



**International Center
for Language Studies**

1133 15th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
Ph. (202) 639-8800
Fx. (202) 783-6587
www.ICLS.com

*A leader in Language Training &
International Exchange Programs since 1966*

Version 7.11.22



**Intern and Trainee Exchange Program Guidelines
for International Participants**

ORIENTATION HANDBOOK



**Connecting global leaders,
creating lasting impact.**

Contact: winintheusa@icls.edu



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Welcome

Welcome to the International Center for Language Studies' WIN in the USA Program!

You are among a select group of professionals from all over the world who have been chosen to participate in the Bridge USA Exchange Visitor Program in the Intern or Trainee category through ICLS. Congratulations! ICLS will serve as your program sponsor and provide support while you are in the United States.

We know the process of coming to the United States can be complex. We have designed this handbook to help guide you through this experience. We wish you a successful training and cultural experience in the United States!

Program Sponsor Contact Information

The International Center for Language Studies (ICLS) is your Program Sponsor.

ICLS' office hours are Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM.

The WIN in the USA Department is made up of the following positions and their corresponding titles – please save this contact information for easy communication!

Name	Position	Email	Phone Number
Jessica Hines	Program Director / Responsible Officer (J-1)	jhines@icls.edu	+1 202-991-6010
Ricki Schwab	Program Coordinator / Alternate Responsible Officer (J-1)	rschwab@icls.edu	+1 202-839-5524

- **For life-threatening or medical emergencies, call 911.**
- **For program-related emergencies that cannot wait until the next business day, call the ICLS emergency customer service line: 202-964-7242.**

Throughout the duration of your internship program, please stay in regular contact with ICLS. Should you have any concerns, questions, or emergencies, contact ICLS. We are here to help you and want you to have a successful program. If you find you are not following the approved DS-7002 Training Plan contact ICLS. Also, please be familiar with the U.S. Department of State list of Unskilled Occupations. Should you be asked to do any tasks on that list – for example, cleaning, solely administrative/clerical work, running errands, etc. contact ICLS immediately.



ICLS ADDRESS AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

International Center for Language Studies (ICLS), Inc.
 1133 15th St NW, Suite 600
 Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 639-8800
Main WIN Email: winintheusa@icls.edu

Situation	Contact #1	Contact #2
I am having a life-threatening emergency.	911 – Connect to police, fire, or hospital/ambulance	ICLS – Once you are safe with emergency responders, contact ICLS.
I have an emergency related to my visa and J-1 status.	ICLS	
I have non-emergency questions related to my visa.	ICLS	
I have recently arrived and need to submit my arrival documents & schedule an orientation	ICLS	
I have questions regarding my specific health insurance policy.	Health Insurance Provider	ICLS and/or placement partner if they arranged your insurance.
I have concerns about my internship and training program.	ICLS	Placement Partner
I am sick and/or will be late for my internship.	Host Supervisor / Host Company	Contact a medical doctor to seek help, if needed
I am interested in applying for an extension to my current ongoing program.	ICLS	Placement Partner
I want to travel internationally during my program.	ICLS	Host Supervisor / Host Company
I have to take an unplanned trip due to a family or other type of emergency.	ICLS	Host Supervisor / Host Company
I am finishing my program soon and want to be sure that I have turned in all necessary reports and that I will be issued a certificate.	ICLS	

BridgeUSA Program Overview

The purpose of the BridgeUSA Program (J-1 Exchange Visitor Program) is for “Educational and Cultural Exchange,” not employment. The 1961 Fulbright-Hayes Act created the J-category with the purpose of “increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges.” At the end of the program, Exchange Visitors are expected to return to their home country to utilize the experience and skills they have acquired while in the United States.

The [Exchange Visitor Program](#) is administered by the Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.



International Center for Language Studies

U.S. Department of State
Office of Designation
Private Sector Programs Division
ECA/EC/D/PS - SA-5, Floor 5
2200 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

TELEPHONE: (844) 300-1824

FAX: (202) 203-7779

EMAIL ADDRESS: jvisas@state.gov

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International Exchange Programs since 1966*

Common Words & Phrases: ICLS Program Dictionary

Intern / Intern Category

The Intern Program provides a structured and guided work-based learning program to reinforce the student's or recent graduate's academic study as described in the Training/Internship Placement Plan (Form DS-7002). The intern program recognizes the need for work-based learning experience, enhances the intern's knowledge of American culture and society and tests his/her career field knowledge through exposure to American techniques, methodologies, and expertise. Interns must possess sufficient English comprehension and speaking skills to become eligible for the internship program.

Interns can participate in the internship program for 3-12 months.

An **Intern** is a foreign national who:

- 1) Is currently enrolled in and pursuing an academic degree/certificate at a post-secondary academic institution outside the United States.
- 2) Has graduated from a degree/certificate-granting post-secondary academic institution outside the United States no more than 12 months prior to his/her exchange visitor program begin date, and
- 3) Enters the United States to participate in a structured and guided work-based internship program in his/her academic field.

Trainee / Trainee Category

The Trainee Program provides an Exchange Visitor-Trainee the opportunity to enhance his/her skills in his/her career or occupational field through participation in a structured and guided work-based learning program described in the DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan (T/IPP). The program enhances a trainee's understanding of American culture and society while augmenting his/her career/occupational field through exposure to American techniques, methodologies, and expertise. Trainees must possess sufficient English comprehension and speaking skills to become eligible for the training program.

The maximum length of stay for Trainees is 12-18 months. Training programs in the fields of "Hotel/Hospitality and Tourism" are limited to 12 months.

A **Trainee** is a foreign national who:

- 1) Has either a degree or professional certification from a foreign post-secondary academic institution and at least one year of prior related work experience in his/her occupational field gained outside the United States, or



- 2) Has five years of work experience outside the United States in his/her occupational field, and
- 3) Enters the United States to participate in a structured and guided work-based training program in his/her occupational field.

Program Sponsor

The U.S. Department of State designated ICLS to serve as a program sponsor for two exchange programs – Intern and Trainee. In order to participate in this program, you need to apply for a J-1 non-immigrant cultural exchange visa. ICLS is responsible for screening, selecting and enrolling qualified candidates for the Intern or Trainee Exchange Program. ICLS issues the following application forms to students to apply for a J-1 visa:

- Training Internship Placement Plan (DS 7002)
- Certificate of Eligibility for obtaining a J-1 Status (DS 2019)

As your program sponsor, ICLS will be your main point of contact to address the internship program and visa related matters and while you are in the U.S.

Partner

The partner, also called a third party, is a partner of ICLS who identifies and screens potential J-1 program participants and may help identify internships or traineeships with suitable host organizations. ICLS works closely with our partners to ensure a successful program. While you are on the program, you will often communicate with the host organization, the partner, and your sponsor. **Be advised that ICLS is the program sponsor designated by the U.S. Department of State and should be the first point of contact for any questions or concerns.**

Important Program Documents

DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility: The DS-2019 (signed by the ICLS Responsible or Alternate Responsible Officer, the U.S. Consular Officer, and yourself) is used to show your legal status in the U.S. It contains your program information including your official program dates, unique SEVIS ID number, internship field and approved host organization. It is also used to display information about your sponsor contact information.

DS-7002 Training Internship Placement Plan: The purpose of the Training/Internship Placement Plan is:

- to enhance the Exchange Visitor's skills in his or her occupation through participation in a structured training program;
- to improve the participant's knowledge of U.S. techniques, methodologies, or expertise within the Trainee/Intern's field of endeavor;
- to enable the Trainee/Intern to understand U.S. culture and society; and
- to enhance U.S. knowledge of foreign cultures and skills.

