



www.AmericanImmigrationCouncil.org

EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

Exchange Visitor Handbook

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YOUR J-1 VISA

As a participant in an American Immigration Council sponsored training or internship program, you'll enter the United States in J-1 visa status. The J-1 visa gives you certain privileges and responsibilities during your stay in the United States. Please be familiar with the following points concerning your J-1 visa:

- You have a trainee or intern J-1 visa.
- Your J-1 visa is valid only when accompanied by the DS-2019 form sent to you by the American Immigration Council.
- You may receive training as described in the American Immigration Council-approved Trainee/Intern Placement Plan that accompanied your DS-2019 form.
- You may receive compensation for on-the-job training described in your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan.
- You may only work in on-the-job training that is described in the Trainee/Intern Placement Plan.
- Your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan is site specific; changes can only be made with written approval from the American Immigration Council.
- You may not work at any site outside of the site described for on-the-job training in your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan.
- Treaties between your government and that of the United States may require you to return to your home country for a period of two years at the conclusion of your J-1 exchange visitor program. You should investigate if this applies to your participation before applying for the J-1 visa.
- You have the responsibility to keep the American Immigration Council informed of your progress with the Training/Internship Placement Plan and your location while in the United States.
- You are responsible for contacting the American Immigration Council should any problems arise during your stay.

OUR ON-LINE SYSTEM

You and your supervisor will both use our on-line system throughout your J-1 program to transmit vital information to the American Immigration Council. The system is accessed through your e-mail and password via a link from our webpage: www.internationalexchange.org. You should expect to enter information at a minimum as follows:

- To enter Arrival & Program Dates once your J-1 visa has been issued
- To enter Post-arrival Follow-Up Information once you arrive in the United States
- To complete to 30-Day Survey, 30 days after you begin your J-1 program
- To complete your Mid-Stay Evaluation
- To complete your End-of-Stay Evaluation
- To complete your Alumni Survey

In addition, you will also enter the following as necessary;

- Up-dates to U.S. residential addresses
- Up-dates to I-94 arrival records
- Adding J-2 dependents who travel after the J-1 visa was issued
- Up-dates to host organization contact information

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

As a J-1 exchange visitor sponsored by the American Immigration Council your first responsibility is to obtain J-1 visa from the American Embassy or Consulate in your home country .¹

Specific instructions about applying for a J-1 visa in your home country are found on the U.S. Embassy website. You must present the original DS-2019 form (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status) that the

American Immigration Council has sent to you when applying for your visa as well as to the immigration inspector at your port of entry. Do not confirm travel arrangements until you have the visa in your passport. Both the DS-2019 form and visa² are required to enter the United States.

When you go to the Embassy or Consulate in your home country, please make sure to bring the following documents so as to ensure quick processing of your application:

- DS-2019 form issued to you by the American Immigration Council
- Your Passport
- Bar code page from completed non-immigrant visa application form DS-160
- A copy of your fully signed Trainee/Intern Placement Plan
- Passport picture
- Required fees
- SEVIS I-901 Form

Be sure to review your Training/Internship Placement Plan before your visa interview. You may be asked questions about it. Also, be sure you have reviewed the Exchange Visitor, Host Company, and American Immigration Council Declarations that were signed during the program application process so that you are able to answer any questions about the role of each in your exchange visitor program. If you do not have copies, the text can be found in the application system which you can access through the link at www.internationalexchangecenter.org.

In addition, you may be required to show that you have sufficient ties to your home country to compel you to return after the completion of your J-1 exchange visitor program. The following documents will help demonstrate your home ties:

- Evidence that you own a house or apartment.
- Evidence that you are not giving up the lease on a house or apartment.
- Evidence that you have a job or school waiting on your return.
- Evidence of dependents who will not be leaving the home country.
- Evidence of a spouse who will not be leaving the home country.
- Evidence of financial ties: bonds, bank accounts, property ownership, business investment.
- Evidence of leadership in community organizations.
- Evidence of other commitments that would compel you to return to your home country.

This is only a short list of what is required; please check the website of the specific Embassy or Consulate you will be visiting for up-to-date information.

Please note that all J-1 visa applicants are required to appear in person at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a brief interview. You will be asked for the reason why you are planning to travel to the U.S. (receive training), and you will be required to provide a biometric identifier, currently an inkless fingerprint. The applicant's field of study, prior travel to certain countries, and other factors may trigger "administrative processing" procedures. The additional procedures mean the visa application, in some instances, takes longer to process. Individuals should apply for visas well in advance of their proposed date of travel. Do not make final travel plans until the visa has been issued and you are in receipt of your passport and J-1 visa. Please contact the American Immigration Council at JIProgram@ImmCouncil.org if you have any problems applying for your visa.

¹ Unless you are from Canada

² Most Canadians will enter with the DS-2019 and I-94 status marked J-1 D/S

It is a good idea to make copies of all important documents pertaining to your training or internship before you leave for the U.S. Keep one photocopy of your DS-2019 form and J-1 visa stamp separate from your passport. You may need these copies if you lose your DS-2019 form or passport during your exchange program. Should you lose any of these documents during your stay contact the American Immigration Council immediately.

Also, please complete the Arrival and Program Dates form in our application system as soon as you have your visa and know your travel itinerary. As long as you have sickness & accident insurance and the J-1 visa, you will be able to enter the United States up to 30 days before the start date on the DS-2019 form. The information you enter in the Arrival and Program Dates form will be used to activate IMG group insurance if you have elected to be enrolled and to amend your program dates in SEVIS.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Upon entering the U.S. you will need to present the following documents and information to immigration officials at your point of entry:

- Your DS-2019 form
- Your Passport (with J-1 visa stamp inside)
- U.S. Customs document
- SEVIS I-901

Upon arrival in the United States your hand will be scanned to confirm that you are the same person who was issued the J-1 visa. Your visa will also be scanned and your non-immigrant status will be entered into the I-94 Entry Control system. This system notes your J-1 status, the number of entries into the United States you are allowed while in J status, and the date until which you may be in the United States. In most cases, the date will be entered as “D/S” which stands for “duration of status.”

The Immigration Officer will also inspect your DS-2019 form. Make sure you present the original copy of this document, and remember to take it with you when you leave the Immigration checkpoint. You cannot begin your exchange program without the stamped, original copy of your DS-2019 and your I-94 status. Be sure to secure all documents with your passport before you leave the Immigration checkpoint.

After you go through Immigration you will pass through Customs. Please make sure all prescription drugs are clearly marked and remember that you cannot bring perishable food and articles made from protected species. If you are carrying more than \$10,000 you must report this to Custom Officials.

BEGINNING YOUR J-1 EXCHANGE PROGRAM

Upon entering the U.S., and within seven (7) days of beginning your j-1 exchange program, a copy of the following items needs to be submitted to the American Immigration Council:

- J-1 visa stamp in your passport
- I-94 admission record
- proof of health insurance if not enrolled in the IMG group policy
- your residential address in the U.S.

You will submit these items through the application system by completing the Post-arrival Follow-Up Information form. Government rules pertaining to the Exchange Visitor Program make it necessary for the American Immigration Council to have your home address in the U.S. as soon as possible. This information is used to activate your SEVIS status. If you foresee a delay in getting this information to us, please contact the American Immigration Council. It is imperative that you submit these items to the American Immigration

Council before applying for your Social Security number. Failing to submit these items to the American Immigration Council may cause unnecessary delays with Social Security and may require the American Immigration Council to notify the Department of Homeland Security of your non-compliance and terminate your training. As a reminder, note that in the agreement you signed in the Essay and Declaration page of your application, you agreed not to adjust or change status while in the United States and stated that you have no intention of working for the training company past the end date of your program.

When you begin your training or internship, please keep the American Immigration Council informed of your progress. If you have any questions, you should feel comfortable calling the American Immigration Council at any time. You and your supervisor must complete a mid-point evaluation during your J-1 program – you will do this by completing the evaluation questionnaires in the application system. Do notify the American Immigration Council with any questions regarding this. Also if you experience problems with the program not being conducted per your expectations, please call the American Immigration Council.

SEVIS

SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. It is the tracking system used by the Federal Government to monitor the location and visa status of individuals with F, J, and M category visas.

