

Best practice guide for crisis management

Prior to Recruitment

- Establish an emergency helpline.
- Create and ensure a clear crisis framework.
- Share your framework with all collaborating parties.
- Ensure all collaborating parties have their own emergency framework.
- Include your crisis framework in your materials and orientations.
- Maintain the financial capability to meet the obligations and responsibilities for a successful program.
- Ensure health insurance coverage includes all crisis situations.
- Ensure clear and transparent refund policies and include these in your agreements.
- Create a chain of command based on RACSI to provide consistent messaging – responsible-accountable-consulted-supporting-informed.
- Ensure adequate staffing and sufficient support services are provided.
- Create a communication system for emotional support.
- Be familiar with available emergency housing options.
- Develop and build relationships with government agencies that can assist with communication, flights and housing.
- Develop an emergency app.
- Ensure all above tasks have been completed prior to recruitment.

Participant Orientation

- Include a segment on managing expectations which might include possible scenarios (flight delays, missed transportation, loss of documents, natural disasters, testing positive for Covid, etc...).
- Reiterate that an exchange program can be emotionally challenging even during the best of times.
- Explain emergency communication procedures (What's app, Skype, surveys, etc...).
- Incorporate training on how to activate insurance.
- Encourage carrying insurance cards at all times.
- Gather and include any host specific natural disaster, terrorism and/or pandemic processes.
- Gather and include any country specific natural disaster, terrorism and/or pandemic processes.
- Include training on identifying factors that are out of the control of all parties (such as weather, government policies, etc) to help manage expectations.
- Include training on different levels of crisis: inconvenient (closed airspace) - direct immediate danger (hurricane) – major public health or safety issue (pandemic/civic unrest).
- Include recommendations on how to get emergency information from direct and reliable sources.
- Educate and prepare participants on how to get help off-line.
- Include a segment educating parents/guardians.
- Set expectations for response times and emergency vs. non-emergency protocols.
- Explain the refund policy.
- Reinforce messaging with multiple communications and orientations.

Action Plan

- Be prepared to liaise with airlines directly and provide guidance.
- Ensure direct channels of communication (be cautious of large social groups that are difficult to control)
- Have access to host emergency protocols readily available (link to website per host which is updated in real time) or a copy of internal procedures per host.
- Have solutions in place ready to use with a triage system (for quick communication and prioritizing).
- Encourage embassies to post guidelines for its citizens during crisis situations.
- Remember to try and work collaboratively at all times.

Future Community Collaboration

- Create a platform to share accurate information throughout the exchange community.
- Create a standard training workshop which could include repeated exercises and drills.
- Include a segment educating hosts.
- Include a segment educating parents/guardians.