J-1 Visa: The J-1 Visa, found in your passport, was granted to you based on the approved DS-7002 Training Internship Placement Plan and DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility. Your visa will often display an annotation that describes your program sponsor (ICLS) and whether you are subject to 212(e). It is primarily used to enter and exit the U.S. You must have a valid J-1 visa to enter the U.S.



If you lose, misplace, or someone steals your DS-2019, DS-7002, Passport and/or J-1 Visa, please contact ICLS immediately.

I-94 Arrival/Departure Information

The I-94 Arrival/Departure Record is a record that is generated by Customs Border Protection (CBP) upon the legal entry of a nonimmigrant alien into the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issues the Form I-94 Arrival/Departure record to aliens who are:

- Admitted to the US
- Adjusting status while in the US
- Extending their stay

All persons need a Form I-94 except US citizens. Air travelers will be issued an I-94 number during the admission process at the Port of Entry. As of April 30, 2013, most arrival/departure records are created electronically upon arrival.

When you arrive in the United States and your passport is scanned in Customs and Immigration, your travel history and other traveler information will be saved on your I-94 Arrival/Departure Record. The CBP officer will also give you a stamp in your passport (information below). You can access your record directly through the [Department of Homeland Security](#) after you've arrived. Be sure to select "Get Most Recent I-94." Your I-94 is automatically generated when you go through Customs/Immigration.

Duration of Status (D/S)

When the CBP officer issues your passport admission stamp, they will write "**D/S**" (**Duration of Status**). This means that you may remain in the United States as long as you are properly maintaining status and your DS-2019 (J-1) has not expired. Interns are required to keep the passport entry stamp for the duration of their visit.



Above is an example of the stamp used by CBP officers.

Host Company / Host Supervisor

Your host company is a U.S. organization willing to host international interns/trainees and participate in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Your host company is not your employer, and you are not an employee, rather an intern/trainee gaining practical training and exposure to American business culture at their office or place of work. Your primary supervisor, designated on your DS-7002, will be your daily supervisor responsible for training you. You will also have a secondary supervisor who should assume the duties of your primary supervisor in his/her absence. **The of the Intern and Trainee Program for ordinary employment or work purposes is strictly prohibited.**



SEVIS

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is the web-based system that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) uses to maintain information on J-1 visa Exchange Visitor Program participants.

Exchange Visitor Programs use SEVIS to petition the Department of State for designation that allows the sponsor to offer educational and cultural exchange programs to exchange visitors. Responsible Officers of designated Exchange Visitor Programs use SEVIS to:

- Update Sponsor information and apply for re-designation every 2 years
- Issue Forms DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status) to specific individuals to obtain J-1 status
- Fulfill the sponsor’s legal reporting responsibility regarding exchange visitor addresses, sites of activity, program participation, training, and compliance with the terms of the J-1 status

Common Abbreviations

ICLS	International Center for Language Studies
EVP	Exchange Visitor Program
EV	Exchange Visitor
DOS	Department of State
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOL	Department of Labor
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
POE	Port of Entry
GE	Global Entry
SSN	Social Security Number
SSO	Social Security Office
TIPP	Training Internship Placement Plan, also known as DS-7002 Form
DS-2019	Certificate of Eligibility
SEVIS	Student and Exchange Visitor Information System
SEVP	Student and Exchange Visitor Program

Preparing for Arrival

We encourage you to become familiar with specific rules before your trip to the US. You are responsible for becoming familiar with your program and maintaining your J-1 status while you are in the US.

Estimated Costs and Budgeting

Living in the US is expensive. Be sure to consider all expenses and remember, your stipend from your host company might not cover all your expenses while you’re in the US. Be sure to bring additional personal funds to support yourself. If you are receiving a stipend, it may be several weeks before you receive your first paycheck. It is also important to have emergency funds available. Consider writing out your expenses in a budget such as the one provided below.

Expenses	Cost	Note
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Program Cost		<i>One-time expense</i>
Health Insurance		<i>Monthly/One-time expense</i>
Flight		<i>One-time expense</i>
Housing		<i>Monthly/Weekly expense</i>
Transportation		<i>Monthly/Weekly expense</i>
Utilities (electric, gas, internet, phone, trash removal, water, etc.)		<i>Monthly/Weekly expense</i>
Groceries		<i>Monthly/Weekly expense</i>
Taxes		<i>Per paycheck</i>
Leisure		<i>Monthly/Weekly expense</i>
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$_____ per month/week

Visa Appointment

Follow the steps below to make a visa appointment once you have all the required documentation.

1. Complete the [Form DS-160](#), print and save the DS-160 Confirmation Page
2. Complete the [Form I-901](#), pay the SEVIS Fee of \$220 online, print and save the SEVIS Receipt
3. Pay the Visa Processing Fee (varies by country), print and save the receipt

Take the following documents to your visa appointment:

- DS-160 Confirmation
- SEVIS Fee Confirmation
- Visa Payment Receipt
- DS-2019 with original signature in blue ink (and any applicable J-2 DS-2019)
- DS-7002
- Passport (and any applicable J-2 passport)
- Financial Statement / Proof
- Photographs for visa (and any applicable J-2 photographs), [follow the US Embassy guidelines for submitting photos](#)

Pre-Arrival and US Port of Entry

As part of your pre-arrival preparation, please read this Orientation Handbook in detail. In addition, watch the ICLS Orientation Videos to gain a better understanding of program and arrival procedures.

Pack the following documentation in your carry-on luggage:

- Passport
- DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility
- DS-7002 Training Internship Placement Plan (TIPP)
- Financial Proof Documentation

You will need to present these documents at **U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement at the U.S. Port of Entry** before retrieving your luggage.



Arrival and SEVIS Validation

Be sure the following are submitted **within 3-days** from your entry into the United States:

- Your J-1 visa (in your passport) with Port of Entry Arrival/Departure Stamp
- Signed and stamped DS-2019 Form
- Your medical & accident insurance card with your name and dates of coverage
- U.S. Address with Room/Apartment Number, if applicable
- U.S. Phone Number
- U.S. Port of Entry (ex. John F. Kennedy International Airport, New York)
- Date of Entry into the U.S.

ARRIVAL DOCUMENTS SUBMISSION/REGISTRATION	Log into Hanover with your unique User ID and Password to submit your arrival documents: https://icls-win.hanovercrm.com/
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Active SEVIS Status

Prior to entering the U.S., your J-1 status in SEVIS is listed as INITIAL. Once you arrive, we will change your initial status to **ACTIVE STATUS** as soon as we complete your arrival/verification process once:

- You submit all arrival documents to ICLS.
- You have attended an ICLS Orientation session and/or watched all ICLS Orientation Videos.

ACTIVE status is required to begin your internship and training program. Your status will remain active until the end of your program ensuring you that you are adhering to the J-1 Program Regulations and ICLS sponsorship program guidelines. Please contact ICLS at winintheusa@icls.edu, or your Program Director/Program Coordinator directly, with any questions regarding your status.

Rules, Terms, and Conditions

Below is a summary of the terms and conditions of the program, including the terms and conditions of employment activities, and other conditions and restrictions of the program.

Throughout your stay, you are responsible for:

- Safeguarding and maintaining a valid passport,
- Safeguarding and maintaining an active DS-2019 Form,
- Maintaining an active health and accident insurance plan,
- Following the approved Training/Internship Placement Plan (T/IPP) on the DS-7002 Form,
- Not changing your host organization without ICLS' authorization,
- Not engaging in unauthorized employment.
- **Keeping ICLS informed of any changes to:**
 - Your home address in the US,



- Your host's contact information (address, phone, email)
- Your host supervisor (primary and secondary),
- Your financial status, or
- Your internship training program
- Submitting evaluations to ICLS according to the requested schedule,
- Informing ICLS about the theft or loss of the DS-2019 Form immediately,
- **Maintaining your financial status, such as:**
 - Covering your living expenses (rent, meals, transportation), and
 - Finding appropriate housing in a safe neighborhood
- Per J-1 Intern/Trainee regulations your internship hours **must be** between 32-40 hours per week.

