

J-1 PARTICIPANT

PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION



Your journey is about to begin and the more you are prepared, the more likely you are to have a great experience.

We remind you that the purpose of this program is cultural exchange. The program provides me permission to work for approved US employers in order to subsidize my program costs and travel and to travel the US for up to 30 days after my program end date. Engaging in cultural exchange activities is a requirement and I agree to take part and to document such activities with my sponsor. I understand that not all cultural exchange activities are free and I am responsible for associated costs if I attend.

This booklet contains important information that you must review.

- ***Final Preparations***
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FINAL PREPARATIONS

Once you have received your visa, you can make your final arrangements.

- Confirm your expected arrival date, time and location with your employer **before** you purchase an airline ticket.
- Book your round trip ticket. Participants are able to arrive up to 30 days prior to start date and to travel up to 30 days after the end date (as long as students arrive back to school in time for 1st day of classes)
- Make copies of all of your papers: DS2019, SEVIS receipt, visa, passport bio page, and medical insurance card. Email a copy to yourself so that if you lose or damage your papers in travel, you have copies.
- Confirm arrival details.
 - If you are being picked up, confirm the name and telephone number for the person/s expected to meet you in case there are delays in your travel.
 - If you are not being picked up at the airport, research the public transportation options for getting from the airport to where you need to be in advance and plan for delays.
- Be sure all necessary supporting documents have been submitted including: a copy of your police background check, a copy of your medical screening and signed last page of this Pre-Departure Orientation.

The Department of State provides supplemental information for Summer Work Travel Participants outlining the program purpose, rules and regulations.

You **MUST** read the documents applicable to your program. Note that most camps are exempt of minimum wage and overtime which means you earn an overall salary/stipend and you do not earn a per hour wage.

Exchange Visitor Welcome Brochure: <http://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Brochure-The-Exchange-Visitor-Program.pdf>

Camp Counselor Participant Letter: <http://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2014-CC-Participant-Letter.pdf>

Summer Work Travel Participant Letter: <http://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/SWT-participant-letter-2016.pdf>

Summer Work Travel Program Brochure: <http://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2012-2013-SWT-Welcome-Brochure.pdf>

Human Trafficking: <https://campstaffusa.com/assets/English-Online-Reading-5-20-2013.pdf>

* These documents are also available on the Participant Resource Page.

You can also find more information and helpful links to letters and forms at: <http://www.campstaffusa.com/j1-participant-resource-page/>

TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION

What will I need to have when I enter the United States?

To enhance security without slowing legitimate travel, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has instituted some changes in US entry and exit procedures. Careful planning and preparation can ensure that any delay based on these procedures is minimal. When traveling to the US, you should carry important documents with you.

You will need to have access to:

- **Your passport with visa**
- **Forms DS 2019 (You must keep the biographical page and the explanation page together)**
- **Medical Insurance Information**
- **J1 Sponsor emergency contact information**
- **Writing instrument (pen)**

Canadian citizens will obtain their visa at the port of entry and must also have the SEVIS payment receipt.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that you hand carry the following documentation:

- **Evidence of financial resources;**
- **Sponsorship letter of support;**
- **Employment contract with name and address of your employer.**



Please do not check any of these forms in your baggage!

If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your port of entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States. Be sure to keep all documentation in your backpack or on your person at all times.

For greater detail on procedures for traveling and arriving in the United States, visit: <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/video-gallery/2015/01/youve-arrived>

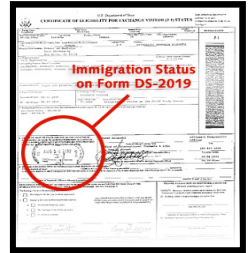
AVAILABLE FUNDS

You must have available to you sufficient funds in US dollars to cover costs you may incur due to unexpected travel or medical reasons prior to receiving your first paycheck or costs associated with unexpected termination of employment. If you are working at a US camp that includes lodging and meals, funds of at least \$800 beyond transportation costs should suffice. If you are working outside of summer camps, \$800 over and beyond transportation costs, housing deposit and first month's rent, depending on location, should suffice to cover immediate expenses or a return home. You should always have accessible to you, via bank account, credit or parental guarantee additional funds in case of emergency.

ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

What will happen when I reach the United States port of entry?

You will go through an initial inspection with a Customs and Border Protection Officer. All visitors entering the United States must state their reason for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important that you tell the inspector that you will be working in the US for the summer as an Exchange Visitor. If you do not, they may incorrectly register you as a visitor and you will be unable to work. Be prepared to include the name and address of your employer. The officer MUST sign and return your form DS 2019 to you.



Electronic I-94 (Record of Admission)

In order to increase efficiency, reduce operating costs and streamline the admissions process, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has automated Form I-94 at air and sea ports of entry. The paper form will no longer be provided to a traveler upon arrival, except in limited circumstances. The traveler will be provided with a CBP admission stamp on their travel document. You will need a copy of your I-94 (record of admission) in order to apply for your social security card, for verification of alien registration, immigration status or employment authorization, and it can be obtained from www.cbp.gov/i94. For more facts click or copy and paste here. <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Mar/i-94-automation-fact-sheet.pdf>



WHOOPS! I FORGOT MY PAPERS.

