



Honoring our immigrant past, shaping our immigrant future

Exchange Visitor Host Site Handbook



<https://exchange.americanimmigrationcouncil.org>

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Welcome to the American Immigration Council's International Exchange Program! We are delighted to sponsor the J-1 exchange visitor participants within your organization.

By hosting an international professional, intern, or scholar within your organization, you are creating the opportunity to combine the best ideas from two nations – the United States' and your J-1 exchange visitor participant's home country. Your exchange visitor participant will return home with new skills and a greater appreciation for the people of the United States, U.S. culture, and U.S. processes, while your company will gain greater knowledge and appreciation for your exchange visitor's country and customs. Hosting an exchange visitor is fundamental people-to-people diplomacy.

This manual is designed for organizations providing training, internship, or scholar programs for exchange visitors. The pages that follow summarize the American Immigration Council's program requirements and the responsibilities of each party in the exchange program. It includes guidance on the orientation you will conduct for the participant, information you must provide to the Council throughout the term of the exchange program, background material on related tax issues, and other essential information. Please review this manual carefully and contact the Council's International Exchange program staff with any questions or concerns.

ABOUT THE J-1 CULTURAL EXCHANGE VISA CATEGORY

The American Immigration Council, your J-1 visa program sponsor, is designated by the U.S. Dept. of State to sponsor international training programs under the J-1 visa. The purpose of the J-1 Cultural Exchange Visitor Program is to further the foreign policy interests of the United States by increasing mutual understanding between people of other countries and the United States by means of mutual educational and cultural exchanges. A J-1 exchange visitor participant is a non-immigrant who seeks to enter the United States for the purpose of enhancing professional skills by participating in a structured training/internship or scholar program conducted by a third party, i.e., a U.S. Host Organization. As a Host Organization, your organization will provide guided work-based training for the exchange visitor participant.

A J-1 exchange visitor participant and their accompanying spouse and/or minor children may apply for visas to be admitted into the United States in valid J-1/J-2 classifications under Immigration and Nationality Act § 101(a)(15)(J) if the Exchange Visitor and their accompanying spouse and/or children each present American Immigration Council-issued SEVIS Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor [J-1] Status) to a U.S. consular official abroad.

Your Agreement to Provide Training

Your organization has agreed to provide a course of training for the prospective exchange visitor participants as outlined in the DS-7002, Training/Internship Placement Plan, which was approved by the Immigration Council at the time of application for those participants under the Intern/Trainee program. Please review the Exchange Visitor Application noted within our application platform, including the DS-7002, and Host Organization Agreement, to be certain you understand what the host organization has agreed to provide. Contact the Immigration Council if you have any questions.

For those participants under the J-1 Research Scholar category, their exchange activity must be conducted at the site(s) of activity identified in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the Dept. of State's tracking database, which may be the location of the host organization facilitating the exchange with permission of the American Immigration Council. Those participants under the Research Scholar category may also engage in activities at other locations if such activities constitute occasional lectures or consultations permitted by the American Immigration Council.

The Council is responsible to the U.S. Department of State (DOS) for ensuring the exchange visitor receives the as outlined in our application platform, Form DS-7002 for Intern/Trainee programs, and SEVIS. In addition, the Immigration Council must ensure compliance with all DOS and government agency regulations concerning the exchange visitor's stay in the United States.

The Immigration Council accomplishes this by maintaining regular and direct communication with both exchange visitors and host organizations throughout the period of training. Thus, the Council must have current contact information for the exchange visitor's supervisor, as well as work and residential contact details for each J-1 participant.¹

U.S. Foreign Policy and Your Organization

The Trainee/Intern or Research Scholar is issued the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa for the purpose of better understanding "American culture and society and to enhance American knowledge of foreign cultures and skills by providing the opportunity for an open interchange of ideas between the exchange visitor trainees and their American counterparts." 22 CFR 62.22 (b)

By hosting an exchange visitor participant, your organization plays a key role in fulfilling the priorities of U.S. foreign policy. Specifically, the J-1 exchange visitor program is intended to:

- Develop on-going positive international ties.
- Develop an international network of individuals who have an accurate understanding of our country and our national values.
- Introduce U.S. residents to ideas and values from other parts of the world.
- Provide foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the United States and return home to share their experiences.
- Encourage U.S. residents to participate in educational and cultural programs in other countries.
- Increase mutual understanding between people of United States and people of other countries by means of cultural and educational exchanges.²

Planning for Your Exchange Visitor Participant

Your exchange visitor participant will need to apply for and receive the J-1 visa before entering the United States. The waiting period for a visa appointment at a U.S. Consulate can be several days or weeks. While waiting for the J-1 exchange visitor to confirm an arrival date, your organization can prepare for the participant in the following ways:

- Let your employees know an exchange visitor will be joining the organization.
- Explain how an exchange visitor is different from your U.S. staff to avoid future misunderstandings.
- Explain to your employees why hosting an exchange visitor is good for your organization.
- Make material available to your employees about the exchange visitor's country and cultural background.
- Share the exchange program involved with individuals in the departments to which the participant will be assigned so the purpose of the program is understood.
- Recruit a mentor or buddy to help the exchange visitor through the first few weeks. Mentors can introduce the community and help exchange visitors find housing, locate banks, markets, the post office, the Social Security Office.
- Ask your payroll department to become familiar with how to put a J-1 visa holder on the payroll.
- Plan the arrival orientation for the exchange visitor.

How is a J-1 exchange visitor different from your US employees?

Understanding the difference between an exchange visitor participant and your U.S. employees begins with the difference between adhering to the Form DS-7002, Training/Internship Placement Plan, for those participants under the Trainee/Intern category, the appointment letter for those participants under the Research Scholar category, and a job description. The DS-7002 & Appointment Letter which outlines the exchange program activities you will provide for the participant, while a job description explains what U.S. employee is expected to do for the organization. The exchange visitor participant must be able to answer the question, "What am I going to learn and how?" The employee must answer the question, "What work will be done and how?" The U.S. government regulations for the J-1 visa under which participants in the Trainee/Intern category is permitted entry into the United States are very specific on this difference: "Use of the Exchange Visitor program for ordinary employment or work purposes is strictly prohibited. For this reason, the regulations are designed to distinguish between receiving training, which is permitted, and gaining experience, which is not permitted unless as a component of a bona fide training program."

The government does recognize that most skills cannot be mastered without actual practice. Therefore, on-the-job training is permitted when it is justified as a means to achieve skills or competencies stated in the Training Plan.

Federal government regulations prohibit using the training program to recruit and train foreign nationals for employment in the United States. Placing exchange visitor participants in positions which will displace full or part-time employees is also prohibited.

Hosting an exchange visitor is good for your organization.

Organizations host exchange visitor participants for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons shared with the Council include:

- “It makes for better U.S. employees. When we assign an intern to one of our permanent staff, the employee must think consciously about how a particular task is accomplished.”
- “It helps to create and strengthen ties with our international partners.”
- “It helps us better understand the overseas market.”
- “We can train a manager for our expansion overseas who will understand our American processes.”
- “It helps us to be more innovative, as the intern brings ideas we haven’t thought about.”
- “It enables our employees to feel they are doing something positive to impact how people in other parts of the world view the United States. It helps them feel good about working for our organization.”
- “Our former exchange visitor participant met me when I was traveling through her country. It was great to see the country through local eyes and not just as a tourist.”

Finding resources about the exchange visitor’s home country:

Basic information about the exchange visitor’s home country can be found through a wide variety of sources. The Council recommends the following:

- Embassy or Consulate – The Embassy or Consulate of your exchange visitor’s home country will be able to supply information on the culture and business practices of the nation. Keep in mind the information will tend to reflect the official government policy.
- Exchange visitor – Ask your exchange visitor participants to send information. This gives the participant the opportunity to begin thinking about how to share their home culture with their

U.S. colleagues and gives their colleagues a better understanding of the cultural assumptions of the participant.

- Reference Librarian – Your local library will be able to find a great deal of information about your exchange visitor’s country and culture.
- Internet – The internet hosts a wide range of websites, ranging from the official site of the host country to websites with culturally specific information.

Who makes a good mentor or buddy?

