

Sierra Service Project



Summer 2026 Information Packet

Published: October 17, 2025

Updated: November 21, 2025

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General Program Information

SSP is an affirming and welcoming community. Our work has long been centered around home repairs that **help residents safely age in place** and **empower volunteers to grow via service-learning**.

Mission Statement

Build faith and strengthen communities through service to others.

As we celebrate 50 years of service, SSP will be talking a lot more this year about our mission and work, and [gathering input from our community](#) about the vision for our next 50 years. You are invited to share reflections and observations about our mission, history, current programs, and future opportunities. We plan to host both virtual and in-person group discussions on these topics as the year progresses and would love your voice to be represented. In the meantime, you can [provide input on SSP's mission](#) now – as well as express interest in joining live discussions.

SSP's Purpose

SSP's purpose is to **build strong connections** and **resilience among communities**, by equipping participants in home repair skills and community-based projects. Making necessary home repairs accessible to historically underserved residents allows communities to thrive and individuals to safely age in place. Inherent in the purpose is the **specific involvement of youth and young adult** participants.



Inclusion Statement

SSP is an affirming and welcoming community that celebrates the lives and love of all people. We welcome LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color who have too often been excluded from leadership and full participation within many communities. We are **rooted in the unique experiences and identities of all members of our community**, which form the foundation of our work.

We welcome all people to be a part of our community as their authentic selves, regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status, gender and its expression, sexual orientation, or ability. Our passion for justice, love, and equality has no limits.



Sierra Service Project's History

In 1975 Sierra Service Project (SSP) began, operated as a satellite program of [Appalachia Service Project](#). Originally founded by several United Methodist Church ministers, SSP is now an **independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization**. For much of [SSP's history](#), our week-long summer home repair projects have been in partnership with Indigenous tribes throughout the Western United States. SSP has worked with over forty Indigenous communities and non-native rural and urban communities.

SSP is aware we have many areas to grow in our expression of anti-racism. Our leadership is, and has historically been, primarily white. We continue to work towards fostering inclusive and BIPOC-elevating spaces. We hope to be transparent in our ongoing efforts to create equitable and safe spaces as a network of helpers, justice-seekers, healers, and community builders.

- In 1979, SSP incorporated as an **independent nonprofit**.
- In the 2000s, we hosted our **first urban site** in South Los Angeles and offered **custom year-round** service-learning experiences.
- In 2010, we hosted our **largest [summer of volunteers](#)**, with **2,071 participants** across **7 partner communities**.
- Throughout the 2010s, we expanded program offerings to include hosting:
 - o **Individual summer volunteers** in 2014
 - o **Local volunteers** for [Days of Service](#) in 2015
 - o **Intergenerational** summer groups in 2017
- In 2020 and 2021, we **shifted programs online** due to [COVID-19](#). We also launched SSP's first [Youth Advisory Council](#) (YAC) along with a [committee on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging](#).
- In 2022, we **returned to in-person overnight service-learning** experiences with high safety standards in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 99% case prevention rate. We also **piloted the [North Sacramento Free Tool Library](#)**, loaning tools to our neighbors.
- In 2023, we piloted a secular summer program supported by the City of Rancho Cordova and stipends for **local youth** who contributed **500 [Days of Service](#)**.
- In 2024, we partnered with the City of Sacramento and City of Rancho Cordova to offer several cohorts of paid skill development and vocational training via the [Sacramento Sustainability Academy](#) **workforce development program**.
- In 2025, we **[celebrated 50 years of service](#)** throughout the Western United States!



People: Who Volunteers?

Each summer, volunteers from a variety of backgrounds serve with SSP. While our program has roots in the United Methodist Church and typically hosts volunteers from progressive Christian denominations, we are open to anyone, and **welcome people from all faith backgrounds and belief systems**. We specifically welcome volunteers local to the communities where we serve.

“SSP is an amazing opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and serve people with your full heart. The work is not easy, but when you are doing hard work you end up making strong friendships. It’s not all about friendships though, serving the community is a big part of SSP as well.”

People of many ages are welcome at SSP. Though our programs are **historically youth-centered**, we have begun hosting **intergenerational experiences**, to provide adults and young adults space to focus on their own journey of service-learning. This works well for groups without youth, families, young adults, and intergenerational groups such as churches seeking robust connections within their congregation.

Groups of any size can attend (within the maximum size set for that session). On average, groups typically each comprise 7-12 volunteers. Some organizations send multiple groups to partner with SSP over the summer due to schedule limitations, and some volunteers attend as school, family, or intergenerational groups. Our doors are also open to **individual volunteers**!



People: Who Leads?

A team of young adult SSP staff (typically 7) guides volunteers throughout their service-learning experience. They rely on **adult counselors (23 and older)** who attend as volunteers to provide youth supervision and be the physical presence on work sites during the day, while they manage multiple site logistics. Generally, staff provide project instructions and other program structure, while the supporting adult counselors maintain and promote constructive community among the youth and adults in their cohort. All adults present at SSP must be suitable to work with youth.

In advance of the trip, year-round **SSP office staff** work with **group liaisons** to prepare each volunteer for what to expect. The SSP office relies on liaisons especially to ensure their group is prepared for the following:

- **Understanding what is required for participation**, and due dates for these requirements, listed in information and preparation packets.
- **Communicating with all participants and parents** in your group all pre-program logistics such as completing forms, what to pack, travel time, etc.
- Estimating group participation size and **communicating any changes** with the SSP office.