What happens if I cannot locate the required documents?

If you cannot locate or provide all of your information or the inspector cannot verify if the information provided, you will need to go through a "secondary inspection." Officials will direct you to an interview area set apart from the primary inspection lines. If you fail to provide the necessary documents at the US port of entry you may be refused entry under the J-1 visa. In certain circumstances, the Customs and Border Protection Officer may issue you an I-515A form, Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor. This form **temporarily** permits your admission to the US.

What happens if I receive an I-515a form?

If you are issued an I-515A form, you will need to obtain the proper documentation and mail it to the address indicated on the form. Do not mail original documents unless instructed. After the documents are processed

by the Customs and Border Protection Office, they will either mail them to the address indicated on the form or to your sponsor who will forward them to you.



Contact your sponsor for any additional assistance! You can contact your sponsor by calling toll-free 1-855-517-8233 or use the number indicated on your form DS2019.

MANDATORY CHECK IN AND SPONSOR COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS



Obtaining your visa and getting through immigration is not enough!

Initial Check In: You will need to provide a working email and an active US phone number when you check in. You are required to check in within 5 days of the program beginning date indicated in Section 2 of the form DS2019 regardless of entry date. By completing the “check in” form, you are confirming your arrival and providing your sponsor with a valid and active email address and US telephone number for continued communication. When you check in, your sponsor will change your visa status from “initial” to “active.”

**If you fail to complete the check in form and do not contact your sponsor, the SEVIS system automatically changes your visa status to either “invalid” or “no show.” In both situations, your program is no longer valid, you are not able to legally work and you must return home. In some cases, you can apply for a reinstatement of your visa status, however, all fees and costs associated with reinstatement is the responsibility of the participant.*

Scheduled Check Ins. You are required to maintain regular communication with your sponsor. Your sponsor requires that you check in on (or within 5 days of) the 1st and 15th of each month through your program end date.

Sponsor Initiated Contact: You are also required to respond to all sponsor initiated contact within 5 days.

Residential Update: You must update your sponsor of any changes in resident location including apartment number, bunk or cabin number or name.

Employer Approval Process: You were pre-placed or pre-approved for sponsorship with your initial camp employer. If you complete your initial job offer and your window of opportunity permits, you may request post-camp employment consideration. However, you **MUST** obtain approval from your sponsor prior to any employment change. Accepting unapproved employment violates the program regulations and will result in visa termination as per Department of State requirements.

** If you fail to communicate with your sponsor according to the above terms, your sponsor is required to “terminate” your visa. If your visa is “terminated” you must return home immediately at your cost. You can expect to receive notices and requests for program updates and summary of cultural exchange activities every two weeks. If you do not receive an email notification within two weeks of your check-in, contact your sponsor immediately.*

CULTURAL EXCHANGE REQUIREMENTS

The summer work travel and camp counselor visas are **cultural exchange visas** not work visas. While it does permit participants to legally work in the US, cultural exchange is the main objective. As a participant, you are required to engage in activities, events and travel that foster this objective. Examples of such activity include but are not limited to taking part in sports activities and staffing/whole camp events, visiting tourist attractions, malls, and historical sites; attending local fairs, etc. All participants are required to provide their sponsors with proof of engagement in cultural exchange activities with each continued communication. Participants can submit journal entries, pictures, ticket stubs, etc.

SOCIAL SECURITY

In order to obtain a Social Security Number you must complete an application, form SS5, at a social security office and you must print a copy of your I94 (Record of Admission). The Social Security Office works with the SEVIS system and timing is important. **You cannot apply if you have not checked in with your sponsor to validate your visa.** With the electronic entry process, it takes approximately 3-5 business days for your status to be updated for social security to be able to verify. You cannot delay application too long, however. **The Social Security Office requires that your visa be validated for at least 5 days prior to application with a program end date at least 14 days from the date of application to provide time for processing.**

The online form is available at www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf. Most camps will organize a day or time for you to do this in a group but you can locate the social security office nearest your employer at www.ssa.gov. You will need to enter the zip code.



You will also need to present the following documents:

- Valid passport with J-1 visa
- DS 2019 forms
- I-94 Record of Admission printed from www.cbp.gov/I94 or white I94 card provided upon entry.
- Job offer

NEW FORM for use with Social Security Applications! Release your number to your employer automatically.

Social Security has now developed a form that participants can submit with their application that in essence gives permission for the release of their social security number to the employer for payroll and tax purposes: <https://campstaffusa.com/assets/ssa132.pdf>. Complete this form and submit it with your application.

You should make a copy of all of these documents and keep them safe in case of loss or theft of the originals.

The Social Security Card will be mailed to the address you listed on the SS5 form. It can take anywhere from 2-12 weeks to receive your Social Security Card, however, you are legal to work. All camps will usually understand this. To check the status of your application, you can call the Social Security Office directly at 1-800-772-1213. If your application has been processed, you can go, in person, to any Social Security Office to receive your number verbally. You must have identification so be sure to take your passport with you.

