

EDUCATION ABROAD PROFESSIONAL STAFF ARE OFTEN ASKED HOW THEY HELP KEEP STUDENTS SAFE, how they prepare for emergencies, and how they respond to crisis situations. It is important for the education abroad field to educate about its efforts, to help the public understand how education abroad strives to help ensure student health and safety abroad, and to advocate for the field.

The Forum's *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad* encourage every organization offering programs abroad to plan and prepare for emergencies, train students and staff before and during their time abroad, communicate effectively with all parties, and review their practices regularly.

The information below is intended to be used as a springboard for discussion with parents, students, campus administrators, and the general public.

WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO PREPARE INCLUDE:

- understanding their program's safety and security practices and asking questions if a detail is unclear;
- taking seriously pre-departure and on-site orientation and their institution's and program's policies;
- sharing concerns about personal matters such as health conditions, medications, ethnicity/religion and security questions, questions about women travelling alone, and LGBTQ safety abroad;
- knowing the host country, its culture, traditions and current events, and specific details of the program site such as current security and health situations, safe transportation means, location of local hospitals, embassies, etc.;
- sharing details of the program with parents, guardians, or spouses.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS STUDENT SAFETY ABROAD:

Plan and Prepare

- Use multiple sources to stay informed: the U.S. Department of State and Embassies, host country government, local and national police, risk management services, insurance providers, private security agencies
- Assess safety and risks of program sites, housing, learning facilities, activities and excursions, transportation, internships and experiential learning
- Register activity and travel: in-country U.S. Embassy registration through the STEP program, program-related travel registration, tracking student independent travel
- Maintain appropriate types and levels of liability and group health insurance, security and natural disaster evacuation coverage

- Develop and test emergency and crisis plans and protocols
- Work closely with physical and mental health providers, emergency service and evacuation providers, and legal counsel

Train and Teach

- Prepare students through proactive pre-departure and on-site orientation, provide the information needed to make wise decisions for staying safe and healthy while abroad
- Educate on-site and U.S. staff and faculty through robust training including in-person, webinars, case studies, PSAs, emergency preparedness and crisis response drills, and post-event debriefings

Communicate and Inform

- Develop and disseminate emergency and crisis response communication plans for contacting students, their families, and home institutions, and provide 24/7 contact information using appropriate technology
- Develop and disseminate emergency and crisis response protocols that detail specific response actions, responsibilities, and chain of communication and command, during an emergency or crisis
- Share information field-wide during times of crisis

Assess and Improve

- Review and improve emergency response plans and protocols on a regular basis
- Review and assess insurance coverage regularly

- Make use of the most appropriate technologies in emergency communications
- Share information across the field, at The Forum's annual conference, its annual Standards Institute on Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management, and other national and international conferences
- Learn from education abroad safety professionals who have specialized knowledge and experience in international emergency and risk management
- Develop and offer re-training opportunities to staff and faculty leaders
- Learn from experts outside the education abroad field, such as legal and regulatory compliance officers, media and communications officers, risk management and insurance professionals, and outdoor education professionals