

MANAGING REAL AND PERCEIVED EMERGENCIES ABROAD
Procedures for Program Leaders and On-Site Staff
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Updated February 2021

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General Contact Information

UW Study Abroad Emergency Phone:

+1-608-516-9440 (after hours and weekends)

E-mail: abroad@studyabroad.wisc.edu

International Academic Programs (IAP) Daytime Office Hours:

+1-608-265-6329 (M-F except holidays, 8:00AM – 4:30 PM Central Standard Time)

IAP Director:

Dan Gold

Office:

(608) 262-9070; (608) 265-6329

Cell:

(919) 923-1838

Home:

(608) 203-6466

Email:

dkgold@studyabroad.wisc.edu

Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) Insurance:

Medical Policy Plan: STB009987907

Policy Information & Claim Form:

<https://studyabroad.wisc.edu/health-safety/cisi-insurance/>

24/7 Emergency Assistance: Team Assist Plan

ID number: STB009987907

Tel in the U.S.: 855-951-2326

Tel outside U.S.: (01-443) 470-343 (collect calls accepted)

E-mail: medassist-usa@axa-assistance.us

Individual will be required to provide an ID number to receive service.

CISI Non-Emergency Contact Information:

Tel: +1-203-399-5130

Fax: +1-203-399-5556

Website: www.culturalinsurance.com

Introduction

These guidelines are written to outline the steps that UW Study Abroad staff in Madison and abroad will follow in the event of a study abroad emergency. The guidelines also outline what Madison expects on-site staff to do in the event of an emergency, including the provision of information and handling of the situation on-site.

International Academic Programs (IAP), a unit of the International Division, is charged with coordinating the management of emergencies affecting participants in study abroad programs that the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, College of Engineering, IAP, and the Wisconsin School of Business study abroad offices offer for credit. The safety and well-being of students, faculty and staff who are participating in UW - Madison's programs abroad is of the highest importance, and all reasonable actions are and will be taken to accomplish this

Program Leaders and on-site staff need to be ready to act in an emergency and to be in regular communication with UW Study Abroad to develop the most effective course of action in an emergency situation. At program sites where there is not staff specifically hired to manage the program, the local institutional contact can act as a resource.

The UW System has established [Policy Guidelines \(145\)](#) for the development and operation of educational programs abroad. The plan for managing emergencies outlined in this document exists within the System Policy guidelines. While acknowledging that no single plan can address all contingencies, UW Study Abroad recognizes the importance of establishing, in advance, policies and procedures that are designed to safeguard the safety and well-being of study abroad participants and to limit the University's legal liability. These policies and procedures, described in detail below, will serve to guide the University's response to crises affecting participants abroad.

In "Coping with Perceived Emergencies" (1989), Diane Smell draws a distinction between "real" and "perceived" emergencies. Real emergencies are those that pose a genuine and sometimes immediate risk to, or that have already disturbed, the safety and well-being of participants. These include such occurrences as *coups* and other civil disturbances; natural and human-made disasters; incarcerations; serious physical or emotional illness; accidents; physical assaults; disappearances or kidnapping; and terrorist threats and attacks.

Perceived emergencies are those which pose no significant risks to the safety and well-being of participants, but which are seen as threatening by family members in the U.S. or by others, including, at times, students and colleagues at the home university. Perceptions of threat can arise out of a number of things, including the sensationalized reporting of an event abroad; the distortion of information provided by a participant in a telephone call, e-mail message, fax or letter home; or simply out of the nervousness of a family member or student with little or no international experience. Such perceptions will sometimes affect family members and others in the U.S. more strongly than will real emergencies, and need to be treated seriously.

By closely following the procedures outlined below, the UW Study Abroad staff will be able to gather information that will allow them to respond appropriately to real emergencies, or to place a perceived emergency in its proper context, and thereby reassure family members and others in the U.S.

After working hours, on weekends and holidays, a UW Study Abroad staff member will always be on call. A call to the main phone number of our office will provide the emergency cell phone number. This number is also placed in each student and Program Leader handbook and is provided to all overseas offices. Each UW Study Abroad participant receives an emergency card with the emergency phone

number, as well as the in-country embassy and on-site staff member contact information. UW Study Abroad staff members, in rotation, staff this cell phone. To be prepared to answer calls, the UW Study Abroad emergency phone will have access to these procedures and all overseas staff contact information and program details to assist staff members on call.

