



Council for Educational Travel USA
CETUSA STUDENT HANDBOOK

***"We're on a mission to transform lives
through cultural exchange."***



Revised June 2025

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WELCOME!



Welcome to the United States!

Few students have the ability and courage to travel across the world to immerse themselves in another culture for a semester or academic year. Of those who do, not all qualify - but you did! You can be comfortable knowing that CETUSA is here to support you and provide you with every opportunity to succeed on program.

This Student Handbook is designed as a guide to help you understand the program and thrive in your American community. Your host family will receive their own handbook. When you need to reference a policy or process, a great place to start is this handbook, or your host family's handbook. Your Local Coordinator is also available to answer questions and support you through the duration of your program.

ABOUT CETUSA

Council for Educational Travel, USA (CETUSA) is a nonprofit international student exchange organization based in Grand Rapids, Michigan. CETUSA coordinates exchange experiences for high school students, university students and young professionals. Our mission statement is simple: We're on a mission to transform lives through cultural exchange! You are here on a J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program. Your Local Coordinator will be your main contact with CETUSA, but if you cannot reach your Local Coordinator, you may also reach out to your Regional Director or in emergencies, CETUSA's Student Support Line at 888-CETUSA-1, which is available to you 24/7.

Your host family members are volunteers who have been screened through a long series of background checks, interviews, and orientations before you arrived. They are not paid to host you and any costs they incur from hosting are paid from their own household budget. The relationship they develop with you is their reward. They will be there to support you and help you throughout your time in the U.S. and should be thought of as your second family.

Your CETUSA Local Coordinator will contact you, your host family, and your school monthly to make sure that everything is going okay. If you need to talk or meet with your Local Coordinator outside of the monthly contact, please do not hesitate to contact him or her!

TO GET HELP

YOUR LOCAL TEAM

Your Local Coordinator is your first contact for questions, guidance and general support. If you cannot reach your Local Coordinator, and the matter is urgent, you may call your Regional Director.

My Local Coordinator's Phone Number: _____

My Regional Director's Phone Number: _____

THE CETUSA MAIN OFFICE

If you cannot reach your Local Coordinator or Regional Director and the matter is **urgent**, please call CETUSA's 24/7 Student Support Services line. This line is active 24 hours per day, 7 days per week:

CETUSA 24-HR Student Support Emergency Phone Line: 1-888-238-8721

1-888-CETUSA-1

EMERGENCY

If you or someone else is in danger of serious illness, injury or death, call 911. This free number works in every U.S. state and will connect you with emergency services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. You should only dial 911 if you need immediate police, fire or ambulance. You should call 911 if you are in a vehicle accident, even if no one appears to be injured. After calling 911, call your Local Coordinator and CETUSA's Student Support Emergency Line as soon as it is safe to do so.

Serious Safety Emergencies:

911

***Police, Fire, Ambulance**

YOUR INSURANCE PROVIDER

If you were enrolled in insurance through CETUSA, your provider is Evisage Global Insurance. Visit them online at: <https://www.envisageglobalinsurance.com/student-zone/cetusa/>

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

No one can tell CETUSA's story of cultural exchange better than you! We would LOVE for you to follow CETUSA your favorite social media channels, and tag us in your own posts! Use hashtags #hostwithcetusa and #exchangematters!



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/c.e.t.u.s.a/>
@c.e.t.u.s.a



TikTok

https://www.tiktok.com/@host_with_cetusa
@host_with_cetusa



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/CETUSAofficial>
@CETUSA



Share Your Story Directly!

CETUSA Student Story Submission Form:
<https://forms.gle/XiarfNHvjF8NnkW79>



CULTURAL EXCHANGE

HISTORY OF CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN U.S.

Organized exchange programs in the U.S. began in the 20th century with the Fulbright Act of 1946, which established one of the first large-scale international exchange programs. This U.S. law aimed to promote peace and mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges between the U.S. and other countries. Later, the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961—also known as the Fulbright–Hays Act—gave the U.S. Department of State (DOS) the authority to manage exchange programs.

Among these, the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa was designed to support cultural and educational exchange between the U.S. and other nations. It allows students, teachers, interns, and other participants to come to the U.S. temporarily to learn, teach, or train, with the goal of fostering international goodwill and understanding. Today, thousands of students from around the world participate in these programs to learn firsthand about American life, global citizenship and cultural literacy.

Exchange programs are a lot of fun, full of new experiences and adventures! Many students describe their exchange program as one of the most impactful experiences of their lives. At the same time, the exchange program is not designed as vacation or tour. This is a culturally and academically immersive experience that aims to increase your understanding of the American way of life. With your commitment, this experience will not only provide an opportunity to make new human connections and master the English language, it will also increase your ability to adapt, communicate, and build resilience. These skills will benefit you throughout your life, whatever comes next!

Excited? Let's get started!

CULTURAL EXCHANGE

U.S. CULTURAL NORMS

As you reviewed in your Pre-Departure Orientation, the culture of the U.S. will vary from the culture you are used to. Differences apply to food, music, transportation, and clothing, but also the way people live and interact. Below are some cultural norms you are likely to encounter in the U.S.

- Family life in the U.S. is very diverse. Families may have one parent, or two parents of the same or different gender. Some families have no children, others have many children. Some families are “blended” families and include children from former partnerships.
- Americans generally stand about an arm’s length apart while speaking.
- Depending on the household, you may or may not take off your shoes before entering the home. When entering a home, ask your host if they would like you to remove your shoes.
- Pets are cherished members of the family for many Americans. Dogs and cats may be allowed on the furniture, or not. Respect your host family’s rules regarding pets.
- When joining a group at a table, it is polite to introduce yourself to everyone present. You can do this simply by extending your hand and saying, “Hi, I am _____. It’s nice to meet you.” This is appreciated and is received as a sign of interest and respect.
- Small talk - that is, casual conversations about the weather, hobbies, or weekend plans are common, even among strangers or people who do not know each other well.
- Eating dinner early (often before 6:00 pm) or snacking throughout the day can be a change from cultures with larger, later meals.

Adapting to new cultural norms can take effort and practice, but is part of the fun of cultural exchange!

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE AND YOUR ARRIVAL

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

You should have received this handbook before leaving your home country. Before you depart for the U.S., be sure to do the following:

1. **Contact your host family.** Get to know them and ensure everyone is aligned on the arrival plan.
2. **Make sure you are up-to-date on required immunizations.** U.S. high schools require this before you enroll in classes.
3. **Bring originals of important documents such as your passport and DOS-2019.** Also bring copies of these documents.
4. **Have a plan for how you will receive money while you are in the U.S.** Many students set up a U.S. bank account that their natural parents can add money to remotely.
5. **Become familiar with your country's convalidation process.** You are fully responsible for convalidation. Consider using a service like Convalidation Services LLC.
6. **Make sure you have Emergency Contact Info.** This info includes contact information for your agent, CETUSA (1-888-238-8721) and your Local Coordinator.

YOUR ARRIVAL

Your host family and/or a CETUSA representative will be waiting for you at the airport when you arrive. They understand that you will probably be tired from your flight, and also a little nervous and excited. This may be the first time you have been so far from home. Try to take everything one day at a time as you adjust to your new environment.

Soon after your arrival, your Local Coordinator will provide you with an orientation, which will provide additional information about the CETUSA program, your local community and high school. Before the orientation, write down questions you'd like to ask. Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. Other students will likely have the same questions.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

- Try to name and acknowledge emotions as you feel them (“I am feeling nervous.”) while maintaining a positive attitude (“I am feeling nervous...but my host family is here to guide me!”)
- Spend time with your host family. Ask them questions about their culture and family, and share your own foods, music, language and customs. (This means a lot to your host family!)
- Limit communication with friends and family back home. Many students schedule a time to connect with their natural family over the weekend. Contacting your natural family and friends at home every day may make homesickness worse in the long term.
- Become involved in your school and community early. This is a great way to have new experiences and make friends!
- Do not drink alcohol, use tobacco, use drugs or have sex.
- Do not travel without approval from your host family and CETUSA.
- Follow all federal, state and local laws.



YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- **Bodily autonomy and privacy.** No person may direct you to share physical contact, show any part of your body, cut your hair, or undergo any activity that makes you feel unsafe.
- **Religious freedom.** Although your host family may invite you to participate in their faith traditions, no person may compel you to act in contradiction to your religious beliefs or participate in religious practices.
- **Contact your Local Coordinator and/or CETUSA.** You do not need permission to contact your Local Coordinator or CETUSA. You are CETUSA's first priority.
- **Refuse labor.** Although you are expected to participate in routine household chores, you have a right to refuse labor including childcare or animal care. You do not "owe" your host family labor, services, or compensation for your exchange program.
- **Access your phone and passport.** No person may take away your phone or passport. Your host family may require you to dock your phone in a common area at certain times.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- **Following CETUSA's Code of Conduct.** It is your responsibility to ensure that you do not engage in any activity that violates CETUSA's Code of Conduct.
- **Respecting your host family's property.** You are responsible for maintaining a clean living space, respecting off-limit areas, and not damaging property.
- **Following school and host family rules and state and local law.** So long as a rule does not violate your rights, CETUSA policies, or DOS policies, you must follow house rules and school policies, even if you do not agree with them or if they differ from rules in your home country. You must also follow all local and state laws that apply to your location.
- **Budgeting appropriately.** Your host family is responsible for providing you with a separate sleeping and study area, three meals per day and basic transportation. Your host family is not responsible for providing the lifestyle that you may be used to.

YOUR HOST FAMILY

Your host family is comprised of volunteers who have been carefully screened and trained to host an exchange student with CETUSA. Many families host because they want to make a difference in the life of a young person and experience a new culture. Your host family will be eager to get to know you and your culture.

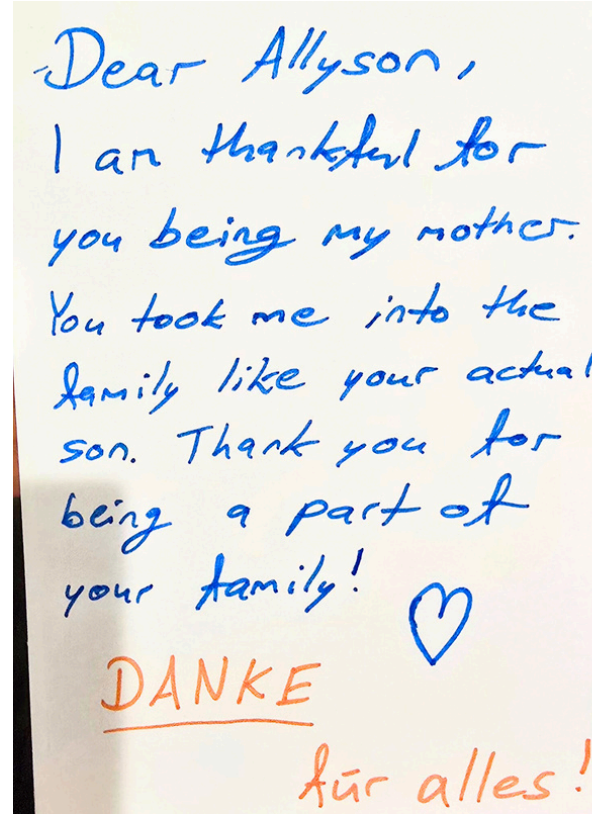
Host families are required to do the following:

- Provide a room with a door and a separate bed. The room may be shared by a sibling of the same gender within two years of your age. Your bed cannot be an inflatable mattress, sofa bed, futon, or mattress on the floor.
- Provide a quiet place to study.
- Provide three meals a day. CETUSA requires host families to provide balanced meals at no cost to you. If you require special food or extra meals beyond what the host family typically provides, you can purchase those foods from your monthly budget. Food to pack a school lunch is to be provided by your host family, but if you wish to buy school lunch, you will need to purchase the school lunch. Note that when your host family dines out at a restaurant, you are responsible for paying for your meal. If you do not wish to join your host family in eating out, there should be adequate food in the home for you.
- Maintain contact with the CETUSA Local Coordinator every 30 days. Additionally, your host family will need to meet in person with your Local Coordinator every 60 days.
- Notify your CETUSA Local Coordinator with concerns or questions that concern you. Your host family may contact the Local Coordinator seek support and provide updates on your program progression, medical needs and schooling.
- Provide a clean and safe home environment for the duration of your program.
- Do their best to welcome you as a member of the family while being respectful and sensitive to your culture.

YOUR HOST FAMILY

There are so many ways to show appreciation for your host family. Most cost little to no money.

- Say “thank you for _____.” It’s great to say, “thanks” but being specific about what you appreciate means even more.
- Some holidays observed in the U.S. are considered **very important** family holidays. A few examples are Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, Thanksgiving, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Birthdays are also considered “family holidays” by many families. A simple card expressing what your exchange program has meant to you will be treasured by your host family. The simple, but sincere note pictured here was written by an exchange student on Thanksgiving Day.
- Although it is not required, if you can afford to purchase a small gift, snack, or beverage for your host family, this is very appreciated!
- One of the best ways to show appreciation to your host family is to spend time with them daily. Ask them about their lives and traditions, and listen to what they share.
- Share your culture with your host family! They are eager to know about your language, foods, holidays, customs and experiences. This is what cultural exchange is all about!



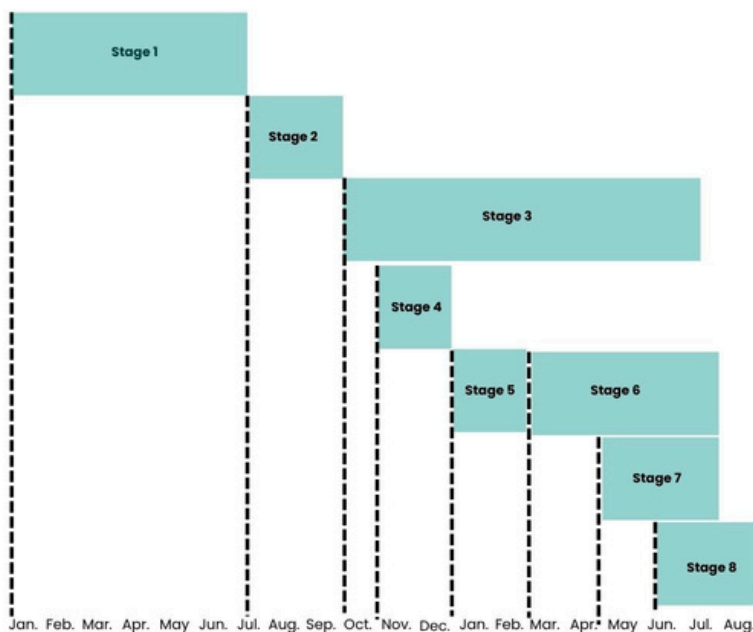
More Ideas:

- Write a Mother’s Day card (or Father’s Day card) to give to your host parents on these holidays.
- Spend time with your host family on important holidays like Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter and other holidays.
- Participate in holiday traditions during these special times of year. In addition to the major holidays mentioned above, some U.S. families love to celebrate other holidays in a big way. These holidays, such as St. Patrick’s Day, Halloween, and Fourth of July are a lot of fun!
- Offer to create a meal for your family.
- Provide your host family with a framed photo of a favorite memory of you together.

STUDENT ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

Although each student is unique according to his or her life experience, personality traits, and emotional tendencies, many students who arrive in August for a 10-month exchange program experience many of eight stages around the same time in their program. These stages are not universal, but acknowledgement of these stages may help you feel at ease with some of the emotions you experience throughout your program.

Student Adjustment Cycle



Stages 1-8

- Stage 1 - Application Anxiety
- Stage 2 - Arrival Fascination
- Stage 3 - Culture Shock
- Stage 4 - Surface Adjustment
- Stage 5 - Mental Isolation
- Stage 6 - Integration/Acceptance
- Stage 7 - Pre-Departure Anxiety
- Stage 8 - Re-Entry

***Review Pages 12-13 of this handbook for more information about each of the eight stages.**

STUDENT ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

STAGE 1 – APPLICATION ANXIETY

Time Period: December/January – Before Arrival

Earlier you may have felt a bit nervous about your acceptance into the program. Now that you have been accepted, you may feel anxiety about receiving information about your host family.

STAGE 2 – ARRIVAL FASCINATION

Time Period: August– September

On arrival, you will likely experience a rush of happiness and excitement. Expectations are high and introductions are overwhelming. You may receive attention and be shown respect and concern that is different from what you are used to in day-to-day life within your home country.

