



ETERNAL ANCHOR

Visitor Handbook

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Welcome!

Dear Guest,

Welcome to Eternal Anchor! We are very excited for you to come and work with us to fulfill our very important mission and vision. Collaborating with visiting volunteers is a very important aspect of our work. You bring fresh energy and excitement to our programs as you help us provide quality education to our students and help with maintenance and construction. You also learn about the important work being done to alleviate the suffering caused by disability in the San Quintin Valley. In high-poverty regions, like the San Quintin Valley, people with disabilities are disproportionately impacted. The lack of public services and quality health care is a chronic systemic issue that Eternal Anchor works year-round to improve. Our passion is to change negative cultural stigmas related to disability, to collaborate with government and non-governmental agencies to improve access to healthcare, education, and community, and to empower people with disabilities who have been marginalized by society so they can reach their God-given potential.

My hope is that through our partnership, you can become an informed and active ally and advocate of Eternal Anchor back home. The work you accomplish and relationships you build during your time with us should not be limited to your visit. I hope that you stay in touch throughout the year, following updates on social media, encouraging our staff from afar, and helping us network to expand our donor base in order to provide critical disability services to even more families.

Your financial and time sacrifice to come and serve alongside our staff is greatly appreciated. You are an important part of our team and we hope that your time with us is meaningful, fun, and productive. Before, during, or after your trip, as you process your experiences, please reach out with questions and comments. We value your input and welcome suggestions on ways we can improve our programs or help future teams maximize their experience with us. I also urge you to share encouraging messages to the staff and directors during your time. Our staff work tirelessly all year and love to hear positive feedback from visiting teams.

Thank you for your commitment to partner with us! I look forward to meeting you and serving with you.

Sincerely,

Austin Robinson
Executive Director

Organization Overview

Eternal Anchor, founded in December of 2014, is dedicated to offering quality disability services in the communities of rural Baja California, Mexico. The name, Eternal Anchor, was chosen for its imagery. Amidst the chaos and the struggles of living life with a disability, our organization strives to offer hope that acts as a safe, stabilizing anchor. This hope is rooted in the eternal, unconditional love God has for all of us (**Hebrews 6:19**). We strive for excellence, offering residential care, special education, early intervention, life skills training, community outreach, horse therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and mobility equipment to both children and adults with disabilities. We serve and work alongside families to ensure that they have the tools necessary to raise their children in a region that has almost no government or private resources available. Our passion is to break down the physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing and participating in their communities. We work hard to heal social divisions so that all members of our community can be valued, experience belonging, and reach their God-given potential.

Children's Home

In the San Quintin Valley, there are no children's homes that accept children with disabilities. It is for this reason that Eternal Anchor opened its residential program. We believe that all children deserve a safe, loving place to call home. We are the only special needs children's home in the state that implements a family model in our home, hiring live-in house parents. We also limit the capacity of each home to 6 residents, ensuring quality care for each child. We are passionate about creating homes, not institutions, for our children.

Special Education

Every child deserves to have access to a quality education. Unfortunately, in high-poverty communities around the globe, public schools are often unwilling or unable to accept children with intellectual disabilities. The San Quintin Valley is no exception. For that reason, Eternal Anchor started a special education school in 2015. Initially, the program had 4 students and operated out of a borrowed church Sunday School room. Today, we have more than 50 students and more than 20 local teachers offering quality, individualized educational services.

- ***Bucaneros (Buccaneers)***: This is our early intervention class. It consists of mostly babies and toddlers 4-years-old and under with a range of disabilities from autism to cerebral palsy to seizure disorders and anything in between.
- ***Capitanes (Captains)***: This is our class specially designed for our kids with the most profound disabilities. Again, their physical and cognitive disabilities run the gamut. Ages range from 4 to 15.