Students on UW Study Abroad programs are covered by an international health insurance plan (currently offered by Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI)) for the duration of their program. This insurance covers a) medical expenses, b) return airfare expenses, c) costs associated with death and dismemberment, d) technical assistance (medical and transport) associated with medical emergencies and death, and e) evacuation (natural disasters or other emergencies). Technical assistance is also available in various areas of travel assistance: emergency cash needs, lost/delayed luggage, replacement of lost or stolen airline tickets, credit card/passport/important document replacement, locating legal services, assistance in posting bail and bond.

UW Study Abroad will gather as much information as is necessary to determine what risks, if any, study abroad participants are facing. In assessing these risks, appropriate people and organizations will be contacted, by telephone if at all possible.

In assessing whether the emergency is real or perceived, the appropriate study abroad staff will contact the appropriate sources for detailed and accurate information:

Study abroad staff will ask for information about a number of issues, and will take careful notes of sufficient detail so as to be able to write a chronological sequence of events leading up to, during and after the emergency.

Operating Principles

In managing emergencies, real or perceived, UW Study Abroad will be guided in its decision-making, before, during and after a crisis, by the following operating principles:

1. All responses to a crisis will be governed by the highest concern for the safety and well-being of students, faculty and staff participating in an UW-Madison-sponsored study abroad program.
2. All reasonable and prudent measures will be taken to limit the University's legal liabilities.
3. UW Study Abroad will exercise caution and restraint in deciding when, and with whom, information about an emergency should be shared, and will operate according to the procedures outlined below in deciding how information should be shared.
4. UW Study Abroad will respond to emergencies by closely following the procedures outlined below, except when otherwise directed by circumstances or agencies outside the University's control.

General Procedures

Typically, UW Study Abroad is notified of emergencies abroad by the Program Leader or On-Site Staff. At times, UW Study Abroad may reach out to the Program Leader or On-Site Staff when it is an emergency that is impacting a specific country or is widespread or if it involves an individual student on your program. When an emergency, real or perceived, occurs, the following should happen:

Program Leader will:

1) Gather appropriate information

- a. Notes should be taken and kept on file at least until the situation is resolved. Generally, notes should be kept for one year after the situation is resolved at which point they can be destroyed unless there is ongoing activity regarding the incident. If you have any questions about this, please contact your Study Abroad Advisor.

2) Notify UW Study Abroad as soon as possible

Some incidents can be emailed to the Study Abroad Advisor for the program. If no action is needed from UW Study Abroad staff, an email detailing the incident is fine. The following are considered serious and **require** notification by phone and not email:

- Hospitalization
 - Legal Action against a student
 - Missing Student
 - Physical Assault
 - Sexual Assault
 - Student Death
 - Suicide Attempt
- a. During regular business hours (8-4:30pm CST), contact Study Abroad Advisor (608-265-6329)
 - b. After hours/weekends, UW Study Abroad Emergency Phone (608) 516-9440

3) Enter an Incident Report in MyStudy Abroad Portal

- a. Reports will be reviewed by study abroad staff and will consult with the IAP Director appropriately.

Program Leaders and On-site Staff **should not talk with media or parents** unless directed by UW Study Abroad.

UW Study Abroad will:

- 1) Ask relevant questions and document information
- 2) Contact others on campus for response, as needed
- 3) Help draft emails or other information that may need to be shared with staff
- 4) Coordinate with family/emergency contacts, as needed
- 5) Discuss follow-up and next steps with you

We will detail the best way to contact us for different types of emergencies and information you may be asked to provide.

Universal Concerns To Be Addressed

- What is the current physical and psychological condition of affected participant(s)?
- Is the lead on-site staff member now in close contact with all affected participants?
- Where did the event take place? What is the proximity of the event(s) to all program participants?
- What is the imminent risk to participant(s) if they remain where they are?
- Are all program participants, whether directly involved or not, aware of the emergency? How are they responding to the emergency?
- Is adequate food, water and medical attention available?
- Is adequate and secure housing available? How long will this housing be available? What other appropriate housing options are available as a backup, if needed?
- What information should be given to students about steps take in the event that the situation worsens? Has the director or on-site staff reviewed plans for contacting students? What are the instructions to be given to students regarding locations to meet or should they be advised to return to and remain in their regular housing?
- Should students be evacuated? Should the students be moved to another location within the country? To a neighboring country? To the U.S.?