STAGE 3 – CULTURE SHOCK

Time Period: September– June

Within weeks of your arrival, some of the initial excitement and fascination you felt at your arrival is likely to wear off a bit. You may experience an increasing awareness that you will be navigating this new environment for a long time. At this stage, you might have changes in your sleep patterns, confusion as you communicate with others and mental fatigue. Be assured this is completely normal.

STAGE 4 – SURFACE ADJUSTMENT

Time Period: October– December

Your English language skills are likely to have improved drastically. At this time, you should be able to communicate basic ideas and feelings. You also feel comfortable within small groups of friends.

STUDENT ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

STAGE 5 - MENTAL ISOLATION

Time Period: December- January

This can be a period of boredom, isolation and lack of motivation. Language difficulties may continue to frustrate you. During the holidays, many students experience homesickness and loneliness.

STAGE 6 - INTEGRATION/ ACCEPTANCE

Time Period: February- Departure

This stage is achieved when you feel at ease with your host family, school and the friends you've made.

STAGE 7 - PRE- DEPARTURE ANXIETY

Time Period: April - Departure

The idea of leaving your host family and friends is distressing. You know how much you have changed and feel apprehensive about returning home. This is a time of great confusion. You want to go home, but don't want to leave! Most students feel this way - your Local Coordinator should have a Pre-Departure Anxiety Kit to go over with you and your host family around this time.

STAGE 8 - RE- ENTRY

Time Period: June - August

For the people in your home country, life has not changed much during your absence. They may initially be excited to hear about your time abroad, but may not have as much long-term interest as you would have hoped. You may experience some difficulties in resuming life in your country.

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

Begin your exchange program well by taking care of yourself and forming a positive first impression with your host family, school and community. The information below will guide you through some realities of beginning your program and tips to do well during your first few weeks.

Jet Lag

Jet lag is common to long-distance travelers. Although your schedule is set according to your U.S. time zone, your body will still be set to the time of your home country for the first few days. This may cause you to feel awake in the middle of the night and ready to go to bed in the middle of the afternoon. You may even feel irritable. Your host family will want to show you their home and community right away. Be patient, and let them know that you are excited but a little tired.

Host Family Rules and Expectations

At the Post-Arrival Orientation, your CETUSA Local Coordinator will provide you and your host family with a worksheet that will help establish expectations between you and your host family. Your host family will not have the same background as you and will have different rules and expectations. You will need to accept and adjust to their standard of living. For example, most U.S. families do not have maids, cooks, or other hired help. For this reason, all family members may help complete household chores like washing dishes, cleaning laundry, vacuuming, and tidying. This is one part of student exchange that allows you to experience life as an American teenager.

Also, in the U.S., parents expect to know where their children are and who they are with at all times. This may be different from what you are used to at home with your natural parents. Neither approach to parenting is “right” or “wrong.” However, in the U.S., this is the norm and crucial to ensure your safety during your exchange program. When your host parents set a curfew and expect to know where you are and who you are with, they are not trying to control you or disrespect your maturity as a high school student. They do want to ensure your safety! Always let your host family know where you are, even when you know that you are safe and with a friend.

Language Adjustment

The U.S. is a land of many accents and dialects. The English you encounter in the U.S. is likely to be very different from the English you’ve learned in class. Many Americans speak quickly, mumble, slur their words, or use words you have never heard. Regional accents often affect how a person pronounces words. The speech of American teens changes so quickly that it never becomes part of what is taught in your home country. Don’t worry, you’ll soon catch on! You may also find that some teens use curse words or speak in a manner that may be offensive or embarrassing to you. Do not repeat these words, as they are likely to be offensive to other students, school staff and your host family.

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

Language Adjustment Continued

Your first experience with spoken English may feel overwhelming. Using a journal to write down your experiences may help you get used to expressing yourself in English. (You will also enjoy reading this journal at the end of your program and later in life to see how much you have grown!)

Despite the lack of confidence you may feel, it is important that you speak English as often as possible. If you are unsure of a word (especially if it may have a negative connotation), say something like, "This is not the right word, but it is something like...". This will allow people to help you find the correct word. Remember, everyone makes mistakes, even native English speakers! Your host family does not expect your English to be perfect. Relax and have fun getting to know them and the language!

Religion

In the U.S., religion is deeply important to a great many people. Christianity is currently the most common religion practiced in the U.S., and can take many forms. In the U.S., church services, beliefs and religious practices may vary according to the denomination (or "version") of Christianity that someone practices. You will likely encounter people of the Catholic faith, and various forms of Protestant Christianity which includes Baptists, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans and many more denominations. Additionally, religions including Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism are common in the U.S. Your host family may practice any religion or no religion at all!

It is important that you are respectful of all religions, as well as people who practice no religion. Participation in your host family's religious activities is entirely voluntary. Note what you said in your application regarding attending religious services. If you said you would attend religious services with your family weekly, your family will probably expect you to do so. Many U.S. religious organizations have active youth groups and community activities that provide opportunities to make friends.



Small church in rural U.S.

You may wish to attend services and practice your own religious beliefs while in the U.S. Your host family and/or Local Coordinator will be able to assist you with transportation and finding a place of worship. Your host family should understand and honor your desire to practice the religion of your choice.

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

Food Differences

American foods can have different ingredients than what you are used to, so it may take some time for your stomach to adjust. Noodles, soup, and rice are good foods to eat in your first weeks. Let your host family know if you are having trouble with food and they will do your best to assist you. Even if you don't think you will like the food your host family prepares, try it. You may be surprised and find a new favorite food. If you find that you don't like it after you tried it, be respectful while explaining this to your host family. After a good meal, a compliment to the person who prepared it! This is good manners in any culture and will mean a lot to your host family.

It is common for many American families to have “leftovers” for a meal. Leftovers are foods made the previous day and stored in the fridge until the next day. Leftovers can be a previously cooked meal, or even something from a restaurant. In the U.S., daily meals are:

Breakfast

Breakfast is the morning meal and is often eaten individually and even on the way to work or school. Breakfast may consist of cereal, yogurt, fruit, a breakfast bar, or waffles. Coffee and teas are preferred breakfast beverages. On weekends, breakfasts may be more elaborate and include omelets or pancakes.

Lunch

Lunch is the afternoon meal and is eaten mid-day. Lunch is often a light meal that includes sandwiches, salads or pizza.

Dinner

In the U.S., the evening meal is the most important meal of the day. American families may eat dinner casually and at different times, but it is common for American families to eat dinner together as they talk about the day's experiences, make plans, or simply have a lively conversation. American families sometimes eat at restaurants or order food to take home if they don't have time to cook. Other American families eat at restaurants only as a “special” occasion.

The foods people eat in the U.S. vary broadly by region, culture and individual tastes. Ask about meals that are unique to your host family's state or region. Your host family will also appreciate you helping them prepare a meal from your country. Preparing a meal together is a fun way to spend time with your host family and get to know each other. Your host family will likely be excited to share their favorite foods and recipes with you, and learn about your country's culinary traditions!

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

Culture Shock

“Culture Shock” is a natural response to sudden immersion in a culture that is completely unfamiliar. Although culture shock is usually associated with negative feelings, it is a normal part of the process of travel and does not last indefinitely. Below are some of the feelings that may arise as a result of culture shock.

- **Panic:** You may have a moment when you fear your entire exchange program was a mistake and want to go home. This is a natural feeling most people have when they suddenly find themselves in a completely new situation. You will encounter a lot of new things and may be away from your family for the first time in your life. However, if you maintain a positive mindset and ask others for support, you will begin to feel more and more confident and at ease.
- **Disinterest:** You may experience feelings of not being excited to be in the U.S., or the things you had previously dreamed about for months. Some things in the U.S., though idealized abroad, may seem inferior to how they are in your home country. This is all part of the personal growth that travel and cultural exchange allow. As you get more involved with your host family and school, your excitement will increase.
- **Nervousness and Uncertainty:** You may feel a lack of confidence. You may feel unsure of yourself and afraid of embarrassment or making a mistake. True bravery is not about being fearless, but rather about accomplishing your goals despite feelings of fear. Ask for help when you feel uncertain. Your new family and friends will be more than happy to help you. As you become more familiar with the American lifestyle, you will become more settled.
- **Impatience:** You might feel impatient with people around you and their inability to understand what you are trying to express. Simple encounters will require more effort from you than ever before. In these moments, remember that this is when the most learning takes place. If you are struggling, that probably means you are challenging yourself and learning!

