# People Who Have a Systemic or Chronic Health Condition

# Access Information Form – Advisor Guidelines

**To research solutions, search MIUSA’s extensive resources:** [**www.miusa.org**](http://www.miusa.org)**.**

## In your own words, please describe your chronic health condition (e.g., is it an orthopedic, heart, or respiratory condition, diabetes, cancer, etc.).

#### What does this tell you?

* If the person provides medical information on the level of the condition (e.g., cancer, but in remission), then consult a specialist or search online for more information on what this means.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* How long have you had your chronic health condition and has it changed over time or recently? If so, how?
* Does your chronic condition change depending on the setting or how you are feeling? For example, does not sleeping enough or not eating well enough aggravate your condition?

# Assistive Devices & Activities

## Do you need any aids or devices to assist you? Frequently, sometimes or never?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person has a chronic health condition that requires an aid or device (e.g., an inhaler for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or a fluid measuring scale for congestive heart failure). This doesn’t necessarily mean that their health condition is worse than others that don’t require an aid or device.
* Keep in mind the use or lack of use of aids or devices does not necessarily correspond with the amount of training and skills an individual has received or their confidence in using them.
* How long the person has used an aid or device makes a difference in their level of confidence and safety in using it and increases the ease of use with aids and devices that the person might need to use while they are in your program.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* How often do you need to use your aid or device?
* Can you use the device without assistance?
* What type of training did you receive to learn to use your aid or device?
* If available, would you like additional training? Do you have funds for this?
* Would you say that you need to always have your aid or device with you at all times?
* If available, would you be interested in using other aids or devices that are locally available while you are on your program?
* How often do you ask people near you for assistance? What is the nature of the assistance that you ask for?
* Do you feel you have adequate skills in the language of the country you are traveling to for asking for assistance from local people if needed?

## Do you use any walking aids, wheelchairs or adaptations to accommodate your condition?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person’s chronic health condition might have a related physical condition that affects walking. For example, a respiratory problem might cause a general state of weakness that makes walking difficult, thus the need for a walking aid or wheelchair.
* The person may have enough mobility to navigate independently, but their gait, speed, or balance may still be affected by their chronic health condition.
* Once in a new environment, the person may need to assess if their mobility changes or is similar to what they experience in their home environment. For example, is the local terrain the similar to their home environment (e.g., More hilly? Rains more? Hotter?)
* The person may not have had opportunities to acquire mobility aids even though they may need them.
* Keep in mind the use or lack of use of aids or devices does not necessarily correspond with the amount of training and skills an individual has received or their confidence in using them.
* How long the person has used an aid or device makes a difference in their level of confidence and safety in using it and increases the ease of use with aids and devices that the person might need to use while they are in your program.
* Refer the mobility disability forms and guidelines for further information.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Are there certain conditions (e.g. indoors or outdoors, stairs or escalators) that are easier or more difficult to navigate with no assistance?
* How often do you ask people near you for assistance? In what situations (e.g. offer an arm for stability when you need to get out of your wheelchair, or to help you carry glass/plate or other object?
* Do you feel you have adequate skills in the language of the country you are traveling to for asking for assistance from local people if needed?
* What is most helpful for you when traveling in airports or long distances?
* Do you use public transportation with no assistance? What type of assistance, if any, would be helpful if it is a new public transportation system, especially one that is crowded?
* If available, would you be interested in getting mobility aids (such as a wheelchair) to rent or own? Do you have funds available?

## Do you do activities on a regular basis that help accommodate your condition?

### If you do engage in activities, do you need any assistance when engaging in these activities?

#### What does this tell you?

* If the person has a regular plan of activities that they do, it means that the person is pro-active.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Will you need to continue to do these activities while you’re abroad?
* Will you need any assistance in carrying them out while abroad?

## Do you use a laptop computer?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person has some computer skills.
* The person may have already shared the type of software she/he uses, such as dictation, screen reading text-to-speech tools, etc.

#### What follow-up questions would you ask?

* How long have you been using all this computer/software? What type of training have you had?
* Would you say you are beginner, average or advanced user?
* How often and for what do you use each of these? If you didn’t have access to it, what would you do instead?
* If you have accessible features on your computer/software, will these work or need to work in the host country language?
* If you had access to other types of computer/software or training, would you be interested? Would you have funding?
* If you will bring this computer/software with you, will you bring it with you on the airplane or will you ship it?
* Will you need insurance to cover damage or loss of the equipment?