Not all camps require a social security number to run their payroll. If your camp does not require a social security number and does not coordinate the transportation to the office, but you would like to make an application, you will have to apply on your day off.

As a J-1 summer work travel or camp counselor participant you are exempt of the sponsor letter requirement as per the <https://secure.ssa.gov/poms.nsf/lnx/0110211345>. Should the Social Security Officer request a letter of work authorization from your sponsor, please reference POMS Section: RM 10211.345 subsection A.

EMPLOYMENT

Good communication can prevent many unnecessary problems. While most participants have very good experiences with their supervisors, miscommunication can create challenges. We have provided a few suggestions for creating and keeping good communication with your supervisors:

- **Be sure to read your contract fully.** Although you may receive documentation about minimum wage and overtime, **most camps are exempt of either minimum wage and/or overtime.**
- **Talk with your immediate supervisor about any questions** you may have even if you think it may be seen as “silly” or if your English skills are not great. Your honesty and your effort will be appreciated.
- **Do not pretend to understand something if you do not.** Ask questions to clarify instructions or directions until you fully understand.
- **Be sure to speak slowly and clearly** to make sure that you are understood as well.
- In all interactions, try to **be friendly and smile.**

SALARY

You should expect to receive pay as indicated in your job offer. Pay is required to be in accordance with federal, state, and local minimum wage requirements including overtime and commensurate with American peers. **For most camps, seasonal exemptions from minimum and/or overtime may apply (See Summer Camp Hours and Wages below).** Applicable taxes may be withheld from your pay but should be outlined clearly in your paystub. See TAXES below.

SUMMER CAMP HOURS AND WAGES

While camps offer a unique opportunity to work in the US, in a community environment, with free housing and food, there are some things to consider.

1. Hours are LONG! Most counselors work 6 days a week and are responsible for their campers from wake up to bedtime with breaks in-between. Most kitchen staff work in shifts that may span most of the day with breaks in-between to cover breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is task oriented so it may take longer at the beginning of the summer until you become more efficient with tasks. Most other support staff will work set hours as per the contract issued.
2. **Most camps are exempt of minimum wage AND overtime.** This means you will earn a set salary as indicated on your contract for a maximum of 9 weeks with a per day pay thereafter.
3. Where camps pay minimum wage, most are exempt of overtime. This means you will be paid per hour given a set wage regardless of hours worked.
4. When accepting employment with a minimum wage camp, participants will be responsible to pay the portion of program fees that camps usually pay when exempt. In this case, you will be responsible for any balance of program fees that the camps would have paid on your behalf.
5. Most camps are physically closed for the winter months so when you arrive, you may be helping to open the facilities. This can be a dirty job, but is part of preparing for a great summer.

ADDITIONAL ORIENTATION

Each location will provide its staff with an orientation specific to its structure, philosophies, procedures and policies. You will be expected to arrive in time to participate in any scheduled orientation. Your employer will go over fully your duties and responsibilities, appropriate and inappropriate conduct as it relates to your position and living arrangements.

PROHIBITED JOBS

THE SUMMER WORK TRAVEL VISA permits general, manual and skilled labor options with SEASONAL NEEDS. Participants are prohibited from accepting jobs that require a license or jobs as Pedi cab drivers, drivers, au pairs, counselors, domestic help in private homes, sales that require personal financial investment for product, positions related to clinical care that involves patient contact, positions that require work hours predominantly between 10pm and 6am, positions involving gambling, positions declared hazardous by the Secretary of Labor at Subpart E of 29 CFR part 570, and any job that would bring disrespect to the program, among others. All employment must be submitted to and approved by the sponsor prior to acceptance. **Unapproved employment acceptance is in violation of the program regulations will result in visa termination.**

THE CAMP COUNSELOR VISA is specific to the counselor role having direct responsibility for supervision of groups of American youth and of activities that bring them into interaction with their charges. There may be times specifically during pre-camp preparations, big camp events or even post-camp clean up when counselors may be assisting the camp with a variety of non-counselor tasks. While it is recognized that some non-counseling chores are an essential part of camp life for all counselors, this program is not intended to assist American camps in bringing in foreign nationals to serve as administrative personnel, cooks, or menial laborers, such as dishwashers or janitors.

BE ON TIME

Employment schedules can be varying depending on your position and hours. Being late for work may be result in employment termination.

HOUSING

CAMP HOUSING

Most summer camps offer free housing as part of their compensation package. Housing details vary by camp. Counselors usually live in bunks/cabins or even tents (some air-conditioned, some not) with 8-10 campers and 2-3 other staff. With special needs camps, the staff to camper ratio is much lower. Camp support staff may live in dormitories or other staff housing on the camp site. At times support staff may even live with campers to be more integrated in the camp atmosphere. Again, housing may or may not be air-conditioned. Housing conditions should be indicated on the job offer. If you have any questions about housing and packing lists, be sure to contact your camp director or supervisor.

EMPLOYER PROVIDED/ASSISTED HOUSING

Employers sometimes assist in securing housing and in some cases provide it as part of the job offer and compensation, like summer camps. Where employers provide housing as part of compensation, state permitted housing/lodging deductions may be made against your pay. In other cases, housing details including require deposit, monthly rent, deductions, utilities, etc. as well as person per room and should be clearly outlined in a lease or rent agreement. Housing ordinances vary by locality, and occupancy laws (number of people permitted per household) apply. If you sign a lease and find that you are uncomfortable with housing upon arrival, be sure to contact your sponsor immediately.

