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Exchange Visitor Program

Welcome Brochure

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program, BridgeUSA.

During your exchange program, you will have the unique opportunity to experience life in the United States. You will not only serve as an ambassador of your home country helping to educate the American people about your country and customs, but you will experience American culture first-hand. You will also enhance your skills and expertise and make connections and memories that will last a lifetime.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, provide you with information on contacting the U.S. Department of State, and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

BridgeUSA

The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange.

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 exchange visitors with pre-arrival information and an orientation in addition to monitoring activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in activities that provide you with an opportunity to share your language, culture, and history of your country 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. Your sponsor's role is to help you manage your program. If problems arise or you have questions, your sponsor is there to help you. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is your sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor, you should contact the person whose name and telephone number is located 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 may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

Current Regulations

The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62) and can be found at:

j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/

It is important that you understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your sponsor will help you keep current with any change which may affect your J-1 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 program 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 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), your spouse, and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their exchange visitors. Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance providers. Consult with your responsible officer's sponsor before the start of your program.

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

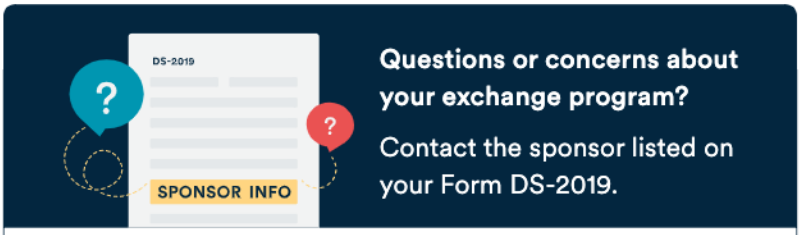
You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program. If your program is terminated, you are expected to immediately depart the U.S.

Required Notifications to Sponsors

You must immediately inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence), telephone number, email address, 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.

Contacting the U.S. 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.



Questions or concerns about your exchange program?

Contact the sponsor listed on your Form DS-2019.

Still have questions AFTER speaking with your sponsor?

Email Jvisas@state.gov

Remaining concerns or need emergency assistance?

Call the J-1 Visa Emergency Hotline at 1-866-283-9090

The U.S. Department of State does not tolerate any form of retaliation and fully supports your request for assistance.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911!

Helpful Links:

For questions on applying please visit:

j1visa.state.gov/participants

j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EV-TRIFOLD.pdf

Resources and Common Questions for Exchange Visitors:

j1visa.state.gov/participants/current

j1visa.state.gov/participants/common-questions/