

Student Handbook

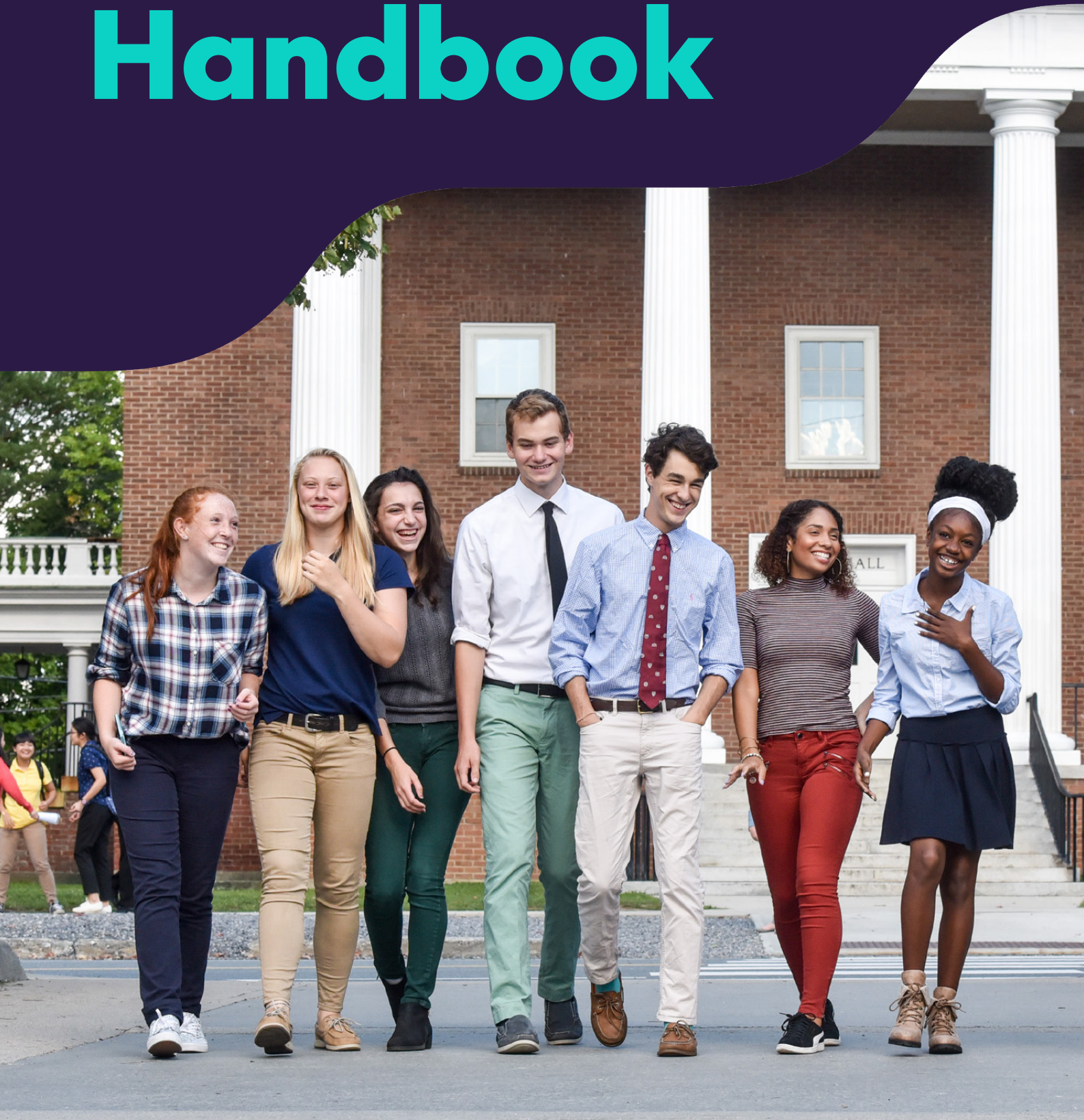


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Welcome

Dear Educatius Student,

We are so excited to welcome you to the United States! This handbook contains tips and information that will help guide you as you adjust to life in a new country. We understand that living in a different culture away from your family can be challenging, and it is our goal to help you feel welcome, supported, and safe in your new community. Below you will see an overview of the support network we have in place for you throughout your time on the program:

