



## **SAFETY, SECURITY, AND WELL-BEING OF ISA PARTICIPANTS**

The safety, security, and well-being of study abroad program participants are of primary importance to ISA. While neither ISA nor ISA's affiliate universities can guarantee a risk-free environment, all efforts are made to best ensure the safety, security, and well-being of our students and faculty participants throughout the duration of the program. ISA follows prudent measures to verify that all transportation, lodging, medical facilities, communications, and emergency responses are in place to best provide a safe environment for the study abroad program and their participants.

While ISA is firmly committed to the provision of this support, we also emphasize to students, faculty, and parents that all program participants must take responsibility for their own safety, security, and well-being. This is highlighted during pre-departure preparations, on-site orientation, and throughout students' stay in the host country. This means using common sense, being aware of their surroundings, and not putting themselves in compromising positions with the abuse of drugs or alcohol. The same precautions anyone would follow in their home communities in the U.S. should be maintained when traveling abroad.

The information below describes the infrastructure in place at ISA program sites abroad that provides logistical support for the students. A brief description of the safety and security measures taken regarding ISA's transportation, lodging, health support, and communications will demonstrate how daily activities lend to the safety and well-being of ISA program participants. Also detailed below are the guidelines and procedures established in the event that an act of war, terrorism, pandemic outbreak, or natural disaster occurs.

ISA strongly encourages all participants to utilize governmental and private websites to read and learn about their study abroad destination including health, safety and security recommendations. Some key resources may be found: <http://www.studiesabroad.com/resources>.

### **ISA Residential Staff:**

ISA employs native born personnel at the majority of our international sites. Most were raised in the program city and all, without exception, are highly knowledgeable about the available facilities, customs, support services, and local people. A staff to student ratio of 1:20 is maintained with few exceptions on all ISA programs, and staff members are available 24-7 to respond to the needs of the program participants. In addition, each main ISA Resident Director has a cell phone, at least two land-lines (home and office), and email services at their disposal. Each program participant is provided with a Contact Card upon arrival in-country that contains the names and cell phone numbers of all on-site ISA staff members, the appropriate U.S. embassy phone number and address, the recommended local hospital, and the local equivalent to the U.S. emergency "911" number.

### **Lodging:**

The majority of ISA resident directors are natives of the country. All staff members are, without exception, very familiar with the program sites and aware of potentially unsafe areas. While there are no risk-free residential areas in any American or foreign city, ISA's student housing accommodations are located in areas deemed to be of lower risk. The same attentiveness is given to the arrangement of lodging during ISA-organized excursions. Hotels are selected based on the security of the area in which the accommodations are located, and also on their proximity to the sites to be visited. To the extent possible, ISA utilizes hotels with interior- rather than exterior-entry doors.

### **Transportation:**

ISA is consistent in utilizing the safest and most reliable transportation (bus and plane) for ISA-sponsored travel. The companies are selected based on their prior safety records, insurance coverage, their administrative responsiveness, and the mutual trust that has developed as a result of the well-established relationships with ISA. In the selection of a transportation company, ISA also takes into account the recommendations from trustworthy external advisors.

### **Medical Facilities:**

ISA provides all students and accompanying faculty with medical insurance for the duration of the program. The policy is arranged by CMI Insurance Worldwide and underwritten by ACE American Insurance Company, and includes medical evacuation and repatriation coverage. A detailed description of the coverage may be found at <http://www.studiesabroad.com/admissions/document/insuranceInfo>.

Prior to departure, ISA provides all students with an on-line orientation that is general to the study abroad experience, and a printed orientation handbook that is specific to the site of study. One section of the site-specific handbook is devoted to issues of medical health. It includes names, addresses, and phone numbers of medical facilities at the program site. Medical facilities are recommended based on the quality of their services, proximity to the areas in which students live and/or to the university or classroom facility, and their experience providing services to American students. In the event that a program participant must go to the hospital or to a doctor, the ISA Resident Director will assist in scheduling the appointment, accompanying the student on the visit, and assisting in any other way necessary. Additionally, the Resident Director will ensure that the student is aware of all procedures required to file a claim for reimbursement for medical services.

### **Cultural and Academic Excursions:**

The Resident Director also takes appropriate measures to ensure that medical facilities are available during ISA-organized excursions, should a medical emergency arise. In the event that a student needs medical assistance during an ISA-organized excursion, the ISA staff member present with the group is available to accompany the student to the medical facility. If more than one ISA staff member is present or if there is a U.S. faculty member accompanying the group, the ISA staff member or the U.S. faculty member will remain with the group and continue with the excursion while the other ISA staff member accompanies the student in need. A meeting time and place will be established for the ISA staff member and student to reunite with the group. While apart from the group, the ISA staff member will maintain contact via cell phone with the other ISA staff member or U.S. faculty member who remains with the group. If the ISA staff member is unable to return to the excursion and a U.S. faculty member is with the group, the ISA staff member will provide the faculty member with instructions on how to guide the students from the excursion to their place of residence/lodging.

In the event that no additional ISA staff member or U.S. faculty member is available to remain with the group while the student in need is accompanied to the medical facility, the ISA staff member on the excursion will select a responsible party to ensure that all students return to their place of residence or lodging.

### **Communications:**

Throughout the study abroad program, the ISA on-site staff members are, above all, there to help the students. Students are provided with each staff member's cell phone number, and are instructed to call the staff members at any time, day or night, for assistance of any type.

