
NAVIGATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

study abroad programs



INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

ABOUT

Each year, University of Notre Dame students embark on study abroad programs that offer enriching academic and personal experiences in diverse global settings. These opportunities provide valuable learning and cultural engagement, but also come with unique challenges, including the heightened risk of sexual harassment.

This guide is designed to empower students studying abroad by raising awareness of these risks and equipping them with strategies to foster accountability, set personal boundaries, and advocate for themselves and others. By understanding the complexities of different social environments, students can contribute to a culture of safety and respect while navigating their international experience.

Content Warning

This guide discusses sensitive topics, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, cultural challenges, interpersonal boundaries, and systemic barriers to reporting. These topics may bring up difficult emotions, particularly for those with personal experiences related to harassment or trauma. Please know that it's okay to pause, step away, or seek support as you engage with this material. Your well-being comes first, and you are encouraged to approach this guide at your own pace and in a way that feels safe for you.

You are not alone, and support is available. Visit equity.nd.edu to find resources and assistance.

THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY



The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) is responsible for administering the University's Policy on Sexual Harassment, Discriminatory Harassment, and Other Sex-Based Misconduct in accordance with applicable law. The prevention, outreach, education, and training team (POET) fulfills OIE's mission to provide consultation, training, and resources to the University community regarding equal opportunity, affirmative action, diversity, and prevent discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. POET is committed to empowering a community that honors the agency and inherent dignity of all individuals through a conscious collective effort to prevent power-based harm.

For questions about the content of this guide, please contact OIE at equity@nd.edu or (574) 631-0444.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Compared to their on-campus peers, students studying abroad face an increased risk of sexual misconduct, including violence and harassment. Several risk factors contribute to this trend, including:



Unfamiliarity with Reporting Systems. Uncertainty and lack of knowledge about how and where reports should be filed results in fewer students utilizing reporting mechanisms available to them. This gap in awareness can increase victimization by leaving individuals without clear pathways to seek help, access support, or hold perpetrators accountable.



Heightened Language Barrier. Language barriers increase the risk of sexual violence and harassment by limiting a person's ability to communicate boundaries, understand consent, and seek help, increasing vulnerability to coercion and exploitation. Perpetrators may take advantage of these barriers and survivors often face challenges in reporting, accessing legal or medical services, and receiving support due to difficulties with interpretation, cultural stigmas, or a lack of resources in their primary language.



Social Isolation. Being away from familiar support networks, such as family, friends, and home institutions, can lead to feelings of loneliness and uncertainty, which may hinder individuals' ability to access resources or report incidents when they occur. Isolation can increase victimization by making individuals more vulnerable to coercion, manipulation, or harm without the immediate support of trusted connections.



Engagement in New or Exploratory Behaviors. While studying abroad, students may be more inclined to experiment with substances, engage in unfamiliar sexual experiences, or explore new cultural environments. Students often increase alcohol use in countries where drinking laws are more lenient or where alcohol plays a significant cultural role. Among other risk factors, increased alcohol consumption is frequently cited as a contributing factor to sexual victimization.



Lack of Cultural Competency. New or different cultural norms and societal hierarchies are critical factors that can increase the risk of victimization. In many countries, deeply entrenched gender roles and patriarchal values can normalize harassment and minimize the perceived severity of sexual violence. The impacts can be further exacerbated on those with intersectional identities (e.g., LGBTQIA2S+ students of color).



New or Heightened Power Dynamics. As students form new relationships with peers, faculty, and program and housing staff, power dynamics can emerge based on authority, cultural norms, or dependency for support. These imbalances can discourage students from setting boundaries or reporting misconduct.

PROACTIVE PREVENTION MEASURES

The following strategies are designed to enhance protective factors and apply harm reduction principles, but it's essential to remember that a survivor's actions or inactions never determine responsibility for harm—it always lies solely with the perpetrator.

ENHANCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS.

Understand Local Laws and Resources. Research the laws, protections, and support networks of your host communities and any countries you may visit while abroad.

Establish Clear Personal Boundaries. Clearly communicate your boundaries with confidence and reinforce them in a way that prioritizes your comfort and well-being.

Build Social Connections. Establish a network of peers and trusted community members to strengthen your ability to navigate challenging situations.

Be Mindful in Environments with Alcohol. Stay aware of your surroundings when alcohol or other substances are present, as it can sometimes be used to exploit vulnerabilities. Note that exploitation is never the fault of the person being harmed.

Research Cultural Competency and Interpersonal Skills. Understand cultural differences and the intersections of gender, race, and socioeconomic factors to safely navigate environments and identify when cultural misunderstandings are being exploited.

