

## A LETTER ABOUT THE NYU STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES

December 2008

Dear Parents,

We are delighted to welcome your son or daughter to New York University Study Abroad. Your student is about to embark on an incredibly exciting chapter in his or her academic development. Our Study Abroad Program provides a unique opportunity for students to experience an entirely new culture from an academically rigorous perspective.

The purpose of this communication is to help facilitate your son's or daughter's adjustment to living overseas; and, more generally, to provide you with the information that your student needs to be best prepared for a successful study abroad experience. While the issues described here are unlikely to surface, they can be very disruptive to a student's life. We therefore ask you to read this letter carefully, and then to discuss these concerns with your son or daughter and with the University's Wellness Exchange. We hope that you are able to identify your student's specific needs and work with us to plan so that their needs are met. It is important to note that the information provided is general in nature, so please do not hesitate to contact us with program-specific questions—local health facilities **vary considerably**.

In the "Resources" section at the conclusion of this letter, phone numbers and email addresses are provided for offices that can respond to any questions you may have about the issues raised in this letter. Please retain a copy of this letter for your records.

### **Making the Transition Successful – Your Role**

As you know, physical and mental health are important factors in a student's ability to succeed in college. While studying abroad, students will immerse themselves in a country filled with new academic, social and cultural opportunities. This will be a wonderful time of new discoveries that will provide knowledge and experiences that will last a lifetime. As with all new experiences, however, there are potential stressors as well.

Students may need the guidance of medical and mental health counseling professionals. In particular, students who are already experiencing emotional or physical difficulties—or who have experienced such issues in the past—benefit from ongoing professional assistance while abroad that enable them to take full advantage of the experience. Students should take responsibility for their own health and welfare by planning for and following through on their individual needs, taking into account that the range of services available at NYU in New York City **is not** available at the study abroad sites. Although study abroad will be, in many ways, a new beginning, **it is important that students continue any on-going mental health counseling or medical care and currently prescribed medications while abroad to ensure that they feel their best and can fully enjoy their experience.**

If you need help determining whether your son or daughter should travel abroad, please contact the NYU Wellness Exchange at 212-443-9999. This service is staffed by licensed mental health professionals at NYU and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to assist with consultation, support, and emergencies after hours.

As a parent, you can assist us in planning for your student's successful time abroad. ***We encourage you to think about your son's or daughter's circumstances prior to departure, consult with a health professional, and determine if studying abroad is appropriate at this time if, either presently or in the past, he or she has:***

- had a chronic medical condition such as asthma or diabetes, etc.,
- been in psychotherapy or taken psychiatric medications,
- had an eating disorder, or,
- had difficulties with alcohol and/or drug related substance abuse

### **Medical and Mental Health Services Abroad**

NYU does not offer on-site medical services, long-term psychotherapy, or ongoing psychiatric services for students studying abroad. Instead, a student who needs regular or frequent care is encouraged to get referrals to private health and mental health providers in the city where he or she will be studying. There may be delays in securing appointments depending on availability, so it is best to start this process as early as possible. **Please be aware that prescription medications cannot be mailed internationally due to customs restrictions, and certain medications may not be available abroad. In addition, prescriptions written in the U.S. are not honored abroad, so your son or daughter should either secure enough medication for the entire duration of their stay, or plan to use local mental health or medical professionals who can write prescriptions.** Even if your son or daughter plans to travel with enough medication for the duration of their program, local customs agents may confiscate medications if it appears that the amounts are greater than for personal use, so please plan accordingly. Finally, it is important to have planned routine follow-up care at the international site by a health professional, particularly if your student is taking medications. It is important that you discuss these issues with a health professional before sending your son or daughter abroad.

