

AMERICAN GAP ASSOCIATION - APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION

Instructions:

The intended method to complete the AGA Application for Accreditation is to go through each Indicator, and mark the grey boxes appropriately. Once finished, the next step involves submitting attachments, notes, or evidence appropriate to each Indicator. The “In Place” column should be used for areas that proof already exists and thus is simply a matter of getting the proof to AGA. The “In Process” column should be used when proof needs to be developed; this may mean that a policy needs to be written and embedded, or simply that you’re not sure whether the proof exists. The “Not Applicable” column should be used when your organization does not employ any of the particulars that that specific Indicator refers to. Finally, the “Exception Requested” column should be used when your policy is insufficient for AGA standards, however you feel your organization has responsibly considered the Indicator and addressed it in an alternative fashion. In cases of an exception, additional support documentation must be submitted such as a letter of explanation or an alternative to the proposed evidence. In most cases, supportive evidence is preferred to be online (both towards efforts of environmental stewardship but also to allow maximum flexibility for the organization). However, in some cases an actual written, signed, or otherwise physical brochure may need to be submitted as well.



Each organization must complete only those certifications for which their organization runs programs, excepting that the “Philosophy & Ethics” certification is required by all applicants. Note, if your organization passes some of the certifications then those will show specifically on your organization’s public AGA web page along with any appropriate AGA promotional materials. Some organizations may not pass, for instance, the “Service-Learning” certification in which case they will still be “AGA Accredited” but will not have the “Service-Learning” certification on any AGA promotional materials.

Fee structure: Organizations will re-apply after two (2) years, and then on a Board-determined frequency. No more frequently than every one (1) year, no less than every four (4).

0 - 25 students	-	\$500 per year
26 - 50 students	-	\$1,000 per year
51 - 100 students	-	\$2,000 per year
101 - 200 students	-	\$3,000 per year
200 + students	-	\$4,000 per year

- ◆ *Annual fees are due each year regardless of whether it is an evaluation year or not.*
- ◆ *Organizations that are a part of a larger organization (e.g., CIEE), or those that run short-term summer programs, should consider only those Gap Year students that are marketed to as Gap Year students, in the fee structure.*
- ◆ *Please note that needs-based discounts are available upon request.*
- ◆ *Organizations that run multiple programs should complete only one application for all programs.*
- ◆ *It will be AGA’s responsibility to connect with supportive students and partner organizations specific to each program to verify this self-reported application.*

Application must be submitted with the following items:

- (1) PHILOSOPHY & INTEGRITY certification must be completed by all organizations
- (2) All other relevant certifications:
 - A. SERVICE-LEARNING certification is for organizations that include student service-learning. Organizations that take part in service-learning must submit a list of their current project contacts and corresponding contact information for 1/3 of all programs at a minimum
 - B. BACKCOUNTRY/DEVELOPING COUNTRY certification is for organizations traveling 2 hours or more away from definitive first-world medical care. Typically this will be applicable for overnight backpacking, or for those that work within developing countries
 - C. INDEPENDENT STUDENT PLACEMENTS certification is for organizations who send students on individual placements where they are away from an organization-staffed supervisor. This is typically an independent internship or a solo experience
 - D. PARTNERSHIPS certification is for any organization that outsources some element to a partner-organization. Typically this looks like hiring private transportation, hiring an adventure outfitter for SCUBA or white water rafting, or organizations that have students in a homestay. Organizations that have specific partnerships must submit a list of their current partners and their contact information for 1/3 of all programs at a minimum
- (3) A promissory letter (on letterhead) committing to refer all of your online applicants to an AGA-sponsored survey that will track longitudinal outcomes for Gap Years. A link will be sent upon AGA accreditation (in partnership with Bob Clagett, Karl Haigler, and Nina Hoe)
- (4) Copy of current Liability Insurance (\$2 million minimum)
- (5) Copy of current Workers' Compensation Insurance
- (6) Copy of state and federal entity Registration Status (e.g., 501.c.3, LLC, ABN Sole-Proprietor, etc.)
- (7) Copy of required student forms including a release and waiver form, a medical disclosure form, and if appropriate, forms for minors
- (8) Copy of employment contract or job description at each level of the hiring structure (e.g., Direct Supervision Staff, Program Director, etc.)
- (9) List of students and contact information from the past year, or, administrative access to the organization's Facebook page in order to corroborate self-report claims as needed
- (10) List of names, titles, and contact information for all office staff
- (11) TEN quotes or testimonials that AGA can use to promote Gap Years and your organization
- (12) TEN pictures that AGA can use to promote Gap Years and your organization
- (13) A list of organization's Financial Aid methods that demonstrate a commitment to a diverse student body. Share the % of student body on scholarship/financial aid/discount, and, a total dollar amount of scholarship/aid/discounts given during the previous calendar year.

For general questions, support, examples, articles, and a glossary, login to your AGA Account at www.americangap.org/account-home.php.

Submit the application along with the appropriate fee to:

Ethan Knight

American Gap Association

1529 N. Killingsworth St.

Portland, OR. 97217

Or, ethan@americangap.org



“Integrity in Gap Years”
 The Standards Development Organization as given by the
 United States Department of Justice, and the
 United States Federal Trade Commission

“Gap Year” definition:

A gap year is a structured period of time when students take a break from formal education to increase self-awareness, challenge comfort zones, and experiment with possible careers. Typically these are achieved by a combination of traveling, service-learning, interning, or working. A gap year experience can last from two months up to two years and is taken between high school graduation and the junior year of their higher degree.

Organization Name:	
<i>Organization Mail Address:</i>	
<i>Number of “Gap Year” students / year:</i>	
<i>Date of Submission:</i>	
<i>Organization Contact Person and Info: (position, email, phone)</i>	
<i>Signature of Executive Director:</i>	

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1 - PHILOSOPHY & INTEGRITY - the basis of all AGA certifications

Every organization that is a part of the American Gap Association MUST complete the Philosophy & Integrity certification. This is an attempt to create a basic level of standards so students are informed, prepared, and safe while on their Gap Year.

1.1 - “Organization’s pedagogy is congruent with Gap Year education.”

Gap Year education is an active process that involves, among other things, both an experiential and a reflective element. Students must be involved in and accountable for their own learning, processes, and growth with a fundamental favor towards natural consequences when appropriate. Structured activities are designed to engender real successes, failures, uncertainty, and do so within a safe manner.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.1.1 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of “Experiential Education:” Appropriate mentorship. <i>(Critical to the development of youth is mentorship. Partially this is a statement about student:staff ratios, but moreso this is about defining the nature of the relationship staff have with students as supportive, interested, and willing to allow small mistakes.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Manual detailing mentorship support tools • Copy of staff training schedule highlighting mentorship strategies 				
1.1.2 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of “Experiential Education:” Focused reflection with a strong emphasis on student-directed answers. <i>(In order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities (as noted by the AEE). At the end of intentional experiences, equal intention must be put into debriefing and reflecting upon what happened.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff manual outlining guidelines to prepare students for active role in day-to-day activities • Expectations that outline reflection • Reflection tools for staff or students 				
1.1.3 - Organization consciously includes core qualities of “Experiential Education:” Have an active role in the self-governance of their program. <i>(Students learn best by doing and receiving the merits of their own efforts - for better or worse. The best way to make sure that students ‘own’ their experience is if they have a hand in its creation. This might mean booking transportation, leading an initiative, etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations that outline self-governance for students as a priority • Staff manual outlining self-governance strategies 				

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)</i>	<i>In Place</i>	<i>In Process</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Exception Requested</i>
<p>1.1.4 - Organization attempts to challenge students' comfort zones in manageable ways. (One of the two most common reasons listed in taking a Gap Year is a desire to increase one's self awareness. Challenging comfort zones remains a vital element in the definition of a Gap Year and organizations each have their own unique approaches to such challenges. Note that each student has a different capacity for such challenge and the organization must attempt to allow for such differences.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of program planning directives that incorporate such challenges to students comfort zone • Copy of staff manual outlining specific activities designed to challenge comfort zones 				
<p>1.1.5 - Organization trains students on the value of seeing things from opposing perspectives; exposing students to, and discussing with them, differing world views, opinions, and cultural norms. (Through this standard, students will be challenged to define their own answers to questions and thus develop a deeper sense of self. Additionally, in terms of developing an appreciation for global citizenship, it becomes vital to develop tools that will help students see things from opposing perspectives. Understanding how to resolve issues with coworkers, strangers, or even other students it is important to attempt to see their perspective.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of curriculum that focuses on opposing perspectives education • Copy of staff expectations that mandate world view education • Copy of staff manual that provides guidelines or directives focused on opposing perspectives education 				

1.2 - “Do what you say you’ll do.”

