



Dear NAFSA:

Thank you for your call on March 6, 2020 regarding the *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education with Students Participating in International Travel or Study Abroad Programs*, originally issued by CDC on March 1, 2020. We appreciate that this outbreak is creating many challenges and CDC's goal is to have our guidance be helpful and clear to you and your members.

In response to our call, I want to address some of your specific questions and clarify our guidance. The guidance was posted in direct response to requests for advice from the higher education community about the risks posed by COVID-19 for students participating in educational programs outside of the United States. In the guidance, CDC does not make a distinction between study abroad or international travel programs for students. The guidance is not intended to be a mandate but rather to provide institutions with flexibility in their decision making and highlight that this may be a time to consider a shift in planning for these activities.

CDC recommends that institutions weigh multiple factors when considering the health of students traveling internationally:

**What information is being provided by CDC (Travel Health Notices)?** CDC posts Travel Health Notices to inform travelers about health threats around the world and is located at <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel>. At the highest level within this system, a Level 3 Travel Health Notice, CDC recommends that travelers avoid non-essential travel to a country. Although we do our best to provide accurate and timely information through our travel health notice system, it is important to note that these notices reflect the situation at a point in time and we do not try to predict the evolution of a health threat.

**What ability does an institution have to support students in settings affected by COVID-19?** Can an institution provide healthcare to students, considering the local healthcare system may be overwhelmed; can the institution evacuate students; support students who may find themselves quarantined; or provide housing and support to students who find themselves quarantined after return to the United States? We realize that many institutions have risk management guidance and additional sources they may turn to in order to assess these risks—CDC's Travel Health Notices may not provide the full scope of information needed for institutions to make future programming decisions.

I hope this helps clarify the intent of our guidance. CDC welcomes the opportunity to work more closely with NAFSA on issues of international student health and we look forward to an ongoing partnership with you.

Regards,

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