Participant Handbook 2016

alliance abroad group®

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WELCOME TO THE U.S.!

Congratulations! You are on your way to writing a new and exciting story in your life! We at Alliance Abroad Group (AAG) are here to help you make the most of your time in the U.S. and to have a fun, safe and valuable program experience. With a good attitude and a willingness to meet new people and try new things, this will be one of the best experiences of your life!

AAG has been a U.S. Department of State-designated program sponsor for the J-1 Summer Work Travel program since 2002 and the Intern, Trainee and Teacher programs since 2009. This designation is granted after a lengthy review, so you can trust that you are in good hands. We pride ourselves on world-class service, high-quality placements, and 24/7 personal assistance prior, during, and after your program.

Please use this handbook as one of your reference guides throughout your time in the U.S. If you have questions at any time throughout your program, please contact your Outreach Coordinator or AAG 24 Hour Support
Line at **1-866-622-7623** or emails us at **supportinfo@allianceabroad.com**.

Alliance Abroad Group is driven by a core of set of values.

- Mentorship: The spirit of sharing your knowledge, development and experiences to foster growth.
- Kindness: Accepting and appreciating and respecting the value of each individual.
- Integrity: doing the right thing by your actions and your words.

AAG is an equal opportunity employer. Equal Employment Opportunity has been, and will continue to be, a fundamental principle for AAG, where employment or promotion is based upon personal capabilities and qualifications without discrimination because of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, marital or veteran status, gender identity or any other protected characteristic as established by federal or state laws.

This policy of Equal Employment Opportunity applies to all aspects of employment. It includes but is not limited to, all policies and procedures relating to recruitment and hiring, training, promotion or transfers, discipline, compensation, benefits, termination or layoffs and all other terms and conditions of employment.

YOUR AAG OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Alliance Abroad Group provides participants with full service support. An Outreach Coordinator (OC) is the AAG team member assigned to assist you while you are in the U.S. on your program. This person is your direct contact to AAG and the first person to contact if you have questions or concerns. Your OC can help you with arrival information, job issues that you cannot resolve with your supervisor, SEVIS, Social Security questions, housing, and much more!

If you need assistance after business hours (before 8:30am or after 5:30pm), please call our 24 hour emergency number: 1-866-622-7623.

If you need urgent help because you are injured or in immediate danger, use the nearest phone to dial 911 (Emergency Services).

ALLIANCE ABROAD GROUP CONTACT INFORMATION:

1221 South Mopac Expressway, Suite 100
Austin, Texas 78746
24 Hour Support Line: 1-866-622-7623
Email: supportinfo@allianceabroad.com
Business Hours: Monday-Friday, 8:30am – 5:30pm Central Standard Time

All health, safety or welfare emergency phone calls received after Business Hours will be patched through to an AAG On Call Representative.

For non-emergency calls, messages will be taken and will be responded to the next business day.

J-1 VISA PROGRAMS

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PROGRAM

The Summer Work Travel program provides foreign university students with an opportunity to live and work in the U.S. during their official summer vacation from college or university to experience and to be exposed to the people and way of life in the U.S. and share their own culture.

INTERN AND TRAINEE PROGRAMS

Internship programs are designed to allow foreign college and university students or recent graduates to come to the U.S. to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive hands-on experience in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field.

Training programs are designed to allow foreign professionals to come to the U.S. to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive training in U.S. business practices in their chosen occupational field.

TEACH

The Teach program places certified and experienced international teachers in American classrooms (from kindergarten through 12th grade) for up to three years.

Participants must be fully certified educators with a degree that meets program regulations, have at least 3 years of classroom teaching experience, and must demonstrate fluency in English.

ALL EXCHANGE VISITORS ARE EXPECTED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME COUNTRY UPON COMPLETION OF THEIR PROGRAM IN ORDER TO SHARE THEIR EXCHANGE EXPERIENCES.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

According to Department of State Regulations, you may not arrive more than 30 days before the program start date shown on your DS-2019. Upon completion of your exchange program, you have a grace period of 30 days to depart the U.S..

If you plan to withdraw from your program, you must notify your program sponsor (AAG). Your program sponsor will enter this information into SEVIS and you may be expected to depart the U.S. immediately. You may not be entitled to the post-completion 30-day grace period.

For more information, visit the U.S. Department of State Website:
http://j1visa.state.gov/participants/

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
INTERNATIONAL MOTOR TRAFFIC
FEE
$15.00
International Driving Permit
Convention on International Road Traffic of 19 September 1949
(United Nations)
Issued at HEATHROW, FLORIDA 32746-5063, U.S.A.
Valid For One Year From:
Date
JUL 25 2014
IMPORTANT
minolta
XD5
MD MINOLTA CELTIC 28mm 1:2.8
LENS MADE IN JAPAN
MINOLTA
WORLD'S
FINEST
GRAIN
LE GRAIN LE PLUS FIN AU MONDE
WELTWEIT FEINSTES KORN
EL GRANO MÁS FINO DEL MUNDO
LA GRANA PIÙ FINE AL MONDO
WORLD'S
FINEST
GRAIN
LE GRAIN LE PLUS FIN AU MONDE
WELTWEIT FEINSTES KORN
EL GRANO MÁS FINO DEL MUNDO
LA GRANA PIÙ FINE AL MONDO

PRE-DEPARTURE PROCESS

Congratulations! Youu have been accepted into a J-1 visa program and issued a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status: Form DS-2019. Below are the steps you must take upon receipt of your DS-2019 form and Sponsor Letter:

1. Complete the Online Visa Application (Form DS-160)

2. Schedule your visa Interview at the U.S Embassy or Consulate

3. Gather all the required documents:

- **Passport**- valid for travel to the U.S. Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the U.S.
- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-160 confirmation page**
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the photo upload fails, you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the Photograph Requirements.
- **DS-2019 Form**
- **Training/Internship Placement Plan, Form DS-7002** (Intern/Trainee Only)
- **AAG Sponsor Letter**
- **Review the Wilberforce Pamphlet** on the Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html
- **Additional documents** might be required to establish whether you qualify for a J-1 visa. For example, additional required documents may provide evidence of:
    - The purpose of your travel;
    - Your intent to depart the U.S. after your travel;
    - Your ability to pay all travel costs; and/or
    - Other documents the consular officer may request.

4. Attend your visa interview. Some of the questions you might be asked:
   - Why do you want to go to the U.S.?
   - What are your qualifications?
   - What are you currently doing?
   - Which university do you attend or did you graduate from?
   - What program are you applying to?
   - When did you apply for your program?
   - How much was your placement fee?
   - Who is going to pay for your expenses? How much will you make per hour?
   - Tell me about your housing in the U.S.?
   - What will you be doing in the U.S.?
5. During your visa interview, you can also expect to get a digital fingerprint scan as part of your application.
6. If your visa is approved, you will be informed how your passport with visa will be returned to you.

UPON RECEIVING YOUR J-1 VISA:

1. Notify your Agency in your home country (if applicable).
2. Purchase and confirm your flight to the U.S.
3. Provide your Arrival Information to AAG: www.allianceabroad.com/arrival.
4. If your housing is Participant Arranged, you MUST secure your housing for the entire duration of your program before you depart for the U.S..
5. Please follow the arrival instructions listed in your Job Offer or Training Offer. If arrival instructions state that you need to provide your Host Company or your Landlord with your arrival information, please make sure to do so.

J-2 DEPENDENTS:

If you have any accompanying J-2 dependents traveling with you, please make sure to provide their arrival information to AAG by emailing supportinfo@allianceabroad.com.

2 YEAR HOME COUNTRY PHYSICAL PRESENSE

When you apply for a J-1 visa, you might be a subject to a 212 (e) section of the Immigration and Nationality Act. This requirement indicates that you must return to your home country for two years at the end of your exchange visitor program. If you are a subject to the 212 (e), which should be indicated on your visa, you will have to reside in your home country or last legal permanent residence for an aggregate of 2 years before you are eligible to apply for:

- An immigrant visa
- A permanent residence
- A nonimmigrant H visa as a temporary worker or trainee,
- A nonimmigrant L visa as an intracompany transferee,
- A nonimmigrant H or L visa as the spouse or minor child of a person who is a temporary worker or trainee or an intracompany transferee
- A fiancé K visa

BEFORE YOU TRAVEL TO THE USA

Before you depart for the airport to begin your journey to the U.S., please check to make sure you have all of these important documents with you:

- Passport with your J-1 visa in it
- DS-2019
- DS-7002 (Intern/Trainees only)
- Job Offer Letter
- Sponsor Letter (from AAG)
- In addition please make sure that you have the following information with you:
- Your Arrival Instructions- review your job or training offer letter and emails from AAG!
- AAG 24 Hour Support Number: 1-866-622-7623
- Your U.S housing address and contact information- Know where you will be staying!
- Your Host Company or Host School contact information

Gates DEFGH
Transfer T4-9
First aid
Eerste hulp
Airline lounges 25-52
By invitation only
Baggage ha
Arrivals ha
T2-T3
Tra
Chocolatier Smurf
ELIE SAAB

ARRIVAL PROCESS

CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

Upon arrival in the U.S., you will be a subject to the inspection by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers. CBP officers will conduct the Immigration, Customs and Agriculture components of the inspection process.
Please make sure you have the following documents ready to present to the Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) officer:

1. Passport with your J-1 visa in it
2. U.S. Customs Declaration Form (will be given to you by the airline)
3. DS-2019
4. DS-2007 (Intern/Trainee Only)
5. Job Offer Letter
6. Sponsor Letter (from AAG)

Inability to present passport, valid J-1 visa, form DS-2019 and form DS-7002 (Intern/Trainee only), may result in denial of entry to the U.S. Please make sure you have all of the documents listed above with you when you arrive in the U.S.

Please remember that it is always up to the CBP officer to determine whether you can be admitted to the U.S.. You may also be asked to go through a secondary inspection. Please make sure that you are calm during the inspection process and answer all the questions truthfully.

ONWARD TRAVEL PLANS

After clearing Customs and Immigration, please proceed to your final destination- the city where your Host Company or Host School is located. Please pay attention to the arrival instructions that you were provided in your Job Offer or Training Offer. Make sure to report to your housing during preferred arrival times. If you arrive outside of the preferred arrival times and you have not made prior arrangements, you will need to check yourself for the night or weekend into the nearby hotel/motel/hostel at your own expense.

ARRIVAL CHECKLIST

YOU'RE HERE! NOW WHAT?

1. **Get settled into your housing:** Unpack, meet your roommates, etc.

2. **Call home:** Let your family know you have arrived in the US and how they can contact you.

3. **Register in SEVIS:** Register with SEVIS by going to: www.allianceabroad. com/sevis. This is a program requirement that must be completed within three (3) days of your DS-2019 start date. Please include your apartment/room/hotel number.

   The following J-1 program participants must contact AAG during Business Hours to report arrival in the U.S.:
   - Teacher Program Participants
   - J-1 participants with accompanying J-2 dependents

4. **Retrieve your I-94 record:** You may retrieve your I-94 record within 24 hours of arriving to the U.S. by going to: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.htm. Print a copy for your employer and one for you to present at the Social Security office.

5. **Contact your Host Company**: Your Host Company contact information is in your Job Offer Letter or on your Training Plan document. Let them know you are here. They can tell you where and when to meet them.

6. **Go grocery shopping**:You must be hungry. Make a list and find the best way to the grocery store. This is also a good time to buy any other items (toi- letries, clothing, etc.) you may need.

7. **Rest:** Get some rest so you are relaxed and ready for your adventure in your new position.

TOP TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **Job Offer/Training Offer:** Read your Job/Training Offer in its entirety. Pay attention to:

    - Program Dates
    - Host Company Requirements
    - Housing Information
    - Arrival instructions

This information is provided to you to ensure that you have a successful start to your program.

2. **Housing:** AAG or your Host Company has provided you with temporary or permanent housing options listed in your Job/Training Offer.

    - If you have housing arranged by the Host Company, be sure you know what the requirements are for the deposit.
    - If your position includes housing, you cannot find your own housing without permission from AAG or the host company.
    - If your housing is Participant Arranged or AAG Assisted, please arrange and confirm your Housing BEFORE you depart for the U.S.. You must have housing for the entire duration of your program.
    - Once you make a commitment to housing, please understand that you are obligated by U.S. law to pay rent on time and through the end of your contract.
    - Bring enough money to cover deposit and first month's rent.
    - If you change your housing during your program you are required to update SEVIS with your new address within 10 days.

If you arrive in the U.S. without pre-arranged and confirmed housing, you will have to stay in a nearby hostel/motel and pay for your room per each day, which is very expensive.

3. **Bring Enough Money:** In the AAG Terms and Conditions you signed, you agreed to bring enough money with you to support yourself until you receive your first paycheck. You may not get paid for several weeks after you have started working or training. Some Host Companies cannot pay you until you have received your Social Security card.

AAG recommends that you bring at least $1,000 - $1,500 to cover your living expenses. For a breakdown of estimated expenses please see our website.

Please note: The AAG recommended amount of $1,000 - $1,500 does not include the cost of traveling to your job/training site or any initial housing costs (first month rent and the deposit).

4. Register in SEVIS: After you arrive in the U.S., you MUST register with SEVIS within 3 days of your DS-2019 start date.

- Register your U.S. home address, including your apartment or room number (where you sleep) and work address (Host Company Address) online within 3 days of your program start date at:
- www.allianceabroad.com/sevis. You will need your AAG ID Number (found on your AAG ID card or sponsor letter) and DS-2019 number.
- You cannot register with SEVIS before the start date on your DS-2019 form.
- SEVIS registration is required to activate your J1 program and to maintain good status with the U.S. government. Failure to register with SEVIS will have serious consequences for your program.
- SEVIS registration is necessary to apply for your Social Security card. If you do not register in time, your Social Security card will be delayed.

5. Social Security Card: You must apply for a Social Security Card at least ten business days after registering with SEVIS. Be sure to apply for Social Security at the beginning of your program. Many employers will want to see a copy of the letter confirming you have applied for your Social Security number. If you apply in the last month of your program, your application will be rejected! Here are the steps you should follow:

1. Find your local Social Security Office: https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp
2. Bring the following documents with you:

- Completed Social Security application form: http://ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf
- Passport/ Visa
- Sponsor letter
- Job or Training Offer
- Training Plan (Interms and Trainees only)
- DS-2019
- Electronic I-94 record print out (can be printed at the following link:
- https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html)
- Birth Certificate or at least one official picture ID (identification document) that is at least one year old. If the passport and other official ID, such as a driver's license, are both less than one year old, a birth certificate is required.

We recommend using your Host Company address on the Social Security application form. Keep your Social Security application receipt and show it to your Host Company.

6. Monthly Check-Ins: Each month, AAG will send you an email request to complete your Monthly Check In.

This is a mandatory component of the program.

- Not completing Monthly Check-In will put your program status at risk.
- The link to Monthly Check In is located on AAG Website: http:// participants.allianceabroad.com/during-your-program/monthly-check-in/
- While completing your Monthly Check-In, you must inform us of any changes to your housing address, email and phone number within 10 day of any changes.

7. Second Job (Summer Work Travel participants ONLY): If you want to seek a second job you must get pre-approval from AAG prior to beginning work to ensure that the job is within your visa regulations.

- DO NOT start a second job without your sponsor's (AAG's) verification and approval. Doing so could be grounds for termination of your program.
- To request approval, complete the following form and submit to AAG: http://www.allianceabroad.com/second-job/ You are NOT authorized to work at your second job, until AAG informs you that the job is approved.

8. **Insurance:** The health care system in the U.S. is very different from other countries:

- Your insurance coverage starts one day before your DS-2019 start date and ends one day after your DS-2019 end date.
- Understand your health insurance: You can find full information on your health insurance on the AAG Participant page: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/.
- Please review insurance information on AAG website very carefully, so you are familiar with what your insurance does and does not cover.
- It is important that you follow the instructions listed on this page in order to avoid paying a lot of money at a doctor's office or hospital.
- Call your insurance company before getting treatment (unless emergency): They will ask for your name and certificate number (listed on your insurance card). The insurance company will assist you with locating a doctor in your area.
- If it is an emergency you should go to the emergency room first and contact your health insurance company within 48 hours.
- Always take your insurance card, passport, and DS-2019 form with you when you go to the doctor.
- When you go to the doctor, you will have to pay a fee for the first visit and an additional fee for each follow up visit. This cost is called a deductible and it is normal for every insurance company:
- Your deductible for doctor's office visit is $100 per visit.
- The deductible for a hospital visit is $250 per visit.
- **Only go to the hospital when it is an emergency**
- Additional insurance: Visit AAG's website for information on how to purchase addition Travel Insurance for before and/or after your program as well as Ski Insurance.

- **J-2 Dependents:** All J-2 dependents must have AAG Insurance for the entire duration of their stay in the U.S. For more information about J-2 insurance, please see AAG Website: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/j-2-insurance-coverage/

9. Host Company/Host School: If you are having any problems at your Host Company/Host School, you MUST discuss these difficulties with your Host Company/Host School and AAG.

- Please talk to us before you decide to leave your current placement. If you leave your site of activity without communicating with AAG, you may not be eligible to continue participating in your J-1program. Please call AAG at any time if you have any questions, problems or concerns.

- You may not begin working or training at your Host Company/Host School until the start date on your DS-2019 form.

10. Get Involved in Cultural Activities: Participating in cultural exchange activities is an essential part of the J1 program. AAG highly encourages you to participate in as many cultural exchange opportunities as possible.

- AAG and your Host Company/Host School will provide you with some opportunities and ideas for experiencing American culture.
- Share your experience on our Facebook page or email us. We are excited to hear your stories and see pictures from your adventures!

Contact AAG: If you have any questions or concerns, please call or email us right away to let us know. We want to help and advise you anyway we can! Please contact your OC first but the entire AAG Team is here to help.

- Toll Free: 1 (866) 622-7623
- Email: Supportinfo@allianceabroad.com

RETRIEVING I-94 RECORD

The I-94 is the Arrival / Departure Record that is issued by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer to foreign visitors entering the U.S. All I-94 records are created electronically. At the time of arrival, you will be provided with a stamp in your passport indicating the Class of Admission and the Departure Date. You must exit the U.S. on or before the departure date stamped in the passport.

To retrieve your I-94 record, please follow these steps:

1. Wait 24 hours from your arrival in the U.S. before you attempt to retrieve your I-94 number.
2. Go to the CBP website: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html. Make sure the computer you are using is connected to a printer.
3. Enter required information in all CAPITAL letters. Please make sure you enter your name exactly as it appears in your passport.
4. Click submit.

If you tried to retrieve your I-94 from and you receive a response that your I-94 is "Not Found," please read the following questions to help you check for mistakes and try to enter the information again:

1. Did you enter your first and last name the same way it appears on your passport? Please do not use dashes or titles.
2. Did you enter the passport number that appears on the upper right hand side of your passport?
3. Did you enter your country of citizenship (country that issued the passport, not where you currently live)?
4. Under Class of Admission, did you enter the visa classification that appears on your U.S. visa OR, if you are traveling under the visa waiver program (VWP)
5. enter WT/WB?
6. If you entered your first and middle name and it is not found, try one name
7. or the other. Also try entering your first and middle name in the first name box.
8. Try entering either your most recent date of entry or your original date of entry into the U.S.

1. If you still cannot find your I-94, please follow these steps:

2. Locate the nearest Deferred Inspection Site to you: http://www.cbp.gov/contact/deferred-inspection/overview-deferred-inspection

3. Call the nearest Deferred Inspection Site during their office hours. Please make sure to have the following documents with you when placing the call:

    - Passport
    - DS-2019
    - Boarding Pass

Inform the CBP officer of the issues you are experiencing retrieving your I-94 record and ask if they can assist you over the phone. The CBP officer might inform you that you need to appear in person.
If you need to report to the Deferred Inspection Site in person, please make sure that you report to the Deferred Inspection Site during office hours and bring the following documents with you:

- Passport
- DS-2019
- Boarding Pass

If you have arrived in the U.S. before May 2013, then you should have a paper I-94 record (white card). Make sure that your paper I-94 card is stapled to your passport and is kept in a safe place. If you lose your paper I-94 card, you will need to replace it and pay $330. For specific instructions on filing paperwork to replace your lost/stolen I-94 document, please contact your Outreach Coordinator.

SEVIS REGISTRATION

As soon as your program begins and you have arrived in the U.S., you must update your Host Company address and your U.S. home address (including your apartment or room number) in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Failure to report your address within 3 days of your DS-2019 start date upon arrival in the U.S. will have serious negative consequences for your visa program.

You may complete your SEVIS check-in on the AAG website: www.allianceabroad.com/sevis.

- You cannot register before you arrive in the U.S. or before the start date on your DS-2019 form.
- If you are staying in a hotel or apartment, you MUST include a room or apartment number.
- Your address cannot be the same as your Host Company address (unless, you are actually living and working in the same building).
- SEVIS will not accept P.O. (Postal Office) boxes.
- If you move, you must register again with your new address within 10 days.

If you do not provide this information correctly, your SEVIS registration will be delayed. You cannot apply for a Social Security Card until you are correctly registered with SEVIS (see below section titled "Social Security Card"). If you have entered all of the information correctly, you will see the word CONFIRMED on the screen.