- **Marineros (Mariners):** This is a fun class that is never short on energy. This is our early elementary class that has kids with a variety of disabilities, but has more kids with autism than any of our other classes. The majority of these kids are physically capable of doing lots of things but have cognitive impairments.
- **Navegantes (Navigators):** These are our older kids that are similar to the Marineros class. Kids in this class are in their early to mid-teens. Like most of our classes, there is a variety of kids with disabilities in this class ranging from a physical disability with mild cognitive impairments, to active and physically typical kids with more severe cognitive disabilities.
- **Buzos (Divers):** This is our preschool class. These kids are the correct age for our Marineros class, around ages 5-8, but are more advanced cognitively. In this class, they focus more on academic tasks, like penmanship and math.
- **Piratas (Pirates):** This is our life skills class. These kids are older, mid-teens, with a wide range of mild cognitive disabilities. Being a life skills class, this class is mostly focused on giving these kids skills to be fully-included members of their families and communities, like gardening and food preparation.

Adult Services

Adults living with severe physical and/or intellectual disabilities are among the most vulnerable, marginalized people in the world. Cultural stigmas and societal barriers often prevent them from being active, valued members of their communities. The staff, students, and families at Eternal Anchor are working hard to change these realities. We provide a place where adults can come and receive the services they need while enjoying the love and friendship they deserve. These services include life skills training, job training, socialization opportunities, and community service activities.

Horse Therapy

As part of Eternal Anchor's holistic approach to providing disability services in our community, weekly therapeutic riding sessions are offered to children and adults with disabilities. The benefits of horse therapy are numerous. We facilitate exercises and activities that develop the fine and gross motor skills of our clients. They also learn about responsibility, self-confidence, assertiveness, and empathy as they work with and care for the horses.

Community Outreach

Eternal Anchor's community outreach department focuses on training families, partnering with local and international organizations for inclusion and respite campaigns, and facilitating access to quality medical, mobility, and therapy services for children and adults with disabilities. Each week, in-home consults are conducted to ensure all families in our community have the tools and equipment needed to provide a safe, nurturing home environment for their children.

Planning and Preparation

Pre-Departure Meetings:

Making the decision to leave your homes, travel to a foreign country, and serve at Eternal Anchor is a big decision. It requires good planning and team coordination. To avoid stress, travel mishaps, and general unpreparedness, we ask that visiting teams have **at least four pre-departure meetings together**. These meetings should be used to go over recommended short-term mission trip readings, review the visitor handbook together, coordinate travel plans and payment schedules (who pays for what meals, who pays for gas, etc.), and to get to know each other. These trips can be very unifying, but they can also be very stressful. To avoid unwanted team drama, we recommend setting high social and behavioral expectations with your team before coming.

Passport:

U.S. citizens must present either a U.S. passport book, passport card, or enhanced driver's license to re-enter the U.S. from Mexico. Before crossing into Mexico, please do a groupwide passport check to make sure everyone has it on them. It's also recommended that you make a copy of your passport and save it in your email so that you can print it in the case of an emergency.

Travel note for unaccompanied minors:

In order to combat international child abduction or the exploitation of minors, non-Mexican minors leaving Mexico must be accompanied by both parents or guardians or be prepared to present **written authorization to travel from the absent parents or guardians**. The child must be carrying the original letter – not a faxed or scanned copy – as well as proof of the parent/child relationship (usually a birth certificate) – and an original custody decree, if applicable. If there is only one custodial parent, the accompanying adult should be prepared to present documentation to that effect.

Money:

Mexican pesos are the local currency. U.S. currency is generally accepted, but Canadian currency is not. There is an ATM machine in town where you can get pesos, but international fees apply. If bringing cash, we recommend small bills (\$20 or less). Pay attention during transactions (e.g., watch to make sure gas meter starts at \$0 when you're at the gas station) and be aware of the fluctuating exchange rate. There is a Friday market for tourists as well as a gift shop with Eternal Anchor t-shirts and souvenirs for sale, so make sure to plan ahead for personal shopping.

Weather:

Weather in the San Quintin Valley can be a beautiful thing. In the winter and spring temperatures will range from 60s-70s degrees (Fahrenheit) during the day with a hot

sun, and drop into the high 40s-50s at night. In the summers it can feel quite warm with temperatures in the high 70s-80s with a quite hot sun during the day and cooler temperatures at night, usually in the 60s. It rarely rains here but when it does, things get muddy! We suggest bringing layers, comfortable shoes and clothes you're not too worried about getting dirty. Rain days typically mean that education programs are closed due to the inability to pick students up from their homes. That means teams need to be prepared for schedule changes and the possibility of full program closures.