Safety & Supervision

Safety of every type – physical, spiritual, and emotional – **is our top priority**. We want each volunteer to have the best experience possible, and strive to create an environment of safety, adequate rest, nutritious meals, and emotional and spiritual support. Each week begins with a **thorough hands-on tool training**, led by our young adult [staff](#). We also have a **comprehensive COVID-19 testing protocol** before and during your week (see page 17).

Creating Emotionally Safe Spaces to Foster Belonging

Since we work with many youth exploring who they are and how they understand their role in the world, we know identity can be inherently fluid and nuanced! To that end, we want to do all we can to facilitate an **emotionally safe space** for identity exploration and community building.

[SSP staff](#) begin their summer by **creating team norms** at training for how they plan to foster a safe environment for volunteers from all backgrounds. A few ways they accomplish this include:

- **Gender Identity:** Staff start the week with volunteers by **sharing their pronouns** (ex: he/him, she/her, they/their, he/she/they, etc.) to model this, inviting others to share theirs if comfortable. We do our best to accommodate single-user shower options for nonbinary and trans volunteers at all sites.
- **Dietary Needs:** Food staff work hard to **ensure dietary needs are accommodated** with delicious and nutritious meals, and that extra food is available for anyone who needs it.
- **Physical Limitations:** Project staff **plan work teams** around any physical limitations volunteers might have on the work site, along with any skills individuals bring.
- **Neurodivergence:** Program staff **structure group activities and discussions mindfully**, taking into account the age-specific, developmental, or other needs each group of volunteers may bring.

Safe Community Policy

SSP has a [Safe Community Policy](#) to ensure all participants and staff can engage fully in the service-learning experience without distraction or concern. This policy outlines expectations for preventing abuse, harassment, or discrimination, and our response to any concerning behavior.

Adults: Youth Support, Driving, & Screenings

Groups with youth must bring adult counselors (23 or older) to lead work teams, supervise youth, and drive youth during the week. We seek a ratio of one adult to every four youth **(1:4)** at High School and Intergenerational weeks, and one to three **(1:3)** at Combined weeks. During intergenerational weeks, not all adults present need to actively lead youth. At all sessions, **any adult under 23 will be a non-driver** due to insurance limitations. Additionally, **all adults 18 and older** undergo **mandated reporter training** as well as **Livescan fingerprinting**, due to [California law AB 506](#) to protect minors.



Work: Types of Service-Learning

Volunteers mostly work on local residents' **homes**, but may also work with local groups like **nonprofits, community gardens, or schools**. Community organizations, Indigenous communities, city representatives, and others aware of local needs refer folks to our services. SSP staff or community partners guide each step of the project, but may not be present the whole time.

Many projects are accessibility or weatherization-related, making a **big impact on a resident's safety and well-being**. Many residents enjoy spending time with the teams working on their homes. Some work during the day and will not be present. Volunteers **do not need construction experience** to participate, but any experience your group might have is welcome!

Home Repair Projects

Although we can't say so far in advance what specific repair projects you'll work on, home repairs most often include:

- **Accessibility & safety related carpentry projects**
 - Building stairs, porches, ramps, awnings, decks, and fences
 - Building sheds for wood to heat homes
- **Weatherization repair projects**
 - Roofs and exterior painting

These high-cost projects are only possible thanks to grant funding! Most repair projects take multiple weeks to complete, so volunteers may only see the beginning, middle, or end of a project. Volunteers will most likely not start and finish a project during their week at SSP. We will not leave a summer without completing all the projects we begin.



Community Projects & Full-Group Days

While many SSP work sites are at homes, some projects are led by community organizations or completed at nonprofit facilities. These types of projects allow SSP to partner with and **learn from the entire community**. Examples range from working in community gardens to invasive species removal to painting or other repairs at community buildings.



During most sessions, we plan for one **full-group work day**, as an opportunity to serve and learn together. These are often centered around **environmental restoration** projects in partnership with National/State Parks, or local nonprofits.



Work: How Are Teams Made?

To maximize the sense of community formed at SSP, **volunteers are mixed together from various groups to create work teams**. The new friendships youth establish in their work teams have proven to be some of the most memorable aspects of a week at SSP, and can last far beyond the end of the week. Placing youth with new peers also provides an opportunity for their unique skills and talents to shine in ways they might not have before.

SSP construction staff consult with adult counselors upon arrival to **assign work teams to a project** for the week, ensuring all special needs are met and those with special construction skills are put to use the best they can. They also provide **plans and instructions** for every team and every job. Staff rotate between work sites, and will not be present with your group all day, but will stop by two to three times per day, as well as check in before and after. Some projects are **led by community-based organizations** like at community gardens and full-group work days.

Throughout the week, **work teams also operate as small groups** for discussions during evening program, leading evening reflections, and completing Opportunities to Serve (cleaning the kitchen, bathrooms, etc.).

Each team is seven to nine people, ideally led by two adults, one of whom with SSP experience.



Within each work team, each volunteer is assigned a **team job** for the week:

- **Group Guide:** Facilitates the lunchtime team discussion (spiritual sandwich prepared by staff), inviting team members to share and making sure every person feels included
- **Scribe:** Keeps track of measurements, instructions, and needed items in construction journal, documenting team's progress via notes, drawings, and photos
- **Tool Toters:** Gathers tools and materials from staff, and checks in with Scribe and construction staff throughout the work day about needed items
- **Nutrition Specialists:** Gathers lunch items from staff, makes sandwiches, and cleans up
- **Hydration Specialist:** Fills up water jugs and ensures the team takes water breaks



Youth & Community Empowerment

Completing hands-on service-learning work, including home repairs that allow residents to safely age in place, is central to what happens at SSP. Our programs **encourage volunteers of all ages to discover their unique journey** through the shared **service-learning experience**. However, there is much more that takes place to empower youth and foster connection and relationships within our partner communities.