IMPORTANT: You must report to ICLS within 10 days of any change to the following:

- Your US address, including any Room/Apartment Number changes
- Your US phone number
- Your email address
- Your host organization site of activity if you have already been given this permission

Health Insurance

J-1 exchange participants and their J-2 dependents are required to have medical and accident insurance coverage with the following minimum benefits (**Section 62.14(b)**):

- Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains for \$25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country for \$50,000
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

Willful failure on the part of the J-1 participant and/or any J-2 dependent on maintaining current insurance coverage is grounds for termination from the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program [22 CFR 62.14] followed by an immediate departure.

ICLS Envisage Global Insurance

ICLS offers health and accident insurance to interns and trainees through Envisage Global Insurance. Insurance policies provided by ICLS will become active as soon as you arrive in the United States, and typically last for 365 days. Be sure to read through your plan carefully and become familiar with your benefits. In addition, watch the [orientation video](#) to US health system and insurance benefits.

NOTE: Purchasing health insurance does not exclude you from paying medical fees after seeking medical treatment. In the US, we pay a monthly fee for coverage that reduces our medical treatment fees. Be sure to review your insurance card and brochure for coverage and fee details.

Student Zone – Online Registration:



Registration can be completed online using this link: [International Center for Language Studies | Student Zone | Envisage Global Insurance.](#)

Once we confirm your enrollment in the plan, you will gain access to the **Student Zone** in which you will learn about your documents, doctors, US health system and tips. In particular, the Student Zone provides J-1 interns and Trainees with the following services:

- Video Resources
- Healthcare Tips
- Telemedicine
- Seeking Treatment Appropriately
- Claims Information Center
- Online Claims Access — 24-hour live claim tracking
- My Documents — ID card and brochure download
- PPO Doctor/Hospital Search
- Online Form to submit questions or request

Insurance is also available for J-2 Dependents as well.

To enroll in an insurance plan through Envisage Global Insurance and ICLS, please contact your Program Coordinator and/or Program Director.

Please see Envisage Global Insurance's contact information below:

For Medical & Travel Assistance:

USA Toll Free (855) 731-9445

USA Direct +1 (317) 927-6806

CustomerCare@IMGlobal.com

Healthcare Before Arrival

ICLS strongly suggests that interns and trainees schedule routine Physical and Dental appointments with their doctors/dentists before departure – take this time to arrange the following:

- Ensure your good health
- Arrange for long term prescriptions
 - You may wish to discuss with your doctor the international availability of any prescriptions you are taking
- Stock up on over-the-counter medications/vitamins that you are unsure of finding in the US
 - The United States has a great variety of over-the-counter medications available for regular purchase, but make sure you know how to get what you're looking for!

212(e) Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement & 1 Year Ban

212(e)

Some exchange visitors with J-1 visas are subject to a two-year home-country physical presence requirement. It requires you to return home for at least two years after your exchange visitor program.



Some countries have agreements with the United States that exchange visitors learning certain skills or who are in certain industries, must return home after their programs to contribute their newfound knowledge/skills to their home economies/industries.

PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICER REGARDING SECTION 212(e) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND PL 94-484, AS AMENDED (see item 1(a) of page 2).

The Exchange Visitor in the above program:

- 1. Not subject to the two-year residence requirement.
- 2. Subject to two-year residence requirement based on:
 - A. Government financing and/or
 - B. The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or
 - C. PL 94-484 as amended

(ALL USAID PARTICIPANTS G-2-00263 AND ALL ALIEN PHYSICIANS SPONSORED BY P-3-04510 ARE SUBJECT TO THE TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT)

Name	Title
Signature of Consular or Immigration Officer	Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING 212 (e).

The above image is the portion of a DS-2019 where the consular officer gives their signature and provides their 212(e) finding. If you are subject to this rule, Box 2(A-C) will be checked. If you are not subject to this rule, Box 1 will be checked.

12-Month Bar for J-1 Students

Students who have been in the United States for more than 6 months of the previous year (12 months) in J visa status are not eligible to begin a new program in the U.S. as a J-1 research scholar or Professor for a 12-month period. Please note that if a J-1 student is subject to this 12-month bar, any J-2 dependents are also subject to the 12-month bar. The 12-month bar does not prevent individuals from returning to the US in any other visa status.

Social Security Number (SSN)

If you are receiving payment (stipend) for your internship/traineeship, then you are eligible to obtain a **Social Security Number (SSN)**. You may apply for an SSN after your status has been activated. If you go to the SSN Administration before activation, they will not be able to issue you an SSN. Once you have been activated, you may go to the SSN Administration office with your DS-2019, Passport, ICLS Social Security Letter, and your I-94 number. You will fill out a SSN application, the application will be processed, and your SSN will be issued in approximately 2-4 weeks. Your host company needs your social security information only to add you to their payroll.

Note: SSNs are **confidential** and should only be shared with your host company, banks, official government offices and/or emergency responders. ICLS does not need to know your social security number. The Social Security Administration will never call you – do not give your SSN over the phone. If someone is asking you for your SSN and you are unsure what to do, speak to your host supervisor or ICLS for guidance.



For more information on Social Security Fraud/Identity Theft, please see more information from the [Office of the Inspector General](#).

Payroll & Paychecks

If you are receiving a stipend from your internship/traineeship, your host company will provide you with this stipend in one of two ways:

1. As a **paid intern** on their payroll
 - a. This means that you will receive a paycheck with all applicable taxes taken out.
2. As a **paid contractor** (1099) on their payroll
 - a. This means that you will receive a paycheck that does not have taxes taken out.

When you complete your orientation with your host company, they will inform you whether they choose to put you on their payroll or will give you 1099 information. They will also provide you with tax forms to fill out. Be sure to ask any questions you may have so that you have a clear understanding of their payment system!

Tax Information

If receiving a stipend, J-1 Program participants are required to pay the following taxes:

- Federal Income Tax
- State Income Tax (if applicable)
- Local/City Income Tax (if applicable)

J-1 Program participants are NOT required to pay the following:

- Social Security & Medicare (FICA)
- Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)

Note: Neither ICLS nor the WIN in the USA Department are tax accountants/CPAs/tax lawyers, and as such cannot give tax information/advice beyond what is provided in orientation and with social security information.

If you have questions regarding how to file your taxes, please take the tax letter provided to you to your host company's HR department, or call the IRS toll free at 1-800-829-1040.

ICLS is proud to partner with [Sprintax](#) to provide our exchange visitors with easy and reliable tax filing and advice. Please contact your Program Coordinator for the latest discount codes available.

Frequently Asked Questions About Host Companies

What will be the typical duties while training with my Host Company?

Your duties will vary depending on your specific DS-7002 Training Plan. Refer to your Training Plan for the duties outlined in your program. Trainees and Interns should not be in unskilled or casual labor



positions, should not be in positions that require or involve childcare, elder care, or patient care, and should not perform more than 20% clerical work. A list of prohibited occupations can be found on the final page of this handbook.

How many hours per week should I be training?

You should train full-time, a minimum of 32 hours per week and a maximum of 40 hours per week.

What will my paycheck look like?

Your paycheck will depend on your unique agreement with your host company. Some host companies will pay a stipend per month or per week, some host companies will pay an hourly wage, and some host companies do not pay Interns or Trainees. If you are paid, you are responsible for paying taxes at the federal, state, and local level, where applicable. Some hosts may provide housing or transportation. If that is the case, you may see deductions on your paycheck for these expenses. Talk to your host supervisor if you have questions about how taxes or any other deductions in your paycheck are withheld. Contact ICLS if you need further assistance.

