Government Connection: Understanding CDC Travel Health Notices and Guidance for Travel Abroad

August 20th, 2PM Eastern Time
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- The volume on the computer speakers
- The soundcard on the computer
Government Connection:
Understanding CDC Travel Health Notices and Guidance for Travel Abroad

August 20th, 2PM Eastern Time
Dr. Cindy Friedman
Chief, Travelers’ Health Branch, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Chris Cook
Associate Director of International Travel Health & Safety, Cornell University

Allison Cash Spiro

Caroline Donovan White
Welcome
Audience Poll
Understanding CDC Travel Health Notices
Audience Poll
Lessons Learned, Monitoring Strategies, and Planning
Discussion
NAFSA Resources, Advocacy, Upcoming Events
Please respond using the poll feature on your screen
The poll is anonymous.
Understanding CDC Travel Health Notices
Understanding CDC Travel Health Notices and Guidance for Travel Abroad during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Cindy R. Friedman, MD
Chief, Travelers’ Health Branch
Division of Global Migration and Quarantine

August 20, 2020
Studying abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic: Countries where students are hosted may change based on risk

Europe hosts over half of U.S. study abroad students.

32% of US study abroad students were hosted by UK, Italy and Spain

* 2017/18 data from Institute of International Education 2019 Open Doors Report
Overview

- CDC’s Travel Health Notices
  - History
  - Purpose
  - Levels
- Travel Health Notices during the COVID pandemic
  - Risk assessment criteria
- Considerations for study abroad in 2021
  - Risk mitigation strategy
Travel Health Notices (THNs) contain up to date information about health issues that impact travelers’ health

- Target audience is US outbound travelers, clinicians, government officials, policy makers, public health partners and others

- Provide important information about outbreaks, special events or gatherings, and natural disasters, in specific international destinations
CDC notifies travelers and other audiences about health threats in destinations around the world through Travel Health Notices

- 2003: THNs developed during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak
- 2013: THNs refined during avian flu (H7N9) emergency response
  - country specific notices begun
- 3 levels of notice were established based on risk mitigation strategy
Three levels of notice based on risk mitigation strategy

Types of Notices

**Warning Level 3 (Red)**: Avoid all non-essential travel to this destination. The outbreak is of high risk to travelers and no precautions are available to protect against the identified increased risk.

**Alert Level 2 (Yellow)**: Practice enhanced precautions for this destination. The Travel Health Notice describes additional precautions added, or defines a specific at-risk population.

**Watch Level 1 (Green)**: Practice usual precautions for this destination, as described in the Travel Health Notice and/or on the destination page. This includes being up-to-date on all recommended vaccines and practicing appropriate mosquito avoidance.

March 2020: Level 3 Global COVID-19 Pandemic Notice issued
Travel Health Notices during COVID-19 pandemic are based on destination risk level

- August 2020: Transitioned to individual country risk assessments
- Based on two sets of criteria (primary and secondary), which contain information about:
  - Virus transmission within a destination (primary criteria)
    AND
  - Healthcare capacity and public health infrastructure within a destination (secondary criteria)
- All primary criteria are assessed over the last 28 days (2 incubation periods for COVID-19)
  - The incubation period is the time between exposure to the virus to developing infection, usually 2 to 14 days for COVID-19
Primary criteria are calculated using World Health Organization COVID-19 surveillance data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 Travel Health Notice Levels* Destinations with Populations Greater than 300,000 People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL 3 HIGH RISK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of new cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence Rate (per 100,000 people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Case Trajectory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*All criteria are assessed over the last 28 days (2 incubation periods for COVID-19)
THN De-Escalation Mechanism

• Primary criteria – three keys needed to “open the door” to de-escalation
  – New case count
  – Incidence rate (New cases/100,000)
  – New case trajectory

• Secondary criteria must
  – Align with primary criteria
  – Confirm de-escalation is warranted
Secondary Criteria are qualitative and come from official destination sources (e.g., ministry of health websites)

- Healthcare capacity

- Public health infrastructure

Journal of Biological Dynamics, 14:1, 621-632
How a THN is de-escalated

All Primary Criteria satisfied
1. New Case Count
2. Incidence Rate
3. New Case Trajectory

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Secondary Criteria met and consistent with Primary Criteria

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DO NOT DE-ESCALATE
Continue to monitor criteria

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DE-ESCALATE
Example: New Zealand has no THN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CRITERIA</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>0.31/100,000</th>
<th>Decelerating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New case count &lt;50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence rate &lt;0.75/100,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New case trajectory decelerating or stable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>28-day Indicators (Consistency with 1° Criteria)</th>
<th>1 = Fully Consistent</th>
<th>2 = Partially Consistent</th>
<th>3 = Inconsistent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEALTHCARE CAPACITY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitalizations</td>
<td>Continuous decline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital beds</td>
<td>Beds available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventilators</td>
<td>Ventilators available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICU beds</td>
<td>ICU beds available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective surgery or procedures</td>
<td>Allowed to resume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing positivity rate</td>
<td>&lt;3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact tracing of cases</td>
<td>&gt;75%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented exportations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

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  - History
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Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education for Student International Travel or Study Abroad Programs

- Consider postponing or canceling student international travel programs
- Students may face unpredictable circumstances, such as travel restrictions, challenges returning home, and challenges accessing health care while abroad
- If the choice is made to continue student international travel programs evaluate the risks in the host country by checking:
  - CDC’s COVID-19 Travel Health Notices by destination
  - US State Department for travel restrictions for U.S. citizens
  - Requirements for U.S. citizens upon entry
  - COVID-19-specific mandates (e.g., testing, quarantine)
Some questions before considering student travel

• Is COVID-19 spreading at the destination?
  A level 3 THN means avoid all non-essential travel
  The more cases at your destination, the more risk of infection

• Is the student someone who might be at increased risk for getting severe disease from COVID-19?
  Anyone can get very ill, but people of any age with certain underlying medical conditions like diabetes are at increased risk

• Does the destination have requirements or restrictions for travelers? Check with the Office of Foreign affairs, Ministry of Health, or US Dept of State about entry requirements such as COVID-19 testing or restrictions such as quarantine
  – If the traveler tests positive on arrival, they may be required to isolate. They may be prevented from returning to the United States, as scheduled
Is COVID-19 spreading at your destination?

