

Guidelines for International Mission Trips

Recent incidents have highlighted the risks for non-citizen immigrants when travelling outside the United States, even for those immigrants who are lawfully present. The following is not legal advice. It is compiled from various resources including webinars and news reports. For legal advice about your travel speak to a qualified attorney.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) retains the authority to screen arriving travelers for “admissibility” into the United States. This includes the right to inspect international travelers. CBP officers may inspect your personal belongings, question you about your travel and status, and conduct warrantless searches of your electronic devices including phones. Refusal to cooperate may result in delays, seizure of devices, and for non-U.S. citizens, denial of entry. While they may confiscate your phone or other electronic devices, you are not required to provide your passcode, which can be construed as voluntarily giving up your right to privacy. You are not required to answer any questions about your political views, social media, or travel history beyond basic entry requirements.

As part of the mission trip preparation, have a conversation with students and parents about border crossing upon returning to the United States. This could help to ease concerns and to avoid any hiccups upon reentry. Importantly, ensure that parents’ names are spelled correctly and consistently in all participants’ documentation including parental consent forms.

Keep an eye on the news, especially for any points of entry/exit you will be using. Stay up to date on any possible changes to entry requirements of the countries you’ll be visiting. [U.S. Department of State Country Information Pages](#) (Use the Entry, Exit and Visa Requirements section on the Country pages).

Documentation

1. It is advisable for U.S. citizens to carry a valid U.S. passport for international travel, as well as an enhanced driver’s license if you have it.
2. Non-U.S. citizens should have valid documentation with them at all times during travel that verifies their identity and immigration status. Legal permanent residents should carry their Green Card with them. Even with valid documentation, non-citizen immigrants may face significantly increased scrutiny when entering the United States at this time.

3. If you have international students travelling with you, request enrollment documentation from their school.
4. Each person should carry additional supplemental documentation that identifies the purpose of the travel, enrollment in school (for school trips), and/or enrollment in parish programs (for parish trips).
5. Carry emergency contact information.
6. Groups leaders should have copies of all documentation for everyone on the trip, including trip chaperones.

On Assessing Risk for Travel as a non-US citizen

- ❖ If you have ever been charged in the United States or convicted of any crime in the United States or any other country, you should not travel. This includes “minor” crimes such as marijuana possession, speeding tickets, disturbing the peace as a college student, etc.
- ❖ If your immigration status is not regularized – if your papers are expired, if your status is pending, if you are in-between statuses, if you have an ongoing review of your status – you should not travel.

Please let the Archdiocese of Seattle know when you are scheduled to go on your trip.

Email Chris Koehler, Director of Missions and Immigrant Affairs at Chris.Koehler@seattlearch.org. Feel free to call (206-274-3194) or email with any questions or concerns.