

## EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

### I. EMERGENCY NUMBERS

For an emergency in Greece, **dial 112** (the European equivalent to 911). You will be re-directed to an English-speaking operator if you require fire, ambulance, or police assistance.

#### **U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Greece/Emergency Contact Information for U.S. Citizens:**

American Citizen Services (ACS): +30 210-721-2951

From the United States: 1-888-407-4747

ACS Unit Email: [athensamericancitizenservices@state.gov](mailto:athensamericancitizenservices@state.gov)

U.S. grantees must have access to the **Emergency and Staff Numbers** provided by Fulbright Greece at all times. It is best to store these phone numbers/emails on your smart phone for easy access.

If a crisis situation begins to develop, Fulbright Greece will regularly communicate with and disseminate information to U.S. grantees.

All grantees, upon their arrival in Greece, are added to a WhatsApp group with Fulbright Greece staff as part of the emergency response system. WhatsApp allows the staff to send messages to all grantees and to see which messages have been delivered and read. However, Fulbright Greece staff can also contact grantees via text, phone, and email.

Make sure to read these guidelines thoroughly and discuss possible emergency plans with your host institution, so you know what to do in case of an emergency. Make sure to also store a hard copy at home and a digital copy of this emergency plan on your tablet, smart phone, and/or computer.

### II. PURPOSE OF EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The purpose of the **Emergency Action Plan** is to ensure adequate preparation for grantees and staff in the event of emergency and crisis situations and to effectively manage them.

This document outlines safety procedures to be applied in case of emergency.

Emergency and crisis situations include natural disasters, civil unrest, incidents of violence, pandemics or other broad health-related crises, or other emergency circumstances that may affect Fulbright grantees.

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Academic and Exchange Programs (ECA/A/E) has overall responsibility for the Fulbright Program worldwide under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, which was renamed the Fulbright-Hays Act.

In crisis situations, it is critical that Fulbright Greece consult closely with the relevant ECA/A/E regional Fulbright Branch, the U.S. Embassy in Athens, and the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding any decisions concerning the safety of Fulbright participants in Greece. In consultation with the U.S. Department of State's Europe/Eurasia Regional Bureau

and the U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section, the ECA/A/E will make the final determination on any case of Program suspension or reinstatement.

### **III. STATUS OF FULBRIGHTERS**

As a U.S. Fulbright grantee in Greece, you are in a distinct category. As a private U.S. citizen, you do not fall under Chief of Mission (Embassy) authority; Fulbright grantees are under U.S. government sponsorship during the Fulbright award, and the State Department has a responsibility to provide guidance for your welfare and security. U.S. grantees are supervised by the Fulbright Foundation in Greece and must abide by the Foundation's regulations, the terms and conditions of their grants, and the policies of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

### **IV. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

1) Fulbrighters are strongly encouraged to enroll in the U.S. Government's **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program** <https://step.state.gov/step/> . By enrolling, you will be able to receive important information from the U.S. Embassy about safety conditions in your host country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans and how to respond in a crisis situation. This will help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest, or family emergency, and will help family and friends get in touch with you in an emergency.

2) U.S. grantees must provide up-to-date contact details to Fulbright Greece for the entire duration of their Fulbright award in Greece. Please update the *Fulbright Greece Portal* (online database) of any phone number, email, or other contact info changes as they occur.

3) In an emergency response, Fulbright Greece will provide information to the U.S. Embassy and the ECA/A/E. The ECA/A/E needs to be able to reach participants quickly and directly via email and/or phone to confirm their safety and whereabouts.

4) Grantees are advised that the standard means of communication may be cut off in an emergency. In the unlikely event that grantees need to depart Greece if a serious situation or crisis occurs, they will receive assistance to do so.

5) If U.S. grantees are leaving their home base in Greece and/or will be out of phone range for more than 3 days (on trips outside the country or to locations within the country), they must provide the Fulbright American Program Coordinator with details of that travel and provide alternative contact details.

6) U.S. grantees are asked to keep their family/friends back home informed (using social networking, email, or telephone) while they are away from their home base in Greece.

7) U.S. grantees are strongly advised to follow both Fulbright Greece and the U.S. Embassy in Athens on Facebook and Twitter. Social media can be used to share important communications.