What is Workers' Compensation?

Workers' Compensation is an insurance policy purchased by companies in the United States that covers work-related injuries. Your DS-7002 Training Plan will indicate whether your host company has Workers' Compensation insurance and if it applies to J-1 exchange participants. If you are injured at your host company or performing duties for your host company, let your host supervisor and ICLS know immediately.

Internship – Orientation Phase (Phase 1)

In order to make the internship experience more beneficial for you and to ensure you have a successful start, we suggest you **discuss the following topics with your host supervisor during their first day** (or two) in the office. The following topics should be discussed with your host supervisor during orientation to the company:

1. Office policies/culture. This might include information about:

- Office management and structure, including whom the intern directly reports to
- Answering the telephone (e.g. "Thank you for calling ABC company" or "Good Morning")
- Use of office equipment
- Dress code
- Access to computers, use of the Internet, etc.

2. Schedule

- What are regular business hours for the office? What is a daily schedule for the intern/trainee?
- Are there regular staff or division meetings that the intern will be expected to attend? Are there regular meetings that the intern will not participate in?
- Whom should the intern contact if they are ill?
- What special events—if any—are on the calendar that the intern should be aware of? Is the intern expected to assist? Attend?



- Which federal holidays does your office observe? For example, will the office be closed for Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Election Day, Labor Day?
- If the intern plans a weekend trip that requires leaving early on a Friday (or similar) with whom should they discuss it?

3. Breaks / Lunch

- *All employees and interns in an office are guaranteed time for lunch during the day.* Most companies offer either 30 minutes or 1 hour. What is the lunch policy of your host company?
- Does your host company offer breaks throughout the day? When?

4. Job descriptions & tasks –Training/Internship Placement Plan (DS-7002)

- Discuss the basic tasks for which the intern will initially be responsible.
- What projects does the supervisor expect the intern to complete within the first 4-6 weeks? 8-14 weeks, etc.? By the end of the internship?
- What recurring jobs will the intern be asked to do? How do these fit the mission/structure of the organization?
- Discuss with the supervisor possible new projects or areas of research with which you might be involved in.
- Discuss with the supervisor what you should do if you complete a task, and no one is available for reviewing it immediately or for assigning you another project. Is there ongoing industry or company related issues or topics that the intern should research or read-up on in the meantime?

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Discuss with your supervisor how you will be monitored and evaluated throughout the program, including discussing how the supervisor evaluates your work as well as procedures for introducing new tasks and follow-up meetings for review and approval.

Maintaining an ACTIVE SEVIS Status

While in the US, it is your responsibility to maintain your ACTIVE SEVIS status once you've received it. The following are ways in which you can maintain your ACTIVE SEVIS status.

- Submitting evaluation reports on time
- Keeping in contact with ICLS
- Updating information with ICLS
- Reporting any incidents that may arise
- Following policies on domestic and international travel
- Maintaining medical and accident insurance

Monitoring & Evaluation: Evaluation Reports

Per the regulations of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, both the Host Organization as well as a J-1 participant must complete and return evaluation reports according to the timeline specified in the **Training/Internship Placement Plan (Form DS-7002)**.



Throughout your program, ICLS WIN in the USA Program will review (1) your progress reports and (2) your supervisor’s evaluation reports. These reports allow ICLS WIN in the USA Program to track and assess your participation and development in the program; identify issues and provide timely advice and solutions; make necessary adjustments; ensure you and your host supervisor are following the approved Training/Internship Placement Plan (Form DS-7002).

You are required to complete regular evaluations and return them to the WIN in the USA Program. You must fill out evaluations at the end of each training phase of the T/IPP (Form DS-7002). **Please note your reports are essential for keeping your Program active. Failure to submit them will jeopardize your J-1 status and result in your dismissal from the Program.**

ICLS does not immediately terminate interns or trainees that experience issues, but rather works with them to find solutions. Therefore, it’s important to contact ICLS immediately if you are unable to maintain your ACTIVE SEVIS status.

The Program Coordinator will provide you with all necessary information regarding report due dates and submission instructions a few weeks following the beginning of your program.

Evaluation Reports

- **Orientation evaluation form** for the initial phase
- **Mid-term evaluation form** for each mid-term phase
- **Final evaluation form** at the end of your program

EVALUATION FORM FOR INTERN & TRAINEE	https://form.jotform.com/70363391284154
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HOST SUPERVISOR EVALUATIONS:

The Trainee/Intern’s supervisor is responsible for providing evaluation reports for each phase of the intern’s program by their due date. The supervisor should state whether the participant was able to develop new skills, gain valuable experience and achieve the professional training and internship goals defined in the Training/Internship Placement Plan (DS-7002). Participants must maintain favorable evaluations. Proper attendance, participation, completion of assignments, professionalism and overall attitude are among the factors considered in evaluations.

EVALUATION FORM FOR HOST SUPERVISOR	https://form.jotform.com/63403927456965
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Incidents

While the great majority of our Interns and Trainees have positive and enriching experiences while in the United States, we recognize that occasionally incidents may arise. ICLS is here to support you and your best interests while in the United States.

Examples of Problems and Incidents:

- Being asked to perform tasks outside of your training plan
- Being required to train for more than 40 hours per week
- Being required to train on weekends and holidays without break
- Being harassed/intimidated/abused in the office



- Being denied your stipend or pay

Please remember – your host company does not control your visa. Your host company should never hold/withhold your passport from you. Your host company cannot cancel your visa or threaten deportation.

If you are in a situation in which you are uncomfortable, or are experiencing any of the incidents listed above, please send a confidential report to ICLS. Our staff will work with you, and if necessary, your host supervisor, to resolve the issue. In situations regarding your safety, ICLS may make recommendations surrounding new host placement, moving housing locations, etc.

Ultimately, ICLS supports its interns and trainees, and strives to find solutions that ensure their safety and wellbeing above all.

To submit a confidential report to ICLS, please use the form below. After submitting, please send a follow up email to your Program Coordinator and CC your Program Director.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM	https://form.jotform.com/73315965244157
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For further information on how to keep yourself safe while in the United States, please see the resource list located at the end of this handbook.

Illness & Missing Training

Interns in the United States can take sick leave if necessary to rest or recuperate from illness – this is a federally protected right. ICLS encourages its interns to take a sick day if necessary. Should you become sick and miss training, please refer to the chart on the following page:

# of Training Days Missed	Email	CC on Email	Documentation Needed
1	Host Supervisor	Program Coordinator	None
> 1	Host Supervisor	Program Coordinator	Doctor's Note

Please note should you miss more than 1 day of training due to illness; you will be required to submit a **signed doctor's note** covering the time of absence.

Please note that you will need to submit documentation to your Ice provider for any doctor's appointment(s) or hospitalization(s). Please contact your health insurance provider to get assistance in locating providers, treatments, etc.

Travel: Domestic & International

Before considering domestic or international travel, be sure to speak with your host company about their leave policies and paid time off (PTO) if it is applicable in your case.

Participants who wish to travel within the US during their program must:



1. Notify both their host supervisor and their Program Coordinator/Director
2. Email their travel information (flights, hotels, transportation, etc.) to the Program Coordinator.