All marketing and enrollment material is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis in order to ensure its accuracy and ease of understanding. Materials don’t mislead nor misrepresent any experiences students will be exposed to and are clear about what an ‘appropriate student’ is for their organization’s programs. Policies and marketing materials are unambiguous, deliberate, publicly available, and don’t use misleading terminology.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.2.1 - Student policies must be clear. <i>(The policies that students are expected to abide by are critical to forming clear expectations for their upcoming Gap Year. Keeping students in alignment with the organization’s policies while they are on program begins with early enrollment in the policies - thus the need for making them public.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public list of policies for students and how they are ‘public’ • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public availability 				
<p>1.2.2 - Appropriate student:staff ratios. * Developing Country/Overnight Backpacking - 8:1 * Mountaineering (depending on terrain) - 4:1 * Winter camping - 6:1 * Top-rope rock climbing - 6:1 * Multi-pitch or Ice climbing - 3:1 * Flat water paddling - 6:1 * White water paddling - 4:1 * Sea Kayaking- 8:1 * Rafting (depending on class) - 1:2 boats <i>(Different organizations have differently mandated student:staff ratios for specialty activities. These listed summarize the most common but those activities not listed, if practiced, require stated ratios.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
<p>1.2.3 - Organization clearly outlines the process for escalating disciplinary responses as well as what behaviors will result in immediate termination from the program. <i>(Whether through an escalating series of discipline - warning leading to a verbal contract leading to a written contract, or timeouts - students are more likely to succeed if they know when a rule is absolute and what they can expect in terms of the escalation processes.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public list of policies for students and how they are ‘public’ • Public URL 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.2.4 - Clear policies about exclusive relationships, sexual relationships (both internal and external to the program), and drug and alcohol use. <i>(Each organization treats these policies uniquely, however parents and students should know specifically how the organization plans to handle these key issues while on program.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of policies for students and how they are 'public' 				
1.2.5 - Clear policies about existing student prescription medication. <i>(Who holds the meds? Whose responsibility is it to maintain regular intake of medication? Especially with mental health prescriptions or those considered a 'controlled substance' it becomes necessary to identify where the responsibilities lay and what level of self-care is expected from a prospective student.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of guidelines for admission • Public list of policies for students and how they are 'public' • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
1.2.6 - Neither therapeutic nor adjudicated (court-mandated) youth are allowed. <i>(While many students can benefit from a Gap Year, those that are adjudicated, court-mandated, or requiring regular in-field therapy are beyond the expertise of AGA to monitor.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of admissions criteria highlighting where this is publicly stated 				
1.2.7 - Organization is clear about its optimal "fit" of student to program. <i>(Each organization should be clear about who will and who will not be successful on their program. Are any of the following important: GPA, language requirements, any disabilities? NOTE: Advisory Board member and professional youth counselor Sarah Persha, has volunteered to help each organization create wording that clearly identifies its optimum "fit.")</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of guidelines for admission • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
1.2.8 - Organization has a clear and publicly available Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC). <i>(EEC are vital to clearly explain what is needed for each student to physically and safely complete the established itinerary, but also protect the organization from potential ADA lawsuits. Example: http://www.nols.edu/courses/pdf/admissionforms/nols_student_eec.pdf)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public list of guidelines for admission • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.2.9 - Organization is transparent about typical staff profile (e.g., qualifications or current staff profile). <i>(Staff who administer the organization and especially those Direct Supervision Staff give a window into the type of experience the organization is facilitating.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL listing hiring guidelines • Brochure • Public profiles of current staff • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
1.2.10 - Organization is clear about finances: including costs, anticipated additional charges, and a clear refund policy. <i>(Finances hit at the heart of establishing trust and no one wants to feel blind-sided with them. This means clear anticipated costs. Refund policies must be clearly stated to ensure financial accountability.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • Public profiles of current staff • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				
1.2.11 - “Safe,” “always,” “guarantee” are not used to suggest or promise as much in any materials. <i>(There are legal complications in using unrehearsed or promissory language that creates an implied expectation about things that are ultimately out of the organization’s control. Organizations do themselves a favor to accurately represent risks as well as clarify that sometimes bad things happen despite the best preparation.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization’s policies discussing care in word choice • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
1.2.12 - Organization is transparent with students, parents, and family about expected frequency and methods of communication during the program’s duration. <i>(Because a student’s experience necessarily involves their family, it is important to be clear about the expected methods and frequency of on-program communication. Organizations should also consider whether its communication policy reflect the developmental needs of its students.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public URL • Brochure • General program / organization information packet and description of its public use 				

1.3 - “Organization must abide by AGA principles for strong governance.”

All organization staff should strive to represent a professional educational organization with integrity. Safety and student education should be the priority above all other considerations, however, to achieve the best in safety standards, the organization must be accordingly run and governed.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.1 - Organization must abide by the Standards even when not under review. <i>(The substantive, non-marketing benefit of being accredited by the AGA only works when the commitments are adhered to even when not under review. Keeping students safe means each Indicator must be incorporated into the culture of an organization.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing continued compliance • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>1.3.2 - Organization communicates to parents/students in a professional, timely, and respectful manner. <i>(As a Gap Year organization it is in everyone's interest to keep students and parents happy and doing so on the 'front end' means using communication well. This includes: responding to families in a timely manner, being honest in all communications, and embracing a general respect for all peoples regardless of income, race, orientation, beliefs, different abilities, or history.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies / expectation of office staff specific to the list at left • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>1.3.3 - Organization is adequately insured for all proposed activities (liability minimally at 2 million), properly registered, and submits all mandated reports in a timely and responsible fashion. <i>(Having sufficient insurance, being properly registered, and handling the business of your organization responsibly is a protection to all Gap Year students, not the least of which includes the organization itself. Organizations that do 'adventure activities' may need additional insurance or specific letters of waiver that address bungee jumping, sky diving, or SCUBA diving.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of: current liability insurance policies, local and state and federal registration of entity status (corp, llc, 501.c.3, etc.), most recent 990s • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director • Copy of additionally encouraged insurance (such as DAN for SCUBA) 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.4 - Organization has immediate access to resources sufficient to address emergencies in the field. <i>(Emergencies come in any number of forms and in some circumstances it is necessary for the headquarters to intervene directly with a program. Preparation for those unique situations can only go so far, however, without access to funds.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the field: any short-term emergency expenses such as immediate hired transport or VISA/MasterCard with sufficient funds (depending on the group/program this should be roughly \$800). <i>(Note that areas where access to a VISA/MasterCard is unreliable must bring cash.)</i> • In the office: funds sufficient enough to transport one support staff to any operating location for each of five programs currently operating. Considerations for any necessary (passport) visas should be made to allow for a quick departure should circumstances merit. This could potentially also be with a reliable local contact who can act as a deputy for the organization. <i>(The cost to travel can be significant, so local resources are encouraged if they are trusted. However, financial availability must allow for an organization to deal with all emergencies.)</i> 	<p>Field-relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of financial cushion • Field budget from a recent program showing extra 'emergency' funds <p>Office-relevance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of financial cushion • Organization's emergency protocols • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director • Balance statement from bank accounts • Names and locations of contacts who can intervene • Documents for a Business Line of Credit including available credit 				
<p>1.3.5 - Prior to departure, every student (or their legal guardian if minors), signs medical history forms disclosing current medications, allergies, psychological diagnoses, recent history of therapy, any current physical disabilities. <i>(In order to best protect each student, the organization must know any particular student needs in advance. Preparation and information are a minimum for responsible care.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of medical history form • Copy of deadline for submission of all required forms • Explanation of organization's methods for tracking and keeping copies of all submitted forms 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.3.6 - Prior to departure, every student (or their legal guardian if minors), sign release & waiver forms with risks that are clearly laid out. <i>(Having clear and iron-clad forms help ensure that the organization is safe, and that the students in its charge are informed and transparent about any necessary conditions.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of release and waiver form • Copy of deadline for submission of all required forms • Explanation of organization's methods for tracking and keeping copies of all submitted forms 				
1.3.7 - Organization has independent medical expertise available on-call for consultation. <i>(Medical situations are the most common emergency faced by Study Abroad organizations. Having independent medical expertise provides an expert to help determine medical urgency, treatment (if directed by the expert), and recommend evacuation if necessary. Additionally, it reduces the organization's liability.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and contact of medical experts • Copy of the contract with the individual/organization • International SOS, MEDEX, HTH, etc., contract 				
1.3.8 - Organization has certified and independent, organizationally-sourced clinician available on-call for psychological issues and to help assess fitness of students to continue participation. <i>(Psychological issues are the second most common issue faced by students while studying abroad. While the ultimate decision to remove a student always rests with the Gap Year organization, it is only through informed experts that organizations are able to make accurate assessments. Clinicians should be able to meet remotely (by phone or Skype) with the student or staff if deemed necessary, and must be authorized to advise the organization regarding suggested actions.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and contact of medical expert(s) • Copy of the contract with the individual/organization 				
1.3.9 - Organization abides by all local laws wherever students are present. <i>(Familiarity with local laws should be necessary to ensure the students and the organization aren't unintentionally put in harms way nor at risk for potential local legal issues, including prison.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing compliance with all local laws • Staff resource for determining local laws 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.3.10 - Any safety equipment used by students or staff are kept in sound condition, appropriately used, checked prior to use, and sufficient to accommodate different students (i.e., sized correctly). <i>(Safety equipment must be kept in good working order and appropriate to the students and staff using it or the utility of the equipment meant to keep students safe will not serve its purpose.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization's policies discussing maintenance of equipment and supply needs/standards • Name and contact information of person responsible for safety equipment 				
<p>1.3.11 - Organization has an Emergency Response Plan with clear steps on how to handle a medical emergency including death. [See your AGA Organization account for examples]. <i>(A good Emergency Response Plan should include specific roles for all parties, addressing all groups (parents, students, staff, affected students/staff, media, AGA, etc.). It should identify when the plan is put into effect and the principal decision-maker for each step when one is called for.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling of current students / group • Communication with family including debriefing and following up with family • Staff support • Availability of psychological professionals / psychological first aid (http://icisf.org: the International Crisis Incident Stress Foundation) • Repatriation of remains / insurance / communication with local government and if needed, State Department (www.travel.state.gov/law/family_issues/death/death_600.html) • Detailing protocols for a missing student including contacting HQ, working with any local agencies, supporting local staff and individual students and other group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Emergency Response Plan that addresses each of the bullet points to the left 				

1.4 - “Organization upholds Federal standards for higher education.”

