



**CIMAT**

**Crisis Management Plan for**

**Overseas Student Activities**

**June 2011**

## **SCOPE**

This Crisis Management Plan is developed by the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMAT) of City University of Hong Kong (CityU) to provide guidelines and procedures to CityU programme organiser(s)/sponsor(s) and student participants in the event of an emergency while studying and travelling outside of Hong Kong. Recognising that it is impossible to plan for all contingencies, this plan is intended to be broad and flexible so as to allow for adaptation to the critical incident (or perceived crisis) at hand, with particular emphasis put on “prevention” and “response”.

## **MISSION**

The purpose of this plan is to serve as a reference manual for staff members to assess the situation and coordinate responses to critical incidents or potential crises involving CityU students abroad and on the mainland. The plan will facilitate suitable and timely interventions to help CityU students, and the community, resume a normal state of functioning as soon as possible.

## **GOALS**

By developing this plan, CIMAT aims to:

1. Enhance awareness within the CityU community of the importance of prevention and preparedness for critical incidents;
2. Provide guidelines and a framework for programme organisers/sponsors in CityU to enable them to develop their own crises management plans that can be adapted to the particular situations of individual students or the entire group involved in real or potential crises whilst studying and travelling outside of Hong Kong;
3. Help the programme organisers/sponsors initiate effective communication and response actions that will assist students and their families when critical incidents arise; and
4. Contain and minimise the impact of critical incidents in order to help members of the CityU community resume their normal status in terms of life and studying.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **Programme Organiser/Sponsor**

The programme organiser/sponsor might refer to a college, school, department, centre, office, project convener and/or registered student association of CityU that organises and/or sponsors a programme outside Hong Kong.

### **Outbound Student**

An outbound student refers to a CityU-enrolled student who participates, individually or as a group, in a programme outside of Hong Kong organised and/or sponsored by CityU. This might include, but is not limited to, internship, summer school, language immersion programme, community service, student exchange programme, cultural tour, field trip.

### **Overseas**

The term “overseas” in this document refers to all regions outside the Hong Kong SAR, including the Mainland, Taiwan and Macao.

## **PRINCIPLES ON THE USE OF GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES**

### **Safety Comes First**

When handling cases, the programme organiser/sponsor should place the outbound students' safety and well-being as the first priority. Before taking action, always assess whether there will be further threats against the outbound students.

### **Know the Background**

The programme organiser/sponsor should gather as much information as possible when being notified of the critical incident so as to make appropriate decisions based on, as far as possible, up-to-date and accurate information.

### **Effective Communication**

The programme organiser/sponsor, when coordinating responses and taking actions encompassed within this plan, will initiate and maintain effective communication with CIMAT whenever necessary.

### **Confidentiality**

The programme organiser/sponsor shall observe and adhere to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) in Hong Kong governing the disclosure of information to third parties in and out of the CityU community. Efforts will be made to protect the identity of the student(s) involved. Information relevant to the incident will only be disclosed strictly on a "need-to-know" basis.

If the incident involves outbound students who are under the age of 18, programme organiser/sponsor may take the decision to inform the parents/guardians about the incident without obtaining the consent from the students.

### **Liability**

If the critical incident is under a law enforcement authority open investigation or court hearing, it is inappropriate for the programme organiser/sponsor to comment on the situation. The programme organiser/sponsor should refer inquiries, where appropriate, to Communications and Public Relations Office (CPRO) at CityU if press enquiries are received.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

The programme organiser/sponsor should plan and act in a sensitive way and ensure that cultural difference(s) will be taken into account when responding to critical incidents involving students and overseas partners with different cultural, political, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

### **Know the Limit**

No single plan can meet the needs of all contingencies. Be aware of and keep clear and consistent expectations. Know there are limitations and do not over commit.