## Will you use a smartphone?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person has learned to use smartphone apps (e.g., blood pressure measuring, pain monitoring, glucose measuring, symptom tracking) that could be helpful abroad.
* How long have you been using all this/these apps? What type of training have you had?
* Would you say you are beginner, average or advanced user?
* If you have accessible features in your apps, will these work or need to work in the host country language?
* If you had access to other apps, would you be interested? Would you have funding?
* The person may need to learn other techniques if these features or applications are not available abroad.
* Will you need insurance to cover damage or loss of your smartphone?
* This person may or may not have an international plan for use when traveling.

#### What follow-up questions would you ask?

* Does your phone have an international plan or have a way for it to work in the host country? Are you prepared to cover cost differences, such as roaming charges?
* Does your phone charger work with electrical and outlet differences abroad?
* If you find you do not have use of your smartphone in the host country, will you be able to find a usable one abroad? Do you have funds for this?
* How often and for what do you use this? If you didn’t have access to it, what would you do instead?
* How often and for what do you use these smartphone applications?
* Do you have applications that will be helpful in the host country?

# Medical Care

## Has your medical health professional given you either a stable or improving report of your chronic health condition?

#### What does this tell you?

* Persons with chronic health conditions should have a stable or improving prognosis for their chronic health condition prior to studying abroad.
* A variable health status within the past 5 years can lead to an aggravation of the condition while abroad. See question #9 for important health insurance questions if the status has been variable within the past 5 years.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* When was the last time you visited your medical health professional?
* When was the last time you visited your medical health specialist, if you have one?
* When was the last time you had a deteriorating health status?

## Do you need to bring medical documents with you while you are in the program?

### If so, do you have those documents translated into the local program language?

#### What does this tell you?

* This person may need to submit these medical documents to their airline prior to travel.
* If they need to carry a supply of medication with them while travelling (see #10), then they will also have to carry with them a letter from their medical health profession explaining the need for these medications.
* If the person has a chronic health condition, then something like MedicalAlert’s medical bracelets, Medical IDs, might be useful to help alert medical professionals globally about the person’s condition and vital medical information.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Have you asked your medical professional which, if any, of your medical documentation you should travel with while abroad?
* Do you have a letter from your medical professional if you are travelling with a large quantity of medication?
* Do you have a medical ID – something like MedicalAlert?
* Do you have funds to translate your medical documents?

## Can you describe your history of hospitalization if any?

#### What does this tell you?

* If the history is long and recent, it might not be appropriate for the chronically health disabled person to study abroad.
* If the history is distant, it might mean that the person is not mentally, physically and emotionally prepared for hospitalization.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Do you have a contingency plan if you are hospitalized while abroad?
* Do you have the insurance to cover an overseas hospitalization?
* Does your insurance cover evacuation, interruption, cancellation, airfare, program fees if you need to return home?
* After hospitalization, how long were you able to return to your “normal” life?
* While you were hospitalized did you continue your studies or work?
* If you continued your studies or work while hospitalized did you need any special accommodations?

## Do you have any medication that you need to take on a regular basis?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person has a condition that requires ongoing pharmaceutical intervention.
* The longer the person has been on this medication, the more aware the person will be of monitoring quantities, funding issues, timing needed to refill medication, etc.
* This may be paid by home insurance or government programs but these funds may not travel with them abroad.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* How long have you been using this medicine? (May be appropriate for the participant to discuss this with a doctor instead.)
* Does this medication have any possible adverse side effects related to academic performance or any other issue that might be related to your experience abroad (e.g., anxiety, fear, etc.)?
* If you cannot bring an adequate supply of your medicine with you while you are abroad, will you need insurance to help pay for it abroad? Will you be able to legally get medicine in your destination?
* Will funding from home for the medicine continue while overseas? What will the funding cover considering exchange rates?
* If you plan to buy these abroad, what do you need from us to assist? Do you have funds or insurance that covers it even if related to a pre-existing condition?

