



THE UNIVERSITY of  
NEW ORLEANS

DIVISION OF  
INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION



## Understanding Safety Management Plans: No Longer an Option but an Imperative, ETC 2018

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### **BEFORE DEPARTURE**

*Legal issues and Liability:* Understand in-country laws and penalties for violation. Know immigration regulations of host country and U.S. laws applicable while abroad, (e.g. Clery and Title IX). Thoroughly check all housing arrangements for risk (structural, environmental) and modes of transportation (dependability, insurance, track record of safety). Prepare and use a liability waiver for all participants (separate waivers for companions), and a contract of conduct as well.

*Health and Safety:* Collect health and emergency contact information from students. This knowledge can be critical in a crisis. Obtain permission to make contact on their behalf in emergency situations. Develop and implement Standard Operating Procedures for all issues related to the health and safety of students. Plan to accommodate any special needs that are disclosed in advance. Obtain comprehensive travel/medical insurance for all group members.

*Crisis preparedness:* Prepare and regularly update emergency and evacuation plans specific to your program's city or country. Ascertain whether host universities and other institutions have their own emergency management plans. Check for any travel advisories from the State Department and adjust accordingly. If there is an increased level of threat, keep your students regularly informed as decisions regarding the program are made. Register all student names and passport numbers with the State Department via the STEP program.

*Communication:* Contact information for all staff on-site should be shared with relevant offices on campus including Central administration and Campus police.

## **ONSITE**

*Communication:* Establish contact with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate and local police. All staff should have the emergency number for USDOS Office of Overseas Citizen Services (202-647-4000) and other emergency numbers programmed into their phones.

Obtain all student/faculty/staff mobile numbers so all can be reached 24/7. Consider a WhatsApp or text communication tree with staff or student leaders responsible for contacting an identified group of students. Develop a plan of action for contacting students in the case of emergency, including a scenario for contacting students when communication and transport systems have failed.

*Health and Safety:* Identify a local travel agency or other means of transport you trust in the event that students need to be evacuated. Keep current air, bus, train, and ferry schedules accessible at all times.

Prepare a list of health resources to have on hand including physicians, dentists, hospitals, mental health counselors and resources. Have a standard first aid kit on hand.

*Code of Conduct:* Follow standard operating procedures for discipline and conduct issues that arise. Appoint members to a Faculty-Student discipline committee to serve during the program and inform them of their responsibilities.

## **ONSITE ORIENTATION**

*Legal issues and Liability:* Communicate the most relevant in-country laws and penalties for violation to students in writing and verbally, pointing out where laws and/or customs differ from those in the U.S. Emphasize the expectations surrounding conduct in the program and in general while abroad.

*Health and Safety:* General information, including precautions to prevent common illnesses, any precautions regarding nutrition, food, water, or other public health issues, if applicable. Keep your information as up-to-date as possible.

Give students their travel insurance card and a card with all emergency numbers (insurance hotline, local police/emergency responders, program staff). Their promptness in alerting us to a possible emergency is critical. Communicate emergency exit procedures from the facilities and identify meeting points in case of emergency.

Address issues related to crime, unsafe areas, or any special precautions students should take as well as any issues related to women's safety or the perception of women in the local culture. If appropriate, arrange a presentation by a representative of the local police or Embassy. Warn students of any specific

locations where students have experienced trouble in previous years and where new students may experience tension, or perhaps, may not even be welcome. These risks will not be exhaustive, but the most deserving of emphasis. Include possible anti-American sentiments and ways to decrease tensions.

*Preventive Measures:* It is also advisable to address an impending problem or dangerous situation before it happens (e.g. political turmoil, impending strikes, threats of terrorism, etc.). Have a mandatory meeting with all students to share information and address concerns and/or strongly advise them of precautions via email or social media. If necessary, address parents/guardians as well.

## **DURING AN EVENT OR CRISIS**

In the event of a general emergency or evacuation, or in the event of an impending crisis, communicate any action or evacuation plan verbally and in writing to students and ask for written acknowledgement of receipt. Notify Central Administration at the earliest appropriate moment of any emergency situation, particularly if critical decisions need to be made.

Always document an emergency or crisis of any kind, keeping a logbook and/or email trail of all communications and actions, and produce a narrative report at the conclusion or resolution of the event.

If there is cause to discipline or remove a student from the program, keep the student informed of all procedures taking place involving them, remain fair and consistent with procedures, and ensure they are well-informed of any disciplinary actions taken. If they are removed from the program, help them depart housing in a timely manner and assure the parent/guardian is aware. This reservation of right to contact parents/guardians is included in the liability waiver.

Do not forget that a crisis for one participant can affect all participants; it is important to be sensitive and responsive to the emotional, physical, and academic needs of all students and faculty in the program. Always follow up with affected students, other students, Program Administration, and Central Administration. Crises can have a long life.

## Basic Immediate Guidelines for Emergencies

Professional staff must be trained to ascertain and assess the facts of a situation. Securing the location and safety of students is always the first priority. Always act in the student's best interest. Do the right, most reasonable thing for the student and the program. Seek information from other participants, host families and local friends of participants. Keep program participants updated on situation (when appropriate) and seek counseling for those who need it. Keep the university administration apprised of developments where appropriate and keep as many notes as possible. Planning, preparation and prudence will pave the way towards positive performance in risk and crisis management.

