

For Immediate Release

April 24, 2020

## **TSTOA Covid-19 Information Update #2**

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(Texas) The Texas Student Tour Operator's Association (TSTOA) is once again reaching out on behalf of our member companies to share some insight into what has been going on in the student travel industry. In this challenging time, we are all dealing with the dramatic effects of the Covid-19 situation. Hopefully these emails are helpful to you as a group leader as you field questions from your parents and administrators.

One very hot topic for group leaders right now is how refunds are being processed by tour operators for trips which have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As seasoned professionals in the youth travel industry, we recognize every conversation around this concern is exhausting and probably does not have the results any of us desire. Today's email is intended to shed some light on what is happening and provide 'talking points' for conversations you might have with affected parents and administrators.

Many music educators already have experience with independent contractors. An applicable analogy is the use of an accompanist for a solo and ensemble competition. The accompanist is selected and payment is based on skills, preparation before meeting the student, rehearsals with the student, and the actual performance of the music. If on the day preceding the actual performance, the student musician becomes ill and is unable to perform - the accompanist has still provided almost everything requested with the exception of the performance. With the Covid-19 issue, your tour operator finds themselves in the same position as the accompanist in this example.

Another topic you might share is how tour operators across the country are struggling with the request for a full refund. This is due to the operating expenses already paid by both vendors and tour operators to remain open. Most businesses have operating expenses including utilities, rent, equipment, payroll and more to offer a product or service. This money has been spent long before the actual event takes place and these operating expenses are not a profit for any business. Many parents and administrators may not be aware of this distinction for both tour operators and vendors.

Our members remain tireless advocates on behalf of teachers, parents, schools and the students who travel. On behalf of the Texas Student Tour Operator's Association, we

hope this has been helpful to you as you face such a burdensome issue. This is a difficult situation for everybody and we hope all parties can continue being patient during this demanding time.

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The Texas Student Tour Operator's Association (TSTOA) promotes travel experiences for Texas students and youth to enhance their social, cultural, and educational growth. TSTOA offers educational resources to empower group travel leaders, educators, school administrators, and district business officers to properly evaluate travel vendors.