### **Importance of Obtaining Adequate Insurance**

As part of the semester based NYU overseas program in which your student is participating, they have been enrolled in a global health insurance plan called HTH Worldwide which will provide them with easier access to medical and mental health services and protection in the event they become ill or injured while abroad with New York University, or require ongoing health or mental health care during their time away. This new health benefit will work in conjunction with their primary (US based) health insurance plan to supplement their coverage abroad. **Note that students ARE STILL REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN their US based PRIMARY HEALTH coverage per NYU Policy.** HTH will support and enhance the insurance a student already has in place by providing 24/7 access to English speaking, western-trained health providers in many locations where available; no copays for necessary visits when using network providers; access to in network hospitals when emergencies arise, etc. Remember, the HTH worldwide plan has coverage limits. It is not an adequate substitute for U.S. based primary health insurance.

Before your student departs, they will receive an email from HTH Worldwide directly with the subject line "NYU-Global Important Insurance Information." Please ensure that your student reads this email carefully and activates their access to the tools and information provided on the website, including the "Well-Prepared" Profile. Your student must also print their health insurance ID card from the web site before they depart. This is very important, as this card is proof of their coverage.

For questions regarding global insurance-related concerns, please contact NYU Student Health Insurance Services at [health.insurance@nyu.edu](mailto:health.insurance@nyu.edu) or (212)443-1020. Tuition insurance is also available and is recommended to protect families from unanticipated financial consequences of physical and/or psychological illness. For more information, please contact Philip Beatty at A.W.G. Dewar, Inc., (617) 774-1555 or [www.collegerefund.com](http://www.collegerefund.com). There are important limitations and exclusions, so please read the policy very carefully.

### **Student Medical Health Questionnaire**

**All students traveling abroad need to submit a completed Student Health History questionnaire to the Student Health Center by November 26, 2008.** The Medical History form which is enclosed in this mailing must be returned by mail or in person to the Student Health Center, Immunization Record Services, 726 Broadway, Suite 357, New York, New York 10003. **In a time of crisis, the ability of our staff and local health professionals to help will be hindered if we do not have accurate health information for your son or daughter on file, including a detailed past medical and mental health history.** In an emergency, our ability to access this information is critical. Please return your form in a timely manner.

## **Students in Need**

The University will make every effort to assist students if they experience health or mental health challenges while abroad. In this regard, on rare occasions, it may be necessary for you, the parent, to travel to the study abroad site to assist your son or daughter and/or accompany him or her back to the United States. The decision to allow your son or daughter to remain in or withdraw from their program rests solely with the University. In the rare instance where your travel may be necessary, it is important that you think through the steps necessary to take a trip abroad before the semester begins. For example, your passport should be valid and plans should be in place if, on short notice, you need to travel abroad (see also “Importance of Obtaining Adequate Insurance” above). Of course, if a student has made the decision on their own to end their study abroad experience early, we will assist them in navigating any academic and travel issues they may encounter.

## **Health Concerns Specific to the country in which your son or daughter will be studying**

While your son or daughter is abroad, it is important to have accurate and reliable health information about the part of the world where he or she is studying. In our student materials, we provide links to the following official entities, and recommend that you look at these resources with regard to all health issues, including Avian Flu and Malaria:

- the Center for Disease Control, U.S. State Department
- the World Health Organization
- local governmental health agencies
- local media sources

Naturally, you will also hear news reports from other sources. While the news can be helpful, we strongly encourage you to confirm any international health reports by checking official sources like those listed above.

The University maintains plans to respond to significant community-wide problems that may arise in the areas where our study abroad sites are located. However, in the event of a pandemic incident where contagion is an issue and government actions (such as quarantine and the closure of borders) can affect our ability to respond, we may be delayed in providing assistance. We share with you these realities because we are aware that the decision to study abroad is a personal one, and should be made with as much information as possible.

The University’s medical professionals recommend that all students:

- Secure an annual flu inoculation. Since flu vaccinations may not be available prior to departure from the U.S. (they are only available at specific times of the year), students should speak with their health care providers to confirm if a vaccine is available or needed.
- Discuss maintenance medication and vaccinations with a health professional. Our student preparation materials, available to students via NYU’s secure online system, “Blackboard”, includes recommendations and links to various official sources of information on this topic, depending on where your student will study. Often, medical professionals recommend that all people who travel abroad receive certain pre-departure vaccinations or bring particular medicines with them - such as Cipro (ciprofloxacin), which is an antibiotic - or anti-malarial prophylaxis medications, so that they are prepared in the event of a medical issue. Please be sure that the advice of a medical professional – wherever the student is traveling – is closely followed.

