

## Our Approach to COVID-19

World Learning Youth Programs recognizes risk as inherent in all travel, and we continually work to identify, mitigate, and manage risks within our program contexts. We continue to closely monitor the impact of COVID-19 on our youth exchange portfolio and the travel industry. As such, we are currently reviewing the 2022 program portfolio to confirm how the programs will be offered. Given the changing nature of the pandemic, programs may need to switch to hybrid (in-country) or virtual exchanges.

**What COVID-19 protocols are World Learning Youth Programs implementing this summer?** View our full COVID-19 risk management protocols [here](#).

**How does World Learning Youth Programs decide when it is safe for a travel program to take place where there might be heightened risk of COVID-19?**

World Learning Youth Programs uses a variety of monitoring sources and relies on a risk committee, chaired by the Director of Security, to comprehensively evaluate risk. Key resources for monitoring risk include daily Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) news summaries, International SOS risk alerts, global and local news sources, local health ministries and other government agencies, and the U.S. Department of State travel warnings.

During a public health emergency such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, World Learning Youth Programs also relies on guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In addition, during periods of heightened health risks, World Learning Youth Programs closely monitors actions taken by the governments in the countries and local communities where our programs operate, such as movement restrictions or quarantine requirements that would potentially impact the program.

Finally, World Learning leverages the expertise and knowledge of our local partners, who provide us with updates about issues of concern and potential impact to our participants and program locations. Our local partners have extensive networks that include local governments, public health authorities, U.S. Embassy services, and informal sources—all of which help to inform our decisions about programs.

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**What if my program gets canceled prior to the start date?** If we do make the difficult decision to modify or suspend any World Learning Youth Program prior to departure, we will work with U.S. Department of State colleagues to determine the best contingency plan for each exchange. Given the changing nature of the pandemic, we may be required to switch to hybrid (in-country) or virtual exchanges, and will avoid cancelling programs to the best of our ability

**Does World Learning Youth Programs require proof of COVID-19 vaccination prior to travel?** Yes, World Learning Youth Programs requires participants to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and asks enrolled participants to submit a copy of their proof of COVID-19 vaccination by as a part of their pre-departure paperwork. Exemptions may be requested by submitting an Immunization Exemption Form to the medical team. Exemptions include a) Medical (provide a letter of support from your health care provider); b) Religious (provide a statement describing a sincerely held religious belief); or c) Accessibility (provide a statement describing the inaccessibility of vaccinations in your location/home country).

Given the increase of COVID variants resulting in changes to entry requirements from countries around the world, and varying definitions of how countries define “fully vaccinated,” **World Learning is strongly recommending that all eligible participants receive a COVID-19 booster shot** prior to the start of the program. Data from clinical trials has shown that a booster shot can increase the immune response and help prevent COVID-19 symptoms. Additional information about booster shots can be found on the [Center for Disease Control's website](#).

*Please note that with regards to exemptions, World Learning Youth Programs cannot guarantee that unvaccinated travelers will be granted entry to all program countries.*

**What can I expect from World Learning Youth Programs as my program approaches?** The World Learning Youth Program team will be in close contact with selected participants as we plan for your program, and prior to your departure, we will share the most current COVID-19 considerations, information, and expectations pertaining to your destination. Feel free to email us – via your program’s email address (below) —we are happy to answer your questions!

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