

DATE: February 7, 2020

SUBJECT: Coronavirus Update

Dear Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor:

The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 in China. ECA views the health and well-being of all our exchange visitors as our top priority.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is the primary resource for up-to-date information on all diseases and biological threats. CDC information about this virus is available at [About 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\)](#).

ECA wishes to thank all sponsors for their ongoing proactive monitoring and reporting efforts regarding Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) participants from China. Considering the current situation regarding the expanded travel warnings and restrictions, ECA recommends the following:

Initial exchange visitors should note that, on Friday, January 31 President Trump signed a proclamation barring entry to the United States of most foreign nationals who traveled to China within the 14 days preceding their entry to the United States. The proclamation is in effect as of Sunday, February 2. This action follows the declaration of a public health emergency in the United States related to the novel coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China.

The full text of the presidential proclamation is available on the White House website at:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspension-entry-immigrants-nonimmigrants-persons-pose-risk-transmitting-2019-novel-coronavirus/>.

This proclamation applies to all foreign nationals, except those who can meet one of the limited exceptions listed in the proclamation.

For exchange visitors who are currently outside of the United States and are in China or who have visited China in the last 14 days:

1. Initial exchange visitors:
  - a. Individuals in China - Delay their program start date (beyond at least April 1, 2020) and issue a new initial Form DS-2019, "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status."
  - b. All others - Delay their program start date until the applicant has been outside of China (and is not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19) for at least 14 days.
2. Active exchange visitors:
  - a. You may keep their SEVIS record active until the exchange visitor is able to return to the United States and continue with their original program objectives. Exchange visitors

should be mindful of the validity dates of their J-1 visa; they may need to renew their visa before they return to the United States.

- b. You may shorten their SEVIS records for authorized program withdrawal upon the exchange visitor's request.

For exchange visitors currently inside the United States:

1. Wherever needed, reinstate (if necessary) and extend the program of Chinese exchange visitors with upcoming end dates until April 1, 2020. Please note the Department does not have funding to support these extensions in terms of housing or food. Exchange visitor's activities must remain consistent with their original purpose of travel to the United States. Any program extension should include a program of activity appropriate to the J1 visa. The exchange visitor, sponsor, or supporting third parties will need to provide the funding for any program extensions. The Department notes, that there are flights from the United States to China on foreign airlines and code-shares with US-flagged airlines and exchange visitors may prefer to return to China.

Exchange visitors should be mindful of the period of admission granted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection when they entered the United States. The period of admission is indicated on their Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record (I-94). Most exchange visitors are granted duration of status; however, some may be given a certain date on their I-94. In the event the period of admission will expire while an exchange visitor must remain in the United States, sponsors and their exchange visitors are encouraged to review the following U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website detailing special situations for extensions and change of visa status, including those individuals subject to INA 212(e): Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement. Go to: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations> and <https://www.uscis.gov/visit-united-states/extend-your-stay>.

2. The Department is aware that a significant number of exchange visitors currently in the United States are at the maximum duration of their current EVP category and their program cannot be extended. Sponsors and their exchange visitors are encouraged to review the following USCIS website detailing special situations for extensions and change of visa status, including those individuals subject to INA 212(e): Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement. Go to: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/special-situations> and <https://www.uscis.gov/visit-united-states/extend-your-stay>.

If you have further questions, please contact the following ECA email addresses that correlate with the exchange visitor's EVP category:

AGAlert@state.gov (Government Visitor, International Visitor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, University Student, and Professor Categories)

HighSchoolExchanges@state.gov (Secondary School Student Category)

Teacher\_Physician@state.gov (Teacher and Alien Physician Categories)

AuPairProgram@state.gov (Au Pair Category)

CCSponsors@state.gov (Camp Counselor Category)

InternTraineeNotify@state.gov (Intern and Trainee Categories)  
SWTSponsors@state.gov (Summer Work Travel Category)

If you receive any COVID-19 related press inquiries, please let us know and then refer them to the following contacts:

During regular business hours, journalists may contact the Office of Press Relations on (202) 647-2492 by email PAPressDuty@state.gov.

After regular business hours, journalists can reach a GPA Duty Press Officer through the State Department Operations Center: (202) 647-1512; or by email PAPressDuty@state.gov.  
Routine questions about the exchange itself can be sent to: ECA-Press@state.gov

Respectfully,  
Office of Private Sector Exchange