**Responsible Study Abroad: Good**

**Practices for Health & Safety**

**By the Interorganizational Task Force on Safety & Responsibility in Study Abroad**

The Interassociational Advisory Committee on Safety and Responsibility in Study

Abroad (formerly the Interorganizational Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in

Study Abroad) was formed as a joint ve nture a number of professional organizations and

study abroad providers. One outcome of this task force was the creation of "Responsible

Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health & Safety."

1. Responsibilities of Program Sponsors

2. Responsibilities of Participants

3. Recommendations to Parents/Guardians/Families

**Statement of Purpose**

Because the health and safety of study abroad participants are primary concerns, these

statements of good practice have been developed to provide guidance to institutions,

participants (including faculty and staff), and parents/guardians/families. These

statements are intended to be aspirational in nature. They address issues that merit

attention and thoughtful consideration by everyone involved with study abroad. They are

intentionally general; they are not intended to account for all the many variations in study

abroad programs and actual health, safety, and security cases that will inevitably occur. In

dealing with any specific situation, those responsible must also rely upon their collective

experience and judgment while considering their specific circumstances.

**1. Responsibilities of Program Sponsors**

The term "sponsors" refers to all the entities that together develop, offer, and administer

study abroad programs. Sponsors include sending institutions, host institutions, program

administrators, and placement organizations. To the extent reasonably possible, program

sponsors should consider how these statements of good practice may apply. At the same

time, it must be noted that the structure of study abroad programs varies widely. Study

abroad is usually a cooperative venture that can involve multiple sponsors. Because the

role of an organization in a study abroad program may vary considerably from case to

case, it is not possible to specify a division of efforts that will be applicable to all cases.

Each entity should apply these statements in ways consistent with its respective role.

In general, practices that relate to obtaining health, safety, and security information apply

to all parties consistent with their role and involvement in the study abroad program.

Much of the basic information is readily available and can be conveyed to participants by

distributing it and/or by referring them to, or utilizing materials from, recognized central

sources. Statements of good practice that refer to the provision of information and the

preparation of participants are intended for parties that advise, refer, nominate, admit,

enroll, or place students. Statements of good practice that suggest operating procedures

on site apply to entities that are directly involved in the operation of the overseas

program.

It is understood that program sponsors that rely heavily on the collaboration of overseas

institutions may exercise less direct control over specific program components. In such

cases, sponsors are urged to work with their overseas partners to develop plans and

procedures for implementing good practices.

*The use of letters is provided for ease of reference only and does not imply priority.*

Program sponsors should:

A. Conduct periodic assessments of health and safety conditions for their

programs, and develop and maintain emergency preparedness processes and a

crisis response plan.

B. Provide health and safety information for prospective participants so that they

and their parents/guardians/families can make informed decisions concerning

preparation, participation, and behavior while on the program.

C. Provide information concerning aspects of home campus services and

conditions that cannot be replicated at overseas locations.

D. Provide orientation to participants prior to the program and as needed on site,

which includes information on safety, health, legal, environmental, political,

cultural, and religious conditions in the host country. In addition to dealing with

health and safety issues, the orientation should address potential health and safety

risks, and appropriate emergency response measures.

E. Consider health and safety issues in evaluating the appropriateness of an

individual's participation in a study abroad program.

F. Determining criteria for an individual's removal from an overseas program

taking into account participant behavior, health, and safety factors.

G. Require that participants be insured. Either provide health and travel accident

(emergency evacuation, repatriation) insurance to participants or provide

information about how to obtain such coverage.

H. Conduct inquiries regarding the potential health, safety, and security risks of the

local environment of the program, including program-sponsored accommodation,

events, excursions, and other activities, prior to the program. Monitor possible

changes in country conditions. Provide information about changes and advise

participants and their parents/guardians/families as needed.

I. Hire vendors and contractors (e.g. travel and tour agents) that have provided

reputable services in the country in which the program takes place. Advise such

vendors and contractors of the program sponsor's expectations with respect to their

role in the health and safety of participants.

J. Conduct appropriate inquiry regarding available medical and professional

services. Provide information about these services for participants and their

parents/guardians/families, and help participants obtain the services they may need.

K. Develop and provide health and safety training for program directors and staff,

including guidelines with respect to intervention and referral that take into account

the nature and location of the study abroad program.

L. Develop codes of conduct for their programs; communicate codes of conduct

and the consequences of noncompliance to participants. Take appropriate action

when aware that participants are in violation.

M. In cases of serious health problems, injury, or other significant health and safety

circumstances, maintain good communication among all program sponsors and

others who need to know.

N. In the participant screening process, consider factors such as disciplinary history

that may impact on the safety of the individual or the group.

O. Provide information for participants and their parents/guardians/families

regarding when and where the sponsor's responsibility ends and the range of

aspects of participants' overseas experiences that are beyond the sponsor's control.

In particular, program sponsors generally:

A. Cannot guarantee or assure the safety and/or security of participants or eliminate

all risks from the study abroad environments.

B. Cannot monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and

activities of participants.

C. Cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous, or unwise

activities.

D. Cannot assure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal

proceedings, or provide or pay for legal representation for participants.

E. Cannot assume responsibility for actions or for events that are not part of the

program, nor for those that are beyond the control of the sponsor and its

subcontractors, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to

disclose pertinent information.

F. Cannot assure that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the

host country.

**2. Responsibilities of Participants**

In study abroad, as in other settings, participants can have a major impact on their own

health and safety through the decisions they make before and during their program and by

their day-to-day choices and behaviors.

Participants should:

A. Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for their personal

preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.

B. Read and carefully consider all materials issued by the sponsor that relate to

safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in

the host country(ies).

C. Conduct their own research on the country(ies) they plan to visit with particular

emphasis on health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural, and political

situations.

D. Consider their physical and mental health, and other personal circumstances

when applying for or accepting a place in a program, and make available to the

sponsor accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any

other personal data that is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad

experience.

E. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage and abide by any conditions

imposed by the carriers.

F. Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know about

their participation in the study abroad program, provide them with emergency

contact information, and keep them informed of their whereabouts and activities.

G. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, and

emergency procedures of the program.

H. Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks

when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety

concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals before and/or during

the program.

I. Accept responsibility for their own decisions and actions.

J. Obey host-country laws.

K. Behave in a manner that is respectful of the rights and well being of others, and

encourage others to behave in a similar manner.

L. Avoid illegal drugs and excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol.

M. Follow the program policies for keeping program staff informed of their

whereabouts and well being.

N. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and legal

system services in the host county.

**3. Recommendations to Parents/Guardians/Families**

In study abroad, as in other settings, parents, guardians, and families can play an

important role in the health and safety of participants by helping them make decisions

and by influencing their behavior overseas.

Parents/guardians/families should:

A. Be informed about and involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a

particular program.

B. Obtain and carefully evaluate participant program materials, as well as related

health, safety, and security information.

C. Discuss with the participant any of his/her travel plans and activities that may be

independent of the study abroad program.

D. Engage the participant in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues,

insurance needs, and emergency procedures related to living abroad.

E. Be responsive to requests from the program sponsor for information regarding

the participant.

F. Keep in touch with the participant.

G. Be aware that the participant rather than the program may most appropriately

provide some information.