If you cannot access a computer or have problems, please call our 24 HOUR Support Line: **1-866-622-7623**

J-2 Dependents: AAG must be informed of J-2 dependents' arrival and anticipated departures. Please call our 24 Hour Support Line to report:

- Arrivals- please call to inform us within 24 hours of arriving in the U.S.
- Departures- please call to inform us 7 days prior to departure from the U.S

SOCIAL SECURITY

To obtain a Social Security Card, you must go in person to your local Social Security office and bring the following original documents with you:

- Completed Application: http://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf
- Passport/ Visa
- Sponsor letter
- Job Offer/Training Offer
- Training Plan (DS-2007) (Intern and Trainee only)
- DS-2019
- I-94 record print out
- Birth Certificate or at least one official picture ID (identification document) that is at least one year old. (If the passport and other official ID, such as a driver's license, are both less than one year old, a birth certificate is required.)

The address of your nearest Social Security Office is provided in your offer. You can also locate the nearest Social Security Office by going to: **https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp** or calling toll-free **1-800-772-1213.**

The Social Security Administration recommends that after completing SEVIS Check In, you wait 10 business days before applying for a Social Security Number. If your SEVIS verification process is delayed, it will delay your ability to apply for and receive your Social Security Card. That is why, it is very important that you provide correct and complete address during your SEVIS Check In.

- You should use the Host Company mailing address on the application.
- You will not receive your Social Security card when you apply at the Social Security office. The card will be mailed approximately 4-6 weeks later to your Host Company.
- Ask the Social Security officer for a SSA-5030 Form proving that you have applied for the card and show it to your Host Company.
- Host Companies may use temporary numbers in their payroll system (000-

00-0000) if the actual number is not available before the first payroll.

- If your employer is not sure how to report your wages before you have received your Social Security number, please ask them to go to the Social Security Administration's website at: http://www.ssa.gov/employer/hiring.htm
- One your receive your Social Security Card, please keep it in a very safe place and only show it to your Host Company and other trusted sources. If you have any questions about who should and should not be asking for your Social Security card or number, please contact AAG.
- If it has been more than six weeks since you applied for a Social Security card and you/your Host Company did not receive it, please call the Social Security office where you applied. You may need to return in person with all your original paperwork to determine what the issue is.

You should bring sufficient funds to cover you living expenses during the period that you wait for your Social Security card, which could be at least one month.

If you have a Social Security card from a previous visit to the U.S., you do not need to apply again.

MONTHLY CHECK-IN

AAG requires that all J-1 program participants complete a Monthly Check In for each month of your program. For example, if your program begins in June and ends in September, you will need to complete a monthly Check-In for July, August and September.

Per the J-1 regulations for Summer Work Travel, failure to complete a monthly Check-In may result in termination of your program. Termination of your program means that your J1 program is ended negatively and you are required to return home. Termination may have a negative effect on your U.S. immigration record, and participants whose status has been terminated may find it difficult to receive future visas. We track responses to Intern, Trainee and Teachers as well and want to hear from each of you every month.

Each month during your Monthly Check-In, you will be required to confirm your housing address, email and your phone number in the U.S. In addition, you will need to update AAG on the status of your program and your cultural exchange experience.

If you have not received an email reminder from AAG about your Monthly Check-In, please contact our Support Department at supportinfo@allianceabroad.com. You may complete your Monthly Check-In at any time during your program by going to AAG Website: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/during-your-program/monthly-check-in/.

PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

INTERN/TRAINEE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ONLY:

Per J-1 Intern/Trainee program regulations, all Intern/Trainee program participants must complete program evaluations. These must be completed by both you and your supervisor. The final program evaluation must be completed before the program end date.

- For programs of six months or less – Only Final Evaluation is required
- For programs over six months – Midpoint and Final Evaluations are required

Evaluations are completed online here: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/during-your-program/evaluations-interntrainee/

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL AND TEACHERS:

After your complete your program, you will receive a request to complete a program evaluation survey. Your feedback is very important to us and will allow us to determine what we can do to improve our programs.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- DS-2019: The DS-2019 form is a very important document which you must keep throughout your program. The DS-2019 is your authorization to work or train in the U.S. for the specified dates that appear in Section 3.

  Please make special note of your start and end dates. You may not work or train before your Program Start Date or after your Program End Date. If you need to replace your DS-2019, please contact AAG. You will be required to pay a $100 replacement fee.

- **Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond your stay in the U.S. If you need to renew or replace your passport, please contact the Embassy or Consulate of your country in the United States.

- **U.S. visa:** A sticker in your passport. Your visa allows you entry into the U.S. Once you are in the U.S., your visa can expire, as long as your DS-2019 is valid. If you plan to travel outside the U.S., you must have a valid multiple entry visa upon your re-entry.

- **Social Security:** A card that you receive from the Social Security Administration. This card has your individual number that your employer will need to have for payroll records and for taxes. If you lose your Social Security card, please report to the nearest Social Security Office with all of your immigration documents and request a replacement card.

- **I-94 record printout:** Your record of Arrival/Departure in the U.S. You will need to provide a copy of this document to your employer and when you apply for the Social Security Number. If you lose this document, you may retrieve your I-94 record by going to CBP website: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html

It is very important that you keep all of these documents safe. We encourage you to make copies of these documents and keep the copies separate from your original documents. You will not be able to use copies of your documents instead of your original documents, but it should help when applying for a replacement document.

WORKING WITH YOUR HOST COMPANY

The time has come to meet your Host Company – this might be a Human Resources manager, your supervisor or the owner. First impressions are very important, so dress appropriately.

- Check your Job Offer, Training Plan or the Host Company website for information regarding uniforms and dress code.
- If you have questions, be sure to ask your Host Company in advance.
- Bring all of your paperwork with you including your DS-2019, Job Offer/ Training Plan, passport, I-94 print out, a pen and a notepad.
- Remember to SMILE!

EMPLOYER PAPERWORK

You will be asked to complete several documents. In the Emergency Contact information of your application, please list your parent's phone number and AAG 24-hour Emergency Line as contacts: 1-866-622-7623.

DRUG TESTS

- Some companies will require a drug test, most of which test your urine.
- Random drug testing may be required as well, so please read your company's handbook for further information.
- If you refuse to take the test or fail it, you will be fired from your Host Company. If this occurs, please contact AAG right away so we can discuss next steps for you.

AMERICAN WORK CULTURE

The work culture in the U.S. may be different than in your country. For example, being on time to work or meetings is very important in the U.S. Here are some tips to help you adjust:

- Arrive to work 5-10 minutes early.
- Notify your supervisor as soon as possible if you will be late or absent from work. You will need to have a valid reason why you are late or absent.

- Follow company policies.
- Speak English at all times.
- Maintain your personal hygiene.
- Be polite and considerate.
- Ask questions if there is something you do not understand.
- Ask for help if you need it
    - If you are not sure or do not understand what is expected of you, ASK. A supervisor would rather have you ask twice than for you to make un- necessary mistakes.
    - Make sure to check with your supervisor, not a co-worker, as your su- pervisor is responsible for you and knows the rules and requirements.

You may feel overwhelmed by the new culture and language at first but remember that you will learn and understand more each day!

Remember that you are in the U.S. on a J-1 visa program and you must remain at your placement during your program. If you are having difficulties at your placement and you have been unable to resolve it with your supervisor, please contact AAG right away.

ON THE JOB INJURIES

- Any injuries that you sustain while on the job should be covered by your Host Company's Workman's Compensation policy. Each Host Company/ Host School has very strict guidelines and rules that must be followed when reporting a Workman's Compensation case. Please make sure that you are aware of the rules and process that your Hosts Company/Host School has.

#1 Rule for ALL Host Companies/Host Schools- Report all injuries sustained on the job immediately to your Supervisor/Manager or Human Resources employee. If you fail to report your injury in a timely manner, there is a chance that your case will be denied.

YOUR RIGHTS AS A TEMPORARY WORKER

As a temporary worker in the U.S., you have the right to:

- Be treated and paid fairly;
- Not be held in a position against your will;
- Keep your passport and other identifying documents in your possession;
- Report abuse without retaliation;
- Seek justice in U.S. courts.

For more information on your rights visit: http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html

Always contact AAG as soon as possible, as your health, safety and welfare are very important to us. You may reach us at our 24 Hour Support Line:

1-866-622-7623.

If you are mistreated or your rights are violated, call these toll-free numbers:

National Human Trafficking Resource Centers
1-888-373-7888 – 24-Hour Toll-Free Hotline

Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line
1-888-428-7581 (Monday — Friday, 9am-5pm Eastern Time) If you are in immediate physical danger, Call 911.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual manner including the following:

- Sexual innuendoes, jokes, or comments
- Repeatedly asking for a date after the person has expressed disinterest
- Unwelcome touching of a person's body, hair or clothing
- Visual pictures or images degrading someone based on their sex/gender
- Letters, notes, telephone calls, or material of a sexual nature

As defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, this conduct affects an individual's employment and creates an intimidating and hostile work environment.

This kind of disrespectful behavior is NEVER acceptable. If you are ever find yourself exposed to sexual harassment at work, please contact the Human Resources representative at your Host Company and your AAG Outreach Coordinator immediately.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR HOST COMPANY/HOST SCHOOL

Please contact your supervisor for issues related to work, including scheduling, days off, etc. If the problem cannot be resolved with your employer, you should contact your AAG Outreach Coordinator for assistance right away.

Please note that you may not change positions, accept additional positions, or leave your assigned position early without permission from your AAG representative. Before you make any change in your program (change of address or job, etc.), it is mandatory that you talk to your AAG Outreach Coordinator to determine the best action. Changing positions, accepting new positions, or changing your address without contacting AAG is a violation of program rules and can have negative consequence on your program.

