Guidance for Education Abroad Program Leaders and Accompanying Dependent and Companion Travel

Guidance
The University of Michigan provides the following guidance for program leaders of education abroad experiences. A program leader is a faculty, staff, or student (graduate or undergraduate) who travels with and has overall (but not sole) responsibility for an education abroad experience organized or managed by the U-M. This guidance also applies to co-leaders and students serving in an official leadership capacity on sponsored organization or sponsored event related programs abroad.

Program Leader Responsibility
The primary duty of a program leader is to appropriately manage the education abroad program. This includes assuming responsibility throughout the education abroad experience for both program quality and for the health and safety of all participants. Specific responsibilities might include: organizing coursework and related activities; accommodations; travel arrangements; identifying and mitigating risks; and responding to emergencies. A program leader must be available to provide emergency support to participants on a 24/7 basis.

Dependents and Companions
A U-M program leader’s dependent is defined as their spouse or other qualifying adult, and/or child. A companion is another adult accompanying the program leader on the education abroad trip.

Because a program leader’s primary responsibility is to the quality, safety and success of the experience, the University of Michigan discourages program leaders from bringing dependents or companions on an education abroad program. A feasible alternative is to travel with the dependent or companion before or after the program.

Accompanying Dependents and Companions
The U-M recognizes that, despite the above discouragement, sometimes a program leader has compelling reasons for a dependent or companion to accompany them on an education abroad experience.

In such exceptional cases, the Dean of the school or college, or the leader of the unit that is sponsoring the program, must be informed and approve the accompanying dependent/companion plan. The Dean and other university officials may impose limits and/or conditions on the presence, roles, and activities of accompanying dependents or companions. In some cases, accompanying dependents or companions might not be permitted to participate in some, or all, activities associated with the education abroad program.

In all cases, program leaders are responsible for supervising the conduct of accompanying dependents and companions.

The presence of a dependent or companion must not disrupt or alter the education abroad experience. To ensure the academic integrity of the program, as well as the health and safety of all participants, accompanying dependents and companions are expected to abide by all program policies and any additional conditions imposed by the units or by U-M safety and risk-management officials.
A program leader should carefully review the following when considering dependent or companion travel: age and health of all concerned, location and nature of the program, availability of accommodations and transportation, and the potential impact the dependent or companion may have on the program.

**Expectations for Accompanying Dependent / Companion over the age of 18**
Accompanying spouses or other qualifying adults, and/or companions are not considered to be program staff or participants. They do not represent the University, and could pose significant risk to the university. They should not assume a role to lead the group, make decisions, rent and/or drive a vehicle to transport students, or to represent the University in any capacity.

**Dependent Minor Children**
The University *strongly* discourages program leaders from bringing their minor children on the program. In the rare case that a dependent minor is allowed to accompany a program leader, there must be another non-participant, accompanying adult dependent or companion to provide all 24/7 supervision of the minor. Participating students may not supervise minors on a program. Minor children are not considered to be program participants. The presence of minors may impose requirements for criminal background checks on both program leaders and program participants (see SPG 601.34).

**Expenses**
Expenses for dependents and companions must remain separate and may not be included in the overall program expenses. Dependents and companions are responsible for all of their own expenses, including, but not limited to, accommodations, transportation, and any incidental expenses. Dependents and companions may share the program leader’s accommodation provided this does not result in an increase in costs charged to program expenses.

**General Liability Insurance and Auto Insurance**
An accompanying dependent or companion of a U-M program leader is not covered by the University’s general liability insurance or auto insurance.

**Travel Abroad Health Insurance**
An accompanying eligible dependent of a U-M program leader is covered by the University’s travel abroad health insurance. A companion is not eligible for coverage.

**Political and Natural Disaster Evacuation Support**
An accompanying eligible dependent of a U-M program leader is covered by the University’s political and natural disaster evacuation support service. A companion is not eligible for coverage.

Dependent travelers may wish to purchase liability insurance and auto insurance, if necessary.

Companion travelers may wish to purchase liability insurance, auto insurance, independent travel abroad health insurance, and political and natural disaster evacuation support.