

Traveling can provide a great experience for a young advocate. Make sure you are prepared so that the trip is safe, successful, and stress-free.

preparing to **GO**

Traveling is exciting, but if you are not prepared, travel can also be stressful. Do you know how to pack for airport security? Do you have the right travel documents? Here is information to help with everything you need to know—from packing and flying to spending money to earning credit - with travel tips, packing lists and more. Being prepared will make your travel experience memorable.

how are you **GETTING THERE**

Choosing whether to drive, or travel by train, bus, or air depends on your destination and your budget.

The cost of gas, hotels, and car maintenance may make it more economical to fly. This is especially true

if you are able to shop around for a ticket with a travel agency or discount websites. Some places don't have public airports, or they are so far away that you could end up having to travel a long distance to your destination after your plane lands.

**If you don't know what a word means, check out the glossary section at the end of the Travel Guide.*

IDENTIFICATION

Don't forget to bring a government issued ID if you are over 18 (State ID, driver's license, and/or a passport work best), or a school ID and birth certificate if you are under 18. This is VERY important because you WILL NOT be able to travel without them. Learn more here: http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/acceptable_documents.shtm.

getting a **TICKET**

You may be responsible for making your own travel arrangements or someone else may be in charge of this for you. It is important to know the dates of travel to and from the event, and the name of the airport of your arrival and departure. Some cities have more than one airport, so find out which is more compatible with your plans; for instance, know where an event is hosted and which airport is closer to that venue before searching for flights. Know your home airport.

If someone else is making your travel arrangements, check with them to make sure you know the proper procedures to get this done; some organizations have their own travel agent or approve only certain agencies or airlines.

Whatever your mode of transportation, there are some general rules to keep in mind.

Buy your ticket as early as possible. Ticket prices go up the closer the purchase day gets to the actual travel day.

Always check and double check your date of travel. It's easy to get a little too relaxed and stop paying attention to days. Often, especially if you are buying a discounted ticket, they are nonrefundable, so you might be stuck

with a ticket on the wrong day.

Check the cancellation/change policies of the ticket before you buy it. Can you cancel your ticket? If something happens, is it refundable? Can you make changes to the ticket? If so, how much will it cost?

Print off the ticket and/or confirmation number and store them in a safe place. Your cell phone is one suggestion. You might also want to give a trusted friend or family member a copy of this. These tips can be helpful if you misplace the ticket, or if there's a problem when you get to the station or airport to check in.

If you are buying a plane ticket, make sure to shop around for the best prices. Websites like www.orbitz.com, www.expedia.com, and www.travelocity.com generally offer discounted tickets, or at least review a large number of airlines at the same time to find the cheapest ticket. Some websites offer cheaper tickets for students, or those under a certain age, such as www.studentuniverse.com and www.statravel.com. Be sure to check the airline sites as well; often times they will match rates that you can find on other sites and you may earn airline credits for miles traveled that you can redeem in the future for tickets purchased directly from airlines.

When buying a bus or train ticket, two of the more widely used sites are www.greyhound.com or www.amtrak.com. They often offer discounts for students, AAA members, or people in the military. Be sure to check the website for any discounts, and pay attention to the requirements for receiving that discount.

PACKING

Once your date of departure is approaching, it's time to pack. There are a few things you need to consider before you begin to pack:

Weather. Use a website like www.weather.com to check the weather of your destination. You don't want to bring only pants and sweatshirts to a

activities

Think about what you'll be doing. If necessary, get a copy of the event's agenda in advance, or ask an adult sponsor/host about expected activities. Dress accordingly. Talking to Congress members requires very different attire than hiking through woods or doing a ropes course. Consider bringing a swimsuit if you're going to be staying at a hotel.

Where you'll be staying. For example, if you're staying at a hotel, there's no reason to bring your own towels, as those are provided. (You might still want to bring your own pillow if you

destination with 90 degree weather anymore than you would want to bring shorts and tank tops to one with single digit degree weather. Knowing the weather can also prevent over packing, which can help you avoid heavy baggage charges on airlines.

have a special one, or if you don't like the idea of sleeping on pillows on which strangers have slept, or bring your own pillow case.) Most hotels also provide lotion, body soap, shampoo, and conditioner; some provide hair dryers. Often, hotel front desks will provide you with forgotten essentials, such as razors, toothbrushes, toothpaste, etc. If an iron is not provided in your room, once you're checked in, you can request one from the hotel housekeeping services. If you're not staying at a hotel, ask your adult sponsor, or the person hosting you if you should provide your own towels, pillows, blankets, or sleeping bag.

length of stay

A weekend trip requires a very different packing strategy from a one-week or a three-month stay.