**Fulbright Greece:** Facebook – FulbrightGreece Twitter - @FulbrightGreece

**U.S. Embassy:** Facebook – USEmbassyAthens Twitter - @USEmbassyAthens

8) Keep important documents (or copies) in a safe, accessible place. Important documents include: • Passport • Copies of your Greek visa and Residence Permit Card • Emergency contact numbers • Copy of ASPE insurance card • Birth and marriage certificates • Drivers' licenses.

### ***Emergency Reference Card***

Make sure to carry an Emergency Reference Card with you at all times. If you are on regular medication, do not forget to include this information on an Emergency Reference Card. If a grantee is unable to talk due to injury or lack of consciousness, their Emergency Reference Card will provide information to those attempting to offer aid or medical attention. Keep your contact information updated on your Emergency Reference Card, so your emergency contacts can be reached as soon as possible.

### **NATURAL DISASTERS**

Information about **crisis preparedness** can be found on the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (GSCP) website at <https://www.civilprotection.gr/en>. General information about **disaster preparedness** is also available online from the [U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#).

**Earthquakes:** several major **earthquake** fault lines cross Greece, and earthquakes occur. Detailed information on Greece's fault lines is available from the [U.S. Geological Survey \(USGS\)](#).

**Severe Weather:** Floods can occur in various regions in Greece. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or large, affecting entire river basins and surrounding villages.

Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds, or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood. Every country is at risk from this hazard.

Storms and very rarely tornados can create high winds, soaking rain, and flying debris. Some winter storms have extremely strong winds that can create blizzard conditions with blinding, wind driven snow, drifting, and dangerous wind chills. These intense winds can bring down trees and poles, and can also cause damage to homes and other buildings. Snow accumulations can immobilize a region and paralyze a city.

Ice: even a small amount of ice can cause hazardous conditions for motorists and pedestrians.

**Fire Safety:** In case of fire, the Fire Department may be reached by calling emergency number **112**.

After arriving in Greece and moving into your apartment, locate and identify fire escape routes. Talk to your landlord about which steps to follow in case of a fire.

At your host school, university, or research lab, ask about where the closest fire escapes are in the buildings and if there is an emergency meeting point.

## **V. STAYING SAFE**

We suggest checking the website of the U.S. Department of State, which maintains an [extensive library](#) of current resources regarding safety for U.S. citizens traveling abroad. When consulting these resources, please keep in mind that some U.S. citizens with special considerations – such as students, women, and LGBTQ+ travelers – may face additional challenges when abroad.

### **TERRORISM**

There have been multiple terrorist attacks in Europe in recent years. Attackers may employ a wide variety of tactics, using conventional and non-conventional weapons and targeting both official and private interests. Extremists may target large sporting events, theaters, open markets, and aviation services. European governments are taking action to guard against terrorist attacks.

### **PROTESTS, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND CIVIL UNREST**

Be aware that it is not uncommon for Greek citizens, as it is a right, to publicly protest about political or social issues. These protests occur mainly in large cities – particularly in Athens and Thessaloniki – but may also affect smaller towns. The Fulbright Foundation Greece strongly suggests that grantees avoid these protests and do not become involved. If you encounter a protest, remain calm and move away from the protestors or enter a public establishment like a café/restaurant. Try not to provoke protestors in any way by taking photos or by making gestures or comments. Call the American Program Coordinator at the Foundation to inform him about your current situation if you need assistance.

#### ***Demonstrations***

Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful have the potential to turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. You should take common-sense precautions and follow news reports carefully. Security messages for U.S. citizens pertaining to demonstrations can be found on the Embassy's website.

***Politically motivated violence*** in Greece is most often connected to Greek internal developments or social issues. Greek authorities and foreign diplomatic facilities have found bombs outside public buildings, have received bomb threats, and have been targets of letter bombs, fire bombs, and Molotov cocktails in the past several years. These attacks generally occur at night, and although they have not targeted or injured U.S. citizens, you should remain aware of your surroundings and report any suspicious activity to local authorities. The only exception to this is the annual demonstration/march on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November that terminates in front of the U.S. Embassy in Athens. This demonstration is largely symbolic, marking the beginning of the end of the junta in Greece, but has occasionally turned violent. Careful measures are taken by law enforcement to ensure everyone's safety, but it is recommended that you avoid the center of Athens on this date. Things return immediately to the safe status quo: The next day, you'd never know a demonstration even took place.

### **STREET CRIME**

Greece has a moderate crime rate and crimes that do occur are mostly theft and economic crimes; violent crimes are fairly rare. U.S. citizens should be aware of the following local circumstances:

- Tourists can be fined or detained for buying counterfeit goods (usually fashion accessories).

