

“I haven’t been everywhere, but it’s on my list.”

-Susan Sontag

# **Education Abroad**

## **Orientation 2**

Health and Safety Abroad

# Today's Orientation

- Health and Safety Prep
- Physical Health
- Protecting Your Property
- Protecting Yourself
- Title IX
- CASAS
- Mental Health



# Preparation:

## Where are you going?

- Being informed about your destination is a safety mechanism
  - Check the State Department country profile: <http://travel.state.gov>
- Is there a State Department Travel Advisory?
  - Petition for an exception through WWU EdAbroad for Travel Advisory Levels 3 or 4
- Visit State Department study abroad page: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- Who is in power? What are the customs?
- Register your trip with State Department: <https://step.state.gov>

# Preparation: Informing Yourself

- Think about your identity and how people similar to you are treated in your host country
  - Women
  - Diverse ethnic/racial background
  - LGBTQ+
  - Students with disabilities
  - Tourist / foreigner
- Resources
  - <https://studyabroad.wvu.edu>
  - <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>



# Preparation: Vaccinations and Prescriptions

- Health History Form
- Travelers Health: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
  - By Destination: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>
  - Travel Health Notices: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>
  - COVID-19 Travel Health Notices: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid19>
- Bringing medication:
  - Is it legal to bring into host country?
  - If so, can you get it there?
  - If not, can you bring enough with you?
  - Keep in original bottle/packaging
- Continue to take medication prescribed by your doctor for physical and mental health; study abroad is not the time to experiment with getting off medication without the supervision of your health provider.

# Pandemic Safety

- COVID-19
  - The CDC advises that you travel internationally only if you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.
  - Wearing a mask makes a difference, especially in enclosed spaces.
  - Ventilation in enclosed spaces makes a difference (open a window where you can).
  - Carry hand sanitizer with you.
  - Travel only if you have international health insurance—you may need it.
  - Follow public health advice and use your critical thinking skills. Viruses don't care about politics.



# Visiting a Doctor Abroad

- Start with your resident director / host university advisor
- International health insurance through study abroad provider or WWU EdAbroad
- Campus health centers or local clinics
  - Interpreter?



# Protecting Personal Information

- Virtual kidnapping and identity theft
- Do not share too much personal information with strangers
- Tell your parents about this, so they know to verify your location if something like this happens



# Protecting Your Property

- Petty theft abroad: carry only what you're willing to lose
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Keep wallet in front pocket / wear purse over torso and keep in front of body / purses should fasten close
- Money belt for credit cards, passport, large sums of cash or keep in safe place in housing
- Keep jacket and loose pockets empty
- When seated, put property on lap or between feet; never over back of chair

# Protecting Yourself

- Be aware of surroundings; know appropriate dress
- Carry cell phone
- Go out with friends / groups / buddy system
- Watch drink being poured; don't leave unattended; don't accept from others
- Avoid walking alone at night, especially in quiet streets/alleys

# Protecting Yourself Continued

- Careful with politics / religion
- Avoid demonstrations / protests
  - Could be illegal
- Avoid driving and be careful crossing streets
  - Vehicle fatalities highest cause of death to foreigners traveling abroad
  - Use safe modes of transportation
- Traveling abroad
  - Always tell Resident Director or host country advisor
  - Do you need a different visa to visit neighboring country?
- Learn host country's version of 911



Don't pet unknown animals abroad!  
Rabies can be lethal.

# Title IX Rights

- Title IX is a civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, in all educational programs.
- Western's "Policy on Preventing and Responding to Sex Discrimination, Including Sexual Misconduct" applies to international programs.
- Title IX and Western's Policy protect everyone from sexual violence, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, and race or ethnicity.

# **Title IX Rights**

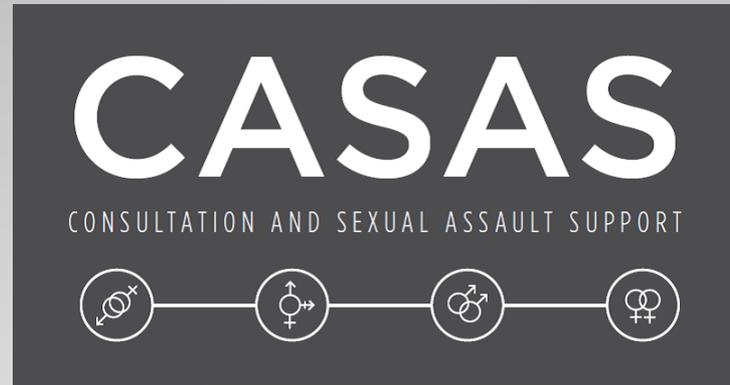
**You have the right to be free from sexual harassment and sexual violence on international programs, and support from Western if you report sexual harassment or violence.**

- Your right to support from Western exists regardless of where the conduct happens, and regardless of whether the perpetrator is another student.
- Support might include a change in living or class arrangements, connection to physical and/or mental health resources, or returning home early.

# Title IX Rights

- If you experience sexual harassment or sexual violence during an international program, report it to:
  - Your in-country program director, who must tell Western, and/or Western's Title IX Coordinator
- Title IX and Western Policy prohibit retaliating against someone for reporting sexual harassment or sexual violence.
- Confidential support resources include:
  - [CASAS](#) – On campus confidential support and counseling
  - [RAINN](#) – website links to international resources
  - DVSAS – Bellingham-based survivor resources

**CASAS is a safe, confidential resource for students who have been affected by violence.**



**(360) 650-3700 • OM 585B**

**[casas@wwu.edu](mailto:casas@wwu.edu)**

CASAS believes that violence can happen to anyone and it's never the survivor's fault.

Regardless of your identity, all students are welcome.

# Mental Health Abroad

- Studying abroad can be stressful
- Consult your healthcare provider before travel to ensure that you're stable enough for travel without your usual support system
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule
  - **Consult a doctor if you can't sleep**
  - **Avoid alcohol to induce sleep**
- Take medications as prescribed during travel, and know how your medications interact with alcohol
- Watch for tiredness, sleep changes, mood swings, withdrawal, change in appetite, feelings of hopelessness. Talk to the program director immediately!

# Developing a Coping Plan

- Have you considered making a plan for coping with these symptoms?
- Who would you talk to about making a plan?
- Specific items for the plan include:
  - Contact with a known treatment provider
  - Ways to cope with triggers
  - Sleep, eating, roommates, academics, **recreation**
  - Communication with international staff about symptoms
  - Access to treatment abroad and crisis support services (see the list on the next slide)

# Mental Health Resources

- Western's Counseling Center: Old Main 540, 360-650-3164 during business hours
- To reach the after-hours (Pacific Standard Time) on-call counselor, call 360-650-3164 and choose option 1
- Western's Student Health Center in Campus Services Facility: 360-650-3400
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- Community Crisis Line (Volunteers of America 24 hour crisis line): 1-800-584-3578
- Crisis Text Line: <http://www.crisistextline.org/>
- The Trevor Project (national 24-hour free confidential suicide hotline for gay and questioning youth), 1-866-488-7386

# Questions

