

RISK MANAGEMENT

*Seven Ways to Minimize Liability
& Keep Your Students Safe*

presented by

DIRECTOR'S CHOICESM



Student travel and performance is a great way to enhance any performing arts program; however, it can be costly, time consuming, and even dangerous if you don't manage risks before and during the trip.

That's why we've produced this guide to help you, as a group leader, parent or school administrator to know what to plan for and expect when travelling with students.



RISK MANAGEMENT | HOTELS

As you are waiting for final travel approval, consider taking this time to minimize risk while on your trip and ensure student safety. Thinking through how to handle communication, enforce rules, and keep everyone safe *before* departure will ensure the trip is all you hope it to be.

Check out these suggestions. Take what works for you and your program and use as a template for creating your own travel safety plan.

SAFETY ORIENTATION

Providing a hotel safety briefing to travelers after check-in can serve multiple functions. First and foremost, it demonstrates that the travelers' safety is of high importance to your organization. Topics to include during the safety briefing may include:

- Evacuation procedures in the event of a fire.
- Always use a manual lock or chain. Make it a habit as soon as you enter the room.
- Never disclose your room number to strangers.
- Room numbers of the chaperones in the event a student needs to contact them if a problem arises.
- Confirm the chaperones contact information.
- Confirm a meeting area located a safe distance from the hotel to gather during an evacuation.
- Never open the door unless certain who is there.

SWIMMING POOL POLICY

In addition to the swimming pool policies of a given property, additional procedures should be considered and adopted, such as:

- A process to ensure the pool area is safe and has the appropriate safety equipment.
- An approval form signed by each traveler's parent or legal guardian that gives permission for the student to participate in swimming activities.
- A policy requiring supervision any time a student traveler is allowed to participate in a swimming activity.
- Clear guidelines addressing if the student travelers are allowed to swim without a certified lifeguard.
- A determination if all chaperones are required to be first aid and CPR trained.

HOTEL ROOM CHECKS

- Consider establishing curfews based on age to ensure students get the rest they need to enjoy their trip.
- After all students return to their hotel rooms at the end of a day, have a procedure to account for students. It is important to actually see each student during these checks to ensure they are safe and ready for bed.

- Room checks are a perfect opportunity to share plans for the next day and to determine student needs.
- Access any damage to hotel rooms and beware of your liability should a student not respect the property.



RISK MANAGEMENT | ITINERARY

Student travel programs are typically very busy by nature leaving little free unscheduled time. At the end of a day, or when at a hotel in the evening, there may be some short period of time when there could be an opportunity for students to explore the surroundings with or without supervision.

WHEN DEVELOPING A FREE TIME POLICY, AT A MINIMUM, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

- Establish a minimum number of students required in a group when traveling through a hotel or event property without supervision. The buddy system can work well for hotels when students are asked to travel the property with an assigned partner. At other venues, larger group sizes may be needed when venturing away from supervision.
- When students leave a hotel for any reason, consider establishing procedures to identify where they plan to go, a process to check them out, and then check them back in.
- Ask the students to keep the hotel location and name with them at all times.
- Make sure at least one member of the group has a cell phone and contact information for the chaperone.
- Considerations should be given to different age groups. It may not be appropriate for elementary and middle school students to have unsupervised time. Free time policies should be age appropriate.





RISK MANAGEMENT | ELECTRONICS

Have you ever considered that having an electronic device policy prior to trip departure can be an important element of your Risk Management policy? By placing reasonable guidelines on cell phone useage for your student, you keep them safe, engaged and ultimately provide them the travel experience they fundraised so hard for.

SAFETY ORIENTATION

- In a theater or during a scheduled program
- While a chaperone tour guide is speaking
- While walking with a group when the student needs to pay attention to their surroundings

STUDENTS USE THEIR PHONES TO:

- Check the time
- Take pictures
- Record video
- Use a GPS app
- For entertainment purposes on long bus rides with chaperone's approval
- When sick, so they can keep in contact with family
- Communicating with friends back home about the wonderful time they are having



PHONES, CAMERAS, AND OTHER DEVICES

• Most student travelers today have a high level of experience with electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets and computers. Traditionally, using a phone while someone was talking would be perceived as rude. Today a traveler may be sharing the experience and information they are receiving from their tour guide real-time with friends and family on a variety of social media sites.

