

**Off-Campus Study****Planning Ahead for Your Health Care Needs While Studying Off-Campus**

**Please read this document and complete the Health Self Assessment carefully, even if you currently consider yourself to be generally healthy.**

Whether you are generally healthy, have significant medical needs, or fall somewhere in between, planning ahead will help you have a successful and healthy study abroad experience. The same things that make studying abroad exciting (new foods, customs, climate, people, etc.) can also present challenges. Many students will adjust very readily with little or no difficulty, while others may experience a range of physical and/or emotional challenges. It is important to be aware that the stresses that often accompany studying abroad may exacerbate ongoing physical or mental health conditions, trigger pre-existing ones, or, in some cases, cause new health conditions to emerge.

Ongoing mild or pre-existing health conditions can become more serious for some students as they transition into an unfamiliar culture and environment. For this reason, it is important to take any pre-existing conditions or special needs into account as you consider whether and where to study abroad. We encourage all students to fully disclose their health history to the Off-Campus Study office so that we can help properly prepare you for your experience, make arrangements for any necessary special accommodations, and, in some cases, assess whether you should consider a program with more readily available support services. This latter consideration is made as you should not assume that the range of services and accommodations available to you here at Colby will be available while you are abroad. In some parts of the world, there may be fewer, or inadequate, resources to help you manage a physical or mental health condition.

Similarly, if you currently receive any academic accommodations at Colby, and hope to receive the same while off-campus, you may be required to provide documentation of these accommodations to your program or university. Many study abroad programs or foreign universities can accommodate learning differences and provide special accommodations but only to the extent that local regulations allow and within the constraints of the program structure and/or host culture.

**Please be assured that your privacy regarding the personal information you disclose will be respected. The self-assessment below is “for your eyes only” and cannot be used by Colby or a program to disqualify you from study abroad on this basis.** We strongly encourage all students to discuss any concerns or needs with the Off-Campus Study office, a Dean, or a medical professional to assure that they receive the advising and preparation they need to have a successful experience while abroad. The information you disclose to Colby or your program or university is used to help you choose an appropriate program or location, properly prepare you for your experience, and make arrangements for any special accommodations or other things you may need to manage your condition on-site.

When it comes to accessing healthcare or special accommodations while abroad, it is important that each student be responsible for recognizing her/his needs and seeking appropriate assistance. While it may be difficult for some students to come forward with their concerns, it is normal to face varying degrees of physical and emotional challenge while abroad and seeking support is the wise and sensible thing to do.

In an effort to help students plan ahead, we put together the following brief Self Assessment:

**HEALTH SELF-ASSESSMENT FOR OFF-CAMPUS STUDY**

The purpose of this self assessment is to help you prepare for your time abroad by considering the issues below and, if appropriate, discussing them openly and honestly with your health care professional, your program, or the off-campus study office to determine what resources may be available for you in your host country and what additional support you may need.

- ❖ **Do you have a health condition or disability for which you may require reasonable accommodations while off-campus?** (e.g. learning disability, attention deficit disorder, diabetes, brain injury, hearing or visual loss, epilepsy, or other condition)

- ❖ **Do you have any serious food, drug, animal, or other allergies?**
- ❖ **Are you on a medically restricted diet, or have other dietary restrictions/needs, e.g. being a vegan or vegetarian?**
- ❖ **Are you currently taking any medications (Prescription or OTC)?**
- ❖ **Are you currently being treated for any physical health condition, injury or disease, or have you suffered from a health condition in the past you are concerned may re-emerge while abroad?**
- ❖ **Are you currently being treated for any mental health condition (including the use of psychiatric medications), or have you suffered from a mental health condition in the past you are concerned may re-emerge while abroad?**
- ❖ **Have you struggled with transitions in the past?**
- ❖ **Do you have any documented disability, support services or accommodations here at Colby?**
- ❖ **Is there any additional information that would be helpful for the program organizers, the Off-Campus Study office or host families to be aware of during your experience off-campus?**

If you answered **yes** to any of the above, we urge you to think about how these issues or conditions might impact you while abroad and to discuss your off-campus study plans and ways to manage your conditions while abroad with your health care professional(s). Additionally, we encourage you to inform the Off-Campus Study office at Colby and/or your program in advance so that they may further assist you in your planning.

**Be proactive, disclose, and plan ahead:**

- Take these issues into account and get advising as you make your decisions about whether, when or where to study abroad
- Prepare in advance for what you need to stay healthy
- Talk to your health professional about medications supply for the duration of your stay
- Inform others on site about your condition so that they can be able to help, if needed
- Put a plan in place to access the resources or treatments you need while abroad
- Communicate your needs to those around you
- Plan to bring the documentation you need to provide to your program or university in order to receive academic accommodations (contact Dean Atkins in the Dean of Students office).

If you have concerns or questions about any of these issues, don't hesitate to reach out to the Off-Campus Study office at Colby. We are thrilled about your interest in studying abroad while at Colby and want to support all students in having a successful and enriching experience. The following are some additional resource that may be helpful to you:

**RESOURCES FOR ALL STUDY ABROAD STUDENTS**

- Your program's information or program handbook includes tips for staying healthy and local resources in the event that you need medical care. The program's resident director and other staff are also very knowledgeable about resources in the community.
- The Off-Campus Study's Pre-Departure Handbook Know Before You Go handbook contains lots of helpful health information and tips. <http://www.colby.edu/offcampus/students/pre-departure/>
- Research health conditions at your destination:
  - Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – Travelers's Health <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>
  - MD Travel Health.com <http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/>
  - World Health Organization (<http://www.who.org/>)
  - Safety Abroad First Educational Travel Information (<http://www.gloaled.us/safeti/>)
  - Center for Global Education Study Abroad Student Handbook (<http://www.studentsabroad.com/>)