YOUR FIRST FEW WEEKS

Criticism

Homesickness may make it easier to view things around you in a critical light. Some things will not be how you imagined and that may feel disappointing. Remember that you are young, adaptable and open-minded; this is a temporary experience that allows you to see life in another part of the world. With consideration to your host family's feelings, express your own feelings so that they understand you better. If you are feeling exhausted, depressed, or grumpy for no clear reason, you can let them know. If you do not communicate about your feelings, your host family may feel that they have done something to upset you. Encourage your host family to speak openly with you as well!

Culture shock often takes the form of complaints about your host family, school, the U.S., and Americans in general. Before you label something in the U.S. as "bad," consider how it may simply be different. Don't let culture shock control you. Express your feelings to your Local Coordinator and family when you feel overwhelmed.

American Life: What May Feel Strange at First



- Americans can be very friendly, even with strangers. They may smile, talk, or joke like friends – but they might not know each other or know each other very well.
- Portion sizes in the U.S. may seem large. Taking food and beverages “to go” is also common.
- Going places often involves driving for several miles.
- Being on time is important. Although 10-15 minutes may not seem like a long time, being late to a class, appointment, or social event is discouraged.
- Drinking alcohol is not permitted by CETUSA’s Standard of Conduct. Additionally, in the U.S. it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to purchase or consume alcohol.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

CETUSA strives to promote a positive learning experience during your exchange program. This section goes over the Standards of Conduct that you and your natural parents signed before you were accepted into the program.

School

- Your Exchange Visitor or Student Visa requires that you attend school regularly and obey all school rules. A truancy letter from the school and/or excessive absences will be grounds for your program to be reviewed.
- You are expected to show an interest in your schoolwork, fully participate in all classes, and complete all coursework on time.
- You are required to maintain a minimum of a C average and pass all courses. Failure to do so will result in your program being reviewed.
- If the school or CETUSA decides you need a language tutor to be successful in school, CETUSA will help to arrange for a tutor. You and/or your natural parents must pay for tutoring.
- If you are given a failing mark in attitude or an official complaint from the school, your program will be reviewed by CETUSA's Director Team.
- Dismissal from school will result in a review of your program.
- CETUSA does not guarantee that you will receive a diploma or be able to participate in graduation.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Convalidation and Transcripts

- All convalidation and apostille requirements are your responsibility. This includes obtaining school transcripts, attendance letters, notarization of documents, and all costs associated with the convalidation and apostille process.
- For assistance with convalidation, consider using a service such as Convalidation Services, LLC.

Extensions

- If you are on the Fall Semester Program, you may transfer to the Academic Year Program by applying for and paying the difference in fees plus the established surcharge only if there is no change of Host Family and school.
- If you remain in the U.S. beyond the scheduled return date without completing the proper steps, you will be considered terminated from the program. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security will be notified that CETUSA is no longer responsible for your stay in the U.S.

Leaving the Program

- You may not leave the program without the express written consent of CETUSA.
- You are not permitted to return home during their program. Doing so will be considered leaving the program. However, you may temporarily return home in the event of a death or serious illness in the immediate family or for another bona fide emergency situation as determined by CETUSA with proper verification.
- If you leave the program, except for in an approved emergency, you may not return to the U.S., as your program will be considered terminated.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT



Medical Care and Costs

- If you becomes ill or injured and require medical attention, your Host Family will seek medical care for you. However, the host family is not financially responsible for this care. All co-pays and medical expenses not covered by the student's insurance program are the responsibility of the student and natural parents.
- Medical providers can take up to a year from the date of service to issue final medical bills. These bills are the responsibility of the student and natural family.
- Telemedicine may be an affordable and convenient option for minor ailments.
- The student and/or natural family is expected to pay any co-pays or bills not covered by insurance in a timely manner.

Host Family Regulations

- Each host family has house rules to run their household effectively. You must make every possible effort to understand your host family's expectations and rules.
- You must be respectful to your host family. Disrespectful behavior and/or repeated violations of the host family's rules may cause your program to be reviewed.
- Your activities must be approved by your host family.
- You must ensure that your host family knows where you are at all times and when you will return home.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT



Money

- You are required to have a monthly budget of at least \$250 per month to cover personal expenses during your program. You are responsible for expenses including but not limited to clothing, personal care, medical care, entertainment, recreation, and discretionary items.
- CETUSA is not responsible for any lost or stolen money.
- You may not place your money in your host family's bank account or provide your host family access to withdraw money from your bank account. You may not lend money to or borrow money from your host family.
- You are responsible for managing your money and monthly budget.

Work and Jobs

- In accordance with your Student VISA, you are not permitted to work or have a job while on program in the U.S.
- However, you may accept offers of non-competitive work (babysitting, yard work, etc.) for no more than 10 hours per week if offered by your host family or host family acquaintances.

Internet Usage

- Your host family is not required to have Internet access.
- You must abide by the rules set by your host family and school regarding the use of Internet, email and social media.
- You are not permitted to download illegal or unauthorized music, movies, games, photos, applications, etc. If you download any of this material, all costs and fines will be the responsibility of the student and his/her natural family. Unauthorized or illegal downloads may be cause for termination of the student's program.
- You are not permitted to use dating apps or websites like Tinder, Grindr, Hinge, etc.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Cell Phones

- CETUSA strongly recommends you have a cell phone for the duration of your program.
- No person may remove access to your cellphone. However, CETUSA and your host family may require you to dock your phone in a common area at certain times of the day or night.
- Your cell phone plan may not be part of your host family's cell phone plan. CETUSA will have no responsibility for losses if this should occur.

Travel

- On arrival to the U.S., you must travel directly from your home country to your host family's home without deviation, unless this deviation is for supervised orientation days and is approved by CETUSA no less than one month prior to your inbound travel date.
- You must depart directly from your Host Family's home to your natural family's home at the conclusion of your CETUSA program. On departure from the U.S, no deviation is allowed without approval of CETUSA Student Services. Your host family, natural parents, and Local Coordinator are not authorized to give this approval. Approval must be granted by CETUSA Student Services, High School Program.
- You are not permitted to arrive in the U.S. sooner than 7 days before your school start date.
- You must depart the U.S. no later than 7 days after the end of classes and/or graduation.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT



Travel (Continued)

- You will be permitted to travel while in the U.S. only under the following conditions:
 - When traveling with your host family for longer than one night, the CETUSA Coordinator must be informed of travel dates and a phone contact where you can be reached in case of emergency.
 - When traveling with another family, all adults over the age of 18 must submit a background check prior to travel approval. Additionally, you must submit a Travel Request Form outlining your plans at least two weeks prior to the intended travel date. CETUSA must approve travel requests before travel takes place.
 - School and group-sponsored trips are permitted; but the the host family must approve and the CETUSA Local Coordinator must be notified.
 - You are not permitted to travel independently by air unless on travel approved by CETUSA.
 - For travel outside the U.S., the DS-2019 form must be signed by an authorized CETUSA staff member before travel is permitted. You are responsible for obtaining this approval at least two weeks advance of travel.
 - If you travel without prior approval, your program is subject to review. Do not buy travel tickets prior to travel approval from CETUSA.
 - All travel must be chaperoned by an adult over the age of 25 and requires written approval. Your Local Coordinator must always be provided with dates of travel and phone contact where you can be reached.
 - Contact your Local Coordinator to begin the process of approving the trip.
 - Your DS-2019 form should be surrendered only on your final exit from the U.S. If it is confiscated by immigration officials on any trip, please contact the CETUSA office immediately.
 - Travel that would interfere with regular school attendance is never permitted. CETUSA is primarily an academic exchange program and school attendance takes precedent over other activities such as travel.
 - If available in your region and permitted by your host family, CETUSA permits students to use rideshare services such as Lyft and Uber for local travel only.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Visits with Relatives and Friends

- Your natural parents, relatives and friends can only visit between February and the end of the program for Academic Year Placement (AYP) students. If you are a Semester student, visits from family and friends will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These visits must be advised to and authorized by CETUSA as well as agreed to by the Host Family. Arrangements between Natural Parents, Local Coordinators and Host Families are not to be entered into before CETUSA Central Office has been notified and agreed in writing. Please note that these contract agreements are enforced primarily for your safety and to ensure compliance with the U.S. Department of State rules that apply to J1 program students.
- In the event your placement is jeopardized by a visit from home, CETUSA will not guarantee another host family placement.
- You must obtain approval from your host family and CETUSA prior to any visit.
- Your guests should not expect your host family to provide them with lodging and/or meals, but are permitted to stay with your host family if invited by the host family.
- If friends or relatives visit you during your exchange stay in the area overnight, you must remain in the home with your host family. You may not stay with your friends or relatives overnight in a hotel or other lodging.
- Return visits to your home country are prohibited during the program, unless in the case of a death or serious illness in the immediate family or other emergency approved by CETUSA.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Law Violations

- You are expected to obey all federal, state and local laws. If you admit to violating a criminal law and/or are arrested and charged with a violation, or CETUSA receives reliable information that you have been arrested and charged with a crime, your program will be reviewed and you may be returned to your home country at your own expense as soon as legally possible.