This is an opportunity for employees or their family members to get to know an exchange visitor participant. The best suited person to help the participant relocate to your community could include a member of the support staff or another department who might otherwise not have frequent contact with the exchange visitor participant.

- Someone willing to take the time to be a resource to the exchange visitor.
- Someone with the patience to make sure the trainee or intern understands US English and local customs.
- Someone with a good knowledge of the local area.
- Someone interested in other countries and cultures.

Understanding the Visa Process

Once the Council has approved the application for sponsorship of the J-1 visa, a DS-2019 form (Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Visa), a DS-7002 form is provided to those exchange visitor participants under the Trainee/Intern category, an Appointment letter to those exchange visitor participants under the Research Scholar category, a receipt for the payment of the I-901 SEVIS fee, and information on how to apply for the J-1 visa is sent to exchange visitor participant via international courier service.

The J-1 exchange visitor participant must schedule an in-person interview appointment with the U.S. Consulate in their home country. Typically, the wait for a visa appointment is 2 days to 6 weeks. The Council staff will have contacted the participant by webcam to review these steps, the documentation required and the Consulate interview process.

The Consular Officer is required by law to view each J-1 visa applicant as a potential non-immigrant to the United States. The J-1 visa applicant must provide the Consular Officer evidence of their intent to return to the home country at the conclusion of their J-1 program. There is no guarantee the applicant will be granted the J-1 visa in their passport. The Council should be notified immediately in the event of a visa denial along with the official reason given to the applicant for the denial. The Council staff will assess what, if anything, can be done to reverse the decision.

Once the visa application is approved by the Consulate, only then should the exchange visitor participant can make travel arrangements to enter the United States. The exchange visitor participant must alert the Council online by completing the Arrival and Program Dates file of their arrival date and as an added measure inform their case manager of their arrival. The exchange visitor participant should also contact their supervisor at the host organization to confirm these dates.

The visa is only permission to enter the United States. It is not permission to be in the United States. The Customs and Border Protection Admission Record I-94 arrival/departure record represents permission to be in the United States for a specific period of time and what the exchange visitor participant can do while in the United States (i.e., participate in the exchange visitor activities). This is represented by the D/S written on the I-94 form issued for land entries. D/S stands for "Duration of Status" and refers to the dates in SEVIS that are printed on the DS-2019. The J-1 status includes a 30-day grace period both prior to the start and after the end date of training shown on the DS-2019.

Please note that exchange visitors access their I-94 admission record online.

What is SEVIS?

SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. It is the tracking system used by the federal government to monitor the location and visa status of individuals with F, J and M category visas. SEVIS is funded by user fees.

The Immigration Council, as the visa sponsor, is under obligation to the U.S. government to maintain the integrity of files in SEVIS. For this reason, trainees and interns must promptly notify the Council of changes to their J program dates, U.S. residential address or travel plans.

Program Start Date

Visa appointment delays and flight availability may change the start date of the exchange visitor program. Any changes to the start date must be reported to the Council, which must ensure that program dates are accurate in SEVIS and in the training plan or appointment letter. The Council urges host organizations to be in regular contact with incoming exchange visitor participants to ensure the validity of start and end dates. Please inform the American Immigration Council of any changes. All changes must be approved by the Council as we must notate those changes within SEVIS. Failure to report changes to the Council in a timely manner may affect the standing of the participant's J-1 status.

When the Exchange Visitor Arrives

Orientation Upon Arrival

The Council will assist in providing general information and a brief orientation to the exchange visitor participants about life in the United States, it is the responsibility of each host organization to conduct a

formal orientation for the participants introducing them to your organization, company culture, and local community at the inception of their programs. In addition to organization-specific details, the host organization must ensure that the exchange visitor understands and is comfortable with various local customs and practices. The Council relies on host organizations to be the exchange visitor's local support network for assistance with all such issues. We pledge to partner with you in these endeavors.

The orientation should include the following:

- Organization specific details:
- Vacation, personal & sick time policies
- Payroll procedures
- Smoking on property policy
- Computer use policy
- Telephone use policy
- Substance abuse policy
- Sexual harassment policy
- Training/work hours & tardiness policy
- Holidays
- Other benefits trainee should/should not expect

Community specific details (may be handled by assigned mentor or buddy):

- Finding housing
 - NOTE: We can assist the exchange visitor participant with identifying housing options upon request.

