Middle States Association

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAVEL

While the Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools strive at all times to be responsive to their accredited and candidate schools, including those in international locations, there are times when international travel by members of the Commissions, their staff, and others performing the work of and/or representing the Commissions requires additional levels of review and/or accommodation. The United States Department of State regularly issues Travel Advisories regarding locations where Americans are advised to avoid travel and Public Announcements that describe short-term issues posing security or health threats and/or locations where Americans may be perceived to be a potential target.

Section 1: Travel to Locations under U.S. Department of State elevated Travel Advisory.
If the United States Department of State issues an elevated Travel Advisory regarding a particular destination, meaning that the State Department recommends precautions beyond those for normal travel, additional care will be taken to ensure the safety and protection of the Commissions' staff and volunteers based on the level of the Advisory. All travel to locations under a "Do Not Travel" Advisory must be approved in advance by the President and at least one member of the Commission(s) or its Executive Committee. Together, they will determine, based on the most current information available, whether travel plans should be changed, postponed, or cancelled. In reaching their decision, the following possible accommodations should be considered:

a. additional security precautions onsite and en route;
b. additional inoculations or health precautions;
c. consultation with the Centers for Disease Control authorities;
d. disclosure by staff members or volunteers of the status of their personal health;
e. additional insurance coverage for the traveler(s);
f. signed waiver of responsibility by the traveler(s); and
g. using team members who hold passports from countries not considered to be threatened or endangered.

Members of the Commissions' staff and/or volunteers may be asked to sign a statement indicating that they have been made aware of the Travel Warning, that they are not compelled to travel to the place under warning, that travel is voluntary, that the Commissions will not provide security personnel for them and holding harmless the Commission(s) for any adverse consequences stemming from the staff member's/volunteer's voluntary travel to the location that is the subject of the Travel Warning.

The President of the Commissions or the appropriate Executive Committees may require additional consents or requirements.

Section 2: Alternative Accommodations When Travel is Postponed. Whenever travel must be postponed, efforts will be made to conduct team visits by alternative means such as videoconferencing, conference calls, or meetings in another location. The determination regarding the use of alternative means shall be made by MSA-CESS Staff. Please refer to the Continuity of Visits Plan for current practices.

Section 3: Status of the School When Travel is Postponed.
Accredited and candidate school shall not be penalized when dangerous conditions prevent travel by the representatives of the Commissions. The Commissions will take prudent and appropriate actions to minimize the effects on the school's accreditation or candidacy for accreditation because of a decision not to permit travel by the Commissions' representatives to the school's location. Candidate and/or accredited schools may be given an extension of accreditation for a specified period that is appropriate to the specific circumstances so that the situation can be reexamined at the end of the specified period. Such extensions shall not exceed two years without the approval of the Executive Committees or the Commissions. All requirements for the submission of reports and documents will remain in effect during the period of postponement.

If a required onsite visit can not be conducted within a reasonable period of time, the Commissions' Membership and Accreditation Committee(s) may determine that the accreditation or candidacy of the school should be terminated or suspended for a stated period of time. The Commissions shall take formal action on such a recommendation, and the action will be recorded in the school's permanent records.