

# Apex Youth Missions Safety Policy and Procedures

## Safety Notes:

- Apex Missions works with our on-site staff and ministry partners to build a safe environment and do our absolute best to keep all of our participants safe in the ministry locations and ministry commutes.
- Apex Missions expects the youth group leader to take primary ownership and be vigilant for their group's health and safety.
- While we work hard to build systems, strategies, and plans to keep participants safe, Apex Missions does not guarantee and cannot be held liable for a participant's health or safety.
- Liability waivers are required for anyone's participation with Apex Missions.

## Safety Systems:

- Prayer – The Apex team regularly prays for our sites and participants including for their safety. We expect all participants, families and churches are doing the same.
- Leadership – Every Apex site has a leadership team to manage ministry, logistics, safety, and health including: an Apex adult site leader, Apex college Mission and Leadership Team students, and our ministry partner/missionary. This team will work in conjunction with the youth group leader, and youth group adult volunteer leader(s) to navigate and coordinate decisions to keep participants safe.
- Checks and Balances – The youth group leader has final authority to reject and/or decline any option offered that he/she feels may put their participants at risk. The exception would be if the missionary/ministry partner or Apex Missions staff believe the youth group leader is knowingly or unknowingly making a decision that will put their participants at a higher risk.
- Reliable Partners – Apex Missions works with trusted and local partners who are familiar with the community and able to wisely advise based on their context and experience.
- Rules – If any participant or group breaks any rules that put themselves or the group at risk they will be sent home at their own expense.
- Street Smarts – Participants are expected to follow the discretion of the youth group leader, Apex staff, and ministry partner/missionary for interaction with anyone not affiliated with the ministry or Apex Missions.
- No Surprises – We prioritize site communication to ensure the youth group leader is always aware of what has happened, what is happening, and what is planned to happen.
- Mission Guide – Apex Missions provides every youth group leader with a “Mission Guide” containing all the major and many of the minor elements of the weeks schedule, expectations, locations, and relevant contact information.
- Where The Buck Stops – We expect youth group leaders to own and keep their group participants safety as one of their top priorities of the trip.

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## **Recommendations:**

- Pod Groups - Divide your students into “Pod Groups” of 3-5 students and assign each Pod Group to an adult volunteer leader. Give the adult leader the responsibility to lead and keep track of their Pod Group students at all times, but especially when traveling. The youth group leader will be responsible for making sure that all the volunteer adult leaders are present to verify their Pod Group is all present and safe. We have found this to be a very effective method to manage groups of students and protects from the “herding cats” mentality that many youth group leaders have struggled with.
- Emergency Packet - The youth group leader should always carry a list of emergency contacts, allergies, and medications for every participant.

## **International Additions:**

- Hospitals - Apex will work with youth group leaders to identify appropriate medical facilities (hospitals) to use in relation to medical severity, injury/issue urgency, and facility distance.
- Insurance - Every participant/group should purchase Mission Trip Travel Insurance to cover any emergency medical expenses and/or evacuation needs as well as any security evacuation needs.
- STEP - Every participant/group should register with the United States Department of State STEP program.
- Freedom - Every participant/group should carry the address of the US Embassy for the country they are serving.
- Unite and Thrive - No participant is ever allowed to go alone anywhere outside of the planned ministry site or housing.