



## Important BridgeUSA Program Reminders for Teachers

### Essentials for a Great Experience

**Alliance Abroad Group (AAG) is your designated visa sponsor and is responsible for monitoring your health, safety, and wellbeing while on the program.** Our Support Department is dedicated to providing assistance to you throughout your program. Please reach out to us with any concerns you may have so we can better support you.

**Our Phone Number: 1-866-622-7623**

**Our Email: [Support@allianceabroad.com](mailto:Support@allianceabroad.com)**

1. **24 Hour Support:** We can always be reached in the case of an emergency at 1-866-622-7623. If the call is not an emergency, a message will be taken and the call returned the next business day.
2. **Research the city/town/area** where you'll be completing your program. Check to see average temperatures in the area and things and activities to do. Be prepared for local climate when packing for your trip!
  - Locate a Public Library in the area: <https://librarytechnology.org/libraries/uspublic/>
3. **Login to your profile in Participant Portal** and make sure you submit to AAG all the required information:  
<https://aag.hanovercrm.com/>

**Bring Enough Money:** AAG recommended amount is \$3,000 USD, plus any additional funds to cover your travel expenses and initial housing expenses (deposit and 1<sup>st</sup> month rent). The recommended \$3,000 USD is to cover your expenses while you wait for your first paycheck, which might take up to 4-6 weeks. Please see this website to know approximate cost of living in the area:

[https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country\\_result.jsp?country=United+States](https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/country_result.jsp?country=United+States)

4. **Access to Finances:** You must have access to at least \$1,000 at any point during your program to cover any unexpected expenses and support yourself during any anticipated work interruption.
5. **Traveling to the US:** You must have the following documents on you when traveling to the US:
  - Passport with your J-1 visa
  - DS-2019 document
  - Job Offer Letter
  - Address where you'll be staying upon arrival
  - AAG 24/7 Emergency Line (1-866-622-7623)

If you do not have your passport and DS-2019 with you when clearing U.S. Customs and Immigration, you will not be allowed to enter the United States.

6. **Program Start:** You cannot start working before your DS-2019 program start date or work after your DS-2019 program end date.
7. **SEVIS Check-in:** After arriving in the US, you MUST check into SEVIS by going your profile in Participant Portal: <https://aag.hanovercrm.com/> You cannot check in with SEVIS before you arrive in the United States and before your DS-2019 start date. If you change your living address, email address, or phone number during your program, you must notify Alliance Abroad within 10 days of the change.
8. **Social Security:** After you check into SEVIS, we recommend waiting 10 days before applying for Social Security. Find the nearest Social Security Office: <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp> and bring the following documents with you:  
Completed Social Security application form: <http://ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>
  - Passport/ Visa
  - Sponsor letter

- DS-2019
- Electronic I-94 record print out (can be printed at the following link: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov> )

Keep your Social Security application receipt and show it to Host School.

9. **Taxes:** As a BridgeUSA teacher, you must pay all local, state and federal taxes. You do not pay Social Security/Medicare taxes for the first 2 calendar years as you are considered a non-resident alien. After the first 2 calendar years, you are considered a resident alien and are liable to pay Social Security/Medicare taxes. *For the purposes of determining 2 calendar years, the calendar year of entry is counted toward the two calendar years*
10. **Insurance:** All teachers must have medical insurance that meets the U.S. Department of State requirements. All new teachers have health insurance with Hollard Travel for the first 90 days of your program (see DS-2019 start date).

**Insurance Provider: Hollard Travel**  
**Insurance Phone Number: 1-877-826-2910**  
**Policy Number: AAG SA-AAG**

You coverage starts on your DS-2019 start date and ends 90 days later. Your insurance through Hollard Travel does not cover regular check-ups, dental, vision, pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, pre-existing conditions, etc. For more specific details about your insurance and what to do when you need medical assistance please visit: <http://participants.allianceabroad.com/insurance>

Prior to your insurance through Hollard Travel running out 90 days after your DS-2019 start date, you must enroll in an alternate insurance such as:

- a) **School's Insurance:** Must include medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness; deductibles cannot exceed \$500 per accident or illness. Please check with your school's Human Resources office to confirm the details of their plan.
- b) **DIANINS Scholar insurance:** <http://www.dianins.com/scholar-plan/> This is a recommendation as all DIANINS plans meet the Department of State requirements.