## **CATEGORY OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

- Alcohol/drugs abuse
- Distressed/disruptive behaviour
- Student arrested or accused of a criminal/civil offence
- Serious illness, physical/mental
- Sexual assault or rape
- Political unrest/terrorist threat
- Natural disaster/epidemic

- Missing
- Death
- Accident
- Any other incident that may be identified to be a real or potential crisis by the programme organiser/sponsor

## **GUIDELINES TO PROGRAMME ORGANISER/SPONSOR**

Programme organiser(s)/sponsor(s) should:

1. Have a pre-selected crisis management team in place with, at least, 2 staff contact points at the home CityU campus (including programme director/leader). Always keep CIMAT updated of the dual-contact numbers;
2. Develop and maintain an emergency response plan at the programme level, based on this CIMAT crisis management plan, that can be adapted to the particular situations of overseas crises involving individual students or the entire group;
3. Operate and provide a 24-hour contact number to Campus Security of CityU via CIMAT;
4. Work with the overseas partner(s) to develop plans and communication procedures on what to do to provide on-site support to affected student(s) and to alert the programme organiser/sponsor in the event of an emergency;
5. Keep a detailed written programme itinerary with written instructions on how the outbound individuals or group can be contacted in an emergency;
6. Identify and require all outbound students to purchase insurance which will include medical coverage, medical evacuation, repatriation, and 24/7 SOS service;
7. Know how to seek counselling support for outbound students overseas;
8. Compile and maintain a participant data file for each outbound student which must include:
  - a. A signed **student agreement** including a statement stating that the outbound student has received and understood the orientation materials;
  - b. 2 emergency contact numbers of outbound student's family, guardian or next of kin. Obtain the student's consent that by providing these emergency contact numbers, the student agrees and authorises the CityU and/or the programme organiser/sponsor to release the student's information to a third party within and/or external to CityU on a "need-to-know" basis;
  - c. Copies of passport and visa (if applicable);
  - d. Information on the student's health condition, physical and mental;
  - e. Copy of insurance policy and instructions on the use of the insurance while overseas;
  - f. Address and contact information of the outbound student's residence overseas.
9. Develop and provide a safety profile to all outbound students during pre-departure orientations. The following information should be included:
  - a. Emergency numbers in the host country/city for police and ambulance service;
  - b. Emergency contact numbers (with country and area codes) of on-site coordinator and/or overseas partner;
  - c. Emergency contact numbers of the programme director/leader of the programme organiser/sponsor back on campus;

- d. 24-hour hotline of CityU Campus Security;
- e. Consular information of the nearest Chinese embassy in host country;
- f. Hotline of Hong Kong Immigration Department;
- g. Travel warnings (if applicable) issued by the HKSAR and/or the Chinese government(s). If there is a travel advisory issued during a programme, the programme organiser/sponsor will communicate and work with on-site coordinator and/or overseas partner and notify outbound students of the situation and contingency plan;
- h. Information about safety and security issues specific to the country. Advise the students to avoid travel to or through any location where tensions exist and travel may be dangerous;
- i. Information about how to seek counseling support from local resources for students in need.
- j. Information about insurance, if arranged by the programme organiser/sponsor, and emergency contact numbers of insurance company including the 24/7 SOS hotline;
- k. Procedures for a medical emergency:
  - Students should be informed, during programme application and pre-departure orientation stages, that they are required to notify the programme organiser/sponsor about any medical emergency. Such information will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be shared by the programme organiser/sponsor on a “need-to-know” basis only;
  - Programme organiser/sponsor should ensure each student participant will access and read the following statement: “Integration into a new culture and learning environment could place particular challenges, both mental and physical, on an individual, if you are currently receiving treatment for any chronic illness it is strongly recommended that you talk with the programme director/leader, counsellor or your doctor about plans to manage your health condition overseas”;

10. Provide a pre-departure orientation programme for all outbound students, specifying potential dangers, expected behaviours, and what contingency responses students should take to prepare for or in time of emergencies.