Participants who wish to travel outside the U.S during the program must:

1. Notify both their host supervisor and their Program Coordinator/Director
2. Use FedEx (certified mail) to mail the DS-2019 Form with travel information (confirmed travel dates or flight itinerary) to ICLS
3. Allow two weeks for processing the request and shipping the document
4. Confirm the receipt of the validated DS-2019 Form. Only ICLS Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer must sign the document

*Please contact the Program Coordinator who will give you full instructions for obtaining a travel validation

ICLS strongly encourages its interns to complete their first 3-6 months of training before requesting travel validation. Except for extenuating circumstances, validation may not be granted. American companies expect that vacations are not taken in the first 3-6 months of training.

NOTE: Participants may not remain outside of the United States for more than two weeks. Long absences from the program may interrupt the structured training program phases and scheduled deadlines for completing tasks for each phase of the training plan. Refer to your training plan (DS-7002). Contact ICLS to discuss this matter.

Emergency Travel: Mail your (original) DS 2019 Form with a brief explanation to ICLS before departure. Provide a mailing address for shipping the document to your home country. Do not forget to include the country zip code and telephone number. If you must travel due to an emergency, please contact ICLS immediately.

Program Extensions

Host organizations and participants must carefully plan and allow adequate time to complete training objectives. Extensions **are only granted** based on **successful** participation in the program as well as the **need** for additional training.

Eligibility can only be determined approximately two months before the end of a participant's original program – please do not submit extension requests prior to 60 days from your original program end date.

ICLS WIN in the USA Program will carefully evaluate training outcomes and a proposed (new) plan to determine the participant's eligibility for additional training.

Participants must submit the following:

1. Complete Extension Application
2. An Extension Request Letter describing your reasons for additional training
3. Updated Financial Proof
4. New Training Plan
5. Letter from Host Supervisor Supporting Extension



- 6. All Evaluations (Intern & Host) for All Training Time
 - a. Must include evaluations from start date through date of extension application

A non-refundable extension fee will be charged upon approved extensions.

The extension is granted within the maximum duration of each category:

- **Intern** Category = 12 months
- **Trainee** Category = 18 months

*Please contact your Program Coordinator for detailed instructions for sending an Extension Request.

NOTE: ICLS does not accept applications for a change of the company if the host organization and the participant are meeting the program requirements.

ICLS will consider the intern or trainee’s home residency requirement status (212(e) or 2 Year Bar) before issuing a program extension.

Medical & Accident Insurance

Please note that while you are participating in your exchange program and are in the United States, you must maintain your medical and accident insurance. You may not be without medical or accident insurance for any duration of time during your stay in the United States. Failure to maintain your medical and accident insurance is grounds for termination from the program.

Program Completion

Ending your exchange program isn’t just getting on a plane and leaving – make sure all loose ends are tied up before you leave to ensure that your records are closed successfully.

Ending Your Program Successfully

In order to complete your program and begin preparing for your departure from the US, please make sure that the following criteria have been met:

1. Ensure that all program evaluation reports, both from you and your Host Supervisor, have been submitted.
2. Complete the ICLS End of Program Report
3. Request your electronic copy of your ICLS Certificate of Completion
4. Email your Program Coordinator to ensure all final documents have been received

END PROGRAM REPORT FORM	https://form.jotform.com/73205628444153
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If you complete your program successfully and turn all required evaluation reports, ICLS will issue you a *Certificate of Completion*. This certificate will be mailed via post to the address specified on your “Certificate Request Form.” Certificates are issued around the 1st of every month and generally take 2-3 weeks to be delivered. The coordinator also keeps electronic versions of the certificates. Please inquire if you’d like your certificate sent electronically.



30 Day Grace Period

Upon successful completion of the program, Trainee/Interns will have an additional 30 days (“grace period”) to prepare for their departure from the U.S. Please note that during the *grace period*, a Trainee/Intern is not permitted to work or study.

NOTE: The Trainee/Intern must leave the country within those 30 days. Failure to exit the U.S. within the 30-day grace period will jeopardize the ability to return to the United States on any US visa.

ICLS does not recommend that Interns/Trainees leave the United States and then attempt to re-enter during their 30-Day Grace Period. Customs/Border Control reserve the right to deny re-entry.

Early Completion of the Program

Voluntary Early Withdrawal from the Program: If personal issues require the Trainee/Intern to discontinue training voluntarily, he/she must:

- return his or her *DS-2019 Form* to ICLS WIN in the USA Program
- provide a letter explaining the reason for early completion or withdrawing from the program
- provide a copy of his/her flight itinerary.
- contact ICLS Coordinator with all necessary information regarding your early completion to the program

Termination of Program due to a violation of rules and regulations: If a J-1 Trainee/Intern violates of any of the rules and regulations set in place by ICLS (the Sponsor) or, by the U.S. Department of State’s Exchange Visitor Program, ICLS will immediately terminate his or her program. In the event of such termination, ICLS will notify the U.S. State Department via SEVIS that the participant is no longer in good program standing and the Trainee/Intern must:

- leave the country within **five days**
- return his or her DS-2019 Form
- submit a letter explaining the reason of the violation, and
- provide a copy of his or her flight itinerary to ICLS WIN in the USA Program
- email a scanned copy of the boarding pass from his or her home country

NOTE: Trainee/Interns who voluntarily end their program early or have their program terminated will not be eligible for a 30-day grace period.

Change in Visa Status

ICLS is not responsible for expired DS-2019 Form if a Trainee/Intern seeks to change his/her status (visa category) while in the United States. ICLS strongly recommends J-1 participants **return** to their home country to share skills and knowledge to fulfill the purpose of the U.S. Exchange Visitor Program.

Life in the United States

The following sections will provide you with the resources needed to help you and your family enjoy your stay in the U.S. It gives tips and resources related to U.S. culture, common practices, and important information.



Emergencies

IN CASE OF ANY LIFE-THREATENING EMERGENCY: DIAL 911

This call is free from any phone in the U.S. Calling 911 will connect you with the Fire Department, Police Department, and Hospital Emergency Services. **The following are examples of life-threatening emergencies:**

- Injuries to the head, back or neck; severe eye injury
- Person not breathing
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- Wheezing, facial swelling due to an allergic reaction
- Near drowning
- Person unconscious, semi-conscious or unusually confused
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Chest pain or pressure that lasts more than 3-5 minutes
- Poisoning, drug overdose
- First-time seizure, multiple seizures, or seizure lasting more than 5 minutes
- Fracture with bone deformity and/or bone exposure
- Person with sudden or persistent severe pain
- Personal safety in danger (ex. Someone following or stalking you)
- Fire

Sources: American Red Cross and American College of Emergency Physicians

The Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs administers the Exchange Visitor Program. You can learn more about this program at <http://j1visa.state.gov/basics/> and <http://j1visa.state.gov/participants/>.

**U.S. Department of State
Office of Designation
Private Sector Programs Division
ECA/EC/D/PS - SA-5, Floor 5
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
TELEPHONE: (844) 300-1824 FAX: (202) 203-7779
EMAIL: jvisas@state.gov**

The Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program Brochure can be found at the end of the orientation handbook. A [downloadable version](#) is also available.

Culture Shock

Culture Shock

Culture shock is common when adjusting to a new culture. While every person is different and may experience different degrees of culture shock, remember that it is temporary.



Culture shock may include homesickness, feeling alone, missing friends or family, reluctance to speak English or dissatisfaction with the new culture. In extreme cases, culture shock may manifest itself as a lack of energy and motivation or even depression.

Dealing with Culture Shock

While culture shock is normal, it is not pleasant. Overcoming culture shock is easier when you become involved in your new surroundings and begin to feel connected to the new culture.

- As a Trainee/Intern, you will have built-in connections to U.S. culture. Take part in company activities and try to socialize with your coworkers. Look for other social events in your community. Getting involved in your local community can help you feel more connected to the people around you.
- Find comfort in the familiar by maintaining ties with your culture. Look for cuisine, clubs, or activities related to your native culture or language.

NOTE: Culture shock may seem trivial, but it can lead to increased feelings of depression and isolation. If you are struggling with culture shock, please reach out to your Program Coordinator, who will work with you to find resources in your city that may help.

US Culture & Customs

Culture in the United States

It is never easy to define the culture of the country. Long recognized as a “melting pot,” the United States is a large country with more than 300 million citizens. However, as in every culture, there are patterns of cultural values and expected behavior.

- **Greeting:** When meeting an American for the first time, it is best to offer a firm handshake in greeting. Make sure to smile and make eye contact. Handshakes may remain the standard greeting for colleagues, acquaintances and some friends, but mainly among men. Most Americans do not kiss each other when greeting or taking leave of each other. Hugs may be more common among friends, particularly women.
- **Language:** There is great diversity in U.S. accents, primarily between “the South” and “the North.” These differences may even extend to some basic vocabulary and phrases. You will be able to adjust to these differences as you become accustomed to your new environment.
- **Climate:** Remember that the United States is a vast country with significant differences in geography and climate. Before you arrive, make sure to familiarize yourself with the climate of the city and region where you will be living. There can be extreme changes in weather depending on the season, so make sure that you bring everything that you will need for the length of your stay.

American Core Values

Although there are some differences in values and not every American you meet will hold all these beliefs, there are some “core” values that most Americans share and that almost all will recognize.



Individualism: Americans place primary value on the individual over the group. Each person is expected to have his/her own opinions and feelings and to be able to express them. This also means the individual is responsible for his/her own successes and failures. As a result, there are perhaps greater “boundaries” in terms of what assistance a friend or acquaintance will expect or offer.

Equality: The notion that “all people are created equal” is a strongly held belief. Americans believe it is important to provide equal opportunities for all regardless of gender, race, religion, age, or disability.

Competition: Americans regard competition as “healthy” and as something that brings out the best in people and rewards merit. While there has been some shift toward inclusiveness and appreciation for the effort rather than ability, many Americans believe that both winning and losing teach valuable life skills.

Value of Time: Americans greatly value time. As a result, Americans (particularly in the workplace) will always expect you to be on time and do not tolerate excuses. If you are going to be late or cannot keep an appointment, let the other person know as soon as possible. Explain why you cannot be there as scheduled and be apologetic.

Being Direct and Honest: Americans prefer honesty over “saving face.” This is true even in the case of bad news. Lying or providing information in an indirect manner usually result in a worse reaction than simply giving bad news. Remember this and be direct. At the same time, Americans do not like being corrected in front of others. Only correct someone publicly if it involves essential or urgent information.

Privacy: Privacy is another important concept for Americans, particularly in modern times. Americans are uncomfortable sharing “personal” information about money, religion, politics, and so forth. Additionally, many Americans do not like to “be told what to do,” and do not welcome unsolicited advice.

Personal Space and Touch: This depends on the individual, but Americans typically like to maintain an arm’s length physical distance and prefer to stand facing each other at a 45-degree angle. Keep physical contact to a minimum unless you know the other person well enough to be aware of his/her personal space.

Cleanliness: The typical American considers good personal hygiene to be essential. Body odor is unacceptable, especially in the workplace. A daily shower is common, and workers should always have clean hair and wear deodorant. It is also uncommon for clothes (except for men’s suits) to be worn on consecutive days. When in doubt, observe the people around you, and do not be afraid to ask a friendly coworker for advice.

Eye Contact: Americans will expect you to make eye contact with them and will often negatively interpret a lack of eye contact as dishonesty, submissiveness or distraction. This will create a bad impression or will make people uncomfortable. However, do not stare. While eye contact is important, you should occasionally look away. Ask an American for advice if you are unsure about what is socially acceptable.

Federal Holidays

There are several federal holidays. Most calendars will have these (and a few other celebrations) noted. Remember that government offices and many private businesses will be closed during many of these federal holidays.

- New Year’s Day – January 1



- Martin Luther King Day – The third Monday in January
- Presidents' Day – The third Monday in February
- Memorial Day – The last Monday in May
- Juneteeth – June 19
- Independence Day – July 4
- Labor Day – The first Monday in September
- Columbus Day – The second Monday in October
- Veterans Day – The second Monday in November
- Thanksgiving Day – the fourth Thursday in November
- Christmas Day – December 25

Other Holidays and Celebrations

While there are only ten federal holidays, there are other holidays commonly celebrated. Rarely, will offices be closed on these days, but Americans will engage in various forms of celebrations — for example, Valentine's Day (February 14), Mother's Day (in May) and Father's Day (in June), Easter, and Halloween. Most Americans will also celebrate "Black Friday" (day after Thanksgiving), Christmas Eve (December 24th) and New Year's Eve (December 31st). It is likely that an office will be closed in observance of these holidays.

US Laws & Safety

Never forget that you are subject to U.S. law as long as you are in the United States. This means that you must know and obey the law. Remember: "Ignorance is no excuse!"

You are entitled to the same rights as a US citizen. If arrested, you have the right to remain silent and the right to legal representation. If you cannot afford to hire a lawyer, the court will appoint one for you and your lawyer will advise you and defend your legal interests in court. ICLS can confirm your J-1 status but cannot provide you with legal advice, a lawyer, or any financial support toward your defense. Being arrested is grounds for immediate termination from the ICLS Exchange Visitor Program.

If you are arrested, you must contact ICLS immediately and maintain communication.

Certain laws are called **federal laws** – the laws that are enforced throughout the whole country. Other laws are **state laws** – the laws that vary slightly by state. It is important to understand both the federal and state laws in which the participant is training. Below are some important examples.

- **Alcohol:** The legal drinking age in the United States is 21 years old. A person under 21 cannot order, buy, or drink any alcoholic beverage. Anyone 21 or older must show identification to purchase or consume alcohol. It is illegal for a person to buy or distribute alcohol to anyone younger than 21 years old. Alcohol should not be consumed in public places, and in many states, it is illegal to have an open container of alcohol in public. Public intoxication is illegal. Driving while drinking alcohol or while under the influence of alcohol is illegal and has severe consequences in the United States.
- **Illegal Drugs:** The use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs is a criminal offense. Some drugs, like marijuana, may be considered legal in one state, illegal in the next state, and illegal to the federal government.



- **Personal Behavior:** Any of the actions below may lead to an arrest and/or prosecution. Avoid the following behaviors and use common sense:
 - Disturbing the peace (particularly by being too loud or belligerent)
 - Disorderly conduct
 - Threatening or touching/harming another person in an unwanted way
 - Damaging property
 - Stealing or taking anything without permission, including shoplifting
 - Any sexual contact with a minor (someone younger than 18 years old)
 - Any unwanted sexual contact with a person who does not explicitly give consent (for more information on sexual consent, watch this video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLS4-kU>)

Safety

The United States is a safe country despite 9/11 and its image as a gun-loving culture. Regardless of its overall safety, it would be best if you always used common sense. Be aware of your surroundings and the people around you. Do not appear lost or unsure of yourself. Project an appearance of confidence, certainty and purpose. If you are uncomfortable with a person or feel that something “isn’t right,” it is better to listen to your instincts and remove yourself from the situation. Do not worry about seeming rude. Later you can ask a friend or acquaintance for his/her interpretation of the situation.

On foot

In America, people generally go home early and stay there. As a result, streets are often empty, and many Americans do not feel comfortable walking late at night, particularly on city streets.

- It is better not to walk alone. Walk with at least one other person when possible.
- Try not to walk on empty or deserted streets. Do not walk through isolated places such as alleys, wooded areas, or parking lots. This is true even when you are not by yourself.
- If you think you are being followed and are worried about your personal safety, cross the street or change direction. Go toward a lighted area and do not hesitate to enter an open store or restaurant. Yell for help if you are afraid. Do not worry about embarrassing yourself. Your safety is more important.

