

Planning for Emergency Situations

Part of the Guide for Short-term Study Abroad Programs

In this section we discuss how to handle emergency situations should they arise while you and your students are in a foreign country.

Emergency Protocol Abroad

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 2001, and more so with recent events, Carnegie Mellon University has invested a significant amount of effort to establish protocols for the safety of the Carnegie Mellon community in the event of an emergency. The OIE wants you to be similarly aware of possible emergencies, and response protocols, in the event of problems while abroad.

OIE recommends that the faculty leader identify a person at Carnegie Mellon who is both familiar with the overseas program and/or site location and who is able to speak the native language of the country in which the program is occurring. This person, based at Carnegie Mellon, would prove a valuable asset during a crisis situation.

In the event of an emergency involving a student, the program leader should immediately inform the other participants and ask them not to send e-mails or make phone calls to friends or family until the affected student's parents have been contacted.

Determine the urgency of the situation. While the faculty leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources; immediately notify Carnegie Mellon of an **emergency** by calling:

During Office Hours 8:30 to 5:00 EST, Monday to Friday

OIE: 412-268-5231

OIE Director, Linda Gentile

OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand

After Office Hours or Weekends

OIE Director, Linda Gentile, 412-760-0109 (M)

OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand, 412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

Campus Police 412-268-2323

When contacting Carnegie Mellon about a student (see flow chart and scenarios), please have the following information available:

- Name of student and basic details of the problem

- Your contact information: name, phone number (city and country code), your location (city and country), alternative contact name and phone number if possible
- Student's emergency contact information in the US.

Many emergencies will require you to be in regular contact with consular services of the US embassy or consulate. You should travel with the relevant contact information gathered prior to the program begin date. For links to US Embassies and Consulates worldwide: <https://www.usembassy.gov/> .

You should keep copies of each student's passport, health insurance, and emergency contact information on your person at all times. Your academic department should also have copies of this information.

Safety & Crisis Management

The following section offers travel leaders specific guidance in handling emergency situations abroad. While each scenario offers its own solutions, there are some things that a faculty member should always do when managing a crisis. Here is a list of the elements of emergency response that are consistent throughout:

- ✓ Always keep a log of what has occurred and how you have responded
- ✓ Always communicate with local authorities.
- ✓ Always communicate with Office of International Education at Carnegie Mellon

How to respond immediately to varying types of emergencies

Gather as much information as you can about the circumstances surrounding the incident. Keep a written log of information and update it as the situation progresses. This will help you report back to Carnegie Mellon what has happened.

If contacted by the media during an emergency or incident and you have NOT been in contact with Carnegie Mellon, please use the following statement: *My first responsibility is to the students on this program, to their families, and to the University. I will be happy to discuss this matter with you after I have contacted these parties. Thank you for your understanding.*

The Office of International Education may put you in the role of de facto spokesperson. Do not release the name of the student or speak on Carnegie Mellon's behalf without contacting the Director or Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs in the Office of International Education, or their designate, to provide support and assistance in developing responses to media inquiries. Please see the flow charts for further information.

Types of emergencies:

- [Crime against a student](#)
- [Arrest of a student](#)

- Missing student
- Psychiatric/mental health emergency
- Serious injury, illness, or hospitalization of a student
- Death of a student
- Sexual assault
- Infectious disease or outbreak of an epidemic among program participants
- Political emergencies and natural disasters

Types of emergencies

Crime against a student

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

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412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- It is recommended to first contact the US embassy if the crime is a sexual assault before contacting the host country's local police.
- Ensure that the physical and emotional needs of the student(s) are being attended to.
- Keep a log of all facts obtained.

(See also protocol for "Serious Injury/Illness/Hospitalization of a Student" for serious injury. When a victim exhibits fear/fright or shock, you should activate protocol for psychiatric emergencies.)

- Talk to the person who reported the crime and acquire their contact information; identify as many of the key persons involved and facts as possible. Determine the identity and present location of the victim(s) and perpetrator(s).

In order to ensure the necessary support to the victims and community, OIE will determine which people overseas and on campus need to be involved. You should brief OIE, or their designate, on at least a daily basis until the crisis has subsided. Inform OIE of any media inquiries.