Location of:

- Food markets
- Dry cleaner/Laundromat
- Post Office Local hospital
- Local library
- Areas to avoid
- Establishing a bank account
- Local transportation options
- Obtaining a driver's license
- Arranging telephone service (cell and/or land)
- Arranging electric/gas service, if necessary
- Doctor referral service
- Local newspaper
- Local map
- Local cultural and sports events
- Local customs and practices

With the Trainee or Intern Supervisor:

- Review the Training Plan
- Discuss expectations

Maintaining Contact with the American Immigration Council

As the J-1 visa sponsor, the Council has several responsibilities to the federal government. These include:

- Monitoring the progress of the exchange visitor participant while on the J program.
- Knowing the location of the participant while in the United States.
- Monitoring that the participant is insured as per (at least) the minimum standards of the J-1 regulations.
- Outreach to the primary phase supervisor and main program supervisors for the program.
- Monitoring that the J-1 visa program is not being misused.
- Interceding for the health, safety, and wellbeing of the participant, when necessary.

To accomplish the above, both the exchange visitor and host organization must maintain contact with the Immigration Council.

Reporting U.S. Contact & Insurance Information for the Exchange Visitor

The exchange visitor participants are required to provide their U.S. residential address, telephone number, and other emergency contact information, as well as proof of medical and repatriation insurance, ***within five days of arrival in the United States***. The exchange visitors supply this information to the Council by logging into their case file with our application platform by completing the “Post-Arrival Follow-Up Information” form as well as reaching out to their J-1 case manager.

If the Council does not receive this information, the J-1 exchange visitor participant will receive reminder emails. If the Council does not receive a response from the participant within 7 days, the host organization will also be contacted for confirmation. Should this information not be promptly provided, the exchange visitor participant’s status runs the risk of their J-1 status being recorded as “No Show” in the SEVIS tracking system. This notifies the government’s immigration enforcement agents that participant is now in the United States without active J status. A “No Show” status brings serious consequences to both the exchange visitor and the host organization.

Required Program Evaluations

To comply with Department of State regulations, both the host organization supervisor and the exchange visitor participant must submit the required program evaluations. For programs of more than six months duration, these include mid and final evaluations from both the participant and their direct supervisors. For programs of less than six months duration the final evaluations signed by the exchange visitors and their direct supervisors are required. These evaluations assist the Council to ensure programs proceed on course and give participants the ability to provide additional feedback.

The host organization supervisor and the J-1 exchange visitor will each need to log into the exchange visitor participant's case file to complete the respective Mid-Point and Final Evaluations. Failure to complete the mid-point evaluation within 30 days after the midpoint date may result in the exchange visitor participant to be considered out of status due to non-compliance with the visa requirements. Any participant who is out of status must immediately leave the United States. Mid-Point and Final evaluations must be completed by both parties for the program to advance to the next stage. Failure to complete final evaluations may impact the host organization's ability to submit applications for future J-1 programs.

In addition, the exchange visitor participant will be asked to complete a survey 30 days after beginning the J-1 program. This survey allows the Council to both monitor the start of the program and to get a sense of the experience at the U.S. consulate where the exchange visitor applied for the J visa in their passport.

Putting the Exchange Visitor on the Payroll

The following information regarding payroll and tax issues is meant to provide general guidance only. It is not meant to be tax advice and should not be considered as such. Tax law is constantly changing and is subject to interpretation. For more specific and updated information, you should contact the IRS, your state tax agency, a tax accountant, or a tax attorney.

General guidelines:

Exchange Visitor participants should not be considered independent contractors. Because participants must perform specific duties under supervision, on-the-job training cannot be considered independent.

The host organization must carry Worker's Compensation Insurance. Exchange visitor participants should be enrolled if allowed by state law.

Exchange visitor participants are subject to federal income tax for U.S. sourced income. They may be subject to state and local income taxes depending on the tax laws of the state.