## **GUIDELINES TO OUTBOUND STUDENTS**

Outbound students should:

1. Consider your health and other personal circumstances when applying for or accepting a place in an overseas programme;
2. Read and get familiar with all materials issued by the programme organiser/sponsor relating to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and religious conditions in the host country/city;
3. Provide programme organiser/sponsor with accurate and complete physical and mental health information;
4. Provide 2 emergency contact numbers of your family, guardian or next of kin to programme organiser/sponsor. By providing the emergency contact numbers, you agree and authorise the CityU programme organiser/sponsor to release your personal and academic information to a third party within or external to CityU on a “need-to-know” basis;
5. Assume responsibility for taking care of your personal preparation for the programme and participate in pre-departure orientation;

6. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct, rules and regulations of the host institution, as well as laws and customs of the host country/city. While in a foreign country or sovereignty, you are subject to the local laws;
7. Accept responsibility for your own decisions and actions. Ignorance or negligence is never an excuse for violating the laws;
8. Stay vigilant at all times as crime exists in all countries and all cities. Avoid becoming a crime victim;
9. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance coverage that will cover medical service and medical evacuation;
10. Know how to use the insurance information. Keep a copy of the insurance policy with you at all times and leave the original policy with your family;
11. Make 2 copies of your passport/travel document. Leave one with your family and bring one with you on the trip and keep it separately from your passport/travel document. Whilst you are travelling, protect your passport/travel document;
12. Learn as much as you can about your country/city before you go. Behave in a manner that is reasonable and respectful of the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to treat you in a similar manner;
13. Develop with your family a plan for telephone or e-mail contact, so that in case of emergency you will be able to communicate with your parents directly about your safety and well-being;
14. Take a credit card or make sure you will have access to additional funds in case of an emergency;
15. Keep the following emergency numbers with you at all times:
  - a. Emergency contact numbers of on-site coordinator and/or your host institution;
  - b. Emergency numbers in the host city/country for police and ambulance;
  - c. Emergency contact numbers of the programme organiser/sponsor in CityU;
  - d. 24-hour CityU Campus Security Hotline (collect calls acceptable):  
+ 852 2788 8888; +852 3442 8888
  - e. Contact number of the insurance company including the 24/7 SOS hotline;
  - f. 24-hour hotline of Hong Kong Immigration Department: +852 1868;
  - g. Contact number of the nearest Chinese embassy in your host country (if applicable).

## **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

1. The programme organiser/sponsor in CityU will coordinate responses to a real or perceived crisis of an outbound individual or group of students.
2. Once the programme organiser/sponsor is informed of the situation, the programme-level crisis management team will be called upon to gather relevant information for initial assessment.
3. A crisis coordinator will be assigned to regularly update the programme director/leader and other relevant parties about the evolving situation. He/She will keep a log of information and actions taken, updated as the crisis evolves.

4. The crisis management team will evaluate and act, promptly and appropriately, to coordinate responses to the critical incident. In the course of attending the incident, the programme organiser/sponsor may need to disclose information to internal and external parties concerned on a “need-to-know” basis, or draw coordinated support from relevant parties. In some cases, however, the programme organiser/sponsor may not involve other parties if the situation can be contained and resolved locally.
5. Depending on the severity, complexity, urgency and scale of the incident, the programme organiser/sponsor may need to escalate the issue to CIMAT. If appropriate, the chairman of CIMAT will take over the reporting and decision-making line and summon CIMAT members and relevant parties (e.g. Legal Counsel) for meetings to work out coordinated strategies in response to serious crisis involving CityU student(s) overseas.

### **CAMPUS EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

Contact with the programme organiser/sponsor or CIMAT Chair / Secretary / members during non-office hours and public holidays should be made through the Campus Security at CityU.

Campus Security will accept collect calls for genuine emergencies. The control of the CityU 24-hour emergency hotlines will then contact the programme organiser/sponsor concerned or the relevant CIMAT.

24-hour Campus Security Number: +852 2788 8888; +852 3442 8888

--- THE END ---

### **Resources & References:**

- ❖ Patricia A. Burak and William W. Hoffa. “Crisis Management in a Cross-cultural Setting.” Revised edition 2001. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Washing D.C., USA.
- ❖ Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D., CTS, George S. Everly, Jr., Ph.D., CTS, Daniel W. Clark, Ph.D. “Strategic Response to Crisis.” 2006. International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., USA.
- ❖ “Education Abroad Emergency Protocol.” September 2010. Education Abroad Committee, Loyola University New Orleans, USA.
- ❖ “Emergency Response Protocol for International Education Programs.” The Office of Education Abroad, University of Oklahoma, USA.