

SUMMER STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM

RISK MANAGEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

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As judicial affairs officers, you may be called upon to deal with a student who has violated your code of conduct while on a summer study abroad program. I recently created the following document for the Summer Study Abroad program at East Carolina University. You may find it helpful.

INTRODUCTION

Whenever students are taken outside of the classroom there is an increased risk of liability for the university as well as the activity sponsor. Taking a group of students out of the country creates a significantly increased risk. While there are many similarities between study abroad and off-campus placements or field trips, the potential for liability increases when a group of students is taken away from the campus for an extended period of time into a country whose laws and customs differ from the laws and customs with which they are familiar.

There are many resources available to assist you as you prepare your orientation. The following resources are excellent:

- SAFETI On-Line from The Center for Global Education at www.globaled.us/safeti.
- The National Association of International Educators Section on U.S. Students Abroad (NAFSA) Advisor's Manual at www.nafsa.org/regulatory_information.sec/nafsa_advisor_s_manual.

The information that follows is drawn from the several resources, including Study Abroad: A Risk Audit Workshop presented at a UNC University Attorneys meeting on April 5, 2002, SAFTI On-Line and NAFSA's Adviser's Manual. Because of the similarity of recommendations, the material is not annotated.

EXTENDED RESPONSIBILITY

When you take a student group far from home, you become responsible for the students twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week -- from the moment they connect with you at your rendezvous point, be it in the United States or at their foreign destination, until their travel officially ends. While there is no expectation that you become their baby sitter, your commitment to them significantly increases. You are the contact point for them and their parents and/or guardians (hereinafter, families); you are the first respondent in emergency situations; you set the tone for their interface with the citizens of the host country.

Your responsibility for the students who travel abroad with you may vary given the age of the students and their sophistication about foreign travel. An 18 or 19 year old undergraduate student who has never traveled outside of the state of North Carolina will need more support and supervision than a 25 year old graduate student who has traveled abroad extensively. Your responsibility for the students also will vary from country to country depending on the stability of the government, sanitation requirements, the accessibility to health care, and the degree of contrast between the cultural and sociological expectations in the host country and the United States.

Regardless of the students' ages, level of travel sophistication, or the amount of contrast between cultures, it is expected that you remain with your students throughout the trip. That does not mean that you must see each of them each day; however, you must remain available to them and in regular contact. If you are with a group in France, for example, it is *not* okay to hop over to Spain for a day or two, even to check out a possible site for another study abroad opportunity. If part of your study abroad plan calls for students to be in widely disparate locations simultaneously, it is recommended that another person(s) travel with you, perhaps a graduate assistant and/or a faculty member from your department; or that you utilize a subcontracted host.

RECRUITMENT

Risk management begins with recruitment. Consider how you are presenting your trip. Are you presenting it as an opportunity for the student to expand his/her academic horizons or as a chance for him/her to have a 'good time' in a foreign country? As an opportunity to compare and contrast a foreign culture with US culture *vis-a-vis* your discipline or as an opportunity to get a couple of academic credits and travel cheaply?

While [name your university] recognizes that there is a social element to travel abroad, if the primary emphasis of your marketing is on the academic and cultural experiences rather than social experiences, you will have set a positive tone.

You are encouraged to set the bar high beginning with the required grade point for your student travelers. Taking a student who has less than a 2.5 gpa sends a different message about your academic expectations than setting a gpa minimum of 3.0 or higher.

It is good practice to speak individually with each student who expresses an interest in your program to determine her/his reasons for wanting to study abroad. If her/his reasons parallel your expectations, s/he is a good candidate. If s/he cannot articulate a sound academic reason for the trip, it may signal that the student wishes to travel abroad but not study abroad. On the other hand, a student applicant may not have traveled extensively and may not be able to anticipate the academic experience. Failure to articulate sound academic reasons for the travel abroad should not automatically disqualify him/her from the travel.