FINDING HOUSING

If your accommodations are not provided, then you should begin your search before you depart from your home country. While hostels, hotels, and other temporary lodging is accessible in many locations, this is more expensive and may require additional transportation if they are not near your work location.

1. Confirm your physical work location.
2. Check public transportation options in the area to obtain a realistic distance options. www.citysearch.com
3. Start looking for housing within your area. Here are some helpful links: <http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites>, <http://www.findtemporahousing.com/>

** As a reminder, you should obtain any housing agreement in writing including any security deposit and rent. Once you have secured housing, you are required to report your physical resident address to your sponsor and should you move for any reason, you must update your sponsor. Sponsors reserve the right to inspect your housing and determine its suitability. If housing is deemed to be unsafe or unacceptable, you will be asked to relocate at your expense. If you have any questions if housing will be acceptable, contact your sponsors before making a deposit or commitment. **Failure to report your physical address or to update your sponsor within 10 days of a change will result in program termination.***

TAXES

Your pay amount may not be exactly the amount on your contact because some taxes may apply. As a J-1 participant you are NOT required to pay Social Security and Medicare taxes. These will be indicated on your paystub. Links to support this are found on <https://campstaffusa.com/employer-resource-page/>. If you find that your employer has taken these taxes out of your pay, please inform your employer immediately. Taxes withheld can be reimbursed by filing for a refund. You will need to file for a return no later than April 15th the year following your employment in order to receive a refund for taxes paid through December 31st. Although participants are able to apply for a tax refund independently, it can be quite confusing. TaxBack is a company dedicated to helping J1 students obtain the tax refund they deserve. Your sponsor will provide them with your email so that they can contact you when the time comes. They will provide you with a free tax refund estimate.

If you leave the US prior to receiving your Social Security Number or if you never completed the application process, you can still file a tax return. You can either obtain a Taxpayer Identification Number from the US embassy in your home country or you can download and complete a W-7 Application <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw7.pdf> for an Individual Taxpayer Number directly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) website at www.irs.gov. Submit the completed W-7 form and all required documents along with your income tax return. TaxBack may also be able to assist you with this.

US LAWS

ALCOHOL.



The drinking age throughout the U.S. is 21 years old. If you are under 21, please do not attempt to purchase or consume alcohol during your program. U.S. laws regarding underage drinking vary from state to state but are quite strong. Some locations have laws against drinking in open locations such as public streets, public beaches and in cars, DWI/DUI. Driving a vehicle while intoxicated is considered an extreme offense (and a felony in some states). Mandatory jail time, heavy fines and loss of your visa will occur.

DRUGS.



Illegal possession and/or use of drugs or drug paraphernalia is a felony offense in most jurisdictions. Further, long jail sentences and heavy fines may be imposed as well as forfeiture of your US visa. **Note that although marijuana may be legal in some states, it is still prohibited by federal law and may be prosecuted. In addition, employers maintain their right to drug test employees and terminate employment should drug usage, including marijuana be found.**

SMOKING.



Many US states have banned smoking in public places, including restaurants and bars. Further, you should check with the development in which you are living to determine if smoking is allowed on premises.

SHOPLIFTING.



Security/Surveillance cameras are prevalent in almost all shopping locations in the US including malls, grocery stores, convenience stores, gas stations, etc. Shoplifting is a criminal offense and violators will be arrested and prosecuted. You do not have to physically take something in order to be charged with this offense. If you are with an individual and assist them in they're shoplifting or if you change the price or modify the price of an item, you can also be charged with shoplifting.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Available Health Care, Emergency Assistance and Insurance Coverage

The exchange visitor program requires all participants to have medical insurance coverage for the entire duration of their program (that is from your beginning date through your end date). **If you fail to maintain medical insurance coverage for the entire program, your sponsor is required to terminate your visa.** While it is not required, it is recommended that all participants maintain medical insurance coverage to include travel before and after program dates. If your planned travel extends past your program and you want medical insurance coverage for your travel, you can request an extension at your cost.



Please note that the medical insurance issued does NOT cover pre-existing conditions and does not include travelers insurance for lost of stolen luggage. If you suffer from a pre-existing condition that would cause you to need medical attention while in the US, you may need to seek secondary insurance.

Policy details and confirmation of coverage will be emailed to you and will also be made available on the Participant Resource Page. You should carry your insurance information with you at all times. Save the toll-free insurance number in your cell phone or email it to yourself for easy access.

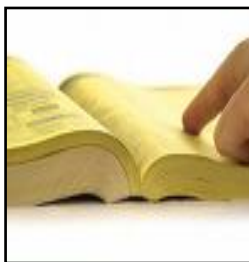
You should NOT go to the emergency room or call 911 if it is not a medical emergency. Should you be in need of non-emergency care during your stay, the insurance carrier will help you locate the nearest facilities that provide coverage under your policy, although most camps have a wellness center on campus and can address minor issues such as colds and cuts. We strongly recommend that you contact the insurance carrier before seeking out treatment at an emergency room or clinic for minor injuries or illness. Visits to the emergency room for illnesses not resulting in hospitalization or clinics unassociated with your coverage are **EXTREMELY** expensive and are your responsibility. They will direct you in the best way and can, in most cases direct you to the nearest facility.