The IRS and Social Security Administration do not consider most J-1 Exchange visitor participants to be resident taxpayers; therefore, a different tax code may apply to your international trainee or intern than that which applies to your ordinary employees. Many payroll services may not have the computer software to handle the different treatment. Also, before consulting with a tax professional, be sure to understand the professional's experience with nonresident alien taxpayers. Not all tax professionals are familiar with the complexity of the tax laws for nonresident aliens.

Exchange visitor participants are authorized to participate in a structured activities which may not exceed the time period specified by their DS-2019 form. The participants may receive compensation for in connection with their exchange program activities. For those participants under the Trainee/Intern category, must receive training at the host organization outlined on the Form DS-7002, which details the structured training involved. If for any reason they do not fulfill the requirements of the training program, the Immigration Council should be notified.

Completing Form I-9 for the Exchange Visitor

Within three days of the exchange visitor participant joining your organization, the Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, needs to be completed. The form indicates the following documents are acceptable for employment eligibility verification:

For column A:

- Passport – confirms identity
- I-94 admission record (printed from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>) – confirms legal entry, length of stay, and J-1 status

The Council suggests including in column A the DS-2019, which notes your organization as the approved employment site. In addition to the completed I-9 form, keep photocopies of the passport identity page, J-1 visa, I-94 admission record, and DS-2019 form in the exchange visitor's personnel file.

Awaiting the Social Security Number

Exchange visitor participants will need a social security number for tax identification purposes. Participants should be sure that the Social Security office issues a number that will allow them to work. If "Not Valid For Employment" is printed on the card, request that the participant have it changed immediately.

If the card is marked "Allowed to work with BCIS approval," this refers to the employment verification documents listed above. If your trainee or intern applied for a Social Security Number (SSN) but has not yet received it, you can file the W-4 form by entering "applied for" on the form. When the exchange visitor receives the SSN, file the Corrected Wage and Tax Statement, form W-4c, to show the actual SSN.

Some exchange visitor participants will have a Social Security Number from a previous stay in the United States. If they have been issued an SSN in the past, but does not remember what it is, the nearest Social Security Office will search for it. The exchange visitor participant previously issued a SSN should not apply for a new number.

Please do not insist your exchange visitors apply for a SSN on the first day of training. The Social Security Administration advises J-1 visa holders to wait a minimum of 72 hours after their J-1 status is activated in SEVIS. The Council recommends waiting five days from the time the information for SEVIS is submitted.

Also note that no separate government “employment authorization document” (EAD) card is needed by the exchange visitor participants. Form DS-2019 is sufficient proof of authorization to participate in exchange program activities in the United States. However, please note that spouses and dependents of a J-1 must obtain an EAD card to work.

For more information on putting the trainee or intern on the payroll while awaiting the Social Security Number, go to: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm>.

To find the nearest Social Security Office, go to <https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>.

To download the Social Security Number Application, go to: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>.

Avoid unnecessary delays by helping the exchange visitor participant fill out form SS-5 (Application for a Social Security Card). Exchange visitors should fill in their names exactly as they appear on the passport. They will need to know their mothers’ maiden name. They should use your organization’s address or U.S. residential address, not the home country address. They will mark that they are a “Legal Alien Allowed to Work.” They are not students while on the J-1 visa. They should be reminded that dates in the United States are written month/day/year.

Please remind your exchange visitor that the SSN is a lifetime number. Thus, it is important not to lose the Social Security card.

Completing the W-4 form

The following is intended to provide general guidelines only. Given the complexity of tax codes affecting J-1 visa holders, you may wish to consult with a competent tax professional knowledgeable about international tax treaties.

Before completing the W-4 form, there are three factors that need to be determined for each calendar year, or part thereof, during the exchange visitor’s stay in the United States:

1. Is the Exchange Visitor Participant taxed as a nonresident or a resident taxpayer?

You will find a discussion of how to determine if an alien is a resident or nonresident taxpayer on page 8 of IRS Publication 515 or on page 3 of Publication 519.

Publication 515

<https://www.irs.gov/publications/p515>

Publication 519

<https://www.irs.gov/forms-pubs/about-publication-519>

As a rule, if your exchange visitor has not been in the United States on a different category of the J-1 visa in the past, his or her tax status will be nonresident alien during the first two calendar years or parts thereof.

2. Does an international treaty cover the trainee or intern?

It is the responsibility of the exchange visitor participants to notify you by submitting IRS Form 8233 <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8233.pdf>. It is the employer's responsibility to verify that the treaty covers participant.

IRS Publication 901 <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p901.pdf> summarizes the tax treaties currently in effect. Exchange visitors from Canada, Mexico, American Samoa, Japan, Korea, India, and others often find tax advantages in the treaties.

3. What is the withholding rate?

Resident alien taxpayers are taxed the same as U.S. citizens, unless a tax treaty applies. Nonresident alien taxpayers are not subject to FICA (Social Security and Medicare) or FUTA (Federal Unemployment) taxes. They cannot collect, so they do not have to pay.

Following the guidelines of IRS Publication 515, nonresident alien taxpayers should fill out the W-4 form as follows:

- Check off "single" in box 3, regardless of actual marital status.
- Claim only one exemption on line 5 (unless a tax treaty applies).
- Write "Nonresident Alien" or "NRA" above the dotted line on line 6. Employers should then refer to page 15 of Circular E or Page 24 of Publication 515 for how to determine the withholding rate.

Resident taxpayer aliens should fill out the W-4 form following the instructions printed on the form.

IRS Publications can be found at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs>.

When in doubt on any issue discussed above, seek competent tax advice before proceeding.

State and Local Income Tax

The following link can be used to find the web page for your state tax agency:
<http://www.taxadmin.org/state-tax-agencies>.

A note on Reporting Exchange Visitor income to the IRS

Exchange visitor participants are not independent contractors; therefore, in most cases you will issue the W-2 form to the trainee or intern for all compensation you have paid regardless of nonresident or resident alien status. However, if the exchange visitor has given you an IRS 8233 form for the current tax year which you or your tax adviser, have determined exempts this individual from all or part of the U.S. federal taxes, the exempt income is reported to the IRS on Forms 1042 and 1042S. The filing deadline for forms 1042 and 1042S is March 15 of the following calendar year from which the income was paid.

Tax Law is Constantly Changing

Tax laws affecting international trainees and interns change as treaties are ratified, and as Congress amends the Internal Revenue Code. It is always advisable to consult with a competent tax professional, the IRS, or your state tax agency for the latest information.

During The Stay

Program Announcements and J-1 Journeys

Program announcements are made via e-mail and posted on our website: www.internationalexchange.org. Discussion of J program issues and information on current American culture is periodically posted on our [J-1 Journeys](#) webpage. This website is designed to share information about cultural and compliance events. We may even approach hosts for postings from time to time.

When to contact the American Immigration Council Address and telephone number changes:

Training site – contact the Council within 5 business days
Exchange visitor's U.S. residential address – contact the Immigration Council with 5 business days
Exchange visitor's home country address – include on the Final evaluation

Program supervisor changes:

Notify the Council of the new supervisor, and the new supervisor's credentials within 5 business days. The supervisor information and signature must be changed on all affected phases of the DS-7002.

Training Placement Plan Changes:

All changes to the training plan must be approved in advance by the Council. If you foresee a need to adjust the training plan, please call the Council immediately. Failure to inform the Council of program changes may negatively impact the exchange visitor participant's J-1 status and continued training at the host organization. This may also impact the host organization ability to serve as a host for other program participants.

Exchange Visitor Travel

Travel within the United States:

If the trainee or intern will be away from the approved training site for 10 days or more, a travel itinerary should be sent to the Immigration Council atJ1Program@immcouncil.org.

Travel outside the United States:

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) require that all J-1 participants and J-2 dependents have their DS-2019 forms validated for travel taking place outside the United States. Before the exchange visitor participants can travel outside of the country for the first time, the original DS-2019 form(s) and the Travel Validation Request form signed by both the training supervisor and the exchange visitor must be sent to the American Immigration Council office. The Travel Validation Request form is available on our website. Send these documents a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the date of travel.