Prioritize Emotional and Mental Health Support. Utilize available resources and self-care strategies to address cultural adjustments, academic pressures, and the emotional impact of being in a new environment.

APPLY HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES.

Know Emergency Phrases. Learn key local phrases like "I need help," or "Call the police."

Utilize Program Contacts. Keep key resources and primary support contacts for your study abroad program easily accessible.

Establish a Check-In System. Check-in regularly with friends or family. Let someone know your plans, location, and estimated return time.

Use a Buddy System. Whenever possible, travel or attend events in pairs or groups to provide mutual support and ensure someone is available to help.

Trust Your Instincts. Your intuition is usually informed by cues about your environment.

UNDERSTAND HOW TO REPORT AND ACCESS RESOURCES.

HOW TO REPORT.

If you are subjected to, witness, or learn about sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it immediately. Reports can be made to local law enforcement and/or the University. To notify the University, file a report at speakup.nd.edu.

What happens after a report is made to the University?

A staff member from the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) will reach out to you via email with information about support and resources to address the situation.

Depending on the circumstances, additional reporting mechanisms may be available within your host institution or community. OIE staff can assist in understanding these options.

Have questions about reporting?

Contact OIE at (574) 631-0444 or by email at equity@nd.edu.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

Continue reading to view a list of medical, counseling, and pastoral resources that may be available.

If you are ever unsure about who to talk to or how to navigate a challenging situation while abroad, please contact **Crisis24 Horizon**. This confidential service is available 24/7 and is designed to support Notre Dame students navigating emergencies, safety concerns, or personal matters—no issue is too big or too small.

Crisis24 Horizon connects you to experienced professionals who can help guide you through your options, offer immediate support, and ensure you are connected to the right resources, whether it is medical help, mental health support, or navigating interpersonal or safety-related challenges.

Reach Crisis24 through the Crisis24 App or by calling +1 (443) 569-8607.

MEDICAL

Local Medical and Emergency Services

Identify local medical services, ideally a hospital with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE), and know how to contact police and crisis responders. To quickly locate these services, utilize Crisis24.

Specialized Support

Services like rape crisis centers, shelters, and family justice centers offer support for sexual violence, domestic abuse, or interpersonal harm. Find these resources on NOMORE.org and through the Crisis24.

University Health Services

(574) 631-7497

Confidential*

On Campus

Upon your return to campus, University Health Services are accessible between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. While staff are unable to perform procedures related to the collection of evidence for the purposes of pursuing criminal prosecution, they can provide medical care including wound care, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and referral and transportation to a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE).

COUNSELING

TimelyCare Telehealth

timelycare.com/notredame

Confidential*

Available to students travelling within the U.S. or to U.S. territories, services include access to 24/7 access to mental health counselors, non-emergency medical providers, and nutritional specialists.

GeoBlu and AETNA

geobluestudents.com or
aetnastudenthealth.com

Confidential*

Undergraduates have 24/7 access to GeoBlue, which offers six free counseling sessions per issue per year. Graduate students with AETNA can access 24/7 free virtual therapy through Talkspace based on their plan.

Care and Wellness Consultants

supportandcare.nd.edu

Non-Confidential**

Care and Wellness Consultants (CWCs) are available to assist students in identifying strategies and resources to address academic, social, physical, mental, financial, or spiritual concerns. Schedule a virtual meeting with your CWC at supportandcare.nd.edu.

RAINN.org
(800) 656-4673

Confidential*

The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) is an anti-sexual violence organization that partners with local rape crisis centers across the country. Access 24/7 support by calling (available in U.S. only) or using the online chat function.

PASTORAL

Campus Ministry
ministry@nd.edu
(574) 631-7800

Confidential*

Staff who are not vowed religious are considered non-confidential resources.

On Campus

Staff in Campus Ministry are available to support students on campus and abroad. Schedule a time to meet with a staff member at campusministry.nd.edu.

Note that vowed religious (priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers) are confidential when operating in their role as staff members of Campus Ministry and will honor confidentiality unless there is an imminent danger to the student or to others. A disclosure during the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) will not be revealed by the priest for any reason, as it is a sacred obligation protected by law.

***Confidential means information will not be shared except in instances of imminent danger to the student or others.**

****Non-Confidential means information will be shared with OIE. Refer to Page 4 for more information about what occurs after OIE receives a report.**

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

VISIT OIE'S WEBSITE AT [EQUITY.ND.EDU](https://equity.nd.edu)



FOLLOW THE POET TEAM ON INSTAGRAM [@ND_POET](https://www.instagram.com/nd_poet)