For shorter trips, try and pack only what you'll need. Planning outfits, as opposed to a random number of tops and bottoms, can cut down on what you pack. It can also cut down on time spent getting ready in the morning.

For longer trips, consider that there will probably be laundry facilities, so you don't need to pack something to wear every day. Pack items that can be mixed and matched. For example pants can often be worn more than once when combined with a different top and shoes. Especially consider this tip if you are needing to wear several business professional outfits. Jackets can be worn with different pants to expand your number of outfits without having to expand your suitcase.

If you are packing a large amount of clothing, it is also helpful to use space-saving bags. These shrink the space your clothing will take up and can help reduce the total number of suitcases you have to take which can help to cut down on cost. These bags are available at Target, Wal-Mart, or online at www.spacebag.com. Also, use your space creatively. You can pack underwear or socks inside shoes to save space. Also, something as simple as neatly folding your clothes before packing can save more room than stuffing unfolded clothes into your suitcase. This can also save morning preparation time.



airport/TSA rules and regulations

Recently, many airlines have begun charging for checked bags. There is also a charge for bags that are heavier than the weight limit (usually 50 lb). Currently, there are rules that prevent you from having more than (1) carry-on (small suitcase) and (1) personal item (a purse, or briefcase) as carry-ons. If you are taking a carry-on, check www.tsa.gov for the latest travel regulations. All liquids and pastes must be in a 3 oz. container or smaller, and they all must be contained in a clear quart-sized zip sealed bag (a sandwich-sized Ziploc bag will work). Learn more here: <http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm>.

pack smart

If you can pack solely in a carry-on, do it. If your trip will prevent you from packing more than just a carry-on, pack at least one change of clothes in your carry-on (in the event that your checked baggage is delayed or lost). You can bring one carry-on and one personal item. A “carry-on” is a small suitcase designed to fit in the overhead compartment of a plane. The dimensions of a typical carry-on are 24” x 17” x 10”. A personal item is one that can fit under the seat in front of you and is a briefcase, backpack, or a purse.

snack packs

It is also helpful to pack dry snacks, such as fruit, cookies, granola bars, etc. in your carry-on for your travel. Airports have several food options available, but they are typically much more expensive than outside of the airport. Having your own snacks is especially helpful if you have long layovers or flights that last several hours. Drinks can be purchased inside security and carried onto the plane. Most airlines have free beverage services on flights; however, some airlines are now charging for chips and peanuts, and even soft drinks.



buying stuff while you're there

Make sure you have enough space in your suitcase if you want to purchase anything on your trip. Be sure to keep in mind airline restrictions on items (especially liquid) if you are planning to carry-on your luggage on your return trip.

HOTEL reservations

After making your flight reservations, it is helpful to make a hotel reservation. For some organizations, this may already be done for you on a master bill, but be sure to check with your contact first. If it is not covered, contact the hotel where the training will occur. If the training is offsite, check www.hotels.com to find a hotel close to where you will be traveling to and the price ranges of the hotels.

A credit card will be needed to make the reservation. If you book a room with hotels.com or another booking agency, you will need to pay the cost of the

hotel up front. If you book a reservation directly with a hotel, the card will be needed to simply reserve the room and will not be charged until arrival. **If you are using a debit card, most hotels will place a hold on the funds in your personal checking account for the entire amount of the hotel stay plus deposit, which can tie up funds in your checking account for up to a couple of weeks.

Also, age limits may apply in some states, so check to ensure that you will be able to reserve and stay in a room without an adult.

Getting to & from the **STATION/AIRPORT**

In the weeks before you travel, begin to plan and arrange your travel to the airport/station. There are a number of options:

Driving yourself and parking at the station/airport. Remember that most airports require you to pay to park at the airport. The cost fluctuates depending on where you park, how long you plan to stay, and different airports. Remember to look this up before you leave, and plan for the cost in your budget.

Having a friend/family member drop you off. When choosing this person, make sure they are reliable enough to pick you up and get you to the station/airport on time. If not, it might be easier (and cheaper) to take a taxi when compared to the cost of missing your flight.