Accommodations:

There are a few reasonably priced options in town for group accommodations. We recommend that you inquire and reserve space as soon as possible to ensure that you will have adequate lodging for your group. If these aren't available, contact Eternal Anchor administration at info@eternalanchor.org.

Welcome Home Outreach

Cost is \$20/person/night – Includes lodging, breakfast and lunch (no dinner)
For more information, visit: www.welcomehomeoutreach.org

Live Different

Cost is \$15/person/night – Includes lodging but no meals
Cost is \$26/person/night – Includes breakfast and lunch
Cost is \$32/person/night – Includes all meals
For more information, email Alison Willis: alison.w@livedifferent.com

Mission San Quintin

Cost is \$25/person/night – Includes lodging, breakfast and dinner (no lunch)
For more information, visit: <https://www.msqdreamcenter.org>

YWAM Central Baja

Cost is \$25/person/night – Includes all meals
For more information, email Bill Sopher: 41greatadventure@gmail.com

John Haff

Cost is \$12/person/night – Includes lodging but no meals
For more information, email John Haff: johnhaff@juno.com

Medical Emergency:

For medical emergencies, there are local medical clinics in the area. However, these clinics are only equipped to deal with basic medical care. If you have a medical condition that requires regular medication, please be sure to bring a sufficient supply. The nearest U.S. hospital is about 4 and a half hours from Vicente Guerrero. Should an emergency occur, each individual is responsible for his or her own insurance, medical care, transportation and any associated costs.

Week at a Glance

Here is a general outline of what your week will look like, but keep in mind, things can always change!

Monday – Friday:

8:00am-12:00pm – Groups will spend the mornings in the school with the kids. We have a lot of students, so teachers will always appreciate the help. You will be divided into the different classrooms and assist teachers with the different classroom activities. This usually means helping with one-on-ones and general class supervision.

12:00pm-1:00pm – Lunch break! Sometimes your lodging will provide lunch for you but you're always welcome to explore restaurants in town.

1:00pm-5:00pm – The afternoon is usually spent doing some other type of work, either at the Ranch or with the adult program. Our Ranch is always growing and always in need of upkeep and maintenance (painting, weeding, etc.). We also have our wheelchair shop at the ranch. The director of the ranch and/or the wheelchair shop coordinator will tell you the day of what needs to be done. Make sure to pack clothes you don't mind getting dirty and at least one pair of clothes to paint in.

After 5:00pm – Evenings are free time for groups. You can hang out at a local coffee shop, go to the beach, go to a local church service (Wednesday afternoon), or just rest and relax wherever you're staying. If your team would like to provide and eat dinner with Eternal Anchor's staff on Thursday at 5:00pm, let us know so we can facilitate that. Many teams will buy tacos or pizza to share with the staff and spend time playing games and getting to know one another.

Friday:

Friday afternoon will be free time for your team to go shopping at the local market and visit some local tourist attractions. If your team would rather stay with the adult program and hang out, that's also an option. Sometime in the afternoon, the group coordinator will set a time with the team leader to meet for your debrief. This is a time to reflect on the week and share thoughts and feelings together.

Friday evening (4:45pm) will be your opportunity to go into a family's home and eat dinner together as a group. Often times, visiting groups are too large to all go to one house, so your group will be split into smaller groups and sent to different families. These dinners are meant to help your group experience a different culture and to build relationships with some of the families we work with.

