COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS[1]

WHAT YOU NEED:

All contact information for students should be kept in an online database or other convenient system such as master-lists (this system will be used for checking off students as contacted.) Information should include: student's phone number, email, host family number (if applicable.) There should be a cell for extra info so that when a student is checked off, specifics can be added such as 'Did not speak to student but roommate confirmed that they were together and safe.'

A group messaging system either online through a database, or via a phone application such as Whatsapp. Depending on the size of your team, if you are using a phone app then this should be installed on at least two phones if possible, with all student info already programmed in so that it is ready to go in the event of an emergency. If you have an emergency phone, the app should be installed with numbers programmed on this phone.

Phone tree. If you have a team of two or more people, you should have a phone tree which designates certain students to particular staff members who will be responsible for contacting them. There should be at least one designated coordinator (and a deputy in case of absence) who will be responsible for updating one master check list in the event that there are several team members on the phone tree. Each team member would check in with the coordinator.

Assign responsibility for who will do what in the event of an emergency SMS being sent (who will check Facebook, who will check email, who is checking the phone.)

A general template with the language to be used in the initial emergency SMS and follow-up email.

Students should be encouraged/required to have a phone which works locally and when traveling throughout Europe. A staff member should be responsible for making sure that follow-up happens within the first few days of arrival to ensure that all students provide a number and that this number is added to the database or master lists.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

The **language** you are using in your communication with students. This should be:

- Clear
- Informative
- Factual
- Reassuring
- Non-inflammatory

Depending on the size of your team, you should have **one or two 'back-up' coordinators** who can send the emergency SMS and coordinate check-ins in the absence of the lead staff member.

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IN THE EVENT OF A DIRE EMERGENCY
(for example: a natural disaster or a terrorist attack)**:**

Send an SMS (or group message via Whatsapp or other service) to ALL STUDENTS with clear instructions:

- The nature of the emergency (where, when how)
- To get in touch with you **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**
- How to do so (via text, phone call, email, Facebook group**)**

Half an hour following the SMS and depending on the size of your team, the coordinator should check in with each staff member to update the master list with who has been contacted. It is important that there is at least one list which is updated with all the information so that it can be seen at a glance who is accounted for and who is not.

Put phone tree into action and start calling all those not yet accounted for. For those in host families, call the host family phone if you cannot reach the student.

Stay in touch with home institutions for updates as some parents and students might call them directly to check in and they might well be able to update you on some people you have not been able to reach.

Half an hour following phone tree being put into action, the coordinator should **check in again** with staff members to update the master list with those who have and have not been accounted for.

Following all these steps, a **general email** should go out to students and schools encouraging students to check in.

*Students should be informed during Orientation that should they receive an emergency SMS when traveling, they are expected to check in as if they were on site. Thought and consideration should go into the advice given to off site students, depending on the nature of the emergency (is is better for them to stay where they are or should they return to site, for example.)

FOLLOW-UP:

As the **situation develops,** there should be **continued communication** with students by way of email and/or FB in order to keep them updated on the evolution of the situation. Students should be reminded to keep themselves informed using reliable news sources (see fact sheet 'Information, Risk, Fear Management')**.**

Follow-up emails should be sent once the **situation is over**, in order to inform students of any measures in place (heightened security, travel warnings, areas to avoid etc) and to reassure them of your continued presence and surveillance. This is also an opportunity to assess needs (depending on responses) for any further support (for example counseling for individual students, group therapy sessions.)