For life threatening emergencies, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. 911 emergency services are available from all landlines, even if it is through a pay phone. This will provide you with instant access to the police, fire rescue and ambulance services. *(Note: 911 should only be used in case of emergencies. Response by local authorities is mandatory. Individuals who abuse the 911 services can be fined or prosecuted.)*

The names and number for local medical centers, hospitals and walk-in clinics are also listed in local phone books and on www.yellowbook.com. Most of these locations will ask the patient for payment of deductible at the time of service. **For additional assistance you can call toll free at 855 J1 STAFF (813.517.8233).**

SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN THE US

LOCAL COMMUNITY RESOURCES



Before departing from home you should do some research on the city where you will be living. Sites such as www.switchboard.com and www.yellowbook.com can help in finding all types of local information regarding transportation, housing, public libraries, entertainment etc. and you can utilize these sites to plan days off or your travel after camp. Most camps offer free internet connections, however the number of computers may be limited and shared among all staff. Local libraries typically offer free Internet access as well so you can find information during your stay and you can stay in contact with friends and family at home. Hard copies of the yellow book will be in telephone booths and in rental units. This booklet is a resource to find local businesses, services and residents.

SOCIAL EQUALITY

All individuals you meet should be and will expect to be treated with consideration and courtesy. North Americans expect that all people accept other individuals regardless of sex, race, occupation, handicap or religion. Women play an active role in the United States and are considered equal to men in status and therefore deserve the same respect.

USE OF NAMES

- First names are more readily used in the United States than in other countries, especially at camp. It is almost always acceptable to use the first name of someone of approximately your same age or younger as soon as you meet the person.
- The use of nicknames is fairly common, especially in the camp environment. Being called by a nickname is not uncomplimentary if done in good taste, and is often considered as a sign of acceptance and affection.
- Do not be shy to ask people how they would like you to call them and to say what you would like them to call you. This will make introductions easier.

CONSUMERISM

One of the things that always impress many people from other countries is the abundance of consumer goods. In general, Americans spend more and have more than any other nation. All around you, there will be an incredible amount of special offers and discounts advertised and it will be very tempting to just buy and buy. Credit may be easy to obtain and students are inundated with what may seem to be specially sent offers to purchase magazine subscriptions, music tapes and compact discs, and to apply for all kinds of credit cards. Be **very careful** if you decide to take up any of these offers. Read all the fine print very carefully before you make any decisions. The same goes for buying goods on sale or as part of a special offer.



FRIENDLINESS AND FRIENDSHIPS

Most US summer camps are especially friendly and lively. In close living quarters, most counselors develop friendships rather quickly. Americans in this setting may appear to form friendships very quickly and easily. However, because the United States is such a mobile society, they tend to avoid deep involvement. Friendship is viewed as something much more casual than in many other cultures. It is not uncommon for Americans to have only one close friendship during their lifetime and to consider other friends to be merely social acquaintances.

- In the United States, people often will ask, "How are you?" or "How are you doing?" when you meet them. These are usually polite phrases more than personal questions, and they do not always expect an honest answer. If you are well acquainted with this person, you might say how you truly are feeling. If not, the accepted response is usually "Fine, thank you. How are you?" even if you are not feeling very well.
- Many Americans, especially at camp, communicate with touch, by putting a hand on somebody's shoulder to express warmth of feeling, by giving a nudge to express humor, a "high five" to express congratulations or a pat on the back to express reassurance. Often they will hug when meeting. These friendly gestures are common and should not be interpreted as intrusive or disrespectful. If it makes you feel uncomfortable, you should express your discomfort and offer what you prefer.
- Even if Americans tend to touch each other more often than in some other cultures, they usually maintain a relatively large physical distance between one another during conversations or social meetings. Everybody has a different "comfort zone" around them; do not be offended if an American takes a step back as you approach him or her in a conversation. Men and women often have long-term platonic relationships, which can surprise some foreign visitors. People of the opposite sex might go to the movies, a restaurant, a concert, or other event together without ever being romantically involved.

As in any culture, it takes time to make good friends. Just be patient, try to meet as many people as possible, and with time you may form friendships while in the United States that could last a lifetime.

DATING AND RELATIONSHIPS

For many international students, American dating and relationship rituals can be one of the most difficult things to understand. Unlike many other cultures, American culture does not have an accepted pattern of behavior that regulates romantic relationships. While not universally true, you may find the following general comments useful.

