

EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

Trainee/Intern Handbook

Your J-1 Visa	2
Before you leave home	2
When you arrive.....	4
Beginning your training/internship	5
SEVIS	6
Health insurance.....	6
Social Security Card	7
Getting on the payroll	8
Evaluations.....	9
Traveling outside the U.S.	10
Extensions	10
Family members traveling separately	11
Cultural Adjustment.....	11
Emergencies.....	11
Legal Information	12
Ending your training/internship	14
Life in the U.S.....	14
Important Forms.....	25
Useful contact information	42
Glossary of terms	42
About the American Immigration Council	43

YOUR J-1 VISA

As a participant in an American Immigration Council sponsored training/internship program, you will enter the United States in a J-1 non-immigrant status. The J-1 status gives you certain privileges and responsibilities during your stay in the United States. Please be familiar with the following points concerning your J-1 status:

The Visa -

- You have a trainee or intern category visa.
- Your J-1 visa is valid only when accompanied by the DS-2019 form sent to you by the American Immigration Council.
- You may receive training as described in the American Immigration Council-approved trainee/intern placement plan (form DS-7002) that accompanied your DS-2019 form.
- Your trainee/intern placement plan is site specific; changes can only be made with written approval from the American Immigration Council.
- Treaties between your government and that of the United States may require that you return to your home country for a period of two years at the conclusion of your J-1 training/internship program. You should investigate if the two-year rule applies to your participation before applying for the J-1 visa.

Working -

- You may receive compensation for on-the-job training you may participate in as described in your trainee/intern placement plan.
- You may only work as a component of the on-the-job training described in the trainee/intern placement plan.
- You may not work at any site outside of the site described for on-the-job training in your trainee/intern placement plan.

Responsibilities -

- You have the responsibility to keep the American Immigration Council informed of your progress with the training/internship placement plan and your location while in the United States
- You also are responsible for contacting the American Immigration Council if any problems arise during your stay.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

As a J-1 participant sponsored by the American Immigration Council your first responsibility is to obtain a J-1 visa from the American Embassy or Consulate in your home country¹. Specific instructions about applying for a J-1 visa in your home country are enclosed. You must present the original Form DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status) that the American Immigration Council has sent to you when applying for your visa as well as to the

¹ Unless you are from Canada

immigration inspector at your port of entry. Do not confirm travel arrangements until you have the visa in your passport. Both the DS-2019 form and visa² are required to enter the United States.

When you go to the Embassy or Consulate in your home country, please make sure to bring the following documents so as to ensure quick processing of your application:

- DS-2019 form issued to you by the American Immigration Council (enclosed)
- Your Passport
- Completed non-immigrant visa application forms: (see sample forms at end of handbook)
 - DS-156
 - DS-158
 - DS-157, if required
- A copy of your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan (enclosed)
- Passport picture
- Required fees
- SEVIS I-901 Form (enclosed)

Be sure to review your Training/Internship Placement Plan before your visa interview. You may be asked questions about it. Also, be sure you have reviewed the Exchange Visitor, Host Company, and the American Immigration Council Declarations that were signed during the program application process so that you are able to answer any questions about the role of each in your J-1 program. If you did not have copies, the text can be found in the application format at <http://www.aifl.org/exchange>.

In addition, you may be required to show that you have sufficient ties to your home country to compel you to return after the completion of your J-1 program. The following documents will help demonstrate your home ties:

- Evidence that you own a house or apartment.
- Evidence that you are not giving up the lease on a house or apartment.
- Evidence that you have a job or school waiting on your return.
- Evidence of dependents who will not be leaving the home country.
- Evidence of a spouse who will not be leaving the home country.
- Evidence of financial ties: bonds, bank accounts, property ownership, business investment.
- Evidence of leadership in community organizations.
- Evidence of other commitments that would compel you to return to your home country.

This is only a short list of what is required; please check the website of the specific Embassy or Consulate you will be visiting for up-to-date information.

² Most Canadians will enter with the DS-2019 and I-94 card marked J-1 D/S

Please note that visa processing has changed since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. All J-1 visa applicants are now required to appear in person at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a brief interview. You will be asked for the reason why you are planning to travel to the U.S. (receive training), and you will be required to provide a biometric identifier, currently an inkless fingerprint. The additional procedures mean the visa applications, in some instances, take longer to process. We recommend individuals apply for visas well in advance of their proposed date of travel. **Do not make final travel plans until the visa has been issued and you are in receipt of your passport and J-1 visa.** Please contact the American Immigration Council at exchange@aif.org if you have any problems applying for your visa.

