

RISK CHECKLIST - CHURCHES MISSION TRIPS

Many churches organise interstate or overseas trips for members and adherents. These trips are organised for a variety of purposes including encouragement of remote workers, to build awareness of missions and to provide practical assistance through building, teaching etc. Many of the locations visited during mission trips will expose the travellers to new experiences including cultural differences and behavioural expectations, different foods, exposure to diseases not normally encountered in Australia, etc. The risks associated with the new experiences should be identified so that they can be managed and travellers remain safe.

This Risk Checklist is intended to assist churches in identifying risks and in establishing safe procedures for conducting mission trips.

Planning

- Has formal planning (including budget) for the trip been undertaken?
- Have organisers contacted the sending agency (e.g. Global Interaction) for the mission situation to be visited? **Note:** some mission agencies have their own planning documents that will need to be completed by mission trip leaders and participants.
- Have trip objectives been articulated?
- Does research of the intended destination confirm trip objectives can be met?
- Do you understand cultural norms for the destination(s) to be visited?
- Have you researched protocols relating to photography at the trip destination (e.g. permission to photograph minors, sensitive defence installations etc.)?
- Has checking included reference to the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) travel advisory site (<http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/>) ?
- Has the trip been approved by appropriate church authorities?
- Determine the capabilities of travellers and their capacity to undertake planned activities (remember physical activities in the tropics are much more taxing than in more temperate climates).
- What external service providers will be required to enable successful completion of the trip? Have you checked:
 - Working With Children status of contractor staff;
 - Liability insurance coverage of contractors;
 - Service contractual arrangements (pay particular attention to any indemnity clauses)?

Application Process

- Does the design of trip application forms include sections for:
 - parental consent for minors (attendance, transport arrangements, cancellation conditions);
 - medical advice forms to provide details of special medical needs of travellers (including medications and treatment options);

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- indemnity clauses (legal assumption of risk by participants and accepting responsibility for meeting medical costs)?
- Have potential travellers been advised that the organisers reserve the right to approve or decline attendance on the trip?
- Have application forms been distributed and have they been received back within the nominated timeframes?
- Does the application form include provision for agreement to comply with behavioural expectations?
- Compile a master folder for the team leader with a copy for church administrators. Details should include:
 - Photocopies of all passports and visas
 - A passport photo of each traveller
 - Emergency contact particulars
 - Information on specific medical needs
 - Medical release forms and any indemnity and permission forms
 - Insurance contact numbers
 - Travel details including booking references for each traveller

Leaders

- In considering potential leaders for the trip, has their relevant experience been taken into account (e.g. experience in travelling to the specific location, travelling with groups etc.)?
- Do you have sufficient adults attending the trip for the number of children attending?
Consider:
 - Minimum adult to child ratio of 1:10
 - Adult gender mix appropriate to the gender mix of the children
 - Sufficient adults to cater for the group being split for any reason, e.g. child being sent home
- Have all adults accompanying the trip been subject to Working With Children and/or Police checks?
- Have all supervising adults at the overseas location been subject to similar checks in their local country? Do we have evidence of those checks?

Communication

- Has a communication plan for the trip been developed?
- What advance notice has been provided to travellers and parents so that they can plan their participation?
- Have travellers and parents been informed of:
 - trip objectives;
 - destination;
 - itinerary;
 - planned activities;

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- risks and proposed controls;
 - behavioural expectations;
 - cancellation conditions;
 - passport and visa requirements (plus copies of same and extra passport photos);
 - clothing and equipment requirements;
 - financial and other implications of withdrawing from the trip;
 - expected costs
- What are the expected methods of communicating while overseas:
- leaders to parents;
 - leaders to church;
 - parents to children;
 - in an emergency;
 - mobile phones;
 - satellite phones?
- Do we have overseas contact details and have they been communicated to all stakeholders?

Risk Management

- Has a comprehensive Risk Assessment been completed for expected mission trip risks (and associated controls), including (but not limited to):
- specific “adventure” type activities;
 - travel and transport arrangements (including missed flights or trains);
 - communication;
 - child protection;
 - pastoral care;
 - accommodation;
 - medical emergency;
 - environment;
 - political environment (including civil emergency);
 - financial;
 - security;
 - natural disasters (earthquake, extreme weather events)?
- Incident reporting and recording process available.