Drugs

- The purchase, possession and/or use of illegal drugs is forbidden, and no association is to be maintained with anyone involved with illegal drug possession, sale or use. If you violate this policy, your program will be reviewed.
- Illegal drug use includes taking prescription drugs not prescribed to you. Additionally, many pills sold illegally at the street level in the U.S. look like real medications (such as Adderall, Percocet, or Xanax) but are fake and can contain deadly drugs like fentanyl. Only take medication that is prescribed to you by a healthcare provider and filled at a pharmacy.
- CETUSA reserves the right to conduct drug testing at CETUSA's discretion at any time during your program.
- CETUSA must be informed of any medications, including homeopathic ones, that you bring with you or receive from home.

Alcohol

- The purchase, possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages, including beer and wine, is forbidden and will result in your program being reviewed.
- If you are in a situation where alcohol is offered to or consumed by minors, you must immediately contact your host parent or Local Coordinator to let them know and make arrangements to be picked up. Failure to do so will result in your program being reviewed.

Tobacco

- The purchase, possession and/or use of any tobacco products is forbidden. This includes but is not limited to: cigarettes, chewing tobacco, nicotine patches, vape, electronic cigarettes, hookah products, snuff, etc. Violations will result in your program being reviewed.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Pornography

- The purchase, possession, viewing and/or downloading of pornography is not permitted. If you are found to have violated this policy, your program will be reviewed.

Sexting

- Sexting is a punishable offense in the U.S. in order to protect children from sexual predators.
- Teenagers who text nude or partially nude photos of themselves or friends can be charged with distribution of child pornography. Recipients of the pictures may be charged with possession of child pornography. Sexting is a **serious** offense and will result in your program being reviewed.

Dangerous Activities

- The following dangerous activities are prohibited:
 - all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding
 - axe-throwing
 - bungee jumping
 - glider riding
 - hang gliding
 - hot air balloon riding
 - hunting and/or using any weapon (including but not limited to guns, bows/arrows, etc.)
 - jet skiing (driver or passenger)
 - motorcycling (driver or passenger)
 - motorcycling
 - parachute jumping
 - parasailing
 - racing (by horse, motor scooter or any motorized vehicle)
 - riding in a private aircraft
 - scuba-diving (involving underwater breathing apparatus unless certified)
 - skydiving
 - snowmobiling
 - spelunking
 - water-skiing

Your program will be reviewed if you participate in any of these activities. Some adventure sport insurance plans may cover these activities, but this does not mean they are permitted by CETUSA. 27.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Driving

- You may not, under any circumstances, drive a motorized vehicle. This includes but is not limited to automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, motor scooters, all-terrain vehicles, golf carts, snowmobiles, riding lawnmowers, etc.
- You are not permitted to receive driver's training, a learning permit, or driver's license. Violations will result in your program being reviewed.
- Although you are not allowed to drive any motorized vehicle, you are permitted to use rideshare services such as Lyft and Uber for local travel only, and only with the full knowledge and consent of your host family.

Hitchhiking

- Hitchhiking is **extremely** dangerous. You are not permitted to hitchhike, either alone or with friends, at any time on the program. Violations will result in your program being reviewed.

Sex

- Your exchange program is not intended to be a time to form romantic attachments. Exclusive dating while on the program is discouraged. You are an ambassador of your country; it is extremely important that your behavior be beyond reproach at all times.
- If you are involved in a sexual relationship while sponsored by the CETUSA program, or if it is found you are pregnant (or have caused a pregnancy) while on the CETUSA program, your program will immediately be reviewed.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT



Life-Changing Decisions

- You are not allowed to make life-changing decisions while on program.
- Decisions such as marriage, engagement to be married, change of religion, acquiring tattoos or body piercings, making any body modifications, altering plans for career or college education, etc. must be put aside until after you return home. Violations will cause your program to be reviewed.

Decisions and Determinations Final Authority

- You must respect all decisions made by CETUSA and its coordinators or staff.
- CETUSA reserves the right to terminate your program if there should arise, in the judgment of CETUSA officials, a condition likely to be detrimental to your health or well-being.
- CETUSA reserves the right to review your program if you violate the Standards of Conduct or for other disciplinary problems.
- Review of your program may result in a decision up to termination of the program and your immediate return to your home country.

MANAGING MONEY AND BUDGETING

Your host family is responsible for providing:

- Room and board with a separate bed.
- Three meals per day.
- Necessary transportation.

Beyond this, you are responsible for your own expenses, including but not limited to, clothing, personal care, medical expenses, recreation, entertainment, preferred food items, cell phone bills, and school-related expenses. To ensure these expenses are covered, CETUSA requires you to have a minimum of \$250 per month available to you.

CETUSA recommends that you open a bank account through which your natural family can send funds. You would then be able to withdraw funds as needed or make purchases with a debit card. You may also use a credit card, but please ensure ahead of time that your credit card will work at American ATMs and retailers. Foreign transaction fees may apply when using a credit card from your home country.

If you run out of money, your host family is not permitted to provide you with funds until your next installment. For this reason, it is crucial that you budget responsibly. A sample monthly budget is provided on page 32 of this handbook to help you track and plan for expenses each month. You are not allowed to borrow money from or loan money to your host family or friends. If you need help budgeting, ask your host family or coordinator for assistance. If you are asked to loan anyone money, contact your Local Coordinator or the CETUSA office. CETUSA highly discourages students from bringing large sums of cash with them. CETUSA is not responsible for any lost or stolen money.

MANAGING MONEY AND BUDGETING

USING A BUDGET

Your minimum monthly budget required by CETUSA is \$250 per month, but some budgets may be larger. A simple monthly budget tracker, like the one on the next page, can help you be sure that you have enough money to pay for everything you need. If you do not have enough money to pay for your expenses because you spent too much on recreation or shopping, contact your natural family. Do not assume the host family will pay for the remainder of the month. This is a situation you absolutely want to avoid.

It is okay for your host family to pay for shopping, dining and activities if they offer, but your host family should never be put in a situation in which they are pressured to cover your expenses because you did not budget well.



DO

- Thank your host family when they offer to pay for shopping and activities.
- Respect your host family's financial limitations.
- Be aware that your personal budget may be larger than your host siblings. Consider this when making large purchases.



DO NOT

- Assume your host family will pay for expenses that are your responsibility if you run out of money.
- Forget to thank your host family when they offer to pay for shopping and activities.
- Purchase more products than you can reasonably store or ship home.



Students are required to have a minimum budget of \$250 per month!

MONTHLY BUDGET

| | |
|--|----|
| MONTHLY INCOME MIN. \$250 PER MONTH | \$ |
|--|----|

| FIXED EXPENSES | | | SEASONAL EXPENSES | | |
|---|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| | BUDGET | SPENT | | BUDGET | SPENT |
| Personal Items (Toiletries, Haircut, etc) | | | Winter Apparel | | |
| Restaurants and Dining Out | | | Apparel for Winter Formal | | |
| Preferred Snacks and Foods | | | Apparel for Prom | | |
| Entertainment and Recreation | | | Prom Dinner | | |
| Phone Bill | | | Prom Tickets | | |
| School lunch | | | Prom Photos | | |
| Recurring Subscriptions | | | Graduation or Convalidation | | |
| Clothing | | | Class Pictures | | |
| Extracurricular Expenses | | | Homecoming | | |
| Medical Expenses | | | Sports Supplies | | |
| Any Seasonal Expenses from "Seasonal Expenses" Column | | | Yearbook | | |
| | | | Travel/Souvenirs | | |
| | | | Gifts (Holiday, Thank You, Farewell) | | |
| MONTHLY TOTAL: | | \$ | SEASONAL EXPENSE TOTAL: | | \$ |

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| TOTAL BUDGETED FOR MONTH: | \$ |
|----------------------------------|----|

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| TOTAL SPENT: | \$ |
|---------------------|----|

| | |
|---------------|----|
| + OR - | \$ |
|---------------|----|

Note:
Seasonal expenses are listed as examples only. Your own seasonal expenses are likely to be different.

