



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



January 8, 2024

Dear Intern:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the start of an exciting adventure. During your time in the United States, you will have the opportunity to share your language, culture, and customs as you enhance your skills and expertise in your future profession. Through well-structured and guided training, you will improve your knowledge of American techniques and technology, increase your understanding of American culture and society, and enhance your American colleagues' knowledge of foreign cultures and skills. 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, safe, and successful cultural exchange experience. Accordingly, we encourage you to take a few precautions both before and after you arrive:

- 1) Obtain written confirmation of any training offer details;
- 2) Know the best way to travel to your housing or host organization's address;
- 3) Bring enough money to cover your expenses and some extra money in case of an emergency;
- 4) Research the local area and learn about nearby medical facilities, shopping, and public transportation;
- 5) Keep information about your program sponsor and emergency resources close at hand at all times.

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. Please contact your sponsor immediately if you have any questions about your exchange program or need any assistance while you are here. It is your sponsor's responsibility to help you with any issues, 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. 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. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program. Please add the helpline number and the 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, 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, stylized initial "R".

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange