

Welcome to the Dominican Republic!

Who is Community Empowerment?

Community Empowerment is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that was formed in 2016 to function as the logistics partner to the Office of Global Health at Rush. CE's mission is to save lives and protect health by providing access to quality, community-owned, sustainable healthcare, including primary care, surgical care, and public health in chronically underserved and under-resourced communities in the Dominican Republic & Haiti. CE works in tandem with local leadership to provide essential health care, while creating a self-sustaining system in which our assistance is no longer needed. Primary care teams, in partnership with local medical trainees, work to provide medical consultations, training, and chronic disease management. Primary care includes Audiology, Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, and Pediatrics, as well as Dentistry and Physical Therapy. Surgical teams operate alongside local trainees to provide specialty care that is otherwise unavailable to the patients we serve. Surgical specialties include Craniofacial Plastics, Otolaryngology, Gynecology/Pelvic Reconstruction, General Surgery, Orthopedics, Urology, and Pediatric Urology.

Where will we be traveling?

The Dominican Republic is a Caribbean nation that shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti to the west. It is made up of 29 provinces, and it is run as a representative democracy, with elections every 4 years. The country is the home of Merengue music, is predominantly Christian, the national language is Spanish, and the national pastime is baseball.



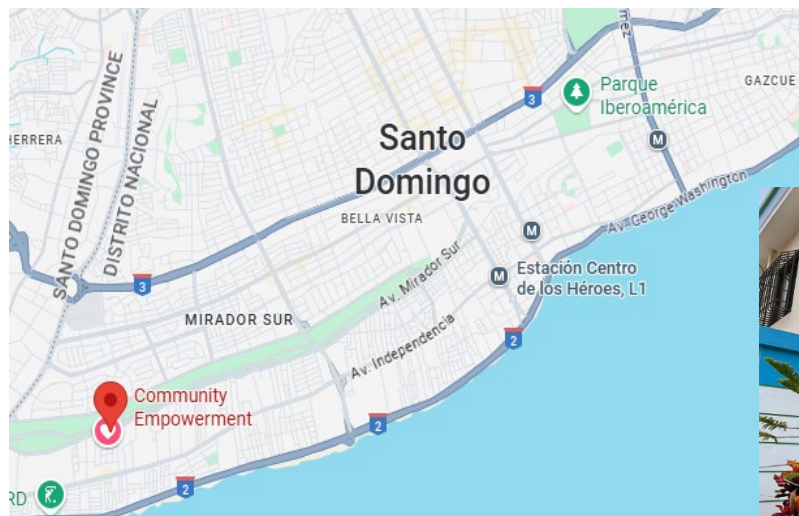
Primary teams work in either Duquesa or Oregano Grande:

Duquesa: Duquesa is home to mostly undocumented Haitian immigrants and one of the largest garbage dumps in the Caribbean. With no pathway to citizenship, the Haitian residents earn a living by picking through the garbage to sell cardboard, metal, glass and plastic to local recycling businesses. The community lacks access to basic medical care except in the case of emergency or labor and delivery but has strong leadership and communal bonds. We are partnering with a local organization that is entrenched in the community, having already built improved housing for single mothers, a community center, and several wells.



We will be staying in Santo Domingo, the capitol city, approximately 40 minutes from Las Americas International Airport (SDQ). Santo Domingo is located in the Distrito Nacional province, which is on the southern border of the country on the coast of the Caribbean Sea and is home to the Zona Colonial (a historic and beautiful colonial district), and nearly 3 million Dominicans.

We will be staying at the CE guest house/headquarters. It is a comfortable and secure house: shared air-conditioned bedrooms with bunk beds; reliable Wi-Fi on the first floor; generally stable cell service and electricity, comfortable bathrooms (not always hot water).

