



## Social Work & Community Development in Guatemala

Asociación Pop Wuj, a language school and community center in highland Guatemala, offers a four-week cultural and language immersion workshop for social workers, counselors, community organizers, and activists. The program serves a maximum of 15 students per session and is presented in January, April, May, October, and November, with accommodations and revised programs in the summer months.

This program provides those working in the Latino immigrant communities of the United States, Canada, and Europe with hands-on experience of Latin American culture, traditions and practices—along with one-on-one Spanish instruction 5 hours a day. The focus is on social welfare and community development vocabulary and offers workshops, conferences, and panels addressing the history, anthropology, current events, economics, politics, and religious beliefs of Latin America.

Students participate in two weeks of supervised field placement, working directly with the highland village residents of the Departments of Quetzaltenango, Sololá, San Marcos, and Totonicapán in a variety of disciplines and have the option to participate in the public health and daycare projects operated by the school. Field trips to collectively operated businesses present students with the experience of a culture in which competition, individual gains and recognition play a lesser role than in developed nations.

**Why isn't speaking the language enough?** The practices of social work, counseling, and community organizing all aim to maximize strengths within a person, family, group, or community while addressing their problems and challenges. There is a potential for doing damage in an attempt to problem-solve on the parts of well-meaning but uninformed practitioners. Frequently harm results when clients are asked to adhere to practices, attitudes, and ideas based in the social worker's culture. Understanding the cultural wealth of the clients themselves mitigates this potential harm and helps practitioners to communicate with a cultural sensitivity. Students come face-to-face with the strengths, needs, and historical and familial roots of their clients and gain the unique perspective necessary to return to their countries and approach their clients with respect and understanding. They will be able to work in partnership with them, having an awareness of the comprehensive and rich culture from which the clients come as well as the history that has created the circumstances against which they struggle. Students also gain increased awareness of the components that comprise their own cultures and thus become better able to choose, incorporate, and teach those positive values when working with clients from other countries.



### Tuition & Fees

The per-student tuition is \$720 for the full four weeks which include all one-on-one language instruction and group classes, lectures, seminars, field trips, interpretative services, and supervision in field placement. There is a \$150 nonrefundable registration fee that is used to cover the costs of guest lecturers and additional supervisors as needed.

### Information and Registration

Contact Coordinator Rebecca Walters, M.A.  
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Visit our website [www.pop-wuj.org](http://www.pop-wuj.org)



## Asociación Pop Wuj

**LANGUAGE  
IMMERSION  
& CLINICAL  
PLACEMENT  
in GUATEMALA**

[www.pop-wuj.org](http://www.pop-wuj.org)

# Health Services & Medical Care Program

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Since June 2002, Asociación Pop Wuj, a language school in highland Guatemala has offered a health and medical education along with placement programs for medical students, providers, public health professionals, and other healthcare practitioners (e.g., doctors, medical students, nurses, paramedics, physical therapists).

Of the most important goals of Pop Wuj's Medical Program, are increasing students' cultural competency and improving or developing their Spanish language skills. To be able to deliver healthcare in a compassionate way, with the knowledge of the culture and history of the population one works with, is an essential value to Pop Wuj's vision of the Medical Program.

**When Is It Offered?** This special program is offered all year round, beginning the first Monday of each month and continues for at least four weeks.

**What You Can Expect** The core components to our program are: (1) language instruction, (2) home stay with a local family, (3) supplemental curriculum, and (4) clinical placement for qualified individuals.

The program's foundation is the one-on-one classroom setting with the goal of providing student the tools necessary to take a history and perform a physical examination in Spanish or address simple healthcare needs. Outside the classroom, students have access to medical conferences that are simultaneously translated from Spanish to English, a host of hands-on clinical volunteer positions (see list below for more details). Medical students, nurses, and doctors studying at Pop Wuj can receive further history and physical tutoring from Guatemalan medical students and residents.