Illness and Injury

We often hear about illnesses or injuries through email, from program partners, family members, the student themselves or on-site staff. **If the illness or injury does not require immediate action or is received during regular business hours**, the information should be emailed to the SAA for the program.

If the illness or injury requires follow-up, below are the types of questions you can expect to be asked by UW Study Abroad Staff. You may not have all the information initially, and that is ok. We just want as much as you have at the moment.

Illness

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- What medical treatment has s/he received?
 - What is the diagnosis?
 - What is the treatment plan?
 - What is the prognosis?
 - Where is the medical care taking place (address/phone)?
 - Does the attending physician speak English?
 - Is someone going to stay with the student?
- Are other students at risk from this illness?
- Has CISI/Assist America been contacted?
 - Is airlift a desirable and viable action?
 - Should we explore bill pay with CISI?
- Does the student have the necessary financial resources to pay for bills or will the program cover those expenses at a later date?
- Has the student contacted family or friends?
- What next steps are needed?
- What should our continued communication plan be?

Injury

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- Where did the event take place?
- What are the details of the injury/accident?
- What medical treatment has been received?
 - What is the diagnosis?
 - What is the treatment plan?
 - What is the prognosis?
 - Where is the medical care taking place (address/phone)?
 - Does the attending physician speak English?
 - Is someone going to stay with the student?
- What has on-site response been?
- Has CISI/Assist America been contacted?
 - Should we explore bill pay with CISI?
 - If needed, is airlift a desirable and viable action?
- Does the student have the necessary financial resources to pay for bills or will the program cover those expenses at a later date? Has the student's family been contacted?
- Has the student contacted family or friends?
- What next steps are needed?
- What should our continued communication plan be?

Mental Health Concerns

Mental health concerns can occur suddenly, develop over time, or be pre-existing. Students may not have disclosed this information to us previously or may be experiencing a mental health concern for the first time. Examples of mental health concerns include:

- Student exhibiting extreme behavior (disruptive or reclusive) that is not the result of drug/alcohol use.
- Student is a danger to self or others
- Student is harming self, has made a suicide attempt or threatens to harm themselves.
- Student stops taking prescribed medications for pre-existing conditions
- Student has homicidal ideation
- Persistent erratic behavior that is disruptive to the community and/or threatens major life functions

Note: we need to determine the level of the concern before acting. A student acting odd or not like “other students” on the program does not constitute a mental health crisis and we would not want to force students into help when it is not needed.

We will trust your discretion on which method of outreach is best: email or phone. **If the student is threatening to harm themselves or others, call for assistance.** If a student is threatening self-harm, the following phrases may be helpful:

- *I care and I want to help. That thoughts of suicide are common and do not need to be acted on.*
- *I know that you are in a lot of pain”*

Ask:

- *Have you decided how you will kill yourself?*
- *Where you will do it?*
- *Have you taken steps to carry out your plan?*
- *Have you used any alcohol or drugs?*

Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s) name?
- What behavioral factors are you noticing about this student that leads you to have concerns? (**Please share as many details as possible.**)
 - Is the student functioning on a daily level (e.g., attending daily activities, classes, sleeping, eating, interacting with others)?
- Have you discussed this with the student?
- Has the student identified a history of mental health concern?
- Are you able to continue with your daily or travel plans when the student is in this condition?
- Have you contacted the CISI emergency line or the psychiatrist/counselor identified by the program?
- Does the student have medication that they are supposed to be taking?
 - Have they been taking that medication?
 - If not, when did they stop and are they possibly experiencing symptoms of withdrawal?
- Has the student expressed thoughts of harm to others?
- Do you know if the student has been in touch with family/friends at home about this?
- Do you think you need to get the student to a hospital?
- Has the student expressed thoughts of **suicide or intentional self-injury**?
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?

Mass Emergency

We consider mass emergencies to be those to include: political, natural/man-made, global pandemic or other major health crises that impact multiple students in one location, multiple locations, or across the globe. UW Study Abroad will often be in touch with you about these situations, but you may also notify us to something that is happening at your site.