The American Immigration Council, as the visa sponsor, is under obligation to the U.S. government to maintain the integrity of files in SEVIS. For this reason, trainees/interns must notify the American Immigration Council of changes to their U.S. residential addresses within 7 days. Exchange visitors should also notify American Immigration Council of any travel plans and of any changes to their program dates.

SICKNESS & ACCIDENT INSURANCE

There is no government-provided health insurance in the U.S., and the U.S. State Department requires that exchange visitors (J-1s and J-2 dependents) participating in the American Immigration Council Exchange Visitor Program must have sickness/accident insurance coverage during their entire stay in the United States. Coverage must be at least \$100,000 per illness/accident, at least \$25,000 for the repatriation of remains in the case of death, and may include a deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness. Medical evacuation coverage must be at least \$50,000. It must also have an insurance claims paying ability rating of A- or better from either A. M. Best or Standard & Poors.

This insurance may be provided either through the host company or through another policy meeting the U.S. government regulations on J visa exchanges. Please notify the American Immigration Council if you are having difficulty obtaining the required insurance coverage.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

Exchange visitors must apply for a U.S. Social Security Number in person at the Social Security Office nearest to your training/internship site. This number will be used for your host site's payroll records, to open bank accounts, rent apartments, apply for a driver's license, etc.

Please wait at least 72 hours after you activate your SEVIS status by completing your Post-Arrival Follow-Up Information form in the application system. Make sure you have been in the United States for at least 10 days before you apply for your Social Security number.

To locate the Social Security Office nearest your host site, go to <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>. (If that web address is too confusing, you can link to it from www.ssa.gov)

To apply for a Social Security Number, you will need the following items:

- Original DS-2019 form
- Passport with your J-1 visa stamp and I-94 status
- I-94 Admission Record (downloaded from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>)
- Application for a Social Security Number (Form SS-5)

The Form SS-5 can be downloaded at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>

Things to remember when completing the Form SS-5:

1. Fill in your name as it is on your passport
2. Use your U.S. residential or your training/internship site address
3. You are a legal alien allowed to work
4. You will need to enter your mother's birth surname (maiden name)
5. All requests for Social Security information refer to the U.S. system, not to your home country
6. Dates are written month, day, year

Please understand that obtaining a Social Security Number can take several weeks. If you have not received the Social Security Card within one month, you should notify the American Immigration Council with the following information:

- The date you applied for the number
- The address of the Social Security Office where you applied for the number
- The name of the agent who took your application, if known
- Your U.S. mailing address and telephone number
- The Social Security application reference number, if known

If there are delays in receiving a Social Security Number, you must still begin your training or internship. The following web site explains to your host site how to put you on the payroll pending the receipt of the Social Security card: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm>.

GETTING ON THE PAYROLL

If on-the-job training is part of your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan, you will need to fill out various forms before your employer can add you to the payroll. The first is required of all employees, both U.S. citizens and aliens, to document the legal ability to work. An I-9 form should be completed within three days of starting the on-the-job component of your training or internship.

To complete the I-9 form you will need the following:

For column A:

Passport - Confirms Identity

I-94 admission record - Confirms legal entry, length of stay, and J-1 status

The American Immigration Council suggests you may wish to include the DS-2019, which notes your host company as the approved employment site, in column A as well. With the completed I-9 form, the employer may wish to retain photocopies of the passport identity page, the J-1 visa, the I-94 admission record, and the DS-2019 form.

You will also need to fill out a W-4 form. This form tells your employer what Federal taxes should be withheld from your pay. As a J-1 trainee/intern you are subject to U.S. Federal taxes, except in the extremely rare event of a tax treaty between your government and that of the U.S. Unless you have previously been in the United States within the last six years on a J-1 visa, you will be classified as a non-resident taxpayer for Federal taxes. This means you are not subject to Social Security or Medicare withholding during the first two calendar years,

or parts thereof, that you are in the U.S. on a J-1 visa. You will need to provide your employer with two documents:

1. A memo stating that you are a non-resident taxpayer due to your J-1 visa status, therefore not subject to Social Security or Medicare withholding.
2. A completed W-4 form.

As a non-resident taxpayer, you are considered to be single (even if you are married) and you are allowed one exemption (even if you have children). Following the guidelines of IRS Publication 515, non-resident alien taxpayers are suggested to fill out the W-4 form as follows:

- Check off "single" in box 3, regardless of actual marital status.
- Claim only one exemption on line 5 (unless a tax treaty applies).
- Write "Nonresident Alien" or "NRA" above the dotted line on line 6.

For a more detailed explanation than this, you should download Internal Revenue Service (IRS) publication 519, the U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens and IRS Publication 515, the Withholding of Tax on Nonresident Aliens and Foreign Entities at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p515.pdf>.

Exchange visitors from Canada, Mexico, American Samoa, Japan, Korea, or India may want to check with a tax specialist to determine if a tax treaty will affect their withholding information.

Exchange visitors who have been in the United States previously on J-1 visas, and who meet the substantial presence test as described in IRS Publication 519, will be classified as a resident taxpayer, and subject to the same taxes as American citizens, including Social Security and Medicare.

Many States and local communities also tax income. You may wish to visit the website for the State where your training/internship site is located, or speak to a tax agent at the State Department of Taxation. Websites can be located through the following link: <http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/default.php?lnk=10>

With tax law changing from State to State, Community to Community, and year to year, the American Immigration Council cannot give definitive tax information. If you need help, call, and we will direct you to the IRS or State office that can help you.

EVALUATIONS

U.S. government regulations under which you have been issued the J-1 visa require that you and your direct supervisor complete a Mid-Stay and an End-of-Stay evaluation. The American Immigration Council may require additional evaluations during your stay. The timely submission of the evaluations to the American Immigration Council helps to insure that you stay in good standing with your J-1 visa. All evaluation questions are completed in our application system. You and your supervisor will access the forms at the proper times using your e-mail addresses and passwords to enter the system.

Current evaluations/surveys include:

30-day post arrival survey – completed by the trainee/intern

Mid-stay evaluation – completed by the trainee/intern and supervisor for programs of six months or longer

End-of-stay evaluation – completed by the trainee/intern and supervisor

Alumni survey – completed by the trainee/intern

TRAVELING OUTSIDE THE U.S.

If you are planning to travel outside the U.S. for vacation or holiday during your training/internship you must have your DS-2019 form endorsed by the American Immigration Council before you plan to travel. Please send

the original copy of your DS-2019 form to the American Immigration Council at least 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date of departure by courier (FedEx, UPS, Express Mail, etc.) with a Travel validation Request form completed by your direct supervisor stating the approved dates of your travel and confirming the mailing address of your host site. The American Immigration Council will then sign the front of the form, indicating you are in good standing in our program, and return it to you at your host site address. If you are sending the DS-2019 with less than two weeks to process the request, you should include a pre-paid, pre-addressed envelope in which for us to return your form to you.

Before you leave the U.S., check the expiration date of the J-1 visa in your passport and the end of training/internship date on your DS-2019 form. If your J-1 visa expires while you are in the U.S. and your DS-2019 is still valid, you may legally continue your training/internship. However, if you leave the country you will need to apply for another J-1 visa before you can re-enter and continue your training/internship. Please contact the American Immigration Council if this is the case and we will help you get your documentation in order so you can apply for another J-1 visa while you are abroad.

EXTENSIONS

The maximum length of training under the American Immigration Council program is 18 months for trainees and 12 months for interns. If your host company originally requested a training period shorter than 18 months (for trainees) or 12 months (for interns), an extension may be requested. This request is initiated through our on-line system by both you and your supervisor completing the Extension Request tasks 30 days before your current program end date. The requests must detail why the extension is necessary and what new skills you will be acquiring during the extension. A new DS-7002 form will need to be developed for the period of the extension. There is also a fee for this service.

Remember, the J-1 visa in your passport shows the dates you may legally enter the U.S. These dates will not affect your extension unless you need to leave and re-enter the country. Please notify the American Immigration Council as soon as possible if you need to leave the U.S. with an expired visa.

