lost keys.
- It is not a good idea to have guests over because many families worry about having strangers in their home. It is strictly prohibited to have guests spend the night.
- Not all families have wi-fi. If you need wi-fi for classes or homework or personal use please let us know and we will try to accommodate.
- Most Costa Ricans always wear shoes in the house. You might get strange looks for walking around barefoot.
- Water is also expensive. Try not to take longer than necessary in the shower.
- Very few (almost no) families have hot water. You won't miss it - the tropical heat welcomes cold and refreshing showers.

- Don't flush toilet paper or sanitary products. The pipes and septic systems can't handle them. There will be a garbage can in the bathroom to dispose of these items.

## **FUN FACTS**

- A soda is a small, informal restaurant that serves traditional meals like chicken, rice, beans and salad for \$2-\$3 a plate.
- A pulperia is a neighborhood store that sells foodstuffs like canned goods, eggs, milk, bread and some produce.
- Climate: For most of Costa Rica, the dry season runs from December through April. During these months, the Pacific coast and most of the Central Valley receive little rain, or the odd afternoon shower. May through mid-November is considered the rainy season, when days are marked by sunny mornings and late afternoon thunderstorms. The Caribbean coast, Monteverde and Arenal areas are exceptions to this rule, and have no distinct dry season.
- Language: Costa Rica's official language is Spanish, though a large number of its citizens speak English especially in the San Jose tourist area. However, in the Guanacaste province and in the program designated area(s), English is not spoken widely by its citizens.

## COSTA RICA PROJECTS

**CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADOLESCENT EMPOWERMENT GROUPS** (groups in Bolson and Ortega) After/before school programs that provide a safe space for children and young people to talk about issues that are important to them and their peers. The goal of these groups is to empower young people and give them the skills to become healthy and productive individuals and community members.

**Children's group (ages 7-11).** Topics: communication, bullying, internet use and sexting, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, safe places, family violence, studying and importance of education, future planning, community, gender stereotypes, respect, self-care, sports, emotions, and xenophobia.

**Teen group (ages 11+. 10 – 15 people, primarily female).** Topics: future planning, internet use and sexting, reproductive education, selfcare, sports, talking with their family, healthy relationships, community, family violence, LBGTQ – gender and stereotypes, racism /xenophobia, alcohol and drug abuse and prevention, self-care, reproductive health, mental health.

**SENIOR GROUP** Group meets daily in a community building to do crafts and spend time with others. They are interested in doing more activities including movement, music, personal care, sharing experiences, and other crafts. They meet to do arts and crafts, health, mental health, relationships, but are interested in movement therapy, painting nails, make-up, crafts activities to keep them busy and moving. A day trip to Ortega Museum can be arranged.

**WOMEN'S HEALTH AND EXERCISE GROUP** Meets every afternoon for Zumba, but the group would also like to talk about: gender and violence, family violence, talking with their children, self-care, women's health, breast self-exams, and other topics. Forming communities and working together would also be useful.

**MEN'S GROUP** Work In Progress

**EBAIS – (Equipo Básico de Atención Integral en Salud) Primary healthcare facility.** One to two students can work with the ATAP (technician) to provide healthcare information, visit seniors and patients with chronic illnesses, and collect epidemiological data. Community level home healthcare and health education. This placement require student to ride a bicycle for 2 – 3 hours in the morning with the ATAP technician to nearby villages.

**CEN/CINAI** A government center for low income infants, toddlers and breastfeeding mothers. Provides nutritional supplements to families as well as nutrition education and meals for children. Interns will assist staff, work with the children, help with daily activities, learn about the center and its functions.