Developing an Ethic of Service in Youth

Our goal is to **meet everyone where they are** and offer a loving environment that is conducive to learning. When given the tools and opportunity to make a tangible difference and collaborate on a team, youth experience joy, gain valuable social skills, and grow in self-esteem.

Fostering Intergenerational Understanding

Though cross-generational learning is a natural byproduct of SSP's traditional youth-focused model, intergenerational weeks **allow people of all ages to work together** in a high-impact setting. Building community in an encouraging atmosphere is **rejuvenating for adults and youth alike**. Intergenerational sessions invite adults to come as they are, without the pressure on all adults to supervise youth.



Framing Service-Learning

SSP does not refer to our work with our partner communities as a 'mission trip.' Mission trips have a history of a one-directional, transactional relationship between a giver and receiver of service. At SSP, we believe **the service-learning experience is reciprocal**, and the communities we work with bring countless assets in partnership. Prior to participating in SSP's summer program, we encourage volunteers to engage in discussion with their group, friends, and family about the meaning of the work we will do together.

When collaborating in an immersive setting with new communities and cultures, this can grow into an expression of **advocacy** once volunteers develop a connection to a partner community. Staff are prepared to engage volunteers in discussions about what it means to advocate alongside a community, and invite all volunteers to be **open to new ideas**, learning alongside one another during the week.

We hope volunteers continue learning and **expanding their worldview** after the week is over! As we all learn to become better advocates together, we can **elevate the voices of the historically unheard, impact public discourse, and lead solution-oriented change** in our communities. Learn more about SSP's [partner communities](#) and how to [advocate](#) alongside them.



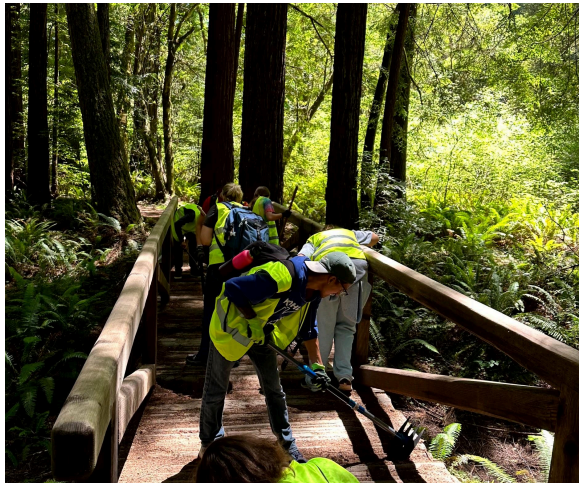
Asset-Based Community Development

One of the objectives of the SSP experience is to build bridges of collaboration with our partner communities, beyond just providing direct service. As an organization, we are committed to **integrating community understanding** and **reciprocal learning** throughout the week. SSP volunteers should gain a better understanding of the host communities' unique strengths by the end of their week with SSP.

Listening to and advocating alongside historically marginalized populations and communities are important forms of service, connected to the physical home repairs volunteers complete. Many of our [partner communities](#) are prevented from accessing platforms to speak and be heard by those who can effect change. As partners with these groups and individuals, we must be careful not to speak over, or for, them.

Del Norte County: Follow local news at the [Redwood Voice](#), an *“autonomously youth-led media organization designed to empower youth in Del Norte and Tribal Lands through amplifying their voices using media productions. We believe the first step in changing the narratives of our community is to tell the untold stories and raise the voices that are not heard through traditional communication outlets.”*

Navajo Nation: With more than 399,494 enrolled tribal members as of 2021, the Navajo Nation is the largest federally recognized tribe in the United States and has the largest reservation in the country, with 17.5 million acres of reservation land across portions of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. Within the reservation, there are 110 chapters, which are the local form of government. Follow local news at the [Navajo Times](#).



Left: Volunteers in **Del Norte County, CA**, volunteering with the Redwood Parks Conservancy.

Right: Canyon de Chelly, a National Monument with historic meaning to the Diné people, and a site where SSP volunteers often visit for end-of-week reflections.

Visit SSP's website to learn more about [advocacy with partner communities](#).



Spiritual Program: What to Expect

SSP has a long history of running programs in partnership with faith communities, and specifically has roots in United Methodist tradition. Evenings are spent singing, learning about the **culture of the community** we are serving with, and participating in activities to **explore spirituality**. These evening activities allow youth and adults to embrace their childlike sense of play and connect the week's experiences and summer theme to their lives at home.

Historically connected to United Methodist teachings, SSP is **open to all expressions of faith**, our spiritual program is modeled around **loving our neighbors in word and deed**. SSP is inclusive of those who also do not ascribe to any faith identity, and invites everyone into the powerful work of reciprocal service-learning. Together we explore how our actions pave the way for a future in which everyone experiences true belonging.



SSP's Theology

Grace: At SSP, we know God to be a giver of wonderful gifts. We believe each person receives God's grace freely, and seek to extend that grace without condition to everyone we meet.

Service: We practice selfless service, following the example of Jesus Christ. We believe every person is valued and carefully fashioned in God's image, worthy of love.