Host Families:

- Welcome you into their homes and their families
- Provide you with a room and meals each day
- Share USA culture with you
- Learn about you, your country, and your culture

Local Coordinators (LCs):

- Work with you and your host family to help you have the best possible experience
- Help you with any problems that come up at school or at home
- Check in with you at least once a month

Regional Managers & Directors:

- Oversee Local Coordinators within your region of the country
- Work with schools and host families
- Provide additional support to you and your host family

School:

- Provides a positive educational experience through academic classes, activities, and a network of teachers and staff
- May have their own set of rules and policies that you are expected to follow

Student Experience Team:

- Communicate with your international agencies to share important information with your parents
- Support you in mediating and resolving any issues you may have – You can contact them by emailing: studentexperience@educatius.org.



Educatius Headquarters Contact Information:

50 Congress Street, Suite 730

24-Hour Emergency Number - (800) 301-6014

+1 (479) 222-6714 from outside the U.S

Pre-Departure

Pre-Departure Checklist:

What to bring?

- ☐ Passport Visa documents
- ☐ Original transcripts
- ☐ Immunization records
- ☐ Flight tickets & itinerary
- ☐ A printed copy of your emailed I-20

What to do?

- ☐ Organize all necessary documents
- ☐ Confirm your flights
- ☐ Get immunizations needed for school
- ☐ Make a list of any medications & prescriptions (including eye glasses)
- ☐ Bring some small gifts for your host family

For personal emergencies or missed flights, call Educatus immediately: **1-800-301-6014** or **1-479-222-6714**

For life-threatening emergencies, **call 911**

Host Family

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Regional Manager

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Local Coordinator

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Arrival in USA

What happens after you land in USA?

1. During your flight, you will fill out a Customs Declaration Form.
2. When you land, you will go to Immigration. They will check your I-20, passport, and visa.
3. Customs officials will keep your Customs Declaration Form.
4. You will exit Customs, change to your connecting flight, or be met by your Local Coordinator (LC) and/or your host family.

**For more information,
watch this video online:**

<https://www.educatius.org/USAarrival>



Culture Shock

When you first arrive in a new country, you will feel many different kinds of emotions. As you adjust to life here in USA, these emotions will change, and you will most likely go through some of the stages of culture shock:

Stage 1 – The Honeymoon:

You feel excited, and you're seeing new things and places every day!

Stage 2 – Culture Shock:

You feel overwhelmed, confused, and frustrated with the challenges of your new life.

Stage 3 – Adjustment:

You feel more familiar and comfortable with USA culture, and you are building stronger relationships.

Stage 4 – Adaptation:

When you are getting ready to return home at the end of your program, you feel excited but anxious. You may want to stay longer in USA.

Whatever happens is totally normal!

Your experience will be completely unique to you; you may adjust very quickly and easily, or you may need much longer to get used to your new surroundings.

If you are struggling, feeling depressed, and you need one-on-one support outside of your host family and your local coordinator, we can help you find a professional counselor. Talk to your local coordinator about finding a counselor, or email studentexperience@educatius.org for support.

If you have questions about this or if you need support coping with the effects of culture shock, please contact your Local Coordinator.



"It's not as difficult as it seems; the first week is overwhelming, but then it gets easier as you make friends and get to know people."