The signature is valid for up to 12 months from the date the form is signed and permits multiple departures and reentries. The exchange visitor must email the Council the dates of additional travel but does not need a new Travel Validation signature. However, if the training program extends past the 12-month mark, an additional endorsement is required.

Should the exchange visitor need to travel in less than two (2) weeks, send the DS-2019 and the signed Travel Validation Request form via an overnight courier service, such as FedEx or UPS. Include a self-addressed and paid overnight envelope in the packet so we can rapidly return the signed form.

Program Extensions

A program may not exceed 18 continuous months for trainees or 12 continuous months for interns. However, if the host organization and exchange visitor wish to extend the training program up to the maximum total, they must submit the request as part of the Final evaluation. To apply for consideration of an extension, a new DS-7002 training plan must be submitted which does not repeat skills already accomplished in the original plan. An explanation of why the extension is being requested must accompany the new training plan, along with an extension application fee. Sickness and accident insurance complying with federal regulations must also be extended for the full length of the extended program. Exchange visitors must also submit a statement that they will not apply for any other U.S. visa status before the conclusion of the J program and their departure from the U.S. The request is subject to approval by the Council.

For those exchange visitor participants under the Research Scholar program us update the Council two (2) weeks prior to the requested extension request to receive permission. Sickness and accident insurance complying with federal regulations must also be extended for the full length of the extended program. Exchange visitors must also submit a statement that they will not apply for any other U.S. visa status before the conclusion of the J program and their departure from the U.S. The request is subject to approval by the Immigration Council.

Please note that there are applicable fees applied to requests for extension.

The Ups and Downs of Intercultural Experience

Many participants in an intercultural exchange experience a series of ups and downs throughout their stay. Typically, the first weeks are filled with the excitement of being in a new place. Roughly three to four months into a program stay, the exchange visitor participant will begin to realize just how different the United States is from home. While you may expect this is right around the time exchange visitors have 'settled in,' this may be the most vulnerable period of the adjustment phase. When the exchange visitor is well supported, positive adjustment occurs, and excitement returns to the experience. Some exchange visitors will have more difficulty with the cultural adjustment than others, depending typically on the strength of their support systems.

Signs of Cultural Adjustment Issues

"This country is really stupid..." – A common statement from exchange visitors who are seeing a cultural trait of the United States through the experience of their own culture. A response might be, "Why do you think we've done it that way?"

"English doesn't have enough words..." - A common statement from interns who cannot find a way to express emotions described in their native language, but not shared by the Anglo cultures.

"All I want to do is sleep..." – A common statement expressing the emotional and physical overload of change.

"I'm gaining a lot of weight..." – The change in food often results in weight gain. It can be difficult for exchange visitors to understand how to use local and different foods for a healthy diet.

"Americans ask 'How are you doing; but don't really want to know..." An accurate and common observation that may indicate the exchange visitor is understanding what is said literally, but not hearing the underlying or cultural meaning.

"Why should I celebrate your holiday; I'm not American..." – An attitude that could indicate the trainee is suffering a bit of cultural identity crisis.

Assigning mentors or buddies who will take an interest in the trainee or intern and will share their own American experience is often a productive way to help an exchange visitor through cultural adjustment. Encouraging the exchange visitor participant to eat a healthy diet, get sufficient sleep, exercise, and become involved in the local community will go a long way toward reducing the stress of cultural adjustment. Remember, unlike most of your employees, the international visitor usually does not have extended family or social contacts in the United States. The exchange visitors are missing traditional sources for learning both the verbal and non-verbal cultural cues that we take for granted in our daily American life.

Problems with a Trainee or Intern

If a serious problem arises with an exchange visitor participant, please call the Immigration Council immediately. Remember, an exchange visitor is not an ordinary employee. Your organization has entered into an agreement with the Immigration Council to provide a stated course of training. All serious issues concerning your exchange visitor should be discussed with the Immigration Council before taking a course of action.

Participants are generally not permitted to change host companies, except under extreme circumstances. In these cases, participants may not change companies without written permission from the Immigration

Council. Participants who change companies without permission will be asked to return to their home country. Companies and exchange visitors are strongly encouraged to contact the Immigration Council early should any problems develop in the training program that might lead to a need to change companies or to return early to the home country.

