Safe Spaces Off-Campus

This handout is a supplement to the Safety and Study Abroad handout, addressing several specific areas that you should pay specific attention to as you study off-campus. While we in the Off-Campus Programs office (OCP) do our utmost to provide a secure environment in which students can live and learn, it is impossible to guarantee the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from an off-campus study experience. You are responsible to do your part by making yourself a “hard” target rather than an “easy” mark. With this in mind, we encourage you to partner with OCP by doing the following:

- Review the Safety and Study Abroad handout
- Continue to build your situational awareness skills.
- Follow directions and guidelines provided by your program director/instructor
- Factor safety into your decision-making—make smart choices about where to go, who to spend time with, when to share information, etc.
- Communicate openly with peers and directors about your plans for independent travel.

It is our hope that specific information shared in this handout will foster discussion and provide resources about staying safe and knowing how to respond in certain situations, if they were to happen while you are studying off-campus.

Alcohol

Most serious problems that students encounter overseas can be attributed to excessive use of alcohol, and research shows that many college students increase their alcohol intake while abroad, which can lead to a number of negative consequences. Students who abuse alcohol are more vulnerable to theft, sexual assault, sickness, physical injury, & poor decision-making. Think carefully about how you want to handle alcohol, talk to others about your decision, and then be true to yourself. This is especially important if you will be living in a country where the legal drinking age is 18 years old. Don’t let others talk you into things you do not want to do. Remember:

- If you decide to drink, drink moderately.
- Avoid hard liquors as drinks may be mixed more strongly than you are used to.
- Get your own drinks and, if possible, watch them being made.
- Don’t accept drinks from strangers.
- Use a buddy system when you go out to take care of each other.

Sexual Assault and Harassment

Gender roles and expectations often vary from one culture to another. You are encouraged to think about what this means for you during your off-campus experience, including what steps you can take to reduce your vulnerability to sexual harassment and assault. Examples include:

- Avoid walking alone at night or in questionable neighborhoods.
- Dress conservatively and in accordance with local customs.
- Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know.
- Be aware of the risk of friendliness being mistaken for romantic interest.
- Be straightforward, serious and firm if propositioned; you may have to deny propositions multiple times.
- Don’t be afraid to be "rude." Protect your own comfort and safety.
- Avoid eye contact with strangers.
- Avoid alcohol abuse, and never accept a drink from someone that you do not know.
Always remember that no one has the right to take sexual advantage of you. For further information regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault (including related college policies), see the Calvin College Sexual Assault and Prevention Team (SAPT) website: http://www.calvin.edu/broene/organizations/sapt/information/

**In Case of Harassment:** If you are experiencing sexual harassment, follow these guidelines:

- **Say NO!** Say it firmly without smiling or apologizing. You may also wish to write a letter to the harasser clearly communicating your objections.
- **Keep a record of what has occurred and how you responded.** Include direct quotes, dates, places, times, and witnesses to the harassment. Save all harassing cards, letters, voice mail or answering machine messages.
- **Talk to someone for support.**
- **Recognize that you have a right to report all incidences of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation regardless of the offender’s identity or position.**

The following resources are available to you in case of sexual harassment:

- Jane Hendriksma, Dean of Students for Judicial Affairs: 616-526-6116 (office), jhendrik@calvin.edu
- Don DeGraaf, Director of Off-Campus Programs: 616-558-7245 (cell), ddegraaf@calvin.edu
- Calvin College I Will Report It service: 616-526-IWRI (616-526-4974)
  - Message line designated for phone reports from students, faculty, and staff relating to sexual harassment or assault—trained Student Life professionals monitor and respond to all calls

**In Case of Assault:**

If you experience an assault:

- Go to a safe place
- Get help from a trusted person immediately.
- Get the medical and psychological support services you need immediately.
- Inform your program director/instructor and/or the Off-Campus Programs Office as soon as possible.

In addition to the contact information listed above (in case of sexual harassment), the following 24/7 resources are available to you in case of assault. You can call collect from anywhere in the world by using a land line and dialing international operator assistance.

- Calvin College Campus Safety: 616-526-6452
- RAINN (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network) confidential hotline: 800-656-4673
  - online hotline (instant messaging): www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-online-hotline