COMMUNICATION BACK HOME

HOME

Try to limit your communication with your natural family and friends back home. Limiting communication back home to weekends or scheduled times for no more than two hours tends to help with homesickness. Below are some additional tips!

- CETUSA recommends that you get acquire a SIM card in the U.S. or purchase a new cell phone in the U.S.
- Never sign a contract or join your host family's phone plan. Instead, opt for a "pay-as-you-go" service plan that allows you to cancel at any time without a contract.
- Consider using WhatsApp, which can be used from a smartphone or computer at <https://web.whatsapp.com>.
- Limit time you spend on social media. Photos and videos of friends back home can increase feelings of homesickness and FOMO (fear-of-missing-out). Instead, consider chronicling your own exchange year! CETUSA would love to see your photos and videos, and hear about your experiences on program. Follow CETUSA on social media and share your journey!
- Respect your host family's rules regarding phone and computer usage around the house, such as no phones or technology at the table or after a certain time of night.





YOUR HIGH SCHOOL

General Information

American high school spans four years– 9th grade (freshman), 10th grade (sophomore), 11th grade (junior), and 12th grade (senior). Typically, the school year begins in August or September and ends in May or June. One academic year can be either split into two semesters (most common) or three trimesters.

The beginning and end of the school day depends on your individual high school. At most high schools, the school day begins between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. and ends between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., with a lunch between 20 and 40 minutes. You will have between five and seven classes per day. In a U.S. high school, students move from room to room, rather than instructors. At the end of the school day, many students participate in extracurricular activities that include drama/theater, sports, student council, band, or other activities. You can find out more about available activities from the school counselor and host family.

In addition to their core subjects, American high school students are able to choose electives based on their interests and skills. Electives can include visual arts, performing arts, computer science, business, music, and so on. Physical education (“gym”) and a foreign language are often required for students to graduate. Different schools offer different electives; the electives at your U.S. high school may differ from those of another student at a different high school. It is important that you always speak English as your instructor may not always be able to spend class time assisting you. You may find it helpful to write your questions down, and ask them after class. The more you practice, the faster your English will improve!

If you use a translation app on your phone, keep in mind most schools restrict cell phone usage during class, so they may limit your use. If you feel an English or other tutor would be helpful, please let your host family and Local Coordinator know. You are responsible for paying for tutoring.

YOUR HIGH SCHOOL



Convalidation

Convalidation is the process by which students receive an official certification of their transcript in order to receive credit in their own country for their U.S. classes. Many countries now require students to convalidate their grades before returning to their home country. You are fully responsible for your own convalidation process and fees. Convalidation is not the responsibility of your host family, Local Coordinator or CETUSA. To ensure you receive academic credit, confirm with your agent and school in your home country to determine if convalidation is required. Should you need to have your transcripts validated, inform your U.S. high school in advance so they can prepare as needed.

CETUSA recommends you use of a third-party convalidation service. There are many organizations that offer this service. CETUSA recommends Convalidation Services, LLC. Ask your Local Coordinator for a copy of the forms and information for Convalidation Services, LLC. You can also visit Convalidation Services LLC at <https://convalidation.com>.

Graduation

CETUSA does **not** guarantee that you will be able to graduate or receive a high school diploma. Individual high schools and their districts determine whether or not they will allow graduation by exchange students. Some schools allow exchange students to graduate and receive a diploma. Others may only allow exchange students to walk with their class. Some may be awarded a Certificate of Participation. Other schools may not allow any participation in graduation for exchange students. You must never argue with school officials regarding their decision on graduation or attempt to dispute their decision.

MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE



Insurance

As required by the U.S. Department of State, all CETUSA students are covered by a traveler's insurance policy. Your traveler's insurance includes three types of insurance:

- Medical, for illnesses and injuries
- Liability, for accidental damage to other people's property
- Baggage, in case your possessions are lost or damaged

All students are enrolled in insurance before departure. Depending on your home country, you may be enrolled by CETUSA **or** by your Sending Organization.

- **If you are enrolled in insurance by CETUSA**, you will receive your insurance details via email to the email address listed on your application. Student enrolled by CETUSA are covered under [Envisage](#). To access your Envisage insurance information, open the email sent to you by CETUSA at the beginning of your program or click this link to [Envisage](#). The "Student Zone" at Envisage contains:
 - Your insurance ID card (*keep this with you at all times in case of an emergency!)
 - Information about Teledoc
 - Online Claims Questionnaire, which you will submit each time you receive medical care.
- **If enrolled in insurance by your Sending Organization**, your insurance will be included in your pre-departure packet.

U.S. insurance does not cover pre-existing medical conditions. These are conditions for which a student has received medical care in the past six months. For example, if a student is diagnosed with asthma the month before coming to the U.S., the insurance policy would not pay for asthma treatment by a U.S. provider. Your insurance only covers medical care for conditions that occur in the U.S., and not ones that have been evident prior to your arrival. Please note that amateur athletics are not covered under your plan. This means any organized sports activities that are not officially sponsored by a high school are excluded from coverage. If you plan to participate in sports outside of school, you will need to get your own private insurance coverage.

If you are unsure which type of enrollment you have or can't find your insurance info, please email medical@cetusa.org or contact the CETUSA main office at 1-888-CETUSA-1.

MEDICAL CARE AND INSURANCE

Medical Care

If you have any medical need, communicate with your host family as soon as possible. They must take you to a proper medical facility for treatment. Options include a private medical practice, Urgent Care, CVS Minute Clinic, and when appropriate, telemedicine. Through your insurance policy, you can access Teledoc which allows you to access medical care quickly from your computer or smartphone. You will receive an email after your arrival with more information on how to access Teledoc.

In a serious emergency, including difficulty breathing, severe burns, extreme blood loss, or neurological (brain) symptoms, call 911 or arrange for immediate travel to an emergency room. That said, visit an emergency room only when absolutely necessary, as emergency rooms often convey high medical bills and are not intended for routine care.

When you use your natural family's name and address on paperwork – not your host family's. If the doctor will not accept an international address, please list the CETUSA Main Office at:

CETUSA

678 Front Avenue NW, Suite 091A

Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Telephone: 616-365-9940

After you have received medical care, be sure to notify your Local Coordinator. Your Local Coordinator will notify the CETUSA main office, who will be available to assist with any ongoing medical concerns. Keep all documentation from medical visits. As with most medical policies, some expenses (such as hospitalization costs) are paid directly to the provider, while other costs (like prescribed medications) are reimbursed. You are responsible for filing your own claims online and paying your own medical bills. You are required to fill out an online form through your insurance after each injury or illness. This form is easily accessible through the website listed on your policy and is due within 72 hours of the injury or illness. Keep copies of all medical transactions (bills, claims, payments, etc.) and keep proof of payment and any invoices. If you have questions about your medical insurance, you must contact the insurance provider.

ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

Overcoming Challenges

While we hope everything goes smoothly during your program, we know that this might not always be the case. Minor issues can and most likely will arise. The first step is to ask to talk with your host family and Local Coordinator about any issue you encounter.

Your Local Coordinator must contact you and your host family every 30 days to observe how you are progressing and offer support. (Every 60 days, these contacts must be in person.) Use these monthly contacts to ask questions and keep your Local Coordinator informed of any challenges you may be facing. Remember, you can contact your Local Coordinator with questions and for help at any time during your exchange program; you do not need to wait until the next monthly check-in.

Student Success and Conflict Resolution Process

A minor issue or misunderstanding may occur between you and your host family. In this case, your Local Coordinator will initiate an Encouragement Stage discussion between you and your host family. At this discussion, all parties will work together to develop a plan for resolving the issue. It is important that you follow the plan established at this meeting. If issues persist, a CETUSA Student Support Specialist can initiate an advisory notice to resolve the conflict with new strategies. At this stage, the issue will be documented, along with a written agreement that outlines all parties' steps for moving forward.