Universities, in order to receive funding and ensure compliance with Federal agencies, must abide by reasonable practices. Given the relationship Gap Years have (and hope to continue) with universities, such standards are in every organization's best interest to pave the way for Gap Years' inclusion in Federal education benefits.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.4.1 - Staff do not share information about specific students without either the express permission of the student, or to prevent a clear and immediate danger to a person or persons (ie, FERPA). <i>(Sharing any students' information creates many consequences and should only be done with their prior permission, or if a clear and immediate danger is posed. This explicitly includes information-sharing with parents. Minor children don't have the same legal right to privacy, however, every effort should be made to treat them as adults whenever safety is not a concern. For a full explanation of FERPA, click here.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing staff disclosure of student details for Office staff and Field staff • Policy of organization to use FERPA 				
<p>1.4.2 - Mandatory reporting of any security threat to AGA using the AGA Reporting Form. <i>(The Clery Act (read summary here) was passed to ensure students are informed about threats to their safety. It is a mandatory process for any organization receiving Federal funds and thus is an important commitment for AGA towards facilitating future FAFSA eligibility. The AGA have a Reporting Form that will allow us to track data and keep AGA organizations informed about historical risks while paving the way for Clery compliance. Forms must be submitted on a semi-annual basis. www.americangap.org/incident_report.php.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing use of AGA Reporting Form • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>1.4.3 - HIPAA compliance for all staff handling student records [See your AGA Organization account for details]. <i>(Organizations that report student information to another organization, AGA for instance, are required to be in compliance with HIPAA regulations. Ethically speaking and for the sake of simplicity, any student health information must be considered confidential and safely guarded.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing organization's compliance of student record confidentiality 				

1.5 - “Organization prepares student appropriately.”

Despite the best training for staff and solid organizational protocols, at the end of the day, students themselves are their own best protectors. Providing a comprehensive and learning-appropriate orientation remains the best way to safeguard students: Teach a student to make safe and healthy decisions for themselves.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.5.1 - Provides on-site program orientation, started and finished within 96 hours of program beginning. <i>(Safety begins with a solid structure and detailed orientation at the commencement of a program. While operating an orientation prior to departure is a much-used tool, creating an orientation on-site adds a taste of relevance and reality that assists in the integration of students' learning. Ultimately, students are their own best safety-sponsors, but only if they are informed about, and meaningfully understand, the relevant dangers. Examples include: scavenger hunts, local contacts, and scenarios.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site staff facilitates follow-up with students about any potentially undisclosed medical concerns • Focuses on teaching students experientially about “risk management awareness” and problem solving. [See your AGA Organization account for an AGA-approved example curriculum] • Re-establishes program policies and provides EXPLANATIONS meant to enroll students in the reasoning for each policy • Addresses and provides instruction on how to handle ALL of the following: illness, disease (rabies, STDs, HIV, regional considerations), proper hygiene, working and communicating with others (within the group and cross-culturally), cross-cultural safety considerations, personal medical issues (allergies, medication, etc.), curfews, host-region cultural-norms, terrorist attacks, natural disasters (flooding, hurricanes, typhoons, etc.), crime (sexual assault, assault, how best to respond), local laws, proposed individual goals of the program, safe hydration, safe food intake, fauna, road safety, water safety (oceans, drowning, etc.), environmental hazards (lightening, etc.), hypothermia (where appropriate), heat stroke (where appropriate), navigating homestays (where appropriate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the staff policies detailing orientation expectations • Copy of an orientation • Copy of instruction used to experientially instruct students about risk management awareness and problem solving • Signed copy of program policies that students have re-initialed from an orientation • Copy of the staff policy detailing timeline and what must be covered during orientation 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.5.2 - Written welcome information that includes details on program policies, housing, food, drink, local environmental concerns, flora, fauna, transportation, vaccinations (based on CDC guidelines), possible challenges (personal, group, cultural), safety/security, packing list specific to the student's program. <i>(Different people learn in different methods, so while it's important to address details over the phone and 'on the ground', it's also vital to have these same details available for reference in print.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program-specific welcome packet detailing the concerns listed • Student web-page detailing the concerns listed 				
<p>1.5.3 - Organization has appropriate re-entry process. <i>(These experiences inevitably will transform a student's life, but even moreso with a proper contextualization of the experience. Taking time to prepare a student for 'normal' life, or 'reverse culture shock' are critical towards their longterm success and the integration of lessons learned.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of curriculum used in debriefing program • Handouts or materials to address re-entry preparation and how they are used • Written letter describing the steps taken to address re-integration shock post-program 				
<p>1.5.4 - Provides an orientation specific to safety prior to each organized activity (e.g., rock climbing, entering a new city, etc.). <i>(Safety cannot be overemphasized, and each situation is unique. Accordingly, reminders should be frequent and as specific as they can be to ensure that students are making informed decisions. The great fear of "negligence" can be abated if students are informed and thus then are responsible for ensuring their own safety in as much as they've been warned. Simple things can have life-altering impact if not done with preparation and care.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the staff policies detailing activity/site-specific orientation • Copy of student roles detailing activity/site-specific orientation • List of expectations for on-site representatives 				

1.6 - “Organization has clear policies about transportation.”

Understanding that different methods of transportation are critical to the overall experience of a good Gap Year, transportation remains a mostly preventable risk. Road transportation is the most common cause of fatalities and thus should merit a significant effort for each organization to ensure safety.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.6.1 - Motorcycles, ATVs, and quads, are not allowed. <i>(In the Peace Corps anyone riding a motorcycle is automatically expelled.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing motorcycle use 				
<p>1.6.2 - If staff operate a motor vehicle in which students are passengers, they are trained on the specific vehicle as well as the following: <i>(Organizations that allow staff to pilot vehicles require additional safeguards to ensure students aren't unnecessarily endangered.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum number of occupants per vehicle • Proper operation • Proper preparation (including checking fluids, light functionality, tire tread and pressure, prior to each trip) • Proper maintenance • Special training or experience is given if using a trailer • Vehicle and driver are insured for the use of that vehicle (as mandated by state law) • Any decision to ride in a vehicle without seatbelts is made consciously and as part of a planned and researched activity. If available, seatbelts must be worn at all times • Valid drivers license for the vehicle they will be operating and the states / countries it will be operated in • Vetted for a safe driving record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff driving vehicle check list • Staff policies detailing minimum training standards • Copy of vehicle insurance certificate and coverage • Copy of policy on when seatbelts are used and when they are not 				
1.6.3 - Organization has a policy for only driving when awake and rested. Staff-drivers abide by US DOT standards: For road: 10-hour maximum driving after 8 consecutive hours off duty. 70 hour driving limit within 8 consecutive days. <i>(The Federal Government has created a few clear limits around driving before the 'human element' begins to have a negative impact.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of Staff policy detailing rest and US DOT standards 				

1.7 - “Organization has clear process for hiring and staffing.”

Hiring the right people is arguably the most important process for any well-run organization. Doing so inadequately both endangers the organization and the students we strive to safely educate. Staff should be well qualified, which includes but is not limited to: ability to self-assess, take feedback, appropriately handle foreseeable medical emergencies, handle challenging or difficult students, familiar with program-specifics (activities, age range, group dynamics, duration, and region if appropriate), possess specific technical skills, teaching skills, intercultural skills, interpersonal skills, any necessary language requirements, etc

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.7.1 - The hiring process is legal. All local hiring guidelines are followed. <i>(Hiring comes with some specific challenges that carelessness could open into lawsuits. Hiring according to local laws must be employed, and in the US, most typically will involve NOT asking certain questions about age, religion, etc. Hiring international staff requires special considerations such as potential work visa requirements or alternative methods for performing background checks. Note that when an employee is in the US, US-labor law applies. However, when an employee is outside of the US such laws, in most cases, do not. Read here for a helpful tool on hiring law.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of hiring process including dos and don'ts for questions, etc. • Copy of staff interview template • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
<p>1.7.2 - Direct Supervision Staff are not hired as independent contractors and have health and medical evacuation insurance for the duration of their employment. <i>(Staff that feel safe and supported are better able to do their jobs. Non-independent contractors have additional long-term support through workers compensation in the event of an accident that although costing more to an organization provides securities for the staff that albeit not ideal, are critical.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff compensation guidelines detailing independent contractor • Copy of staff contract with insurance details • Copy of organization policy for hiring independent contractors 				
<p>1.7.3 - Staff have a regular process for assessing performance that is focused on improvement, safety, and appropriateness of fit with the organization. This should be no less than an annual process. <i>(Staff can always improve and having strong systems in place to facilitate such growth will only create a better experience for students. Great staff represent, as well, an investment for the organization that if done wisely will support the organization's reputation and program quality.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff assessment with names blacked out • Copy of policy for staff assessment, including frequency, and hierarchy • Names and contact information of current staff 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.7.4 - Staff have appropriate process for redress of grievances to HQ that is timely and free from retaliation. <i>(Treating staff with respect only improves their experience and thus that of their students. Creating a strong process for addressing grievances involves creating a culture of tolerance around sharing, but also represents a safety net from lawsuits.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols for staff grievances • List of person in charge of dealing with staff grievances • Copy of previous staff grievance and how it was addressed 				
1.7.5 - Staff have understanding of relevant cultural norms and how to navigate them with students. <i>(In every Gap Year there is some form of cultural navigation - whether from New York city to Katrina relief or from Colorado to Turkey. In every case, staff should have a strong understanding of the cultural norms to safely chaperone students through the intricacies of navigating cultural differences. These skills have direct benefits in college and in the workforce and thus represent a compelling reason for students to take a Gap Year.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of hiring guidelines • List of expectations for staff to know specifically re. cultural norms • List of supportive educational materials for staff to read prior to departure • Copy of staff training materials that discuss navigating cultural norms while on program 				
1.7.6 - All Direct Supervision Staff that are hired by the organization have a background check or at least three professional and relevant references prior to hiring. <i>(Working with young adults while putting them in de facto uncomfortable situations means they will rely on staff in a very significant way. Even though it is rare that a relevant history will show on a background check, it's also critical that if it does not, the organization be able to say they did their due diligence.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of contract with background check agency • Copy of organization policy to get references from all potential staff • Copy of reference check form with instructions 				
1.7.7 - Staff are interviewed in-person or virtually so. <i>(Hiring staff that interact with students, parents, or other professionals is far too important to do with only a phone call or email. In this day and age, there are too many options for a virtual meeting to warrant not having one. e.g., skype, google video chat, sightspeed, etc.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of interview sheet for organization HR • Copy of interview guidelines for prospective staff • Name and contact information of person in charge of interviewing 				

1.8 - “Direct Supervision Staff have clear policy expectations, are regularly and adequately trained, and current on any certifications.”