Community: We believe that connecting in community invites us to open ourselves to the possibility of a transformational experience. Together, we open ourselves to grow and be led by the Spirit.

Discovery, Not Delivery:

At SSP, we pose questions for exploring purpose, rather than present answers. We call this **"discovery, not delivery."** We believe meaning is found in community, and that a purpose-driven life integrated with service develops naturally from this act of sharing with one another.

Each of SSP's summer sites will operate spiritual programs based on this approach. You can read SSP's full [theology statement](#) on our website and the [inclusion statement](#) on page 3.

What do volunteers say about SSP's spiritual program?

"The team was incredible and meaningfully met our youth's social, spiritual, and emotional needs."

"I felt respected, and had tons of thoughtful and meaningful conversations with all of the staff."

"Our youth felt so safe and comfortable to be themselves. They've grown so much and gotten so close as a group. We couldn't have done a trip anywhere close to this great without SSP."



2026 Summer Program



Recent Program Changes:

If you haven't served with us since 2019 or earlier, here are a few other things to be aware of:

- **Requirements for those 18 and older:** Due to a recent California law ([AB 506](#)), all volunteers 18 and older must have undergone Livescan fingerprint screening to attend SSP, as well as complete [mandated reporter training](#). Details on these requirements will be in the prep packet, which we release in the spring.
- **Fee flexibility:** SSP offers variable fee options depending on session length, along with an updated policy for groups that drop spots before the program. Details are further along in this packet. As always, we offer [scholarships](#) to assist with the cost of participation.
- **Covid-19 Prevention:** While SSP is not requiring vaccination, we *strongly recommend* participants be up to date with all immunizations per [CDC guidelines](#). We do require [testing before and during your SSP week](#) to prevent the spread of the virus; this is important as we work in medically vulnerable communities, and want to do all we can to protect underresourced residents, along with staff and volunteers.

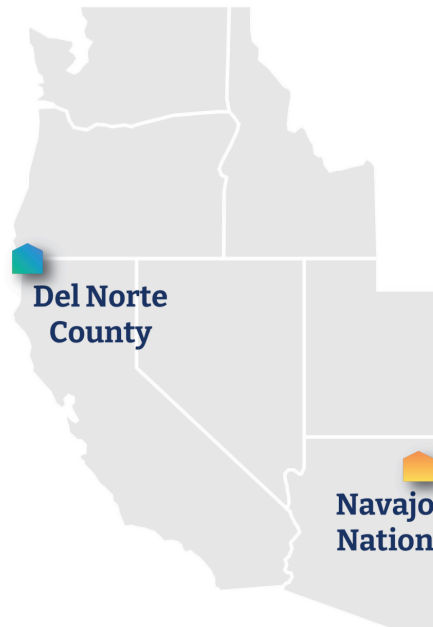


Partner Communities

In summer 2026, SSP will be working with and hosting volunteers in two partner communities:

- [Del Norte County, CA](#)
- [Navajo Nation](#) (sovereign Indigenous nation situated in northeastern AZ)

Read more in the following pages about each community and what to expect at each!



What does this mean for SSP's work in other partner communities?

As SSP has done for decades, this year we have to **shift summer locations due to volunteer capacity, operational limitations, and funding**. SSP has many longstanding partnerships with communities you may not see on the map above, and we value each of these connections.

While we were thrilled to return to Chiloquin, OR last summer for the first time since 2019, we know we need to **offer more geographic diversity** to accommodate volunteers from throughout the Western United States. Similarly, we miss our contacts in the Navajo Nation and know repairs remain necessary, but we require **more volunteer interest** to operate a summer site there.

However, we have **plenty of opportunities in Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Cruz** for custom weekends or weeks of service until May! In Sacramento, we will repair homes in Rancho Cordova, focused on improving home accessibility for mobile home park residents, and repair homes and work in community gardens in North Sacramento. In San Diego, we will continue our partnership with the City of National City and various community organizations. In Santa Cruz, we will partner with a long-term disaster recovery group to work on home repairs.

Express interest in year-round programs [via our survey](#), and [contact us](#) to learn more.



[Del Norte County, CA](#)

We have partnered with communities in **Del Norte County** since 2013, and previously in the 1990s. Since 2014, we have worked closely with the [Tolowa Dunes Stewards](#) to host environmental restoration projects. These full-group service-learning days focus on removing invasive European beach grass, while on other days some work teams remove invasive English ivy from the redwoods.



In Del Norte County, most of our work is locally led in partnership with community-based organizations with an environmental stewardship lens. We work with many community garden partners to improve access to nutritious produce. As grant funding for building materials is available, some projects will focus on typical SSP repairs such as ramps, stairs, and painting.

What are the prevailing needs in Del Norte County?

- *Support for environmental restoration efforts*
- *Plentiful hands to aid with community-led initiatives*
- *Low-income, older residents in need of otherwise costly home repairs (we have over 40 work requests leftover from previous summers)*

What does Del Norte County have to offer?

- *Low summer temperatures and a cold coastal climate*
- [Redwood National & State Parks](#)
- *Strong commitment to sustainability and Indigenous food sovereignty*

Who is a good fit to volunteer at this location?

- *Anyone is welcome!*
- *Groups and individuals looking for projects with community-based organizations*
- *Volunteers interested in the intersection of environmental justice and its impact on Indigenous communities*

Accommodations: SSP will be housed at [Crescent City United Methodist Church](#), a central area in [Del Norte County](#). All volunteers should be aware showers are off-site from the location where we are housed.