Arrest of a student

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

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OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand

412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- Quickly assess the situation by obtaining as many details as possible (i.e., determine who, what, when, where, how and why).
- Begin writing a log of the crisis situation that you add to as the case develops.
- For US citizens, contact the US Embassy immediately. Ask the Consular Officer for the names of lawyers who can give the student the legal help they require and provide this information to the student. The Consular Officer will also work to ensure that the student's human rights are not violated. The Consular Officer will also notify the imprisoned student's family and/or friends, if authorized by the imprisoned student.
- Visit the student as soon as possible. In some countries, you may have to assist in bringing basic necessities to the student—including food.
- Provide regular updates (at least on a daily basis) to OIE, or their designate; OIE, or their designate, will contact with the student's designated "Emergency Contact" if authorized.

Missing student

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

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University Police 412-268-2323

- Notify the local police authorities. Ask them to check hospital and city records for possible police information. Find out how long a person must be missing before a report can be filed and what the procedure is in the host country for filling out a missing persons report.
- Begin a log of information that you have been given and actions that you have taken.
- Contact the local university psychiatric services (if applicable) and the local university student health services (if applicable) on the chance that the student was admitted to their facilities.
- Contact OIE. OIE, or their designate, will determine whether to contact the student's "Emergency Contact."
- Talk with the student's roommate, or host family, and neighbors. Ask them to contact you immediately if the student returns. Check the student's residence so that you can look for information that may indicate where the student is. Gather information on any unusual behavior that may have been exhibited.
- File the missing person report with the local police when the required amount of time has passed.
- Contact the OIE to alert the University that an official report has been filed.

It is possible to request a “welfare/whereabouts check” from the Department of State, Overseas Citizens Services. The OIE can coordinate this in the US if it becomes necessary.

OIE, or their designate, will coordinate appropriate actions, which may include contacting the student’s designated “Emergency Contact” person. Appropriate follow-up will be planned.

Once the student has been located, inform all appropriate persons on-site and the OIE at Carnegie Mellon. OIE, or their designate, will inform the appropriate persons in the United States. If necessary, activate other protocol, such as “Serious Injury/illness/hospitalization of a student” or “Crimes against a student.”

Psychiatric/mental health emergency

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

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412-592-1040 (M)

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University Police 412-268-2323

Carnegie Mellon's Counseling and Psychological Services

Carnegie Mellon's Counseling and Psychological Services provides 24-hour on-call service to assist you with assessing and responding to psychological emergencies. To consult with a mental health professional, please call: 412-268-2922.

Background Information

Occasionally students are predisposed to certain psychiatric conditions that manifest unexpectedly with the stress of overseas travel. The following cursory list identifies observable symptoms and traits that may warrant intervention:

- Expression of wish/intent to harm self or others
- Precipitous decline in functioning, e.g., academic, social, hygienic
- Unusual conduct: oddly disruptive or antagonistic acts, self-injury, talking to self
- Excessive energy, agitation, extremely elevated moods
- Extreme anxiety in the form of worry or panic
- Odd thought patterns, e.g., delusions, paranoia, disorientation, rambling or nonsensical speech
- Extreme weight loss
- Attending class or field trips under the influence of drugs or alcohol

Serious injury, illness, or hospitalization of a student

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

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OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand
412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- Get the student to the appropriate care facility, either by calling the country's equivalent to 911 (if it has one) or arranging for transportation (such as a taxi) .
- Identify hospital staff who speak English.
- Contact the Director or Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs within OIE. OIE, or their designate, is responsible for notifying the student's family and answering their non-medical questions about the situation. The program coordinator should not contact the student's parents.

OIE may coordinate with Student Health Services staff to provide relevant information to the student's family, and other individuals.

- Visit the student in the hospital and/or organize visits from program participants. These visits should take place when circumstances permit and at your discretion.

A hospitalized student's parents might want to visit. Should the parents have needs, such as lodging, you should assist with needed arrangements. The OIE will assist as necessary.

If the decision between the student and the doctor calls for an emergency medical evacuation (to either the US or to the nearest location with the appropriate medical facilities); OIE should be contacted as part of the process. Carnegie Mellon will coordinate through their insurance provider. Also:

- The US Embassy or Consulate closest to your location can help arrange the transportation of the injured person. However, the full expense must be borne by the injured student or their family.
- If the student has a current ISIC card, they have supplemental medical evacuation insurance. Contact CIEE using the number on the back of the card.
- If a CMU student has Carnegie Mellon University Health & Accident insurance coverage, visit
 - For general information: <http://www.cmu.edu/health-services/student-insurance/plan-details.html>
 - For CMU Aetna coverage:
<https://www.aetnastudenthealth.com/students/student-connection.aspx?GroupID=867853>
 - Worldwide/Travel information (On Call Assistance):
http://www.cmu.edu/health-services/student-insurance/16-17_ASH%20Description%20of%20On%20Call%20Services.pdf
 - If the student is covered by another insurance company, contact the company to learn how to proceed.