## Do you need to regularly keep in contact with a doctor while you are in the program?

#### What does this tell you?

* If the person needs to be in contact with their local doctor, it might be necessary to offer an environment to accommodate that communication, for example a private room.
* If the person will need a local doctor, is one available? If the person needs a specialist, are those specialists available in the host country?

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* How will you be able to get the information that is needed from your healthcare professional while abroad?
* If you need to see a local doctor will you have the language skills to communicate with that doctor? If not, will you need a translator? Do you have funds for that if not provided?
* If your needs are not met with the local doctors, do you have a contingency plan?

## Are you currently seeing anyone from the mental health profession regarding your condition?

#### What does this tell you?

* This person not only has a chronic health condition, but that condition is affecting them psychologically.
* This person might have a recent hospitalization (see #9) or a recent (within the past five years) change of health condition status (see #7).
* If he or she communicates with a key support through Skype, it will be important to identify internet access points and learn if they are able to continue formal therapy over Skype due to therapy practice laws.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Will you need to continue seeing a mental health professional while you are abroad?
* Will you be in contact with your mental health professional at home while you are abroad? If you are in contact, will that contact be regular? Will you have regular scheduled sessions on Skype, Viber, FaceTime, etc., while you are abroad?
* Do you have the insurance to cover the costs associated with seeing a mental health professional?
* See the Mental Health guidelines for further questions.

# Aggravating Your Condition

## Do you have anything that might trigger the aggravation of your condition?

#### What does this tell you?

* This person understands well their chronic health condition.
* If they understand the triggers, they can either avoid or modify those triggers, or they might have a remedy to reduce the aggravation of their chronic health condition.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Is there anything that can be done while abroad to reduce the likelihood of aggravating your condition?
* Other than rest is there anything that you normally do to alleviate the aggravation of your condition? Will it be hard to do that while you are studying abroad?

## If your chronic health conditions are significantly aggravated while you are in the program, what has your medical health professional suggested as your course of action?

#### What does this tell you?

* That this person, if they answer this question, has planned for negative contingencies.
* That this person has a good working relationship with his medical health professional which is important for managing chronic health conditions.
* Perhaps this course of action should be shared with all principle members while abroad, e.g., host family, host director, etc.
* If the person doesn’t have a course of action, have them create one. When a condition is aggravated, being overseas can overwhelm some persons with chronic health conditions.

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* Is the course of action in written form? Is it with you at all times?
* Is this course of action doable overseas?
* What course of action is to be done in the short-term? In the long-term? For example, would you need to miss a few days of program vs. needing to return home early? What would need to be coordinated regarding this?

## If you have ever experienced an aggravation of your chronic condition in the past, were you able to continue your studies or work with accommodations?

### If so, what accommodations did you need?

#### What does this tell you?

* If the person has had to discontinue their studies in the recent past 5 years, their condition might not have a stable report (see #7).
* If the person has been able to continue their studies with accommodations those accommodations might need to be revisited in a studying abroad context (see #17).

#### What follow-up questions could you ask?

* If your condition is aggravated, will you be able to use special accommodations while you’re abroad?

# Studying

## Do you prefer sitting in a particular seat (in front, in the back on a particular side of the room, etc.) or other arrangements when you are in a group setting?

#### What does this tell you?

* The person feels that the right context in a group situation might alleviate their chronic health condition.
* The person may need to be in the front of the room because they might feel that they will need to leave the room suddenly, or in the back of the room because they might think that some aid or device that they use might bother their fellow classmates or coworkers, etc.
* Since either the condition or medication used to alleviate symptoms might cause disorientation, the person may want to be oriented to what and where people and things are located in a room and in the surrounding rooms so he or she can adjust to a group setting. In addition, the person might have specific needs, e.g., going to bathroom, getting air, when condition related symptoms flare up.

#### What follow-up questions would you ask?

* What would be helpful to ensure you can find a seat that meets these preferences?
* How much does this help you? If you had this preferred seat, would you need any other accommodation?
* In what situations, is this type of preferred seating unhelpful? What do you do in those situations?
* What is helpful and how much time do you typically need to get oriented to a group setting?
* Are there helpful things that can be done during a meeting or class or other group setting?

## In your studies or work, do you typically have an accommodation when attending class or meetings, fulfilling assignments, or taking exams?