FAMILY MEMBERS TRAVELING SEPARATELY

If your spouse or children plan to enter the U.S., they must each have their own DS-2019 forms and must apply for J-2 dependent visas before they can come to the U.S. Each must also be covered by sickness and accident insurance in compliance with the minimum standards of the J regulations. If you plan to have your family join you in the U.S., please notify the American Immigration Council.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENTS

From the day we are born, cultural norms form our understanding of what should be expected. Our cultural norms unconsciously influence what we talk about, what we eat, what we wear, what smells are considered normal, how the bathroom works, what we consider to be "fun", and what is the "correct way" to do something. Adjusting to a new environment, where everything carries new meanings and new definitions of correctness, typically produces a series of emotional highs and lows. Faced with daily questioning of why we do what we do puts our personal identity and self-esteem in crisis. This crisis produces stress.

There are five very important things you can do to reduce the stress caused by cultural change and to maintain your overall health:

- 1.) Drink plenty of water and juice
- 2.) Eat a healthy, balanced diet; be sure you are getting enough protein, vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates as you experience foods that are new to you.
- 3.) Get enough sleep. Cultural adjustment can be exhausting.
- 4.) Lower your expectations. You've spent a lifetime learning about your own culture. It will take time to

- understand a new culture and routine.
- 5.) Ask questions. Don't assume that because something looks the same as it does at home, it carries the same cultural meaning in the U.S.

EMERGENCIES

As your program sponsor, the American Immigration Council is officially responsible for you during the time reflected on your DS-2019 form. It is our duty to provide you with up-to-date information and emergency assistance, if necessary, to give you the best possible experience as an exchange visitor in the U.S. Please note the procedures for the following common emergency situations:

- Medical emergency: first call 911 for emergency assistance, and then contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible. Insurance inquiries should be directed to your medical insurance company.
- Lost or stolen passport or I-94 card: file a police report in the jurisdiction where you believe the passport was lost or stolen, and then notify your home country's Embassy or Consulate in the U.S. as soon as possible.³ Act fast, do not allow yourself to become a victim of identity thief.
- Lost DS-2019: Contact the American Immigration Council.
- Lost Social Security Card: call the Social Security Administration at toll free 1-800-772-1213.
- Tax and payroll: first speak with the payroll personnel at your host site. Contact the American Immigration Council if you are having difficulty resolving issues.
- Crime victim emergency: first call 911 for assistance, and then contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible. Note that a crime victim emergency is for an event that is in progress or has just happened. If you discover you have been a victim of a crime after the fact, call the regular number for the local police department.
- Arrest: please note that if you are arrested for a crime or misdemeanor, the American Immigration Council may not be able to help you. We would contact your consulate in the United States if you are not able to do so, and we could refer you to legal counsel. You would be responsible for any court or legal counsel costs. In any case, if you find yourself in legal trouble, contact American Immigration Council as soon as possible.

If you are unsure if the American Immigration Council can help you with a specific question, please notify us. We will be happy to help you or to direct you to the agency or department that can help.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Local Laws

Unlike most countries, laws in the United States vary from state to state and even city to city. It is important for exchange visitors to become familiar with and obey the local laws in the town or city where they are living, so as to avoid any potential legal difficulties. For example, most states require a driver to carry his or her license whenever driving. In some states, driving without a license can result in immediate incarceration, while in other states the driver may be given a citation or an opportunity to produce the license at a later time.

Local laws that govern public alcohol consumption, noise levels, and group gatherings can be strict. In order to maintain order, local police often aggressively enforce minor laws.

³ For more specific instructions on what to do if your Passport or Visa is lost or stolen, go to <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/lost-or-stolen-travel-documents.html>

Narcotics

Illegal possession of controlled substances (drugs) in the U.S. is subject to prosecution by law. The penalties for drug possession vary from state to state and region to region. Any type of illegal drug use is a serious offense in the U.S. and cause for termination from the American Immigration Council J-1 Program. People are subject to fines and possible time in jail for any drug possession or association with people who have drugs themselves. Offenders face deportation and could be prevented from returning to the U.S. at a later time.

State laws regarding the possession and use of marijuana are particularly confusing. While some states now allow for the possession and use of small amounts of marijuana, federal law still prohibits this drug nationwide. The American Immigration Council recommends that exchange visitors avoid testing the state laws as federal consequences could affect future visas to the United States.

Alcohol

People are required to be at least 21 years old to drink alcohol legally in the United States. Many exchange visitors come from countries where the legal drinking age is much younger and this can be quite a culture shock. People are asked to produce picture identification to prove that they are above the legal drinking age if they look 30 years old or younger. Drinking in public (i.e. outside a bar, restaurant, or the residence) and with an open container is prohibited in many places, especially in beach or resort towns. Exchange visitors will be subject to fines and possible jail time if they are found guilty of these infractions.

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

A national campaign to raise awareness of "drunk driving" and decrease alcohol related traffic accidents has swept the United States. Because of this, the enforcement of DWI/DUI laws has become very tough. Americans generally appoint a "designated driver" when going out with a group of friends. This person agrees to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages and serves as the driver to get the friends safely home.

Smoking

As part of an intense anti-smoking campaign in the United States, tough measures provide a smoke-free environment. There are federal, state and local laws governing smoking in public places. Smoking is banned on all domestic air flights and will eventually not be allowed in all restaurants and bars. Many communities have laws prohibiting smoking within a set distance of an entry door. Smokers should look around before lighting a cigarette and ask what the rule is before smoking. "No Smoking" signs are usually, but not always, posted in a clear, visible location. In order to purchase cigarettes, one must be at least 18 years old and must show identification to verify age. Smoking may also deliver cultural messages regarding the age, class, and gender of the smoker that can be interpreted differently in various parts of the United States.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any time an individual is uncomfortable with another's comments, discussions, or approaches that can be interpreted as carrying a sexual overtone. It is illegal in the United States and can result in employment suspension or termination. Understanding what constitutes sexual harassment in the United States may be one of the greatest cultural differences you face. An explanation of "it's different in my country" will carry little weight in the American workplace.

ENDING YOUR TRAINING/INTERNSHIP

Before you leave the U.S. you must have your supervisor complete an End-of-Stay evaluation for you. The evaluation forms are found in the on-line system. There are two sections, one for you and one for your supervisor. Your Certificate of Completion will be sent only after the End-of-Stay Evaluation is received from both of you. If you have any questions regarding, please contact the American Immigration Council.

As a J-1 exchange visitor you are allowed to be in the country as a tourist for a total of 30 days after the final date of the program on your DS-2019 form. You are not allowed to train or work at your host company during this time; however, you should use these 30 days as a way to travel and see the U.S. before you return to your home country.

During this 30 day "grace period," you can stay in the United States lawfully while you prepare for departure. You have had the wonderful opportunity to gain career enhancing skills that will be of great benefit to you and your future. You have also had the chance to be exposed to a new culture and to share with those around you the unique culture that you bring. The American Immigration Council hopes that you have great success in your future plans and that someday you can visit the U.S. again. In the meantime, we would love to hear how you have used what you learned as an American Immigration Council sponsored trainee or intern to further your career at home. Send us an e-Mail or comment on J1 Journeys!

LIFE IN THE U.S.

As an exchange visitor with the American Immigration Council Exchange Visitor Program you have been given a great opportunity not only to learn important skills to further your career in your home country, but also to learn about U.S. culture and the way of life that is unique to Americans. During your stay in the U.S. you should visit the local attractions and sites in your city. Venture outside of your immediate area and, when time is available, travel around the country, seeing the diversity that makes America great.

During your program, you are encouraged to attend social functions with your host company, as well as to visit the many parks, museums, theaters, and historical sites, and other cultural opportunities available in your area. You will find not only that there are many differences between your home country and the U.S., but there are also many similarities that will open your eyes and show not only our diversity, but also how alike we all are.

To get to know Americans, it pays to know certain mannerisms and habits many Americans share.

Getting Started

Electricity

The United States electrical system uses 110 volts, 60 hertz (cycles). It is the same system throughout the entire 50 states. If bringing appliances from home, the exchange visitor will need to purchase a transformer and plug adapter that can handle the wattage of the particular appliance.