Be Safe on Public Transportation

- Use well-lit stops or stations that many passengers use.
- Do not close your eyes or fall asleep while riding or waiting for public transportation. Maintain control of your belongings so that nobody can grab them. Always be aware of your surroundings!
- If a person is making you uncomfortable or bothering you, move to another area near other passengers or the driver. Do not worry about hurting somebody’s feelings or being embarrassed. If you feel threatened, yell for help or use the emergency device.
- If someone does try to rob you: remain calm, listen to what the person is demanding, do not argue or fight back, and give up your property (it is not worth your life). After you are sure that the robber has left, contact the police. You can dial 911 (the emergency telephone number), or you can go to the nearest police station. Try to describe a person and explain what happened as carefully and thoroughly as possible. Please notify ICLS and the host organization.



Hospitals & Healthcare in the US

Healthcare is expensive in the U.S., which is why it is so important to maintain an active health and accident insurance coverage for the entire duration of the program and international travel days.

If You Need Urgent Medical Care

You should only go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital if it is an emergency that cannot wait. To find the nearest hospital or emergency room, visit <http://www.ushospitalfinder.com/> and type in your zip code. **If it is a life-threatening emergency, dial 911.**

Clinics & Low-Cost Health Care

Clinics are medical offices that provide free or low-cost service. Most communities have at least one clinic. On the following page are the types of clinics that may be available to you in your area:

1. Minute Clinic
 - a. These are health clinics located inside select CVS Pharmacies. Locate the closest Minute Clinic to you here: <https://www.cvs.com/minuteclinic/clinic-locator/>
2. Urgent Care
 - a. Locate the nearest Urgent Care Clinic to you here: <https://www.ucaoa.org/UCC-Finder>
3. MedExpress
 - a. Locate the nearest MedExpress Care Center to you here: <https://www.medexpress.com/>

Pharmacies

Often, in the U.S, you will have to pick up any prescribed medication at a pharmacy. There are local pharmacies, but also national chains (such as CVS, Rite-Aid, and Walgreens, among others). In addition to prescription medicine, you can also get “over-the-counter” anti-inflammatory, anti-allergy, fever and pain reducing medicine such as Tylenol, Advil, Benadryl, etc. The larger chain pharmacies will sell much more than medicine including snacks, greeting cards, make-up, and hygiene products.

Housing

It is strongly recommended to find housing **before you arrive** in the U.S. Otherwise, you will have to stay in a hotel, which can be expensive. You are responsible for securing your own housing, but ICLS can lend support if requested. ICLS recommends the following ways to procure housing:

- Sites dedicated to short/long term student housing, such as <https://4stay.com/>
- Online sites such as www.justlikehome.com, www.apartmentguide.com, www.ishdc.org, www.airbnb.com, or www.apartments.com
- Call a local real estate agency.
- You can also speak with your host company and supervisor for suggestions. They live and work in the area and are often a great resource.
- Reach out to interns in the United States who are completing their programs soon and need to leave their apartments/rooms.



Finding an Apartment

You must first consider your budget, safety, and location when selecting an apartment. As you will only be living in the U.S. temporarily, you may want to consider renting a furnished apartment. However, these are usually more expensive. Additionally, you should pay careful attention to the actual condition of the apartment. Make sure that everything (including the lock, windows, plumbing, heating and cooling system) is working and in acceptable condition. If something needs to be repaired or changed, point it out. Make sure that the landlord will pay to fix any such problems before you take the apartment.

The most basic American apartment will have a cooking area with refrigerator, stove and sink and at least one bathroom with toilet and bathtub and, or shower, but more amenities are common. Remember that rent may or may not include utilities (electricity, water, and so forth), and you should clarify this. You will be responsible for your telephone costs. You may also have a washer and dryer included in your apartment or general laundry room. Not all buildings have such facilities, so consider how important this is to you. You will also have a private mailbox. Your rent may include parking, or you may be able to rent a parking space for an extra fee.

Being Accepted as a Tenant

After you find an apartment that suits your needs, the property owner (landlord) must decide whether to approve you as a tenant. This usually involves filling out an application that will ask for your housing, credit and employment histories. International interns, as students or recent graduates, may have difficulty providing this information.

Upon acceptance as a tenant, you must provide a security deposit (usually equal to one or two months' rent). The landlord will be able to keep this deposit if you do not pay your rent, or if you damage the apartment. Confirm that this deposit is refundable. Also, make sure that you understand the terms of your lease and that everything you were promised was put in writing.

Landlords and Problems

You will be responsible for basic housekeeping and for keeping your apartment in a livable condition. While ordinary "wear and tear" is acceptable, you may lose your security deposit when you move out if you damage your apartment or do not clean it when your lease is up. Otherwise, the landlord is responsible for the general maintenance of the building and your apartment. Be sure to read everything thoroughly before signing. Leases are legally binding and are usually expensive to break.

Do not forget to pay your rent on time every month. If you are consistently late with the rent or do not pay it, the landlord may have you evicted. Also, do not stop paying your rent because of a problem with your landlord without first consulting an attorney. Obey the terms of your lease. Failure to do so could create unnecessary problems for you.

Utilities

Utilities include electricity/gas, water, and heating/air conditioning systems. Your rent may cover some or all of these services. Make sure you understand which of these services are included! The lease will detail how many of the utilities are covered by your rent payment.



You will be able to contact the necessary utility companies by calling their customer service numbers. Because the utility company is a business, each company will also ask that you fill out forms including your credit and employment history. Once again, you may have trouble providing an adequate history, and the utility company may request a deposit or proof that you can pay your bills. The company will provide you with an appointment to install the service on a particular day. The time may not be specific, and you will have to wait at home until the installer arrives.

Always pay your bills on time to avoid late fees and penalties, or, in extreme cases, the discontinuation of services. This is also an excellent way to build your credit history.

Cell Phone Service, Cable, and Internet

The country code for the United States is “+1.” You may have to dial this number when making long distance or toll-free phone numbers. Otherwise, phone numbers consist of ten digits. The first three numbers (often placed in parentheses) indicate the area code, which serves all or part of a city or state. For example, a resident of Washington, DC may have (202) 555-1234 as a telephone number. (202) is the area code and tells you that the number is a Washington, DC number, just as a (212) indicates a New York City number or (213) indicates a Los Angeles number. You will have to dial the area code to complete calls.

Obtaining a U.S. Phone (or local) Number is required for your records in SEVIS so that we and others can come in contact with you. You can either get a “pay-as-you-go phone,” which allows you to only pay for the services you use or buy an American SIM card to put in your international phone. Both options are available at cell phone companies.

Cable, Internet and Cellphones

AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, and Sprint are the most popular American cell phone companies. These companies also offer “bundles” of cell phone service with cable and WIFI (internet). Buying a bundle or package is usually cheaper than buying each separate. You can visit their Websites to check plans and promotions advertised in the media. Many people now use *Skype*, *WhatsApp*, *Telegram*, *IMO*, *Google Chat* or other *apps* to stay in contact with their friends and families back home. Remember to pay your bill on time to avoid penalties.

International Calling Cards

You can also buy an international calling card at a convenience store that will allow you to make long distance and international calls from any phone. You must activate the card before you can use it. Also, check the terms and conditions for rates and expiration details.

Transportation

Public Transportation

Many cities have buses, trains, subways or “the metro,” trolleys, or streetcars. Anyone can ride these vehicles for a small fee. In some places, you can buy a card good for several trips on subways or buses. You can also pay for each trip separately. Taxicabs, or “taxis,” are generally more expensive than other types of public transportation. Ask friends or colleagues about the best options for you.