Remember: All address changes must be documented in SEVIS within 10 days of the change: www.allianceabroad.com/sevis

According to Department of State regulations, J-1 Summer Work Travel participants may not work or train in the following positions:

- In positions that could bring notoriety or disrepute to the Exchange Visitor Program;
- In sales positions that require participants to purchase inventory that they must sell in order to support themselves;
- In domestic help positions in private homes (e.g., child care, elder care, gardener, chauffeur);
- As pedicab or rolling chair drivers or operators;
- As operators or drivers of vehicles or vessels for which drivers' licenses are

required regardless of whether they carry passengers or not;

- In positions related to clinical care that involves patient contact;
- In any position in the adult entertainment industry (including, but not limited to jobs with escort services, adult book/video stores, and strip clubs);
- In positions requiring work hours that fall predominantly between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am;
- In positions declared hazardous to youth by the Secretary of Labor at Sub-part E of 29 CFR part 570;
- In positions that require sustained physical contact with other people and/ or adherence to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions guidelines (e.g., body piercing, tattooing, massage, manicure);
- In positions that are substantially commission-based and thus do not guarantee that participants will be paid minimum wage in accordance with federal and state standards;
- In positions involved in gaming and gambling that include direct participation in wagering and/or betting;
- In positions in chemical pest control, warehousing, catalogue/online order distribution centers;
- In positions with traveling fairs or itinerant concessionaires;
- In jobs that do not allow participants to work alongside U.S. citizens and interact regularly with U.S. citizens and to experience U.S. culture during the workday portion of their Summer Work Travel programs;
- With employers that fill non-seasonal or non-temporary job openings with exchange visitors with staggered vacation schedules;
- In positions that require licensing;
- In positions for which there is another specific J visa category (e.g., Camp Counselor, Trainee, Intern, Summer Work Travel);
- In positions with staffing agencies, unless the placements meet the following three criteria:
    - Participants must be employees of and paid by the staffing agencies
    - Staffing agencies must provide full-time, primary, on-site supervision of the participants
    - Staffing agencies must effectively control the work sites, e.g., have

hands-on management responsibility for the participants

After November 1, 2012, in positions in the North American Industry Classification System's (NAICS) Goods-Producing Industries occupational categories industry sectors 11, 21, 23, 31-33 numbers (set forth at http://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag_index_naics.htm).

TAKING EXTENDED TIME OFF FROM WORK OR TRAINING

You may not take extended time off during the time of your program unless you have written permission from both your Host Company/Host School and AAG.

- Your Host Company/Host School is counting on you to be present and participating in your program during the dates listed on your DS-2019 document or school year (Teachers). If you leave the company/school without the Host Company's/Host School's and AAG's permission, you will be putting your program status at risk.
- If you are not sure what is allowed, please talk to your supervisor at work or call your AAG Outreach Coordinator.
- It is best to plan your travel during the 30 days before or after the end date on your DS-2019 form.

I-9 EMPLOYMENT ELIGIBILITY FORM

Host Companies will ask you to fill out an I-9 form related to work and work authorization. This is a form that U.S. workers must also complete. Here are some helpful tips for you on how this form should be completed:

Section 1:

- Write your Host Company's address
- Write your Social Security number if it has been issued.
- Check the box "an alien authorized to work until (enter the end date on your DS-2019)".
- For the "alien # or Admission #, enter the number from your I-94 form.

Section 2 (List B):

- Write "valid passport from " (name of your country).
- Passport number.
- Passport expiration date.

Section 2 (List C):

- Write "DS-2019 number" (The number is in the upper right corner of the DS-2019 form.)
- Write "I-94 number".
- Enter the same date as you did in section 1 concerning work authorization.

W-4 FORMS (FOR TAXES)

Your employer is required by law to withhold income tax from your salary and pay it directly to the U.S. Government. J-1 program participants must pay Federal and State/Local taxes and are exempt from Medicare and Social Security taxes. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of your salary or stipend will be withheld for federal income tax. Depending on regional laws, state and local income taxes may also be withheld from your paycheck. State and local income taxes can take out another 5 to 8 percent of your total income.

J-1 program participants MUST pay U.S. income tax. Failure to do so could result in an outstanding debt to the U.S. Government, creating problems for you in the future.
Please look carefully at your paycheck to ensure that these taxes are being correctly withheld. If you or your employer has questions regarding your tax status, they can contact your Outreach Coordinator or AAG at 1-866-622-7623.

ManyJ-1visa program participants are surprised by the high amount of money taken
out of their paychecks for U.S. Taxes. U.S. citizens experience the same shock when entering the workforce. As a J-1 visa program participant you have to pay some, but not all, of the taxes that a U.S. citizen has to pay.

Taxes You Have to Pay:

- Federal income taxes
- State income taxes
- City income taxes

Taxes You Do Not Have to Pay:

- Social Security & Medicare Tax (FICA)
- Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)

Host Companies should ask you to complete a W-4 form, which will be used to determine how much tax will be withheld from your pay. Here are some helpful tips for fill out the W-4 form:

- On line 3, check only "single" marital status (regardless of marital status)
- On line 5, claim only one withholding allowance
- On line 6, write "Non-Resident Alien" or "NRA" above the dotted line
- On line 7, do NOT claim "Exempt" withholding status

Important: You should not follow the instructions provided on the W-4 form. These instructions do not apply to "non-resident aliens," which means they do not apply to J-1 visa program participants. The above rules should be followed to avoid over-taxation or having to pay tax to the U.S. government in the future when you fi your tax declaration form.

Please note: Tax information is subject to change. If you have any doubt, verify this information with the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) or the U.S. Embassy in your home country (if tax service is available).

HEALTH INSURANCE

All J-1 program participants have insurance coverage through AAG. Your insurance provider is Bulstrad Live with GBG Assist.

Insurance coverage for all J-1 program participants begins one date before and ends one day after the program dates listed on your DS-2019 form.

On the AAG website: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance.html , you will find

- A quick guide to using your insurance.
- Your General Insurance Card and instructions
- How to purchase additional travel insurance & ski insurance
- How to purchase insurance for your J-2 dependent/s (if applicable)

It is very important that you review the materials on the AAG website. If you have questions about Health insurance, please contact AAG at supportinfo@allianceabroad.com or by calling our 24 Hour Support Line: 1-866-622-7623.

Please note: J-1 program participants may be subjects to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

The health care system in the U.S. is very different than in other countries! To avoid problems, we want to review with you the steps that you MUST take to correctly use your insurance and avoid being charged a lot of money for your medical treatment.

1. ALWAYS call your insurance company first

- AAG is NOT your insurance company.
- The phone number for your insurance is listed on your insurance card and on AAG Website: **1-866-914-5333**
- When you call your insurance company, provide them with your Name and your Certificate number (located on your card and AAG website).

- The insurance company will find a doctor in your area who accepts your insurance.
- If you do not follow this step, you will have to pay your bill yourself (this can be thousands of dollars!)

2. Take your documents with you to the doctor or hospital:
   - Insurance card
   - Photo identification
   - DS-2019 form

3. When you go to the doctor, you will have to pay a fee for the first visit. This cost is called a deductible and it is normal for every insurance company.

   - Deductible is $100, if you see a doctor.
   - Deductible is $250, if you go to a hospital.
   - Do not go to a hospital unless it is a true emergency!
   - Your deductible will not be reimbursed.

4. Within 10 days of seeing a doctor, call the insurance company (1-866-914-5333) provide them with the information about medical treatment that you received and request that they open a claim for you.

   Important: If you do not follow this step, you will be responsible for all your medical expenses.

5. File a claim

   - For help with filing a claim, call the insurance company (1-866-914-5333)
   - Be sure to ask for a case number that you can refer to in the future.
   - If you do not call for authorization first or notify the insurance company with 10 days of receiving medical care, there is a chance that your claim will be denied!

If you fail to call the insurance before or within 10 days of receiving medical attention, you are responsible for paying any and all medical bills. You can

submit a claim form to seek reimbursement from your insurance company, but the claim will likely be denied.

TRAVEL INSURANCE BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR PROGRAM DATES

If you are arriving before your program begins or planning to travel after your program ends and would like coverage, please fill out the Insurance Request form: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/files/PDF/Insurance_Request_Form.pdf

The completed form should be submitted to supportinfo@allianceabroad.com.

AAG strongly encourages all participants to purchase additional travel insurance if you plan to travel in the U.S. after your program ends.

- After your DS-2019 end date, you have 30 days to travel in the U.S. before you have to return home.
- Your insurance ends 1 day after your DS-2019 end date. This means that if you had injuries after this date and had to see a doctor, you will be responsible for all the medical bills.
- If purchasing additional travel insurance, please do so minimum 4 weeks before your DS-2019 end date.

Please visit AAG's website for more information on how to purchase Travel Insurance: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/insurance-duration/

SKI INSURANCE

Summer Work Travel Participants ONLY: You have ski/snowboarding insurance coverage. Please familiarize yourself with your ski/snowboarding insurance coverage so you understand what injuries are and are not covered: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/ski-insurance-leisure-sports/

Intern/Trainee/Teacher Participants:

AAG strongly encourages you to have ski insurance if you are working/training at a ski resort or are planning to ski during or after your program.

Your medical insurance does not include ski coverage, so if you were to get hurt while skiing, you would be responsible for the full cost of all bills associated with the injury, which can be thousands of dollars.

Please visit AAG's website for more information on how to purchase ski insurance: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/ski-insurance/

J-2 DEPENDENT INSURANCE

All J-2 dependents are required to purchase insurance through AAG for the entire duration of their stay in the U.S. The cost of insurance for all J-2 dependents from age newborn up to age 65 is $60/month. The insurance cannot be pro-rated and must be purchased up front:

- J-2 dependents with proof of anticipated departure (return ticket) at the time of admission will be charged for the number of months in the U.S.
- J-2 dependents without proof of anticipated departure will be charged up front for the duration of J-1's program.

J-2 dependents may also be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

To request insurance for your J-2 dependent, please contact AAG at supportinfo@allianceabroad.com.

HOUSING

Housing arrangements are different in each location and for each job. Short-term housing can be very expensive and hard to find in some resort areas.

You should expect to spend between 40-50% of your monthly wages on housing. Please understand that housing will probably cost you more than the rates that you see in the local newspaper, if you are not committing to a year-long lease (contract). Short-term rentals (3-4 months) are always more expensive. Landlords may charge larger deposits to international visitors because they do not have a credit history in the U.S., and because other international students may not have always shown respect and taken good care of the property.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN APARTMENT

When looking for an apartment, you should consider the factors that will affect your enjoyment of the apartment, such as:

- What kind of neighborhood is it in? Do you feel safe?
- How will you get to and from work? Is a public transportation route accessible? Are well-lit sidewalks available?
- Is the apartment in good condition? If it needs repairs, will the landlord pay for it? Do the windows/doors close and lock properly?
- Are there laundry facilities nearby?
- Are pest control and extermination services provided on a regular basis?
- Is there a maintenance person to take care of repairs?
- Are the mailboxes secure?

WHAT IS INCLUDED?

Most apartments in the U.S. will include a stove, refrigerator and sink in the kitchen, a toilet, bathtub or shower and sink in the bathroom, at least one lock on the apartment door, and a private mailbox.

In addition, some apartments will have air conditioners, dishwashers and waste disposal devices in the kitchen. An outdoor parking space or indoor garage

space may be included in the rent or offered at an extra charge.

In some apartments electricity or gas service is included in the rent. Telephone ser- vice and Wi-Fi are not often included.

