

Changes to Hosting Realities (COVID-19 Edition)

PANAMA - October 21, 2020
ARRIVAL INFORMATION: Participants need a printed Covid-19 test with a negative result, with the result obtained within 48 hours prior to the departure from the home country and to be presented upon arrival in Panama. It is STRONGLY RECOMMENDED that all participants arrive with the printed Covid-19 test
VISA: Most participants enter Panama as tourists, and do not require a visa. Tourist visas are being issued by the Panama Embassies/Consulates, as usual, for the few nationalities that require a Tourist Visa.
QUARANTINE: If the participant does not have the printed test (as mentioned in the ARRIVAL INFORMATION), a test will be performed upon arrival at a cost of US\$50 paid in cash. If the test is negative, the participant can enter the country freely. If the test is positive, will need to remain in a hotel at the Panama government's expense, for seven days. A test will be performed after seven days, if negative, the participant can leave the hotel. If positive, will remain at the hotel for an additional seven days. In the case of a participant remaining in quarantine, a member of the AFS Staff will be personally responsible to provide support and supervision, from a distance. Consequences for not abiding by quarantine rules have not been established to date – Oct. 21 st , 2020
LOGISTICS/ORIENTATIONS: The Arrival Orientation will take place in a location with limited access to persons outside the AFS group and will last a minimum of 10 days for the SH21 cycle. Any Staff, volunteer or service person will be tested for Covid-19 before the event.
SCHOOL REALITIES: AFS Panama will not host students in SH21. All CPOs assigned to cs participants are working in person, with safety protocols reviewed by the Ministry of Health.
DAILY LIFE ACTIVITIES: Except for bars, movie houses and crowded activities (concerts, sporting events, etc), the rest of daily activities are taking place largely as usual (with limited capacity in restaurants, offices that serve the public). Everyone is required to wear a mask outdoors and in public. It is very unusual to see someone without a mask outside the home.
PACKING LIST: Participants should bring approx. 10 masks. But these are widely available throughout the country at affordable costs and in a variety of styles.
INDEPENDENT TRAVEL: Independent travel will be allowed as outlined in the country information booklet. Participants are expected to comply with safety requirements, including wearing masks when in public and the rest of the personal care recommendations.
NATURAL FAMILY VISITS : Will be permitted as outlined in the Country Information booklet, ideally at the end of the program.
PROGRAM TERMINATION: Allowed as outlined in the Country Information booklet.
General Safety Precautions Everyone is expected to maintain social distancing and comply with regulations that are posted or visible in all public spaces. Wearing mask in public is done by close to 100% of the people. Hand washing should be as often as possible and hand sanitizer is available and offered when entering any shop, bank, public space. Most families are leaving their shoes at the entrance of the house, and wash/spray with alcohol anything that comes into the house (groceries, money, etc.). Many people take a shower and change into clean clothes when returning home from any outside activity. Greetings are limited to fist-bumps, with no other physical contact.