Working with the Children

Working with Children at Eternal Anchor:

Working with children with special needs can be a little different than working and playing with typically developing children. It's easy to do but there are a few important things to remember:

- **Encourage Independence:** Let the children attempt to work on tasks themselves. Ask a staff member before carrying a child or assisting them with walking or carrying something. As a rule, always assume competence and ask before helping with anything.
- **Be Aware of Sensory Needs:** Many of our kids have different sensory needs which present in a variety of ways. Some kids love loud noises; some love silence. Some kids love running and jumping, some love rolling on the ground, and some like to lay still. Some kids do not want to be touched, while some kids like to be squeezed hard. Which leads to our next reminder...
- **Appropriate Physical Touch:** Help staff reinforce to the children what appropriate physical contact should be with a stranger. High-fives and fist bumps are encouraged over hugging. While babies and toddlers under the age of 3 can be picked up with the permission of the teacher, we ask that only visitors over the age of 18 pick up the babies for safety reasons.
- **Discipline:** Allow staff to deal with discipline. When in doubt ask a teacher. Don't assume that you know the context of a given situation or assume the role of the teacher. Teachers are instructed to take children who are not following directions or who may be escalating. If a teacher takes a student from you, please do not be offended. They may be taking the child to the bathroom, redirecting a negative behavior, or preventing negative behavior. The teacher will do their best to explain the situation and will assign you to a different student.
- **Medical Emergencies:** In the event of a medical emergency, ***immediately call a staff member***. In the event of a seizure don't put anything in the child's mouth. Please turn the child onto their side so that they don't aspirate and maintain a calm environment, not shouting or panicking.
- **Bathrooms:** For the protection of children and staff, ***no visitors will be alone with a child. No visitors will be allowed to change diapers or take a child to the bathroom.***
- **Feeding:** Some of our children have special feeding instructions. To prevent accidents, we ask that visitors not help with feeding the children. Snack time is a perfect time for you to grab a snack, some water, use the restroom, and take a short break. You can wait outside for the children to go out for recess.

Survival Spanish

Greetings / Saludos

Hello	Hola
How are you?	¿Cómo estás?
What is your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?
My name is ____	Me llamo ____
Good morning	Buenos días
Good afternoon	Buenas tardes
Good evening/night	Buenas noches
Goodbye	Adios / Bye
See you tomorrow	Hasta mañana
See you later	Hasta luego

Conversation / Conversación

Nice to meet you	Mucho gusto
How old are you?	¿Cuántos años tienes?
Where is ____?	¿Dónde está____?
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias
You're welcome	De nada
What time is it?	¿Qué hora es?
I don't understand	No comprendo
Let's go	Vamos
God bless you	Dios te bendiga
How much?	¿Cuánto es?
I like it	Me gusta

Conversation / Conversación

How do you say ____?	¿Cómo se dice ____?
What is your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?
My name is ____	Me llamo ____
Nice to meet you	Mucho gusto
How old are you?	¿Cuántos años tienes?
Where is ____?	¿Dónde está____?
Please	Por favor
Thank you	Gracias
What time is it?	¿Qué hora es?
I don't understand	No comprendo
Let's go	Vamos
How much?	¿Cuánto es?

Places / Lugares

Bathroom	El baño
Kitchen	La cocina
Store	La tienda
Classroom	La clase / El salón
School	La escuela
Office	La oficina
House / Home	La casa / El hogar
Church	La iglesia
Bus	El camión
Ranch	El rancho

Recess / Recreo

Let's play	Vamos a jugar
Run	Corre
Jump	Brinca
Look	Mira
Come	Ven
Very good	Muy bien
Ball	La pelota
Slide	La resbaladilla
Swing	El columpio
Soccer	Fútbol
Toy	La pelota
Trampoline	El trampolín

Recess / Recreo

Let's play	Vamos a jugar
Run	Corre
Jump	Brinca
Look	Mira
Come	Ven
Very good	Muy bien
Ball	La pelota
Slide	La resbaladilla
Swing	El columpio
Soccer	Fútbol
Toy	El juguete
Trampoline	El trampolín