Navajo Nation

Historically based in Tsaile, AZ, we have partnered with the **Tsaile Wheatfields and Lukachukai Chapters** of the Navajo Nation since 2013, and throughout the 2000s. SSP has worked with various Chapters in the Navajo Nation since 1994.

In the Navajo Nation, the majority of our work is high-impact home repair projects. This includes roof replacements, building accessibility ramps, stairs, porches, awnings for snow protection, sheds for storing wood to heat homes, and other general home repairs.



What are the prevailing needs in the Navajo Nation?

- *Weatherization home repairs for harsh winters*
- *Accessibility repair projects for residents, including decks, stairs, and ramps*
- *COVID-19 cautious visitors dedicated to safety - the Navajo Nation is one of the most medically underserved regions heavily impacted by the pandemic, and mask use is common throughout the community*

What does the Navajo Nation have to offer?

- *Ample learning opportunities rooted in sacred Navajo traditions and history*
- *Gorgeous natural landscapes at high elevation, including [Canyon de Chelly National Monument](#)*
- *Unique experience on a reservation not mixed with other communities*

Who is a good fit to volunteer at this location?

- *Anyone is welcome!*
- *Groups and individuals seeking hands-on construction and carpentry projects*
- *Volunteers interested in Indigenous life on reservations, interaction with Navajo residents, and a strong connection between community and sacred spaces*

Accommodations: TBD! We hope to return to the [Diné College](#) dorms, but are actively exploring various options. This facility offers dorm rooms which usually house 4-6 volunteers each, some of which include beds (though most volunteers should bring air mattresses). Each room also has a single-user bathroom and shower shared with the neighboring room.



Daily & Weekly Schedules

Each site has its own flavor of the day and week with SSP. In general, here is what you can expect for the daily and weekly schedule:

Typical Day:

7:00 AM	Rise and shine!
7:30 AM	Spiritual Awakening (optional)
8:00 AM	Breakfast
8:40 AM	Opportunities to Serve (cleaning the kitchen, bathrooms, etc.) & work team jobs
9:00 AM	Leave for work site
Noon	Lunch & Spiritual Sandwich conversation at work site
4:00 PM	Shower & free time
5:00 PM	Staff/adult counselor meeting to discuss plans for the next 24 hours
6:00 PM	Dinner
6:45 PM	Opportunities to Serve
7:30 PM	Song time & evening program
9:00 PM	Jammify: free time & get ready for bed
9:30 PM	Evening devotion led by a work team
10:00 PM	Lights out!



Note: Depending on facility access, some sites may shift schedules to shower in the evenings.

Typical Week:

6-Night Sessions		5-Night Sessions	
<i>Sunday</i>	Arrive between 2:00-4:00 PM	<i>Sunday</i>	Arrive between 2:00-4:00 PM
<i>Monday</i>	Hands-on tool training & half day at the work site	<i>Monday</i>	Hands-on tool training & half day at the work site
<i>Tuesday</i>	All day at the work site	<i>Tuesday</i>	All day at the work site
<i>Wednesday</i>	Full group work day & half day of rest & recreation	<i>Wednesday</i>	Full group work day & half day of rest & recreation
<i>Thursday</i>	All day at the work site & off-site evening program	<i>Thursday</i>	All day at the work site & end of week reflections
<i>Friday</i>	All day at the work site & end of week reflections	<i>Friday</i>	Depart between 8:00-10:00 AM
<i>Saturday</i>	Depart between 8:00-10:00 AM		



COVID-19 & Safety Practices

Since summer 2025, we have not required the COVID-19 vaccine for volunteers. However, we **strongly recommend** all participants are up to date with all immunizations per [CDC guidelines](#), including new COVID-19 vaccines as they become available.

We know the virus continues to evolve with new, highly contagious strains emerging. To ensure everyone's safety and prevent pausing operations due to illness, we follow these procedures:



Prior to arrival:

- ☐ **Reduce exposure** to potential positive COVID-19 cases. Any **known exposure** to a positive case **within 5 days of departure for SSP** means the volunteer is **not allowed** to attend, but can **reschedule** for a later week.
- ☐ **Test before you depart for SSP:** Provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test for every volunteer. Be sure to test before members of your group gather and are in high-exposure spaces as you prepare to travel to site. Rapid antigen at-home tests are preferred.

During the program:

- ☐ **Test mid-week:** 48 hours after arrival everyone will test again, and as needed as symptoms or known exposures arise. SSP will coordinate and provide tests.
- ☐ **Positive cases:** If someone becomes **symptomatic** or **tests positive** at SSP, that person will **isolate**. Others who meet High-Risk Exposure criteria will be tested daily and mask indoors for the remainder of the week to prevent spread during the incubation period.
 - ☐ **High-Risk Exposure:** 15+ minutes unmasked, less than 6' apart in enclosed space
 - ☐ Arrival group members who have been in a vehicle or slept nearby
 - ☐ Work team members who have been in a vehicle or indoors together
 - ☐ Others who have slept nearby at site
 - ☐ **Those who test positive (with or without symptoms) have two options:**
 - ☐ Isolate on site for the duration of the week; OR
 - ☐ Depart and travel home. SSP strongly encourages all parents to have an early departure transportation plan in case of this.

After the program:

- ☐ **Notify SSP staff of any positive cases** in the volunteer group within 48 hours after leaving the program. This helps us identify follow-up testing for staff and any exposed community members as necessary.