Taxi. Call a local taxi company a few days before your flight leaves. Have them quote a price from your address to the airport. If the cost seems excessive, consider other options. If it seems acceptable, reserve a taxi for your date of travel. Remember to leave enough time for error.

Airport Shuttle. Look online or in a local phone book under “shuttles” or “airport shuttles.” Often, if you live too far from an airport for a taxi to be economical, an airport shuttle is the next option. For a set fee, the shuttle will pick you up at your house and deliver you to the airport. If you are able to plan ahead, buying a roundtrip ticket (to the airport and back) might earn you a discounted price.

Public Transit Systems. This is always an important option if you live in an area with public transportation.

Make sure to leave with enough time to get to the airport AT LEAST an hour before your flight leaves. This time can fluctuate depending on your airport and the time you are traveling. Boarding the airplane begins 30 minutes prior to the scheduled time listed on your ticket, and you will need to leave enough time to get through security and get to your assigned gate before this time.

TIPPING and miscellaneous cash

Having a small sum of cash can be helpful. You can use this to pay and tip cab drivers, baggage handlers, etc. or for emergencies. It is generally expected to give a shuttle driver \$1 per bag if they help put your bag into the shuttle and a 10-20% tip to cab drivers.

Check out the following links for hints on being a good traveler:

www.cheapflights.com/travel-tips/airplane-etiquette/
www.wikihow.com/Practice-Airplane-Etiquette
www.practicaletiquette.com/airplane-etiquette.html

TICKETING

Once you arrive at the airport, go to the ticketing counter for your airline. Depending on your airport, sometimes these can be in different terminals which can be very far apart, so make sure to pay special attention to the terminal signs when you are arriving at the airport. You will need to show your ID to the ticketing agent to get your boarding pass(es). These are important to keep track of until you leave the airport at your final destination, as these have the information you will need for travel, including your gate number and seating assignment. You will have to present these to get through security and again to the gate agent to be allowed onto the plane. If you misplace these, go to a ticketing or gate agent to get them reprinted.

Today, most airports have a self-service station (kiosk) to expedite the travel

process. You'll need your confirmation code from your e-ticket, your awards member number, or a credit card. Walk up to the kiosk and input either of the codes, or swipe a credit card (issued in the name of the traveler). Credit cards are not charged at this point, and will pull up any listed reservation in the cardholder's name.

According to Wikipedia, an electronic ticket or e-ticket is used to represent the purchase of a seat on a passenger airline, usually through a website or by telephone although purchase through airline ticket offices or travel agencies can also get you an e-ticket. Once a reservation is made, an e-ticket exists only as a digital record in the airline computers. Customers usually print out a copy of their receipt which contains the record locator or reservation number and the e-ticket number.

checking in your **LUGGAGE**

If you are checking a bag, take your bag you are wanting to check to the ticketing agent. They will weigh your bag and put a tag on it so that airline employees know where the bag is supposed to go. This is also where you will pay for your bag (if applicable). Try and make sure your bag does not weigh over 50 pounds, or there may be an additional 'overweight' fee.

Though weight requirements vary by airlines and country of destination, typically, bags that weigh over 50 lbs will cost extra. Before packing, check your carrier's weight requirements, and if possible, weigh the bag before you leave your house.

If you get stranded:

On the off chance that you get stranded in the middle of your travel, remain calm. Stressing out, getting angry, or panicking will not be helpful to your circumstance. Take a deep breath and head for a gate agent or a ticketing counter. If you can, pick the one with the shortest line. You don't have to be at your own gate to get rebooked. When getting rebooked, ask for a confirmation on a later flight, so that you don't continuously get placed on standby. While you are in line, call your airline. Sometimes, you can get rebooked faster that way, or at the very least, you have nothing to lose while you're standing in line.

traveling by AIR

security

Bring your boarding passes and your ID to the appropriate security entrance. Follow the signs that match up with your gate number to make sure you are going through the correct security checkpoint. Present your ID and boarding pass to the security agent. They will check your ID and boarding pass and then point you to the security gate. The security gate is where the security officers will examine your carry-on items to make sure that it is safe for all passengers to fly. Here are the steps you will have to take to get through security:

Grab a plastic bin at the beginning of the security line. Take off your shoes, belt, jacket, hat, watch, etc. and place them in the bin with your clear quart size bag with your travel liquids.

