

Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

Strong Direct Service:

Provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or "hands-on" projects and activities that address critical but unmet social needs, as determined by the community. Community interaction during service projects and throughout the week is highly encouraged during breaks.

Orientation:

Prior to departure, participants should be oriented to the mission and vision of the community partner or organization(s) with which they are working. Participants are encouraged to look at the context of the work of the organization within the broader community and to become allies to their mission and vision through direct service.

Education:

Trip leaders should include issue specific educational sessions which participants attend prior to and perhaps during their alternative break. These sessions provide participants with the historical, political, social, and cultural context of the social problems they will be working with during the break. Effective education provides faces and opinions from all perspectives on the issue, including ways that the participants' personal life choices are connected to them.

Training:

Participants should be provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training should take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site. Examples of training include teaching basic construction, learning how to read with children or gaining first aid skills.

Reflection:

During the trip, participants reflect upon the experiences they are having - synthesizing the direct service, education, and community interaction components. . Applying classroom learning and integrating many academic disciplines can occur. The site leaders should set aside time for reflection to take place, both individually and in a group setting.

Reorientation:

Upon return to campus, trip leaders should have reorientation activities for all participants where they can share their break experiences and translate them into a lifelong commitment to active citizenship. Through these activities, participants continue their volunteer efforts in their local area, learn about possible internships, engage politically in their community, obtain resources for continued education on social issues, and make life choices that benefit the entire community.

Diversity:

Trip leaders should also plan to intentionally address the issue of diversity and social justice, or in other words privilege and oppression, and how it relates to service work. This brings different perspectives and insights to reflections and trips as well as represents the wide range of students in our campus community.

Alcohol and Other Drug Free:

Issues of legality, liability, personal safety and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Alternative Breaks are meant to be an immersion experience which may be hindered when under the influence of any sort of drug.

The 9th Component- Simple Living:

During the alternative break trip, everyone should live a simple life. This means that each individual will have \$6 total for all 3 meals (\$1 for breakfast, \$2 for lunch, and \$3 for dinner). This is implemented because it shows individuals how people sustain themselves on low budgets. The simple living component also includes having no cell phones, computers, etc. Lastly, trip leaders are encouraged to find housing that is low cost as well to help simulate the experience of living a simple life.