

## Mission Trip Safety



Safety considerations should be taken for short—term mission trips, including trips out of the country. It is important to recognize the possible risks involved with mission trips and how to prepare for those risks.



When traveling to an unfamiliar location there is always the potential for risk. Depending on the location, crime may be elevated and/or political or cultural differences may put participants at greater risk than in this country. In addition, places like hospitals, police stations, and help centers could operate differently than in the U.S. It is important to plan ahead for all possible risks, such as a vehicle accident, illness, kidnapping, robbery, natural disaster or even a state of political unrest. If an unfortunate event does happen on the mission trip, research and planning will aid your church and mission travelers in the long run. While risks will vary depending on the location of the mission trip, it is the responsibility of church leaders to realize and assess possible risks as part of the planning before the trip begins.

The church needs to adequately research the mission trip destination to ensure that the trip will be safe for travelers and to lower the possibility of surprise for the group. Through research, the church should learn possible health risks, dangers, and cultural norms. If the mission trip is taking place in a foreign country, research should be conducted on issues, such as immunizations, laws, and customs.

By developing written guidelines for your trip, the planning process will be more organized and should work to reduce the risk for trip participants. Here are some guidelines your church should consider before starting to plan a mission trip:

- Decide which church leaders will need to approve the trip plans
- Make a written proposal for the trip for church leaders to approve
- Select requirements for travelers, such as age, health, and experience
- Conduct background checks on traveling adults and determine their duties for the trip
- Decide what kinds of documents travelers must provide prior to the trip
- Designate a contact person, not on the trip, who will communicate between the church, the travelers, and their family members
- Have each traveler receive a physical examination from their physician, including any needed immunizations and prescriptions, at least six weeks before the trip to ensure their health
- Establish procedures for emergency situations

In some instances, churches may want to consider purchasing extra insurance for the mission trip. Contact Arthur J. Gallagher Risk Management Services about mission trip insurance or with any further questions regarding specific mission trip risks.

**Any questions or concerns about the above material, please feel free to contact Phil Hinton at 601-956-5810.**

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