If you have a laptop, place it alone in a separate bin by itself.

getting to your gate

While you are at the airport, you might have to wait around a lot. Bring several activities to help you keep from getting bored (see 'Packing Checklist'). You will have to carry all of your items with you at all times, so only bring what you want to carry around with you at the airport. Make sure to pay special attention to your gates and flight times. These should be printed on your

Make sure to place all of your bags on the belt to go through the x-ray machine.

Hang on to your boarding passes as some security agents will check this as you go through the metal detector.

Wait for the security agent to motion for you to walk through the metal detector. Sometimes you may be selected for additional screening. If this happens, simply follow the instructions of the security agent.

After getting cleared, you will be able to get your belongings that you sent through the x-ray machine. If there is a long line behind you, grab your bags and plastic bins with your stuff and go to the sitting area near security to put back on your shoes, jackets, etc.

You are now ready to head to your gate!

boarding pass, but gates can change frequently. You will also want to check the TV monitors where all the flights are listed and listen to announcements to make sure you don't miss it if your plane changes gates. Some airlines also have texting or email services to notify you of any updates to your flight. Check on the airline's website for these options.

boarding

The boarding process will begin 30 minutes before your flight is scheduled to leave. Make sure you stay close to your gate area 15-20 minutes within your boarding time. If you need food, drink, restroom break etc, make sure to do these well in advance of your boarding time which should be printed on your boarding pass. Listen to the gate agent to know when you are supposed to board. Airlines will go by group number or status to board. This information should also be included on your boarding pass so you know when to board. Once your group is called, make sure you have all your belongings and hand your boarding pass to the gate agent. They will swipe it and hand it back to you.

When you get on the plane, check your boarding pass for your seat assignment. Once you reach your assigned seat, place your carry-on (if you have one) into the overhead bins above your seat, and your personal item underneath the seat in front of you. If you want to have your iPod, laptop, etc. out or books to read, you should get them out while everyone is boarding so that you can have them ready when they are allowed for use.

landing and baggage claim

Once the plane lands, make sure you get all of your belongings. After de-boarding the plane, follow the signs through the airport to baggage claim if you checked luggage, or to ground transportation if you have to catch a shuttle. You may need to contact the hotel to schedule a pick up (see Travel Information sheet).

getting **TO & FROM** the hotel

There are a variety of ways to get from your flight to your hotel. Some of these are the same as getting to the airport, but there are a few additions.

hotel shuttle

Some hotels offer a free (or inexpensive) hotel shuttle service to and from the airport and local attractions. Look at the hotel's website, or give them a call, before you travel.

shuttle services

Most destinations have shuttle companies that you can utilize to get from the airport to where you need to go. These can be reserved online or by calling ahead. An online search should provide several options, depending on where you are going; www.supershuttle.com is one example of a national shuttle service.

taxis

Get a price quote before you leave the airport. Also be aware that most cabdrivers charge per piece for luggage, as well as per piece of luggage that they have to handle. Note: there is sometimes an airport surcharge for taxis waiting at the airport.

rental cars

For youth who are over 21, this can be an option once you arrive at your destination. This option can be very costly, but sometimes it may be the only option. Generally, it is beneficial to reserve these online well in advance of your trip. Be sure to shop around for the best deals. If you are reserving online, a search for coupon codes for this company can get you a discount as well. For most companies, there is an additional charge (usually \$25/day) for drivers under 25. Most will request, and some require, that you purchase insurance (price per day varies by company). Many companies will also require a hold on the car for the duration of the rental. These holds can be up to \$350, so it is important to make sure you have this plus the entire cost of the rental available, in addition to the other expenses of your trip. Some companies, however, will waive the deposit if you use your debit card and show that you have a round-trip ticket (for example, Alamo.com).

If you choose this option, once you get off the plane, proceed to the rental car counter (signs should be visible in the airport). Some airports will require that you take a shuttle to the rental car counter. Provide the salesperson with your name and reservation number. You

will have to present valid driver's license and credit or debit card at this time. The attendant will give you several options for refueling: the least expensive option is usually to refill the tank yourself. They will give you the keys, and then you will go find the car they have assigned you. (Attendants should give you directions to find the car, but if you are unsure, always ask before assuming.) Once you find the car, make sure to inspect the inside and the outside of the car before leaving the lot, and make note of any scratches or damage that you see. If this has not been previously documented with the company, you could be held liable for this damage even if you are not the one responsible for it, so this step is very important. Next, drive the car to the exit, and give your paperwork to the attendant. They will make sure everything is correct before you leave the rental car lot. Make sure to get out your directions to where you are needing to go so that you have them easily available while driving. Make note of any gas stations that are close to the airport when you are leaving, as you will need to stop and refuel before returning the car to the airport. Be sure to keep your receipt from refueling as this will likely be needed for reimbursement purposes.