• There are venues where making and receiving a phone call is inappropriate. Having clear guidelines in place and communicating to students when it is OK and when they should set their phone to silent, is important. It is equally important to understand when it is safe and appropriate for student travelers to wear headphones or earbuds.



RISK MANAGEMENT | COACH SAFETY

Whether you book motor coach transportation on your own or with with a travel provider like Director's Choice, it's critical that the coach company is vetted for qualified driver, well managed dispatch and safe, reliable equipment. Unfortunately, motor coaches are the number one culprit of unforeseen travel issues. At Director's Choice, we never leave you alone on the road. We are on call 24/7 to manage any situations that may arise with your driver or equipment.

REDUCE RISK

- Build relationships with bus companies built around student tours and their idiosyncrasies.
- Develop a list of preferred drivers with extensive knowledge.
- Understand the mandated service hours and how they apply to student groups.
- Develop knowledge of resources available to research charter companies such as the safer website.
- Develop a policy to check bus company safety records.
- Provide materials to group concerning bus safety. Loading and unloading, etc.
- Build a database of appropriate drop-off and pickup areas in each city.
- Build relationships between guides and bus drivers
- Develop a system so your tour organizer has availability 24/7 to you in the event of breakdowns, traffic, etc.
- Understand the of risk management issue associated with student group travel. Provide adequate insurance.
- Be aware of local, state, province, and federal laws.
- Develop a policy to check the safety record of your bus companies prior to contracting services.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

- Everyone should be respectful of the bus driver as he/she is an integral part of the team.
- The chaperone should meet the driver and find out what his/her rules are for the bus, then share that information with all travelers in the group.
- Instruct students to follow all safety instructions provided by the bus driver.
- Remind students to wear seat belts, if supplied
- Remind students to be seated while the bus is moving.
- Do not use "risk seats" or seats without another seat in front of them if they do not have seat belts.
- Point out the emergency exits if not covered in the driver's safety briefing.
- Baggage, handbags or back packs should not block the aisles or stairwells.
- Don't store heavy luggage in the overhead racks.
- Never leave valuables on a bus.
- If possible, try to keep an open seat near the front of the bus for students feeling ill or nauseous.
- Understand the mandated service hours and how they apply to student groups.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Safety and Fitness Electronic Records (SAFER) System is one option at <https://safer.fmcsa.dot.gov/CompanySnapshot.aspx>. Users can search by DOT Number, MC/MX Number or Company Name.



RISK MANAGEMENT | TRAVEL OPERATORS

The best way to reduce risk of unwanted events on a trip is diligent preparation. Once systems and procedures are in place, they can be monitored for success and enhanced for future trips. As a student group tour operator, Director's Choice has developed a checklist to inspect suppliers on a regular schedule to ensure they are in compliance with the safety and ethics standards.

As a group travel leader, you must be aware of the safety and credibility of any supplier and travel operator you hire. Director's Choice is SYTA (Student Youth Travel Association) accredited, meaning we have met the below criteria and work with suppliers who do as well.

CHECKLIST FOR TRAVEL OPERATOR

- Check for a valid business license.
- Obtain a copy of your vendor's insurance policy and ensure coverage is in place during the trip travel period and that your business interests are covered by the policy.
- Obtain copies of any release forms participants must sign prior to taking part in an activity provided by the vendor. Understand the date in which the documents need to be returned to the vendor prior to the activity commencing and ensure all participants understand the deadline.
- Review the vendor's emergency/crisis plan and ask how supplier employees are trained and kept up-to-date on the plan. Activities Inspection Form (ropes courses, rafting, challenge course, etc.)
- Complete a walkthrough of the facilities for an activity. Note equipment or facilities issues that could result in a problem or injury.
- Confirm the vendor has a safety program, who is responsible for it, and that a trained program specialist will be on-site during your visit.



- Many activities require inspection by local authority or professional organizations. Request the most recent inspection report. Note any repairs or deficiencies noted in the inspections and remediation and question the vendor on progress made to correct the deficiencies.
- Determine if the activity requires a liability release form be completed prior to participating in the activity. If so, who will ensure the parent or legal guardian has the opportunity to review the form in advance and sign it on behalf of their student traveler.



RISK MANAGEMENT | PRE TRIP FOCUS AREAS

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

- Maintain an updated contact list for each vendor and validate the phone (cell phone, text and email address) contacts annually.