You will probably want to find a furnished apartment, which will usually cost more than an unfurnished apartment (without furniture). There are companies that provide rental furniture for a monthly fee. Ask the apartment manager about furniture rental.

SIGNING A LEASE

A lease is a legally binding commitment

- Read your lease thoroughly and keep a copy of your lease to refer to or share with AAG if you have any questions.
- Look for information regarding all fees, penalties, restrictions and rules.
    - Are there penalties for late rent?
    - What utilities will the landlord pay and which ones are you responsible for?
    - Are there policies on painting or altering the apartment?
    - What do you do and who do you call if something breaks or needs repair?
    - What are the penalties for moving before your lease term is up?
    - What are the policies on subletting and having roommates or even stipulations for having roommates of the opposite sex?
    - How many people can live in the apartment? Are there extra fees for extra people?
- Be aware of the dates on your lease. If you leave before the end of the lease (contract) you will likely lose your deposits and you could even have legal charges brought against you. If this happens, your program may be at risk, and there may be legal consequences.

Housing is a serious matter and can make or break the success of your program.

HOUSING DEPOSITS

Once you find an apartment to rent, most landlords will require you to fill out an application and show some credit and employment history, which you probably do not have as an international program participant.

- Landlords protect themselves by taking security deposits from tenants.
- You may have to pay a security deposit equivalent to one or two months' rent (in addition to the monthly rent) which the landlord will be entitled to keep if you damage the apartment or don't pay rent.
- When you give the landlord a security deposit, make sure to ask if it is re-fundable and read any written or legal documents.
- Make sure you have everything in writing and ask for receipts for all money paid!

Remember, if there are damages to the apartment or other issues, you may not receive your deposit back. This includes damages you did not cause, but for which you will be responsible since your name is on the lease.

Upon move into your housing, please do a thorough check for any damage and if discovered upon move in, please immediately report to your landlord, so it is properly document and you are not responsible for it. Please take photos of everything and keep them for your record.

LANDLORDS AND PROBLEMS

The landlord will be responsible for most of the building maintenance. You will be responsible for keeping your apartment clean and in good condition. If you damage the apartment beyond ordinary "wear and tear" you risk losing your security deposit when you move out.

If you don't pay the rent for a certain period of time, the landlord may remove you from the apartment by going to court and getting an eviction order.

- If you have a legitimate grievance (complaint) with the landlord, you might be entitled to withhold rent but you will have to follow certain rules depending on your area; you cannot simply stop paying.
- If you cannot afford a lawyer to help you, many local government

agencies can give you free assistance.

- If you feel that the landlord is violating your housing rights by overcrowding a residence or for any other reason, please contact an AAG representative for help.

UTILITIES

The term "utilities" refers to heating, electricity, natural gas, water and garbage services and is subject to special government regulation.

- Some utilities, such as water, heating, natural gas and electricity may be included in your monthly rent.
- Some houses and apartments are all electric and you must pay for the electricity in addition to the rent.
- Please be sure to ask if any utilities are not included in the rent and about how much they will cost.
- Once utility service is connected, pay your bills on time to avoid late charges and to maintain good credit.
- Be sure to call to turn off your utilities before you move out of your apartment.

All utility companies have customer service telephone numbers you can use to get service started. The utility company will give you a date their installer can come to your housing to connect the service. Please keep their number in your phone or in a safe place for you to reference later.

ONE
Bar
Cafe
Restaurant

TRANSPORTATION

AIRPLANE

Traveling by airplane is usually the most efficient and the most expensive way to travel long-distances. When searching for the best airfare deals, try:

www.travelocity.com
www.expedia.com
www.orbitz.com.

You may also want to check the websites of all major airlines and discount carriers such as Jet Blue and Southwest.

BUS

Bus travel is a popular and inexpensive way to travel in the U.S. The major bus companies can help you connect to local bus transportation to reach even remote towns. Greyhound Bus Company is the largest bus company in the U.S. their toll-free telephone number is: 1-800-231-2222. Website: www.greyhound.com

LOCAL BUS

This is a great way to get around during your stay in the USA. Some transit systems service multiple cities.

- If you are riding public transit after dark be sure you are wearing light colored clothing and/or signaling the driver with a lighted device (for example: a cell phone or flash light).
- Dress for the weather so you are not uncomfortable while waiting for the bus to arrive or transferring to other buses.
- Find out if it would be cost-effective to get a 30-day bus pass or multi-trip ticket for your regular journeys.
- Make sure you catch your bus going in the right direction

CAR

You must have automobile insurance and a valid driver's license from your home country (along with an International Driver's License, available in your home country from motorizing organizations) in order to drive a car in the U.S. It is unlawful to drive without adequate automobile insurance.

To rent a car, most companies require that you be at least 25 years of age. Some rental car companies, however, allow the renter to be 21 years of age and have at least one major credit card.

Be aware of the rules of the road while you are in the U.S., drive safely, obey all speed limits and make sure you carry proof of auto insurance at all times while driving to prevent any problems. Seatbelts must be worn at all times by all passengers and the driver. Different cities and states have varying laws regarding cell phone use and texting while driving, please avoid using your phone while driving! If you need to send a text or make a call, we recommend pulling over in a safe place to do so.

TRAIN

Amtrak, the national railroad (railway), offers a rail pass similar to Europe's Inter-rail pass. The USA Rail Pass is valid for either 15 or 30 days. There are nationwide passes, and Amtrak has also divided the country into sections for regional travel. You can get passes for the Eastern Region, Northeast Region, Southern Region and Western Region. Please call their toll-free number for prices and more information: 1-800-872-7245. Website: www.amtrak.com

HITCHHIKING

Hitchhiking is a means of transportation that is gained by asking people, usually strangers, for a ride in their automobile or other road vehicle.

It is illegal and unsafe to hitchhike in the U.S.. Do not do it!

OBTAINING A DRIVER'S LICENSE/STATE ID

In the U.S. a **department of motor vehicles (DMV)** is a state-level government agency that administers vehicle registration and driver licensing. Each State has own requirements for issuing driver's licenses and state ID. Please make sure that you check to see what requirements are for obtaining a Driver's License/State ID in your state. To locate a nearest DMV, please visit: http://www.dmv.org/dmv-office-finder.php

Important: Your SEVIS record must be Active before you can apply for a Driver's License/State ID. When reporting to the DMV office to apply for a Driver's License/State ID, you will need to have the following documents with you:

- Passport with valid visa
- DS-2019
- I-94 record print out
- Social Security card (if you have it)
- Proof of residency (bank statement, paycheck, utility bill with your name and address on it)
- Fee to cover the cost of issuance of Driver's License/State ID
- Any other document that your state might require.

J-2 Dependents: J-2 dependents applying for a Driver's License/State ID, will need to check with the local DMV office to see what requirements are there to obtain a Driver's License/State ID.

15
M.P.H.

SAFETY FIRST

Though many Americans are friendly, open, and willing to help, be aware that there are some people who may want to take advantage of visitors. Be cautious and use common sense during your stay and trust your instincts. If something or someone makes you uneasy, avoid the person or leave.

Here are some tips:

- In crowded areas like airports and bus and train stations, always keep your property close to you or in a concealed place.
- Do not carry large amounts of cash and do not expose it in crowded places.
- Travel and go out with a friend as much as possible. Do not walk alone by yourself in unlit or empty streets.
- Do not use ATM machines in the dark, especially if you are alone.
- When possible, take copies of needed documents with you, and keep your originals in a safe place.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Do not behave in ways which may bring attention of thieves or someone who might try and take advantage of you.

Transportation Safety Tips:

On Foot:

- Whenever possible, walk with a friend, especially early in the morning and late at night.
- Stay on well-traveled, well-lit streets. Avoid shortcuts through dark or wooded areas, parking lots, or alleys.
- Never walk along or try to cross a highway or multilane road, unless there is a safe path and a cross walk. Always use extra caution even on paths and cross walks.
- If you think someone is following you, change direction or cross the street.

- Walk toward an open store, restaurant, or lighted house. If you are scared, yell for help.
    - If you have to work late, make sure there are others in the workplace with you and ask someone (a colleague or security guard) to walk you to your car or transit stop or ask for a ride home.

On Buses and Subways:

- Use well-lit, busy bus stops and stations.
- Stay alert! Don't sleep or daydream.
- If someone harasses you, don't be embarrassed. Loudly say "Leave me alone!" and call for help.
- If that doesn't work, use the emergency device (alarm).
- Watch those who exit with you. If you feel uneasy, walk to a place where there are other people.

If someone tries to rob you:

- Don't resist.
- Give up your property; don't give up your life.
- Report the crime to the police by calling 911. Try to describe the attacker accurately. Your actions can help prevent others from becoming victims.

Trouble Spots:

- Stairwells and out-of-the-way corridors: don't use the stairs alone. Talk to the building manager about improving poorly lit corridors and stairways.
- Elevators: don't get into elevators with people who look out of place or be- have in a strange or threatening manner. If you find yourself in an elevator with someone who makes you nervous, get off as soon as possible.
- Restrooms (toilets): attackers can hide in toilet stalls and corners. Make sure restrooms are locked and only employees have keys. Be extra cautious when using restrooms that are isolated or poorly lit. Go to the restroom area with a friend, if possible.
- Late Night: don't work late at night alone. Create a buddy system for

walking to parking lots or public transportation or ask the security guard to escort you.

- Bars and Clubs: Use caution and do not trust strangers. Never accept a drink from a stranger. If you drink was out of your sight, throw it away and get a new one. You want to be sure no one had the opportunity to put anything in your drink.

Biking Safety Tips:

Many participants bike to/from work and training. Please make sure to be a safe and responsible rider!

- Before using your bicycle, make sure it is ready to ride. You should always inspect your bike to make sure all parts are secure and working properly. Don't forget to check your breaks!
- ALWAYS wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet
- Wear bright reflective clothing, so you are visible to the car drivers on the road
- Avoid riding at night-If you have to, make sure you have both front and back lights on the bike
- Make sure that your bike has proper reflectors so the car traffic can see you
- Wear appropriate shoes (no flipflops or sandals!)
- Ride defensively. Be aware of other vehicles, pedestrians and other road obstacles
- Always look both ways before crossing a street
- Walk your bike when appropriate
- Watch for and avoid road hazards
- Do not carry more than what can fit in a lightweight backpack
- FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD!