It is a good idea to make copies of all important documents pertaining to your J-1 program before you leave for the U.S. Keep one photocopy of your DS-2019 form and J-1 visa stamp separate from your passport. You may need these copies if you lose your DS-2019 form or passport during your program. Should you lose any of these documents during your stay, contact the American Immigration Council immediately.

Also, please notify the American Immigration Council via email of your itinerary before you travel to the U.S. As long as you have sickness & accident insurance and the J-1 visa, you will be able to enter the United States up to 30 days before the start date on the DS-2019 form. You can send your travel information to the following email address: exchange@aif.org.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Upon entering the U.S. you will need to present the following documents and information to immigration officials at your point of entry:

- Your DS-2019 form
- Your Passport (with J-1 visa stamp inside)
- I-94 card
- SEVIS I-901 Form

Prior to entering the U.S. (usually en route onboard the airplane) you will be given an I-94 card to complete. (It's a good idea to have a blue or black ink pen with you to fill out the card.) Upon arrival, an Immigration officer will write "D/S" on the card and one copy will be placed in your passport. "D/S" stand for "Duration of Status". In practical terms, this means that you can stay in the United States so long as you are in good standing with your J-1 program, and through the 30 day grace period after the end date on your DS-2019.

The Immigration Officer will also stamp your DS-2019 form. Make sure you present the original copy of this document, and remember to take it with you when you leave the Immigration checkpoint. You cannot begin your training or internship without the stamped, original copy of your DS-2019 and your I-94 card. Take the time to secure these documents with your passport before you leave the Immigration checkpoint.

After you go through Immigration you will pass through Customs. Please make sure all prescription drugs are clearly marked and remember that you cannot bring perishable food and articles made from protected species. If you are carrying more than \$10,000 you must report this to Custom Officials.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR VISA DOCUMENTS

Your status in the US is indicated by three documents that work together.

- J-1 visa – provides the dates between which you can apply for admission into the United States. It is NOT permission to be in the U.S.
- I-94 card – provides the dates during which you may legally be in the U.S. on J-1 status. Most I-94 cards are marked by the Immigration Officer in poor handwriting as “D/S.” (See explanation above.)
- DS-2019 – the Certificate of Eligibility determines what you can do while in the U.S. Essentially, your DS-2019 permits you to participate in the program outlined by your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan (DS-7002 form).

BEGINNING YOUR J-1 PROGRAM

Upon entering the U.S., and within seven (7) days of beginning your training/internship program, a copy of the following items needs to be faxed or scanned to the American Immigration Council:

- J-1 visa stamp in your passport
- I-94 card
- DS-2019 form showing the Consular Stamp
- proof of J program compliant health insurance
- your home address in the U.S.

Please use the enclosed J-1 Exchange Visitor Program Follow-up Form when sending this information to the American Immigration Council. US government rules pertaining to the Exchange Visitor Program make it important for the American Immigration Council to have your home address in the U.S. as soon as possible. If you have a temporary address while waiting for more permanent housing, send us the temporary address. You will then up-date the address each time you move. If you foresee a delay in getting this information to us, please contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible.

It is imperative that you submit the above items to the American Immigration Council before applying for your Social Security number. Failing to submit these items to the American Immigration Council will cause unnecessary delays with Social Security and will require the American Immigration Council to notify the Department of Homeland Security of your non-compliance and terminate your training. If your program dates are delayed, please notify us via e-mail so we can change your official dates of participation.

When you begin your training, please keep the American Immigration Council informed of your progress. If you have any questions, you should feel comfortable calling the American Immigration Council at any time. You and your supervisor will be expected to complete a mid-point evaluation during your program – the forms will be sent to you via e-mail. Please make sure your e-mail address is up-to-date when you submit your Follow-Up Information form. Please notify the American Immigration Council if you have any questions regarding this. Also, if you experience problems with the training or internship program not being conducted per your expectations, please call the American Immigration Council.

As a reminder, note that in section IV of your application, you agreed not to adjust or change status while in the United States and stated that you have no intention of working for the US company past the end date of your program.

