



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



January 8, 2024

Dear American Host Family:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, we would like to thank you for your decision to host an au pair. BridgeUSA programs allow you to experience first-hand the richness and diversity of a culture different from your own as you exemplify American values and culture to an exchange visitor. People-to-people exchanges are a valuable tool of foreign policy. Through this program, you will join thousands of American families who serve as citizen ambassadors of the United States. Families across the United States have found hosting an au pair to be a rewarding and memorable experience.

The au pair program is primarily a cultural exchange opportunity with the goal of increasing mutual understanding between people of different countries and Americans. The way you interact with your au pair will have a significant impact on the way she/he understands this country and its people. Your au pair will likely have much to learn about American customs and culture and may begin the exchange with only basic English language skills. The most successful host families expend the time, energy, and initiative necessary to help their au pair adjust to American life and ensure their au pair feels safe, stays healthy, and engages in educational and cultural activities.

While you are hosting a young person who will help you care for your children, the ultimate responsibility for your children's well-being will continue to rest with you. You must be prepared to work with your au pair to establish the best care for your children. It is important to understand that child care traditions are likely different in large or small ways in your au pair's home country. Being clear about your expectations and keeping a transparent schedule consistent with the rules of the program that both you and your au pair agree to will reduce misunderstandings.

Information about the au pair program is on our website at <http://j1visa.state.gov/programs/au-pair>. The website addresses the most frequently asked questions about the program and provides the rules under which the program operates. It is extremely important that you notify your sponsoring organization if you have any concerns or if your au pair's personal health, safety, or well-being is threatened in any way. If the sponsoring organization is not responsive to your concerns, you should contact the Department of State directly through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov.

The BridgeUSA program will create a strong life-long bond between you, your au pair, and your local community. We are pleased that you made the decision to be part of this impactful exchange program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Pasini".

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange

