



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural
Affairs
Private Sector Exchange



February 1, 2022

Dear Summer Work Travel Participant:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program, BridgeUSA. During your stay in the U.S., you will enhance your skills and expertise and you will make connections and memories that will last a lifetime. Your participation empowers you to represent your country as a 'citizen ambassador', where you will help create new and lasting relationships between our two nations.

As a summer work travel participant, you are part of a U.S. Department of State cultural exchange program in which you, like thousands of other summer work travel participants from around the world, will have the opportunity to share your language, culture, and customs with the Americans you meet in your local communities, places of employment, and travel destinations over the course of your semester break from your college or university back home.

As you meet new people, make new friends, and experience new personal and professional challenges, you will learn about the United States, its values, and its people. You will improve your knowledge of American techniques and technology, increase your understanding of American society, demonstrate your skills, and enrich your American colleagues' knowledge of your culture.

In order to ensure that you have a safe and exciting cultural exchange experience here, we encourage you to take a few precautions both before and after you arrive:

- Contact your employer to obtain written confirmation of any job offer details. Make sure all terms and conditions are clear and that you understand them all. In addition, make sure you understand any housing agreements. If there is anything you do not understand, ask your U.S. sponsor or host employer before you come. Note that the terms and conditions of your job must follow all local, state, and federal laws.
- Notify your U.S. sponsor and host employer of your exact arrival time and make sure you fully understand the best way to travel to your housing or employment address. If your sponsor is not meeting you, plan the journey to your destination carefully.
- Make sure that you have enough money to cover your expenses. Your U.S. sponsor should provide you with an estimate of the necessary amount. If they have not provided this information yet, ask them. Also consider bringing extra money in case of an emergency.
- Study all the pre-arrival materials provided by your U.S. sponsor. Make sure you understand your rights, both in this country and in your program, as well as your obligations, such as updating your address once you arrive.
- Learn about the area in which you will live and work in the United States before you come. Pay special attention to that area's safe and affordable housing areas, public transportation, medical facilities, banks, shopping areas, and so on. Your U.S. sponsor should advise you on these matters if you are unsure.

Your U.S. program sponsor, identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status, is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. If you have any questions about your exchange program, if you need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right to you, immediately contact your U.S. program sponsor at the telephone number in your orientation material. This telephone number should be available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have concerns or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline (1-866-283-9090), which is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program. Please add the jvisas@state.gov email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department.

As exciting and enriching as international exchange can be, it may present challenges. The Department of State's concern for your health, safety, and welfare includes your mental health. There are many resources available to help deal with mental health issues. Please reach-out to <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help/immediate-help> for immediate help. BridgeUSA also has other available resources on our website, <https://j1visa.state.gov/programs>, for you to check out.

As a summer work travel participant on a BridgeUSA program, you will receive future emails regarding alumni opportunities with over one million current and former exchange visitors. We welcome you to join the International Exchange alumni website – a place where past and present U.S. visitors find tools to advance their communities and our world. You can read more at: <https://alumni.state.gov/>.

We are pleased that you made the decision to be part of this amazing program. I hope you enjoy your stay in the United States.

Sincerely,



Nicole Elkon
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Private Sector Exchange