SEVIS

SEVIS is the 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.

The American 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, J-1 participants must notify the American Immigration Council of changes to their U.S. residential address within 7 days of each move. Participants should also notify the American Immigration Council of any travel plans and of any changes to their program dates.

HEALTH INSURANCE

There is no government-provided health insurance in the U.S., and the U.S. State Department **requires** that all J-1s and their J-2 dependants participating in the American Immigration Council Exchange Visitor Program must have medical/accident insurance coverage during their stays in the United States. Coverage must be at least \$50,000 per illness/accident, at least \$7,500 for the repatriation of remains in the case of death and must include a deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness. Medical evacuation coverage must be at least \$10,000.

The American Immigration Council has negotiated a group policy for J-1 and J-2 visa holders that meets the US government regulations. Currently, the cost is \$40/month/person. Additional information regarding this policy can be requested via e-mail at exchange@ailf.org. Insurance may also be provided either through the host company or through another policy. Please note that all policies must be vetted by the American Immigration Council for compliance with the J regulations before you enter the US on J status.

SOCIAL SECURITY CARD

If you will be paid by the US host company, you must apply for a U.S. Social Security Number (SSN) in person at the Social Security Office nearest to your training or internship site. This number will be used for your host company's payroll records, to open bank accounts, rent apartments, apply for a driver's license, etc.

Please wait at least 48 hours after you activate your SEVIS status by sending your J-1 Exchange Visitor Follow-up Form to the American Immigration Council and make sure you have been in the United States for at least 10 days before you apply for your Social Security number.

The ten date wait is important. This is the period of time it takes for your legal entry record to electronically flow from the Immigration Officer at your Port of Entry to the Social Security System. Applying for the Social Security number before your arrival information has reached the Social Security Administration can delay getting the SSN by many weeks.

To locate the Social Security Office nearest your training/internship site, go to <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp>. (If that web address is too difficult to cut and paste into your web browser, you can link to it from www.socialsecurity.gov.)

To apply for a Social Security Number, you will need the following items:

- Original DS-2019 form
- Passport with your J-1 visa stamp and I-94 card
- Application for a Social Security Number (Form SS-5)
- An original letter from the American Immigration Council stating that you are an active participant on our program.

The Form SS-5 can be downloaded at: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.pdf>

Things to remember when completing the Form SS-5:

1. Fill in your name as it is on your passport (question #1)
2. Use your U.S. residential or your training/internship site address; be sure to use US Post Office standard format (question #2)
3. You are a legal alien allowed to work (question #3)
4. You will need to enter your mother's birth surname (maiden name) (question #8)
5. All requests for Social Security information refer to the U.S. system, not to your home country
6. Dates are written month, day, year
7. You are completing this application yourself (question #17)

Please understand that obtaining a Social Security Number can take several weeks. If you have not received the Social Security Card within one month, you should notify the American Immigration Council with the following information:

- The date you applied for the number

- The address of the Social Security Office where you applied for the number
- The name of the agent who took your application, if known
- Your I-94 card number
- Your U.S. mailing address and telephone number
- The Social Security application reference number, if known

If there are delays in receiving a Social Security Number, you must still begin your training or internship. The following web site explains to your host company how to put you on the payroll pending the receipt of the Social Security card:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm>.

GETTING ON THE PAYROLL

If on-the-job training is part of your Trainee/Intern Placement Plan, you will need to fill out various forms before your employer can add you to the payroll.

The I-9 Form

This first form is required of all employees, both U.S. citizens and aliens, to document the legal ability to work. The I-9 form should be completed within three days of starting the on-the-job component of your J-1 program.

To complete the I-9 form you will need the following:

For column A:	Passport – Confirms Identity I-94 form (stapled into passport) – Confirms legal entry, length of stay, and J-1 status (Option #5 on the List of Acceptable Documents)
---------------	--

With the completed I-9 form, the employer may wish to retain photocopies of the passport identity page, the J-1 visa, the I-94 card, and the DS-2019 form.

The W-4 Form

You will also need to fill out a W-4 form. This form tells your employer what Federal taxes should be withheld from your pay. If you receive compensation from the US employer as a J-1 trainee or intern, you are subject to U.S. Federal taxes, except in the extremely rare event of a tax treaty between your government and that of the U.S. Unless you have previously been in the United States within the last six years on a J-1 visa, you will be classified as a non-resident taxpayer for Federal taxes. This means you are not subject to Social Security or Medicare withholding during the first two calendar years, or parts thereof, that you are in the U.S. on a J-1 visa. You will need to provide your employer with two documents:

1. A memo stating that you are a non-resident taxpayer due to your J-1 visa status, therefore not subject to Social Security or Medicare withholding.