11. **Monthly Check In:** You are required to complete Monthly Check In every month during your program. Please use this opportunity to let us know about your program and what events and activities you've participated in. To complete Monthly Check In, please go to: <https://aag.hanovercrm.com/>
12. **Site of Activity:** Your SEVIS record must show the exact location where you are teaching and can be located during your program. If you change school location (even within the same school district), Alliance Abroad must be notified within 3 days of the change so we can update your SEVIS.
13. **Teaching Pre-K:** You cannot teach in Pre-K classrooms unless you are teaching in a language emersion program that is offered as a regular course of study by your school. If you are teaching Pre-K, please confirm that you are in compliance with program regulations and requirements.
14. **School Resources:** Know the resources available to you at your school to assist during your program. (e.g. mentors, coaches, fellow co-teachers, etc.) Please ask questions and request assistance when needed.
15. **Certification Requirements:** Certifications are required by each state in order to teach within your district. Make sure you understand and fulfill the requirements for your certification within the first year of your program.
16. **Cross-Cultural Activity:** You are required to conduct cross-cultural activities each year during your program and submit an annual report to Alliance Abroad. Please contact [j1teacher@allianceabroad.com](mailto:j1teacher@allianceabroad.com) if you have questions about this requirement.

17. **Stay in Touch:** As a BridgeUSA program participant, it is your responsibility to stay in regular contact with your sponsor. You should report any issues or concerns to Alliance Abroad by calling us at 1-866-622-7623 or emailing support@allianceabroad.com. You are required to check your email regularly and respond to communication from Alliance Abroad within either 24 hours or time frame given. Staying in touch will help us to better assist you in your program.
18. **Commitment to your Host School:** You are expected to complete the entire duration of your program (see your DS-2019 dates) at your current school. If you are experiencing any difficulties or issues at your school, please address these with your school's administrators and contact Alliance Abroad. If you leave your school without prior notification and approval from Alliance Abroad, your program will be shortened and you will be required to depart the United States.
19. **Program Renewal:** Each spring, you will receive information from Alliance Abroad about the renewal process. You must comply with all the requirements within the given deadlines to continue participating in the program. The annual renewal fee is \$1000.
20. **Applying for a J-2 Dependent:** Before agreeing to review a J-2 application for sponsorship, Alliance Abroad will closely review your annual salary, the cost of living in your city/town (including housing, cost of childcare, and child's age), and the certification and licensure process in your school district. In some cases, it may be determined that you must complete a year of your program before you can bring your dependents.
21. **Pregnant Teachers:** Please notify Alliance Abroad if you become pregnant during your program. Alliance Abroad will look at the facts and circumstances of each pregnancy on an individual basis. Among other factors, Alliance Abroad will evaluate whether you have access to:
  - paid maternity leave at the school and a guaranteed position upon return;
  - access to prenatal/pregnancy care either covered by the school's insurance, or other insurance, since Alliance Abroad's insurance does not cover maternity expenses;
  - financial resources sufficient to pay for the pregnancy, birth, time away from work, and additional expense of a new child; and
  - a plan for childcare when returning from maternity leave.
22. **Travel Validation:** If you decide to travel outside of the United States during your program, you must obtain permission from your school (if the dates fall outside of the school break) and get your DS-2019 endorsed for travel by Alliance Abroad. AAG needs to receive your DS-2019 document in our office at least 3 weeks prior to your intended travel date. For more information, please visit: <http://participants.allianceabroad.com/travel>
23. **Program Length:** Your program length cannot exceed 3 years with an opportunity to petition for an extension during your last year, for an additional 1-2 years (at the discretion of the Department of State). During your 3rd year, you will receive information from Alliance Abroad about the extension process. Please note that Alliance Abroad will only petition for an extension for teachers who choose to stay at their host school.
24. **Your Program Is About Cultural Exchange:** You are expected to take part in cultural exchange opportunities at your school, in your community, and in your area. Each month, you will be expected to provide information about cultural events and activities you have attended. We'd love to hear about your experiences and see photos! You may also share your experiences and photos with AAG on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. When posting, remember to use the following hashtags: #AllianceAbroad and #intlExchange

**ENJOY YOUR CULTURAL EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE!**