Time Differences

The United States is divided into five time zones - Eastern, Central, Mountain, Pacific and Hawaii- Aleutian. Most, but not all, states maintain Daylight Savings Time. www.timeanddate.com/worldclock is a good web site for figuring time changes.

Most Americans view time as a commodity that can be spent or saved. Being "on time" is valued. Being late can be seen as evidence of disrespect or disinterest. If you find that you are going to be more than five minutes late for an appointment, you will be expected to call with your apology and expected time of arrival.

Temperature Measurement

In judging temperatures, there is an easy formula for roughly translating Fahrenheit to Celsius. Subtract thirty from the Fahrenheit number and divide by two to calculate the Celsius temperature. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by two and add thirty. (If you want to be more accurate, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit number, then divide by 9, next multiple by 5.)

United States Units of Measurement

The United States does not use the metric system; rather our system is broken down into inches, feet, yards, etc. Exchange visitors who want more information about the metric conversion are encouraged to check out www.infoplease.com and search for conversion factors.

Everyday Life in the U.S

Greetings and Introductions

Americans shake hands firmly with each other when first introduced, or when they meet again, but rarely when they part. When having a conversation, it is considered impolite not to introduce new comers who may join. Hugging is acceptable when greeting someone who is a close friend or family member. However, touching or handholding with someone who is not a close friend or family member can be seen as an expression of sexual attraction. In recent years, casual friends have begun to “fist bump” upon greeting. This is thought to be more hygienic than a handshake, but is considered less formal.

Distance and Eye Contact

When two Americans are standing and talking to each other they stay an arm’s length away from each other. Maintaining eye contact is a sign of interest and respect. Avoiding eye contact is understood as discomfort or an admission of shame.

Gender Roles

Discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity is not accepted in the United States. In the workplace, you can expect to see women and men sharing the same jobs and having equal responsibility.

Foreign Languages

If an exchange visitor is with a group of mainly English-speaking people and the conversation is going on in English, it is not polite to speak in the exchange visitor's own or another foreign language. Avoid swear words in any language (people are often surprised when someone else has a comprehension of the language they are speaking). Swear words are not acceptable in professional settings. They carry a much stronger offensive meaning in the United States than they might in other English speaking countries.

Formal and Informal Attire

For some people, and in some regions of the United States, "informal" means blue jeans and T-shirts. For some others, it means sports jackets and ties. Ask specific questions about the expected attire for an event. Even if informal clothing is in order, clothes should be kept clean and neat. The phrase "formal" (also referred to as "Black Tie") means tuxedos for men and evening dresses for women. Semi-formal means business suits (jacket and tie) for men and cocktail dresses for women.

Public Services

The term "public services" refers to services available to consumers offered by private stores, corporations and companies, rather than by the government or not-for-profit organizations. Products and services vary greatly in quality, accessibility, price and suitability. Visitors will have to become informed consumers to get the greatest value and working knowledge out of the American markets.

Newspapers

Newspapers are as a convenient tool to scan the local businesses, services and resources. Newspapers often have discount coupons that can be presented to merchants for savings on many products and services. Weekend editions of newspapers contain valuable information about the specific city including movies, concerts, special events and other items of interest. Increasingly, American newspapers are being published on-line. They can provide interesting insight into the community before and during your J program.

Public Libraries

Exchange visitors are encouraged to search out the local public libraries to familiarize themselves with the facilities. Most libraries have consumer information, books on getting the most value for the dollar, orientation lectures and booklets, Internet services and free consumer-oriented publications and pamphlets. The public library is simply the best source for information about practically anything. Library staff is trained on how to find the information.

Photo Developing

It has become difficult to get camera film developed in the United States. Many discount stores and drug stores will send the film away to be developed. It can take several days for the photos to be returned electronically. Electronic pictures can be printed at many discount and drug stores at reasonable prices and the pictures are returned the same day. Be sure to check the quality of the pictures before paying for them.

Drug Stores

Drug stores in America sell more than medicine, though all will have a section where prescription drugs are dispensed. Drug stores can be as big as supermarkets, with aisles selling stationery supplies, light bulbs, food and greeting cards. Drug stores are also called "pharmacies."

The pharmacist may be an excellent resource for recommending over the counter remedies to minor ailments such as poison ivy rashes, pollen allergies, and the common cold. Many drug stores now have on-site health clinics for dispensing flu shots and treating minor ailments.

Public Restrooms (toilets)

Public restrooms in the United States vary widely in availability and cleanliness. Most can be used without paying a fee. In the middle of large cities, hotels are the easiest places to find a clean public restroom facility. On the road, service (gasoline) stations and fast food restaurants have free restroom facilities.

American Money

The basic unit of American currency is the dollar (\$1). Coins are in the value of 1 cent (a penny), 5 cents (a nickel), 10 cents (a dime), 25 cents (a quarter), 50 cents (a half dollar), and one dollar. Fifty-cent coins are rarely seen.

American paper money is the same color and the same size in all denominations. \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 dollar bills are most commonly used. Each bill will have a picture of a famous American on the front, and the bill's numerical denomination on each of the four front corners. Exchange visitors will have to be careful at first not to confuse the denominations.

American coins are even more confusing than currency notes. American coins do not have a number value on them but instead the amounts are spelled out. The coins are not minted in size order. The dime is smaller than the penny.

Tipping

It is important to realize that for many professions, particularly waiters and waitresses, taxi drivers, hair dressers, porters and bellhops, tip income is at least half of the worker's total income. If in doubt, tip a little more than usual, especially if service was good or the person was friendly.

Restaurant Tipping

In America, when served by a waiter or waitress at a "sit-down" restaurant, people are expected to leave a tip or gratuity of 15 to 20 percent of the bill. Service is almost never included in the price of the meal. In some restaurants, a service charge will be added to the bill, which means the group does not have to leave a tip, but this practice is rare. If consumers receive poor or rude service, this is expressed with a smaller tip. If the restaurant check is divided with several other people, the diners would then take the sales tax and tip into consideration when figuring out how much each person owes.

Delivery people

When people order take-out food or groceries, there should be tip of 5 to 10 per cent of the total bill.

Taxi drivers

Taxi drivers are usually tipped 10 -15% of the *total* bill.

Porters, skycaps and bellhops

The general etiquette is to give porters at least \$1 for each bag.

Hairdressers and barbers

Hairdressers are generally tipped at least 15%.

Coat check

When someone checks his or her coat, it is appropriate to tip \$1 if there is no charge for the service.

Hotel services

The maids (housekeepers) are generally tipped 2 or 3 dollars a day or more, depending on how messy you are. Room service waiters are tipped at 15% of the food bill. If the hotel concierge goes out of his or her way to help someone, a tip from \$10 - \$20 is expected.

Valet parking

Valet parking attendants expect a \$1-2 tip for their services.

Banking Services

Exchange visitors may want to open a checking account at a local bank as soon as they can upon arrival. Services and fees vary from bank to bank and area to area. Checking accounts may have fees per month and per check. It is advised to check with several different banks to find the one that best suits your individual needs. Also ask what documents the bank will need to see in order to open an account.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Most bank accounts provide bank cards that can be used at 24 hour automated teller machines (ATMs). At least two banking networks, the Cirrus network and the Plus network, offer services at machines in many locations across the United States. When staying in major cities, a bank card may prove as useful as traveler's checks or credit cards. Exchange visitors will want to check with their local financial institution before leaving home to verify if they are able to use their bank card at these machines.

Banks may charge a fee of between \$1- 2 or more per withdrawal for using an ATM machine belonging to another bank. Some banks do have a service charge for using their own personal ATM.

Getting Money in a Hurry

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's Checks are a convenient and safe way to finance travel expenses. They are refundable if lost or stolen, and can be purchased at any bank. Making a separate list of check numbers and buying small denominations are pro-active measures when using Traveler's Checks. Some establishments do not accept Traveler's Checks, and exchange visitors will need to ask before shopping. Where an establishment specifies, "no checks accepted," this usually refers to personal checks from the bank account, not Traveler's Checks.

Western Union

This service makes it possible to transfer money from the exchange visitor's home country or state to anywhere in the United States within 15 minutes on any day of the week. There is a handling charge, which will vary according to the amount of money sent. The exchange visitor can call 1-800-325-6000 to learn more about Western Union services.