16-year-old Spanish student, studied in Utah

Host Family

While you're living with your host family, you have the opportunity to share your own culture and learn more about American culture. Below are some of Educatus' expectations of your host family and you:

Expectations of a Host Family:

- Create a safe and welcoming home environment
- Provide 3 meals a day (Note: if you choose to buy lunch at school instead of packing a lunch at home, you will be responsible for paying for this meal)
- Show you around their home

Expectations of a student:

- Have an open mind and a flexible attitude, understanding that USA is a very diverse country
- Learn what chores and household responsibilities you have
- Communicate – the more open you are with your host family, the better your relationship will be

If you have any questions about this or if you need help adjusting to host family life, **please contact your Local Coordinator.**



Electronics Tips

1. Follow your host family's rules about electronics, gaming, and the internet.
2. Always be kind and respectful online.
3. Be safe on social media. Don't share any personal information with strangers.
4. Don't download anything illegal or inappropriate.
5. Pay attention to how much time you spend on your electronics. Instead of playing video games every night, hang out with your host family!
6. Don't 'sex' or send any sexual pictures or messages.
7. Don't copy other people's work from the internet; plagiarizing will get you in trouble!

If you are unclear about electronics policies at your host family or school, **please contact your Local Coordinator.**



School

Expectations, Academics, and Attendance:

- Attend and pass all of your classes
- Maintain at least a C average in every class
- Follow all school rules
- Join a club or a sports team - that is the best way to make friends!

Remember: You are in USA with an F-1 Visa. Your school can cancel your I-20 at any time if you do not follow the school rules and maintain your grades.

“American teachers are really kind and always open to tutor you after school or help you out with any problem you could have. Don’t be afraid to talk to them and ask questions, because they would be really happy to help you.”

17-year-old Italian student, studied in Michigan

If you have any questions about this or need help with anything at your new school, **please contact your Local Coordinator.**

“Do your homework!!!! It has a great weight on your final grade.”

17-year-old Brazilian student, studied in Michigan



Insurance

United Healthcare Provider Network / Point Comfort Group

Toll-Free: (833) 483-0001

Direct: +1 (317) 210 2010

travelclaims@pointcomfort.com <https://egi.zone/educatius-inbound/>

Once you arrive in USA, carry your insurance card with you at all times. Your plan uses the UnitedHealthcare PPO Network, and you can find providers in your area through your Student Zone or by contacting Point Comfort directly.

You will not have to pay a copay when you see the doctor, but there is a \$350 charge for an emergency room visit (unless you are admitted). If you are not having a true emergency, you should use the Telemedicine services included in your plan, or go to the doctor or an urgent care center.

Your insurance company will help you with:

- Finding a doctor or clinic within the UnitedHealthcare Network.
- Emergency travel assistance
- Filing and tracking the status of your claims.

If you feel ill and would like to see a doctor or if you are injured at any point in the program, **please notify your host family and your Local Coordinator.**

Your insurance will not cover:

- Sports physicals
- Immunizations
- Routine check-ups
- Regular physicals (yearly exams)
- Pre-existing conditions
- Organized sports outside of your High School

Make sure you have all necessary vaccines and immunizations before arriving to USA. Before leaving USA, pay all of your medical bills.



TIP: Call Point Comfort at (833) 483-0001 for emergency assistance or if you have any questions about your medical benefits or claims. Please Note, you must file a claim with Point Comfort after seeking treatment. You can learn more about the claims process through your Student Zone.

If you have questions about your insurance coverage, **please contact your Local Coordinator or the Student Experience Team.**

Personal Safety

While sexual abuse is not a common occurrence in the experience of international students, Educatus wants you to know how to recognize and respond to it, should anything happen.

How should you respond to unwanted and inappropriate advances?

- Listen to your feelings. If someone tries to touch you or behave sexually toward you in any manner that makes you uncomfortable, pay attention to those feelings and act on them. It is never appropriate for an adult to engage in sexual activity with a teenager.
- Say 'Stop' or 'No' firmly and loudly. If you are feeling threatened by someone giving you inappropriate and unwanted attention, do not worry about being polite. Your safety is more important than whether or not the other person will be embarrassed.
- Remove yourself from the situation as quickly as possible. Always be sure to carry your cell phone with you. If you feel you are in immediate danger, call 911. If you do not feel you are in immediate danger but need someone to pick you up in order to leave the situation, call your host parent or LC.
- Tell a trusted adult. Talk to your host parent and LC about any situation like this. Don't be afraid that you might get someone in trouble. You could be protecting others from harm by sharing your story.