CHAPERONE HANDBOOK

- Handbooks can be distributed to chaperones in advance of a trip. This practice allows chaperones the opportunity to review policies at their leisure prior to the trip. They may also refer to the document during travel to help clear up any confusion that may arise
- Consider adopting a policy of asking chaperones to sign a document stating they have received and understand your policies and procedures.
- Develop an orientation curriculum for chaperones that can be reviewed prior to a trip. The orientation can be delivered in person, in writing or in the form of an on-line training video for chaperones who come from other areas. between chaperones, tour guides, and or travelers.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

- Establish a list of behavioral expectations for participants of a trip and the steps that will be taken when these expectations are not followed.

STAFF ORIENTATION

Travel seasons are cyclical and staff involved in travel programs change over time. It is important to have a consistent orientation program for all staff annually.

- Develop a curriculum for your program that involves day-to-day activities, emergency policies and staff behavior expectations. By doing so, you will go a long way towards ensuring everyone understands the most up-to-date policies and procedures.
- Develop a similar orientation program you or the tour organizer can present to travelers and adult traveling chaperones.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Proper documentation of incidents that arise during a trip is critical. Capturing the facts surrounding an incident when it happens provides important information to be used to prevent an accident from happening in the future. Accurate documentation can also be beneficial later if an incident escalates or if a complaint is filed regarding the incident. When completing an incident report, it is important to document only information that is factual. It is not appropriate to document opinions or conjecture of what might have happened. It is important to remember that any incident report can be used in a court of law if an incident escalates to that

level. An incident report should address at least the following subjects; and document basic information relevant to the incident such as:

- The date, time and location the incident took place.
- Names of all people or agencies involved.
- Names and signed statements of all witnesses to the incident.
- Pictures of the incident scene if appropriate
- A section where the individual involved can describe what happened in his or her own words.
- If more than one individual is involved, a separate incident report should be completed for each person.
- A signature line so the person completing the incident report can sign the report verifying that the information in the report is accurate to the best of his or her knowledge.

Before you ever depart on your trip - whether it be a quick overnight or a lengthier trip, it's important to make your expectations for all participants clear and in writing. This allow you to manage your expectations and reduce liability, executing a safe trip that all can enjoy.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

School teachers are required to complete and submit a background check on a regular basis as a qualification to teach. When other adults are recruited to assist with chaperone duties, they may not complete a background check. Background checks are a simply and reasonable way to help ensure no person with a criminal background has access to students traveling on a trip.

- Consider requiring a background check on all adults who have direct contact with student travelers on your program.
- You may also want to require a background check on any adult traveling as a medical aid for a student on your trip.

IDENTIFY HEALTH FACILITIES

- Although experiencing a serious medical event during a trip is unlikely, it is important to plan ahead and know where the closest emergency medical facilities are in the area where you will travel.
- Develop a plan in the event a traveler needs to see or stay overnight in a medical facility. The plan should answer the questions: "Who will stay at the hospital and who will supervise the group?"
- Have a plan in the event a student needs to return home early due to illness, behavior, or other reason. Prior to a trip, ensure you have a list of all contact information for parents, guardians and emergency contacts (grandparents, etc.).
- Determine if the medical facilities accept insurance cards or will they expect to be paid directly. Clarify, in advance, who will be



responsible for the payment if the traveler does not have the funds available to cover their medical services and, if needed, what method will be used for reimbursement after the trip.

- When traveling internationally, determine in advance whether the medical staff speaks English in the region you will travel and, if not, who will serve as the interpreter for the student and accompanying chaperone or staff member.

FAQ FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS

- Consider adopting a process and format to provide advice to parents and students of important facts surrounding their trip. A comprehensive student handbook is a great tool. For shorter trips, a FAQ list might suffice.
- This format can also be used to update families on the positive elements of a trip before, during and after the trip.
- A closed Facebook page open to only the travelers and their parents or legal guardians can be an effective tool to accomplish trip updates. Consider developing a secure social media plan to communicate with travelers. Social media can be one of the most effective ways to communicate with the travelers' families back home.
- Never post personal information involving any single traveler on a social media site. Updates on health and safety related incidents or disciplinary activities should be handled confidentially with the family members involved.

DIRECTOR'S CHOICESM

Director's Choice is the industry leader when it comes to creating customized travel and events for performing arts student groups. As an accredited member of SYTA (Student Youth Travel Association), we've met the rigorous standards set by the organization to keep your students and their money safe when travelling. Whether you travel with us or not it's our mission to keep traveling students safe.