Telegraphic Transfer

This allows the exchange visitor to transfer money from a bank in their home country to a bank in the United States. This can often take a week or longer. The charge varies from bank to bank; both the receiving and sending banks may charge the exchange visitor. Not all banks offer this service - Ask in advance.

Bankers Drafts

These can be bought from the exchange visitor's home bank and then mailed through the Post Office's Express Service. This usually takes between three and seven days. Exchange visitors sometimes have difficulty cashing them at banks where they do not have an account. Exchange visitors will want to designate an emergency contact in their home country or state in case this service is used.

Credit Cards

Most Americans have credit cards. They are a convenient and safe way to make large purchases, or to get cash advances from banks. Be careful about overspending with "plastic money"- all debts have to be paid eventually. A credit card is also handy if you plan to stay in a hotel or rent a car while in the country. A credit card can also be useful with unexpected emergencies that may arise.

Please note: It will be very difficult for exchange visitors to be approved for a credit card in the United States because they will have no previous American credit history. If the exchange visitor has a credit card issued from home, it is recommended to bring it with them. However, check the currency conversion policy before using a credit card issued outside the United States for purchases here.

Sales Tax

Sales tax is added when consumers pay for any retail items. Sales tax varies from state to state and from region to region. For example, the sales tax is 2.9% in Colorado and 7.5% in California.

Sales taxes exist in most, but not all, states. Merchants are responsible for collecting sales tax on purchases and then giving it to the state. Not all products are taxed. Often food and clothing are exempt, depending upon the state. Many services, hotel rooms, gasoline and other items may have additional use taxes.

United States Holidays

Like in any country, holidays are a time to reflect and celebrate. All holidays are observed by the United States population, but this does not mean that exchange visitors are guaranteed holidays off. Each employer sets its own policy with regard to holidays. While it is common for employers to observe 6 holidays each year, (New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas), the Federal Government also officially observes Martin Luther King Day, President's Day and Veteran's Day. Private employers often close on fewer holidays.

New Year's Day: January 1

Official holiday. New Year's Eve, December 31, is often more celebrated than is New Year's Day.

Martin Luther King Day: third Monday of January

Official holiday. Martin Luther King Day commemorates the birth (January 15) of the Civil Rights Leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated in 1968. Dr. King led the non-violent movement protest of the era's discriminatory laws regarding voting and access to jobs.

Groundhog Day: February 2

The groundhog or woodchuck is a burrowing marmot that hibernates during the winter months. Traditionally, if the groundhog comes out of its hole, sees its shadow and runs back into the hole out of fright, spring will take a full six weeks to come. If the groundhog doesn't see its shadow, spring will come early, in about six weeks.

Presidents Day: third Monday in February

Official holiday. Originally scheduled to fall between George Washington's birthday (the first President of the United States) and Abraham Lincoln's birthday (the President during the American Civil War), the holiday now commemorates all U.S. Presidents.

Valentine's Day: February 14

Lovers exchange their vows of love. Elaborate greeting cards and gifts are exchanged. This is the traditional day for proposing marriage. Don't do it! You have to go home at the end of your J program.

Saint Patrick's Day: March 17

St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland; Irish immigrants brought this holiday to America. People celebrate this holiday by wearing something green. If you are going to drink something green, find a designated driver.

April Fool's Day: April 1

This day is marked by the custom of playing practical jokes on friends and colleagues. However, practical jokes may not be appropriate in a professional or work environment.

Easter: A Sunday in March or April

A religious holiday for Christians who believe that on this day Christ rose from the dead. Many folk traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs and the Easter Bunny giving gift baskets to children.

Passover

Passover is an eight day Jewish holiday celebrating the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt over 3000 years ago. Passover is celebrated with a special ritual dinner called a "Seder."

Mother's Day: Second Sunday in May

On this day Americans honor their mothers by sending flowers, buying small gifts and taking their mothers out to eat so that they don't have to cook or do work around the house.

Father's Day: Third Sunday in June

Fathers are honored on this day. Children of all ages give their Dads cards and gifts.

Memorial Day: Last Monday in May

Official holiday. Memorial Day is the day on which Americans commemorate those who have died in military service for their country. The day is marked with patriotic parades and speeches. American flags are placed on veterans grave sites. This day is considered the beginning of the summer season.

Independence Day: July 4

Official holiday. Independence Day commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, parades, political speeches and community get-togethers that culminate in fireworks displays.

Labor Day: First Monday in September

Official holiday. This holiday was established in recognition of the labor movement's contribution to the productivity of the country. This day is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outdoor events.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Late September/Early October

Rosh Hashanah, commemorating the creation of the world, is the first of the Ten Days of Penitence, which ends with Yom Kippur, the most solemn of Jewish holidays. For Rosh Hashanah, families gather for a feast in which an apple is dipped in honey to express hope for a sweet year ahead. Yom Kippur is a day of judgment; on the eve of Yom Kippur, Jews ask forgiveness from those they may have wronged.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. Lasting for the entire month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals and visit with friends and family. It is a time of worship and contemplation and a time to strengthen family and community ties.

Columbus Day: Second Monday in October

Official holiday. Columbus Day celebrates the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus on October 12, 1492. Be sure to check out our J1 Journeys post on this holiday.

Halloween: October 31

It is celebrated mostly as a children's holiday. Traditions include carving out pumpkins with funny faces as well as dressing up in costumes and going around the neighborhood to receive treats. When people come to the door, children say, "trick or treat," meaning, "if the person doesn't give me a treat, I will trick the person." In recent years, trick or treating is often being replaced by costume parties.

Election Day: the first Tuesday after the First Monday in November

This is Voting Day for all national and most state and local elections. However, many local communities schedule their local elections at varying times throughout the year.

Veterans Day: November 11

Official holiday. Veterans Day honors veterans of America's military. It is celebrated by parades and speeches.

Thanksgiving Day: Fourth Thursday in November

Official holiday. The most widely celebrated holiday in the United States, Thanksgiving is associated with early settlers to Massachusetts, the Pilgrims, who in 1621 gave God their thanks for having survived their first year in America (with the help of the local indigenous tribe). It was declared an official holiday by Abraham Lincoln in 1860 as a day for Americans to reflect and give thanks.

Hanukkah: Eight days, usually in December

This Jewish holiday is known as the Festival of Lights. The tradition can be traced back almost 2,400 years. Hanukkah celebrates a miracle in Jewish history. When the time came to light the Eternal Light of the Temple, the Jews could find only one sanctified jar of oil. It was only enough to last one evening. The lamp was lit with this small jar of oil and, miraculously, stayed lit for eight days, until more oil suitable for the temple was made. Today, Hanukkah is marked with parties, games, gifts for children and the lighting of the nine candles of the menorah.

Christmas: December 25

Official holiday. Traditionally commemorates the birth of Christ. Although its origins are religious in nature, it is a holiday widely celebrated, often as an occasion for families to gather and exchange gifts. Families decorate a Christmas tree, join in the festivities of the Christmas season and wait for Santa Claus to arrive.

Kwanzaa: December 26 through January 1

Kwanzaa is a holiday celebrated by many African-Americans. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa, which means "first fruits," celebrates the oneness and goodness of life, and puts particular emphasis on family life and African-American continuity with the past.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS, WEBSITES, AND ADDRESSES:

American Immigration Council
Suite 200, 1331 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 1-202-507-7500
www.AmericanImmigrationCouncil.org

Social Security Administration
Tel: 1-800-772-1213
www.ssa.gov

Internal Revenue Service
Tel: 1-800-829-1040
www.irs.gov

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Tel: (202) 401-9810
InternTraineeNotify@state.gov
<http://j1visa.state.gov/>

Directory of U.S. Embassies abroad
www.usembassy.state.gov

CALL 911 for emergency MEDICAL OR POLICE ASSISTANCE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Exchange visitor: anyone entering the United States on a J visa.

FluidReview System: Our database system which contains your program activity files. You will access your case through your e-mail address and password.

DS-2019 form: The Certificate of Eligibility provided to you by American Immigration Council that allows you to obtain a J-1 visa. You will need this to enter the U.S. on a J-1 visa and to obtain a Social Security card and train or intern at your host company. You will also need this form signed by American Immigration Council before you travel outside the U.S. at any time during your J-1 program.