2. A completed W-4 form.

As a non-resident taxpayer, you are considered to be single (even if you are married) and you are allowed one exemption (even if you have children). Following the guidelines of IRS Publication 515, non-resident alien taxpayers are suggested to 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 in line 6.

For a more detailed explanation than this, you should download Internal Revenue Service (IRS) publication 519, the U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens and IRS publication 515, the Withholding of Tax on Nonresident Aliens and Foreign Entities at <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html?portlet=3>.

Trainees/Interns from Canada, Mexico, American Samoa, Japan, Korea, or India may want to check with a tax specialist to determine if a tax treaty will affect their withholding information.

Trainees/Interns who have been in the United States previously on J-1 visas, and who meet the substantial presence test as described in IRS publication 519, will be classified as a resident taxpayer, and subject to the same taxes as American citizens, including Social Security and Medicare.

Many States and local communities also tax income. You may wish to visit the web site for the State where your training/internship site is located, or speak to a tax agent at the State Department of Taxation. Websites can be located through the following link: <http://www.taxadmin.org/fta/link/forms.html>

With tax law changing from State to State, Community to Community, and year to year, the American Immigration Council cannot give definitive tax information. If you need help, call, and we will direct you to the IRS or State office that can help you.

EVALUATIONS

The U.S. government regulations under which you have been issued the J-1 visa require that you and your supervisor complete a **Mid-Stay** and an **End-of-Stay** evaluation. The American Immigration Council may require additional evaluations during your stay. The timely submission of the evaluations to the American Immigration Council helps to insure that you stay in good standing with your J-1 visa. You can find the Mid-Point and End-of-Stay Evaluations forms at the end of this handbook or online at http://www.aifl.org/exchange/midpoint_eval.pdf and http://www.aifl.org/exchange/final_eval.pdf.

TRAVELING OUTSIDE THE U.S.

If you are planning to travel outside the U.S. for vacation or holiday during your J-1 program, you must notify the American Immigration Council two weeks before you plan to travel. You will need to send the American Immigration Council your DS-2019 form to have it endorsed before you travel. Please send the original copy of your DS-2019 form to the American Immigration Council at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date of departure by courier (FedEx, UPS, Express Mail, etc.) with a letter from your supervisor stating the approved dates of your travel and confirming the mailing address of your host site. The American Immigration Council will then endorse the front of the form, indicating you are in good standing in our program, and return it to you. If you must travel on short notice, you should include a pre-addressed, prepaid courier envelop in which for us to return the endorsed form.

Before you leave the U.S., check the expiration date of the J-1 visa in your passport and the program end date on your DS-2019 form. If your J-1 visa expires while you are in the U.S. and your DS-2019 is still valid, you may legally continue your J-1 program. However, if you leave the country you will need to apply for another J-1 visa before you can re-enter and continue your training or internship. Please contact the American Immigration Council if this is the case and we will help you get your documentation in order so you can apply for another J-1 visa while you are abroad.

EXTENSIONS

The maximum length of training under the American Immigration Council program is 18 continuous months for trainees and continuous 12 months for interns. If your host company originally requested a training period shorter than 18 months (for trainees) or 12 months (for interns), an extension may be requested, but only by your training company. This request must be sent from your supervisor at your training company and include the following:

- An explanation of why the extension is being requested
- A description of what new skills you will be acquiring on during the extension
- An evaluation of your progress on your existing training plan through to within 30 days of the original end date
- A DS-7002 detailing the training for the period of the extension and not repeating skills or activities you have already accomplished
- Statements from both your host company supervisor and yourself to the effect that you will not seek to change visa status while in J-1 status
- The extension fee of \$250

Please contact the American Immigration Council in advance if you or your host company is considering an extension.

Remember, the J-1 visa in your passport shows the dates you may legally enter the U.S. These dates will not affect your extension unless you need to leave and re-enter the country. Please notify the American Immigration Council as soon as possible if you need to leave the U.S. with an expired visa.