What happens **AT THE HOTEL?**

check-in

Most hotels require a credit card on arrival for what they call incidentals (any extra expenses charged to your room, such as movies). Check with your adult sponsor to see if you will need a card for this or if it can be covered another way. Also, if you are using a debit card to check in, most hotels will place a hold for the entire amount of the hotel stay, plus

a deposit which can tie up funds in your checking account for up to a couple of weeks. Leave a copy of all your travel information at home in case someone needs to get in touch with you. And when you arrive at the hotel, ask the front desk to be sure your name is on your room so your family can be connected to the right room if they call you.

in the room

Once you get to your room, look around to make sure everything is clean and in order. Many hotels have personal care items (including shampoo, conditioner, lotion, soap, other personal care items, etc.). If you forget something, you can call the front desk to see if they offer complimentary (no cost) items. Coffee that is placed in the rooms generally does not cost. Be aware that many hotels will place water bottles, food, etc. in the rooms and will charge your room for any of these items that are used. It is suggested to purchase snacks at an off-site location once you reach the hotel as hotel items can be much

more expensive. Same goes for pay-per-view movies on TV-if you feel that this is an appropriate expense for you, then check with an adult supporter to make sure the purchase is okay. These charges will show up on your hotel bill, so don't charge anything you wouldn't want adults to know you're watching!

There are also many safety concerns to be aware of in your room. Make sure to lock your door while in your room, and always check to make sure you know the person knocking before opening your door.



checkout

Look around the room before leaving and check the bathroom to make sure you have all of your belongings. Then take your keys or cards to the front desk and tell the clerk you need to check out. If you have to pay for your room up front, make sure to get a copy of your bill with your name, dates of stay, and a zero balance when checking out.

forms

You should be in contact with your adult supporter to find out the process for reimbursement of expenses. Sometimes you will need to keep your receipts for anything purchased, including meals. Make sure to check in with your adult supporter before going on the trip to understand what will be necessary for you to get reimbursed later.

checklist

You might find the checklist below helpful. It is not comprehensive, but a great place to start.

- Government issued picture ID (driver's license, non driver's ID, military ID, passport, etc.).
- Credit card if needed for hotel.
- Cash.
- Dry food and snacks (no liquids).
- \$25-\$50 per checked bag, each way if needed (check with your airline).
- Appropriate clothing for the weather where you are traveling.
- Dress clothes, if you plan on presenting. If you are unsure what is appropriate dress, be sure to ask an adult sponsor. Most airlines have a place to hang garment bags if you choose to carry on your dress clothes.
- Bathing suits (check if the hotel has a pool)
- Appropriate shoes (for walking or working out if there are activities outside of the hotel).
- Activities for down time (for example, iPods, video games, books, magazines, writing or drawing materials, card games, hand-held). Be careful! You are responsible for your own property.
- Chargers for electronics (iPod, phone, laptop, etc).
- Toiletries (for example, toothpaste and brush, hair supplies, cologne, perfume, deodorant, shaving supplies, makeup, shampoo, and conditioner—if you don't like what the hotel provides).
- Contacts, glasses, or other eye-care-related items.
- Medications, with labels (Make sure to pack these in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is delayed).

DO NOT PACK the following in your carry-on luggage: scissors, nail clippers, nail files, tweezers, razors, knives, any sharp object, mace, pepper spray, lighters, and strike-anywhere matches. These will be thrown away at security if you attempt to bring them in your carry-on.

my travel information sheet

Fill out this sheet to take with you before you travel!

My flight # is _____ on _____ airline.

I will get to the airport/train station by _____.

I need to be ready to leave by this time: _____.

I am getting to from the airport/train station by _____.

My travel confirmation # is _____.

Name of Hotel: _____.

Address of Hotel: _____.

Confirmation # for hotel: _____.

Phone # and Room # of hotel are _____.

My supportive adult phone # and room # are _____.

My Emergency contact person and phone # are _____.

Medications I am taking: _____.

I need to take these medications on the following days/times: _____.

Additional information I need to know: _____.

Glossary

Boarding (to board) - The process of getting onto the plane.

Boarding pass - A paper that will have your name and flight information. You will get this at the ticketing counter when you first get to the airport and will have to show it to get through security and onto the plane.