End-Of-Stay

Exchange visitor participants often begin to establish social and community roots as their program near completion. It may be tempting to try to help your exchange visitors find ways to extend their time in the United States. Please remember this is not really helping your program participant. The J-1 visa was issued with the understanding that the exchange visitor would return to share what has been learned about the United States with co-workers, friends, and family in their home country. Your trainee or intern needs to return home to accomplish “the other half” of the exchange experience.

Six weeks before the end of stay, the exchange visitor’s supervisor should begin encouraging the exchange visitor participant to think about practical plans to use the training in the exchange visitor’s home country. Before program completion, the exchange visitor participant should begin shipping excess baggage home. No more than 30 days before the end of stay and prior to the completion of the program, the exchange visitor and host supervisor should log in to the case management system to complete an end of stay evaluation and submit it to the Council. The exchange visitor participant will not receive the Certificate of Completion from the Immigration Council unless an end of stay evaluation is received. The Council is also unable to approve future J-1 applications for host companies if end of stay evaluations are missing.

Before the exchange visitor leaves, be sure to record a forwarding address in the home country for future correspondence, including W-2 forms. Also, check to make sure personnel records are updated, especially if the Social Security number was received after the trainee or intern began his or her program.

Finally, your exchange visitor has up to 30 days after the end date on the DS-2019 for travel within the United States or for activities such as settling affairs or making return travel plans to the home country. Exchange visitors may neither work nor train during these 30 days.

We anticipate that both your organization and the exchange visitor participant will have a valuable experience. We are here to help facilitate the most successful experience possible. Please contact us with your questions and suggestions. We look forward to working with you.

Glossary of Terms

DS-2019 form: The Certificate of Eligibility provided to exchange visitor participant by the Immigration Council permitting the application for a J visa. This is needed to enter the U.S. on a J-1 visa and to obtain a Social Security card and constitutes work authorization at a specific site of activity. This form must be endorsed by the American Immigration Council before the exchange visitor leaves the U.S. at any time during the training.

DS-7002 form: The Training/Internship Placement Plan, an official US Government document, agreed to by the host organization, exchange visitor, and J visa sponsor (The American Immigration Council). By signing the form, each party is certifying the accuracy of the training plan. False certification carries strong penalties, including the possibility of fines and imprisonment.

J-1 Research Scholar Appointment Letter: an invitation or offer letter. Invitation letters generally follow a similar structure as an offer letter. This letter is needed as a part of the scholar's initial application to request a DS-2019, for the scholar to apply for their visa at a U.S. consulate, and at other stages in the immigration process.

Exchange visitor participant: Any individual who enters the United States on a J-1 visa.

Host organization: The organization that has agreed to provide an internship or training to an international exchange visitor.

I-94: The arrival and departure record. "D/S" stands for "Duration of Status" meaning that the visitor may stay lawfully in the United States pursuing the training program for the length of time listed on item 3 (dates of program) of the DS-2019. If the I-94 admission record does not reflect "J-1 D/S", please contact the Immigration Council.

I-901 form: The receipt that the \$220 SEVIS fee was paid.

J-1 visa: The visa obtained from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate which is placed in the international visitor's passport. The visa gives the dates and number of times during which the visa holder may enter the United States.

Passport: The formal document issued by your home country that is necessary for exit from and re-entry into the country and allows you to travel internationally in accordance with visa requirements.

Port of entry: any one of several locations where visa holders are permitted to enter the United States.

SEVIS: The federal web-based system for maintaining information on international exchange visitors and students in the United States. Exchange visitor participants must be "Active" in SEVIS to maintain their J-1 visa status while in the United States.

Sponsor: The Council is designated by the US Department of State to issue the DS-2019 form and provide oversight of the intern or trainee experience.

USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services - the federal agency that exclusively focuses on immigration and citizenship services.

About the Council

The mission of the American Immigration Council is to be a leader in strengthening America by honoring our immigrant history and by shaping how the public thinks and acts towards immigration now and in the future.

The American Immigration Council believes that the dignity of the individual knows no boundary. Our nation's moral and ethical values must be reflected in the way we welcome immigrants.



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