#### What does this tell you?

* Friends and family who act as notetakers may be the only option available in their countries. The person may prefer to have this personal interaction or may not know how to use the other options.
* The person may need a personal reader to accommodate their studying needs.
* The person may need extended time to complete assignments, exams, papers, etc.
* The person may need a recording of the class because sometimes they may not attend class due to their chronic health condition and therefore it might be recommended to have a recording for all classes.
* The person may need a private room to take exams or complete certain types of work assignments. If this is needed, the room might need to have similar features as the normal classroom or office space. For example, proximity to a building exit or bathroom.
* The person may need supervised breaks.

#### What follow up questions could you ask?

* If you do not take your own notes in meetings or a classroom, who typically takes notes for you?
* How do you access these notes? Are these notes electronic? Hand written?
* How do you schedule and/or pay for this person? Is the person a volunteer?
* Do you use the notes at the same time the notes are being written or do you view them later? If at the same time, are there other ways to access the information such as sitting closer?
* Are these your only notes or are the notes supplemental? Do you also have a way to take your own notes?
* If available, would you want to use equipment to record or type notes? Do you have funds for this? Would you need training?
* If you need a reader, how do you schedule and/or pay for this person? Is the person a volunteer?
* If available, would you want to use equipment that will read materials to you? Do you have funds for this? Would you need training?
* Do you have specific needs for a private room?
* If you need extended breaks, how long are they typically and what do you typically do during this extended break? For example, do you typically leave the building? Go get a coffee?

# Other Accommodations and Services

## Please describe any other tools or services you use to improve accessibility that were not mentioned above.

#### What does this tell you?

* Learn more about the tools or services mentioned through Internet searches and/or asking medical professionals who have specialized in the specific chronic health condition the person describes.

#### What follow-up questions would you ask?

* How long have you been using the tools or services?
* Would you say you are beginner, average or advanced in using each of these?
* How often and for what do you use each of these? If you didn’t have access to it, what would you do instead?
* Are these tools or services portable abroad and if so, will these work or need to work in the host country language?
* If you had access to other types of tools, services, or training, would you be interested? Would you have funding?

## Are there any tools or services to improve accessibility that you prefer not to use? Any that you would like to learn to use? Please describe.

#### What does this tell you?

* The person may want to continue using equipment or tools he or she already has because of cost, time for training, and/or availability.
* The person may be unfamiliar with these tools or equipment and/or tried them and did not find them useful in the past.
* The person may not want to bring their tools or equipment abroad for a variety of reasons and will choose an alternative in the host country instead.

#### What follow-up questions would you ask?

* If you receive assistance, will you have this person to assist or equipment with you while you are in the program? How will you plan for this?
* If you receive assistance, will you be able to find this in the host country? Do you have the language skills of the host country language?
* If training is available to orient you to the new environment and learn to do these on your own, with or without adaptive equipment, would you be interested? Would you have funding? How much time would you need? Would you need to arrive early to learn? Could you learn some of this at home first?
* If you are used to being independent, how will you adjust if people in your host country strongly suggest you need, or give you, extra assistance?

## Please tell us anything else that we need to know about how you do things or your access needs:

#### Things to consider.

* The person’s academics may or may not be on par with other non-disabled students in his/her country as he/she will most probably have spent time dealing with either her/his condition-specific skills training or his/her chronic health condition.
* If the person has been in an inclusive school vs. being home schooled he or she may feel more confidence in navigating and interacting with non-disabled people. The person may or may not have had appropriate accommodations provided to him or her for his or her studies.
* Other considerations may include refrigeration for medications, an air conditioned or purified room if heat or pollutants aggravates condition, how diet affects the person’s condition and how they expect the foreign cuisine to impact this, etc.

#### What follow up questions could you ask?

* Have you thought about how you will explain your disability, or noticeable symptoms like fatigue, to anyone you need to while abroad?
* Have you learned about your chronic health condition in your destination, e.g., the prevalence of your condition, general knowledge about your condition?
* What do you think would be the benefits in the different setting?
* What are some concerns you have about adjusting to the different setting?
* If you want the same setting, what was most important about that for you?

**This form was produced by Mobility International USA,** [**http://www.miusa.org**](http://www.miusa.org) **with thanks to John Dennis, PhD, Professor, Psychologist, and Melioravit Consultant.**