



La Unión del Pueblo Entero
Founded by César E. Chávez

Alternative Spring/Winter Break: FAQs

Please read this document carefully to see the answers for frequently asked questions about LUPE's Alternative Breaks program. If you have any questions that are not answered here, please feel free to contact Abraham Diaz at abrahamd@lupenet.org or (956) 904-7092. Thanks!

SERVICE WORK:

1. How is LUPE's Alternative Break Program different from other programs?

- a. LUPE does not have 1 specific service project that students work on throughout the week (for example, building houses or working in a soup kitchen). Our emphasis is on the "learning" aspect and accordingly, we try our best to expose students to the variety of social justice issues at the US-Mexico border through a combination of service and learning opportunities. Sometimes students will be doing direct service (English tutoring, flyering in the colonias, refurbishing low-income housing) and other times they will be learning and discussing immigration issues (visiting the border wall, visiting El Milagro Clinic, presentations on immigration reform).
- b. We encourage participants to be respectful, keep an open-mind and understand that students are not here to "help" LUPE but to work in partnership with our members to create a more just community.

2. What are the detailed descriptions of the services students will be doing? What will our service schedule look like?

- a. Once you confirm your trip, an alternative break pre-survey will need to be completed by the group a week prior to arrival. In addition, your site leader will work with a staff member to come up with the weeklong schedule and service activities. Examples of activities that might be included in the trip are as follow:
 - i. Learn about immigration reform and immigrant rights organizing through local house meetings and presentations
 - ii. Witness and learn about the US-Mexico border wall
 - iii. Volunteer in *colonias*, low-income neighborhoods along the border
 - iv. Volunteer with Proyecto Azteca to refurbish and construct parts of housing units for low-income residents
 - v. Visit El Milagro Clinic to learn about health-care access
 - vi. Learn about workers' rights and immigrant women's rights by visiting the South Texas Civil Rights Project
 - vii. Visit La Posada Shelter to learn about immigrant detention/deportation
 - viii. Volunteer with La Posada Shelter to practice English with previously detained migrants looking for asylum
 - ix. Meet with civil rights activists to learn about the work to combat human rights abuses at the border



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- x. ****Please note that students will need to be flexible with LUPE and our partner organizations as we work to accommodate everyone in sometimes small spaces!****
 - b. Students will generally volunteer from **Monday through Friday, starting at 9am and finishing their work day at 5pm**. This general schedule may vary depending on the needs of the student group and our partner organizations.
 - c. We usually do not provide activities for students on the weekends as our offices are not open. ****Please let us know ASAP if you foresee the need for service activities on the weekend.**
 - d. We will create your service schedule for the week including scheduling you with our different local partners. **If you plan to be with LUPE for only part of the week and schedule other site visits on your own, please let us know ASAP.** It may be that your visit does not actually constitute an Alternative Break visit for us and we will have to consider how exactly we can involve you in our activities for the week.
3. **What type of educational material can your organization recommend so that participants can better understand the social issue(s) they will be working with?**
- a. We can provide a list of resources upon request of websites, movies, articles, books, etc for pre-service education and awareness on immigration and immigrant rights.
4. **What is the long term impact of LUPE's Alternative Break Program?**
- a. By attending our program, students have learned about important social justice issues and themselves. We ask that students take back what they've learned and relate the stories they heard and experiences they had at the border in order to help create a larger movement for immigrant rights.
 - b. Because of the time and effort that goes into organizing alternative break trips, **the student groups that we receive will develop a post-trip program to ensure that their trip has a larger impact than just the time spent with us.** In the past, student groups have conducted fundraisers for specific LUPE projects, invited LUPE staff to speak at their University, and participated in their local organizing efforts for immigration reform/immigrant rights.

LOGISTICS:

- 1. **How many students would be ideal for us to send to your organization for alternative break?**
 - a. 10-12 students would be ideal.
- 2. **Is there a cost for volunteering at your agency & what is included?**
 - a. The price is \$200 per group for the whole week. This includes the organizers accompanying students to various sites for service, but does not include meals or housing. Once we confirm your trip, we will provide you with an invoice to process the payment via check.
- 3. **What should volunteers bring and what should participants wear?**
 - a. Bug spray and sunscreen (one set for all your participants would probably be sufficient).