Students receive 4 hours a day of individualized language instruction and participate in the medical program the other 2-5 hours a day. During the beginning of the student's stay, the medical program consists more of the supplemental curriculum including cultural competency lectures, workshops, and observation at clinics. We feel it is important that patients encounter compassion and understanding, in accordance to their own traditional beliefs and value systems. The cultural competency lectures include such topics as historical, socio-cultural, and economic information in relation to healthcare delivery and issues in Guatemala and Latin America. This information complements what is learned in the classroom and clinical placement. Clinical placement is only to those who have received the cultural competency lectures.

The medical program gives the opportunity for a better understanding of the origin, development, treatment, and cultural characteristics of certain illnesses. Participants are encouraged to select and research a health topic of interest, develop an essay, and, toward the end of the program, present their work to other participants in a round-table discussion atmosphere. Frequently, program participants have used these essays to give health education presentations to patients who wait their turn in a clinic waiting room or those beneficiaries of other Pop Wuj community development projects. This is a significant part of preventative medicine and education for many community members. Students' presentations and round-table discussions are delivered completely in Spanish and provide program participants of all levels the opportunity to demonstrate their progress.

As the student's Spanish language ability becomes more proficient, patient interactions become more frequent. This is determined by the student, the teacher, and the clinic director. By the end of the student's stay, much of his/her participation in the medical program consists of clinical activity, which begins the second week. If a student chooses, s/he may volunteer in a clinic affiliated with Pop Wuj beyond the 4 weeks of the Medical Program if they are enrolled in another program at Pop Wuj, typically the Regular Immersion Program.

The school has coordinated placements with 9 organizations and collaborates with 6 NGOs, one public hospital, 2 government health centers, one private rural midwifery clinic, and the Pop Wuj clinic.

## Placement Options

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### THE POP WUJ CLINIC

Staffed by a local doctor, the clinic will serve scholarship students, children at the "Guardería" or day-care center, women and children in our latrine and stove projects, Pop Wuj teachers and families, and the local public. Visiting doctors, practitioners of other health-related disciplines, and groups of students from around the world set up shop and attend to patients while improving their own healthcare and medical Spanish skills.

### CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

All of our clinical placements are in local ambulatory clinics. You may specify your preference to work with pediatric or geriatric populations, or with midwives, in addition to the adult out-patient population. We cannot guarantee your preference, but we will make every effort to place you according to your interests. All of our clinics see patients either free or on a sliding scale.

- Two indigenous midwives with ten plus years of experience working in the field attend an average of 300 births per month in the population they serve. For students with family-planning or obstetric experience, this is an excellent opportunity to help. The midwives' confident and open personalities provide students with the ideal learning environment.
- A lab of a local, well-funded clinic has lab techs who enjoy teaching technique as well as Spanish. Lab work means stool samples, blood smears, urine analysis, etc. (you have to come to Central America to make stool samples exciting).
- Social Work Graduate Students at the University of San Carlos do home visits to collect social statistics. Their personalities foster a comfortable and open exchange. Excellent opportunity for basic, directed conversation in Spanish, not to mention the obvious benefits of a unique cultural perspective.
- Both rural and urban clinic experiences in several sites in and around Xela. Some clinics are all indigenously run and see a clientele that is only partly Spanish speaking (most of the doctors and nurses in these settings are bilingual in Spanish and an indigenous language). The degree of participation in these settings strictly depends on your level of medicine and Spanish.
- A well organized clinic Methodist clinic run by an American couple, which runs solely on donations of equipment and medicine. They are able to give all medications for free. There is a local bilingual doctor who speaks Spanish and Quiche, the most common indigenous language of the population.

The important thing to remember about these volunteer placements is that we hope to be more of a help to the clinics than a burden. For this reason, it is important the student take the work seriously and is punctual and regular in his/her schedule.

## Prices

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The cost is \$150 for the registration fee and \$720 for 4 weeks of tuition, room, and board, paid in full before beginning the program.

These prices are slightly higher than those of the nonmedical Spanish study program. The extra money serves to offset the additional costs of medical conferences, materials and scheduling, while some is put into a fund supporting the Pop Wuj medical clinic.

For more information, references or to register: go to [www.pop-wuj.org](http://www.pop-wuj.org) and click on Programs, then chose Health Services and Medical. You may also contact the program coordinator Dr. Shelley Peery, PhD. [medical@pop-wuj.org](mailto:medical@pop-wuj.org)