



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



January 8, 2024

Dear Camp Counselor:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the start of an exciting adventure. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime, get lots of practice in speaking English, and partake in new traditions. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

As a camp counselor, you are part of a U.S. Department of State cultural exchange program in which you, like thousands of other camp counselors from around the world, will have the opportunity to share your language, culture, and customs as you enhance your skills and expertise in your future profession. You will improve your knowledge of American techniques and technology, increase your understanding of American society, demonstrate your skills, and enrich your American colleagues' knowledge of your culture. In order to ensure that you have a safe and exciting cultural exchange experience here, we encourage you to take a few precautions both before and after you arrive:

- Contact your camp supervisor to obtain written confirmation of any offer details. Make sure all terms and conditions are clear and that you understand them all. If there is anything you do not understand, ask your U.S. sponsor or camp before you come. Note that the terms and conditions of your job must follow all local, state, and federal laws.
- Notify your U.S. sponsor and camp of your exact arrival time and make sure you fully understand the best way to travel to your housing or camp address. If your sponsor is not meeting you, plan the journey to your destination in advance.
- Confirm that you have enough money to cover your expenses. Your U.S. sponsor should provide you with an estimate of the necessary amount. If they have not provided this information yet, ask them. Also consider bringing extra money in case of an emergency.
- Study all the pre-arrival materials provided by your U.S. sponsor. Make sure you understand your rights, both in this country and in your program, as well as your obligations, such as updating your address once you arrive.
- Learn about the area in which you will live and work in the United States before you arrive. Pay special attention to that area's safe and affordable housing areas, public transportation, medical facilities, banks, shopping areas, and so on. Your U.S. sponsor should advise you on these matters if you are unsure.

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, <https://j1visa.state.gov/programs> for you to check out.

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 is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Add this phone number to 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. Please add the helpline number to your contact list and the JVisas@state.gov email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to come to 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".

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange