

## TALKING TO STUDENTS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE RISK ON STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS St. Cloud State University

Sexual violence and gender violence is a risk everywhere, in some places more than others. Find out how much of a problem sexual violence is in the areas to which you will travel, and try to give students a realistic appreciation of the known degree of risk. All students and faculty should be aware of what they can do to reduce their own risk, have a realistic appreciation of the occurrence of sexual violence in the destination country and know what the University's policies are on aiding students who have been sexually assaulted.

Tell students to be at least as aware of the risks as they are in the U.S. and remind them:

- Travel with other people and to watch out for one another;
- Be aware pepper sprays may be unavailable or illegal in some countries ;
- Observe local norms of dress and behavior (covering the legs or head, for example)
- Familiarize themselves with phrases or gestures that may be interpreted as signaling sexual availability (give them country-specific examples);
- Do not be alone with strangers;
- Do not accept drinks from someone they don't know well;
- Remember alcohol/ drugs will impair their ability to assess a situation;
- In some places what Americans would consider sexually harassing behavior is considered normal, or even complimentary; if you know a woman who has traveled or lived in the destination country, ask her about male-female relations;
- And - if students are assaulted - get to a safe place and contact their onsite Program Director (or local authorities and the Center for International Studies/Public Safety/Gender Violence Prevention Program) as soon as possible.

It's important to tell students that even when abroad, they're covered by the Universities policies on sexual assault and they need to know what the University considers to be sexual assault and harassment. Our policy statement is: Sexual violence relationship violence and stalking are all Intolerable intrusions into the most personal and private rights of an individual and are prohibited at St. Cloud State University.

[http://www.stcloudstate.edu/policies/categories/documents/Sexual\\_Violence\\_Relationship\\_Violence\\_Stalking\\_Compliance\\_Program.pdf](http://www.stcloudstate.edu/policies/categories/documents/Sexual_Violence_Relationship_Violence_Stalking_Compliance_Program.pdf)

If inappropriate behaviors are being made by others on the program, both students and faculty are still covered by the school's policies and codes. The victim should report it to the faculty or to the Title IX Coordinator or any of the other contacts provided on the previous list under the *Immediate Concerns and Responses*. Let students know that the University takes sexual violence and harassment very seriously and that University services are still available to them while on a study abroad trip.

Make sure students know that you will do everything you reasonably can, with respect to a housing, academic issues, and shielding the victim from the accused.

Provide contact information on local resources for victims of crime and encourage students to talk to faculty on the trip about any concerns they have.

A more difficult case of harassment or sexual violence is when the accused is from the host country, but isn't part of the program, and considers their behavior normal for their own culture. In some cultures, some types of harassment can be an everyday occurrence, and something that local women are accustomed to. However, students on the program may consider this harassment and, by their culture and our University's definition, it is harassment. Neither you nor the student can change cultural norms, but you can listen to the student's concern and--while not dismissing the validity of the student's response--you can advise them on preventative measures they can take and culturally-appropriate ways of responding.

Also encourage students to watch out for each other and develop safety plans for when they go out including ways to intervene in potentially harassing or dangerous situations.

You can review the hand out *Staying Safe While Traveling Abroad* with the students at the beginning of the trip.

Revised from the University of Delaware's information sheet on *Sexual Assault Prevention Faculty Study Abroad*.

For more information contact the Gender Violence Prevention Program at the SCSU Women's Center.

[leladue@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:leladue@stcloudstate.edu)

320-308-3995.