DS-7002 form: The training plan approved by the American immigration Council which must be followed to maintain J-1 status as an intern or trainee.

I-94 Entry Control verification: Your official arrival and departure record. Your record is accessed through the government website at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>. It is usually marked "D/S" which stands for "Duration of Status." This means that you may stay lawfully in the United States pursuing your training or internship program for the length of time listed on item 3 (dates of program) of your DS-2019. If your I-94 record does not say "J-1 D/S", please contact the American Immigration Council.

I-901 form: The receipt that the \$100 SEVIS fee was paid.

J-1 visa: The visa obtained from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate which is stamped in your passport. The visa gives the dates and number of times during which you can enter the United States in J status. It does not indicate the dates you can be in the United States (see I-94 above).

J-1 Intern: An individual learning skills directly related to their academic degree field at a U.S. organization.

J-1 trainee: An individual gaining new skills and competencies directly related to their career field at a U.S. organization.

J-2 dependent: Your spouse or child who is accompanying you on a J-2 visa during your exchange program.

J-1 Sponsor: The American Immigration Council. Organization designated by the U.S. department of State to oversee the exchange visitor program.

Host organization: The entity that is providing your training and supervision.

Host site: The location of the host organization where you are receiving your training or internship.

Host supervisor: The individual at your host site who is providing daily supervision.

SEVIS: The Federal web-based system for maintaining information on international exchange visitors and students in the United States. You must be in "Active" status in SEVIS to maintain your J-1 visa status while in the United States.

J compliant insurance: Sickness and accident (traveler's) insurance that meets or exceeds the requirements of Federal regulations for exchange visitor programs.

Port of entry: The location where you are permitted to enter the United States.

Social Security Number (SSN): A taxpayer identification number used for payroll and banking purposes in the United States.

IRS: Internal Revenue Service. The agency that enforces tax laws and collects taxes for the U.S. government.

Federal Income Tax: Taxes paid to the U.S. government by all income earners, including exchange visitors in trainee or intern programs.

Social Security Tax: A tax withheld from the wages of U.S. residents to provide a supplement to retirement income. Exchange Visitors are usually exempt from this tax.

Medicare: A government fund to provide health care to elderly U.S. residents. Medicare taxes are withheld from the checks of U.S. residents but exchange visitors are usually exempt from this tax.

Federal: Refers to the national government of the United States. The United States is a federation of 50 sovereign states, each with their own laws and customs. The federal government regulates international policy, including J exchange visitor programs, and interstate commerce.

USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. The federal agency which exclusively focuses on immigration and citizenship services. It can assist you with information on forms and fees concerning your stay in the U.S

APPENDIX 1:
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INFORMATION FOR J-1 HOLDERS

The Exchange Visitor Program

WELCOME BROCHURE

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Private Sector Exchange
United States Department of State

The Department of State welcomes you to the United States. We are pleased to receive you as an exchange visitor. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will acquire an experience in the United States and as an ambassador of your country you will help educate the American people about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations that are most relevant to you.

THE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

Sponsors – The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer exchange visitor programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide participants pre-arrival information, an orientation, and monitor their activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. Exchange visitors are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.

Responsible Officers – Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is the sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor you should contact the person whose name and telephone number can be found on your Form DS-2019.

Exchange Visitor – An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange visitor program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Spouse and dependents - Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried children, under 21 years of age, to accompany an exchange visitor to the United States. These individuals are dependents of the J-1 and may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

REGULATIONS - RULES

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your responsible officer will help you keep current of any change which may affect your J-visa status. Some requirements of the Federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

Register with your sponsor – Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This System is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor's program during their stay in the United States.

When you arrive in the United States, you must contact your sponsor to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States.

Activities and Program Provisions – You entered the United States in a specific program category, and are required to engage in that category and the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your exchange category.

Insurance – You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1) and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their participants. Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance carriers. Consult with your responsible officer before the start of your program.

(a) Minimum Insurance Coverage – Insurance shall cover: (1) medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500; and (3) expenses associated with medical evaluation in the amount of \$10,000.

(b) Additional Terms – A policy secured to fulfill the insurance requirements shall not have a deductible that exceeds \$500 per accident or illness, and must meet other standards specified in the regulations.

(c) Maintenance of Insurance – **Willful failure on your part to maintain the required insurance throughout your stay in the United States will result in the termination of your exchange program.**

Maintenance of Valid Program Status – You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program.

Required Notifications to Sponsors – You must inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence) or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program status.

Current Regulations – The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62). The regulations are generally available for review at the offices of your sponsor, universities, law schools, or

large public libraries. They are also available on the Internet at:
<http://www.J1visa.state.gov>

For Further Information – Additional requirements that may apply to you are set forth in the Exchange Visitor Program Regulations. Review a copy of the current regulations and consult with your responsible officer.

Contacting the Department of State – The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The Office of Designation and the Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance are located at:

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Department of State
State Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20522-0505

The office of Designation is organized under two divisions. The Academic and Government Programs Division, and the Private Sector Program Division. Contact information and the exchange categories for the divisions are identified below:

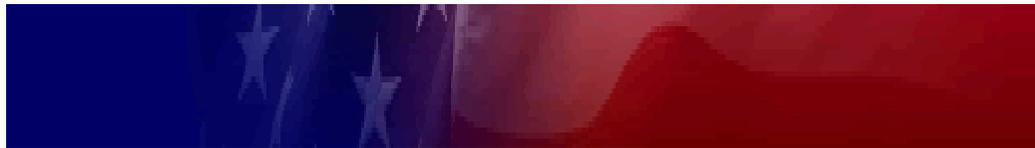
Academic and Government Programs Division (ECA/EC/D/AG)

Categories of exchange: Government Visitor, International Visitor, Professor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, Student (College and University)
Telephone: 202-203-7131
Fax: 202-203-7779

Private Sector Program Division (ECA/EC/D/PS)

Categories of exchange: Alien Physician, Au Pair, Camp Counselor, Intern, Secondary Student, Summer Work Travel, Teacher, Trainee
Telephone: 202-632-2805
Fax: 202-203-7779

The Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance is responsible for monitoring designated sponsors for regulatory compliance. Inquiries regarding sponsors and the Program can be emailed to Compliance by using JVisas@state.gov.



Are You Coming To The United States Temporarily To Work Or Study?

We Are Confident That You Will Have An Interesting And Rewarding Stay.
However, If You Should Encounter Any Problems, You Have Rights And You
Can Get Help!

You Have the Right to:

- Be treated and paid fairly;
- Not be held in a job against your will;
- Keep your passport and other identification documents
in your possession;
- Report abuse without retaliation;
- Request help from unions, immigrant and labor rights
groups and other groups; and
- Seek justice in U.S. courts.

✂ These rights, and others, are explained in this pamphlet.

...
treated or your rights are violated, call these toll-free
numbers:

National Human Trafficking Resource Center's
24 Hour Toll-Free Hotline
1-888-373-7888

(Run by a non-governmental organization)

Human Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation
Task Force Complaint Line

(Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm Eastern Time)

1-888-428-7581

(Run by the U.S. Department of Justice)

If you are in immediate physical danger, Call **911**



For more on your rights to be treated and paid fairly at work, see page 5

For more on your right not to be held in a job against your will, see page 7

This pamphlet was created as a result of a U.S. Federal law, Public Law 110-457. The U.S. Government has issued this pamphlet to honor the rule of law and uphold the dignity of all who come to this country. The U.S. Government is committed to combating human trafficking and labor rights violations.



Steps to Protect Yourself

Keep your passport, visa, and employment contract in your home country with relatives

Keep a list of the days and hours that you work, and the amount and date of each wage you receive; and

Call the Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline at 1-888-428-7581 (weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time) or the Trafficking in Persons and Worker Protection Complaint Line at 1-888-428-7581 (weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time) if you need help.



An Overview of the Nonimmigrant Visa Process

What is a nonimmigrant visa?

A nonimmigrant visa is a U.S. government document that permits individuals who travel to the United States to request entry for a particular purpose; for example, to work or to study.

