

## Before You Go - A Checklist for Study Abroad Leaders

\_\_ **Know the rules and set the tone.** Prior to traveling with students, faculty and staff members should familiarize themselves with policies students must abide by listed in the Student Code of Conduct (<https://ssc.okstate.edu/student-conduct/code.html>). Additionally, understand the behavior of leaders on the trip will set the tone for what is acceptable behavior for students.

\_\_ **Communicate about bystander intervention.** Discuss cultural differences around dating, relationships, and sexual norms of the host country – perhaps assign readings and have a discussion session. Also review rules and expectations for group dynamics and intra-group relationships. (Most people are not a potential victim or perpetrator of a crime or sexual assault. Most people are bystanders who can take action.)

\_\_ **Discuss safety and risk-reduction.** Pre-departure, discuss safety and risk-reduction strategies and review sexual assault prevention and response protocols, specifically who to notify and how to get information to Student Support & Conduct. A discussion of alcohol use, responsible consumption, and the use of alcohol as a sexual assault facilitating factor might be useful – avoiding a “victim-blaming” stance, but rather, focusing on the fact that some perpetrators use alcohol or drugs to facilitate violence. Keep in mind that sometimes sexual assault can take place between / among class participant groups.

\_\_ **Encourage a climate of reporting.** We want people to feel safe getting help. Let students know that the trip leaders can take actions to help reduce harm if it has occurred and can take steps to prevent recurrence. If a student doesn't feel comfortable reporting to the trip leader, they are encouraged to keep emergency numbers that include OSU Police 405-744-6523.

\_\_ **Compliance obligation to notify.** Trip leaders must immediately report issues of sexual violence so Student Support & Conduct can reach out to the student with options and resources. This may be done via phone or email (405-744-5470, [student.support@okstate.edu](mailto:student.support@okstate.edu)) It is up to the student how he or she responds to the reach-out. See the “Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence” for more details.

\_\_ **Check yourself.** Set the right tone with students on trips by keeping an appropriate balance of distance. For example, closed door meetings in hotel rooms or room sharing are generally not a good idea with a power imbalance, even with same-sex faculty/student groupings. Students may feel uncomfortable declining such an arrangement given a faculty-student power differential even if it facilitates cost reduction for the trip.

\_\_ **Negotiate Boundaries.** It is a fine line between the personal and the professional when personal/professional/ travel time blends 24/7. Be sure that students have an opportunity to express concerns and personal needs and travel preferences prior to departure so that any issues can be addressed ahead of time.

\_\_ **Set specific and clear expectations.** Expectations about communication, acceptable behavior, timeliness, and professionalism must be had before the trip and reminders during the trip can be beneficial. Communicate how you expect students to embrace the culture they are experiencing but that they still represent the university. For example, providing what you feel might be an appropriate curfew to give them enough time to rest and eat as well as explaining that students shouldn't show up to an early meeting or tour hungover. You can't restrict certain behaviors, but you can recommend how students may want to represent themselves and OSU so that they can have a positive impact and the best, safest experience possible.

## Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence While Abroad

Oklahoma State University has policies and procedures in place to appropriately respond to reports or disclosures of sexual violence (sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and sexual harassment). Outlined below are the required procedures. In addition to following required procedures, it is also important to demonstrate a high degree of caring and calm when responding to an individual who discloses sexual violence. We want our response to be competent and to do no further harm.

Study abroad trips are not immune to this behavior occurring. Due to the nature of the trips and the increase of risky behavior, students can still be harmed and the university still has a responsibility to address concerns appropriately. To encompass all possible undesired behavior, throughout this document the following definitions will be referred to as sexual violence.

### Policies

#### Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

#### University Policies

The Student Code of Conduct (<https://ssc.okstate.edu/student-conduct/code.html>) outlines the policy definitions for sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and sexual harassment.

**Sexual Misconduct:** This term is used to encompass Sexual Assault, Indecent Exposure, and Sexual Exploitation.

*Sexual Assault:* An offense that meets the definition of rape, fondling, incest, or statutory rape:

- a. *Rape* – the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim;
- b. *Fondling* – the touching of the private body parts of another person for the purpose of sexual gratification, without the consent of the victim, including instances where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of his/her age or because of his/her temporary or permanent mental incapacity;
- c. *Incest* – sexual intercourse between persons who are related to each other within the degrees wherein marriage is prohibited by law;
- d. *Statutory Rape* – sexual intercourse with a person who is under the statutory age of consent.

*Sexual Exploitation:* Conduct where an individual takes non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another for their own benefit, or to benefit anyone other than the one being exploited. Examples of sexual exploitation include, but are not limited to,

engaging in voyeurism; sharing of pornographic or other sexually inappropriate material; the intentional removal of a condom or other contraceptive barrier during sexual activity without the consent of a sexual partner; and any activity that goes beyond the boundaries of consent, such as recording of sexual activity, letting others watch consensual sex, or knowingly transmitting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) to another. Allegations of sexual exploitation will be evaluated to determine if they meet the severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive standard.