Contact us with questions: Info@SierraServiceProject.org



2026 Summer Session Options

We will offer **several types of sessions** across **six weeks** and **two partner communities**:

2026 Dates

Week 1: Jun 28 - Jul 3

Week 2: Jul 5 - 11

Week 3: Jul 12 - 18

Week 4: Jul 19 - 25

Week 5: Jul 26 - Aug 1

Week 6: Aug 2 - 7

Session Types & Who Can Join

High School Only: Incoming 9th grade through graduating 12th grade, plus adult counselors to supervise youth in a 1:4 ratio.

Combined Middle & High School: Incoming 6th grade through graduating 12th grade, plus adult counselors to supervise youth in a 1:3 ratio.

Intergenerational: Incoming 6th grade and older. Adults over 18 are invited to attend as young adult or adult volunteers, without the expectation of supervising youth. Groups bringing youth should bring adults counselors to supervise youth in a 1:4 ratio. These sessions generally have a 1:1 adult to youth ratio.

Individuals can attend any program open to their age, including volunteers who:

- Are not connected with a group or have scheduling conflicts with their group
- Are local to SSP's partner communities
- Are staff alumni or young adults who want to stay connected

Summer Program Schedule:

The summer 2026 program schedule, which outlines the type of session at specific locations and dates, was determined by priority registration in mid-November.

We will host four 5-night sessions (Sunday-Friday), during Weeks 1 and 6. All other sessions will be standard 6-night Sunday-Saturday weeks.

	<i>June 28 - July 3</i>	<i>July 5 - 10</i>	<i>July 12-18</i>	<i>July 19-25</i>	<i>July 26 - August 1</i>	<i>August 2-7</i>
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
Del Norte County	5-night Combined	Combined	High School Only	Intergenerational	High School Only	5-night Combined
Navajo Nation	5-night Combined	High School Only	Intergenerational	High School Only	Intergenerational	5-night Intergenerational


Key	High School Only: Incoming 9th grade - graduating 12th grade
	Combined Middle & High School: Incoming 6th grade - graduating 12th grade
	Intergenerational: Incoming 6th grade and older, including young adults & adult groups



Registration Information

Registration Details

All registrations can be made via the [MySSP volunteer platform](#), which **requires a liaison account**. When creating an account for the purpose of registering, select “liaison” from the menu below (even if you are an adult registering your child or yourself as an individual participant).



Select Account Type

☒ **Liaison**
I'm coordinating a group of volunteers

☐ **Adult Volunteer**
I'm participating as an adult

☐ **Responsible Adult**
I'm a parent/guardian of a youth

[Cancel](#) [Next →](#)

MySSP.SierraServiceProject.net

If you are a new liaison for an existing group, contact Admin@SierraServiceProject.org to obtain login access for the account.

Navigating the MySSP Portal:

We made the transition to a new volunteer platform in spring 2023! Please use our [MySSP Portal Liaison Manual](#) to navigate the new system, and inform us of any errors you may find.

We will continue adding to this [user guide](#) with key instructions and visual aids for liaisons as the year continues. Reach out with any questions at Admin@SierraServiceProject.org.



Registration Timeline:

- **Priority Registration (October 17 - November 10):**
 - Groups that sign up during priority registration determine when and where specific session types are held! SSP reviews the highest interest for sessions and publishes the full program schedule after making placements in mid-November.
 - During this time, groups submit their **top three to five choices** of sessions, as well as their preferred program type and length.
 - **Sign-up fee and per-person deposits** are required to register.
 - Groups receive placements in mid-November.
 - If placement does not work for your group, **notify the SSP office within two weeks of receiving placement** to receive a full refund or credit of the deposit payment.
- **November – June:**
 - After priority placements, registration is **first-come, first-served**
 - Sign up as [space is available](#)

What You'll Need:

- Your group type (*high school, combined, intergenerational, etc.*)
- Group size (*per person deposits required; we recommend conservative group estimates*)
- Session choice (*date & location*)
- Sign-up fee and deposit payment due to register

Register at: MySSP.SierraServiceProject.net



SSP's Financial Costs & Program Fees

To host impactful service-learning experiences, **SSP incurs real year-round costs** as we prepare for the summer program and maintain organizational operations. This includes employing several long-term SSP staff, renting office and warehouse space and utilities, vehicle maintenance, and acquisition and repair of tools.

These costs are incurred **in addition to the direct costs** of our summer program, which includes food and materials for volunteers, facility use fees, vehicle rentals and fuel, T-shirts, summer staff pay, and more.

With substantially increased costs, we also face **several years of inflation**. The [true cost of running the summer program](#) is significantly higher than SSP charges for participant fees, thanks to grants and [donations](#) that underwrite the summer programs. This helps offset some of the costs of running our programs, while the rest comes from participant fees.



Though we work to keep fees low, we have to make minor increases to ensure the longevity of our work with our [partner communities](#). To mitigate the cost of attending for anyone who finds it a barrier, **SSP can provide scholarship funds**. Learn more about [SSP's financials](#), as well as review our Form 990 and independent audits on our [downloads](#) page.



Scholarships

We are committed to **ensuring the inclusion of all people** and **reducing financial barriers**. A key part of SSP's mission has always been to make our programs accessible to anyone who wants to take part. One way we live this out is through our [scholarship fund](#) for participants!

Each year, SSP awards **scholarships to about a quarter of volunteers each year** to make our programs more accessible to participants. In 2026, we have **\$30,000 available** in scholarship funds to support the cost of attending.