- Travelers must purchase train, bus, or metro tickets and validate them prior to boarding (usually near the entrance of the train or metro, or on the bus). Tickets may be purchased at ticket kiosks and train/metro stations. Failure to follow this procedure may result in a fine. Due to possible scams, we suggest that you do not pay the fine on the spot. Ask the inspector for the nearest office where you can pay the fine.
- Thieves may impersonate police officers. If you are stopped by a plainclothes policeman, ask for a uniformed officer and insist on seeing an officer's identification card.
- Do not leave bags unattended. Most reported thefts occur at crowded tourist sites, at airports, car rental agencies, on public buses, metros, and trains, and at the major railway stations. Never leave baggage alone in a car, including in a closed trunk.
- Be alert to criminal schemes. Organized groups of thieves and pickpockets operate at major tourist destinations, in train stations, bars, and cafes. Some travelers have reported incidents in which criminals used drugs to assault or rob them. Thieves on motor scooters sometimes snatch purses or bags off pedestrians as they ride by. Resisting these thieves can be dangerous.
- Keep your car doors locked and windows rolled up at all times to avoid thefts while you are waiting in traffic.

Local Greek enforcement authorities are noticing an increase in the appearance of ATM skimming devices. Here are some helpful hints to protect against theft at ATMs:

- Use ATMs located in well-lit public areas or secured inside a bank/business. Cover the keypad with one hand as you enter your PIN.
- Closely monitor your account statements for unauthorized transactions.

See Department of State information on scams  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/scams.html>

### ***Pickpockets - Loss or Theft of Important Documents***

The first rule is not to have anything more in your wallet/purse than you are willing to lose. Try to keep only what is essential: ONE credit/ATM card, ONE piece of identification (emergency card), and no more than €40-50. A hair brush can be easily replaced, but something like your passport or your social security card is much more difficult and its loss can cause much grief.

**Make a copy and/or scan of your passport** (front and back) and of everything that you have in your wallet. In case something happens, you will have all the numbers and contact information to cancel your cards and replace your passport.

Carry purses or backpacks that zip. Carry them tightly under your arm and slightly in front of you. If you have the backpack-type purse, swing it around so that it is slightly in front of you as well, or place a wallet in a front pocket.

The places where many people get pickpocketed are close to major tourist sites: the city center, historic monuments, trains, train stations, airports, subways, and sports facilities. Most, but not all, pickpockets work in groups. They are often adolescents, since it is extremely difficult for minors to go to jail here. They can be groups of young girls or boys and of all races.

If you do have your pocket picked and something important was stolen, like your passport or residence permit, go to the local police station and file a complaint. Don't chase down whoever you think stole your wallet. Remember if they work in groups, your wallet was

most likely handed off before you realized it was gone. Find a police officer and make an immediate report.

If you lose your passport, you will need to apply for a new one through U.S. Embassy:  
<https://gr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/passports/>

You will also need to file a report at the nearest police station. Renew your passport.

**Visa/Residence Permit:** Contact the American Program Coordinator to discuss replacing your residence permit.

### **CAR ACCIDENTS**

If you want to rent a car, be sure to:

- Find out if the car is covered by insurance.
- Have all necessary documents including a comprehensive motor insurance policy and the license of the car with you.
- Make sure to ask what to do in case of an accident and collect all the contact numbers of the car rental company.

## **VI. EMERGENCIES AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE**

As a general rule, emergency treatment is provided at public hospital emergency rooms (ERs) to patients who have been seriously injured in an accident or have been suddenly taken ill and require urgent medical treatment. Access to this service is given to patients according to a priority order defined by the seriousness of their health condition. Emergency medical service is usually free of charge or provided upon payment of a limited fee.

Hospitalization and outpatient treatment are provided at both public and private hospitals. Public hospitals can be overcrowded in large cities. Generally, non-emergency services are subject to a fee. Private hospitals and clinics are usually less crowded than public hospitals, but generally charge considerably higher fees.

To call an ambulance or to receive first-aid assistance, **dial emergency number 112**; this service is free of charge and is available 24 hours a day both on working days and holidays. Please keep your insurance card with you at all times. You will need to file a claim with Seven Corners/ASPE or your other insurance provider for reimbursement. Remember to keep copies of all bills, prescriptions, and other documents given to you at the hospital for your insurance claim. If you use your Seven Corners/ASPE Coverage, you must notify Seven Corners immediately to obtain either pre-certification or certification of expense reimbursement for physical and mental health care.

Inform the Fulbright Greece American Program Coordinator or the Executive Director of your hospitalization and health situation as soon as possible.

In case of a chronic health problem (diabetes, allergy, asthma, high blood pressure, etc.), please update the relevant section on the Fulbright Greece Portal. If you have a persistent illness, do not wait to seek medical attention, as it may worsen your condition and make treatment more difficult.

In Greece, people obtain their medication from a pharmacy, even when they just need some basic cold medicine. (In other words, medicine is not sold over-the-counter in grocery stores, only at pharmacies. However, if you need a packet of paracetamol pills, known as Tylenol,

Excedrin, or Panadol in the U.S., it can be found at newspaper kiosks in Greece, under the brand name Depon for under 2 euro per pack). There are multiple pharmacies in every neighborhood, but most close at night, on Sundays, and during holidays. There will always be a pharmacist on duty in your neighborhood or in a nearby neighborhood if needed.

In case you need to see a doctor, you can look for a local doctor yourself or ask for recommendations of university authorities or your Greek hosts/ friends, but you are sure to find a doctor when you need one.

The U.S. Embassy has a list of English-speaking medical professionals in Greece.

<https://gr.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/doctors/>

### **COVERAGE ABROAD**

Your Fulbright award includes the U.S. Department of State's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE), reimbursing up to \$100,000 in medical expenses for any accident or illness, with a small deductible for each claim. You can read more about the insurance and its coverage at [www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos](http://www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos) and the Terms and Conditions of the Fulbright-Hays Grant document.

Please note that no pre-existing conditions are covered on this plan, and it is your responsibility to confirm whether or not any prescriptions you currently receive will be available or allowed in Greece. We recommend bringing essential medication with you from the U.S. to Greece. In addition, your dependents will not be covered by this insurance. Fulbright Greece strongly suggests that you acquire health and accident insurance for your dependents before leaving the United States.

Health care is provided in accordance with the Greek health insurance legislation. There is no document indicating your entitlement to reimbursement of health services provided in Greece. The invoices for health services provided in Greece must be sent to your health insurance institution in the U.S. That health insurance will reimburse you according to the conditions and rates laid down in its health insurance legislation.

Medical and health standards are very high in Greece.

### **ASPE ASSIST**

#### **Mental Health Support Hotline**

ASPE provides access to a mental health consultant and a referral services hotline. ASPE Assist is a benefit for all Exchange Participants, including those on the Fulbright U.S. Student and Scholar Programs, during their USDOS program. ASPE Assist is designed to augment the health benefits that are concurrently provided through ASPE. ASPE Assist is operated by The ANVIL Group, in partnership with [Seven Corners](http://www.sevencorners.com).

ASPE Assist Services include the following:

- Mental health advice
- Mental health crisis support
- Sexual assault response
- Violent Crime response
- Advice to grantees when they feel at risk or vulnerable



ASPE Assist is accessible 24 hours a day and is available to provide support to Exchange Participants in urgent and non-urgent situations, including the identification and referral of mental health conditions requiring in-person or Telemedicine treatment, and crisis intervention. The medical staff responding to grantee calls are trained to handle serious situations such as sexual assaults and mental health crises. They can also provide medical advice.

### ***ASPE Assist Contact Information***

Phone: +1-833-963-1269

Worldwide: +44-20-3859-4463

Email: [ASPEsupport@anvilgroup.com](mailto:ASPEsupport@anvilgroup.com)

When contacting ASPE Assist for the first time, please be prepared to provide your full name and date of birth, ID card number, program name (for example, Fulbright U.S. Student Program), and host country. This information will allow ANVIL staff to verify your status as a U.S. Fulbright Student grantee with the ASPE Health Benefits Plan.

If you unable to call the ASPE Assist line directly and need to have the ASPE Assist team give you a call, please email [ASPEsupport@anvilgroup.com](mailto:ASPEsupport@anvilgroup.com) with your name, date of birth, ID card number, program name (for example, Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program), and host country and indicate that you need them to call you. Make sure to provide them with your complete international phone number, including relevant country codes and area codes.

The information provided by you to The ANVIL Group in the event of an illness, emergency, or other personal crisis is considered private. However, it may be responsibly shared within organizations administrating your grant program, including Seven Corners, in their efforts to assist and support you.

Any questions not related to mental health support services – including benefits, claims, coverage – should be directed to [Seven Corners](#) Customer Service for assistance.