Driver's License

It is illegal to drive a car in the United States without a driver's license. Be sure to check with the department in charge of issuing driver's licenses in your state, commonly called the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), the Department of Transportation, or the Secretary of State. You can find further information [here](#).

Buying a Car

Owning a car can be a convenient way to get around. In the U.S., you must also pay for car insurance, registering your vehicle and licenses. Heavy traffic can make driving difficult in some cities. Think of all the costs and benefits before you decide to buy a car.

Taxis and Ride-Sharing Apps

Most U.S. cities have a taxi system. Taxicabs cost approximately \$2.50 per passenger and approximately 65 cents per fraction of a mile. Rates must be posted where you can see them clearly. Generally, Americans add a 10% tip to the fare.

U.S. cities also are equipped with ride-sharing apps. such as Uber, Lyft and Via. These often offer a cheaper alternative to taxis. Always be cautious, safe, and be aware of your surroundings.

Money & Banking

Banks

Banks are usually open Monday through Friday, and many are open Saturday morning. They are closed on Sundays and federal holidays. Automatic teller machines (ATMs) are typically open 24 hours a day. Some U.S. banks are regional meaning they are common in one part of the country, but not in another. Other banks are considered national meaning that they have locations throughout the U.S. Select a bank that can provide the services that fit your schedule, preferences, and habits and be sure to find out what maintenance fees would apply to the accounts (if any). You may also consider a U.S. bank that can easily transfer money with the bank in your home country and take care of currency exchanges.

Opening an Account

Banks require specific information before opening an account for you. You will probably be asked to provide photo identification (passport), some personal information, mailing address, and money as a minimum deposit. Banks also will usually request Social Security Number (SSN) to report earnings to the federal tax authority – the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Some banks do not require international students and exchange visitors to obtain an SSN to open an account.

Credit Cards

Most Americans have and use credit cards frequently. You should have at least one to pay for emergencies if not for everyday purchases. Many hotels and car rentals require a credit card to use their services.

OTHER COMMON EXPENSES



WIFI: There are increasingly more and more places that offer free WIFI. These places could include restaurants, cafes & coffee shops, parks, public libraries, and/or your apartment building common area.

Food: Your food budget will depend on your dietary and spending habits. Buying the majority of your food at supermarkets and preparing your meals at home is certainly less expensive than eating out. Depending on your diet, a typical budget for groceries might be \$100 a week.

Tipping Culture: In the U.S. waiters/waitresses often don't get paid minimum wage. Instead, they get their money through tipping. It is customary and expected to tip your waiter/waitresses at a restaurant. Generally, the minimum amount to tip is 15% of the bill. Some might tip as much as 25% if the server and food were excellent. It is also customary to tip a bartender (usually \$1 per drink). Americans will also tip people doing them a service such as taxicab drivers, valet parking attendants, hairdressers/barbers, or if you get your car washed. If you are unsure when or how much to tip, it is okay to ask an American friend or colleague.

Leisure: Be sure to consider entertainment expenses when you are planning your budget.

Public Resources

Post Offices & USPS

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is a semi-independent agency of the federal government. All cities and towns have local post offices (or "branches"), and you should be able to find one in your neighborhood. At the Post Office, you can pick up or send packages and letters, buy stamps or other shipping materials as well as find some useful forms. Mail is also delivered to all residences and businesses Monday-Saturday, except federal holidays. You can also buy a P.O. Box at the post office where your mail will be delivered.

While hours of operation can vary, post offices are typically open from 9:00-5:00 Monday-Friday and 9:00-2:00 on Saturdays. Remember that the post office is closed on Sundays and federal holidays. Please check your calendar or a list provided in this handbook for all federal holidays. Even when your branch is closed, you may be able to enter it to mail stamped items or to pick up or buy certain products through automated services.

Public Libraries

The public library is still an invaluable source of information. In addition to borrowing (checking out) books and other materials, you can use the library as a research tool and as a source for some community-related information. When you have time, you may wish to visit your local library (or "branch") to see what it has to offer you. You may also ask the librarian for assistance in finding books or information, or for help in how to use the library. Be aware that many libraries are facing budget cuts and may have reduced schedules. Make sure that your branch will be open before you go there.

City Websites

Most U.S. cities and surrounding areas will have their own websites or social media pages. They are primarily dedicated to tourism and can give you great information on the city including various neighborhoods, the transportation system, and/or current city news. Also, cities will advertise upcoming special events or local museums/cultural sites. Checking these websites regularly is a good way to stay



informed and find exciting stuff happening around the city you live in or plan to travel to for tourism and cultural experience. Here are some examples of city pages:

- New York City - [NYC The Official Guide](#)
- Los Angeles, CA - [Discover Los Angeles](#)
- San Francisco, CA - [San Francisco Travel](#)
- Washington, DC - [Washington.org](#)

Additional Information

Online Forms

ARRIVAL DOCUMENTS SUBMISSION/REGISTRATION	Log into Hanover to submit Arrival Documents: https://icls-win.hanovercrm.com/
CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM	https://form.jotform.com/90776349631163
EVALUATION FORM FOR INTERN & TRAINEE	https://form.jotform.com/70363391284154
EVALUATION FORM FOR HOST SUPERVISOR	https://form.jotform.com/63403927456965
INCIDENT REPORT FORM	https://form.jotform.com/73315965244157
END PROGRAM REPORT FORM	https://form.jotform.com/73205628444153
CERTIFICATE REQUEST FORM	https://form.jotform.com/51173774509157
EXTENSION OF PROGRAM APPLICATION	https://form.jotform.com/193527449042057

Information on Training Site Safety

Links to Important Safety Information	
Non-Immigrant Rights Pamphlet	Sexual Harassment & Retaliation Information
Protecting Personal Information (OIG)	Human Trafficking Information
Social Security Information for Non-Citizens	DOS Exchange Program Brochure
Employee Rights	

Prohibited Unskilled Occupations List



The [following occupations](#) are considered unskilled, and as per State Department regulations (Appendix E to Part 62; 22 CFR (c) (1)) Interns and Trainees cannot perform these occupations while completing their exchange program:

Assemblers	Attendants, Parking Lot
Automobile Service Station Attendants	Bartenders
Attendant (Personal Service)	Attendant (Recreation Service)
Attendant (Amusement)	Ushers, Recreation, and Amusement
Basic Accounting and Bookkeepers	Caretakers
Cashiers	Charworkers and Cleaners
Cleaners, Hotel, and Motel	Chauffeurs and Taxicab Drivers
Clerks, Hotel, Restaurant	Clerks, General
Clerks and Checkers, Grocery Stores	Clerk Typist
Cooks, Short Order	Counter and Fountain Workers
Dining Room Attendants	Electric Truck Operators
Elevator Operators	Floor workers
Groundskeepers	Guards
Helpers, any industry	Material Handlers
Hotel Cleaners	Nurses' Aides and Orderlies
Household Domestic Service Workers	Packers, Markers, Bottlers, and Related
Hotel Housekeepers, Room Service, Guest Service	Laborers, Farm
Janitors	Laborers, Mine
Key Punch Operators	Loopers and Toppers
Kitchen Workers	Porters
Laborers, Common	Receptionists
Sales Clerks, General	Sailors and Deck Hands
Sewing Machine Operators & Hemstitchers	Streetcar and Bus Conductors
Stock Room and Warehouse Workers	Telephone Operators
Truck, Yacht Drivers	Yard Workers
Typist, Lesser Skilled	Restaurant Cleaners, Kitchen Workers, Food/Beverage Delivery, Valley Parking, Hostess
Spa Massage/Nail Technician	