How to Apply:

The [priority scholarship application](#) deadline is **February 1** to be part of our first round of awards. We will begin awarding scholarships in **early February** (before the second payment installment is due), and offer additional awards on a rolling basis throughout the spring as funds are available.

If you represent a volunteer group, complete the **Group Scholarship Application** to explain your group's needs. Anyone signed up as an individual participant (not connected to a group) can apply using the **Individual Scholarship Application**. Applications are available on [SSP's scholarship page](#).



Participation Fees & Payment Timeline

Payments are made in **three per-person installments, plus a flat fee to sign up:**

- **Sign-up fee** due at time of registration
- **Per-person participation fee** due in three installments:
 - **Deposit** due at time of registration
 - **2nd payment** due March 1
 - *Considered late after March 15*
 - **Final payment** due June 1
 - *Considered late after June 15*

Groups with financial needs are encouraged to **apply for [scholarships](#) by February 1** (the priority application deadline) to receive assistance before the 2nd payment is due.

Sign-Up Fee

All groups registering must submit a **flat rate sign-up fee**, based on their estimated size. The sign-up fee is **non-refundable and non-transferable**:

Group Size	Due Date	Amount Due
Individual or Small Group (1-5 participants)	At time of registration	\$75 flat fee
Standard Group (6 or more participants)		\$200 flat fee

Per Person Participation Fees

Participant fees (in addition to the sign-up fee) range between **\$675 and \$740 total per person**:

Installment	Due Date	Session Length	Amount Due
Deposit	At time of registration	All sessions	\$125 per participant <i>+ sign-up fee</i>
2nd Payment	March 1, 2026	5-night (Sun-Fri)	\$325 per participant
		6-night (Sun-Sat)	\$390 per participant
Final Payment	June 1, 2026	All sessions	\$225 per participant
Total Fee		5-night (Sun-Fri)	\$675 per participant <i>+ sign-up fee</i>
		6-night (Sun-Sat)	\$740 per participant <i>+ sign-up fee</i>



Payments & Fee Policies

At SSP we believe in transparency - so we don't want you to be surprised by any of our policies! A copy of these policies is included in the [Terms & Conditions](#) of [registration](#). If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out for clarification at 916-488-6441.

How to Make Payment

- **Sign-up fees and deposits** are collected via **debit/credit card** at the time of registration unless otherwise coordinated with the SSP office.
- **2nd and Final Payments** may be made via:
 - **Check** (preferred to avoid processing charges), made out to 'Sierra Service Project' and mailed to:

*Sierra Service Project
PO Box 13009
Sacramento, CA 95813*
 - **Debit/credit card** on the [volunteer platform](#). This requires a liaison login. SSP can also securely process card payments over the phone.
- **Credits** may also be applied toward any payment. Liaisons should be able to see what credit is available and its expiration date on their [MySSP](#) group page.
- **2nd and Final Payments not received within 2 weeks** of the listed due date will incur a **5% late fee**, based on the amount owed for that installment and added to the balance.

Fee Policies

Installment	Due Date	Policy
Sign-Up Fee (flat rate)	At time of registration	Non-refundable and non-transferable.
Deposit (per person)		Refundable or creditable <u>only</u> for priority-registered groups unable to attend their assigned placement (placements made in mid-November). Liaisons <u>MUST</u> notify SSP's office within two weeks of placement to obtain a refund or credit. In all other cases, non-refundable and non-transferable.
2nd Payment (per person)	March 1 for all spots reserved as of this date	After March 1 due date: Non-refundable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% transferable toward balance or credited toward a future trip in the event of dropped spots. • 75% of balance for dropped spots still owed.
Final Payment (per person)	June 1 for all spots reserved as of this date	After June 1 due date: Non-refundable <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% transferable toward balance or credited toward a future trip in the event of dropped spots. • 75% of balance for dropped spots still owed.



Changes to Registration

- **Session changes impacting fee:** Groups changing sessions that have differing participant fees will be responsible for the total balance corresponding to their *new* registration. If you have overpaid after the final payment, either a credit or refund will be issued.
- **Changing participant numbers:** After registering, liaisons may add or drop spots from their group, as space is available. If a session is full, you can place spots on a waitlist. Please **make changes to your registration *prior to a payment due date*** to avoid being charged for dropped spots. Once spots are added, the liaison is financially responsible for all payment installments corresponding to the updated group size.
 - **Example:** A group of 10 that *adds* 1 spot on April 1 is then responsible for 11 deposits and 11 second payments (March 1 due date). If the group remains at 11 people by June 1 (the final payment due date), the full balance for all 11 spots is owed.
 - **Fees for dropped spots:** Groups that decrease in size after a payment due date still owe payments for those dropped spots:
 - **Deposits** for dropped spots are non-refundable and non-transferable.
 - **Second and final payments** for dropped spots are non-refundable and 25% transferable toward the balance or credited toward a future trip in the event of dropped spots. 75% of these installments are still owed for dropped spots.
 - **Example:** A group of 10 that *drops* 1 spot on April 1 is then responsible for 10 deposits and 9 second payments *plus* 75% of 1 second payment (the dropped spot). If all 10 second payments were made prior to the drop, then 25% of 1 second payment will be transferred toward the balance for the final payment.
- **Cancellation by group:** See policies for each installment in the table on the prior page.
 - **Examples:**
 - A group that cancels **after March 1 but before June 1** and has submitted payment for all prior installments would receive 25% of their second payment as a credit toward a future trip, and would not be charged the final payment. Groups that haven't paid their second payment in full before dropping would still owe 75% of this installment, but would not be charged the final payment.
 - A group that cancels **after June 1** and paid on time, in full, would receive 25% of their second and final payments as a credit toward a future trip. Groups that haven't paid their final payment in full before they drop would still owe 75% of the final payment due.



