



Safety Precautions

What we understand

Squads Abroad understands that traveling to a new part of the world can be daunting not only for volunteers but also friends and family that are supporting your squad. Squads Abroad number one priority is volunteer safety and we have created this FAQ page to help address concerns you may have about safety and security of our programs.

It is important to keep in mind that the communities we work in are largely isolated and far away from major cities where crime is more prevalent. Squads Abroad has built very strong relationships with the communities in which we work and is very aware of the safety and security environment of each community. We urge parents and volunteers to understand that crime committed in the major cities of the countries we work in does not mean that the entire country is unsafe. For example, if there was a riot in downtown Dallas, we would not assume that the entire state of Texas is unsafe and that the people in Houston are at risk. Please consider the nature of our work in isolated areas when reading any negative press about the danger of the countries that we are working in.

What kind of security and staff is provided?

Every group is accompanied by at least one trained Squads Coordinator, a full logistics team, and trained drivers. While in the community, Squads Abroad Coordinators are in charge of maintaining a professional and safe work environment for the volunteers and the community. All coordinators are trained to assist first aid emergencies at the locations. Special transportation is on-call 24/7 during the brigade in case of major emergencies or complete evacuation from the location.

What is the relationship between the local entity and police?

Squads Abroad maintains very strong and formal relationships with the National and Local Police. All of these entities are aware and supportive of volunteer activities and have worked together successfully for years to support the volunteers. Furthermore, SA's community projects are only done in rural areas where crime is low (if barely existent) and where relationships have been long established.



What is the involvement of the U.S Embassy and Department of State?

Prior to each squad program, all volunteers are registered in the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Additionally, Squads Abroad in-country entities are in close contact with the Embassy and are notified of any safety advisories.

What criteria does SA use when selecting transportation vendors?

All vendors must be in full compliance with all local laws and regulations required by the government in order to transport passengers. All vehicles being provided must be recent models and in excellent working condition. All drivers must possess the appropriate special driver's license that is required by the government, qualifying them to drive the types of buses that are being provided. In order to obtain this license, drivers have to pass a special driving test administered by the government. Lastly, SA only works with established vendors in the transportation field who have extensive experience in the business of transporting passengers.

Are the communities safe?

Before entering a community, the SA Research and Evaluation (R&E) team collects baseline data, assesses community needs and secures buy-in from the local leadership. Each community is visited by the operations team of the local SA office to ensure that it is secure and safe for transporting the volunteers to and from the community. If the in-country leadership team ever feels that the safety of volunteers is compromised in any way, volunteers would be immediately withdrawn from the community.

How accessible are the communities?

All communities must be accessible through paved roads or well-maintained dirt roads (used mostly during summer) by normal vehicles or four wheel drive. The driving time to the location varies between approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours from where the volunteers are staying.

Have there ever been any incidents related to criminal activity?

Squads Abroad has an exceptional track record for brigade security because of the involvement of local law enforcement, hired security, and strong relationships with local communities leaders. Groups have only experienced incidents typical of any international travel, such as petty theft. Squads Abroad has not experienced any incidents related to criminal activity in the years that the organization has been operating.



Are volunteers ever alone?

Volunteers are never left alone; Squads staff remain with all groups for the entire duration of their program. All volunteers are given explicit directives to remain with their group at all times during the program.

What if the group has to be evacuated?

All program countries have detailed evacuation plans in place in the event volunteers need to be removed from the program site or country due to an emergency. All volunteers are covered by the Squads Abroad Travel Insurance Policy. The in-country Program Associates will work with the Squad Coordinators, local embassy, and airlines to ensure that the group departs immediately and safely.

Who do I contact in case of an emergency?

If there is an emergency situation where the family needs to get a hold of the volunteer immediately, please contact the appropriate team members listed on the contact sheet provided for each country.

What if a volunteer gets ill during a program?

With common, non-urgent illnesses, volunteers can be seen by a staff paramedic or physician. In severe cases, or by request of the volunteer, Squads Abroad can arrange communication to family members or transportation back to the volunteer's home country. Depending on the severity or nature of the illness, transportation home may be partially or fully covered by Squads Abroad's travel insurance.