Direct Supervision Staff are those staff who are hired to work directly with the students. This may represent a group leader, a remote supervisor doing regular check-ins, or a local independent contractor who is in charge of the day-to-day safety of the student. Direct Supervision Staff represent the greatest safety mechanism in working with students. They must be regularly trained, respect the fundamental worth of all people regardless of personal differences, and should work within the scope of their training.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.1 - Staff have a minimum and current qualification of First Aid/CPR, although more is preferred. <i>(Organizations that go “backcountry” have a higher responsibility to provide a WFA or, preferably, a WFR. Please note that only certifications from WMI, WMA, or SOLO will suffice.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of training / incentives that organization sponsors to ensure staff compliance 				
1.8.2 - Staff work within the scope of their training. <i>(Staff who assume training, or ‘practice medicine without a license’, endanger not only the student, but also the organization at large. If a staff member is not sure about their scope and the circumstances are not an emergency, they should consult with their supervisor prior to acting.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policies / expectations that are specific about working within their training • Copy of staff training that details a course on working within the scope of their training 				
1.8.3 - Policies support the sustainability of staff (e.g., time off, adequate co-leaders, professional development opportunities, etc.). <i>(Staff who are well-rested and strongly supported are better able to do their job. Additionally, the institutional knowledge of a veteran staff is in everyones interest.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training that emphasizes staff care • Copy of staff manual that offers suggestions for staff care • Organizational policy that discusses staff support 				
1.8.4 - Organization must have protocols in case a student does any self-harm. <i>(This is meant to include physical harm or a intent to do physical harm. In most cases this protocol will involve phoning the office and connecting with a clinician to help assess the student, but might also consider current medications, parental support, and most importantly documenting the behavior as it evolves. Potentially this could result in the student’s early departure from the program.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols or staff expectation • Copy of training that addresses a student who does self-harm 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.5 - Staff must ensure students' basic needs are being met, including physical (medical, food, water, shelter), mental, and emotional health. <i>(In order to do the real work on a Gap Year we must ensure that students' basic needs are being met. Teaching them what healthy food, clean water, and emotional health looks like is often more useful in their lives than many of their experiences. Unless there is a specific and intentional experience such as a walkabout or a fast from food, this standard should be considered second only to immediate physical safety concerns.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy that requires staff to ensure students basic needs • Copy of resources for staff to support students' basic needs • Copy of staff training that addresses mental and emotional health • Copy of policy that outlines regular staff interaction with students 				
<p>1.8.6 - Staff policy clearly states: <i>(While these should seem obvious, it must be clearly stated.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sexual relationships with student(s) • No harassment of students • No exploitation of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Staff contract with these points highlighted 				
<p>1.8.7 - Staff must ensure any water activity have available and functional PFDs for any activity in which the shore is farther than an average swimmer can swim safely in relevant water conditions (typically in calm water this might be 50 yards - or one pool length - from shore). <i>(Water issues are amongst the most common in student fatalities.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses swimming policy 				
<p>1.8.8 - Staff must ensure that any student unable to swim, or under the age of 18, have a PFD that is properly used whenever engaged in a water activity wherein the water is deeper than the individual can safely stand and breathe. <i>(Minors and those incapable of swimming must have adequate backup if they are to be in a water environment.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses swimming policy 				
<p>1.8.9 - Staff policy clearly prohibits students from carrying any of the organization's critical emergency equipment (med kit, emergency phones, etc.). <i>(It may be tempting to empower students with these tools, however, given their critical nature only staff should possess them.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Staff contract with these points highlighted 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.10 - Expectations for staff to communicate to their supervisor whenever they plan on being beyond the reach of telephone or internet as well as when they can reasonably expect to be back in communication. <i>(Whenever a program is going to be away from regular communication, expectations must be set so that supervisors and HQ know when to call in the authorities for a missing group, student, or staff.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of training that addresses communication requirements 				
1.8.11 - Clear expectations about staff communication both internal and external to the program. <i>(Communication is amongst the most important of tools for any program and staff should know whether they are expected to communicate with parents and if so should have guidelines for doing so responsibly.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation detailing communication boundaries 				
1.8.12 - Policy that the following rubrics are used to help determine continued student participation in the program: <i>(These are written to provide an objective measure for escalating HQ, parent, and potentially therapist involvement.)</i> (1) If the student reports or the leader observes behavior that interferes with normal participation in the program (2) If an event or behavior has occurred that endangers the emotional or physical safety of the student or any member of the group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of questions in a staff manual • Photograph of questions in a staff manual 				
1.8.13 - Policies about medical kit includes that staff do not dispense medication or assist the acquisition of "prescription" medicine for students without prior consultation by a physician. <i>(In the US, only physicians can dispense prescription medications. In fact, at most hospitals even over-the-counter medications require physician approval due to unforeseeable or undiagnosed contraindications or adverse reactions. Staff, unless specifically trained or directed to do so by a physician, should not dispense directly to any student any medication.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of staff manual 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.14 - Organization has clear policies about documentation requirements. <i>(Documenting student behavior is both important for legal records, but also helps to address the 'gradual change blindness' of student behavior and empower staff to respond objectively and appropriately.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy or expectation • Copy of staff manual • Copy of documentation template 				
1.8.15 - Training is based, whenever the opportunity is available, on experiential methods. <i>(Staff who are working within an experiential pedagogy should be trained in the same, thus expanding their teaching tools and responding to student learning styles. This might be scenarios, games, or skits.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training with scenarios highlighted • Copy of policies / expectations that emphasize an experiential pedagogy internal to the organization 				
1.8.16 - Training addresses "Gradual Change Blindness." <i>(Over the course of several months, complacency can become a major hazard in the field. Educating staff on the signs that it's taking effect, what the potential liabilities are, and how to address them are all vital.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training with gradual change blindness highlighted 				
1.8.17 - Staff are educated, proficient, and trained in how to deal with students on prescription psychotropics. <i>(Approximately 60% of students are on some form of psychotropics. Staff must be prepared to work with some of the unique considerations that accompany these students. Please note that AGA-Advisor Sarah Persha will be conducting several online webinars throughout the year addressing prescription psychotropics.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of educational materials for staff detailing prescription psychotropics • Copy of staff training about prescription psychotropics and when staff are instructed on it • Written letter of commitment by Executive Director to participate in AGA online trainings 				
1.8.18 - Staff training addresses personal biases that might affect work performance. <i>(Staff have an incredibly challenging job, but one that only works if they are aware of their own biases. Staff must be involved in their own regular self-reflection process in order to identify and address, any unconscious shaping of group/program dynamics, a 'favorite student' dynamic, or a bias against a particular student.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of hiring guidelines • Copy of training that emphasizes reflection and self-awareness of staff • Copy of policy that details staff stepping down • Copy of methodology for student grievances to be shared / dealt with 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.8.19 - Staff are trained on how to administer (or ensure proper administration of) epinephrine according to the organization's protocols. <i>(Epinephrine is a life-saving drug that must be available and administered correctly. There are many vehicles for administering it, and staff must be informed about when to use it and how it is injected. An anaphylactic reaction can occur without any prior warning.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training that emphasizes epinephrine training (WFA does not emphasize this standard) • Organization's epinephrine tools of choice and instructions for its use 				
<p>1.8.20 - Staff carry appropriate, relevant, and updated resources that support and complement learning opportunities. <i>(Staff are incredibly dedicated and smart people. However, they are limited by their experience and the organization can support them to support their students. This may mean games, lesson plans, activities, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Outlines games, initiatives, lesson plans, histories, reading lists, etc. • Copy of handouts for staff that support their efforts to educate 				
<p>1.8.21 - Staff always carry a copy of all emergency medical phone numbers, all known current student & staff medications, all medically relevant allergies, and any relevant diagnoses for each student and staff member currently on program. <i>(In case of a medical emergency, these details become exceedingly critical.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Policy detailing mandate to carry staff manual at all times 				
<p>1.8.22 - Staff always carry emergency protocols for staff prioritizing student safety that include considerations for: <i>(In the event of an emergency, these protocols can become the difference between a well-organized and efficient treatment, or a chaotic, poorly communicated, and potentially dangerous course of action.)</i></p> <p>(1) Communication ___</p> <p>(2) Weather / natural disaster ___</p> <p>(3) Terrorist attack ___</p> <p>(4) Medical emergency ___</p> <p>(5) Missing student ___</p> <p>(6) Student evacuation ___</p> <p>(7) Political crisis ___</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual • Policy detailing mandate to carry staff manual at all times 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.8.23 - Staff always carry all program expectations, student expectations / policies, all organizational protocols, and all staff expectations / policies. <i>(From time to time, staff will need to refresh their memory on some of the essentials of the organization's policies. Having them ready at-hand will make doing their job easier.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff manual 				

1.9 - “Organization have a medical kit that is carried at all times.”

A medical kit is an essential part of every safety plan, but only a well-stocked and maintained kit that’s on-hand can actually serve its purpose. Staff must be comfortable using every item in the medical kit and if not done so through previous training, the organization must ensure appropriate training to do so.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.9.1 - Staff must carry medical kit at all times students are present. <i>(Carrying the medical kit at all times is of course the only way it will be useful. Unsurprisingly, the times it will be needed most are those when it is inevitably not carried.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy that mandates staff carry medical kit at all times 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.9.2 - Medical kit must contain a list of all known current student and staff medications, medically relevant allergies, and relevant diagnoses for each student and staff member currently on program. <i>(A well-stocked and prepared medical kit will satisfy about 90% of any emergencies. Note that these lists should be contained in the medical kit and another location such that all staff have a copy of these vital details whenever the need should arise.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of any emergency medical phone numbers • List of contraindications and dosage for all medications • Epinephrine • Backup water purification • Bacitracin antibiotic cream • Band Aids • Trauma gauze • Trauma sheers • CPR mask • Rubber/latex gloves • Tape • Benadryl • Irrigation tools • Tweezers • Thermometer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's medical kit 'must haves' • Photograph of actual medical kit 				
<p>1.9.3 - All medication must be current and not expired. <i>(Carrying expired medication means that it is unreliable and potentially ineffective. The organization must ensure that all medication be current.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's policy stating that all medication in each med kit must not be expired 				

1.10 - “Organization has clear admissions processes.”