Typically you will call, but email may be the easiest way depending on the type of emergency. Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- Are all students located?
- What is the preferred method for communication (email, text, phone calls)?
- Has the U.S. Embassy advised students to take specific action(s)?
 - Have all students been made aware of any precautions, and in writing?
 - Are all students following these precautions?
 - What instructions are being given to students regarding locations to meet?
- Is there adequate food, water, and medical attention available?
- Is adequate and secure housing available?
 - How long will this be needed?
 - Should students be advised to return to and remain in their regular housing?
- Have local authorities imposed a curfew?
- Is travel in or out of the country being restricted in any way?
- Is a quarantine being imposed?
- Is the group in danger?
 - Who or what is the target of any unrest?
 - Has any particular group or organization been threatened?
- What kind of military or other security or public safety personnel are present? Are they unusually visible?
 - How are they behaving with respect to the civilian population?
- Should students be evacuated? Moved to another location in the US?
 - Is evacuation by air a desirable and viable action?
- Are local medical facilities available?
- Have students been in touch with friends/family?
- What next steps are needed?
- Confirm they have names, titles, addresses, telephone, and email of appropriate officials at the U.S. Embassy.
- Confirm they have names, titles, addresses, telephone, and email of appropriate officials of local law enforcement or public security officials.
- What is the continued communication plan with us and with students?

Missing Student

If a student is missing, we will start actions **IMMEDIATELY** to locate the student, even if local authorities will only accept a report after 24 hours. The report of a missing student may involve:

- Student who has not been in communication with family/friends as planned or not responding to communication attempts
- Student has not returned from personal travel or social activities when expected and has not responded to communication attempts
- Student is unexpectedly absent from planned activities or classes and has not responded to communication attempts
- Student is in a place where there has been a mass emergency and has not responded to communication attempts

You should always call UW Study Abroad in the case of a missing student. We will coordinate outreach with family, campus partners, and the Embassy. Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- When was the student last seen?
- Does anyone have any idea about where they may have gone?
- If the student had left and was expected to return at a specific time, when was the date and time of the expected return?
- Did the student tell anyone of plans to be absent?
- What contact methods have been used to reach the student?
- When was the student last in communication (via social media, text, phone, or other communication modes)?
- Does the student have known medical conditions?
- What was the student's emotional state when last seen or spoken?
- Are other students aware of this situation?
- If family member notifies you, say, "*We take this very seriously. I will be in touch with the the study abroad staff in the United States and we will start our action plan. Someone from UW Study Abroad will call you back in one hour.*"

You may be asked to contact other participants or faculty, but please do not do so until instructed by UW Study Abroad.

Physical Assault

Students can be the victim of a physical assault with or without a weapon, aggressive robbery, robbery at knife or gunpoint while abroad. If the student is harmed, but does not need hospitalization, you can email this information. If the student needs to be hospitalized, please call.

Here are the types of questions you can expect.

- What is the your and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- Where did the event take place?
- What are the details of the assault?
- What medical treatment has been received?
 - What is the treatment plan?
 - What is the prognosis?
 - Where is the medical care taking place (address/phone)?
 - Does the attending physician speak English?
 - Is someone going to stay with the student?
- What has on-site response been?
- Has CISI/Assist America been contacted?
 - Should we explore bill pay with CISI?
 - If needed, is airlift a desirable and viable action?
- Does the student have the necessary financial resources to pay for bills or will the program cover those expenses at a later date? Has the student's family been contacted?
- Does the student want counseling?
- Does the student need help replacing identification, credit cards, lost cash?
- Has the student contacted family or friends?
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?

Program Leader Illness or Incapacity

Unfortunately, Program Leaders or On-Site Staff could become ill, injured, or incapacitated and/or have family members become ill, injured or incapacitated and need to leave the program. Please notify your Study Abroad Advisor by email if there is time or by phone if immediate action is needed. If you are unable to contact us the designated +1 for the program should contact us.

Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the Program Leader's name?
- What has happened to the Program Leader?
- If hospitalized, where and for how long?
- Are students aware of the situation?
- Who is currently with the students?
- What support is the +1 able to provide?
- How much time is left on the program?
- Will the program be able to continue or will we need to end the program?
- Is the faculty member's family aware of the situation?
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?

Sexual Assault or Rape

A sexual assault or rape is a traumatic experience for the survivor. The reporting can come through various channels:

- Reported directly by survivor
- Reported by the survivor based on a “feeling” something happened, but they don’t remember details
- Reported by a friend, family member, on-site staff

No matter how we receive the report we always support the survivor and believe them. Note, **Program Leaders, On-Site Staff and UW Study Abroad staff members are mandatory reporters and are not confidential resources.** We also **are not investigators.** We must know the student’s name and location. Other information is helpful, but not required.