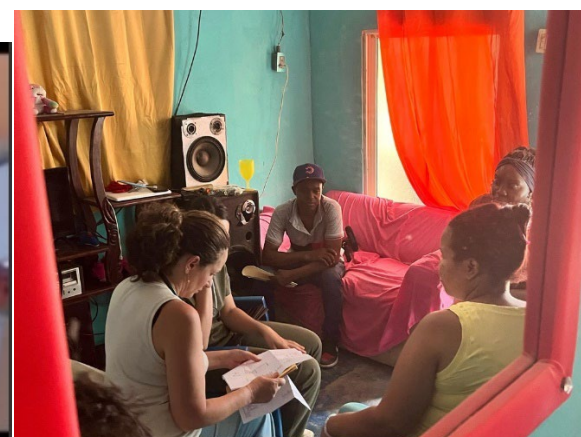


Oregano Grande: Oregano Grande is a small rural community located in the Azua Province, about three hours west of Santo Domingo. It is an agricultural community—plantains and oregano are two staple crops. Clinic will be held out of a local school. While folks in this community have some limited access to healthcare by traveling to the nearest small city, there are extensive gaps in care. Many people find themselves choosing between food and medicine in a given month.

We will be staying in local guest houses/”hotels”. Accommodations are very modest—1-3 people to a room, no air conditioning, intermittent Wi-Fi and cell service but steady electricity and each room has a fan.



(Bedroom at the hotel where team will be staying)



(Home visit in the community)

Food: Food is an important part of Dominican culture, and much of what we will eat during our time is traditional Dominican fare. Rice and beans, plantains, fruit, scrambled eggs, chicken and pork are dietary staples. We will provide three meals a day but many team members have found it helpful to bring granola bars or fiber supplements. For teams staying in Santo Domingo, there is a modern grocery store two blocks from the guest house. Snacks and alcohol can be purchased with cash or credit cards throughout the week. We are able to accommodate vegetarian diets. And please make us aware of any food allergies or other dietary restrictions.



Water: As in most developing countries, the tap water is not potable. **Do not drink or brush your teeth with tap water.** We will provide bottled water. Do not flush toilet paper down the toilet, remember to place toilet paper in trash.

Communication: Cell phone service will be available in Santo Domingo and is generally available yet patchy outside of the city. If you plan to use your cell phone service while abroad, contact your cellular carrier about the global service plans offered. It is useful to download WhatsApp, an app that allows users to text via Wi-Fi even when they don't have cell service. **911 is still the first contact in case of emergency**, and 1411 is directory services. There is reliable Wifi at the Guesthouse. CE staff will have access to local cell phones at all times that can be used in case of emergency.

Money: The official currency of the Dominican Republic is the Dominican Peso, denoted as RD\$. If you would like to have cash on hand, contact your local bank prior to travel to order \$50-100 in pesos. However, there are not many opportunities to make purchases outside of the grocery store and team dinner out at a local restaurant—both places that will take credit cards. Alert your credit card company that you will be using it in the DR if required.

Photo Ethics: Travel in other countries provides many opportunities to take photos, but when taking photos of individuals in communities, we need to be mindful of our intentions and usage of photos. **Any images that have faces of individuals that you intend to use require spoken/written approval.** Please be thoughtful about why and how you choose to share these photos. View a video tutorial on items to consider when taking photos abroad: <https://www.radiaid.com/social-media-guide>

Contact Information: Community Empowerment & Rush Global Health Contacts

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Packing List

- Please pack all personal belongings in one carry-on bag as you will be responsible (carrying & cost) for 1-2 checked bags of medication and supplies.

Personal Items:

Passport
(2) copies of passport, medical license, Ministry of Health Permit (sent to you before the trip).
Toiletries: soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush & paste, feminine products, sunscreen
Insect repellent with 30% DEET per CDC recommendations
Personal meds: NSAIDS, Benadryl, allergy meds, antacids/antidiarrheals
 o Zofran (for nausea); Malaria prophylaxis
Earplugs (shared rooms)
Reusable water bottle

Clothing:

Scrubs for clinic (one set per day)—scrub bottoms & t-shirt is also okay
Seasonal clothing; sweat wicking material is great, as it is very hot/humid
One outfit for a night out
Socks & underwear
Comfortable, close-toed shoes for walking/clinic (tennis shoes or work boots)
Bathing Suit and flip flops for possible beach day
Sweatshirt or jacket for nights

Medical Supplies:

Stethoscope
Penlight
Oto/ophthalmoscope/pulse ox (if you have them)

Miscellaneous:

Spending money or credit card for souvenirs (if desired- there are ATMs in Santo Domingo with good exchange rates)
Snacks/granola or meal bars and fiber supplements
Travel games, books, headphones for downtime after clinic

*Outlets are the same as the U.S. You do not need an adapter for your chargers.