Gap Year organizations only thrive when their students thrive. To have students that thrive, each organization must be clear about the right fit, for both the student and the organization. Every organization has a different set of focus areas, however, and being both conscious and clear about then is important. Some of these different areas might include: student-supervision and independence, specific activities, certificates/credits earned, languages learned, level of ‘roughing it,’ religious affiliations, physical fitness, and many more. Not every program is right for every student and the organization inevitably remains the last safeguard for ensuring that students who embark on their program do so from an informed perspective and are interviewed and educated about the program for the highest chance of a successful outcome.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.1 - Admissions process includes at least a phone interview that must address expectations and review of policies (45 minutes MINIMUM per student). <i>(Finding the right fit for each student is ultimately up to the organization. During the interview process, getting to know a student is a critical element to understanding how they’ll fare on your program, and thus establishing minimum interviewing standards for a student is important to ensure ‘fit’ and save all parties from a less-than positive experience.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization’s interview template • Copy of completed interview with student name edited out • Organization’s handbook for interviewing students 				
<p>1.10.2 - Interview questions should be aimed to foster candor, trust, and confidence: [See your AGA Organization account for examples] <i>(The third most common “contributing factor” in study abroad illness is ‘undisclosed medical issues.’ Students and parents often fear discrimination for any history of mental health issues. Every effort to foster candor in the student’s medical responses should be made. Be aware that many parents will tell their students to not be forthcoming.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization’s interview template • Copy of completed interview with student name edited out • Organization’s handbook for interviewing students 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.3 - Script that is shared with every student that shares how the organization responds to students that are either showing signs of being unwell or if they break any program policies. This discussion should include what support the organization has to offer the student once they are on program. <i>(e.g.,: "We encourage you to bring up past challenges as well as current goals. If there are physical, emotional, social or mental health challenges that impede your experience or that of others (fellow students, staff, and local contacts), then we may have to consider your early return home. It is our policy to consult our own independent advisory mental health specialist for professional perspective, but the final decision to send any student home always rests with our organization.")</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of script that is universally communicated to students encouraging transparency but also how the organization plans to proceed in the event of an event or episode in the field • Copy of disclaimers that are read to all students 				
<p>1.10.4 - Any history of therapy within the past 12 months must have a communication plan between organization staff and clinician prior to participation on program. <i>(Students with a past history of mental health issues are not uncommon, however, predicting how a change in endorphins, metabolism, student desire to titrate themselves of a prescription absent professional consultation, jet lag, physical illness, or other emotional growth that they'll be exposed to in their Gap Year presents a unique challenge for how to work best with each student. A good plan that supports the student and the organization is key, and clarity that it's always the organization's prerogative to send a student home is likewise key.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note: Student's personal clinician must be available for candid conversations with program staff about perceived patient needs (note, this requires a release form for any student having had therapy in the past to be able to directly converse with the student's therapist. [See your AGA Organization account for examples] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization's policy on accepting students with a past history of mental health • Copy of 'communication plan' made for a past student • Copy of form used for release • Copy of organization policy that states need for use of ROI form in every case student has seen a mental health specialist within the previous 12 months 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>1.10.5 - Organization takes special consideration with any student on medication - considering and discussing with each student the expected availability in case of loss/damage to existing medication. <i>(Prescription medication is a controlled substance and in many cases crossing state lines or international borders, requires special consideration. Anticipating the question of "what happens if the medication gets damaged or stolen?" is a responsible consideration that student and parents might ask. Parents might not anticipate the normal restriction of insurance companies to fill 30 days worth of medication, and the responsibility to address this remains with the students and parents. However, it is the organization's responsibility to share these concerns to students as it is unreasonable for them to anticipate these issues given that most have less experience in these matters than the organization.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization handout (and how it is delivered to students) detailing anticipated medication problems • Copy of policy on student medication that details suggestions for how to address anticipated medication problems • Copy of policy expecting families to create a 'backup plan' for medication in case of loss/damage • Copy of backup plan submitted by family 				
<p>1.10.6 - Students are discouraged from removing or titrating themselves off of their prescription medication without the consultation of their guiding physician. <i>(It's not uncommon for students to take themselves off of their medication while on program often due to a newfound sense of self-awareness, or a rebellion against the 'dependence' on them. Unanticipated side-effects are common - even including suicide - if students remove themselves from medication without proper supervision and done in a controlled environment. Additionally, staff have strong sway with students and careless words about medication could spurn students to titrate themselves off of their medications with great consequences.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization policy on students removing themselves from their medication • Copy of staff policy discouraging unsupervised titration from medication 				

1.11 - “Organization strives to improve (has risk assessment and analysis / management policies).”

All good things evolve and organizations, through a regular and thorough review process, have the capacity to control their evolution and reduce their students’ exposure to potential grave catastrophes. Program evaluation, outcome research, or consumer satisfaction measures are all satisfactory efforts towards this improvement, however, real efforts to make program changes based on such feedback are critical. The organization should have regular review processes that include positives, negatives, and reviews for potential changes to organizational policies.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
1.11.1 - Reviews should include a mid-way (optionally) anonymous evaluation for students focused on improving their current experience. <i>(Every program can always be improved, however, waiting until the end of the program to solicit opportunities for improvement is an opportunity lost to improve the immediate student experience.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Template copy and delivery method of mid-program student evaluation</i> 				
1.11.2 - An end-of-program evaluation given to students that must include the “net promoter score.” <i>(The end-of-program student evaluation is an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the student experience and an opportunity to mine for areas of improvement, and great reviews or testimonials. For a link and explanation of the net promoter score and why it’s relevant, click here.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Template copy and delivery method of end-of-program student evaluation</i> 				
1.11.3 - A staff evaluation of the program. <i>(Staff will often have the best feedback complete with what worked for their students and what about an itinerary made their job more difficult.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Template copy and delivery method of end-of-program staff evaluation</i> 				
1.11.4 - An evaluation process aimed at staff development and staff support. <i>(Working with staff is always an organizational investment, but unless they’re given feedback to grow, the organization won’t avail itself of opportunities to improve. NOTE, this is required for both Direct Supervision Staff and Office Staff.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Template copy and delivery method of Direct Supervision Staff evaluation</i> • <i>Template copy and delivery method of Office Staff evaluation</i> 				

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)</i>	<i>In Place</i>	<i>In Process</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>	<i>Exception Requested</i>
<p>1.11.5 - An annual evaluation of the admissions process. <i>(The relative entry point of average students is constantly changing - even 10 years ago the medication-intake of students was manifold less. Adapting the admissions process of the organization is critical to addressing the changing student body.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous student interview/admissions template with date • Policy for admissions process annual review • Written letter of commitment from Executive Director for a minimum annual review of admissions process 				

2. - SERVICE-LEARNING

Service-Learning is an often-used tool on Gap Years. The benefits to the students are in almost all cases profound, however, the importance of leaving a responsible footprint on the host communities must be done with care. Fundamental to such responsibility is that visitors, guests, students, and volunteers enter their host communities focused on learning rather than 'helping.' It is clear that when a project becomes focused exclusively on the completion of its goal the host community suffers in the longterm, thus, a focus on process and education rather than completion should be the guiding principle. Students often won't understand these nuances, so the onus for such framing of expectations necessarily falls on the organization and the staff. Note, that this does not take the place of a structured independent internship where service-learning is a component. PLEASE NOTE: 30% of projects must be presented for certification, meaning that the first section of "Projects are well run and managed," must be submitted for each project-partner organization. The focus with this certification is on improvement, and subsequent applications will need to show improvement in most indicators.

2.1 - "Projects are well-run and managed."