Behavioural Expectations

- Have travellers been informed of behavioural expectations, including:
- attire;
 - culture;
 - security;
 - gifts;

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- photography protocols;
 - implications of breaches?
- Have leaders been informed of their behavioural expectations?

Accommodation

- Have suitable sleeping arrangements been organised for children and adults? Factors to be considered include:
- single gender;
 - private bathrooms;
 - homestay arrangements (suitable hosts, privacy, monitoring by accompanying adults, emergency arrangements)

Travel Arrangements

- Has a travel agent been engaged to help with the travel and accommodation bookings?
- Have passport and visa requirements been determined?
- Have overseas airfares been booked?
- Has in-country ground travel been booked, e.g. train, coach, private car?
- Do we have evidence that all travellers have current passports with appropriate visas for the trip?
- Where ground travel includes motor vehicles, what have we done to ensure that:
- drivers are licenced;
 - drivers are experienced in transporting children (where applicable);
 - drivers are familiar with the area being visited;
 - vehicles are roadworthy;
 - vehicles are insured (comprehensive and 3rd party equivalents);
 - numbers of passengers per vehicle are appropriate?

Medical

- Advise travellers to have medical and dental check-ups before travel.
- If travellers have pre-existing medical conditions, have their doctors provided permission to travel?
- Have all travellers (adults and children) provided relevant medical details, e.g. asthma, anaphylaxis, food intolerances?
- Have we obtained professional advice of vaccinations, etc. required for the destination country(ies)? Have these requirements been communicated? Do we have documentary evidence of vaccinations obtained by all travellers?
- Have we prepared medical plans for all travellers with special needs as advised by means of medical advice forms?
- Do we have trained first aid practitioners on the trip?
- Do we have adequate first aid kits to take on the trip?

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Money Matters

- Has the cost of the trip been communicated with sufficient notice for family budgeting?
- Have travellers been advised to ensure that they have appropriate travel insurance in place? Do you have evidence that travel insurance has been purchased? Note: if the trip is an authorised activity of a church, Baptist Insurance arranged travel insurance will provide cover.
- Have travellers been advised what funds to take on the trip and the form in which it should be taken, e.g. foreign cash, credit/debit cards etc.
- What advice has been provided to travellers in relation to valuable equipment that they might wish to take, e.g. phones, iPads, cameras, computers, etc.?

Equipment

- Have you obtained advice from the sending agency or people being visited regarding clothing recommendations?
- What advice regarding clothing has been provided to participants?
- Has equipment for the trip been identified and sourced? Examples may include:
 - mobile phones;
 - satellite phones;
 - cameras (movie and/or still);
 - medical / first aid kits;
 - computers;
 - GPS units and compasses;
 - sports equipment;
 - emergency beacons.

Emergency Management

- Have we completed planning of actions to be taken in an emergency, including:
 - medical;
 - civil disturbance;
 - traveller sent home for disciplinary reason;
 - traveller returning home due to home based emergency?
- Have travellers been provided with insurer emergency contact phone numbers?
- Have emergency arrangements (including contact details) been communicated to:
 - responsible church authorities;
 - parents;
 - travellers;
 - leaders?

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Just Prior To Departure

- Confirm that up to date travel advice has been obtained from DFAT or some other reliable source (e.g. International SOS)
- Has the trip been registered with DFAT and the local embassy?
- Do we have colour copies of travellers' passports, visas and tickets?
- Do we have copies of medical and contact data for all travellers?
- Have the first aid kits been packed?
- Has equipment been packed?

On Returning

- Have all travellers been provided with access to professional debriefing, to ensure that they are not negatively impacted by what they have experienced?
- Have leaders conducted a post travel appraisal in order to better structure subsequent trips?

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Other relevant material may be found at:

BIS publications (www.baptistinsurance.com.au):

- Risk Information – Schools Overseas Trips
- Schools' Risk Checklist – Overseas Excursions
- Risk information – Schools Parental Permission Forms

Global Interaction Global Xposure Manual

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