The nonimmigrant visa process involves two important steps:

1. Applying for the visa at the appropriate U.S. embassy or consulate abroad; and
2. Presenting the visa to an immigration inspector at a U.S. port of entry.

What are the important parts of my documentation?

1. The visa. It is located in your passport and shows your picture and visa expiration date. If your visa expires, you cannot reenter the United States on that visa until it is renewed.
 - If you have an employment-based visa, the visa will include the name of the employer who is sponsoring you to work in the United States.
 - Your temporary work visa **does not give you permission** to work for **any** employer that you choose—it is permission to work **only** for the employer listed on your visa application. In rare cases, it may be possible to change employers.
 - This does not mean you have to continue to work for your employer if the employer is abusing or exploiting you.
2. The I-94 Card. This is a white card provided to you when you enter the United States. Your I-94 card shows the period of time that you are allowed to remain in the United States.
Do not lose this card!

TIP
Before you travel to the United States, **make two copies** of all important documentation, especially your passport (with visa), your contract, and your identity documents. Give one set of these copies to someone you trust in your home country. When you arrive in the United States and receive an I-94, make one copy of the I-94 in case you lose the original. Keep these documents in a safe place.

TIP
Once you arrive in the U.S., **keep your passport and other travel documents in a safe place where you can access it at all times!** It is illegal for your employer to take your passport away from you!



Your Workplace Rights in the United States

There are several protections that are specific to the type of visa you receive. These are outlined below by visa category.

A-3, G-5, and B-1 domestic employee visas

- If you work for a diplomat (A-3 visa) or a representative of an international organization (G-5 visa), or if you are a domestic employee holding a B-1 visa, your employer must provide you with an employment contract that complies with U.S. law.
- The contract must include the following provisions:
 - An agreement by your employer not to keep your passport, employment contract, or other personal property from you;
 - An agreement by your employer to abide by all laws in the United States;
 - An explanation of how much you will be paid for your work, as well as how frequently you will be paid; and
 - A description of your work duties, weekly work hours, holidays, sick days, and vacation days.
- Make sure that you understand the terms of the contract. If you cannot understand the language in which the contract is written, ask someone you trust to read the contract to you in a language that you understand. **Do not sign anything that you do not understand!**
- When you apply for the visa, a U.S. Consular Officer will meet with you and confirm that your contract complies with U.S. law. Do not hesitate to ask the U.S. Consular Officer any questions. Your employer is not supposed to be present when you meet with the Consular Officer.
- If you sign a contract that violates your rights, or if your employer does not do what the contract says, call the hotlines listed in this pamphlet immediately. They can help you find a lawyer who can help explain your rights in this situation.

H-1B and H-1B1 visas for performing services in specialty occupations

- If you are coming to the United States to perform services in a specialty occupation or as a fashion model, please refer to www.Travel.State.gov for more information regarding your rights and ability to change employers.

H-2A temporary agricultural worker visas

- If you are a temporary agricultural worker, you must receive a written description of the terms of your employment no later than the first day of work. This document must contain detailed information about the benefits, wages, housing, work duration, and transportation benefits that your employer will



provide.

- You are entitled to payment at or above a wage that is set by the government. This rate applies whether you are paid hourly or by piece rate.
- You do not have to pay either U.S. social security taxes or fees to a labor recruiter in your home country.
- Your employer must provide clean and safe housing at no charge.
- Your employer must reimburse you for transportation costs from your country to your place of employment, but only after you complete half the contract period; and your employer must pay for your return transportation costs for your trip home after completion of the contract.
- You are entitled to guaranteed work for at least 3/4 of the number of workdays stated as the contract period unless you are displaced by a U.S. worker during the first half of the contract period.

H-2B temporary non-agricultural worker visas

- If you are a temporary non-agricultural worker, you are entitled to payment at or above the prevailing wage, which will be at least the federal, state, or local legal minimum wage, but may be higher. This rate applies whether you are paid hourly or by piece rate.
- Your employer must provide return transportation costs for your trip home if your work ends or you are dismissed for business reasons unrelated to job performance before the end of your contract.
- You are usually entitled to terms and conditions of employment that are normal for similarly employed U.S. workers in the area.
- You should never have to pay fees to a labor recruiter in your home country.

J-1 exchange visitor visas

- Unless your exchange program is sponsored by the Federal government, the program must be a minimum of three weeks duration. The Form DS-2019, the basic document required to apply for a J visa, reflects the category of exchange and the program dates. Depending on the category of exchange, there may be other documents and/or contracts which cover the terms of your exchange program.
- Your sponsor's advertisements must be accurate and explain all costs, conditions, and restrictions of the exchange program. Your sponsor must also give you an orientation and provide you with information about:
 - the J-1 program and a description of the specific program in which you are participating and its rules;

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- travel and entry into the United States;
 - housing;
 - fees, and costs, including living expenses, healthcare, and insurance costs;
 - life and customs in the United States;
 - local resources;
 - your sponsor's address and the name and phone number of the person responsible for you in the United States;
 - contact information for the Exchange Visitor Program Services of the Department of State; and
 - The Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program brochure;
 - If you are entering on a Summer Work Travel program and do not have pre-placed employment, your sponsor must assist you in locating employment if you have not found employment within the first week following your arrival, and insure that you receive pay and benefits commensurate with those offered to your American counterparts.
 - If your J-1 visa is for a training and internship program:
 - Your sponsor must interview you in person, by telephone or by web camera;
 - Your sponsor must have a Training/Internship Placement Plan (Form DS-7002) in place before your visa paperwork is submitted. This Form includes a written statement of any stipend you will be paid, and a summary of the training objectives of the program.
 - Your sponsor must give you a written statement of the costs and fees you will have to pay, and an estimate of living expenses in the United States.
 - Your training/internship must be at least 32 hours per week; and
 - If your training/internship is in agriculture, your working conditions and wages must meet strict federal requirements for agricultural workers.
 - Your sponsor must assure that you have medical insurance coverage, though your sponsor need not provide or pay for this coverage.
 - If you work in the United States, you should apply for and receive your own Social Security number, and your employer must report all tax withholdings using this number.
 - If you are bringing your spouse or minor children with you on a J-2 visa, they may apply for work authorization only if the income is not necessary to support you.

For more information on visa categories and U.S. entry procedures, see the Web site of the U.S. Department of State:

www.Travel.State.gov



Your Rights Regardless of Visa Status

There are also many **rights you have regardless of your visa status**. If any of these rights are violated, you can report the violations to a government enforcement agency. In most cases, you can also bring a lawsuit to attempt to recover your losses, without fear of being punished.

1. Your Right Not to Be Retaliated Against

- It is unlawful for your employer to try to punish you, for example, by threatening to report you to immigration or the police if you try to enforce your rights! If your employer threatens you at any time, **seek help immediately. Remember, your safety comes first!**

2. The Right to Be Paid

- You have the right to get paid for **all work you do, in the same manner as U.S. workers**.
- You have the right to earn at least the federal legal minimum wage, \$7.25 per hour, in the same manner as U.S. workers. Also check
 - The minimum wage for the **state** in which you work. If that wage is higher, you have the right to be paid the higher amount.
 - Your employment contract, which may obligate your employer to pay a higher amount.
- Most workers in the United States are entitled to overtime pay of one and a half times the amount of their wage for any hours worked over 40 hours per week. For example, if your regular wage rate is \$10 per hour, your employer may be required to pay you \$15 for each hour you work above 40 hours in a single week.
- If your employer takes money from your paycheck, this is called a deduction. Many deductions are illegal if they diminish your legal wage rate. For example, an employer usually may not deduct for housing (with some visa classifications, housing must be

provided free of charge), most uniforms, safety equipment, or recruitment fees.

3. Your Right Not to be Discriminated Against

- As an employee, you have the right to not be treated differently or badly at work because of your gender, race, national origin, color, religion, or disability.

TIP

Make sure to keep a written record of **all the time that you work**. Get a notebook and write down all of the days and hours that you worked, how much you were paid, the days you received a payment, any deductions taken from your paycheck, and the reasons for those deductions.

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- Your employer should pay the same amount to each worker for the same work and offer each worker the same job opportunities no matter what the worker's gender, race, national origin, color, religion, or disability.
 - Your employer can't make you speak only in English at work unless there is an important business reason to require English.

