Travel Alerts

March 2, 2020 - The Ohio State University community should be aware that on March 1 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued additional guidance to institutions of higher education for student travel abroad as it relates to COVID-19.

Ohio State’s protocol for determining travel risk has always given primacy to the CDC travel health notice system, and we are adhering to its recommended guidance. Utilizing the CDC guide, Ohio State weights the CDC issuance of a Warning Level 3, Avoid Nonessential Travel as equivalent to a U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory of Level 4: Do not travel. Any country or region with either designation is elevated to our highest tier of risk, and Ohio State supported student travel is restricted pending assessment of the notice.

Accordingly, as the CDC issued Warning Level 3 notices for China, South Korea, and Italy, Ohio State swiftly moved to suspend current programming, reach out to students in the impacted locations and offer support and resources to depart the location and return to the United States. These decisions are not taken lightly as they present complications for student academic continuity and curtail an experience that students diligently planned for and expected to be a hallmark of their university career.

Although previously indicated in Ohio State’s risk designated scale, it should be clear in the midst of the challenging response to COVID-19 that if any new CDC Warning Level 3 notice is issued, Ohio State will suspend travel to the region or location for at least the duration the travel notice remains in effect.

Ohio State also utilizes the guidance within a CDC Alert Level 2, Practice Enhanced Precautions notice. The current COVID-19 related notice issued for Japan advises postponing nonessential travel for those individuals with chronic medical conditions. Any student enrolled in a current program or committed to a future program in Japan has been advised to consult their treating medical provider concerning travel. Students providing documentation from their treating medical provider will be supported in withdrawing from the program.

For those locations with a Watch Level 1, Practice Usual Precautions we advise students to consult the content and follow the professional guidance of the CDC. In following the CDC advice, we do not immediately postpone or cancel travel. For those countries with no specific travel notice, all students are informed to consult the CDC country information for their travel, and to schedule a travel consultation with the trained travel medical providers at the Wilce Student Health Center or the medical professional of their
choice. During travel, they are provided comprehensive medical coverage through an insurance plan by GeoBlue.

Ohio State realizes it is commonplace for institutions to state that monitoring the CDC, U.S. DOS and other professional resources is part of routine practice. However, we want to assure travelers that the advice forms the basis of our consistent commitment to the health and safety of our students.