- Men and women generally treat each other as equals and in an informal, casual way. There is often friendly teasing between men and women.
- Traditionally, men ask women on dates, but it is considered acceptable for a woman to ask a man out.
- Expenses on a date are sometimes paid by one person or sometimes split between the two. The man will usually offer to pay but will usually not protest if the woman offers to pay in part.
- Going on a date in American society is to express the desire to get to know the other person better. It does not assume any kind of sexual involvement. It is unacceptable — and in some cases even criminal — to impose one's sexual desires on another person. Make sure you respect the other person's wishes and, likewise, make sure you are not forced to do something you do not want to do.
- Homosexual relationships, even if not widespread, are commonplace in the United States. While many people are still uncomfortable with gays (homosexual men) or lesbians (homosexual women), it is not accepted to discriminate or make derogatory comments against them. If you are gay or lesbian, you will be able to find organizations, newspapers, and magazines targeted to you in most American cities and on some university campuses. If you are not homosexual and somebody of the same sex expresses an interest, do not be offended; just decline politely.
- It is illegal to engage in sexual relations with an individual under the age of 18 years old.
- Sexual harassment is a serious matter in the US. Unwelcome comments and verbal and non-verbal advancements can be construed as sexual harassment and can be grounds for termination of employment and in extreme cases arrest.

Remember that every situation is different and must be approached with consideration for the other person's standards, values, and sensitivities. Remember as well that HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases are present in the United States, and you should always take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from infection.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Every culture has accepted standards when it comes to personal hygiene. As a foreign visitor, you should be aware of what Americans consider appropriate and proper hygiene practices especially in the close quarters of group living. For some, American standards might seem exaggerated, unnatural, or even offensive. However, if you want to fit in more easily, you will want to adopt the practices that prevail in the United States, even though doing so might not be easy. The basic idea is that you should be clean. Makeup, perfume, and cologne are not necessary for social acceptance, but cleanliness is definitely expected.

While the practice is not universal, many people use perfume, cologne, mouthwash, and other scented products to give themselves an odor that others will presumably find pleasant. However, Americans generally do not like others to use "too much" of a scented product. Too much means that the smell is discernible from more than a meter or two away.

Most American women, though not all, shave the hair from their underarms and their lower legs and wear varying amounts of makeup on their faces. This is, however, not a requirement to "fit in." It is a matter of personal choice.

Here are a few tips and suggestions:

As a general rule, Americans usually consider that the odors that the human body naturally produces — the odors of perspiration or breath, for example — are unpleasant.

- Wash with soap at least once a day to control body odors.
- Brush your teeth with toothpaste at least in the morning and evening.
- Consider using underarm deodorant/antiperspirant to control perspiration odors.
- Wash your hair as often as necessary to keep it from becoming oily.
- Wash your clothing regularly. Clothing should not emit bodily odors. The American practice is to wash clothing that has taken on the smell of the wearer's perspiration before it is worn again. Most camps offer laundry services for their staff.

JET LAG

Depending upon where you are coming from, one of the first adjustments you will have to face after your arrival in the United States is "jet lag." Jet lag is the physical shock of your body adjusting to a new time zone. Its intensity will depend upon how many time zones you have crossed during your travel to the United States. While your body is adjusting to a new daily rhythm, you may experience headaches, disorientation, sleeplessness, or sleepiness. Many people find that for every hour of time difference, it takes one day to completely overcome the effects of jet lag. However, you may find that you are through the worst of it in about half that time. After this period of adjustment, you should be able to function normally and follow a regular daily schedule.



There are a number of things you can do to help yourself through the transition. Attempt to follow the normal eating and sleeping patterns of your new time zone. Resist taking naps in the middle of the day since it will make it more difficult to sleep at night and will only serve to prolong your jet lag. Instead, take a walk, exercise, or plan activities with friends during the day when you find you are tired.

CULTURE SHOCK

Culture shock is the process of adjusting to a new country and a new culture, which may be dramatically different from your own. Climate, food, and landscapes, as well as people and their ways all seem strange to you and you may suffer, to an unexpected degree from the fast pace of life and the group living.

If you feel this way, do not panic. Culture shock is a normal reaction. As you become adjusted to US culture and attitudes and begin to know your way around, you will start to adapt to and understand your new surroundings and way of life.

Some strategies to cope with the stress of culture shock include:

- Make sure you know what to expect before you arrive. Carefully read this guide and other books and magazines on the United States and the city where you will be living to find out more about American life and customs. This will help you orient yourself physically and mentally when you arrive in the United States.
- Eat well, sleep well, and take good care of yourself.
- Exercise is a great way to alleviate stress and tension. Ask your camp director what facilities are available to you and join a camp league when possible.
- Find some time on your day off to walk around your new neighborhood or to enjoy the camp facilities. This might help you develop a sense of home as you find the local stores, parks, activity centers, and so on. Try to carry a small map of the city with you so you will not get needlessly lost very often.
- Keep in touch with family and friends to tell them about your experiences.
- Take some time to relax. Listen to music, read a book, and go to bed early once in a while.
- Do not lose your sense of humor. Laugh at your mistakes rather than getting depressed about them.

Information was compiled from a combination of sources with a large part from, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State.

TRAVEL

Can I travel outside of the United States while on my J-1 visa?

Yes, but there are considerations.