Expressions and Vocabulary / Expresiones y Vocabulario

You can play with him/her	Puedes jugar con él/ella	Shoes	Los zapatos
You can help him/her	Puedes ayudarlo/la	Socks	Los calcetines
You can take it	Puedes tomarlo	Shirt	La camisa
Have him/her sit on the chair	Que se siente en la silla	Pants	Los pantalones
Have him/her sit on the floor	Que se siente en el piso	Diaper	El pañal
You can do it	Tu puedes	Backpack	La mochila
Sensory time	Tiempo sensorial		
Circle time	Tiempo de círculo	Body	El cuerpo
Exercise time	Tiempo de ejercicio	Head	La cabeza
Give me a high-five	Chócala	Hands	Las manos
Without shoes	Sin zapatos	Arms	Los brazos
Have him/her take their box	Que tome/lleve su caja	Feet	Los pies
Have him/her go upstairs	Que suba las escaleras	Legs	Las piernas
Have him/her go downstairs	Que baje las escaleras		
Sit down	Siéntate	Red	Rojo
Stand up	Párate	Blue	Azúl
All done	Terminamos	Green	Verde
You can go with him/her	Puedes acompañarlo/la	Yellow	Amarillo
How did she/he work?	¿Cómo trabajó?	Orange	Anaranjado
Time-out	Tiempo de reflexión	Purple	Morado
Prize / Reward	El premio	Pink	Rosa
Food	La comida	Black	Negro
		White	Blanco
Mom / Dad	Mamá / Papá	Brown	Café
Sister / Brother	Hermana/o	Gris	Grey
Grandma / Grandpa	Abuela/o		
Aunt / Uncle	Tía/o	Breakfast	El desayuno
Wife / Husband	Esposa/o	Lunch	La comida
Cousin	Prima/o	Dinner	La cena
Friend	Amiga/o	Snack	El lonche
Numbers	Números	Fun	Divertido
Count	Contar	Tired	Cansado/a
One Two Three Four Five	Uno Dos Tres Cuatro Cinco	Good	Bien
Six Seven Eight Nine Ten	Seis Siete Ocho Nueve Diez	Bad	Mal
Twenty Thirty Forty Fifty	Veinte Treinta Cuarenta Cincuenta	Fast	Rápido
Sixty Seventy Eight Ninety	Sesenta Setenta Ochenta Noventa	Slow	Lento / Despacio
One hundred	Cien	Outside	Afuera
One thousand	Mil	Inside	Adentro

NOTE: The letter “A” is pronounced “ah” like in “father”. The letter “E” is pronounced “eh” like in “met”. The letter “I” is pronounced “ee” like in “feet”. The letter “O” is pronounced “oa” like in “boat”. The letter “U” is pronounced “oo” like in “boot”.

In the Community

As visitors, you represent the ministry of Eternal Anchor and your conduct impacts our reputation within the community.

Dress:

All EA staff and visitors are expected to dress modestly. Avoid shorts/skirts that are shorter than 5 inches above the knee, exposed cleavage, pants with tears and holes, exposed underwear, yoga/stretch pants (unless covered by a skirt or shorts). At the beach women should wear modest one-piece swimsuits. It is not appropriate for men or women to wear their swimsuits in town or for men to be shirtless anywhere besides the beach or swimming pools. It is difficult to account for every new fashion, so please don't be offended or upset if you are asked to change. We want to maintain a reputation for cultural sensitivity within a community that values modesty.



Photography/Social media:

We love to take pictures of our trips and experiences. It is a great way to capture and preserve our memories. During your stay in Mexico, you may experience cultural differences or observe living conditions different than what you are accustomed to. We ask that visitors are careful to respect the dignity of the families that we work with. It is very important that we not display their living conditions in a negative light. We ask for discretion when posting photos and videos to social media websites. Some of the families have access to social media and so we ask that you keep that in mind as you write about your experiences and/or post photos and videos. Please remember to celebrate dignity and not emphasize material poverty.

Internet/Cell Phone Use:

While we don't prohibit the possession of cell phones, we do ask that visitors keep cell phones put away while working with the children at the school. Please do not make or receive personal calls, texts, or spend time on social media sites while at school. Our priority is to show love and our undivided attention to the children.