UW Study Abroad staff will do the required Title IX and Clery reporting. A required follow-up email with resources for the student will be sent by the Study Abroad Advisor for the program or designated UW Study Abroad Staff member. **Do not share this information with other students on the program. If a timely warning is needed, that will be determined by the UW Police Department and they would send that message.**

Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student’s name?
- What are the details of the incident (We must know location. Other things that can be helpful include: gender of survivor, date, survivor’s relationship to the offender-if known, was alcohol involved)?
- What has the on-site response been?
- Has medical treatment been offered to the student?
 - Where has the student been taken?
- Has the student been offered alternative housing or accommodations?
 - Where has the student been taken?
- Is counseling available?
 - Is that counseling in English?
- Has the closest U.S. consulate or embassy been contacted for advice regarding reporting the incident?
- Has the student been notified of their right to contact law enforcement?
 - Is that appropriate in the host country?
- Would the student like an individual to come and be with them? Explain that CISI provides that coverage for up to 10 days and we can open a case file to get that started.
- Will the student need to miss classes or other activities? What support can be provided without sharing details of the incident to faculty members on-site?
- Do you know if the student has been in touch with family/friends at home about this?
 - Do they want people notified? (In no way should we pressure students to do share if they do not want to.)
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?

Note: The above focuses on Sexual Assault/Rape, but you should also report: Sexual Harassment, Dating or Domestic Violence, Stalking, Retaliation.

Student Death

A student death is the most tragic incident that Program Leaders or On-Site Staff may experience in working with students. There is a detailed protocol that will be followed in these cases.

You should always call UW Study Abroad in the case of a student death. We will coordinate outreach with family, campus partners, and the Embassy. Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- When did the death occur?
- Is the student in a hospital or morgue?
- Has the family been notified?
- Do other students on the program know or did they witness the death?
 - If yes, students may need to be assisted with:
 - Possible housing changes
 - Individual or whole group processing
 - Academic accommodations
 - If no, inform the caller that a communication plan for students will need to be developed and we will assist with that.
- Have local authorities been notified?
- Is the student a U.S. citizen?
 - Has the U.S. (or student's home country) Embassy been notified?
 - Who is the contact person at the Embassy and at the State Department in Washington, D.C.?
 - What are their titles and contact numbers?
- Determine what is the continued communication plan

Student Legal Issues/Arrested Student

In the event that legal action or arrest is taken against one of our students, we will provide support where possible. We are limited in our ability to provide a response in these cases. **No legal advice should be given by the Program Leader or On-site Staff.**

You should always call UW Study Abroad in the case student legal issues or arrest. We will coordinate outreach with family, campus partners, and the Embassy. Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- What is the student(s)' name?
- Has he or she been detained?
 - Is the student safe and being treated respectfully?
- Has the U.S. Embassy been notified?
 - If not, this should be done immediately.
 - If so:
 - What has their response been?
 - What is their advice?
- What agency made the arrest and filed the charges?
 - What are the names, addresses and phone numbers of arresting authorities?
 - What is the case number?
 - What rights have been granted?
 - Is he/she entitled to place a phone call?
 - Is bail an option? Has bail been set? At what amount? If bail is paid, does that remove the possibility of further legal action?
- Is appropriate legal counsel available?
- Has CISI been contacted for assistance with locating local legal services and posting bail money?
- Do we need to arrange for translators for legal documents?
- Do other students know about this situation?
 - What support do we need to provide to them?
- Has the student notified family/friends?
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?

Student Taken as Hostage

If a student is taken hostage, we will provide as much support as possible, but will be working very closely with the U.S. Embassy on actions. **You should always call UW Study Abroad in the case student legal issues or arrest.** We will coordinate outreach with family, campus partners, and the Embassy. Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- What is your name and phone number?
- Who has been taken hostage?
- Has the U.S. Embassy been notified?
 - What is the Embassy's advice?
- Have the kidnappers made contact?
- Who is the contact person at the Embassy and at the State Department in Washington, D.C.?
 - What are their titles and contact numbers?
- Are other students aware of the situation?
- Is the family aware of the situation?
- What next steps are needed?
- What is the continued communication plan?