

Volunteer Scheduling Process

This document describes the approach to volunteer scheduling on Binational MDS projects. It is intended to be a communication tool for MDS constituents and the broader public.



**Mennonite
Disaster
Service**

Terms & Definitions:

Winter - January through March

Spring - April and May

Summer - June through September

Fall - October through December

Weekly Volunteers serve on an MDS project for 1-3 weeks, and participate in the construction duties on the project. Weekly Volunteers come in groups or as individuals.

Long-Term Volunteers serve on a project for 4 weeks or more (not in a leadership role), and must go through the Long-Term Volunteer application process, including an interview and references.

Leadership Volunteers are responsible for the day to day operations of an MDS project. They work together with local community partners and homeowners, organize the work for the weekly volunteers, and ensure that all volunteers are well fed and cared for throughout their time on the project. Leadership Volunteers serve on a project for 4 weeks or more, and must go through the Leadership application process, including an interview and references. Examples of Leadership Volunteers include Project Directors, Construction Supervisors, Crew Leaders, Office Managers, and Cooks.

Volunteer Team - MDS staff who recruit, train, and schedule Weekly, Long-Term and Leadership Volunteers. This team includes:

- **Coordinator for Weekly Volunteers** - staff based out of the Lititz, PA office who schedules Weekly Volunteers on all binational projects.
- **Volunteer Coordinator for Leadership** - staff based out of the Lititz, PA office who schedules US-resident Leadership & Long-Term Volunteers.
- **Volunteer & Project Coordinator** - staff based out of the Winnipeg, MB office who schedules Canadian-resident Leadership & Long-Term Volunteers.
- **Volunteer Administrative Assistant** - staff based out of the Lititz, PA office who delivers information to/from volunteers, the Volunteer Team, and projects.

MDS runs most of our projects during the winter, and typically has fewer projects open in the spring, summer, and fall seasons. Many of our volunteers are in farming and construction industries, and they are most available to volunteer during those months.

Scheduling Process

At any time, Weekly, Long-Term, and Leadership volunteers may contact MDS and inquire about serving on a project during a specific season. If scheduling for that season has begun, the Volunteer Team can schedule Weekly, Long-Term, and Leadership volunteers according to the available openings. If scheduling for that time has not yet begun, the Volunteer Team records their information and places them on a waitlist.

Once MDS has determined which projects will run and for what dates, the Volunteer Team begins to schedule volunteers as follows.

1. The Volunteer Team schedules Leadership Volunteers at each project.
 - a. When the Volunteer Team schedules Leadership Volunteers, they may offer for Leadership Volunteers (typically Project Directors) to schedule a group of Weekly Volunteers from their church or community before scheduling opens to the broader public.
2. The Volunteer Team schedules Weekly Volunteers at each project.

When scheduling begins for a project season, the Volunteer Team first contacts those who are on the waitlist and works to schedule them.

After all of the volunteers on the waitlist have been contacted, scheduling is opened up to the broader public. This is primarily communicated on the MDS website, in the Biweekly Update, and in communication to MDS Unit and Region leaders. Once scheduling has been opened up to the broader public, Weekly Volunteers are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Volunteer needs and requirements (including skills and number of volunteers) may vary from project to project.

Scheduling Weekly Volunteers from the waitlist typically begins as early as 3 months prior to the beginning of a Project Season;

- Fall (October -December) – scheduling begins in August
- Winter (January – March) – begins in October
- Spring/Summer – (April to July/August) begins in February.

These timeframes are approximate and are subject to change as project details develop.

Please note that submitting an online Registration Form or calling the MDS office does not guarantee a spot on a project. Volunteers should not book any travel until they have received an email or written confirmation from the Volunteer Team for their project assignment.

Historically, MDS's busiest time of year has been in January through March because of the availability of volunteers. This means that more volunteers want to serve during these months, and as a result, openings on projects are more difficult to come by. The likelihood of Weekly Volunteers being placed on an MDS project increases if they are willing to serve *outside* the months of January through March.