



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



January 8, 2024

Dear Au Pair:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the start of an important and exciting adventure. During your time in the United States, you will have the opportunity to experience life as part of an American family and have the opportunity to enroll in college to earn credit. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime, get practice in speaking English, and learn about U.S. culture. Since 1949, thousands of young adults from around the world just like you have come to the United States on a cultural or educational exchange to share their language, culture, and customs with their American hosts, schools, and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

We want you to have a meaningful and successful experience. You will be living with a host family that may have different rules for their children and a different way of life from what you may be used to, so keeping an open mind will be important. Your goal should be to learn about American customs, values, and culture and build strong relationships with your host family and new friends.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials and identification card, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Keep this number in your contact list.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:JVisas@state.gov). Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program. Please add the [JVisas@state.gov](mailto:JVisas@state.gov) email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department.

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

We are pleased that you made the decision to pursue a cultural exchange program in the United States and hope you enjoy your stay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Pasini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and "P".

Rebecca A. Pasini  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
for Private Sector Exchange