Airbnb Type Accommodations

International Travel Health & Safety (ITHS) at DU strongly advises against the use of Airbnb, Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO), couchsurfing.com, or any similar commercial or social applications to find and book lodging for DU-related travel and stresses individuals should only do so with the highest caution for their safety and security. Further, DU employees should not book an Airbnb on behalf of another traveler because one cannot accept the risk on another traveler's behalf, and any individual traveler who chooses to use such services, does so at their own risk.

Although rare, there have been incidents of violent crime associated with their use, and verifying adequate safety (i.e., locks on doors, smoke detectors, an inability of others to enter the premise) is complicated at best. The fact that you may be in an unfamiliar city and culture can put you at greater risk.

When searching for temporary lodging options:

- Remember that lodging arrangements identified through the above-described services may not be licensed and may not comply with city code, safety, or other requirements. If you are unable to verify, through trusted local contacts or personally, that security (i.e., locks on all doors that can only be controlled by the occupant-bedrooms, entrance, windows, etc.), fire (i.e., smoke alarms, multiple points of egress, extinguishers, etc.), health (i.e., clean surfaces, no black mold, CO_2 detectors, etc.) and other such protective measures are in place, you should not book the accommodation.

If this type of accommodation is the only viable and responsible option for you (i.e., there are no traditional hotels that must comply with a responsible health and safety code) AND you have done the due diligence listed above:

- Before you meet a host identified through Airbnb or another application, look carefully at their posted reviews and references. We recommend that you do NOT stay at a place that has fewer than about ten recent positive reviews.
- Once you are given an address, take a close look at the neighborhood and surrounding community on the internet. Ask others in the community about the area; call a tourist bureau or similar agency; and seek any further resources for the same information. If you have doubts about the location or concerns about the host's reliability, trust your instincts and look for another alternative.
- Let others know exactly where you'll be staying—including the address and the host's name and contact information. Tell someone that you'll check in with them about an hour after the scheduled meeting time to report that you're safe and satisfied with circumstances.
- Make sure if you agree to meet the host or whenever you go to the apartment or lodging, that you have a charged cell phone and know or have programmed in your phone the emergency telephone number for local law enforcement response.
- If you schedule a meeting with the host, agree only to do so in a public place during daylight and if possible, take a friend with you to the initial meeting. Be cautious.
- Never arrive at the lodging initially late at night.

- Once you have arrived at the apartment or lodging, look around with safety and security in mind. Look in the closets and adjoining rooms. Make a quick mental note of how you might exit if there is a need. Be sure there is an internal lock on your bedroom door that cannot be opened with a key from the outside (ideally, it has a chain or bolt lock – better rental apartments or homes are modified with bedroom locks to provide exactly this sort of peace of mind).
- If you are not satisfied with the circumstances you find, or something just doesn't feel right—leave right away and find other lodging. Any extra money spent is worth the investment in your safety!
- If you have a poor experience, post a review to help others.
- Monitor your credit card bill for any unexpected/unapproved charges. Make sure to get a receipt for any services--especially if paying in cash.