FAMILY MEMBERS TRAVELING SEPARATELY

If your spouse or children plan to enter the U.S., they must each have their own DS-2019 forms and must apply for J-2 dependent visas before they can come to the U.S. If you plan to have your family join you in the U.S., please notify the American Immigration Council.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

From the day we are born, cultural norms form our understanding of what should be expected. Our cultural norms unconsciously influence what we talk about, what we eat, what we wear, what smells are considered normal, how the bathroom works, what we consider to be “fun”, and what is the correct way to do something. Adjusting to a new environment, where everything carries new meanings and new definitions of correctness, typically produces a series of emotional highs and lows. Faced with daily questioning of why we do what we do puts our personal identity and self-esteem in crisis. This crisis produces stress.

There are five very important things you can do to reduce the stress caused by cultural change and to maintain your overall health:

- 1.) Drink plenty of water and juice
- 2.) Eat a healthy, balanced diet; be sure you are getting enough protein, vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates as you experience foods that are new to you.
- 3.) Get enough sleep. Cultural adjustment can be exhausting.
- 4.) Lower your expectations. You’ve spent a lifetime learning about your own culture. It will take time to understand a new culture and routine.
- 5.) Ask questions. Don’t assume that because something looks the same as it does at home, it carries the same cultural meaning in the U.S.

EMERGENCIES

As your program sponsor, the American Immigration Council is officially responsible for you during the time reflected on your DS-2019 form. It is our duty to provide you with up-to-date information and emergency assistance, if necessary, to give you the best possible experience as a J-1 participant in the U.S. Please note the procedures for the following common emergency situations:

- Medical emergency: first call 911 for emergency assistance, and then contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible. Insurance inquiries should be directed to your medical insurance company.
- Lost or stolen passport: file a police report in the jurisdiction where you believe the passport was lost or stolen, and then notify your home country’s Embassy or Consulate in

the U.S. as soon as possible.³ Act fast, do not allow yourself to become a victim of identity thief.

- Lost I-94 card: contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at 1-800-375-5283 and apply for a new **I-94**. The American Immigration Council keeps a copy of your I-94 card on file to help with the replacement in the event you lost the original.
- Lost DS-2019: contact the American Immigration Council.
- Lost Social Security Card: call the Social Security Administration at toll free 1-800-772-1213.
- Tax and payroll: first speak with the payroll personnel at your host company. Contact the American Immigration Council if you are having difficulty resolving issues.
- Crime victim emergency: first call 911 for assistance, and then contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible. Note that a crime victim emergency is for an event that is in progress or has just happened. If you discover you have been a victim of a crime after the fact, call the regular number for the local police department.
- Arrest: please note that if you are arrested for a crime or misdemeanor, the American Immigration Council may not be able to help you. We would contact your consulate in the United States if you are not able to do so, and we could refer you to legal counsel. You would be responsible for any court or legal counsel costs. In any case, if you find yourself in legal trouble, contact the American Immigration Council as soon as possible.

If you are unsure if the American Immigration Council can help you with a specific question, please notify us. We will be happy to help you or to direct you to the agency or department that can help.

Legal Information

Local Laws

Unlike most countries, laws in the United States vary from state to state and even city to city. It is important for J-1 participants to become familiar with and obey the local laws in the town or city where they are living, so as to avoid any potential legal difficulties. For example, many states require a driver to carry his or her license whenever driving. In some states, driving without a license can result in immediate incarceration, while in other states the driver may be given a citation or an opportunity to produce the license at a later time.

Local laws that govern alcohol consumption, noise levels, and group gatherings are strict. The best source of information will be local residents and United States students who are living and working in the town or city with the J-1 participant. In order to maintain order, the local police often strictly enforce misdemeanor laws.

Narcotics

³ For more specific instructions on what to do if your Passport, Visa or I-94 card is lost or stolen, go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_2009.html

Illegal possession of controlled substances (drugs) in the U.S. is subject to prosecution by law. The penalties for drug possession vary from state to state and region to region. Any type of illegal drug use is a serious offense in the U.S. and cause for termination from the American Immigration Council Trainee/intern Program. People are subject to fines and possible time in jail for any drug possession or association with people who have drugs themselves. It will almost certainly result in deportation and could prevent the offender from returning to the U.S. at a later time.