*Indecent Exposure:* The act of intentionally exposing one's genitals in public or in front of others, for the purpose of sexual gratification or causing offense. Allegations of Indecent Exposure will be evaluated to determine if they meet the severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive standard.

**Dating Violence:** Dating violence is committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with another person. The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on consideration of the following factors: length of relationship, type of relationship, and frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship. Dating violence includes, but is not limited to, sexual or physical abuse or the threat of such abuse. Dating violence does not include acts that meet the definition of domestic violence.

**Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is a crime of violence committed by a:

- a. current or former spouse or intimate partner of the victim;
- b. person with whom the victim shares a child in common;
- c. person who is cohabitating with or has cohabited with the victim as a spouse or intimate partner;
- d. person similarly situated to a spouse of the victim;
- e. any other person against an adult or youth victim who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of Oklahoma.

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions, or threat of actions that influence another person.

**Stalking:** Stalking refers to one who engages in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.

- **Course of conduct** means two or more acts, including, but not limited to, acts in which the stalker directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about a person, or interferes with a person's property.
- **Reasonable person** means a person under similar circumstances and with similar identities to the victim.

- **Substantial emotional distress** means significant mental suffering or anguish that may, but does not necessarily, require medical or other professional treatment or counseling.

**Sexual Harassment:** Conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- a. A person acting on behalf of the University in a position of authority conditioning the provision of any aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (quid pro quo);
- b. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the University's education program or activity;
- c. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Subsections (a) and (c) are not evaluated for severity, pervasiveness, or offensiveness, because such conduct is sufficiently severe to deny access to the University's education program or activities

## Response

Disclosures about sexual violence might be made in person or could possibly be disclosed to a campus advisor from a distance by phone/email or video conference. Regardless, communication about traumatic events can be more difficult for both the reporting individual and/or the individual receiving the information when they are away from familiar surroundings. Many people, if unprepared, might be shocked into being relatively silent or have some other unexpected reaction to hearing that a student has been raped, assaulted, or has experienced some other form of violence or harassment. The following offers guidelines for working with students who are victims of sexual violence.

Please note that this document is intended to give you tools for communicating with students if this disclosure occurs. It is not possible to address every possible scenario that could occur, especially if the action occurs between two students that are a part of the trip. Please consult with the Aleigha Mariott, Ph.D. Director of Student Support and Conduct and Deputy Title IX Coordinator (405-744-5470) if you need information about how to proceed with accommodations, as you are not to investigate the situation.

Those who report sexual violence may not always immediately tell someone in authority exactly what occurred. They may dance around the topic uncomfortably. Faculty and staff working with study abroad programs are considered to be "responsible employees." Responsible employees are required to report sexual violence or harassment to the appropriate university official. As a responsible employee there are four steps to follow to ensure that you have fulfilled your obligations.

## 1. Support

If an individual discloses an incident of sexual violence to you, first provide a supportive response. Always make it apparent to the student that you believe them and are available for support.

If a student discloses an incident of sexual violence you could respond:

"Thank you so much for trusting me enough to share this with me. Do you feel you are in immediate danger, if so, we should contact OSUPD. Before we talk more, I want to let you know that I am required to report this information to Student Support & Conduct so they can offer you the appropriate resources."

If the student is in **immediate danger**, contact the OSU Police Department: (405) 744-6523.

## 2. Refer

There are several campus and community resources available to victims of crimes. Refer the student to [1is2many.okstate.edu](https://1is2many.okstate.edu) to review support resources.

Due to being abroad, you might need to offer assistance in setting up an international calls or zoom with counseling services, victim advocates, or Student Support and Conduct.

Depending on the victim's wishes, you may need to engage with local law enforcement, the U.S. Embassy, a partner institution, local health care providers, or others. You may also need to help make emergency arrangements for the person to travel home.

Please inform the individual about their option to:

- **Seek supportive measures** from Student Support & Conduct. Supportive measures include living arrangements, academic arrangements, emergency protective orders, etc.
- **Contact an OSU Victim Advocate.** A Victim Advocate can talk with an individual about resources on campus as well as the different processes an individual may or may not want to consider. Victim Advocates are confidential, meaning they cannot disclose information shared with them to anyone. Victim Advocates can be contacted at (405)-564-2129 for more information and resources.
- **Report directly to law enforcement.** When studying abroad it is important to consider the cultural response to sexual violence before reporting. Please consult before you go forward with this option.
- **Submit a report to the university.** Students can submit a complaint alleging a policy violation against another student or an employee. Student Support & Conduct can assist in filing a complainant also available online.

Referring a student could sound like:

"I would really like to share the resources we offer on campus with you. There is information on [1is2many.okstate.edu](https://1is2many.okstate.edu) and you can also reach out to a Victim Advocate for support. A Victim Advocate can talk with you about resources on campus as well as the different processes you may or may not want to consider in the future. Victim Advocates are confidential, so they will

not share your information with anyone. Can I give you their phone number, or call them with you? Also, please know the university has supportive measures they can offer, encourage reporting to the police as well as to the university to address the concerns. We are here for you. "

### **3. Report**

Employee should report disclosures involving students to Student Support & Conduct online at Student Support & Conduct's [reporting page](#) or call 405-744-5470.