4. Your Rights as a Woman Worker

- Your employer **MAY NOT** treat you differently or badly because you are a woman or you are pregnant - this is sex discrimination.

Whether you are a woman or a man, your employer **MAY NOT** sexually harass you. Your employer should never:

- Demand that you perform sex acts;
- Touch you in a sexual manner; or
- Say or yell sexual or offensive comments.

5. Your Right to a Healthy and Safe Workplace

- All employees have a right to safe and clean working conditions:
 - **Housing:** If your employer provides housing, it should be clean, safe, and in a sturdy structure.
 - **Bathrooms:** Bathrooms should be clean and accessible.
 - **Potable Water:** If you work in agriculture, in most cases, you have the right to receive clean water to drink and to wash your hands.
 - **Illness or Injury on the Job:** If you are injured or get sick at work you may seek medical treatment. In most cases, you will receive free medical treatment and part of the wages lost while injured.
- If you are working with or around **pesticides or dangerous chemicals:**
 - You have a right to wash your hands in clean water after handling the pesticides/chemicals. You are entitled to training on pesticide safety during the first 5 days of work.
 - Your employer must tell you where and when pesticides were sprayed to avoid accidental exposures. Workers and others must not be in an area where pesticides are being applied.
 - If you mix or apply pesticides that require you to use protective equipment (like coveralls or a mask or respirator), your employer must give you

TIP

Keep a detailed record of every inappropriate comment and/or action your employer takes against you and write down the names and phone numbers of any witnesses.

CAUTION!
force you to do something or go somewhere, even back to your home country, by withholding your pay.



equipment that is clean and in good condition.

- **Medical Emergencies:** In the case of an emergency, call **911** and ask for an ambulance.
 - Your expenses may be paid for, so you should tell your employer as soon as possible so the employer can file the necessary paperwork.
 - When you are at the doctor or clinic, ask for copies of the paperwork regarding your illness or injury.

6. Your Right to Join a Union and Bargain Collectively

- With few exceptions, all workers in the United States have a right to form and join a union, regardless of their immigration status under federal law. Your employer cannot take action against you for doing so. This means you can:
 - Join with other workers to improve wages and working conditions;
 - Attend public speeches, rallies, and demonstrations; and
 - Join a union or other worker organization.

7. Your Right to More Protections Under State Law

- Call the hotlines listed in this pamphlet for a referral to organizations that can tell you about your rights in the state where you are working.

8. Your Right to Leave an Abusive Employment Situation

- You do not have to stay in your job if your employer is abusing you.
- But, if you came to the United States on an employment-based visa and you leave your employer, your visa status will no longer be valid. However, depending on the type of visa you have, you may be able to change visa categories or employers. You may also be able to remain in the United States legally to pursue a legal claim.

- You may also make a formal complaint or file a lawsuit against your employer while you are still working. There are severe penalties for an employer who tries to punish workers because they pursue their rights.

- If you are experiencing problems with your current employer, contact the hotlines listed in this pamphlet. They will be able to connect you

with a local organization that can speak with you about your options.

TIP

You have rights in the United States and no one can take those rights away from you.

There are hundreds of organizations that can help. Don't be afraid to ask for help to protect your rights.

Human Trafficking



1. What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is among the most terrible workplace abuses that an individual in the United States could encounter. Human trafficking occurs whenever a person is recruited, transported, or kept against his or her will for purposes of exploitation. For a full definition of human trafficking, please see www.state.gov/j/tip (see Legislation—Trafficking Victims Protection Act). The following are some warning signs that may indicate human trafficking:

Threats and Fear:

Employers, and people who help employers, may use threats and other intimidating acts to make you and other workers feel too afraid to try to leave. For example:

- Beatings, physical abuse, or sexual abuse;
- Threats of beatings, physical abuse, or sexual abuse;
- Locking in or restraining a worker;
- Threats of harm to the worker or the worker's family if the worker tries to leave, complain of mistreatment, report the situation to authorities, or seek help;
- Threats of being deported or arrested, or of being turned over to police for trying to leave, complain, report, or seek help for the worker's situation;
- The employer, or someone working with the employer, has harmed or threatened other workers who have tried to leave, complain, report, or seek help; or makes threats that any worker who tries to escape will be found and brought back.

Rules and Controls:

Employers, and people who help them, may use rules and controls to make it harder for you and other workers to leave, complain about mistreatment, or seek help. For example:

- Rules against leaving the workplace, or strict rules about where you can go when not working;
- Rules against holding onto your own passport, visa, birth certification, or other identification documents;
- Denial of adequate food, sleep, or medical care; or
- Preventing or restricting you from communicating freely with family, other workers, or others outside the workplace.

Deception and Lies:

Employers, and people who help them, may also use deception and lies. For example:

- False promises about working conditions, living conditions, or pay;
- Telling you that you have no rights;

- 
- Telling you that you will not be believed if you try to seek help; and
 - Instructing you to lie about their identity.

2. What should I do if these things are happening to me?

- If any one of these things is happening to you or you are in a dangerous situation, **get help immediately** by calling 911, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (1-888-373-7888), or the Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint

Line (1-888-428-7581). They can help refer you to a local organization that help victims of human trafficking in your area.

- If you are in physical danger, you should call **911** to reach the Police. If you call the police, show them this pamphlet and tell them about the abuse that you have suffered.

3. Will I be deported if I report the abuse?

There are programs to protect people who report abuse. You should not be afraid to seek help even if you have immigration concerns. You should consult with an immigration attorney who does not work for your employer. The hotline can help you find someone to consult.

- If you believe you may be a victim of human trafficking or of another serious crime, including rape or sexual assault, you may be entitled to a different nonimmigrant visa, like a T visa (for trafficking victims) or a U visa (for victims of other serious crimes). These visas were created to provide protection for certain crime victims worried about their immigration status. Many people are unfamiliar with these visas and you may need to tell people assisting you about them.

4. What services are available for victims of human trafficking?

- If you are a victim of trafficking in the United States, you may be eligible for benefits, services, and immigration remedies under federal or state programs.
- Many organizations can help you access these services, which include medical care, mental health care, housing, dental care, legal advocacy for immigration and other legal needs, employment assistance, and public benefits.

TIP

Before leaving for the United States, talk with migrant worker organizations or former migrant workers for names and numbers of persons or organizations you can contact if you have problems or questions when you are in the United States.



Know Your Rights

Call one of the hotlines listed in this pamphlet if you need help

You are receiving this pamphlet because you have applied for a nonimmigrant visa to work or study temporarily in the United States. The purpose of this pamphlet is to help you understand your rights when you arrive in the United States. Even though you will be living in the United States only temporarily, you will still have many of the basic workplace rights that U.S. citizens and residents have.

This pamphlet gives an overview of your basic workplace rights. Understanding your rights will help you to protect yourself from abuse. Keep this pamphlet with you in the United States in case you need to reach someone for help.

This pamphlet was also created to help you protect yourself against the most serious abuses, such as human trafficking. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery where an employer or other individual, through physical or psychological abuse, causes an individual to feel that he or she is not free to leave the situation. **Recognizing that you are in an abusive employment situation is the first step toward getting help.**

If you arrive in the United States and have problems at work, you should seek help immediately. Do not believe your employer if he or she says that you do not have legal rights in the United States. Do not accept legal advice from your employer, contractor, or recruiter. Only an attorney representing you should give you legal advice.

If you believe your rights are being violated, the hotlines listed in this pamphlet can help you reach local organizations that can provide further assistance. **Do not be afraid to contact these organizations! They are here to help you.**

This pamphlet is not a substitute for legal advice. There are many different types of temporary work and educational visas, and you should not be afraid to ask for more information about your visa.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
1-888-373-7888 (24 hours)

Working in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line
1-888-428-7581
(Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm Eastern Time)

About the Council

The mission of the American Immigration Council is to be a leader in strengthening America by honoring our immigrant history and by shaping how the public thinks and acts towards immigration now and in the future.

The American Immigration Council believes that the dignity of the individual knows no boundary. Our nation's moral and ethical values must be reflected in the way we welcome immigrants.



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