Requiring rigorous pre-departure study both of the academic discipline and of history and culture of the country(ies) to which you will be traveling will lay a solid groundwork for the students' travel and will allow you to identify those who are traveling for travel's sake. If several

members of your group have minimal academic aspirations, you may find yourself dealing with significantly more disciplinary issues.

During the individual interview, it is important that you talk with the prospective traveler about the social and economic conditions of the country(ies) to which you will travel, but also your disciplinary expectations concerning their behavior while they are traveling with you. A student who learns that you will not tolerate drunkenness or drug use, for example, may decide to spend her/his summer stateside.

The Summer study abroad program recognizes that providing accurate information to your student travelers about the country(ies) in which they will be traveling and about your disciplinary expectations, may not seem like the best marketing strategy; however, prescreening students to enable you to take only those who primarily seek an academic experience will reduce the potential for serious disciplinary problems arising when you are thousands of miles from campus and campus support systems.

PRETRAVEL ORIENTATION

The University of North Carolina Office of the President recommends that you not only include specific information about the country and your expectations in your pre-travel orientation meetings, but have that information acknowledged in a written document signed by both the student traveler and his/her family.

Although you planned your travel to avoid placing your students in harms way, the amount of control you have will vary from country to country and program to program,. The student traveler and her/his family need to understand there are circumstances over which you have no control or responsibility. And there will be some. It is important that you never put a PR spin on this information or downplay risks. Please remember that there is no way for you to predict, for example, a bus bomb in London, a natural disaster, or even a political uprising.

Developing emergency protocols and providing them to your student travelers and their families will assist you in dealing with the unexpected. While it is important that you provide safety information to your students during orientation, always look for appropriate opportunities to insert the idea that the student traveler is ultimately responsible for her/his own safety.

The amount of pre-travel information that must be provided will vary greatly from site to site depending on the culture of the host country(ies), the size of your group, the housing and academic facilities utilized by your students, and by the presence of an academic facilitator from the host country or a teaching assistant from [insert campus name]. However, it is strongly recommended that during your orientation and in your written materials you inform student travelers and their families that while you have taken all reasonable steps to prequalify the study abroad site(s), you:

- do not guarantee and cannot assure the safety and/or security of participants

- cannot not eliminate all risks from the study abroad environment and will not assume responsibility for actions or events that are beyond the control of the sponsor and its subcontractors
- cannot monitor or control all of the daily personal decisions, choices, and activities of participants
- cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities
- can guarantee that U.S. standards of due process will not apply in overseas legal proceedings nor that the sponsor, [insert college name] or the U.S. embassy/consulate can guarantee the release of a student who is arrested or justice for a student victim
- cannot assume responsibility for actions or for events that are not part of the program
- cannot assume responsibility for situations that may arise due to the failure of the participant to disclose pertinent information (allergies, physical limitations, etc.)
- can assure that home-country cultural values and norms will not apply in the host country
- will not pay costs associated with the early removal from the program or for legal representation resulting from a violation of your rules/policies or the laws of the host country.

While some of this information is covered by the materials provided to students by the Summer study abroad office, your reiteration of it in the context of your trip will provide emphasis.

THE ROLE(S) OF OTHER TRAVELERS.

It is important that you clearly articulate your role and the role(s) of any other person(s) traveling with the group and the role of any subcontractor you may be using. If you utilize a graduate teaching assistant, for example, the student travelers need to know if that GA has any responsibility for out-of-classroom activities. If you allow him/her to organize free-time or you recognize that s/he is offering to do so once abroad, you need to be clear with the other students that s/he is operating independently and that the activities s/he is arranging have nothing to do with the program. If you and a co-faculty member divide roles, student travelers need to know who is responsible for what and when. Putting those expectations in writing prior to your departure or immediately upon recognizing an emerging situation may save a good deal of confusion and perhaps liability.

If you hire a third party to facilitate part of the program, that party's role not only needs to be clearly articulated, but the contract with them needs to be consistently honored. If the contract with them gives them disciplinary purview in the host country, that purview must be respected. As long as they are following their policies, do *not* interfere. If you believe they are not following their policies, meet privately with the person in charge to discuss the issues. Documenting that conversation may avoid future problems. Be careful not to give your student traveler mixed messages by criticizing the actions of the contractor as long as they are following their policies.

FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)

FERPA applies to any education record, i.e., any record created and maintained by an educational institution in which a student is personally identified. FERPA applies regardless who creates the record or where it is created.

Education records may not be disclosed to a third party without the identified student's signed, dated permission. This may pose some limitations on information distribution during your travel abroad. For example, you may not distribute a list of students who are traveling with you, even to the other students unless *every student who is named* gives you permission by signing and dating a FERPA waiver allowing you to do so. You may not distribute contact information about everyone traveling with you to the students' families unless *every student who is named* gives you permission to do so. If you do not have every student's permission, you may provide contact information without names or exempt the name of the student who does not wish to be identified.

The Summer study abroad program has students sign a FERPA waiver that allows you to communicate with the SSA office, International House and/or the family of the student traveler. The waiver also allows you to distribute contact information for fellow travelers to each traveler. It does not allow you to provide information to anyone not listed unless there is a health and safety emergency.

While FERPA requirements may seem annoying, they do provide protections for students. It is unfortunate, but in today's society, a student may wish to allow one parent to know where s/he is living while s/he travels abroad, but not wish the other parent, the one who physically or mentally abused him/her through childhood, to have the same information. If you provide a list of every student who is on your trip and/or the name and contact information of their host families, and/or the name of your hotel, the abusive parent may somehow access that information. You could find the abusive parent traveling on the same airplane or at your destination when you arrive. This would create a negative and potentially threatening situation for you and your students.

Always check with the SSA office before exercising a FERPA exception.

INFORMATION PORTFOLIO

Rather than giving the students a handout about the host country, it is good practice to have them research the area(s) of the host country(ies) in which they will be studying and require them to prepare a general information portfolio that is copied and distributed to each traveler – after you have reviewed it for accuracy. If you are traveling to several sites, you could break the group into teams and assign an area for each team to research.

This information also may be used as the basis for parts of your orientation.

Minimally, the portfolio should contain information about

- sanitation (bed bugs), food handling and preparation
- the availability of medical support, its cost, insurance coverage
- the availability of emergency medical support (Do they have a 911-type system? How is it contacted?)
- the availability of and contact information for non-emergency health care providers
- the warning signs of communicable diseases particular to the host country
- the types and incidence of sexually transmitted diseases
- prescription drug availability; protocols for safely transporting prescription drugs

- immunization suggestions and requirements
- emergency contact protocols for you and for any subcontractor including telephone numbers
- the availability and use of public transportation
- the availability of cell phone networks and public telephones; specific information about how to use them
- passports and visas (necessity for, handling of, storing copies)
- money (currency of country, exchange rate, tipping practices, their ability to access personal funds in the US); using cash, money orders, credit cards
- customs, the violation of which might create a safety risk for them, through inappropriate dress and language, use of alcohol and/or drugs, American music (especially loud and/or obscene), being in public unchaperoned, especially women
- laws governing the use of alcohol and other drugs and probable penalties
- due process standards in the host country (see due process, p. 7) and the availability of legal services.
- helpful resources such as The Center for Disease Control, U.S. Department of State, and the nearest U.S. embassy/consulate and contact information for them including web and/or e-mail addresses and telephone numbers.
- The availability of on-campus [insert college name] resources, including the names, telephone numbers and web addresses of offices they may contact in an emergency, including the Summer study abroad office, the Ombudsman's office, the Center for Counseling and Student Development, Student Health Services, and the Office of Student Conflict Resolution.

CELL PHONES

If your students are carrying cell phones, ask them to put a space then the letters ICE in front of the name person(s) you or anyone in the group should use as a contact in case of an emergency. For example,

ICE Jerry Smith; ICE Sandy Jones.