**Mural Project** To be determined every year



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON COSTA RICA

By Carrie McCracken of VN Abroad

### Guanacaste: Society and Way of Life

- Guanacaste is located in the North of Costa Rica and shares a border with Nicaragua. Previously part of Nicaragua, it was annexed to Costa Rica in 1824. The population is primarily mestizo, or mixed descendants of Spanish and Chorotega Indigenous groups.
- Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces: San Jose, Cartago, Alajuela, Heredia, Limon, and Guanacaste. Each province is divided into cantones and then further into distritos.
- During this trip we will travel in the province of Guanacaste. While in Ortega we will be in the canton of Santa Cruz and the distrito of Bolson. In Matambu, we will be in the canton of Hojancha in the distrito of Matambu. In Playa Hermosa, we will be in the canton of Carillo and the distrito of Sardinal.
- Within the Province there is the Guanacaste Conservation Area which includes Santa Rosa, Guanacaste, Rincon de la Vieja, Palo Verde and Barra Honda National Parks. There are four tropical ecosystems and approximately 65% of known species in Costa Rica.
- Primary economic activities in the area include: cattle ranching, agriculture (sugar, cantaloupe, and rice) and tourism.
- Additionally, part of the Province, the Nicoya Peninsula, has been declared one of the five Blue Zones in the world. The Nicoya Blue Zone is formed by five cantones: Part of Nicoya, Santa Cruz, Hojancha, Carillo, and Nanayure. Within the entire Nicoya Blue Zone, there are at least 45 people over the age of 100, and over 5,000 people over the age of 75. Blue Zones are characterized not only by longevity of the population, but also by quality of life and overall happiness. Factors that contribute to the quality of life of Blue Zoners in Nicoya include:
  - Calcium in the water (the volcanic and limestone soils add to the calcium in the water). This contributes to strong bones and lower indices of many chronic diseases.
  - Adequate amounts of sun and vitamin D for overall physical and mental health.
  - Strong family structure, social networks, and communities
  - A Physically active lifestyle
  - A life purpose and focus for living
  - The “pura vida” concept of life in Costa Rica
  - A healthy diet strong in basic grains and limited meat consumption
  - The Costa Rican Universal Healthcare system which provides free and quality healthcare to all Costa Ricans

### Matambu

Matambu is a district of the canton of Hojancha. It is also the only indigenous territory in Guanacaste. In Matambu, there are approximately 1,600 residents. Eighty percent of the population is indigenous, and the remaining are mestizo. The 20% of the non-indigenous

population in Matambu owns approximately 80% of the land in the indigenous territory. Land occupation by non-indigenous residents is a problem in a majority of Costa Rica indigenous territories.

### **Government Institutions in Costa Rica**

Names of just some of the government institutions and state-run social programs in Costa Rica. These institutions were formed to promote social and economic development and guarantee basic citizen and human rights. We will see, visit, and talk about many of these institutions during the program.

#### **Ministerio de Educacion Publica (MEP)**

By law, all habitants in Costa Rica have the right to education and the State has the obligation to provide educational opportunities to the entire population living in Costa Rica.

The Ministry of Education is part of the Executive Branch of the government and in charge of both education and culture. They administer all factors related to education in Costa Rica.

They coordinate with other government institutions to guarantee that the needs of students are met. They are in charge of infrastructure, programs to increase attendance including scholarship programs, conduct research and develop curriculum, and support adequate nutrition through school meal programs.

#### **Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (PANI)**

PANI is responsible for protecting the rights of children and adolescents. It was formed in the Constitution of 1949. PANI protects children and adolescents in situations including: negligence, abandonment, physical and sexual abuse, sex trafficking, family violence, expulsion from school, adoption, permission of minors to leave the country, child labor, and many other situations. In PANI, professionals including psychologists, human rights workers, and social workers collaborate to protect the interests of children.

#### **Ebais: Equipo Basicos de Atencion Integral en Salud**

Health is a basic right guaranteed by the government of Costa Rica. The Ebais provide preventative care at the local level. For every 4,000 – 5,000 habitants there is one Ebais. For smaller populations the Ebais will visit the community on a weekly or monthly basis. The Ebais is formed by a doctor, nurse, and Technician (ATAP). In addition, some Ebais have dentists, microbiologists, and other specialists. They are responsible for preventative healthcare and provide health programs including vaccinations, personal hygiene campaigns, nutritional information, and prevention and care for most illnesses. Home visits are fundamental to meeting the goals of the Ebais, and the ATAPs visit residents in their homes to provide basic healthcare and health education.