- Contact Educatus. Even if you talk to your host parent or other trusted adult, please always let your LC know as well. If you cannot reach your LC or do not feel comfortable talking to them, please contact your Student Experience Advisor.

What is sexual abuse?

- Forcing unwanted sexual activity (kissing, grabbing, touching) onto another person
- Being forced to look at sexual pictures, videos, or pornography
- Being watched while dressing or showering
- Any unwanted physical touching that makes you feel uncomfortable

If anyone intimidates, threatens, or tries to force you into sexual activity, contact the **Educatus Emergency Number (800-301-6014)** at any time. If you are in immediate danger, **call 911**. We are here to help and support you.

Program Rules

General Rules

- Students who are 18 upon arrival or who turn 18 during the program are subject to the Program Rules in their entirety. Educatius has a contractual agreement with the natural parents, and obligations towards natural parents are the same as for students who are under 18.
- Any and all past and current physical or psychological medical conditions need to be communicated to the sending organization in full, prior to program start.
- If a student is experiencing any health issues that are endangering the student's well-being (e.g. eating disorders), the Program Review Committee will determine if it is in the student's best interest to return home and be with the natural family.
- Students must have a working cell phone with a local number
- Students must follow the host family (HF) rules, participate in HF everyday life, and aim to integrate in the HF community. Students must act respectfully and always keep the HF aware of their whereabouts.
- Students must accept placement with a HF of any race, creed, or color. Students must act as a member of the HF, respect the rules and customs of the HF, and accept the responsibilities given.
- School attendance is compulsory. Students must follow all rules set by the school, as well as:
 - » attend school every day and follow school policies with regard to absence.
 - » maintain a C-average or higher in all courses at the host school.
- Use of phone and/or other forms of communication to contact home should be restricted in order to avoid homesickness.
- Natural parents are advised not to contact the receiving organization unless approved by the sending organization.
- Students must abide by all laws of the host country.
- Students may not buy, sell, possess, or use any form of narcotic, alcoholic beverage, or controlled substance (unless prescribed by a medical doctor and disclosed previously to Educatius). Students may not use any legal substance in a way that is meant to achieve intoxication, including but not limited to inhalable intoxicants. This restriction also includes

the possession of any drug paraphernalia.

- Students may not smoke or use tobacco cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or any form of tobacco while participating in the program.
- Students may not accept any form of employment that is in violation of the rules of their visa or study permit.
- Independent overnight travel is allowed, as long as it is in accordance with Educatius Travel Policy. Students must complete the Independent Travel Request Form at least 14 days in advance, and the trip must be supervised by an adult 25 years of age or older. The form must be approved by the host parents, school (if applicable), natural parents, and Student Experience Team.
- Convalidation of grades or approval of school year is the student's responsibility.
- Students must leave the host family's home within five days of the last day of school.

Be aware that the local laws may be different from laws in the student's home country. Violations of the above rules may have serious consequences and/or result in a cancellation of the program.

Specific Rules

The following actions/behavior are not permitted:

- Hitch-hiking
- Sexting, that is, the sending or sharing of sexually explicit digital images, videos, text messages, or emails
- Life changing decisions:
 - » Marriage
 - » Changing religion
 - » Changing nationality
 - » Tattoos
 - » Piercings
 - » Becoming pregnant or impregnating another person
- Driving or purchasing a motorized vehicle (car, motorcycle, boat, all terrain vehicle, scooter, or similar means of motorized transport)
 - » Driving is only permitted with an instructor of an official driver's education course. It is only permitted during class hours.

Program Rules

Our rules are made with our students' safety in mind. To ensure student success, we have a set process for handling situations in which students break the rules and require additional support.