Service-Learning, when done well, is a mutually beneficial endeavor; for the students performing the work and for the communities benefitting. Participating in service-learning in a responsible manner, however, is a complicated endeavor and involves lots of preparation, creating reasonable expectations, appropriate supervision, and of course a long term plan. Development work is at its core is developing a sense of action that the community can make their own lives better.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
2.1.1 - Prior to beginning any project, the organization has specifically identified values that the project is designed to support within the host community. These values must come from the host community. <i>(The intent here is to focus the project on processes rather than outcomes - not adding value to the community based on the work, but instead based on the interactions. For instance, while the host community might say they need a school, identifying and reflecting on the values that go along with their request will ensure that the project doesn't become focused on completing a wall to the exclusion of cross-cultural activities that will be more influential and beneficial in the long run. Such identified values should be shared with students in reflections both before the project and at its completion. For an exemplary article click here.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of questionnaire given to project partner that includes community vision • List of expected benefactors and those outside of the benefit for the project • Past year's projects and identified values 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>2.1.2 - Projects must fit within a larger vision for the community (manpower, money, motivation). As before, it is critical that the vision be given by the host community and not the organization or its volunteers. <i>(What is the long term plan for the project? How does this project tie into other projects that are going on or are planned? In most cases in the developing world, this may be a new term and so the organization may have to have a hand in stitching projects together with values, but these larger visions should be shared not only with the communities, but also the students as a matter of educating. Having some design, whether in partnership with a local non-profit, the community leader, or a family, but some clarity about the long-term vision should be had.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of long-term plan written by the project coordinator • Copy of communication about a long-term plan and how the project fits within said plan 				
<p>2.1.3 - Organization incorporates local direction and support into every project. <i>(Including local direction and support is important for the cultural exchange but also to ensure that the project meets a community-identified value rather than addressing a student need to feel as if they've 'saved those poor locals.' Better is: 'don't come to help me, come to learn with me.')</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of planning-communication from benefactors for each project 				
<p>2.1.4 - Organization ensures a transparent budget for project supervisor, project, and any partner organizations. <i>(Having a budget to know where donated funds goes is an important facet of responsible service-learning. Creating an economy based on the service-learning imposes an external and often damaging hierarchy on local populations, so transparency is key.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of project budget for each project over the past year 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>2.1.5 - Students are involved in project evaluation and reflection. The evaluation / reflection should focus in parallel, connecting the volunteers actions to expected outcomes as (1) project-participants/ volunteers and as (2) relationship-builders with the host community. <i>(As educators, it's important that efforts are made to include students in 'responsible' service-learning or else they'll miss opportunities to grow through the understanding that evolves when the real complexities of service work are considered and discussed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of project evaluation / reflection template and how students are involved • Policy that requires staff to facilitate student involvement in project assessment 				
<p>2.1.6 - Responsibly tracks usage of resources, supplies, and materials. <i>(Attempting to ensure that project materials are being used on the project rather than a corrupt official is important to a responsible project. Every effort should be made to not create or contribute to local hierarchies, power structures, or class divisions.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of written communication from the project coordinator detailing resource allocation • End-of-project write up detailing resource allocation 				
<p>2.1.7 - Has a list of current supporters for the project beyond the AGA Organization. <i>(Community projects often work best when they are continued in concert with other efforts that can sustain a project beyond the length of the students' service-learning tenure. Additionally, it can be instructional for students to know what other resources a community has and whether expectations are made for the community by those resources. Fundamentally, however, knowing who is responsible for the maintenance and longevity of each project is an important step in integrating it into the community and instilling a sense of ownership.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of current supporters for each project in addition to your organization 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>2.1.8 - Organization does a regular assessment for each service-learning project that answers as best as possible the following points. Annual assessment at a minimum is required and must be done for any community the organization revisits. <i>(Answers to these assessments are mostly academic, and thus the focus should be on a frank and honest evaluation that will allow the organization to grow in its positive impact and take efforts to reduce its negative impacts. Whether the intended project is now being used for an unintended purpose may both yield surprisingly good outcomes, or alternatively bring awareness to perceived negative outcomes. In most cases, these are questions that should be considered prior to embarking on a service-learning project. Every effort to improve should be made.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on local job market (Are you taking jobs? Creating them?). <i>(It's highly likely that jobs are being taken ... but not in itself a reason not to proceed.)</i> • Community goals for the project are re-evaluated. <i>(Involving locals in their own goal-setting is critical towards ensuring a continued positive impact.)</i> • Impact on the human element is considered (service-learning with children for short-term projects inevitably creates a sense of loss and potentially abandonment, when the students leave). <i>(Social service vs. Physical labor, etc.)</i> • The volunteer liaison is regularly evaluated for community engagement, quality of position, and efficacy. <i>(People change as do their priorities and potentially their trustworthiness.)</i> • Existing power dynamics are not shifted within the community. <i>(Being conscious of any existing hierarchies so as to not create a new hierarchy through a project is important. The community will have to live there once students have left.)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Copy of organization's template for, or completed, project assessment that includes consideration for each bulleted item on the left</i> 				

2.2 - “Service-learning students are prepared.”

Running a responsible service-learning project necessitates that the students be prepared as there are specific safety concerns in working with tools, children, or outdoors. Additionally, students must be prepared to leave the most enduring and positive impression on the host community - striving to avoid power-differentials and culturally prepared to minimize culture shock. At its core, this section is dedicated to ensuring that students know where they’re going, what they’re doing, some background on the organization they’re supporting as well as its mission, and what cultural context they’re coming into and bringing with them. Service-learning is not about the students’ story nor exclusively the host community’s story, instead it is about listening-to-understand and through such exchange all parties inevitably benefit.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>2.2.1 - Are marketed to appropriately by refraining from using misleading terms such as “saving,” “helping,” or “dealing with their problems.” <i>(Consciously preparing students for their service-learning experience is critical to ensuring they are there with the right expectations rather than “saving the poor.” AGA understands that most students won’t immediately understand these lenses nor the power they have, and as such some developmental education will take place as a matter of course. However, not reinforcing such stereotypes in any materials will only benefit them when they arrive on site.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of current brochure • Written letter of commitment by the Executive Director 				
<p>2.2.2 - Have adequate materials (tools) training prior to use. <i>(Working with tools is often new to students, so ensuring students have training on how to safely use tools such as a shovel, axe, or hammer is vital to their and the organization’s security.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy detailing tool-training standards • Communication from Project Coordinator outlining requirement and onus to train students on all tools 				
<p>2.2.3 - Have adequate safety materials to prevent long-term injury (safety goggles, ear plugs, gloves, close-toed shoes, etc.). <i>(In some places safety gear is simply unreasonable, however, every effort to ensure safety is important. Usually the onus for this rests with the Direct Supervision Staff or Project Supervisor, but the program director can help by laying out clear expectations about work that can and cannot be safely performed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff or Project Supervisor policy detailing need to arrange for, or consideration for, appropriate safety materials • Organization inventory list of safety materials on hand and those on the project site 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>2.2.4 - Have detailed project orientation, and policies are clear about local-interactions. <i>(Informing students about the vision of each project creates buy-in and encourages forward thinking. A solid orientation must include dealing with health and safety concerns such as environmental factors, cultural factors, and basic medical concerns.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the mission of the organization and the vision of the project • Establishes who the students are to go to whenever they have a question. Is it a local? An organizational staff member? Another volunteer? • Focuses on being a project-partner and creating a culture of empowerment with the local hosts rather than one of hierarchies that can “save” or “help” the locals • Discusses the impact of giving things and perpetuating a have/have not cultural divide. This will include an articulated donation or gifting policy for the students. [See your AGA Organization account for a list of articles] • Discusses a framework for understanding the host-culture’s historic and cultural context, as well as that of the students’ • Focuses on creating expectations about ongoing relationships that are realistic rather than making empty promises (photos, emails, etc.) • Medical protocols • Medical kit location • Access to needed water or nutrition • Any relevant health and safety concerns • Any relevant environmental hazards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of organization’s template for, or completed, project orientation list that includes consideration for each bulleted item on the left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
2.2.5 - Have adequate project debriefing upon completion of service-learning project that includes connecting the action (service) to the impacts through reflection. <i>(Vital to Experiential Education is a debriefing session at the completion of any project. Whether done by journal, group conversation, or academic paper, this is a vital element to understanding the impact any project has had personally, organizationally, and on the community.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy requiring supervisory staff to debrief with students at the completion of each project • Outline or template for project debriefing 				

2.3 - “Projects have appropriate supervision.”

Supervision on a project site is important to ensure that students don't create more work than they perform, and of course that safety remains paramount.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
2.3.1 - Supervisors have clear policies about safe operation and training standards of tools. <i>(If no policies are in place about what safe tool training looks like, then the organization must ensure that the trainer for each tool is or has been paid to use such tool professionally, and thus represent a reasonable expertise with it.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing safe operation of tools • Copy of training specific to safe tool use • Copy of training detailing how to best train students on tool safety 				
2.3.2 - Direct Supervision Staff must commit to reading two (2) AGA-approved articles as a method for informing students. [See your AGA Organization account for a list of articles.] <i>(Ensuring that staff are fully aware of the network of considerations is vital in order to best prepare students for the full impact of responsible service-learning.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written letter of commitment by the Executive Director • Policy requiring Direct Supervision Staff read AGA-approved articles 				

3 - BACKCOUNTRY / DEVELOPING COUNTRY SAFETY

Backcountry or Developing Country is considered to be any time a student is 2 hours away from definitive first-world medical care. Typically this certification must consider timeliness, isolation, lack of immediate access to rescue, and communication. “Definitive first-world medical care” means care that is comparable to that received in a US hospital, and typically means having a surgeon on call 24-hours/day, as well as advanced medical diagnostic equipment including X-rays and a CAT scan as well as the availability of experts to interpret any test results.

3.1 - “Organization has risk management protocols.”

Risk will never be a non-factor in life, but appropriate risk management protocols will effectively save the organization and students great trouble by pre-identifying areas that require greater awareness and creating steps to ensure smart decisions are made instead of reactionary or uninformed ones. Safety is no accident.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.1.1 - Field resources (cash, ID, communication / telephone, insurance cards, etc.) sufficient to get to greater care if needed. <i>(In an emergency, often times the use of travelers checks or a credit card will not be sufficient enough to navigate the student/staff to additional emergency medical care. Organizations should have a list of required items staff must have on hand at all times.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of program budget with resource-budget allocation • Expectations of staff to have on their person at all times each of the items at left 				
3.1.2 - Staff have ability to communicate any emergent issues (language abilities are considered and needed communication tools are provided). <i>(Communicating allergies or events must be within the purview of the staff to ensure students receive adequate care.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of job descriptions 				
3.1.3 - Direct Supervision Staff have access to emergency communication tools 90% of the time they are with students. <i>(Having access to a satellite phone or a cell phone is critical in terms of communicating with the organization’s headquarters or local authorities.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written letter of commitment by the Executive Director • Field list of required-to-carry items • Copy of staff protocols for communication 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.1.4 - Organization makes efforts to fly with reputable airlines by asking and answering the following questions prior to purchasing tickets: Does the desired destination represent a significant portion of that airlines routes? How 'on time' is that particular airline? Are there more than one flight per day for that route? Is the value of any financial savings by purchasing a discounted fare going to limit assistance in any times of need or crisis? <i>(Often times, when an airline is not strong in an area, they undercut their competitors and thus represent a volatile, often fast-changing market push. When saving money on discount tickets purchased online, for instance, the benefits of working with an individual in a pinch evaporate: small changes to a flight in the imagined case of an itinerary shift, can be stonewalled by a discounted ticket. Of course, every effort to save money is important, but working with reputable airlines is another way AGA accredited organizations show their dedication to student safety.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy detailing appropriate steps of inquiry to fly with any non-major airlines 				
<p>3.1.5 - There are clear protocols for uniform medical evacuation insurance activation. <i>(Having great medical evacuation insurance is critical, however unless the staff are prepared and aware of how to activate the insurance it becomes useless. Typically, good carriers might include iNext, International SOS, HTH international, or MEDEX. [See your AGA Organization account for a growing list of discounts.]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols for using medical evacuation including who makes the final decision 				
<p>3.1.6 - Registration with relevant authorities prior to arrival (local sheriff, rescue agencies, State Department STEP program). <i>(If traveling backcountry, all appropriate resources should be notified to help address any emergencies that might arise and to keep staff informed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of job description / expectations of responsible staff • Copy of receipt of registration • Copy of organizational policy requiring registration with listed agencies 				

3.2 - “Organization critically and continually reviews all locations for safety in advance of any student activities.”

