

## Sexual Assault Abroad

Sexual assault can happen to males and females of all ages and backgrounds. Most often, sexual assault is committed by someone a person knows and trusts. While you or someone you know may never experience sexual assault, it is important to know the options and resources available, what steps to take, and where to report an incident if it occurs.

It is also important to be aware of the laws pertaining to sexual assault in the country you are visiting. The response from local authorities and the options for reporting an assault may be different in another country.

Sexual assault encompasses acts that range from unwanted touching to rape. Sexual assault occurs when a person does not, or is unable to, consent to sexual activity. A person is unable to consent when he or she is forced, threatened, intimidated or is mentally or physically incapacitated.

If you or someone you know experiences a sexual assault while abroad, please remember that you are not alone. Many of the same resources available to assist you while you are on campus are also available to assist you while abroad. Your program staff or an administrator at your host school can be a great resource and first step in seeking help. You can also contact:

- W&M Director of Sexual Assault Services: (757) 221-3620
- W&M Sexual Assault Educator: (757) 221-7369, email: trhuns@wm.edu
- W&M Dean of Students: (757) 221-2510
- W&M SAPA (Sexual Assault Peer Advocates): (757) 645-8367 or sapaxx@wm.edu

For more information and resources, visit [www.wm.edu/sexualassault](http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault)

## Additional Resources

If you become a victim of any crime while in another country, you can contact the nearest United States Embassy, Consulate, or Consular Agency. If you are not a US citizen, you can contact your country's embassy. Personnel are available for emergency assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember to request a copy of your police report.

If you need to contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the U.S. or Canada, call 1-888-407-4747, or from overseas call 202-501-4444.

Consular personnel know the local government agencies and resources in the country. They can help you:

- Obtain medical care
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
- Obtain general information about the local criminal justice process and your case
- Obtain information about local resources who can assist you
- Obtain a list of local English-speaking attorneys

For more information, visit The US Department of State: Students Abroad:

- <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/htmlsite/Emergencies.html>

For more information and resources, visit [www.wm.edu/sexualassault](http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault)



Staying Safe  
While  
Abroad

The College of William and Mary  
Office of Sexual Assault Services

[www.wm.edu/sexualassault](http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault)

## Knowing Yourself

Most people who travel to different countries have the desire to be culturally sensitive. They wish to get along, to be respectful, to fit in, and to not offend the people they meet. However, this never requires that a person submit to behaviors that invade personal boundaries or that feel uncomfortable or unsafe. **No matter where you are, you always have the right to leave if a situation feels inappropriate or makes you uneasy.**

Personal boundaries are the personal spaces around us, physically, emotionally, and sexually, that help protect us, while still allowing us to experience new relationships and situations. Boundaries are defined through our own personal values and desires. Boundaries can be as simple as setting a limit of how much to drink, or as complex as deciding to form an intimate relationship with a new partner. Knowing our boundaries can help us recognize signs that an individual or situation may be unsafe. An example of this is if a situation or person makes us uncomfortable by testing or disregarding our boundaries.

Defining your boundaries for yourself and communicating those boundaries to others is the first step. It is also important for others to respect your boundaries and for you to respect the boundaries of others. Never assume that someone has the same understanding or awareness of boundaries as you. The issue of boundaries and personal space is highly influenced by cultural norms and may be very different from what you are accustomed to.

When interacting with others, It may be a good idea to:

- Learn about the cultural norms
- Learn from your local hosts about appropriate social interactions
- Learn how to communicate effectively using the local language. Communication in a different language might change or alter your meaning and could increase the chances for miscommunication or misinterpretation
- Trust your instincts: Pay attention to any inner signal about an individual or situation
- Have an exit strategy: Develop a plan on how to safely leave any situation that makes you uncomfortable
- Use the buddy system at all times. Travel in groups if possible

## Helping a Friend

Many of you will be studying abroad with other students from W&M or from your host school. One of the best ways that you can stay safe while abroad is to always use the buddy system. By traveling in pairs or groups, you can help each other by being on the lookout for potentially unsafe situations.

Watch out for other students and step in if a situation seems unsafe or uncomfortable. You can help by making a plan with others before you go out. This plan might include:

- Having a signal or code word that can be used to indicate someone in the group needs help
- Talking with your friends about how they would want you to intervene, should one of you need help
- Deciding beforehand how you will safely leave an unsafe or uncomfortable situation
- Talking to each other about your boundaries

To learn more about how you can intervene to help a friend, visit the “Community of Trust” section of the William and Mary Sexual Assault Resources and Education website: [www.wm.edu/sexualassault](http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault)

Sometimes helping a friend means supporting someone who has experienced sexual assault. If someone comes to you for help after a sexual assault, the most important thing you can do is to believe them. Also be sure to:

- Listen without judgment
- Assure your friend that it is not their fault and they are not to blame for what happened
- Assure them that they are not alone. There are people and resources to assist them, even while abroad
- Empower your friend to make their own choices about the steps they want to take. You can provide resources and options and let them take control from there
- For more information visit [www.wm.edu/sexualassault](http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault)

## Low-Risk Drinking

For many people, traveling to a different country means being able to experience new things and situations. Sometimes, this means being able to legally consume alcohol for the first time. In making decisions about if and when to drink, be sure to keep local drinking laws and customs in mind.

Consumption of alcohol impairs our inhibitions as well as our judgment and ability to communicate. In addition, people often have different expectancies about what will happen when drinking. Alcohol can also be used as a method to coerce others into sexual activity, by pressuring someone to drink more or by taking advantage of a person's impairment.

There are many useful strategies for protecting yourself from any unwanted outcomes while drinking. You can:

- Choose not to drink
- Eat before and during drinking
- Drink only with trusted friends or use the buddy system
- Ask a close friend to intervene if they think you've had enough
- Set a limit for yourself and stick to that limit
- Try to maintain a BAC at or around 0.05
- Pace drinks over time (ideally one per hour)
- Avoid drinking games
- Alternate between alcoholic drinks and nonalcoholic drinks
- Keep track of how much you are drinking
- Use a designated driver who is completely sober
- Always have an exit plan
- Never leave your drink unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers

**Remember, use the strategies that work best for YOU!**