If you do not follow the agreement as it pertains to your actions, Student Support may issue a Final Warning or your program may be reviewed by CETUSA's Director Team.

Issues are generally divided into "Level One" and "Level Two" issues. Level One issues are most often minor problems and misunderstandings, whereas Level Two Issues are more serious and more likely to result from disregard of host family rules and CETUSA policies. Below are examples of each.

Level 1 Issues

- Cultural and language differences
- Academic performance and grades
- Excessive use of electronics
- Communication Issues
- Misunderstanding of expectations

Level 2 Issues

- Major house rules broken
- Recurring issues
- Breaking Standards of Conduct
- Sneaking out
- Aberrant behavior

BULLYING

“Bullying” is any behavior that aims to anger, offend, intimidate or humiliate another person.

Examples include:

- Insulting comments or slurs which may or may not be passed off as a “joke.”
- Rumors or gossip.
- Passive-aggressive remarks directed at a person or within their hearing.
- Violence or threats of violence.

If You Are Bullied

If you become the target of a bully, please remember this does not indicate anything negative about you. A bully’s behavior only represents the bully. If you are bullied, do not allow a bully to see if they have upset you – this is the reaction the bully wants. If someone is bullying you online or via text message, do not respond. Instead, take a screenshot of the offensive messages to share with your Local Coordinator, and block the bully from communicating with you further.

To Prevent Becoming a Target

Bullying cannot always be prevented, but there are some things you can do to reduce your risk of becoming the target of a bully. Firstly, show confidence, even when you do not feel confident. Walk into rooms in a relaxed manner. Develop friendships and walk with your friends and host siblings when possible. Do not bring expensive items or large amounts of cash to school. Report bullying to your Local Coordinator and host parents. To prevent online bullying, do not broadcast personal information online, or share any personal information with someone you meet online.

If You Are Accused of Bullying

If you are accused of bullying, consider the words you choose and your tone of voice. If you think someone was hurt by something you said, apologize and ask him or her what they thought you meant. If you did say something offensive, simply apologize. Do not post pictures of others online without their permission and never disparage anyone online. Before posting or speaking, ask yourself – is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful?

Bullying is a serious offense and schools may address bullying with suspension or expulsion. Dismissal from school results in dismissal from the CETUSA program, as stated in the Standards of Conduct. If you need help getting along better with your peers, ask your host parents and Local Coordinator for advice.

PERSONAL SAFETY

“Red flag” behaviors may be different from bullying. Rather than outright aggression, “red flags” are seemingly small but serious signs in a person’s behavior that indicate a person could cause you harm. Examples of red flags include:

- Bragging about partying, irresponsible behavior, getting into trouble.
- Trying to persuade you to use tobacco, alcohol, or drugs.
- Demonstrating extreme mood swings – happy one moment, and hostile the next.
- Trying to get into your personal space quickly and without your consent.
- Doing what he/she wants without asking you what you want.
- Becoming angry or sulking if you do not do what he/she wants you to do.
- Pressuring you to be alone together or go somewhere with him/her.
- Asking repeatedly or pressuring you to have sexual contact.
- Initiating overly personal or sexual conversations.
- Initiating touch frequently or constantly without reason.
- Asking you to handle a firearm or other weapon.
- Overly ingratiating behavior that doesn’t have a clear reason. Excessive, unsolicited attention, praise, favors, or gifts, especially early in a relationship that seems friendly at first can be a tactic to lower defenses. This behavior, called “grooming” may be an attempt for an abuser to manipulate their target, making it harder for the target to recognize or report abuse later on.

When you notice a red flag in a person’s behavior, do not ignore it. Although teachers, host families and other adults may be thoroughly vetted, red flag behavior is never impossible. Remember, it is not acceptable or culturally normal for any person of any age to coerce, manipulate or ask you to do something that violates CETUSA policy or your own sense of dignity and safety. To stay safe, spend time with people who share your values and avoid hanging out with people who are much older than you. Do not use alcohol or drugs.



SAFETY HABITS

To stay safe, practice being assertive and stating what you want, and don't want. If there is something you don't like, you can say things like, "No," "No thanks," or "That's not for me."

- Always be aware of your surroundings. Ask yourself, "Who is around me? Who is a safe person? Where are the exits? How would I leave this situation if the need arose?"
- Get to know people before trusting them and sharing anything personal about your life.
- Before agreeing to go somewhere or do something, find out the plan. You may find that you and this person do not want to do the same thing.
- Be open to new activities and interests, but spend time with people who share your values.
- Avoid being isolated or in places where you don't feel safe.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs. They are illegal and violate CETUSA policies, but they also make it difficult for you to remain in control of yourself and your choices.
- Establish a "buddy system" with your friends. Tell each other when you are leaving a gathering and where you are going.
- Never accept rides from strangers and never hitchhike.
- Develop a plan with your host parents and local coordinator for what you will do if you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation. For example, determine a plan of action if you are at a party where someone begins sharing alcohol or drugs.
- Don't do something just to avoid a disagreement, unpleasantness or embarrassment. You have the right to say "No."
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable, scared or sense that you are about to be pressured to do something, act quickly. Say, "No," or "Stop," and call for help.
- No means no. Say it clearly, loudly, and mean it.

Remember, you have a right to trust your feelings. You have the right to refuse and to say "No," and other people have the right to say "No," to you. You have full autonomy of your body.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Although occurrences of sexual abuse are not common in cultural exchange programs, it is important that you are equipped with knowledge of the behaviors that constitute sexual abuse, best practices to prevent sexual abuse, and what to do if someone makes improper advances or commits sexual abuse against you. It is CETUSA's intent that no student should ever be victimized.

CETUSA takes several precautions when screening host families, including:

- In-home interviews of all household members.
- A complete inspection of the home.
- Reference checks.
- Criminal background checks of all household members ages 18 and older.
- Prior approval of the host family by school personnel.

Sexual Abuse: A Definition

Sexual abuse includes any unwanted sexual activity forced upon someone through threats, coercion, or manipulation. It also refers to any sexual behavior that is inappropriate or harmful—such as between an adult and a minor or student, or with someone who cannot give informed consent due to age or mental capacity. Importantly, minors cannot legally consent to sexual activity with adults. Students cannot legally consent to sexual activity with teachers, regardless of the student's age. It is a serious crime for any adult in a position of trust—such as a host parent, teacher, or program representative—to engage in sexual behavior with a student.

Sexual abuse is not always sudden; it can be preceded by grooming—a process through which an abuser attempts to build trust with an intended victim in order to gain control. Again, grooming behaviors may include excessive compliments, giving gifts, or offering favors with the intent to create a sense of obligation or guilt. These tactics are meant to make it harder for a victim to say “no,” or report inappropriate behavior.

If anyone—regardless of who they are—makes you feel uncomfortable through verbal or physical actions of a sexual nature, it is important that you report it to your Local Coordinator, host parent(s) and the CETUSA Main Office. You have the right to be safe, respected, and protected.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Examples of Sexual Abuse Include:

- Inappropriate physical contact such as assault, blocking your movement, touching in private areas with or without clothing on, kissing, or excessive hugging, patting, touching or stroking.
- Exposing private parts of their body to you or photos of these body parts.
- Inappropriately photographing you or exposing you to pornography.
- Asking you to show any private part of your body. Areas of your body should not be touched or seen by others are best described as areas that are covered by a swimsuit. Likewise, you should not touch anyone else in those areas.
- Furthermore, excessive or inappropriate touching anywhere on your body should be reported. For example, a hug from an adult host family member on your birthday is normal. Multiple hugs throughout the day, every day is not normal. If someone touches you inappropriately or in a sexual way or asks you to pose without proper clothing, you should immediately report the incident to your host parents, your Local Coordinator, and the CETUSA corporate office.

Safety Precautions:

Sexual abuse is never the fault of the victim. At the same time, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of being exposed to sexual abuse.

- Be aware of your surroundings.
- Before leaving home, have a plan for how you will get home safely.
- Walk and travel in pairs or groups.
- Ensure your host family always knows where you are and who you are with.
- Never accept rides from strangers or hitchhike. Hitchhiking violates CETUSA's Standard of Conduct.
- Say "No" or "Stop" to any unwelcome, uncomfortable or confusing remarks, questions or touch by any person – including any adult.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- If you recognize "red flag" behavior from any person, get to a safe place and report the behavior to your Local Coordinator and host family.

