
Listserv Summary: Programs in Haiti

May, 2018

An inquiry was made to the AIEA listserv asking if other institutions are currently running health programs (or other programs) in Haiti, and if so, what they have put in place to address the associated risks.

Summary of responses:

There were six responses with half of the respondents reporting on their engagement in Haiti and the other half noting why they are not engaged.

Respondents with programs in Haiti:

- One institution has developed a risk mitigation plan that for their undergraduate study abroad program in Haiti. They have students in Haiti currently, and have taken multiple groups of graduate students in the past with no issues.
- One institution has been sending faculty-led programs to Haiti for many years, typically in Nursing and other health professions. They partner with a local NGO that has extensive on-the-ground experience, and they host most of their groups. The program relies heavily on their local expertise to mitigate many safety concerns (housing, transportation, etc.), and they have had enough faculty traveling to Haiti over the years that our institution is comfortable in the environment.
- At one institution, Haiti has been off-limits, but their Nursing school has interest and there is a site visit going on in May 2018 to reassess.

Respondents without programs in Haiti:

- One institution does not have a program in Haiti, but does run a global health program in Ghana where there has been great concern over internships in medical situations. Big ethical as well as liability concerns have driven an emerging 'no-clinical shadowing' policy. The respondent noted that Haiti is a tough place for all kinds of reasons, and review is important; there are serious risk management issues.

- One institution refers to the institutional policy on international travel for any faculty-led program. Their International Travel Review Committee has determined that any programs requesting to go to a country with a level three or level four travel warning put out by DOS will not be approved. (Some schools have an institutional policy that travel to countries with level three travel warnings will be considered by a committee on a case by case basis). Our reasoning for moving forward with that policy was that while the DOS may put out information on countries with level three travel warnings that are only specific to certain areas within the country, that the climate of politics, crime, etc. could change at any moment and cross town borders. The institution has a faculty-led program that has run smoothly every year without any problem, in a country with a level three travel warning. The program is in an area of the country not affected by the travel warning, but the committee felt it was best not to put our students at risk due to liability. The committee felt it would be too difficult in litigation to back up the committee's reasoning to send students to a country with a level three travel warning when DOS travel warning information is public knowledge.
- One institution currently has suspended programs/travel to Haiti due to ongoing concerns about poor infrastructure and limited resources. The Travel Safety Committee often has discussions about the ethical implications of operating programs in locations in which resources are scarce already for the local residents. Groups of students in Haiti are likely to get prioritized by local providers for everything from bottled water to health care services (if any of them require such services), so they want to wait until Haiti has sufficiently recovered from the fallout of the series of natural disasters that it faced, and until more of the infrastructure (e.g., roads) are restored.