## **Family Support Is Irreplaceable**

The support and supervision that students receive from their families is irreplaceable. If your son or daughter demonstrates the need for your continued close involvement, we encourage you to provide it, taking into account the challenges that different time zones, telephone costs, and physical distance can create, especially in the event of an emergency. Communication may be more difficult in the country where your son or daughter is studying. For example, access to land-line phones varies from country to country, making mobile phones the best option in many cases. Costs may be higher for many services, and internet connectivity is often not as reliable or fast as it is in the United States. **If, as you communicate with your son or daughter, you become aware that he or she**

**may be in need of help, please contact us – we want to hear from you.** The staff at each site can help address your immediate concerns. Always know that you can contact the NYU Office of Public Safety **24 hours a day** at 212-998-2222.

### **Resources**

If you need help determining whether your son or daughter should travel abroad, please contact the NYU Wellness Exchange at 212-443-9999. Other NYU health and mental health resources can be found on the attached sheet. If you need assistance finding health or mental health practitioners in the city where your son or daughter will be studying, or have other inquiries - either before departure or once your son or daughter is abroad - please email the Director of Global Health, Zoe Ragouzeos, LCSW at [zoe.ragouzeos@nyu.edu](mailto:zoe.ragouzeos@nyu.edu), who can help you directly, or put you in contact with the on-site staff. Local resources are also included in our materials, which may be accessed on-line by students through Blackboard. Visit our website for more information ([www.nyu.edu/studyabroad](http://www.nyu.edu/studyabroad)).

**Should there be an emergency involving the immediate physical well-being of your son or daughter while he or she is abroad, you can always call the NYU Office of Public Safety at 212-998-2222, twenty-four hours a day.** Note that when your student arrives at their international site, he or she will also receive a local number that can be accessed, 24/7, if he or she is in need of help.

NYU places the highest priority on the academic success and overall well-being of its students. We look forward to an effective partnership with you and your son or daughter in achieving these goals.

Sincerely,

Henry Chung, M.D.  
Associate Vice President for Student Health  
Executive Director of the Student Health Center



## NEW YORK UNIVERSITY Relevant Health and Mental Health Resources at NYU

A number of offices at NYU offer health-related services to help students make the most of their academic experience. Students studying abroad may contact these offices with additional questions, or if they are already utilizing their services, should advise them that they will be studying abroad.

### **Department of Public Safety**

The officers in the department of Public Safety are committed to maintaining the highest level of safety and security for the members of the NYU community anywhere in the world. In an emergency situation concerning your son or daughter, you may call **212-998-2222** to get the immediate assistance, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

### **Wellness Exchange**

The Wellness Exchange is the key to accessing NYU's extensive health and mental health resources. A central feature common to all these services is a private, 24/7 hotline that puts students in touch with mental health professionals who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns including medical issues, academic stress, depression, sexual assault, anxiety, alcohol and other drug dependence, sexually transmitted infections and eating disorders. The Wellness Exchange is also available for students who just need to talk—for whatever reason. The hotline is available to anyone who needs to use it – students, parents, friends, or anyone concerned about your son or daughter. We also have a Crisis Response Counselor on call 24 hours a day should your son or daughter need this kind of assistance. You can access the Wellness Exchange anytime at 212-443-9999 or at [www.nyu.edu/999](http://www.nyu.edu/999).

**The Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities** (212-998-4980) provides comprehensive services and programs for qualified students with psychological, mobility, visual, chronic, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Disabilities. The Center is committed to assisting students in achieving as much independence as possible. Students who wish to receive assistance from the Moses Center must provide documentation of their disability. All communication with the center is confidential.

### **Additional Information on the NYU website**

NYU also has extensive information about these services on the web. You may wish to view the NYU Wellness Exchange website at [www.nyu.edu/999](http://www.nyu.edu/999), or the Student Health Center website at <http://www.nyu.edu/shc>.