Checked baggage - Usually larger luggage that you will give to the ticketing agent when you check in. This luggage will be transferred automatically to your other flights and you will pick it up at baggage claim after you arrive at your destination. Some airlines charge \$25-\$50 per checked bag, and most airlines have fees if your bag weighs too much.

Checking out (hotel) - Letting the front desk at the hotel know that you are finished with your stay. Most hotels will need you to check out by noon.

Carry-on baggage - Bags you can take with you on the plane. Must be small enough to fit in the overhead compartment. Ask a supportive adult if you need help determining this.

Gate - The doorway to get from the terminal to your plane. You will need to know your gate number (on your boarding pass or TV monitors in the airport) to make sure you are getting on the right plane.

Gate agent - The person at the gate who checks your boarding pass and lets you onto the plane.

Layover - Time at the airport in between flights.

Rebooked - Taking a different flight. This usually happens when flights have been cancelled or delayed. Go to a gate agent if you have questions or are unsure if you are rebooked.

Security agent - People who check your carry-on belongings and you to make sure everyone stays safe.

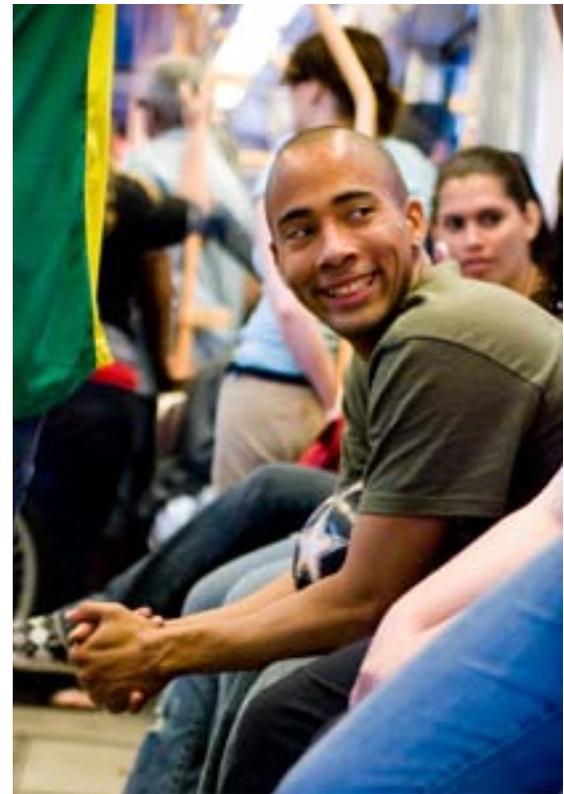
Security checkpoint - The place you have to go through to get your belongings checked out before you can go to your gate.

Standby - Being placed on a 'waitlist' to get a seat on an different flight. This is not a guaranteed seat.

Terminal - The building (usually labeled with letters) that tells you where you will be flying out of. Pay attention to which airline you are flying, because some airports have different airlines in different terminals that don't connect.

Ticketing Agent - Person at the ticketing counter that will check you in, check your baggage, and give you boarding passes.

Ticketing Counter - The first place you go when you get to the airport. This is where you get your boarding passes and check-in for your flight.



Checklist for Adults: Preparing Youth to Go

It is important that youth know what, where, when and why they are traveling. Not only does it help them prepare but it is a learning experience. If they know the details up-front, they may be able to be responsible for carrying out some of the research and planning that goes along with the trip.

Give information on travel and transportation

This includes dates, times, flights, how, and when arrangements and reservations need to be made. Youth should have as much detail about the trip and itinerary as you. If something should happen to the adult, the youth should still be able to travel and make the engagement based on the information that was provided ahead of time.

Share contact information

Exchange cell phone numbers with everyone in the group. Everyone should have each other's number for emergency, planning, and in case of change of events. Also check to see if your phone has texting capabilities. Some youth are a lot easier to reach through these means.

What if you or the youth gets stranded or lost?

A plan should be discussed as to what happens if one or the other gets lost, stranded, or separated from each other or the group traveling. Panic is not an option. If cell phone numbers are exchanged, meeting times and places are discussed, and plans are discussed ahead of time this should eliminate the moment of panic for everyone involved.

In case of emergency

Emergency contact information should be exchanged for and with everyone that is traveling. Emergencies don't just happen to youth nor do they only happen to one person. Think about food related sickness, if you are traveling with a group chances are the group has eaten at the same place. If one gets ill due to food, chances are the others will too. Sharing emergency contacts with each other and having this printed information for everyone once again is a way to share the responsibility with the group.