Credit Policies

- All credits issued are valid for two program years, and expire at the end of September.
 - **Example:** Credits issued for the summer 2024 program are valid through September 2026, and so on.
- Liaisons may apply credit toward any payment installment as they see fit. Once applied, credits used toward the payment balances are subject to the same fee policies associated with each installment.
 - **Example:** Credits applied toward the deposit are not refundable, but can be given back as credit if a group notifies the SSP office they cannot attend their priority placement within two weeks of receiving the placement details.

Scholarship Policies

- May be applied toward the 2nd or final payment installments.
- [Scholarships](#) applied toward dropped spots may be redistributed across the group's total balance, as long as the total award does not exceed the amount owed.
- Groups who receive scholarship awards, but later drop in full, will have their award amounts withdrawn from their full balance. Due to funder restrictions, SSP is only able to provide scholarships to participating volunteers.

COVID-19 Related Fee Policies

SSP is unable to depart from our standard fee policies in the event a group or volunteer drops due to infection or exposure to [COVID-19](#). To mitigate any financial hardship due to COVID-19 cancellations, drops, or other contingencies, SSP strongly **recommends all participating groups procure traveler's insurance** in case of last-minute cancellations.

In the event SSP cancels a session at any point (whether due to COVID-19 or other reasons), and your group cannot be rescheduled, our fee policy for each payment installment is as follows:

- **Deposit:** Non-refundable and non-transferable (no change)
- **2nd payment:** 50% creditable toward a future program
- **Final payment:** 50% creditable toward a future program

See page 17 for more details on SSP's [COVID-19 safety](#) practices.



2025-26 Terms & Conditions

Prior to registering, we want to ensure all groups are on board with our preparation process and expectations for the service-learning experience! In the [registration form](#), the authorized liaison from the group must agree to SSP's [Terms & Conditions](#). In addition to the policies listed elsewhere in the information packet, terms include:

Please read the section below and check each box to indicate you understand and agree to the terms and conditions. You will be emailed a copy of these upon registering.

NOTE: Review the following documents before completing this section:

- [Safe Community Policy](#)
- [Summer Information Packet](#)
- [Terms & Conditions](#)

Communication

- ☐ I agree to receive SSP's Liaison Link newsletter for important program details
- ☐ I agree to check my email and voicemail regularly and respond accordingly
- ☐ I agree to communicate program information from SSP to all volunteers and parents in my group
- ☐ I agree to notify SSP as soon as possible of any liaison changes or updates to our registration
- ☐ I understand SSP's office hours are Mondays – Fridays between 9 am and 6 pm Pacific

Safety

- ☐ I have read, understand, and agree to abide by [SSP's Safe Community Policy](#) and will share with volunteers and parents
- ☐ I understand all adult volunteers my group brings must be suitable to work with youth
- ☐ I understand anyone 18 and older as of June 1 will have extra pre-trip requirements to volunteer, due to California state law [AB 506](#) protecting minors
- ☐ I understand SSP reserves the right to change program details and requirements as needed to ensure a safe environment for all volunteer participants and our partner communities
- ☐ I understand [SSP's COVID-19 safety precautions](#) include testing, and isolating in the event of a positive case

Payments

- ☐ I agree to SSP's Payments & Fees Policies and timeline (see information packet)
- ☐ I understand SSP's COVID-19 Related Fee Policies (see information packet)
- ☐ I understand the group sign-up fee is non-refundable and non-transferable, EXCEPT in the case of priority-registered groups who receive a session placement they are unable to attend
- ☐ I understand deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable, including credits used
- ☐ I understand 2nd and final payments are non-refundable and 25% transferable/creditable
- ☐ I understand credit/debit cards, checks, or SSP credits can all be used for payment
- ☐ I understand SSP credits may be used for any of the payment installments
- ☐ I understand SSP recommends traveler's insurance in case of cancellations

Authorization

- ☐ By writing your name below, you (the primary liaison) confirm you have authorization to sign this contract on your group's behalf



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

We can't wait for you to join us next summer! As you prepare your group to register, here are a few frequently asked questions that come up during the registration process.

1. How late can I [register](#)?

We accept registrations right up to the week before the program takes place! However, we *recommend* registering within our priority period (starting in October), or well in advance of May 15 - the date we order T-shirts and review paperwork for all volunteers. This helps SSP with our preparations and allows you to spread out your payment installments, make travel arrangements, and collect important information from each volunteer.

2. How long does it take for [space to open](#) if I have spots on a waitlist?

Space opening from a waitlist can vary, and there is no real guarantee that it will open up. However, we often see shifts in group numbers within the month surrounding the second and final payment due dates (March 1 and June 1).

3. My group will have a hard time with the payment timeline or installments. What options do I have?

If you anticipate needing an alternative payment schedule to the dates that are listed, [let us know](#)! We can work with your group in advance to set up a plan that works for you.

4. When will we know the details of each site's accommodations?

Because SSP utilizes facilities from our local [partner communities](#), we often do not have these confirmed until the spring, when we do site visits to each location. As soon as information is confirmed, we will publish details on housing, mailing addresses, shower information, and more on the [website](#).

Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we prepare as best we can!

Reach out with any questions at Info@SierraServiceProject.org, or call our office at 916-488-6441. We look forward to serving alongside you.