Example: Indonesia

Warning – Level 3, COVID-19 risk in Indonesia is high

- Indonesia reported 2081 new cases of COVID-19 on 2020-08-17. In total, 139,549 cases have been reported there
- CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Indonesia
- Travelers at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 should consider postponing all travel, including essential travel, to Indonesia.
- COVID-19 risk in Indonesia is high
- If you get sick in Indonesia and need medical care, healthcare resources may be overwhelmed
Is the traveler someone who might be at increased risk of getting severe illness from COVID-19?

- Age
- Immune status
- Medical history (e.g., diabetes, asthma, lupus on certain medications, dialysis, cancer chemotherapy)
- Smoking
- Obesity

In addition to wearing a mask and social distancing there are additional ways to reduce risk at the destination

- **Mode of travel**
  - Avoid crowds on public transportation

- **Special activities**
  - Avoid cruises, mass gatherings

- **Living conditions**
  - Avoid crowded living conditions (e.g. dormitories with shared rooms and bathrooms)

- **Purpose of program may increase risk**
  - Programs in healthcare settings might be riskier
Activities in the host country such as Nile river cruises pose an added risk for rapid spread of disease even beyond the voyage

- 101 persons on nine separate Nile River cruises during February 11–March 5 returned to 18 states and had positive SARS-CoV-2 tests, nearly doubling the total number of known COVID-19 cases in the United States at that time.
It is not just the student traveler who is at risk
After travel it is important to continue to protect others

- **Watch your distance**: Stay at least 6 feet from anyone both indoors and outdoors
- **Wear a mask**: to keep your nose and mouth covered when you are outside of your home
- **Wash your hands**: often or use hand sanitizer
- **Watch your health**: Look for symptoms of COVID-19
Pre-COVID-19 global travel was on the rise

In 2019, there were 241 million International passengers, up 2.4% from 2018

*Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Department of Transportation, March 2020*
What will global travel look like during the COVID-19 era?
What will International travel look like in 2021 and beyond?

- Health attestations?
- Point of travel testing?
- Immunity passports?
- Vaccination?
- On-patient storage of vaccination history?

Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education for Students International Travel or Study Abroad Programs

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- Students may face unpredictable circumstances, such as travel restrictions, challenges returning home, and challenges accessing health care while abroad.
- If the choice is made to continue student international travel programs evaluate the risks in the host country by checking:
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  - US State Department for travel restrictions for U.S. citizens
  - Requirements for U.S. citizens upon entry
  - COVID-19-specific mandates (e.g., testing, quarantine)
For more information, contact CDC
1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)

Thank you

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Please respond using the poll feature on your screen
The poll is anonymous.
Lessons Learned, Monitoring Strategies, and Planning
Lessons learned

- A good starting point...
  - Travel registry - Response plan - Travel committee - Assistance provider - Policy
- With gaps...
  - Totally new crisis with totally new players
  - Wide-spread incident response plan
  - Faculty travel
  - Variety in partner response
  - Transparency
Strategies for monitoring the virus

- DoS, CDC, Other country’s travel advice
  - https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice
  - https://travel.gc.ca/
- Daily briefings
- Peers
- OSAC
  - https://www.osac.gov/
- Insurance providers
- Watch for trends – airlines, quarantines, entrance bans
Free resources

- Open source
  - Our World in Data (cases, death, testing): https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-data
  - IATA Travel Centre (Flight restrictions): https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/world.php
Planning

Optics  Risk Tolerance  Finance
Criteria to consider

- Travel Considerations
  - Assistance provider advice
  - CDC
  - Dept. of State
  - Entrance restrictions
  - Essential?
  - Flight options
  - Planned Itinerary
  - Quarantine
  - Your own restrictions

- COVID-19 Considerations
  - Case/death/hospitalizations
  - COVID-19 negative
  - Healthcare infrastructure
  - Testing

- Traveler Considerations
  - Risk awareness/mitigation measures
  - Familiarity with destination
  - Completed pre-departure courses?
  - Acceptance of responsibility/Waiver

https://global.cornell.edu/travel/international-travel-guidelines-policy-and-recommendations
Q&A with Panelists

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Reminders

• Today’s Government Connection was recorded and will be available to watch on demand.

• Download the handout from today’s presentation in the “files” section.

• Continue today’s conversation in the Education Abroad Knowledge Community Network – visit www.nafsa.org/eakcnetwork
SAVE THE DATE

• October 8 – NAFSA Virtual Workshop Student Health and Safety Abroad
• October 15 – NAFSA Virtual Workshop Risk Assessment and Crisis Management in Education Abroad  www.nafsa.org/workshops
Help Secure COVID-19 Resources for International Education

TAKING ACTION ➔

connectingourworld.org
NAFSA: Association of International Educators is the world's largest nonprofit association dedicated to international education and exchange, working to advance policies and practices that ensure a more interconnected, peaceful world today and for generations to come.

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