That will ensure that the name comes up at the very front of the list. While the ICE convention may not be known in the host country, it will enable you to instantly access their emergency contact. (Note: Some cell phones will not allow you to use the space, in which case the emergency contact may quickly be found by going to I in their directory.)

WALLET CARD

Consider providing each student with a wallet-sized laminated card containing emergency contact information. This will increase the potential that the student will have the information with him/her should an emergency occur. This card may serve two purposes: assist a local in contacting you should be student be unable to do so and give the student quick access to information about how to contact you or the local contractor should s/he need do to do so.

The card should clearly show that the traveler is a _____ University student or faculty member. It should contain your name, the host country telephone number(s) and address(s). It also would be helpful for the student if you include brief but detailed information about how to access local emergency services and how to use local telephones, including the cost. You may also include contact information for the local contractor, if there is one.

HEALTH ISSUES

The greatest potential for liability is grounded in health issues, specifically sickness and injury. “Nowhere is the potential for lawsuits greater than the situation where a student is hurt while participating in a study abroad program. Even when the institution or its staff is truly not at fault, there is always an inclination in the judicial system to help the injured party.” (Study Abroad: A Risk Audit Workshop, April 5, 2002. Health Issues, p. 1.)

To mitigate this risk, it is recommended that you cover the following information during the orientation and provided copies of the information to the student and her/his family:

- difficulties associated with air travel
- fatigue caused by travel
- mental and emotional tolls from traveling and studying abroad

In addition the following information should be provided and tailored specifically to the country you are to visit.

- sanitation issues and suggestions (bed bugs)
- food handling and/or preparation issues
- water quality assessment
- illness and disease alert
- differences in health care systems from the U.S.
- availability of health care providers, including emergency care
- prescription drug availability
- issues concerning sexually transmitted diseases
- general immunization suggestions and immunization requirements

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Traveler’s Health section at www.cdc.gov/travel and the US Department of State Travel and Business section at www.state.gov/travelandbusiness both contain a great deal of helpful information that you can quickly access and download.

In addition, UNC suggests the following topics be discussed “comprehensively and completely” and documented in your orientation materials.

- hygiene
- nutrition
- alcohol and drug risks,
- sexually transmitted diseases
- warning signs of diseases particular to your area of travel (malaria, meningitis, bird flu, etc.)

It is a good idea to carry a first aid kit and be knowledgeable of basic first aid responses. You might consider taking a basic Red Cross first aid course and/or a CPR course. However, if you are the type of person who cannot handle a health crisis, and that is nothing to be ashamed of, you should consider taking a person with you who has some medical background and/or identifying student travelers who have specialized training. Regardless, you should get professional help whenever, ‘band aid first aid’ will not solve the problem.

You will be provided with those parts of the application that provide personal information about your student travelers' medical conditions which may be affected by travel and study abroad. In addition, consider having each student make a list of medications s/he needs and are taking with them. (Students should be told to carry medications in their prescription bottles and take copies of the prescription whenever possible.) You also might specifically ask students to tell you if they have any severe allergies or allergic reactions to medications.

As part of the application, students were required to provide the emergency contact information. By providing this information and signing the form, the student waived her/his Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act rights *for the person(s) listed* and for the staff of the Summer study abroad and International Affairs. Yes, FERPA applies to records about an [insert college name] student that you create and maintain, even when you create them abroad.

All personally identifying information provided to you about student travelers *must be shredded* at the conclusion of the trip. The Summer study abroad Office will maintain the original copies of the information should you need to access it.

TRANSPORTATION

Allowing students arrange their own flights may enable students to find cheap flights on the internet and may reduce your liability. While this is suggested by UNC, you need to consider the relative travel sophistication of your student travelers when making this decision. If you are not traveling as a group, you should collect, prior to departure, specific information about the student's travel arrangements, including transfer information. This will help you locate a student traveler who does not appear when and where you expect her/him to appear.

You should determine prior to leaving this country whether or not the rental of motor vehicles will be needed or allowed. If so, determine who will be allowed to drive and require that the driver provide a copy of his or her motor vehicle record from his or her state's motor vehicle agency prior to departure. It would be unwise to risk the lives of your students to a person who has several speeding tickets or even one drunk-driving ticket.