What To Do If You Are Abused

If you experience sexual abuse in the U.S., please report it to your Local Coordinator, host family, CETUSA main office, and law enforcement. Even if you are worried that you broke a rule, it is important that you seek support. Sexual abuse is a serious crime in the U.S. and will be treated accordingly by CETUSA and local authorities. A complete investigation will follow any report and when applicable, prosecution of offenders. You must never make a false accusation of sexual abuse, molestation or exploitation as this is also a serious violation. False accusations of sexual misconduct should not be made under any circumstances.

If you feel that you are in danger of sexual assault or have been sexually assaulted, call 911 immediately and contact your Local Coordinator as soon as it is safe to do so. If someone's behavior threatens your sense of safety, bodily autonomy, or personal dignity, let your Local Coordinator and host family know immediately. You will not "get in trouble" for any report you make in good faith. Above all, do not stay silent.

SUMMARY: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE REGULATIONS

Status of Sponsor:

- The Exchange-Student Program Sponsor (CETUSA) must be tax-exempt.

Selection of Students:

- Students shall be between the ages of 15 and 18 1/2 and enrolled in secondary school in their home country.
- Students shall display sufficient command of the English language to function well in an English-speaking school and community environment.
- Students shall be screened for maturity and good character.

Orientation*

- Provide a student orientation before arrival and again upon arrival in the United States.
- Provide host family orientation before the student's arrival.
- Ensure all participants carry health and accident insurance.

Dispersion of Students*

- Place no more than 5 students in a single school**.

Acceptance of Students*

- Bring students to the U.S. only if the student has been accepted in writing by a school and host family.

Host Family Arrangements*

- Ensure maximum compatibility between the student and host family.
- Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary.
- Select the highest quality families to host for the entire academic year.
- Ensure background checks are done on all adult host family members.
- Place only one student per family**.

Host Family Changes*

- Host family changes are only to be made in the student's best interest.

SUMMARY: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE REGULATIONS

Student Employment*

- Engage only in part-time employment of less than 10 hours per week in non-competitive jobs.

Supervision*

- Maintain continuous personal contact with host family, student and school. Initiate action to resolve any problem.
- Contact student and host family at least once every 4 weeks and meet personally with each at least once per semester. At CETUSA, the Local Coordinator must meet personally with the student and host family at least once every 60 days.

* The Local Coordinator is responsible for implementing these regulations.

** Under specific circumstances, exceptions may be made.

DEPARTURE

A couple months before you return to your home country, you and your host family will receive a Pre-Departure Orientation Kit via email. We ask you to review this kit with your Local Coordinator, as it addresses some of the thoughts and feelings you might experience in the days and weeks leading up to your departure.

Departure Date

You must return home within seven days of school ending. At that time, CETUSA and your host family are no longer responsible for you. Any deviation from the 7-day rule requires approval from the CETUSA High School Program (HSP) Main Office. Your host family and/or Local Coordinator cannot provide this authorization. Authorization, if given, must be given by the CETUSA Main Office. Remaining in the U.S. past this date could jeopardize your entry into the U.S. in the future.

Medical Bills

Pay any and all outstanding medical bills before you return home. If you are unable to pay them before your departure, contact the medical facility's billing office and make sure the account is in your name and home country address and not your host family's name or address. You are responsible for your medical bills.

Your Form DS-2019

The Form DS-2019 or "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status" is the basic document used in the administration of the exchange visitor program. You should keep this form in a safe place - even when you return home, as you may someday need it for re-entry into the U.S. CETUSA is unable to send you a new DS-2019 once you leave the program.

Packing

As you begin to pack, decide if you will carry everything in your luggage or ship some items home. If you have more items than space, or if your luggage exceeds the airline's weight limit, compare the cost of shipping extra items or paying for an extra suitcase and the overweight luggage fee. Some students choose to leave or donate extra items, such as old clothing in order to have more room for souvenirs. Please make sure you leave behind a tidy room.

Saying Goodbye

It will be emotionally difficult to leave, as you have made some amazing friends and connected with your host family. If you choose to write your host family a letter expressing your appreciation and what your exchange has meant to you, they are likely to treasure it forever. (Some of our families frame these photos or letters from their exchange students in their homes permanently!) Remember you can stay in contact via social media or email. Make sure all your friends and host family know how to contact you. You never know when you may come back to the U.S. for new adventures!



Exchange Visitor Program

Welcome Brochure

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program, BridgeUSA.

During your exchange program, you will have the unique opportunity to experience life in the United States. You will not only serve as an ambassador of your home country helping to educate the American people about your country and customs, but you will experience American culture first-hand. You will also enhance your skills and expertise and make connections and memories that will last a lifetime.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, provide you with information on contacting the U.S. Department of State, and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations.



BridgeUSA

The Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange.

The Exchange Visitor Program

The U.S. Department of State administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

Sponsors

The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer exchange visitor programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide exchange visitors with pre-arrival information and an orientation in addition to monitoring activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in activities that provide you with an opportunity to share your language, culture, and history of your country with Americans.



Responsible Officers

Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019) and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Your sponsor's role is to help you manage your program. If problems arise or you have questions, your sponsor is there to help you. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is your sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor, you should contact the person whose name and telephone number is located on your Form DS-2019.

Exchange Visitor

An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange visitor program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Spouse and Dependents

Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried children, under 21 years of age, to accompany an exchange visitor to the United States. These individuals may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

Current Regulations

The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62) and can be found at:

[1 visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/](https://www.visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/)

It is important that you understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your sponsor will help you keep current with any change which may affect your J-1 visa status. Some requirements of the Federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

- Register with your sponsor – Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This System is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor's program during their stay in the United States.

When you arrive in the United States, you must contact your sponsor to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Failing to maintain your program status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States.

- Activities and Program Provisions – You entered the United States in a specific program category and are required to engage in the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your exchange category.
- Insurance – You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1), your spouse, and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their exchange visitors. Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance providers. Consult with your responsible officer's sponsor before the start of your program.

Maintenance of Insurance

Willful failure on your part to maintain the required insurance throughout your stay in the United States will result in the termination of your exchange program.

Maintenance of Valid Program Status

You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program. If your program is terminated, you are expected to immediately depart the U.S.

Required Notifications to Sponsors

You must immediately inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence), telephone number, email address, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program.

Contacting the U.S. Department of State

The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



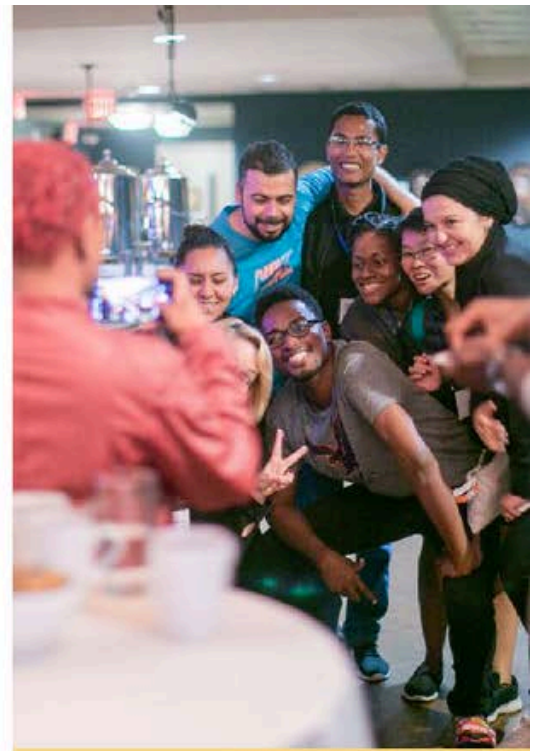
Questions or concerns about your exchange program?
Contact the sponsor listed on your Form DS-2019.

Still have questions AFTER speaking with your sponsor?
Email jvisas@state.gov

Remaining concerns or need emergency assistance?
Call the J-1 Visa Emergency Hotline at [1-866-283-9090](tel:1-866-283-9090)

The U.S. Department of State does not tolerate any form of retaliation and fully supports your request for assistance.

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911!



Helpful Links:

For questions on applying please visit:

j1visa.state.gov/participants

j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/EV-TRIFOLD.pdf

Resources and Common Questions for Exchange Visitors:

j1visa.state.gov/participants/current

j1visa.state.gov/participants/common-questions/