Swimming Safety Tips: http://www.lcra.org/water/safety/boating/swimming.html

You can greatly reduce the chances of you or your friends and family becoming drowning or near-drowning victims by following a few simple safety tips:

- Keep an eye on friends and family. Drowning can occur in as little as 20 seconds for children and 60 seconds for an adult. Drowning is known as the "silent killer" because most victims slip beneath the water without
- a sound. Paying close attention to those around you can drastically reduce such accidents.
- Learn to swim! The American Red Cross has swimming courses for people of any age and swimming ability.
- Swim in designated swim areas. These areas are properly marked, and motor boats are prohibited.
- Swim near the shore. Drowning most often occurs within about 10 feet of safety and usually within about 50 feet from shore.
- Never swim alone.
- Learn to help a drowning victim without entering the water.
- Learn to perform CPR (or cardio-pulmonary resuscitation). Check Red Cross CPR training programs. In an emergency, always have someone call 911.
- Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. See information on the different kinds of life jackets.
- Never swim under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Remember that swimming and alcohol/drugs can be a deadly combination.
- Swimming in a river, lake or pond always carries some risk of exposure. Unlike swimming pools, natural waters are not chlorinated or disinfected. The risk is higher after heavy rains when bacteria levels are elevated due to fecal matter washed into the lakes and streams. People who go into the water do so at their own risk.

Skiing Safety Tips: http://skiing.about.com/od/safetyforskiers/a/skisafety.htm

- Intern/Trainee/Teacher: Purchase Ski Insurance. You can purchase ski insurance on your own or through AAG. Purchase it in advance for the time period you will need it. Please see our website for details on how to get ski insurance http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/ski-insurance/
- Wear a helmet. Wearing protective headgear while skiing will protect you from serious injuries during falls and can even save your life!
- Use proper ski equipment. Don't borrow equipment. Rent from a ski shop

or the ski resort. When buying equipment, make sure your ski boots are fi - ted properly. In both cases, make sure your bindings are properly adjusted.

- Prepare for the weather. Wear layers of clothes and wear a helmet liner, a hat, or a headband. Wear gloves or mittens. Bring an extra pair in case the first pair gets wet.
- Exercise in advance. You will have much more fun on the slopes if you're in good shape. Work your way up to skiing by exercising year-round on a regular basis.
- Get proper instruction. Sign up for ski lessons (either individual or group). Even experienced skiers polish up their skills with a lesson now and then.
- Wear goggles. Wear ski goggles that fit properly around your helmet. If you wear eyeglasses, buy goggles that fit comfortably over your eyeglasses or consider prescription goggles.
- Take a break. If you're tired, take a break and rest for a while in the lodge. While you're resting, make sure you eat and drink enough. Skiing burns a lot of energy! When it's the end of the day, there's no need to try and get in a last run, or two, if you are tired. It's better to quit while you're ahead and save your energy for next time.
- Ski with a friend. It's always safer to ski with a friend so he can watch out for you and vice versa. Prearrange a meeting place in case you get sepa- rated and use walkie-talkies to stay in touch.
- Respect your limits. Do not ski trails that are above your skill level. Trails will
- Clearly marked (Green Circle, Blue Square, Black Diamond) as to what lev- el skier they are appropriate for. On a similar note, stay in control of your skis and focus on the trail you are skiing. Accidents happen more readily when we are distracted.
- Stay on the Trails. Never ski off the marked trails. This is for your own safety.
- Follow the rules. Do not go off-trail. Obey posted trail closure and other warning signs. They are there for a reason. Any injuries sustained due to skiing off the official paths will not be covered by your ski insurance provider.
- Remember that skiers who are in front of you, and below you, on the trail have the right-of-way.
- No Drugs or Alcohol. You should never ski under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This is extremely dangerous and any injuries sustained while skiing under influence of drugs or alcohol will not be covered by ski insurance provider.

Driving Safety Tips:

- ALWAYS wear a seatbelt.
- Never drive without a valid license and car insurance.
- Never drink and drive.
- Never get in a car if a driver is intoxicated.
- Do not text while driving.
- Do not talk on your phone while driving- use a device that allows you to be "hands free" if you absolutely must make a phone call.
- Drive defensively and be aware of other drivers, bikers and pedestrians on the road.
- FOLLOW THE RULES OF THE ROAD!

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

If you are in an emergency situation and need immediate help, CALL **911!**

You should call 911 immediately if:

- You have a medical emergency.
- You are the victim of a violent crime.
- There is a fire.
- You need the police.
- You are concerned about your safety.

You should call your Outreach Coordinator (8:30am-5:30pm) or the AAG 24 Hour Support Line at **1-866-622-7623** if:

- You are arrested.
- You have questions about legal documentation.
- You are unhappy.
- You have employer concerns.
- You are fired from your job.
- You lost your passport or other documents.
- You have questions regarding your insurance.
- You are having irresolvable issues with your housing.
- You have concerns about your health, safety or welfare that are not immediately in danger (in which case you would call 911.)

If there is a local or national emergency, please call the AAG 24 Hour Support Line at **1-866-622-7623**, to let us know if you are safe or if you need assistance. For any job-related injuries, please report to your supervisor immediately.

LEGAL INFORMATION

While you are in the U.S., you are subject to U.S. laws. Your best defense against legal problems is to educate yourself about the laws of the U.S. and follow them. If you unknowingly break a law, your ignorance cannot be used as a legal defense. You are obligated to take responsibility for any crimes or violations that you commit. This means you are fully responsible for any and all expenses involved with defending yourself if you have been arrested, and any penalties, prison or monetary, if you are convicted.

Alliance Abroad Group can verify your J-1 status and can advise you on a course of action, but there are limits to the help we can offer. Program participants have the same rights as a U.S. citizen if accused of a crime. Being arrested can be cause for immediate termination from the J-1 visa program.

ARRESTS

If you are arrested, contact AAG's 24 Hour Support Line at **1-866-622-7623** and state that it is an emergency.

If you are arrested, you have the following rights:

- You have the right to remain silent and to refuse to answer any questions if you so choose.
- You have the right to be represented by a lawyer, and to be provided with a lawyer to represent you if you cannot afford to hire one. No person accused of a crime may be forced to confess or give evidence against oneself.
- You have the right not to be searched unless the police officer has a
- warrant (an authorization to search premises, arrest or other actions relating to the administration of justice).
- You are entitled to be released from jail upon posting of a bail bond (money paid to ensure that the person reports for trial) set by the court while you await trial.
- You are entitled to a fair trial conducted according to all the rules of evidence and court procedures.

- You are presumed innocent until proven guilty. You do not have to prove your innocence, but rather the prosecution must prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

LAWS

A few ILLEGAL acts that could result in you getting arrested are:

- Underage drinking of alcoholic beverages. **The legal drinking age in the U.S. is 21.**
- Drinking alcohol in public places (parks, streets, beaches, etc.)
- Purchasing alcohol for anyone under 21
- Driving after drinking alcoholic beverages or consuming drugs
- Illegal drug use and/or possession (Even though some states allow use of marijuana, it is still illegal under U.S. federal law)
- Disturbing the peace (making excessive noise late at night)
- Threatening another person or touching another person in any undesired way.
- Disorderly conduct (including treating police officer disrespectfully)
- Property damage
- Hitchhiking (asking strangers for a ride in their car)
- Driving a vehicle without a valid driver's license and insurance
- Having a sexual relationship of any kind with someone under 18 years old
- Theft (stealing goods or anything that is not yours)
- Driving without a seatbelt or having passengers riding in your car without seatbelts. "Click it or ticket."
- Crossing the road in an area without a cross walk. This is also known as "Jay Walking."
- Smoking in many public places. Look around you before you light up. ("No Smoking" signs are usually posted in clear, visible locations. Ameri- cans are likely to be much less tolerant of smoking than people in your country. As part of an intense anti-smoking campaign in the U.S., tough measures have been taken to provide a smoke-free environment).

AAG Zero Tolerance Policy

AAG has a "Zero Tolerance" policy in regards to certain types of behavior. If we receive documentation that you have done any of the following, we will end your program and request that you return home immediately:

PHYSICAL ALTERCATION

Getting into physical fights with colleagues, roommates, etc., including assault of any kind.

THREATS

Any statements made to others that involve harm to other people:

- Verbal
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- In Email/Text/Voicemail

THEFT

Taking items that do not belong to you.

Please remember you are representing your country, and your behavior has serious consequences on your experience in the U.S. program and request that you return home immediately.

MONEY MATTERS

HOW TO OPEN A BANK ACCOUNT

We suggest that you open a bank account upon arrival in the U.S. and deposit your money. It is not safe to carry on you large amount of cash. To open a bank account, please follow these steps:

- Locate a nationwide bank in your area. You can locate a bank in your area by doing an internet search. You can find out if the bank has nationwide and international locations by speaking with a bank representative.

  Major Banks in the U.S. are:

  - Bank of America
  - HSBC
  - Wells Fargo
  - Chase
  - Citibank
- Documents you should take with you to open your account:
  - Passport
  - I-94 document
  - • DS-2019
  - Sponsor Letter
  - Social Security Card (some banks require this, others do not)
  - Any secondary form of identification you may have
  - Your full address, including apartment/room number
- Ask the bank if they offer a free student checking account.
- Ask if the bank offers online banking. Many banks now offer online banking and mobile applications that are linked to your checking account. Using online banking you can:

  - View your balance
  - View your statement of recent transactions

- Please provide your Host Company with a Direct Deposit form from your bank, so your paycheck can be automatically deposited to your bank account.

Please remember that if you have a bank debit card and lose it, it can be replaced. If you lose cash - it cannot be replaced.

AUTOMATIC TELLER MACHINES (ATMs)

Most U.S. banks provide bank cards that can be used at 24-hour automated teller machines (ATMs). Banks may charge a fee of $1-$10 per withdrawal for using an ATM machine of another bank.

CURRENCY

The basic American unit of currency is the dollar ($1). Be careful as all U.S. banknotes (bills) are green in color and can look alike. Many shops and stores do not accept bank notes (bills) larger than $20, so it is best to get smaller bills from a bank. To convert U.S. dollar into your country's currency, please use this Currency Converter: http://www.xe.com/

CREDIT CARDS

It is important to have a credit card available for emergency situations (including dental problems, theft and fire). Credit cards are also useful when finding an apartment, paying a deposit and booking transportation online. Credit cards are accepted by most stores and businesses, and they are much safer than carrying cash as they can be replaced easily if lost or stolen.

YOUR PAYCHECK

In the U.S., it is required that all employees pay taxes on their salary/stipends. All J-1 participants will need to pay Federal and State taxes. You will NOT be responsible for paying Medicare or Social Security Taxes (FICA) or Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA). See section on "W-4 Forms" in this handbook for more information on taxes.

Many program participants do not consider that taxes will be deducted from their paycheck, and this can lead to not having enough money. Here is an estimate to consider:

If you make $8.00 per hour and work 32 hours a week, you will make $256. Approximately $51.20 (20% in taxes) will be deducted, for a total of $204.80. You

will need to pay for housing, transportation and food. Make sure that you budget accordingly and don't make large purchases until you have paid all of your bills for the month and purchased the essentials (food, transportation, etc.).

There are a few ways to access money from home:

WESTERN UNION

This service makes it possible to transfer money from your home country to any- where in the U.S. within 15 minutes to an hour, any day of the week. There is a handling fee, which will vary according to the amount of money sent. You can call toll-free: 1-800-325-6000 to fi the Western Union office nearest to you and to the person sending money to you. You can also call this number to see if your money has ar- rived.

BANK TRANSFER

This allows you to transfer money from a bank in your home country to a bank in the U.S. This can often take a week or longer. The fee varies from bank to bank, and both the receiving and sending bank may charge you a fee. Not all banks offer this service, so be sure to check in advance.

BANKER'S DRAFTS/BANK CHECK/CERTIFIED CHECK

These can be bought from your home country and then mailed to you by the Post Office's express service. This usually takes between three and seven days, and participants sometimes have difficulties cashing them in small towns.

TIPPING

Some workers in the U.S. depend on tips for a large portion of their salary, making as little at $2.13 an hour. Tipping is expected in restaurants and nice hotels. The standard rate in restaurants is 15%-20% of the bill excluding the sales tax. You are never expected to tip in a fast-food or self-service environment. Taxi drivers, bartenders and hair- dressers also depend on tips (also called gratuities) and should be tipped between 10%-20%.

SALES TAX

Visitors to the U.S. are surprised when a product costs more than the marked price. This is because sales tax is added to the price marked when you pay. Sales taxes vary from state to state but are typically 5-9%, though some states have no sales taxes at all. In some cities and states a bed tax, which can be as high as 15%, is added to hotel bills. It's worth checking whether quoted prices for lodging include all relevant taxes.

You will not be reimbursed the sales tax that you paid on items and services purchased in the U.S..

SHOPPING

SHOPPING FOR GROCERIES

Shopping for groceries can be difficult, especially if it's your first time in U.S. Once you arrive at your housing and are settled in, you will want to locate the nearest grocery store to purchase food. Below are a few tips on how to shop smart, save money and purchase food.

Before Shopping please keep in mind:

- How much refrigerator and cabinet space do you have? If you have roommates, you will have to share the space.
- What appliances (oven/microwave/toaster/) do you have in your housing?
- What utensils (Pots/pans/cookware) are in your housing?
- Make a shopping list before you go to the grocery store and STICK TO IT!
- Buy essential non-perishable food items in bulk (large quantities): pastas, rice, cornmeal, flour, oatmeal, sugar, olive oil, etc. These items will not go bad quickly and can be stored for later use.
- Buy fresh produce and perishable food items only the amount you need for a week: eggs, milk, bananas, meat, etc. It will save you money if you buy produce that is in season (apples in winter, oranges in summer).
- Don't go shopping when you're hungry. This is a common tip but it's true: when you're hungry you're more likely to buy more food items that you planned. When shopping while hungry, we also tend to buy a lot of junk food (food with little nutritional value). Eat a good meal before you go shopping and stick to your grocery list.
- Buy frozen vegetables. While fresh vegetables taste better, frozen vegetables are just as good and can save you money. Since you can keep the vegetables in the freezer, they can last much longer.
- Buy store brand food items. Wal-mart, Kroger, etc.– Store brands are almost identical to brand name items and often cost much less.
- Sign up for store savings cards. These free cards give additional discounts to members and can add up to big savings over time. Stores like Kroger,

Randall's, Walgreen's and CVS all have the store savings cards.

What to shop for once you arrive at the Store:

- Groceries
- Over the counter medications (medication that you do not need a doctors approval to get).
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Shaving cream/razors
- Shampoo/Conditioner/Body Wash
- Lip balm/skin moisturizer
- Sun Screen
- Cell phone/phone card
- Weather appropriate clothing items that you might need (hats, gloves, scar, etc)
- Raincoat/umbrella
- First aid kit
- Laundry bag and Laundry Detergent
- Towels

BUYING A PHONE IN THE U.S.

When you decide to buy a phone, you need to think about the type of phone and phone plan you'll need. There are many options available, so do your research!

- Try not to buy an expensive phone. Many companies will give you an expensive phone for less money if you sign a 2-year contract. DO NOT DO THIS! It is very expensive to get out of this type of contract and will cost you hundreds of dollars.
- Selecting a plan that gives you a set amount of minutes is what you should be looking for. This is called a no-contract/pre-paid cell phone plan.
- Wal-mart is a great place to shop for phones and they offer affordable plans that you can also share with friends or roommates.

Major Phone Companies in the U.S:

- AT&T: http://www.att.com/
- Verizon: http://www.verizonwireless.com/
- T-Mobile: http://www.t-mobile.com/
- Cricket: https://www.cricketwireless.com/
- Straight Talk: http://www.straighttalk.com/wps/portal/home

Here are some additional tips for shopping in the U.S:

- Look for a Wal-Mart. These stores have everything and usually the cheapest around.
- Dollar Stores are great for basic items. Most items cost $1!
- Shoes: Check out Payless Shoes or Walmart.
- Coupon Books: They cost about $10 - $20 and you receive many discounts in your area – Check out https://www.entertainment.com/coupon/
- Thrift Stores: Need some inexpensive work clothes, or items for your housing? Check out Goodwill, Salvation Army, and other second hand stores for gently
- used items that you will be leaving in the U.S. when your program is done.
- Groupon: Check out www.groupon.com for deals in your area.

CULTURE SHOCK

Many participants will experience culture shock at some point during the program. Culture shock is the normal initial discomfort and disorientation when exposed to a new culture or lifestyle. Culture shock usually begins 1-4 weeks after arrival and can last 1-4 weeks.

Common symptoms of culture shock include:

- Homesickness
- Feeling isolated and lonely
- Reluctance to speak English
- Reluctance to adjust to the new schedule, foods, lifestyles, dress, etc.
- Lack of motivation and energy
- Depression
- Crying and sleeping excessively

Culture shock is temporary and will pass. The more involved you can become, the more quickly you will adapt and become comfortable in your new surroundings.

Ideas that may help you feel better:

- Get involved as much as possible in company activities, attend social activities, join clubs and get involved in your new community.
- Find something from home that is comforting: a book in your own language, a favorite food, music from home, etc.
- Get to know your coworkers and seek out new friends when you are lonely.
- Attend events and activities in the area organized or recommended by AAG
- Contact your Outreach Coordinator or anyone at AAG. We are here to help you!

CULTURE SHOCK IS VERY NORMAL, BUT IT CAN BE VERY SERIOUS. IF YOU TRY THE ABOVE ADVICE AND IT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE WORKING, PLEASE CALL AAG RIGHT AWAY AT 1-866-622-7623.

CULTURE EXCHANGE

The primary purpose of the J-1 Program is to offer men and women from around the world an opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of the U.S. firsthand through a combined cultural and work or training experience.

As your sponsor, AAG is committed to ensuring that your program includes a meaningful cultural experience, a variety of opportunities to meet Americans, and a chance to learn firsthand about American society, culture and values. We will do this by providing you with information about cultural activities and events in your area and, in some areas, organizing cultural events for AAG participants. Your Host Company also has a responsibility to provide you the opportunity to engage in cultural experiences throughout your program.

AAG will provide you with the tools you need to have a rich cultural experience. However, it is ultimately up to you to do it! Take advantage of this unique experience in your life to do and try new things. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Follow AAG on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: **#AAG**
- See what events and Activities are coming up in your City: **#J1(yourCity).** Example: #J1Galveston, #J1SanAntonio
- Attend events and activities organized by AAG in your city.
- Look up your local **Chamber of Commerce or Visitors Bureau** on Google and get a calendar of events. You can also visit their offices to pick up brochures and tourist information.
- Check out events at a local college or university. While a J1 participant cannot enroll in classes, this is a great place to meet new people and attend activities and events.
- See what activities your local Park and Recreation Departments offers. Activities may include softball leagues, day trips and more.
- Go bowling! If you like it, join a bowling league.
- **Volunteer** - There are many volunteer opportunities in communities near you. This is a great way to engage in cultural exchange and meet people from your new community.

- Community clean ups
- Teaching local children about your culture at a local school
- Senior Center or Retirement Community. This is a great opportunity to meet the older generation of Americans and hear interesting stories about the good old days!

USEFUL WEBSITES

- If you want to get outside, try Geocaching http://www.geocaching.com/
- What is happening in my state? Check out http://www.thingstodo.com/
- For sports-lovers: http://www.active.com/
- 50 Things to do for Free in North America: http://www.hostelworld.com/travel-features/155754/50-things-to-do-for-free-in-north-america
- Use a coupon: http://www.groupon.com/local/things-to-do
- Volunteer opportunities: http://www.voa.org/volunteer
- Arts & Crafts: Take a class at Michaels Store https://classes.michaels.com/OnlineClasses/control/main?firstVisit=firstVisit

Have fun! Meet new friends, try new things, but remember to stay smart, safe, and be responsible. You are representing your country and the program!

TRAVEL VALIDATION FOR TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE USA

NEVER TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE U.S. DURING YOUR PROGRAM WITHOUT NOTIFYING AAG FIRST!

If you want to visit your home country or any other country (including Canada and Mexico) and then re-enter the U.S. during your program, please note the following requirements

- Your travel must take place before your DS-2019 end date.
- You must have a valid (not expired) J-1 visa to re-enter the U.S. after your international travel.
- You must have a multiple entry visa (the letter "M" will be indicated under the word "Entries" on the J-1 Visa).
- You must have permission from your Host Company (in writing) allowing you to be absent for the duration of your trip outside the U.S.
- J-1 Teachers: If making plans to travel outside the U.S, please make sure you travel after the end of the school year. Prior to making travel plans, please make sure that you meet all the necessary certification requirements to teach at your school for the entire duration of the next school year. In addition, you must obtain permission from your school and AAG before you make and confirm your travel plans.
- You must have the Travel Validation Section on the front of your DS-2019 form signed by a Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer at AAG.
- You must submit your DS-2019document to AAG for travel endorsement minimum 3 weeks prior to your travel date.
- You will need to include the following documents:
    - A self-addressed, stamped envelope.
    - A letter stating the proposed destination and reason for trip, date of departure and date of re-entry.
    - Your phone number and email address.
    - Your original DS-2019 form.
    - A confirmation from your Host Company approving your absence for the duration of your trip.

Please mail all the above listed documents to the following address:

Alliance Abroad Group
Attn: Travel Validation
1221 South Mopac Expressway, Ste. 100
Austin, TX 78746

If you leave the U.S. during your 30-day travel period at the end of the program, you will not be able to re-enter the U.S. and should plan to travel to your home country from your trip destination.

VISITING CANADA OR MEXICO

Some participants experience difficulties re-entering the U.S. after visiting Canada or Mexico. Please consider if the trip is really worthwhile. You will need to:

- Call the nearest Canadian or Mexican consulate in the U.S. to find out if you need a visa for entry. Visa requirements change and are not the same for all foreigners.
- Follow the procedures outlined above to get your DS-2019 form signed.
- Tell the border official when leaving the U.S. that you will be re-entering within a few days, and show your valid passport and DS-2019 form.

You will not be able to re-enter the U.S. after the program end date on the DS-2019. This means that you may not travel outside of the U.S. and then re-enter again during your 30-day grace (travel) period. If you have any questions, please call AAG at 1-866-622-7623.

TAX REFUNDS

You must pay all appropriate federal, state and local taxes. However, a portion of the taxes withheld from your paycheck may be refunded to you, provided you correctly file the necessary tax forms.

- The deadline for declaring all taxes paid in the year you worked is April 15 of the following year.
- If you work in the U.S. during two different years, you must file taxes twice.
- If you do not file your tax declaration, you will not receive a tax refund and you could also have problems during future trips to the U.S.

In January, your Host Company is required by law to provide you with a declaration of the total amount of money you earned the year before and the total amount of each tax that you paid. This statement is called a W-2 form, and it is used to file your Federal Income tax return. Make sure your employer has your current address in your home country so that they can send you your W-2 form. AAG is not able to provide your W-2 form; only your employer can give you this form.

Our partner, Taxback (Taxback.com), specializes in providing U.S. tax refunds for J-1 visa holders. It's free to find out what you are owed; Taxback operates on a no refund - no fee basis. A 10% fee will apply only if you do receive a refund. Their free tax refund calculator will give you an instant refund calculation so you can see how much you're owed.

The taxback.com service is simple to use and custom-built for J-1 participants like you:

- Register for a free tax refund estimation
- Fill out a U.S. tax pack
- Get your U.S. tax refund paid into your bank account
- Spend it!

You can either register online now or wait for the friendly crew at taxback.com to get in touch.

For more information about this service, please visit AAG Website: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/taxes.html

MAINTAINING LAWFUL J-1 STATUS

- You must participate in their program at the Host Company/Host School listed on their DS-2019 document unless
- You must maintain a valid passport.
- You must inform of any change of address, email or telephone number within 10 days of the change.
- You must complete a Monthly Check in each month during the program.
- **Summer Work Travel** J-1 Program Participants may not accept or start working at a second job without AAG's approval of the placement and review of all required documents.
- **Intern/Trainee** J-1 Program Participants are required to complete Final Program Evaluation. Participants with a program exceeding 6 months are also required to complete Midpoint Program Evaluation.
- **Teach** J-1 Program Participants must meet both federal and state certification requirements and teach full time.
- You (and your J-2 dependents if applicable) must maintain required health insurance coverage.
- You must obtain travel validation signature from AAG for any travel outside the U.S.. (Please see instructions for sending your DS-2019 to AAG.)
- You must complete your program by the end date listed on your DS-2019 or, apply on time for an extension of your program (only an option for certain categories of J1 visas.)
- You must depart the US within 30 days of program end date.

RETURNING HOME

You are allowed to travel in the U.S. for a period of up to 30 days after the end date on your DS-2019 form.

- You may not work or train during this 30-day period.
- You may not exit the U.S. to travel to Canada, Mexico or any other country during your 30-day travel period and then re-enter the U.S.
- You MUST depart the U.S. and return home at the end of your 30 day travel period. If you are still in the U.S. after your 30 day travel period, you will be considered an overstay. You may have difficulties obtaining another U.S. visa in the future.

You are not insured for this period unless you contact AAG and make arrangements to purchase an extension of your coverage. Please purchase travel insurance at least 4 weeks before your DS-2019 end date: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance/insurance-duration/

STARBUCKS
ONE WAY
DESIGNER

USEFUL INFORMATION

AAG WEBSITE

Please see AAG website for additional important information that will be helpful to you during your program: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/ . We have lots of resources available to you including cultural exchange suggestions and links.

J-1 SURVIVAL GUIDE

Our Outreach Coordinators put together a "J-1 Survival Guide" that includes useful information on what to pack for your trip to the U.S., how to shop for groceries, buy a phone, rent a car, etc. You may see the guide on our website: http://participants.allianceabroad.com/J1_Survival_Guide.html

METRIC EQUIVALENTS

1 mile = 1.6 kilometers
1 yard (3 feet) = 91.4 centimeters
1 foot (12 inches) = 30.48 centimeters
1 inch = 2.54 centimeters
http://www.metric-conversions.org/

1 pound = 0.45 kilograms
1 ounce = 28.35 grams
1 gallon = 3.79 liters
1 quart = 0.95 liters

TEMPERATURE

32 degrees Fahrenheit	=	0 degrees Celsius
68 degrees Fahrenheit	=	20 degrees Celsius
95 degrees Fahrenheit	=	35 degrees Celsius

For temperature in your area, please see: http://www.weather.com/

ELECTRICITY

Don't forget electrical appliances in the U.S. run on 110 volts. Plugging in electric appliances requiring different voltage may cause damage to the appliance. Save electricity by shutting lights and heaters off when you are not home.

TIME ZONES

The U.S. is divided into four time zones: Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific. For example:

EST	Eastern:	12 p.m. or "Noon"
CST	Central:	11 a.m.
MST	Mountain:	10 a.m.
PST	Pacific:	9 a.m.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The public library is your best source for information about practically anything. Visit it just to familiarize yourself with the facilities. If the library offers an orientation or tour, attend one as soon as you can. If you have any trouble finding or using any of the materials in the library, please ask a librarian to help you. Most libraries have consumer information collections, books on getting the most value for your dollar and free consumer-oriented publications and pamphlets. Often a library will offer free inter- net access if you live in that town.

STANDARD HOURS OF OPERATION

Stores generally open between 8:00 am and 10:00 am in the morning and stay open until 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm Monday through Saturday. Depending on local laws, stores might be open Sunday for part of the day. American stores never close for lunch. Some retailers will remain open until 9:00 or 10:00 pm several days a week, and many discount stores remain open late every day.

Supermarkets usually remain open until 9:00 pm. Convenience stores and some restaurants are open 24 hours a day. Note, however, that most offices close at 5:00 pm; banks generally close earlier.

POST OFFICE

The U.S. Postal Service is operated by the federal government. Post offices are located in every town and are usually open from 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 or 6:00p.m. weekdays, and until noon or 1:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Some large city post offices have a section that never closes where you can buy stamps and deposit mail at any hour. The postal service delivers mail to homes and businesses

every day except Sundays and official national holidays.

International Packages: If you are sending an important item out of the country, the best strategy is to wrap or package it, label it very clearly, then ask the post office clerk how you should send it. The clerk will weigh the package and tell you the cost of each shipping option.

MAIL

American domestic mail weighing less than 1 ounce requires a 49-cent stamp. For general questions regarding postal service in the USA (express mail, zip codes), call: 1-800-275-8777.

TELEPHONE

Telephone numbers in the U.S. have ten digits. The first digit is a "1". The next three digits are the area code. In written or printed telephone numbers, area codes are often placed within parentheses like this: (212) 555-1234. Each area code will serve a few million people. This might be an entire state or just part of a large city like New York or Los Angeles. If you are dialing a number in the same area code as the telephone you are using, you usually do not have to dial the first "1" plus the area code.

LONG DISTANCE SERVICES

There are many long distance and wireless telephone companies in the U.S. such as AT&T, Verizon and Sprint. These companies offer special plans for saving money on long distance or international calls. You can find these calling plans advertised on television, radio, the internet, and your local newspaper. Another option is to use Skype or phone apps like WhatsApp. Please do not make long-distance phone calls from your housing or other people's phones without first obtaining permission and clarifying if any fees will be charged to you.

PHONE CARDS

Phone cards and credit cards can be used to make long distance telephone calls, especially if you are away from home. These can be purchased online or at many convenience stores.

SUPERMARKETS AND GROCERY STORES

The primary outlet for retail food in the U.S. is the supermarket. Supermarkets carry a large number of brands and products in several sizes. In suburban areas supermarkets can be very large and include pharmacies, on-site bakeries, even sections where you can buy motor oil and hardware.

Small supermarkets in cities often offer less variety. A trip to the supermarket can be a major expedition. Financially aware consumers often make shopping lists in advance, and take advantage of discount coupons and weekly specials. Supermarkets offer products under their own brand names as well as national brands. The supermarket brands usually cost less. Supermarkets also offer "generic" or "no name" products which cost even less. Often these products are exactly the same as the more expensive, nationally advertised brands.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Cleanliness is an important part of U.S. culture. While you are here, it is important to follow personal hygiene practices common to the culture:

Take a shower or bath every day.
Use an underarm deodorant or antiperspirant every day.
Practice good dental hygiene by brushing teeth twice a day.
Do your laundry frequently so your clothes and uniforms are clean.

SMOKING

Americans are not very tolerant of smoking. Most workplaces and nearly all public buildings are non-smoking environments. Smoking is also banned in restaurants and bars in some cities and states. If you smoke, it is important that you always smoke in designated smoking areas. When with co-workers, friends, customers, or others, ask if you may smoke around them. Many landlords prohibit smoking inside the house or apartment.

U.S DEPARTMENT OF STATE CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event that you have concerns or issues that have not been resolved through your U.S. Sponsor (AAG), the U.S. Department of State can also be contacted.

U.S. Department of State

ECA/EC, State Annex – 44 (SA-44)
301 4th Street, SW, Room 664
Washington, DC 20547-4406
J-1 Visa Helpline: 1-866-283-9090
Email: JVisas@state.gov
Fax: (202) 203-7779
Website: http://j1visa.state.gov/

Alliance Abroad Group Responsible Officers:

Responsible Officer:
John McNamara
Email: jmcnamara@allianceabroad.com
Phone: 512-904-1157

Alternative Responsible Officer:

Laurie Moxley
Email: lmoxley@allianceabroad.com
Phone: 512-904-1145

SEEK FOR
ADVENTURE

OFF TO YOUR ADVENTURE

Alliance Abroad Group is committed to providing you with a satisfying experience from the time you arrive to the day you return home. It is important that you keep an open mind to new experiences and different cultural norms. Americans are very open, so please don't hesitate to ask people to explain things to you or to express your concerns. You will have challenging days and wonderful days, but we believe that the overall time you spend in the U.S. will be one of the most positive times of your life. If we can make the program better, please let us know. Our programs are only as good as the people who make them, so the rest is up to you. Good luck!

NOTES:

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