NC motor vehicle insurance will *not* cover you abroad, the way it does when you are on official campus business in the United States, so it may be best to use public transportation. If you subcontract with a private carrier, do whatever is possible in advance to check the safety record of the company and the driving record of the assigned driver. The recent bus accident in Peru serves as a sad reminder that accidents may happen even when you rent from a tour operator.

FACILITIES

If you are regularly utilizing a facility in the host country as a classroom or gathering spot, you need to have an awareness of the neighborhood environment and the building's relative safety. Be sure there are multiple exits in case of emergency, that they are clearly posted, and that the building up to the building code of the host country. If the neighborhood around the building is not safe, you need to make arrangements for the safe entrance and egress of your students and yourself.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

When you are arranging for a group to stay at a hotel or inn, it also is important that you consider the facility's relative safety, the existence and posting of emergency exits. Not all countries have the same expectations for safety as does the United States, but it is important that the facility is up to the standard of the host country.

If you are arranging for your students to stay in private homes, it is important that you take steps to minimize the possibility of sexual assault/harassment and related problems. Should there be an incident that results in a law suit, the attorney representing the victim is sure to ask you how you certified the hosts. Were they interviewed by you or a by local coordinator? Were you in regular contact with the students during their stay? Did they have a way to contact you if there was problem and were they encouraged to do so?

Students clearly need to know while living with a host family is a wonderful way to learn about the country and its culture, it poses added responsibilities. They also need to understand how local customs may dictate their behavior. Consider: two female students staying with a Muslim family. The females go into the town wearing American clothing, consume alcohol and dance. They do not become intoxicated; they do not engage in 'dirty dancing'; however, the host family is embarrassed and risks its personal standing in their small community if they allow the women to continue to stay in their home.

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES

DUE PROCESS

Students and their families need to understand that the standards of due process with which they are familiar in the United States almost certainly will not apply in the host country. In addition to the information students compile for their portfolio, it is important that you provide written information to both the students and their families describing the standards that *do* apply in the host country. Please be clear that neither you, nor the University, nor the United States embassy/consulate will provide or pay for a student's legal costs. Also let them know that while U.S. officials may be able to provide a list of local attorneys, they cannot guarantee the competence of any attorney on the list. In addition, the local official cannot

1. demand a student's release or get them out of jail and the country;
2. represent an American citizen traveling abroad at trial or give them legal; counsel; or
3. pay legal fees or fines.

Please let your students and their families know something about the condition of jails in the host countries. Foreign jails may be atrociously bad in terms of food, sanitation and treatment of prisoners. Bail is rare in some countries and pretrial detention without bail is common, especially when there is a fear that the traveler may simply leave the country.

BILL OF RIGHTS

It is suggested that you discuss, during your orientation, why US Constitution's Bill of Rights does not apply in the host country. While this may seem obvious to you, it may not be to the student travelers. They need to understand that they are bound by the host country's rules, not the rules with which they have become familiar in the United States.

Student travelers also need to fully understand the implications for them if they try to exercise their 'rights' in the host country. For example, while protest marches are relatively common around the world, in some countries marchers are thrown into jail or even killed simply for participating. (They may not remember Tiananmen Square.)

STUDENT CONDUCT

Inappropriate behavior may have more serious consequences abroad than at home. Such behavior may

- harm the relationship between your institution and the host institution
- ruin the experience of other students on the trip
- contaminate the behavior of other students on the trip
- violate local criminal laws, subjecting the student to the host country's criminal justice system
- foster the "ugly American" stereotype

It is important that you develop written conduct standards for the student participants and include sanctions for violating those standards. Students and their parents should know prior to their making a final decision/payment, the circumstances under which a student may be removed from a program and what it means to be removed.