Provide and discuss dos and don'ts for travel and hotel stays

As the adult, if there is certain things that will not be tolerated by you or the agency, this information needs to be relayed to the youth prior to the departure rather than just expecting the youth "should know." Whether the young person is an experienced traveler or this is their first time, they should know the guidelines of the trip well ahead of the trip so they can agree, negotiate, or decide they don't want to go. Rules should be very few and made based on safety issues.

Safety guidelines

It is helpful to review safety guidelines for travel and staying in hotels. It is not uncommon for youth that are or have been in care to trust people they don't know very well; they have been placed in stranger's homes, they have been in groups they don't know real well, and they have been transported by people they don't know...why is talking to strangers in airports, bus depots, subways, or hotels any different? The fact that they are in unfamiliar and potential dangerous environments should be explained to them openly and clearly without scaring them.

Do they have luggage?

Many youth in care do not have their own luggage. They have been moved from place to place by utilizing boxes, shopping bags, and garbage bags. Make sure that the youth that are traveling have appropriate luggage, backpacks, and carry-on bags so that they are comfortable with their travels and are not embarrassed or stand out from the other travelers.

Appropriate attire

“What to wear and when to wear it” should be discussed for a couple reasons. One, so the youth can be prepared to dress like others in the meeting, presentation, or function that they are attending. Two, so that as the adult responsible, you can be sure they have the appropriate items of clothing and shoes for the event. It is one issue for the youth to know they need a shirt and tie or a formal dress but it is another issue to make sure they have the items or a means of purchasing the items.

Spending money

Be sure that the young people you are traveling with have some spending money for incidentals and things they may want or need. None of us like to travel without any cash on hand, a young person feels better and a little more responsible with a little “walking around money.”

Up-front expenses

Ensure that youth know what and how much the up-front expenses are going to be. If they are going to have to cover the cost of part of their trip or hotel, they need to be prepared to do so. If they are going to have to submit receipts for reimbursement, they need to know that prior to taking the trip. Many youth do not have the extra cash or credit established to cover large expenses or reimbursements that can take 6-8 weeks. It is also good to know if the young person has a checking account or a means of cashing a check and assisting them with this process in advance if necessary. It is recommended to provide per diem in advance of the trip and then provide the honorarium or stipend upon arrival to the event and to cover hotel expenses with a master bill whenever possible.

Who should be in their rooms?

As a general rule, no one should be in another person’s room unless they are sharing rooms. This policy saves trouble in the long run by preventing incidence or allegations. Adults should never share the room with youth, unless there is a risk of safety. Shared rooms by youth and adults create a huge liability; it is worth the cost of two rooms to avoid this. If the youth is not responsible enough to have their own room, they probably are not responsible enough for the trip in general.

Traveling with youth in care

Be sure to follow your agency guidelines when traveling with youth who are still in care. If you are traveling out of state, you may need to get special permissions from the state office or the judge on the case. Be sure that paperwork and requests are done early so that does not become the reason a youth cannot attend.

Insurance / medical cards

Be sure that you and the youth you are traveling with have copies of insurance/medical cards. Keep the originals together in a location that several individuals have access to just in case something happens to you and you are not available or do not have access to this information.

Medications

Be aware of the medications that the youth is taking, the instructions for taking the medications, and side effects. Try to keep to the medication schedule as close as possible. Do not pack medication in checked baggage; this should be packed in your carry on so that it is with you or the youth at all times. Bring a couple days of extra medication in case of delays or schedule changes.

Age

It is preferential to travel with youth at least 18 years of age, but if you are traveling with youth younger than 18, remember that your level of responsibility and supervision are increased greatly. You may also have to get additional permissions in advance as youth under 18 cannot sign or make legal decisions. In some areas of the country, anyone under the age of 18 are not allowed to have a hotel room without adult supervision. Be sure to check with your hotel site well in advance of the trip to ensure these situations do not arise during travel.

Compensation

Remember that youths' time and expertise is just as valuable as ours. Youth need to be compensated for their time; they are missing school, work, and their normal routine to travel and participate in whatever event is going on and they need to be compensated for such. This does not necessarily mean payment in cash; it could be additional credit for school, earning a professional recommendation or reference from you and can provide new opportunities for the youth to learn and experience.

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