#### **Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social (IMAS)**

IMAS Works to study social problems and create programs to address these problems. IMAS focuses their programs on families that live in poverty and extreme poverty and provide services according to the real needs of these populations. The resources provided by IMAS try to improve conditions and allow people to improve their economic situations. They have programs

to subsidize food, electricity and water, housing and provide free childcare. They offer training and vocational programs to open up new employment and income generating opportunities. They have scholarship programs for adolescents to promote high school education.

#### AyA

The government (public) institution responsible for providing potable water and water treatment to the population. Coverage is approximately 99% in urban areas and 92% in rural areas. Almost all communities in Costa Rica have potable tap water.

#### ICE

Provides electricity and telecommunication services throughout the country. Telecommunications were privatized in 2007, but electricity is provided to almost 100% of the population.

#### Caja

The Caja is responsible for providing universal health services to all Costa Rican citizens, residents, and minors of any nationality. They operate hospitals, clinics, and the Ebais (all three levels of healthcare in Costa Rica). Funding is provided by the State, employers, and employees. Unemployed residents are covered by the State. The universal coverage of the Caja guarantees healthcare to all Costa Ricans and permanent residents.

#### CEN/CINAI

The children and maternal nutrition centers provide daycare, nutrition education, and food subsidies for children and breastfeeding mothers living in extreme poverty and who are undernourished or malnourished.

## SWAP Re-entry Support

Following program completion, SWAP will organize a **reunion** for participants to continue their learning following re-entry into the United States. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend.

### **Adjusting to being back home...after Costa Rica....**

Reverse culture shock is the stress experienced after going home from being abroad. For some, it can be worse than the initial shock of entering into a new culture. During an abroad experience, the way you view the world changes. However, your family and friends have not had the same life-changing experience. You expect people back home to understand the “new” you and what you experienced, and when they don’t, many find it difficult to adjust and relate. This can make you feel alone, angry, depressed, and insecure. These feelings can last weeks to several months.

Reverse culture shock is characterized by the following:

- Feeling that your friends and family don’t understand what you experienced abroad.
- Frustration caused when friends and family seem not to have interest in all of the details of your abroad experience.
- Depression and a desire to be alone.
- Viewing everyday life as meaningless and unimportant.
- A strong desire to return to the country where you had your abroad experience.
- Negative feelings about your home country, the culture, consumerism, and everyday way of life.

### **How to adjust after returning home.....**

Reverse culture shock is something that most individuals experience upon returning home. It is natural; you’ve changed, your friends and family have changed, your country, town, and neighborhood have changed. Just remember it is a normal process and takes time to overcome. The following suggestions will help you work through the feelings of reverse culture shock:

- Stay in touch with the people you met on your abroad trip.
- Share your experiences with others interested in studying and working abroad. Give talks at high schools or campus clubs about your experience. Here you’ll most likely find an audience who wants to hear about your daily experiences (and have the time to look at all of your trip photos!).
- Continue working and volunteering back at home, utilizing the knowledge and skills you acquired during your abroad experience. Many of the issues you learned about while being abroad do exist back at home – continue working near where you live.
- Practice your Spanish. Don’t lose the skills you acquired while being abroad. Teach English, work with youth or migrant communities. There are many Latino communities in the United States that need and welcome volunteers.
- Get involved! Join a club dedicated to social justice, sustainable development, or Latin American solidarity.

- Write an article for a local paper, a study abroad magazine, or an on-line blog. Share with others your experiences.
- Continue learning about Nicaragua and Latin America by studying Spanish, Latin American studies, international relations, economics, sociology, etc.
- Pursue a graduate degree and focus your research in Nicaragua and Latin America. There are many funding opportunities available for international research including Fulbright Grants.
- Stay informed about current events in Nicaragua. La Prensa and El Nuevo Diario are available on-line.
- Read through the journal you kept during your abroad experience. This is a great way to remember your experiences and see how you and your way of viewing the world changed during your experience.
- Study abroad again – whether it be in Nicaragua or another country. There is always more to see, learn and experience.
- Most importantly – stay involved and active. Don't let the skills and knowledge you acquired go to waste. Continue making a difference back home!