Death of a student

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

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During Office Hours 8:30 to 5:00 EST, Monday to Friday

OIE – 412-268-5231

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OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand

After Office Hours or Weekends

OIE Director, Linda Gentile, 412-760-0109 (M)

OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand
412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- Verify the identity of the student. Gather as much information as you can about the circumstances surrounding the student's death.
- Keep a written log of information and update it as the crisis progresses.
- Contact the Director or Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs within OIE. OIE, or their designate, will determine whether to contact the student's "Emergency Contact."
- The Dean of Students, or his designate, is responsible for notifying the next of kin, responding to non-medical questions and referring medical questions to the host country medical authorities, and coordinating other actions.
- Notify OIE before notifying the US Embassy. According to the US State Department: "When an American dies abroad, a consular officer notifies the American family and informs them about options and costs for disposition of remains. Costs for preparing and returning a body to the US may be high and must be paid by the family. Often, laws and procedures make returning a body to the US for burial a lengthy process. A consul prepares a Report of Death based on the local death certificate; this is forwarded to the next of kin for use in estate and insurance matters."

OIE, or their designate, will offer to assist the family with issues such as transportation, accommodations, and arranging for a meeting with the US consular officer.

OIE will coordinate a plan together with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for dealing with the aftermath of the situation, including grief counseling and support to friends, program participants, host family, and the person who discovered the body.

Sexual Assault

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources.

- Immediately notify Carnegie Mellon of an **emergency** by calling:

During Office Hours 8:30 to 5:00 EST, Monday to Friday

OIE – 412-268-5231

OIE Director, Linda Gentile

OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand
Student Life, Coordinator for Gender and Sexual Violence Programs, Jessica
Klein, 412-268-2142

After Office Hours or Weekends

OIE Director, Linda Gentile, 412-760-0109 (M)

OIE Assistant Director, Study Abroad and Exchange Programs, Christine Menand
412-592-1040 (M)

After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- Talk to the person reporting the crime and determine the location and identity of the victim. If there is physical injury, you should arrange for the student to be taken to a hospital/clinic for emergency care. If you ascertain that the student's injuries need attention, but you are not in an emergency situation, contact the US Embassy or Consulate for a referral to a hospital/clinic that will be sensitive to an American's needs in a sexual assault case.

Do not ask the student why they did or did not do something. Assure the student that you believe their story; that it is not their fault; and that you want to help.

- Clarify with the student the degree to which they wish to inform local authorities. Inform the student of the laws and procedures for dealing with sexual assault in the host country, as these may be different from in the US. For example, in the US it is important to preserve evidence of an assault as it may be used in a court of law as evidence.

When a student has been a victim of sexual assault, control has been taken away. It is vital to the healing process that they regain control. For this reason, it is important to resist the temptation to take over. Instead, offer assistance and allow the victim to make the decisions.

- Respect the student's confidentiality: Do not inform other students about the incident, nor should you inform the student's parents without permission. There are many

resources available to the student and to you, the program director; do not attempt to handle the situation alone. Carnegie Mellon's Sexual Assault Advisors offer crisis support for victims of sexual assault and other types of violence, and can provide support and advice to the faculty member/program director regarding management and advocacy on behalf of the student. For further information see the web sites: <http://www.cmu.edu/title-ix/resources-and-information/sexual-assault.html>; <http://www.cmu.edu/title-ix/resources-and-information/sexual-harassment.html>; or call the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs at 412-268-2075.

Infectious disease or outbreak of an epidemic among program participants

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

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After Office Hours or Weekends

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412-592-1040 (M)

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University Police 412-268-2323

- Obtain information from the local US Embassy or Consulate regarding the potential health threat, existence of local medical facilities, local resources and medical advice as to how to deal with symptoms until medical help is obtained.
- Consult with the Director of University Health Services, Beth Kotarski at Carnegie Mellon 412-269-2157.
- Consult the Center for Disease Control information for your host country. This information can be found on the Web at [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Political emergencies and natural disasters

- Determine the urgency of the situation.