Changes to a sites safety happen rapidly and are affected by a variety of unforeseeable and unpredictable elements. Staying connected to what's happening allows for more time to address concerns before they become urgent, and more informed decisions once they need to be made.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.2.1 - Organization attempts to travel during daylight hours for all road and non-vehicular transportation. <i>(Typically, transportation represents the most risk on any program, however, in a backcountry setting or developing country, transportation at night poses additional risks. Whether it's walking at a dangerous hour, or avoiding difficult-to-see hazards, efforts to travel during the day must be made a priority. Note, this is only for road transportation, walking, biking, etc.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy detailing expectation to organize all road transit during daylight hours • Copy of training that highlights this expectation • Copy of training that highlights educating staff to road dangers 				
<p>3.2.2 - Organization checks both prior to arrival and each day a program is in process, for threats that include crime statistics, weather hazards, health or disease concerns, etc. Organizations should use relevant State and/or national resources specifically including National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, Overseas Security Advisory Council, www.globalincidentmap.com, http://reliefweb.int. <i>(Being on the ground in a backcountry setting, it is difficult to access regular information about global happenings, however, organizationally staff must check daily and prior to departure all relevant websites for current information.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of policy requiring staff (office or, if realistic, Direct Supervision Staff) check resources for news on a daily basis • List of resources checked 				
<p>3.2.3 - If a location has a State Department warning valid for any duration of the intended trip, then additional policies are in place: <i>(Many insurance companies will not honor liability insurance if a State Department warning is in place. Taking these additional steps listed is required to ensure students remain safe, the organization remains covered, and parents are respected in their concerns.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance is notified and verified for validity • Political evacuation insurance is verified and uniform for all students and staff • Parents and students are notified in advance of departure and encouraged to read the State Department warning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of protocols in case a location has a specific State Department warning • Copy of approval letter by liability insurance company confirming coverage • Proof of universal political evacuation insurance • Copy of letter written to students and parents informing them State Department warning status 				

3.3 - “Students receive appropriate orientation.”

Backcountry considerations for safety and cross-cultural concerns are far more involved given the heightened stakes unique to this certification. Students remain their own best protectors, but only if they have adequate information to make safe decisions. Additionally, cultural considerations, where appropriate, must be made to ensure not only safety but also a positive experience.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.3.1 - Students must be given a written (or write down) what to do in case of being lost - often times this is a tool designed to facilitate clear thinking in a challenging situation and might be represented as a business card of a hostel, emergency phone number, or action steps. <i>(Whether lost, late, or taken, all of these are beyond concerning events: students must be oriented on how to communicate with organization staff or have written instructions on how to navigate to a proposed meeting area. Students will often take a ‘follow the leader’ approach missing important cues, thus the requirement that it be written. This is often called an “oh shit card” or some other form of handy detailed meeting information.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of emergency card with requisite information • Copy of student orientation requiring use of a card or similar emergency steps 				
<p>3.3.2 - Student on-site orientation addresses additional backcountry concerns including as appropriate: <i>(Student orientations in backcountry settings require additional information to mitigate the additional risks.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseases (malaria, dengue, tropical, communicable, etc.) • Use of medical kit • Independent use of transportation • Cultural norms • Local laws • Drugs and alcohol • Reliable methods of getting in touch with staff or local supervisor • What to do if lost or in trouble • Feminine safety • Hygiene issues • Potable water • “Safe” food • Safety concerns of local fauna • Safety concerns of local flora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of orientation that lists location and clear expectations of staff to cover all relevant points at left • Copy of staff policy requiring orientation covering all relevant points at left 				

3.4 - “Staff are trained appropriately and regularly, and certified where appropriate.”

Leading some activities requires specific training and preparation. Staff who are in a position of leadership must have appropriate certifications where available, and specific training tailored to those activities and locations where they are charged with safeguarding students. Students in removed or isolated situations respond differently by definition, and special consideration should be made for reasonably common situations, such as students using prescription psychotropic medications: metabolisms change, hormones change, and anxiety increases all having an effect on medicated outcomes.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
3.4.1 - Minimum current certification of WFA, preferably WFR or WEMT. <i>(Acceptable providers are WMI, WFA, or SOLO.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of training incentives to empower staff in certification • Copy of current staff certifications 				
3.4.2 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for backcountry and/or developing country concerns including critical contextual information with regards to safety, homestays, isolation, potential language concerns, culture shock, homesickness, etc. <i>(Unique considerations must be addressed when preparing students for unique situations. In homestays this might entail knowing where the staff live. Culturally there may be minor cues that could cause great issue.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
3.4.3 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for backcountry and/or developing country concerns including safe food and water standards for students and staff. <i>(Safe food and water are of course critical in all cases, but especially so when in backcountry settings. Instructions on how to verify food and water safety is important.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.4.4 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for backcountry and/or developing country concerns including local flora and fauna concerns and how to address them (snakes, spiders, scorpions, poison oak, poisonous fruits, etc.). <i>(In backcountry settings, annoyances can turn majorly problematic, but major concerns like snakes can be fatal. Concern for risk management, preparation, and safety must be addressed.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
<p>3.4.5 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for backcountry and/or developing country concerns including local diseases and sickness (e.g., dengue, malaria, staphylococcus, giardia, etc.). <i>(Often times students exposed to new locations are also exposed to new and foreign bacteria that put them at a higher risk. Staphylococcus, for instance, is different in different locations and without previous exposure and thus basic antibodies, the bacteria can grow dangerously fast and in fact represents one of the most common bacteria-related death. Knowing when something is relatively minor, and when it warrants deeper investigation and treatment is paramount to a safe student experience.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				
<p>3.4.6 - Staff must have specific training or knowledge that includes special consideration for backcountry and/or developing country concerns including political concerns, and how to address them. <i>(Staff must have a strong plan for how to respond in the event of a political crisis. Ultimately the quality of response will hinge on a staff persons ability to understand local political concerns and, to a degree, anticipate how to steer their students to avoid negative outcomes.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff training highlighting specific concerns at left • Copies of support materials that are given to staff addressing concerns at left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>3.4.7 - Staff are experienced and/or trained sufficient to lead any activity that isn't being outsourced to a partner organization. <i>(Being in the backcountry demands a higher responsibility to safety and ensuring that staff have specific training or certification if leading the following is critical:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Camping (fire safety and starting fires, wildlife, tent location, equipment maintenance, etc.)</i> • <i>Hiking</i> • <i>Backpacking</i> • <i>Climbing</i> • <i>Biking (touring, mountain, road, commuting, helmets, etc.)</i> • <i>Caving / Spelunking</i> • <i>Horseback Riding / Working with Pack Animals</i> • <i>Snow Shooing, Skiing, Snowboarding</i> • <i>Traveling in Avalanche Terrain</i> • <i>Winter Camping</i> • <i>Ropes Courses (High and Low Challenge Courses)</i> • <i>Initiative Games and Problem Solving</i> • <i>Running</i> • <i>Dog Sledding</i> • <i>SCUBA Diving / Snorkeling</i> • <i>Sailing</i> • <i>Tree Climbing</i> • <i>Water sports (canoeing, boating, rafting, kayaking, etc.))</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>List of typical activities on program and certification requirements to do so</i> • <i>Organizational protocol / policy to determine whether staff can lead certain activities or if they need to be outsourced</i> • <i>Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director</i> 				

4 - INDEPENDENT STUDENT PLACEMENTS

Organizations that send students individually into specific placements understand that there is necessarily a greater risk at hand in safeguarding their students. Students choosing an experience of an independent nature must be informed about the relevant concerns and the full details to which they're committing. However, setting the student up for a successful placement will ultimately require planning, and adequately empowering the student to supervise themselves. Inevitably, preparation will be their most valuable asset.

4.1 - "Organization has protocols that are shared with the student, focused on vetting placements for safety."

Students and parents must be informed about the risks they are engaging in, including those general areas that are not known. The results of a thorough vetting process must be transparent and access to the results must be shared with both parents and students prior to final commitments.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.1.1 - Organization must contact past participants to confirm the following. <i>(There are very few certainties in working with individual placements, however, it is the responsibility of the organization to verify that any independent placement is verified rather than put students into a potentially negative or unsustainable position.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guarantees of student basic needs • Reliability of contact, including supervisor's name and information • Safety of accommodation • Expectations of the student while on program • Reasonable communication expectations • Financial arrangements pertaining to any pre-arranged direct student expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation for staff to confirm points at left with secondary source • Template for student placement vetting 				
<p>4.1.2 - Organization must share relevant information as a result of vetting the independent placement with each prospective student prior to their commencement. <i>(Having great information is important, but only if it gets to those in the position to make a decision. Students must be informed about what to expect for their own success, but also as a matter of organizational transparency and liability. Some considerations must be made for appropriateness too as not all students are capable of an independent experience.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up (or template of one) of a placement given to prospective students and based on information at left 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
4.1.3 - Focus on experiential education that includes some element of mentorship either through a local contact or remotely through organization staff personnel. <i>(Individual placements, in order to be considered a Gap Year, must have some degree of supervisory oversight. This may be in the form of specific job counsel, or better, mentorship about life-matters.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of mentorship expectations for the local contact • Copy of staff expectations requiring mentorship component • Copy of remote-mentorship methodology and expectations 				

4.2 - “Organization provides basic pre-departure support.”