For more information on Seven Corners and ASPE Accident and Sickness Benefits for Exchanges refer to the Terms and Conditions of Fulbright Hays Grant (Fulbright Greece Portal - U.S. Fulbright Program Grant Documents).

Seven Corners and the USDOS disclaim any and all liability for ASPE Assist, The ANVIL Group or other third-party services.

### **HARRASSMENT & SEXUAL HARRASSMENT**

Harassment is defined as behavior that is persistent and is intended to disturb and upset. There are different types of harassment, including psychological, racial, religious, police, and sexual harassment. A target can be verbally, physically, and psychologically harassed and stalked, or tormented, intimidated, degraded and discriminated against. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual advances or visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Although sexual harassment may not involve physical assault, it can be used by potential perpetrators to test the boundaries of potential victims. Therefore, it is important for grantees to stay aware of the prevalence of sexual harassment and how best to respond. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are a concern worldwide. It can be challenging to mitigate harassment while overseas due to language barriers, new surroundings, and lack of familiar cultural signals and cues. Here are some tips on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations:



- Find an ally in hosts/supervisors and/or neighbors.
- Take cues from locals, including coworkers and peers.
- Exercise caution when meeting new people, and arrange meetings in public places and/or with others when possible.
- Remain vigilant and aware of your surroundings.
- Set your limits for acceptable behavior and (try to) be consistent. If you feel uncomfortable or question an unsettling situation, talk to fellow Fulbrighters, friends, and colleagues you trust, or to your point of contact at Fulbright Greece.

While previous Fulbright grantees to Greece have reported feeling safe in their host cities, grantees are encouraged to take general safety precautions (e.g., walking with friends, following well-lit streets at night) and to speak to Fulbright Greece staff if they have an ongoing concern or if they are the victim of harassment.

### **IN THE CASE OF SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ASSAULT**

U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault should seek medical attention at the nearest public hospital as soon as possible. Report crimes by dialing emergency number 112 and contact Fulbright Greece and the U.S. Embassy.

- Local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crimes. See the webpage on help for U.S. victims of crime overseas and U.S. victim's compensation programs <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/emergencies/victims.html>

Fulbright Greece is committed to providing a compassionate and supportive response to all Fulbright grantees in crisis and makes the following commitment to all Fulbrighters who are victims of sexual or physical assault.

- **COMPASSION.** We will treat you with dignity and respect. No one deserves to be a victim of a sexual assault, and we recognize that as the victim of a sexual or physical assault, you are not at fault.
- **SAFETY.** We will take appropriate steps to help ensure your ongoing safety.
- **SUPPORT.** We will provide you with the support you need to aid in your recovery, including access to a 24/7 Fulbright ASSIST helpline, direct you to appropriate medical care, and provide you with emotional support.
- **CONTINUATION OF AWARD.** We will work closely with you to make decisions regarding the continuation of your award.
- **PRIVACY.** We will respect your privacy and will not, without your consent, disclose your identity or share the details of the incident with anyone who does not have a legitimate need to know.

In case of a physical or sexual assault, grantees are encouraged to first ensure their immediate safety: Make sure you have reached a safe place and you are out of danger. Call a friend to take you home or go to their place. In cases where the victim requires immediate assistance, grantees are recommended to then immediately call the police or emergency services to report the incident and/or seek medical attention. While other emergency numbers are listed at the end of this document, grantees should memorize the pan-European number 112 for all emergencies. This emergency number can be called anywhere in the European Union and has English-speaking operators.

Victims of sexual assault should keep in mind that timing is key when reporting a sexual assault. You may need to visit a doctor or emergency room within 24 hours of the assault in order to complete an examination necessary to obtain evidence. Even if you choose not to report the case, you should still go to the nearest hospital or clinic. Make sure you provide

the hospital with your ASPE information and contact Seven Corners directly by email ([usdosinfo@sevencorners.com](mailto:usdosinfo@sevencorners.com)) or phone (+1 317-818-2867, a collect call outside U.S.) as soon as possible.

In less urgent cases, Fulbright Greece can assist grantees in communicating with authorities. Grantees in need of emergency assistance can always contact Fulbright Greece staff and the U.S. Embassy via their 24-hour hotline. Call American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy (**Day and After Hours Phone:** +30 210-721-2951) where embassy officers will help you get in touch with the local police and get medical attention.

When a U.S. citizen is the victim of a crime overseas, they may suffer from physical, emotional, or financial injuries. It can be more difficult because the victim may be in unfamiliar surroundings and may not know the local language or customs. Consular officers, and local employees at the U.S. Embassy know local government agencies and resources in the country where they work. They can – among other things – help to replace a stolen passport, obtain appropriate medical care, explain the local criminal justice process and obtain information about your case, and provide a list of local lawyers, doctors, and counselors who speak English. However, the U.S. Embassy cannot investigate crimes, provide legal advice, represent you in court, serve as official interpreters/translators, or pay legal, medical, or other fees for you. Grantees should remember that Fulbright Greece and the U.S. Embassy cannot provide the same level of immediate assistance as the local authorities.

A physical or sexual assault can be an extremely traumatic experience that can result in emotional, psychological, physical, and financial after effects. Please see below for additional resources designed to help grantees experiencing a mental health crisis.

In order to prevent developing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, also known as PTSD, we strongly recommend that you contact ASPE ASSIST (24/7 Hotline: +44 20-3859-4463 Worldwide) and/or a local therapist. The U.S. Embassy and the Fulbright Foundation will direct you to further resources to help you address all of your concerns and recover as soon as possible from this experience. Contact your local affiliation and the Fulbright American Program Coordinator as soon as possible; their experience and local contacts will further help you get the most timely and adequate response.

#### **IN THE CASE OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): “A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis. Recovery, including meaningful roles in social life, school, and work, is possible, especially when you start treatment early and play a strong role in your own recovery process. A mental health condition isn't the result of one event. Research suggests multiple, linking causes. Genetics, environment, and lifestyle influence whether someone develops a mental health condition. A stressful job or home life makes some people more susceptible, as do traumatic life events like being the victim of a crime. Biochemical processes and circuits and basic brain structure may play a role, too.”

For some grantees, the Fulbright experience can fall at a time during which other factors contribute to the onset or discovery of a mental illness. Mental illness can be difficult to identify and diagnose, and there is no easy test that can let someone know if there is mental

illness or if actions and thoughts might be typical behaviors of a person or the result of a physical illness. Moreover, the normal personality and behavior changes associated with the cultural adjustment of a major move abroad may mimic or mask symptoms of a serious mental health condition, and it can be hard for friends and family members back home to distinguish between “expat blues” and a mental health crisis. Fulbright Program Officers make an effort to check in on grantees throughout the grant period in a preventative effort to identify changes or red flags that might be a cause for concern. Grantees who have concerns about serious changes in the behavior of fellow Fulbrighters should contact Fulbright Greece.

For other grantees, aspects of the Fulbright experience – such as leaving an existing support network or dealing with culture shock on a daily basis – can exacerbate symptoms of previously diagnosed conditions. It is important that grantees prepare for their transition to a new country by identifying resources and support networks (e.g., a mental health center at the host university, an English-speaking therapist in the host city), that they continue to seek appropriate treatment (e.g., medication, counseling), and that they communicate with Fulbright Greece as necessary.

### **Social Media and Online Safety**

With the growth of blogging and social networking sites in recent years, Fulbrighters have many opportunities to share their experiences. However, Fulbrighters should take adequate precautions when using social media tools to share personal information. The U.S. Department of State provides the following guidance regarding online safety and security.

- Do not broadcast your movements. Be aware of applications and programs that track and/or publish your current location without your consent or knowledge. Consider waiting to share photos and stories until after you have left a location (and note that in some cases, such as visits to the U.S. Embassy, this may be required).
- Do not post everything. Private information, such as your email address, residence address, or phone number, may not need to be shared with anyone, much less everyone.
- Use and check security settings. Use strong passwords to help prevent people from hacking your accounts and change your passwords regularly. Don’t forget to check your security settings: they are helpful, but not fail-proof. Although social media tools such as Facebook and Google+ have security settings to limit who is able to see certain information, these tools can still be hacked and misused, and certain information can still be seen by people outside of approved circles or lists.
- Respect the privacy of others. Ask other people for permission before using their names or publishing their photos, as they may have their own reasons for not wanting a public profile.

While you are encouraged to take precautions, sharing your Fulbright stories can bring positive attention to the Fulbright Program’s impact and to your host community. Your family and friends, as well as the public at home and abroad, will enjoy hearing about your Fulbright adventure on Facebook and other social media platforms. In addition to Fulbright Greece’s website and social media platforms, which share grantee news and posts written by grantees, the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau and the Institute of International Education have a variety of websites that regularly feature stories from Fulbrighters in the field.