- Your visa permits re-entry into the US and does not permit entry into another country. You are obligated to obtain the necessary documentation or visa as outlined between your home country and the country you plan to visit.
- Travel outside of the US to a contiguous territory or adjacent island within your program dates, whether for employment purposes or personal day off, is permitted without travel validation. My DS2019 will permit me re-admittance to the United States on the current program but does not permit me entry to any neighboring countries.
- A **“Travel Validation By Responsible Officer”** signature is required if traveling outside of the US (not to a contiguous territory or adjacent island) If you need this signature, you will need to contact your sponsor at least 4 weeks in advance and you will need to ship your forms DS2019 via Fed Ex with a prepaid self-addressed Fed Ex return label for its return to you. You can find your sponsor’s name and contact number in section 7 on your DS 2019. Your sponsor or a representative must sign the Form DS 2019 to indicate that you are traveling and are still in "good standing" with your employer who is expecting you to return. If you leave the U.S. without this signature of "good standing" you may not be permitted to reenter the US under the J-1 visa and you will forfeit your work eligibility and your insurance coverage. In addition, you must have your sponsor sign your **“Travel Validation By Responsible Officer”** if you plan to visit another country other than a contiguous territory or adjacent island. See below:
- If taking short trips (30 days or less) to Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands during the course of your visit to the U.S., hold onto your I-94; **it should only be turned in when you leave the U.S. to return home.**

What is the 30-day “grace period?”

The Department of Homeland Security allows all Exchange Visitors 30 days of lawful status in the US following completion of your program. This 30 day “grace period” is NOT included in the program dates listed in item 3 of forms DS2019. If you are participating in the summer work travel program your program and grace period must fall within the permitted dates specific to your home country.



Can I travel outside of the United States while on the 30-day Grace Period:

NO!!! I am permitted to travel WITHIN the US for up to 30 days after my program end date as indicated in Section 3 of my DS2019 form. If I travel outside of the US during my grace period, my visa will void and I will not be permitted re-entry into the US on my J1 visa. I may need a visitor’s visa for return entry.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS WHILE I AM IN THE US?

Your sponsor is your first point of contact while in the US. They are your advocates and work in your best interest. If you have any questions or concerns about your employment, your employer, your pay, your medical insurance, etc, you can contact your sponsor.

You can reach your sponsor by calling **855-517-8233** or calling the telephone number indicated on your DS2019 section 7. You will receive friendly emails from your sponsor simply asking to confirm your US address, to confirm you are well and you are safe, to report what exchange activities you have been involved in, and to disclose if you are in need of any assistance. This is also the time to share a funny story, upload pictures, etc. If you do not have access to emails you must call your sponsor and provide a telephone number to reach you as an alternate means of contact.

TWO-YEAR HOME-COUNTRY FOREIGN RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT

When you agree to participate in an Exchange Visitor Program and your program falls under the conditions explained below, you will be subject to the two-year home-country physical presence (foreign residence) requirement. **If you are subject to the two-year home-country physical presence (foreign residence) requirement, you cannot change your status to that of H, L, K, or immigrant lawful permanent resident (LPR) until you have returned to your home country for at least two-years or received a waiver of that requirement.** This requirement under immigration law is based on Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, and Title 22 Part 40 and Part 41 in the Code of Federal Regulations.

Two-year Home-country Physical Presence Requirement Conditions - An exchange visitor is subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement if the following conditions exist:

- **Government funded exchange program** - The program in which the exchange visitor was participating was financed in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the U.S. government or the government of the exchange visitor's nationality or last residence;
- **Graduate medical education or training** - The exchange visitor entered the U.S. to receive graduate medical education or training;
- **Specialized knowledge or skill: Skills List** - The exchange visitor is a national or permanent resident of a country which has deemed the field of specialized knowledge or skill necessary to the development of the country, as shown on the Exchange Visitor Skills List. <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/exchange/exchange-visitor-skills-list.html>

DEPARTING THE UNITED STATES

I did not turn in my I-94 when I left the U.S., what should I do?

If you entered the country with the new electronic system, your departure will be automatically verified. If you were given a hard copy card, Form I-94 (white) or Form I-94W (green) Departure Record in your passport and you did not turn it in, it is possible that your departure was not recorded properly.

If you departed by a commercial air or sea carrier (airlines or cruise ships), your departure from the U.S. can be independently verified, and it is not necessary to take any further action, although holding on to your outbound (from the U.S.) boarding pass - if you still have it - can help facilitate your reentry next time you come back to the United States.

If you departed by land, private vessel or private plane, you will need to take steps to correct the record. If you do not validate your timely departure from the United States, or, if you cannot reasonably prove you departed within the time frame given to you when you entered, the next time you apply for admission to the U.S., Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may conclude you remained in the U.S. beyond your authorized stay. If this happens, your visa may be subject to cancellation or you may be returned immediately to your foreign point of origin.

Under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), visitors who remain beyond their permitted stay in the United States cannot reenter the U.S. in the future without obtaining a visa from a U.S. Consulate. So if you are a Visa Waiver Program visitor who traveled by land to either Canada or Mexico for an onward flight, it is particularly important for you to register your timely departure if your green I-94W was not taken when you exited the U.S. If you fail to do so and you arrive at a U.S. port of entry seeking admission under the Visa Waiver Program without a visa, CBP Officers may order your immediate return to a foreign point of origin. If you are a VWP visitor and you left the U.S. by an air or sea carrier, you don't need to worry.