When reporting employees are required to provide both the victim and alleged individual's names and details of what you know. The university is required to take immediate and appropriate steps to investigate what occurred and take prompt and effective action to:

- End the harassment,
- Prevent any recurrence, and
- Remedy the effects.

The university will not be able to fulfill its federal requirements and maintain a safe living and learning environment if you do not share all the information.

**Do not investigate.** You do not have to prove what happened or who was at fault, the appropriate and appointed individuals will investigate. In addition, do not try to apprehend the alleged individual of a crime.

To explain reporting responsibilities and get more information about the situation you might say: "I will need to share this information with Student Support & Conduct. Once they receive my report, they will send you an email with resources on supporting you and options of reporting. Would it be alright if I asked you a couple of questions to be shared when I pass this information along to them? Do you remember a timeframe of when this happened, like the date, and maybe a time? Do you remember where you were when this happened? Who was the person who did this to you?"

In cases where the accused perpetrator is another student, or faculty or staff member additional conversation will need to take place when you report about addressing any additional issues. You should not make these decisions it should be in consultation with the appropriate university officials.

### **Communicating with a Victim**

It will help the reporting individual if you are calm and measured. Assure the student that you will try to help them and will share some resources and discuss their options.

Employ active listening. Display calm, confident, quiet competence. Let them talk at a rate that is comfortable for them. Details might be out of order, and let them decide what and when to share information. Show interest. If in-person or via video conference, nodding your head and eye contact can convey a lot. Electronically, saying "I am here for you," can be very reassuring. Statements of concern rather than shock are key. Resist the urge to make decisions for the student. Don't panic or display high levels of emotion. It is normal to want to fix something and to feel angry or upset, but those reactions are not going to help the reporting person.

It is important to start by believing the individual. It is helpful to express concern and to say that you are very sorry that they have experienced this situation. You walk a fine line between not minimizing the individual's feelings or emotions and not exacerbating their negative emotions with your reaction.

It is helpful to say things like:

- "I am sorry this happened to you."
- "I am here to help you. Let's explore some options."
- "What happened wasn't your fault."
- "That must have been scary."

Likewise, there are things that are unhelpful and to avoid:

- "Why" questions
- Questions about what a person was wearing or how much they had to drink
- Any statement that begins with "at least..." or "if only you hadn't..."
- Any question that asks if they are sure it was sexual assault
- Any statements that normalize sexual assault ("it happens," "it's just sex,")
- Any statement that you cannot be sure of ("I know it will be ok," "I promise you everything will work out," "Everything happens for a reason")
- and more! (Any statement that can be victim blaming, or displaying anger or desire for more violence, can be very harmful to a survivor.)

Know that you do not have to ask the person a lot of questions. We want to give the victim choices and options and let them be in control of letting us know what is most important to them at this moment. In fact, it is recommended that victims not have to repeat what happened over and over and over again, so let the person tell you what they wish to tell you and try not to ask too many questions or assure them of what will definitely happen.

Avoid these communication "roadblocks":

- "Why" questions —tend to make people defensive.
- Quick reassurance — "Don't worry about that."
- Advising — "I think the best thing for you is to..."
- Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about.
- Patronizing — "You poor thing, I know just how you feel."
- Preaching — "You should..." Or, "You shouldn't..."
- Interrupting — implies you aren't interested in what someone is saying.

Try to be comfortable with pauses and some silence as needed by the person speaking to you (whether in person, over the phone, or via video-conference). Know that many victims blame themselves. Responses to sexual violence are physiological (fight, flight, or freeze) and may be dictated by specific situations. After an attack, victims often question what their response was and wonder if they could have done something differently to prevent the situation. If you hear



self-blaming, it is appropriate to reassure a victim that sexual violence is never the fault of the person who was attacked.

It can be especially helpful and important to validate the person's feeling and acknowledge the individual's concerns. Listen openly and with empathy, and respond in a genuine way — for example, "I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue..."

- Be a non-judgmental listener.
- Avoid statements or questions that might do harm to the victim (e.g. avoid any suggestion that the individual is at fault, or that they should have acted in a different manner).
- Reinforce that you can help the individual take steps to help them.
- Assure the individual that they will be treated with respect and given privacy.
- Know that there is an amnesty policy for alcohol and drug use in sexual violence cases.
- Recognize the limits of your expertise and don't try to get all the details.

### **Confidential Reporting**

If the student would prefer to report to a source that does not have to report to the university, you should advise the individual of options for confidential disclosure.

OSU Victim Advocates: Oklahoma State University has victim advocates on call Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They can be reached at 405-564-2129. The advocates' information is provided online at <https://1is2many.okstate.edu/find-support/support-for-victims/victim-advocates.html> if students need to contact them via email.

Wings of Hope: A 24 hour help line is available through Wings of Hope, Stillwater's domestic violence center, at 405-624-3020.

National Sexual Assault Hotline: The National Sexual Assault Hotline offers an online chat feature or a 24 hour phone hotline. <https://hotline.rainn.org/online> or 1-800-656-4673.