Water/Electricity:

Wherever you travel in Baja California, it is important to be mindful of water and electricity usage. Water shortage is a chronic issue in this region and cisterns can run dry if people don't limit their water use. Showering and dishwashing have the potential to consume the most water, so please take extra precautions to conserve water when engaging in these activities. Also, electricity in this region is very costly. Please remember to turn the lights out and electronics off when you are not using them. These practices help us to keep costs down and to be good stewards of the resources that God has given us.

Unity:

Those who serve at Eternal Anchor represent a variety of backgrounds and cultures. Please respect the views and opinions of others.

1 Peter 3:8 - Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

Gifts and Handouts:

Eternal Anchor's desire is to empower and equip families. In an attempt to avoid creating dependency, we do not give money or gifts to children or their families (except in special circumstances with approval by the director). Our desire is to empower the families of the children we serve by recognizing the particular gifts and skills God has given them. So, we ask them to come and use their resources and talents to help not only their children, but other children with special needs in their community. This model promotes dignity and interdependence, rather than an unhealthy dependence on handouts.

In addition, we recommend that groups not give money to people who are begging in the streets or outside stores. Human trafficking is a serious issue in Mexico and you never know where the money ends up. Sometimes by giving money to beggars, you are perpetuating the cycles of poverty and violence that are trapping them in the first place. If you feel convicted by the living conditions of people living on the streets, we are more than happy to connect you with a ministry that serves that population well.

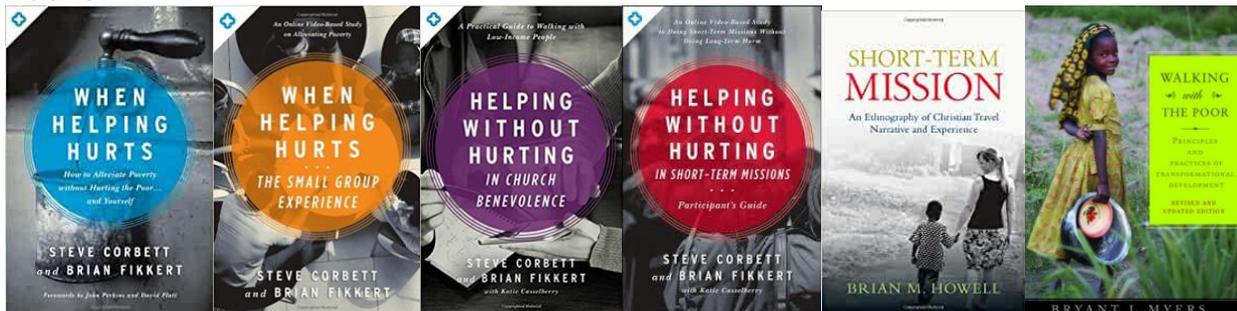
Dinners with Families:

One of our favorite things we offer is the opportunity to have dinner in the home of one of our students' families. The cost is **\$100 pesos** per person, **which should be paid on Monday to the Education Programs Director**. While at the dinner, you'll have the ability to spend time with the families we know and love, learning about them, their lives and getting to eat some delicious food.

Recommended Reading and Viewing

It is **highly** recommended that each team go through some of this recommended material together before coming. As we partner with American and Canadian churches, we hope to inspire people to think about what healthy partnerships should look like between wealthy churches and churches and organizations operating in high-poverty communities. It is important to consider how our actions positively and negatively impact the communities that we want to serve.

Books:



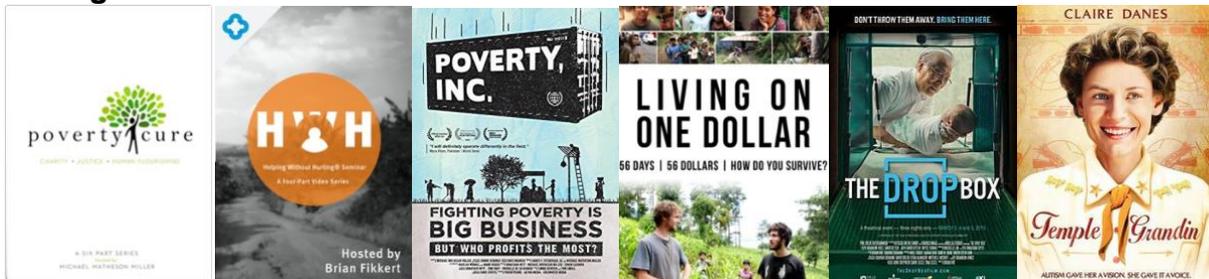
Articles:

“Things No One Tells You About Going on Short-Term Mission Trips” by Michelle Perez
relevantmagazine.com/current16/things-no-one-tells-you-about-going-short-term-mission-trips/

“Mission Trips Don’t ‘Bring Jesus’ to Communities” by Nathan Dove
sojo.net/articles/mission-trips-dont-bring-jesus-communities

“No Justice: Torture, Trafficking and Segregation in Mexico” by Disability Rights Int.
driadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/Sin-Justicia-MexRep_21_Abr_english-1.pdf

Viewing:



Feedback and Suggestions

Feedback and Suggestions:

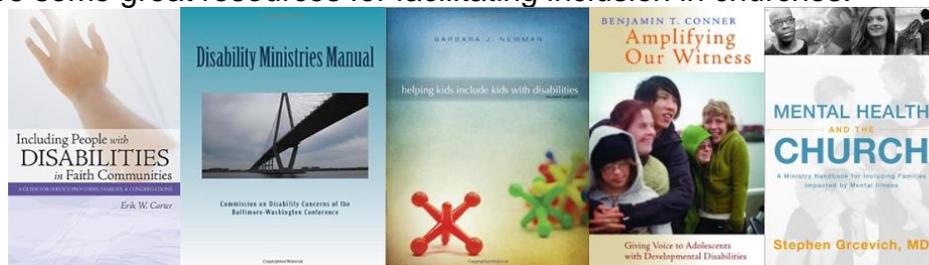
Eternal Anchor strives to do what we do with excellence and we are always interested in your feedback and suggestions. We ask each team to fill out a quick survey at the end of their stay. Your team's honest and thoughtful responses help us to improve as an organization and provide a better experience in the future. Eternal Anchor leadership also welcomes comments and questions during the week as things come up.

You might find that something is done differently here than you are accustomed to. If you are curious about something, please ask! It could be that we are working within the limits of our resources, perhaps it is a cultural difference, or maybe you know of a technique or tool that we are not aware of. We strive to create a climate of openness where we can all learn from one another.

After the Trip

Your experience at Eternal Anchor is not intended to be only a one-week experience. After your trip, take time and reflect on everything you have experienced and consider the following ways you can respond:

1. **Act.** Often unintentionally, many churches are not inclusive of people with disabilities. Consider your own churches and communities: how many people with disabilities are involved? How accessible are your spaces? What has been done to intentionally welcome those with disabilities? Do people with disabilities have a voice, a seat at the table when decisions are made? We have known churches to start disability ministries or parent respite nights for families with children with disabilities. Other churches and individuals become involved with local disability and special needs organizations like Special Olympics. We would encourage churches to form committees of disabled people and caregivers to discuss ways to make the church more accessible and inclusive. Action can also be as simple as inviting children with special needs and their families to birthday parties, cookouts, community festivals or to church. The best way to fight against our subconscious biases that keep people with disabilities on the outskirts is to build friendships. We hope that your trip to Eternal Anchor spurs you to intentionally build friendships with people with disabilities in your communities. Here are some great resources for facilitating inclusion in churches:



2. **Give.** Eternal Anchor partners with hundreds of families in the San Quintin Valley, but we rely on your support. Monetary and in-kind donations are vital to the life of any organization like Eternal Anchor. We would encourage you to consider monthly giving in the form of general donations or in the form of a Child Sponsorship. Both methods can be found online at eternalanchor.org. Monthly giving of any amount allows Eternal Anchor to grow by paying for the staff that shows God's love to those with disabilities in our programs.
3. **Pray.** The simplest method of support is continued prayer. Pray for Eternal Anchor, the families that are a part of our organization, and for our staff and volunteers. Join with us in praying that our communities would grow in diversity and in their inclusion of those with disabilities, and that they would experience true belonging and friendships in our churches.