The supplementary conduct standards you create should augment your university's Student Code of Conduct. Your student travelers should understand that they are subject to your code while studying abroad experience, as well as to your supplementary standards and to rules promulgated by any subcontractor working with your group. [Optional: Should you wish assistance in developing your supplementary rules, please contact the _____ Office].

[Consider implementing] The records of every student who applies for a summer study abroad program are screened by the [name your office] to ascertain the student's disciplinary history. [Office name] maintains records both of academic integrity violations and Student Code of Conduct violations. If a student's disciplinary history suggests that she or he may not respect authority as expressed in law or policy, that student either was removed from your roster or arrangements were made for the summer study abroad staff to meet with you and the student to discuss the university's expectations for their behavior while participating in the summer study abroad experience.

Neither removing student violators nor discussing in advance the importance of living up to the letter of the rules and policies will guarantee that all of your student travelers are prepared to be good citizens. For that reason, it is not enough for you to set limits on behavior. You also must act affirmatively when the students in your care violate those limits. Not to do so sends a strong mixed message to the rest of the group and may create the perception that you are not willing to enforce the rules you have set. Even when you do take affirmative action, communicating to the group may be challenging because the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act applies to records created and maintained by [insert college name] on campus or in another country. While you can terminate a student's participation, you may not tell the other students in your group what behavior led to the student being removed, even to confirm the obvious.

Your response to sexual assault and harassment must be tempered. Because this is an [insert college name] program, Title VII and IX of the Civil Rights Act apply. Carefully reading the section on sexual assault and the supplemental materials provided from the Center for Global Education will help you avoid a Civil Rights Act violation.

Because drugs and alcohol may be easier to obtain in the host country, and because students may feel that because they are so far from home and campus that ‘no one will find out’, inappropriate alcohol or other drug-related behavior is very likely to occur in study abroad situations. Even if the drinking age in the host country is lower than it is in the United States, the Code will apply, [insert alcohol and drug regulations from your code]. [Optional, this is our stance: If the host country makes it legal to possess or use alcohol at age 18, then it would not be illegal for your students who are under 21 to possession or use alcohol.]

One way to avoid alcohol and drug misuse, which often leads to other prohibited behaviors, is to minimize the amount of free time available for students. It is recommended that most of the students’ time be structured. If your program provides unstructured or free times for students, both they and their families need to understand the limits of your responsibility during those times and your expectations for the students’ behavior. When considering your schedule, the guiding principle might well be that if the student can have a similar experience at home, their academic and cultural experience is not being enhanced by participating in that experience abroad. Students have, for example, ample time in the US to attend rock concerts, but little exposure to the opera or to folk music indigenous to the host country; ample time at home to socialize with each other in bars and clubs, but little opportunity to socialize at an outdoor cafe popular with local residents of the host country; ample time to hang out with peers, but rarely the opportunity to live with a host family.

Even if you structure almost every waking minute of the students’ time, you cannot make personal decisions/choices for them. You cannot protect them from engaging in behavior that is illegal or dangerous, nor you should lead the students or their families to believe that you will take responsibility for behavior that is out of your control or that is in violation either of the rules you establish or the laws of the host country. They need to understand that you probably will be unable to assist a student travel who is arrested or jailed and may not be able to assure that action will be taken against the perpetrator of a crime against a student traveler.

[Note: include the protocols from your institutions SSA program.] Should you make the decision to remove a student from the program contact the Summer study abroad office *immediately*. SSA can assist provide advice and assistance. Either you or the SSA staff must contact the family and let them know that the student has been separated from the program and that your responsibility for him/her has ended.

STUDENT RETURNS HOME

Encourage the family to encourage the student to return home. Assist the student in rescheduling his/her flight, accompany her/him to the airport and see that s/he is on the flight home. Prior to the plane’s departure, make sure the student has made arrangements to be met at the airport and transported back to campus or to an agreed-upon location. [Note: include the protocols from your SSA office.] Know who is supposed to meet the student, where and when and convey all of

that information to the SSA office. Either you or the SSA staff will determine who will notify the family of the student's travel plans.