This process involves the following:

Positive Improvement Plan (PIP):

The goal of a PIP is to help students and/or host families resolve minor issues together by opening up communication. The Local Coordinator will meet with students and host families to facilitate conversation and identify areas of improvement.

Success Plan (SP):

The goal of an SP is to provide students with the tools they need to overcome more escalated issues. If an SP is issued, a Student Experience Advisor will work with the Local Coordinator and Regional Manager to provide additional support.

Probation Letter (PL):

A PL will be issued for major violations of the Program Rules. This will involve the Student Experience Team, Local Coordinator, and Regional Manager.

Program Dismissal:

A student may be dismissed for major violations of the Program Rules. The Program Review Committee will examine the violation(s) on a case-by-case basis to make sure the committee's decision is fair and consistent with Educatus' policies. Only the Program Review Committee has the authority to make the decision to dismiss a student.

If you are unclear about the Educatus Program Rules, **please contact your Local Coordinator.**

Travel

If you want to travel independently while you are on the program, you have to:

1. Ask your LC for the Travel Request Form.
2. Fill out and sign the form.
3. Ask your host parents to sign the form.
4. If you are going to miss school, ask your school to sign the form.
5. Send it to your natural parents. Once they sign it, they can send it to your agent. Your agent will send the form to the Student Experience team.
6. Finally, your Student Experience Advisor will approve the form.

Remember:

- You have to turn in your travel form at least 14 days in advance.
- Travel must be supervised by an adult 25 years of age or older.



End of Program

End of Program Checklist:

During your last month:

- ☐ Buy any gifts you want to bring home to your natural family Visit your favorite places in your host town or city one more time
- ☐ Write your host family and/or LC a note thanking them for all they did over the past year
- ☐ Exchange contact information with all of your friends so you can keep in touch
- ☐ Make sure your return flight is booked (Note: you need to leave your host family's home within 5 days of the last day of school)
- ☐ Request a copy of transcripts as needed

During your last week:

- ☐ Return all books and materials to your school
- ☐ Pay any outstanding bills or fees
- ☐ Empty your school locker
- ☐ Close any bank accounts, gym, or club memberships
- ☐ Return any borrowed items
- ☐ End phone contract if necessary
- ☐ Return house keys to host family

Tips for Success



“Don’t spend too much time in your room, but get off your bed and start helping and hang out with the host family. Don’t keep your eyes on your phone during family time, but use that time wisely to practice your English.”

15-year-old Vietnamese student, studied in California

“Enjoy the little things, be grateful, push yourself, try new things, and give your best. Don’t be afraid to speak English!”

17-year-old Brazilian student, studied in Michigan

“Don’t be afraid to say hi to people!”

17-year-old Thai student, studied in Arizona

“Be open-minded and outgoing, involve yourself, and if someone invites you to something, say yes!”

17-year-old Norwegian student, studied in California

Tips for Success

"Just be positive. Don't compare your experience with your life at home; make as many friends as you can and have fun."

17-year-old Italian student, studied in Massachusetts

"Learn how to have fun, but also keep the grades up!"

– 15-year-old Taiwanese student, studied in Arizona

"If you have a problem, tell your host family; if you're upset with something they said/did, tell them; if you appreciate something they did, express it. Talk about how you feel, share your new experiences, ask whenever you don't understand something, and listen! They're not going to be perfect, but you soon will have not one, but two families."

17-year-old Brazilian student, studied in Michigan

"Try to participate in class as much as you can. Be brave - ask about what you don't understand in class, even though your English might not be good."

17-year-old Vietnamese student, studied in Michigan

"Be nice, work hard, and be yourself."

18-year-old Chinese student, studied in Arizona

"My number one advice would be to reach out to other students at school and don't wait for them to come to you. Only you are responsible for how your exchange year turns out, so get out of your comfort zone."

16-year-old Norwegian student, studied in Massachusetts





UNLOCK THE WORLD. STUDY ABROAD.