

# CAMPUS AND NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY FAQ

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (DPS)

### 1. How do I assess the safety of a neighborhood in D.C., Virginia, and Maryland?

- ✓ Call the local city or county police and ask them.
- ✓ Crimereports.com – see if your area is featured. This link provides useful crime data.
- ✓ Visit the neighborhood and talk to the residents. You can tell a lot about a neighborhood simply by observing the conditions and how people behave.
- ✓ Ask fellow students for recommendations.
- ✓ Check neighborhood associations and listserves online: <http://www.h-net.org/~dclist/neighborhoods.html>
- ✓ Read the local newspapers. Many have a crime beat section that summarizes criminal incidents by community.

### 2. When is it appropriate for me to walk alone versus in groups?

There is nothing inherently wrong in walking alone. It is simply safer to travel with others. It is safest to walk around during daylight hours in well-lit, populated areas. Avoid back alleys and dark sides of the street.

### 3. What am I permitted to buy and carry with me in order to protect myself on and off campus?

This depends on your local jurisdiction and your international immigration status. Even though your local jurisdiction may allow residents to carry certain defensive tools such as pepper spray, you should check with your respective embassy and the U.S. Department of State as there may be restrictions prohibiting you from doing so. To carry pepper spray in the District of Columbia, residents fill out a registration form with the vendor, who forwards it to the Metropolitan Police Department. Residents of Maryland and Virginia are allowed to carry pepper spray without any registration.

### 4. In what situations should I call the DPS (202-687-4343) versus the Metropolitan Police (911)?

**On campus:** If you have an immediate, life-threatening emergency, dial 911, and then, if you can do so safely, call DPS. For non-emergencies, call DPS.

**Off campus:** Call 911 in an emergency. If it is a non-emergency, but you still need police services, look up your local police department on the web. They usually post their non-emergency numbers.

### 5. What are the laws regarding alcohol in public on and off-campus?

**The legal age for consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.** Drinking in public or carrying an open container of alcohol in public is considered a criminal offense in most states and districts, and is normally met with a criminal citation. One may incur a fine, be arrested, or both. On campus it is considered a Category “A” student conduct offense, which may lead to sanctions from the University.

### 6. What resources are available to me if I am assaulted?

- ✓ If you have been assaulted on campus, report the assault to DPS; if appropriate, DPS may call Metropolitan Police for support. You may be treated for injuries by GERMS (Georgetown Emergency Response Medical Service), and speak with someone in the campus counseling services.
- ✓ In off-campus situations, report the assault to your local police by dialing 911.
- ✓ Most jurisdictions can provide a referral to counseling services and can arrange for you to receive emergency medical treatment, if warranted. Washington, D.C. has a victim compensation law, in which you may be rendered financial support from the government.

### 7. How do I protect my bike on and off-campus?

- ✓ Bicycle registration. Georgetown University offers bicycle registration for a nominal fee. You must apply in-person. Visit the DPS website for more information: <http://publicsafety.georgetown.edu/programsandservices/12867.html>
- ✓ A quality lock. While no locks are perfect, we have found that higher quality U-bolt locks are more theft-resistant than lock chains or cables. Make sure to lock the bike through the wheel AND the frame.

### 8. How do I protect my computer on and off-campus?

- ✓ Laptop registration. Register your computer with DPS. We will place a tamper-resistant identifier on it and register your laptop with our database. You must apply in-person. Visit the DPS website for more information: <http://publicsafety.georgetown.edu/programsandservices/>

### 9. What are my rights as a taxi customer?

- ✓ Always record the Operator’s name, ID number and vehicle tag number if you are unsatisfied and/or lose property.
- ✓ Always take your receipt when you exit the taxi so that you can identify the specific taxi you were in.
- ✓ The number of passengers allowed in a taxicab is limited to seats available.

**Can a passenger sit in the front seat if no room exists in the back seat?** Yes, there is no limit on stops allowed. Keep in mind, the taximeter will run as one continuous trip; it is not turned off and then started again with every stop. You pay the entire fare at the end of your trip. Passengers are required to use seat belts.

**Can you pre-arrange a trip in a taxicab?** Yes, a client may request to be picked up and dropped off at a specific location and to know the fare ahead of time.

**Are drivers allowed to ask for fares in advance of my reaching my destination?** No.

**Is there a circumstance when a driver can refuse to take on a passenger?** No.

**Can a driver refuse to take a passenger who wants to travel between states?** Yes. A Virginia or Maryland cab will only take passengers from DC to VA or DC to MD respectively and cannot take them to destinations within DC.

**Can a driver refuse me service because I use a collapsible wheelchair or have a service animal?** No. Drivers are required to fold up wheelchairs and place them in the trunk. There is no additional charge for the service animal or for the wheelchair.

**How do I file a complaint against or commend a driver?** The DC Taxicab Commission accepts only written complaints. Your complaint must be filed within thirty (30) calendar days after the event and must be in writing, signed by you, and contain your address and telephone number (See Rule 701.3). You may submit your complaint in person, by mail, by fax, or by email. Please see their website for more information: <http://www.dctaxi.dc.gov/dctaxi/cwp/view.a.3.q.615373.asp>.

#### 10. What are my rights if I am stopped by a police officer in D.C., Virginia, and Maryland?

There are constitutionally prescribed rights which police must respect, and there are also some responsibilities you have as well:

1. You have the right to remain silent;
2. You have the right to an attorney, and if you cannot afford one then one may be appointed to you;
3. You have the right against unreasonable searches and seizures, meaning that police cannot search your person, vehicle or home without probable cause. In most cases, this must be backed up by a search warrant signed by a judge;
4. If you give up the right to remain silent or to have an attorney present, you may regain your rights for both;
5. You may consent to a search, but you may also revoke that consent at any time without penalty;
6. A police officer may detain you out of reasonable suspicion, such as when you resemble the description of a wanted person; the officer may detain you while he is verifying your information and comparing that to the suspect lookout;
7. An officer may pat you down if he suspects that you have a weapon;
8. Motor vehicle law mandates that you produce a valid license, insurance and vehicle registration upon request by a police officer;
9. Police cannot arrest you without probable cause, and, if arrested, you have the right to appear before a magistrate without unreasonable delay;
10. Right to request an interpreter: If you feel that you do not know English well enough to understand the police officer, you may request an interpreter;
11. Right to ask what you have done wrong;
12. Right to ask an officer to display his badge and provide his full name and ID number as well.

#### 11. What are the laws regarding jaywalking in D.C., Virginia, and Maryland?

**Jaywalking** is a slang term referring to the illegal pedestrian crossing of a roadway. In each of the states/districts it is illegal to cross the street other than at a crosswalk or at an intersection if a crosswalk doesn't exist at that location. Also, if there is a pedestrian crossing control light, you must obey these or face a charge of jaywalking also.

#### 12. What is the legal age for purchasing cigarettes in the United States?

The legal age for purchasing cigarettes is 18.

#### 13. What forms of identification should students carry with them on and off campus?

- ✓ On campus or locally, you should carry photocopies of your passport with your visa, I-94 card, and I-20 or DS-2019 Form.
- ✓ When traveling outside the DC metro area, you should carry all the originals. Many establishments do not accept photocopies if you wish to purchase alcohol.