[Note: include the protocols from your SSA office.] While the ultimate responsibility for expenses related to the student's changed travel plans are the student's, if you have to front the money for a new ticket or for rescheduling a flight, there are funds available through the SSA office to reimburse you when you return to campus. The student will then be charged for those expenses.

STUDENT REFUSES TO RETURN HOME

You cannot force a student to get on a plane. If the student refuses to return until her/his scheduled return flight, remove the student from the program and notify Summer study abroad office. [Note: include the protocols from your SSA office] Either you or SSA will notify the student's family that s/he has been terminated from the program and is on his/her own in the host country. If a student is removed from the program, s/he needs to be completely removed from all parts of the program: academic, residential, travel, social. If that student is allowed to remain in the apartment or hotel complex, travel with the group to off-site activities, or socialize with them, s/he may negatively influence other members of your group, create factions within the group or otherwise drain time and energy away from the academic experience. In your discussions with the SSA office there are variables that you will consider. Among them will be the availability of return flights and alternate lodging, the amount of time left in the trip, your ability to control that student's behavior prior to the group's departure, the attitude of the other student travelers towards that student's behavior.

The financial responsibility for a student removed from the program is the student's.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

During the student's orientation, you should include background information for student travelers on sexual harassment, including sexual assault. Information and discussion should focus on both the ways to avoid negative interactions, given the culture of the host country, and how you and they can best respond to sexual harassment and assault if it occurs.

Student victims need to know how they can obtain support from on-site faculty and administrators as well as on-campus staff. In case that the harassment or assault results from contact with faculty and staff themselves, then students must know that they may personally contact the [insert the name of your counseling center, the name of your Ombuds Office, and/or your Summer study abroad office].

Specific information on sexual assault from the Center for Global Education is included in your advisor's manual. One part provides guidelines for you, as you may well be the first responder. The way you respond may have long-lasting implications for the victim as well as for the university. The second part is designed for student travelers. It is recommend that you both distribute this student handout, and invite a counselor from the [insert the name of your counseling center, if it is willing/able to participate] to discuss this topic with your students during orientation.

DOCUMENTATION

If an incident occurs in which the students' health or safety or the safety of the program is put at risk, document it immediately while you still recall the details. It is a good idea to interview everyone involved, then take the first possible opportunity to rewrite your notes. Include the source of the information, and the date and time the statement was made to you. You may ask the source to reread what you have written for accuracy and sign and date the statement. Keep your terminology professional. As you write, think: how will the words I am writing look on the front page of the [insert the name of your local newspaper], The Chronicle of Higher Education, or in a legal brief?

There is a delicate balance between interviewing students and other program participants for information and gossiping. Make every effort to involve only those with first or second hand information: the student who was assaulted and the student(s) who were in the vicinity at the time or had interacted with him immediately prior to the assault. The roommate of the victim may be a valuable resource if s/he is the first person to whom the victim spoke. Assure persons being interviewed that it is better to tell the truth even if they violated the trip policies themselves. Do not, however, interfere with a police investigation or try to shield your students from local authorities unless they clearly are putting the student in danger. In that case, seek assistance from the SSA office [if your office provide such support] or the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

[Note: Insert protocols from your SSA office] Your documentation must be provided to the SSA office as soon as possible. E-Mail it if you have e-mail access. If not summarize the information in a telephone call and 'snail' mail a copy, unless you will reach the campus before the mail. If a student was disciplined for a violation of your rules or policies or for a [Note: insert the name of your conduct code] violation, a copy of your documentation should be provided to the [Note: insert the name of your student discipline office and its address] upon your return. Please feel free to contact the office should you wish to discuss extenuating circumstances.

CONCLUSION

An orientation that focuses on risk management as well as the information students need to know to succeed academically while studying abroad, should allow you to focus on the academic issues involved in your study abroad rather than using your energy to deal with student misbehavior.

All information offered in this publication is the opinion of the author, and is not given as legal advice. Reliance on this information is at the sole risk of the reader.