While the travel leader is responsible for the local coordination and trouble shooting, the leader may expect US-based support from Carnegie Mellon's OIE and other resources

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After Office Hours or Weekend if OIE staff unavailable:

University Police 412-268-2323

- Make sure all participants are accounted for and safe. If a student has been injured, their physical injuries must be attended to. (See “Serious injury/illness, or hospitalization of a student” above.)
- Contact the US Embassy or other official government agency and ask for advice and assistance. If the US Embassy is closed, determine the location from which the embassy is operating (i.e., another embassy within the country, or US Embassy in another country). Gather information regarding the target of unrest and possible danger to US citizens, advice on minimizing danger to students, and the probable impact of the event on the availability of food, water, and medical supplies, the intensity of the emergency or political unrest, the presence of emergency or military personnel, the feasibility of continuing the program, etc.
- You will need to be mindful that not all of your participants will be US citizens. While the US Embassy should still be contacted in any political situation, it is also important for the student to be in touch with their home embassy/consulate in-country, as well.
- Write information in a log that you will continue to update as the situation progresses.
- Contact the Director or Study Abroad and Exchange Advisor of the OIE. They will determine whether to contact the students’ “Emergency Contacts.”

Depending on the circumstances, OIE, or their designate, will

- Stay in regular contact with the US Department of State’s Citizen Emergency Center

- Contact the US Embassy Abroad
- Determine if emergency funds will be obtained from the University or from the State Department

In severe situations, the US Department of State, may arrange for evacuation. If commercial transportation is disrupted, the State Department will charter special air flights and ground transportation to help US citizens depart.

When commercial transportation is not disrupted, but the State Department recommends that US citizens evacuate the country, new airline tickets may need to be purchased since it may be difficult to quickly change existing tickets. The University will assist in procuring emergency funds and arranging new airline tickets as necessary.

If you are not close enough to a US Government office to receive funds or assistance, recourse is [American Express Global Assist Service](#) (800-554-AMEX). This service provides worldwide referrals for personal, medical, and legal emergencies.

If American Express is not accessible, you should try to obtain information from every bank that is accessible and find out what services each can provide for quick transfers of funds. You should pass this information to OIE, or her/his designate.

You should brief OIE, or their designate, daily, if possible.

Once the crisis has ended, OIE, or their designate, will work with you to assess the impact of the event and provide any follow-up that may be needed.

General Emergency response

Who to contact at Carnegie Mellon

OIE

Christine Menand
Assistant Director, Study Abroad & Exchange Programs
412-268-4969 (w)
412-592-1040 (m)

Linda Gentile
Director
412-268-5231 (w)
412-760-0109 (m)

Carnegie Mellon University Police

412-268-2323 (emergency)
412-268-2064 (non-emergency)

Campus Health Resources

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 412-268-2922
University Health Services: 412-268-2157
Coordinator of Gender Programs & Sexual Assault Violence Prevention, Jessica Klein,
412-268-2140

Dean of Student Affairs

Gina Casalegno
VP/Dean of Student Affairs
412-268-2075 (w)

Terrorism Issues/Resources

The NAFSA: Association of International Educators SECUSSA web site presents helpful safety information for study abroad program participants and organizers, and is a good resource for preparing for the possibility of terrorism

www.nafsa.org.

The Overseas Advisory Council provides detailed reports on global security issues.
[OSAC - Overseas Security Advisory Council](http://www.osac.gov).

The general advice for US citizens abroad is to keep a low profile. Since you will be leading a group of students, you can ask them to control their volume when in public, to be respectful of the places they visit, and to remain conscience of the fact that they are

guests in a country where the people may be annoyed, confused, frightened, or shocked by their behavior.

It is also advisable that you stay in touch with Carnegie Mellon University and students stay in touch with their families. Give family members your itinerary for the program and touch base often.

Pre-departure preparations

Travel leaders should become familiar with the types of crime, illness, and emergencies that commonly occur in the host country and the appropriate preventive measures. Making site visits to the destinations can be one way of determining risks, but you can also obtain information from other institutions that have study abroad programs in the same location.

Travel advisories

The United States Government will periodically issue travel warnings for countries where war or political upheaval may pose risks to US citizens. For programs in potentially volatile areas, you should check this site regularly:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings.html>.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

Some additional sources of information:

- Pinkerton Global Intelligence Systems: www.pinkertons.com
- *International Travel and Health 2012*, available at www.who.int/ith/en/
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators (www.nafsa.org) formed an inter-organizational task force for safety and responsibility on study abroad.
- International Travel Information (<http://travel.state.gov/>) from the US State Department contains over 20 online publications covering topics such as crises abroad, safety, medical information and services offered by US Consulates.