What **NOT** to Bring:

Bottled water
Expensive jewelry or other personal valuables
Bed linens, towel, or pillow



Travel Smart. Travel Safe

Evacuation Insurance:

Per policy, evacuation insurance is required for all Rush trainees in all programs, and strongly encouraged for everyone else. Depending on your trip, the cost is usually about \$60-\$80. Travel Insurance policy should include emergency medical care/transportation as well.

Malpractice Insurance:

The policy provides medical professional liability coverage for indemnity, defense costs and regulatory defense costs up to \$1M per claim, subject to a \$3M group aggregate limit. The policy provides coverage for such claims in the Dominican Republic that arise out of the Global Health Initiative's (GHI) operations in that country. In order for the coverage to apply, each provider must be included by name in the policy (to be added before departing for a trip), and the provider must be engaged in the scope of their duties with GHI. All volunteers of the GHI are considered providers and will be covered by this policy. The policy has a per claim retention (or deductible) of \$50,000.

Malaria, Cholera, Dengue, Zika: What You Need To Know

First, understand and minimize your risk: ensure that all of your routine vaccines are up to date- these include the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine (Tdap), varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, Covid-19, and your yearly flu shot. Wear insect repellent with at least 30% DEET per CDC recommendations. Consider pretreating your clothing/scrubs with permethrin, more information here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/prevention/about-permethrin-treated-clothing-and-gear.html> .

The CDC does recommend that medical personnel travelling to the Dominican Republic be vaccinated for Hepatitis A and Typhoid as well as take malaria prophylaxis (Chloroquine), although risk is low in many of the areas we work in. Review the CDC Vaccine and Medicines recommendations here: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/dominican-republic> .

Travel Advisory

We recognize that travel to the Dominican Republic poses certain risks and that the U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory recommendations change fairly often. We take maximum precautions and do everything we can to ensure your safety, however you do travel at your own risk. We are in constant communication with our partners in the DR, and if we feel that the current climate poses grave danger to our team members, we will cancel a trip. You can stay up to date on the U.S. Department of State's warnings here: <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/dominican-republic.html> . Travel Advisories are issued at Levels 1-4 with 4 being "Do not travel." As of June 18, 2025, the DR is listed as a Level 2 out of 4 -Exercise increased caution.

Information & Resources

Medical Considerations before International Travel, NEJM:
<http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMra1508815#t=article>

Money Matters

Your Program Fee includes:

- Lodging (2-8 persons per room)
- Transportation to/from the DR airport
- Daily transportation to the work site
- Breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Purified water
- Tips/gratuities
- Orientation materials
- Organization, planning, and visits to clinic sites, hospitals, lodging
- Planning & evaluation with full time coordinator for pre and post trip, telephone, fax, internet
- Interpretation

Your Budget DOES NOT include:

- Telephone calls or phone cards.
- Any R&R activity or dinner out
- Any alcoholic drinks
- Food outside meal times
- Any other transportation service



Deposit and/or Logistics Fee Payment:

Please complete payment at least 2 weeks prior to departure date.
Include your NAME and TRIP on your payment.

Venmo, Quick Pay or Zelle transfer to Babs Waldman:

Quick Pay or Zelle: info@community-empowerment.org or (224-999-3235)

Venmo: [@C_empowerment](#)

OR

Send a Check or Money Order:

Community Empowerment Attn: Babs Waldman
8 Milburn Park
Evanston, IL 60201