Prior to departure, all students are provided with a description of their host family or housing arrangements. A contact telephone number is included in the description and may be utilized in the event of an emergency requiring that a family member in the U.S. contact the student abroad. If the family member is unable to reach the student at his or her place of residence, s/he may contact the ISA Austin office during regular business hours (Monday-Thursday, 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM CST / Friday, 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM). ISA will, in turn, contact the resident staff abroad. During the weekend and evening hours, ISA Austin's telephone answering machine provides the cell phone number for the ISA Austin office emergency contact that is on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

### **Emergency situations:**

Upon the students' arrival to the program site, the on-site ISA resident staff facilitates an orientation meeting to provide useful information on acclimation to the host culture as well as emergency situation procedures. The staff provides all students with instructions regarding the protocol to follow in the event of a political crisis, terrorist event, natural disaster, or other emergency. The key point is that in the event of an emergency event, students should first try to return to their residence and await contact from ISA. If unable to reach their lodging, students should secondly report to the ISA office. The phone numbers for ISA resident staff (as well as the local U.S. embassy) is provided on the ISA Contact Card that students should carry with them at all times while on the program.

In the event of a crisis or emergency involving a student, faculty member, or group, the following procedural guidelines will be followed:

Step 1: ISA Resident Director assesses situation, attends to the students'/student's most immediate needs as necessary, contacts the ISA U.S. staff or management, and initiates incident report in ISA's Global Records System, as appropriate.

Step 2: ISA management and staff make additional efforts as necessary to assess the situation. Depending on the magnitude and nature of the problem, various outside resources may be accessed (U.S. Embassy, local authorities, media, etc.).

Step 3: Coordination of a comprehensive on-site response begins at this time if necessary, utilizing network of resources and contacts (insurance, travel agencies, law enforcement, medical health professionals, etc.)

Step 4: ISA Austin staff contacts interested parties or resources deemed necessary by ISA management. These may include parents, the students' home university, local authorities, U.S. Embassy and/or insurance company.

### **In the Event of War, Terrorist Activity, Political Emergencies, Pandemic Outbreak and Natural Disasters:**

In the event that an outbreak of war, a coup d'etat, terrorist activity, political instability, or a major natural disaster should occur at any of the ISA program sites abroad, the procedures and support mechanisms outlined above provide the infrastructure required for ISA to respond to the emergency.

In addition, there are specific actions or procedures already in place in the event of such an occurrence. The following describes specific actions on-going at ISA international sites:

- All ISA participants are registered on the US State Department Website.
- ISA Site Specialists and Resident Directors subscribe to the US State Dept reports and to the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) daily reports for their particular site.
- ISA offices abroad do not post signs that identify ISA as having an affiliation with the United States.
- ISA Resident Directors keep a detailed and updated contact list of local law enforcement offices/agents, hospitals, medical health professionals and counselors, nearest U.S. embassy and consulate, fire dept.
- ISA Resident Directors always keep participant contact numbers within easy access, and always have a paper copy in the event of power/internet loss.
- The main ISA Resident Director at each ISA site has a land line in the event of international crisis that cause outages to mobile phone infrastructure.
- ISA on-site staff members keep up-to-date contact information (addresses and telephone numbers) for each student, and establish a procedure for contacting them in case of emergencies.
- ISA Resident Directors give program participants a laminated card during orientation with emergency contact information, including the ISA residential staff phone numbers.
- All ISA students are trained on how to reach ISA on-site staff members 24 hours per day in case of emergency.
- Students are trained to notify directors when they are going to be away overnight. Students are encouraged to provide contact information when known/possible.
- ISA students are discouraged from engaging in practices that increase their likelihood of becoming targets of crime.
- ISA Resident Directors maintain close relationships and agreements with travel agents who will provide assistance if evacuation is needed.

In the event that an international crisis prevents the program participants from returning to the U.S. at the conclusion of the program, ISA would work with the host families to ensure that students could remain with them until the crisis is resolved. Once international travel is deemed safe and secure by the U.S. Department of State, ISA would work with the participants to assist in arranging return to the U.S.

### **U.S. State Department Travel "Advisory" and Travel "Warning":**

Country "Travel Warnings" are issued by the U.S. State Department when it decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to or possibly evacuate a specific country. Please note also that a U.S. State Department "Travel Warning" is something quite serious and rare. It is an official category of advisory statement that is issued by the U.S. State Department. The State Department often issues "Travel Advisories" or "Public Announcements," pointing out the risks of traveling in a particular country and asking Americans to be careful. However, a "Travel Advisory" rarely constitutes a "Travel Warning." If a "Travel Warning" is issued for a particular country, the State Department will clearly state that a "Travel Warning" is in effect for that country. For further

information about all State Department "Travel Warnings," "Travel Advisories," "Public Announcements," and "Consular Information Sheets," please see [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis\\_pa\\_tw\\_1168.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html).

If the U.S. State Department issues an official "Travel Warning" for an ISA location, and the Warning includes an official State Department recommendation that all U.S. citizens evacuate the country, ISA's default action will be to cancel the program. If the program has not yet started, ISA will work with students to transfer to another ISA program, if the students wish and are able to obtain approval from their home institution. If the program has already started, ISA's default action will be to evacuate students. However, any decision to evacuate participants will also be based on information gathered from OSAC, news media, and domestic and international government and law enforcement agencies.

If the decision to evacuate students is made, ISA will make efforts to ensure that all students can return to the United States promptly and will assist students with related communications, logistics, accommodations, and resolution of academic matters. During this type of emergency, ISA will be in close communication with police and security personnel on-site, the ISA resident staff, trusted colleagues on-site, in addition to the resources listed above.