If you failed to turn in your I-94 Departure Record, please send it, along with any documentation that proves you left the United States to:

DHS - CBP SBU, 1084 South Laurel Road, London, KY 40744

Do not mail your Form I-94 Departure Record or supporting information to any U.S. Consulate or Embassy, to any other CBP Office in the United States, or to any address other than the one above. Only at this location are they able to make the necessary corrections to CBP records to prevent inconvenience to you in the future. The London, Kentucky office does not answer correspondence, so please do not ask for confirmation that your record has been updated.

To validate departure, CBP will consider a variety of information, including but not limited to:

- Original boarding passes you used to depart another country, such as Canada, if you flew home from there;
- Photocopies of entry or departure stamps in your passport indicating entry to another country after you departed the United States (you should copy all passport pages that are not completely blank, and include the biographical page containing your photograph); and
- Photocopies of other supporting evidence, such as:
 - Dated pay slips or vouchers from your employer to indicate you worked in another country after you departed the United States,
 - Dated bank records showing transactions to indicate you were in another country after you left the United States,
 - School records showing attendance at a school outside the United States to indicate you were in another country after you left the United States, and
 - Dated credit card receipts, showing your name, but, the credit card number deleted, for purchases made after you left the United States to indicate you were in another country after leaving the United States.

You must mail legible copies or original materials where possible. If you send original materials, you should retain a copy. CBP cannot return original materials after processing. We strongly urge you to keep a copy of what you send to DHS-CBP and carry it with you the next time you come to the United States in case the CBP Officer has any questions about your eligibility to enter. Carrying those materials with you will also allow your record to be corrected at the time of entry if, for some reason, the London, Kentucky office has not yet done so.

Delays beyond the traveler's control, such as cancelled or delayed flights, medical emergencies requiring a doctor's care, etc. are not considered unauthorized overstays, however, you will need to bring proof of the cause of your overstay next time you travel to the U.S. in order for it to be forgiven. For airline delays, ask the airline for a letter affirming the delay or a copy of your cancelled boarding pass.

For more information on this subject click on the link below

https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/752/kw/forgot%20to%20hand%20in%20i94

PARTICIPANT PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION CONFIRMATION

I was provided with pre-departure orientation information outlining US entry information, program rights, requirements and obligations, social security, US laws, emergency contact and other necessary information that I may need for the success of the program.

I understand that my sponsor is my first point of contact in the US and will support and assist me in times of need. I also understand that my sponsor requires that I maintain compliance with the program regulations and is obligated to terminate my program if I fail to meet my responsibilities.

For my convenience, my sponsor has outlined here some of the main points included in this material to emphasize my responsibilities and obligations. Failure to comply fully with these or other program regulations may result in the termination or early end of my program. If my program is terminated or ended early, I must return home immediately at my own cost and no refund of program fees will be provide.

- I am responsible for reporting to my sponsor my expected entry date and departure date and must update my sponsor of any changes prior to my departure.
- I must arrange my arrival in accordance with arrival practices of my employer and I must arrive in time to attend my contracted first day of work. Any travel delays or cancellations that would affect my ability to meet this obligation must be reported to my sponsor and my employer.
- I must check-in with my sponsor within 5 days of my program beginning date as indicated in Section 2 of my DS2019 or my visa to confirm my specific US address (including building or cabin name/number) and to confirm a working email address and to provide a US telephone number.
- I must adhere to the required continued communication as outlined by my sponsor including regular check ins, update of US address & telephone number, and response to sponsor initiated contact within 5 days.
- If I am unable to use the internet to communication with my sponsor and to check in as required, I must call my sponsor to satisfy the check in requirements.
- I must endeavor to complete my employment as per the contract submitted to my sponsor and must report any grievances to my sponsor.
- I must engage in cultural activities and report such activities to my sponsor.
- I must maintain medical insurance coverage for the entire length of my program.
- I must abide by all US laws.
- I must not bring disrepute to my employer, my sponsor or the program as a whole.
- I am only permitted to work for the employer initially approved for my sponsorship and indicated on my form DS2019. Accepting unapproved employment is not permitted under any circumstance.
- Secondary/Alternate employment can only be approved after undergoing the proper process for employer vetting and approval. I understand that potential employers must be willing to provide my sponsor with required documentation including a seasonality survey, business license copy, and workman's compensation policy.
- I understand that termination of my initial employment (voluntarily or involuntarily) does not automatically permit me to seek for or accept alternate employment. My sponsor will consider the reason for termination and a decision will be made regarding my visa status. If I remain in good standing and want to continue my program, I am permitted to seek alternate employment or request assistance from my sponsor in securing alternate employment, but I must have adequate funds accessible to me to cover all living expenses and travel during this search. If alternate employment is not found or approved within ten (10) days, I can choose to return home at my expense or I can request an extension to continue seeking employment. I understand that extensions are only permitted if I can show that I have access to funds to cover additional living expenses. If I do not have accessible funds, I understand that I will have to return home at my expense.

PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)

SIGNATURE