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- b. One sets of long-sleeved shirts and pants that you can get dirty (for the days volunteering doing colonia clean-ups, working on houses or painting).
 - c. Students can wear loose, comfortable clothing on the other days (depending on the weather).
 - d. Please bring closed-toe shoes. All week you will be outdoors and closed-toe shoes will provide the protection you need.
 - e. If staying at St. Paul Church: Extra blankets, pillows, sleeping bags - the church will have basic sleeping amenities, including cots, small pillows and thin blankets. For your own comfort, bring any extra bedding you'd like. The church can get cold at night.
4. **Do the student volunteers need to be Spanish-speakers?**
- a. We would encourage your group to include 2-4 Spanish-speaking students since most of our members are most comfortable speaking in Spanish. However, there are enough bilingual folks among staff and members that it would not be a problem.
5. **Do students need to bring any form of official identification?**
- a. Yes. Please make sure all participants bring their official identification if they have it. A weird Texas state law makes it illegal to not carry your identification on your person if official identification has been issued to you. Your school-issued ID should be enough.
 - b. It is very important that all students who are coming on the trip are citizens, legal permanent residents, or international students with valid visa. Any way that you leave the RGV, students will pass through immigration checks. Legal permanent residents need to have their green card or a photocopy, international students must show their visa or a photocopy, and citizens can use a driver's license, passport, or SS card or photocopy of SS card.

TRANSPORTATION:

1. **Your student group can reach LUPE in one of following ways. Since South Texas does not have convenient public transportation available, all options include van rentals in order to get around the offices.**
- a. Fly into the nearest airport, which is McAllen International Airport (MFE), and rent vans at the airport to use for your week in the Rio Grande Valley. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** When passing through security on your trip back, you will be asked about citizenship status by Border Patrol agents. It is very important that all students who are coming on the trip are citizens, legal permanent residents, or international students. Legal permanent residents need to have their green card (or a photocopy), international students must show their visa (or a photocopy), and citizens can use a driver's license, passport, or SS card (or photocopy).
 - b. Fly into Houston airport (either IAH or HOU), rent vans at the airport, and drive down to the Rio Grande Valley (about a 5-6 hour drive). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** When driving back to Houston, your vans will be stopped at the Border Patrol checkpoint where they will ask about citizenship status. It is very important that all students



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who are coming on the trip are citizens, legal permanent residents, or international students. Legal permanent residents need to have their green card (or a photocopy), international students must show their visa (or a photocopy), and citizens can use a driver's license, passport, or SS card (or photocopy).

- c. Rent vans from your local area and drive down to the Rio Grande Valley. Most student groups have preferred this option as it is the cheapest (but of course the longest). **IMPORTANT NOTE:** When driving back to your city, your vans will be stopped at the Border Patrol checkpoint where they will ask about citizenship status. It is very important that all students who are coming on the trip are citizens, legal permanent residents, or international students. Legal permanent residents need to have their green card (or a photocopy), international students must show their visa (or a photocopy), and citizens can use a driver's license, passport, or SS card (or photocopy).

2. What are the directions to and from LUPE offices, other volunteering sites, and the lodging site?

- a. Your site leader will receive the directions a week prior to your trip. If you would like an idea of the different areas you may volunteer for planning and transportation purposes visit www.lupenet.org/contact/locations

HOUSING & FOOD:

1. What are the lodging options for the week of service?

- a. LUPE will do our best to coordinate your lodging. However, we encourage you to seek housing in case that LUPE is not able to secure low cost housing.

2. Does LUPE provide food? Are there grocery stores nearby?

- a. Students should plan to provide for their own breakfast and dinner.
- b. LUPE can provide lunch meals at the service site on service days (usually M-F) for students at a very minimal cost – currently at \$5 a person per meal. The meals usually include tostadas, enchiladas, tamales, potatoes, soup, etc. Please confirm with us if you would like to take advantage of these lunch meals.
- c. Some students in the past have opted to make their own lunch at the LUPE site (we have kitchens in our offices). The closest grocery store is the local HEB store located conveniently throughout the main highway, close to our offices but there are also some close to the churches. There are also restaurants that could provide affordable food for students.