The expectations of a student on an independent experience require that they both act as student and guardian. Many efforts can be made to safeguard students and provide the highest chances for a successful experience, but they all start with adequate pre-departure support. The organization must adequately prepare students for success both physically, and emotionally / psychologically.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.2.1 - Student receives information and/or training relevant to each of the following: <i>(Students must be prepared for the independent experience they are immersing themselves in. Adequate preparation must be given to the student to ensure a positive and healthy experience. NOTE this does not mean coddling the student for a predictable experience.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture - to understand context and support integration • Language - to demonstrate integration and navigate emergencies • Transportation - to address safety and decision-making • Maturity - to prepare the student in ‘being alone’ • Independent project focus - to understand the capacity, limitations, and network of the project placement • Emotional (family, friend, organization) support - to promote longevity and emotional security for when things become challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational checklist for student appropriateness • Copy of student benchmarks required prior to commencement • Organization protocols for assessing student appropriateness 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>4.2.2 - Organization must provide pre-departure logistical support including: <i>(When on an independent placement, all of the traditional details that would be managed through a staff person inevitably rest on the student. It is the organization's job to ensure that the student is aware of the full total of their responsibilities and thus aren't caught in a "don't know what you don't know" catch-22.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide necessary visa information and timelines • Passport validity details • Transportation logistics • Vaccinations (based on CDC guidelines) • Enrollment in the State Department's STEP program • Financial concerns & arrangements • Communication expectations (cell service, email, accessibility, etc.) • Any regional safety concerns such as environmental, flora, fauna, political, religious, cultural, etc. • Student emergency procedures • Name and contact information for local contact • If work of any kind is performed (service, internship, etc.) then a direct supervisor must be given to the student for each work kind • Arrival transfer information • Use of insurance • Packing list that includes medical kit and regional specific clothing • Appropriate fit for student at project • Information on access to local medical care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of student preparation list addressing all points at left • Copy of staff expectation to connect with students and address all points at left 				

4.3 - “Organization has a local contact for each student.”

Critical to both a safe and productive experience for the student is a local contact person: this person should provide local information, guidelines for how to deal with specific local problems, and help in case of an emergency.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
4.3.1 - Organization ensures an orientation is provided by the local contact in congruence with the orientation standards in the Philosophy and Ethics section. <i>(Orientations are critical to preparing students for both a successful and safe experience. The local staff must be able to provide either independently or in concert with organization staff, all details that would otherwise be given to the student as part of the Philosophy and Ethics section.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation given to local contact detailing orientation specifics • Copy of orientation template used by local contacts 				
4.3.2 - If service-learning takes place, the organization ensures an orientation is provided in congruence with the orientation standards of the Service-Learning section. <i>(If service-learning takes place, then the student must be made aware and prepared for all relevant and reasonably anticipated concerns.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation given to local contact detailing orientation specifics • Copy of orientation template used by local contacts 				
4.3.3 - Organization ensures regular contact (minimally every 21 days) is made between the student and preferably the organization HQ, or, minimally with the designated local contact. <i>(Students working independently often will not reach out for help unless prompted and part of an existing relationship. Conversations and check ins should focus on mental health, physical health, safety, and quality of experience.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff expectation for regular communication • Copy of checklist for communication with students • Organizational calendar detailing check-in details 				

4.4 - “Organization has policies to support students health and safety.”

Acting as their own guardian requires training to what critical elements are and how to respond appropriately. Organizations cannot assume that every student is equally prepared to identify, for instance, when a medical concern is emergent, nor can they assume that every student has adequate wherewithal to safely navigate unfamiliar situations. An emphasis on basic health and safety should be of the utmost priority.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
4.4.1 - Organization has a separate release and waiver form (or addendum) for students on an independent experience that outlines the unique and essential hazards of an independent placement. <i>(The experience of a student on an independent placement is more intense than one with a Direct Supervisory Staff and thus the paperwork must anticipate and address those concerns in detail.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of release and waiver form that highlights specific concerns for student health and safety 				
4.4.2 - Students must be trained in basic first-aid. <i>(In the absence of a Direct Supervisory Staff, students then become their own medical experts. While more training is preferred, a basic first-aid course will create awareness and help identify when higher levels of medical care are required.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of expectation for students to be certified in first-aid prior to commencement 				
4.4.3 - Organization ensures student is trained on policies for how to contact organization in the event the local contact is unable to meet students' needs. <i>(In the event the student needs to connect with the headquarters, each student should know how to contact the head office. This might include awareness on international dialing, or how to use a HAM radio.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of instructions given to every student for emergency contact • Copy of student orientation that details how to contact organization headquarters 				

5 - PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are an important tool in every organization's makeup. Often times, the best way to safeguard students and provide a desired educational experience is to work with an expert in that particular field. However, not all partnerships are good ones that benefit the students and the organization. Bringing an organization into relationship with a local contact or partner organization can endanger students if it's not properly vetted, or if the expectations of the partner are not clear.

5.1 - "Organization takes appropriate steps to ensure partner abides by AGA Standards."

Partnerships with universities, colleges, or parent organizations should be mutually beneficial and hold the integrity and any accreditation or certificates of such partner sacrosanct without sacrificing the established pedagogy of Gap Year Education.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
5.1.1 - Organization has written agreements in place (over email or paper) that clearly outline financial arrangements and all relevant expectations (e.g., who's responsible for food, drinking water, equipment, etc.). <i>(Clarity around who is responsible for bringing what, providing what, and ensuring what can help prevent important confusion around things such as drinking water, doors that lock, food, bedding or mosquito nets.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in detailing partnership agreements • Copy of staff expectation to clarify partnership expectations 				
5.1.2 - Organization has policies in place to research and assess the partner's safe history and/or certifications for outdoor activities regardless of length. This must be done prior to the beginning of the course and certainly for such activities as hiking, camping, rafting, SCUBA, etc. <i>(When partnering with an organization assumptions should never be made that they are competent simply because they have a nice website. If the partner is leading an activity, then the students must be in good hands and competency should be assessed for those areas in which the partner is directly asked to be in charge.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in verifying partnership competencies • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to assess partner strengths and certifications • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				
5.1.3 - Organization has policies in place to research and ensure that the partner does not carry any current ties to illegal organizations or activities. <i>(Partnering with someone who could unintentionally put the students in harms way through external affiliations is critical. Additionally, this standard is meant to not create additional hierarchies in responsibility to the local host communities.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to assess partner relationships • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
5.1.4 - Organization has personal references who have specifically visited the site prior to sending students. <i>(In the best circumstances, an organizational staff person will be able to verify each site for safety and security. However, this is unreasonable in every case, and thus making contact with a previous participant or reference of a partner-activity should be made in advance.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in reference-checking partner • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to contact past participants 				
5.1.5 - Organization strives to become an “additionally named insured” on partner’s insurance whenever possible. <i>(This standard is required to ensure that more responsible organizational partners are preferred over those who don’t have their paperwork in order. Additionally, insurance requires that whenever possible this take place.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written letter of commitment from the Executive Director 				

5.2 - “Organization has policies for vetting homestays and addressing potential homestay issues.”

Sending a student to live with something as critical as a family takes preparation and clear expectations. In many cases, host families might not know what is expected of them, what limits they have in setting expectations and boundaries for the students, or whom to talk to in case of a problem. These details must be communicated in advance of a problem rather than waiting until one is found.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
5.2.1 - Organization ensures food, safe water, physical safety, emotional safety, and addresses strategies for food-allergies, physical disabilities, etc. <i>(Homestays are incredibly common in Gap Years, but at very few times are students more at risk than when staying with a strange family. The organization must take adequate precautions to ensure nothing negatively life-altering happens while a guest.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of template used in verifying critical homestay needs • Copy of staff expectation requiring them to assess and verify student homestays 				
5.2.2 - Scenarios are shared during student orientation about how to handle potentially inappropriate circumstances (sexual, substance, dangerous situations, use of intuition, etc.). <i>(Organizations that use homestays must prepare students not only for the awkward situations, but what to do when they feel endangered.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of student orientation detailing how to deal with or extricate students from challenging homestays • Copy of staff policy requiring student education about common hazards associated with homestays 				

5.3 - “Organization has policies for managing risk on hired transportation.”

Whether airborne, on land, or in the water, transportation remains an often critical element of a Gap Year and thus an important safety matter. Local and public transportation have intrinsic educational value but also intrinsic risks; road transportation in particular remains the most common cause of death.

Indicator	Possible Evidence of Indicator (these are simply possible examples and do not constitute a comprehensive list)	In Place	In Process	Not Applicable	Exception Requested
<p>5.3.1 - On road vehicles, give priority when available to vehicles with seatbelts and use them. <i>(Traveling without seatbelts is commonplace when on a bus or other larger vehicle. It is also commonplace when traveling in the developing world. However, unless there is some specific educational motive or logistical impossibility for doing so, vehicles with seatbelts adequate in function and number for the students must be used.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring preference for vehicles with seatbelts • Copy of staff policy requiring students where seatbelts when available 				
<p>5.3.2 - Staff check routes for possible external threats such as weather, landslides, or security threats prior to each trip and accordingly make decisions. Possible information might lead to deciding to cancel a trip, change the itinerary or routing, or hire specialized vehicles or escorts. <i>(It cannot be assumed that every hired transportation company has researched potential external threats. It is obviously not, for instance, safe to travel in areas where bandits regularly hijack a vehicle, but the hired hands may not choose to share that information for fear of losing the business. Whether on airborne, on land, or in the water, the onus thus rests on the organization to ensure safety inasmuch as it is possible including researching external threats.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring they research / assess external threats prior to departure on any road trip 				
<p>5.3.3 - Staff inquire about reputation of the company and vehicle operators and make appropriate decisions based on results. If available, insurance, licensure, and documentation are verified for validity. <i>(Vetting a company often is possible through external sources, however, vetting transportation companies and drivers is much moreso about the vehicle's safety and the reputation of the driver. Inquiries must be made about the reputation of either the company, or if a smaller operation, the vehicle operators, prior to embarking.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of staff policy requiring researching of reputation prior to departure • List of questions to ask or methods for verifying history and reputability of carrier 				