



The Exchange Visitor Program WELCOME BROCHURE

United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation

The U.S. Department of State welcomes you to the United States as an “exchange visitor” entering the country on a J-1 visa. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will enjoy a unique opportunity to experience American life and culture. As an ambassador of your country, you will help educate the Americans you meet during your stay about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program and familiarize you with some of the Program’s major regulations and requirements that will govern your activities during your visit. We want your stay in the United States to be a positive experience. Please visit our Website, www.exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges for additional information.

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). 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. The expectation is that upon completion of your exchange program, you will return home to share your experiences with family, friends and fellow countrymen.

WHO ARE 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 prospective exchange visitors based on the criteria set forth in the governing regulations contained in the U. S. Code of Federal Regulations (22 CFR Part 62). Sponsors provide participants with pre-arrival information and an orientation. Your sponsor will monitor and oversee your program in the United States.

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Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in any such activities that also provide the opportunity to share your language, culture, and history with the Americans you meet.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT? – Sponsors appoint individuals as “responsible officers” and “alternate responsible officers” who advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. If you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial point of contact is your sponsor. You should contact the person whose name and telephone number is shown on your Form DS-2019 unless your sponsor provided you with an alternative contact name and telephone number.

MUST YOU COME ALONE? – Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried minor children (under 21 years of age) to accompany them to the United States. A spouse or dependent of a J-1 visa holder must obtain a J-2 visa (with the sponsor’s permission) in order to enter the United States for the duration of the J-1’s exchange program.

RULES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and your sponsor’s program-specific rules. Regular contact with your responsible officer will help you maintain your J-visa status by ensuring that you are continually in compliance with all regulations. Some of the major requirements of the regulations are identified 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). DHS administers SEVIS and uses it to collect and maintain information on the current status of foreign nationals and their dependents in a sponsor’s exchange program during their stay in the United States.

You are required to contact your sponsor upon arrival in the United States to start your program. Contacting your sponsor ensures that data in SEVIS regarding your exchange program is accurate and current. If you fail to report to your sponsor upon arrival or otherwise fail to maintain compliance with all governing rules, regulations, and laws, there are serious consequences that may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States in the future.

Activities and Program Provisions – You entered the United States to participate in an exchange program in a specific exchange category (such as an Au Pair or research scholar). You may engage in only the designated category and activity listed on your Form DS-2019. In addition to general Exchange Visitor Program regulations, you must

comply with program specific regulations relating to your exchange category. If you do not know or understand these regulations, contact your sponsor.

Insurance – You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1) and any dependents (J-2) throughout 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 sponsor before your program begins to make certain that you have the required coverage.

Maintenance of Status – You are required to have and retain a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. If your sponsor changes your “status” from “active” to any other classification, your presence in the United States is no longer legal and you must return home immediately. Your sponsor may change your status to “inactive” if you voluntarily leave your program before its end or to “terminated” if you break any rules, regulations, or laws. Individuals whose status is terminated may be prohibited from entering the United States in the future.

Required Notifications to Sponsors – You are required to inform your sponsor if you change your residence or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program prior to the scheduled end date. Your sponsor is required to maintain your current contact information in SEVIS or face sanctions from the Department of State. If you fail to provide this information to your sponsor, your sponsor may change your status to terminated, as discussed above.

Exchange Visitor Program Regulations – The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the U.S. 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. These regulations and other helpful information are available on the Internet at: www.exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges. These regulations change from time to time, so make certain you refer to the current version of both the general regulations and the ones that govern your specific exchange category.

If you have any questions about these regulations or the Exchange Visitor Program you should contact the person whose name appears on your Form DS-2019 or the alternative individual designated by your sponsor.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Your questions and concerns can be sent to us at jvisas@state.gov.

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