Alcohol

People are required to be at least 21 years old to drink legally in the United States. Many trainees/interns come from countries where the legal drinking age is much younger and this can be quite a culture shock. People are asked to produce picture identification to prove that they are above the legal drinking age if they look 30 years old or younger. Drinking in public (i.e. outside a bar, restaurant, or the residence) and with an open container is prohibited in many places, especially in beach or resort towns. Individuals will be subject to fines and possible jail time if they are found guilty of these infractions.

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI)

A national campaign to raise awareness of “drunk driving” and decrease alcohol related traffic accidents has swept the United States. Because of this, the enforcement of drunk driving (DWI/DUI) laws has become very tough. Americans generally appoint a “designated driver” when going out with a group of friends. This person agrees to refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages prior to and during the time they will operate a vehicle.

Smoking

As part of an intense anti-smoking campaign in the United States, tough measures provide a smoke-free environment. There are federal, state and local laws governing smoking in public places. Smoking is banned on all domestic air flights and will eventually not be allowed in all restaurants and bars. Smokers should look around before lighting a cigarette and ask what the rule is before smoking. “No Smoking” signs are usually posted in a clear, visible location. In order to purchase cigarettes, one must be at least 18 years old and must show identification to verify age.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any time an individual is uncomfortable with another’s comments, discussions, or approaches that can be interpreted as carrying a sexual overtone. It is not legal in the United States and can result in employment suspension or termination. Understanding what constitutes sexual harassment in the United States may be one of the greatest cultural differences you face. An explanation of “it’s different in my country” will carry little weight in the American workplace.

ENDING YOUR J-1 PROGRAM

Before you leave the U.S. you must have your supervisor complete an End-of-Stay evaluation for you. The evaluation forms have been included with your DS-2019 form. This evaluation should be completed and sent to the American Immigration Council before you leave the U.S. Your Certificate of Completion will be sent only after the End-of-Stay Evaluation is received. If you have any questions regarding your evaluations, please contact the American Immigration Council.

When you leave the U.S., you will surrender your I-94 card to Immigration. If they neglect to take this please contact the American Immigration Council and we will assist you in returning your I-94 card to the proper authorities.

As a J-1 participant, you are allowed to be in the country as a tourist for a total of 30 days after the final date of the training/internship on your DS-2019 form. You are not allowed to train or work at your host company during this time; however, you should use these 30 days as a way to travel and see the U.S. before you return to your home country.

During this 30-day “grace period,” you can stay in the United States lawfully while you prepare for departure. You have had the wonderful opportunity to gain career enhancing skills that will be of great benefit to you and your future. You have also had the chance to be exposed to a new culture and to share with those around you the unique culture that you bring. The American Immigration Council hopes that you have great success in your future plans and that someday you can visit the U.S. again. In the meantime, we would love to hear how you have used what you learned as an American Immigration Council trainee or intern to further your career at home. Send us an e-Mail or a post card!

Appendix I

LIFE IN THE U.S.

As a J-1 trainee or intern with the American Immigration Council Exchange Visitor Program you have been given a great opportunity not only to learn important skills to further your career in your home country, but also to learn about U.S. culture and the way of life that is unique to Americans. During your stay in the U.S. you should visit the local attractions and sites in your city. Venture outside of your immediate area and, when time is available, travel around the country, seeing the diversity that makes America great.

During your J-1 program, you are encouraged to attend social functions with your host company, as well as to visit the many parks, museums, theaters, and historical sites, and other cultural opportunities available in your area. You will find not only that there are many differences between your home country and the U.S., but there are also many similarities that will open your eyes and show not only our diversity, but also how alike we all are.

Guide to Everyday Life in America

To get to know Americans, it pays to know certain mannerisms and habits many Americans share.

Greetings and Introductions

Americans shake hands firmly with each other when first introduced, or when they meet again, but rarely when they part. When having a conversation, it is considered impolite not to introduce new comers who may join. Hugging is acceptable when greeting someone who is a close friend or family member. However, touching or handholding with someone who is not a close friend or family member can be seen as an expression of sexual attraction.

Distance and Eye Contact

When two Americans are standing and talking to each other they stay an arms length away from each other. Maintaining eye contact is a sign of interest and respect. Avoiding eye contact is understood as discomfort or an admission of shame.

Gender Roles

Discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity is not accepted in the United States. In the workplace, you can expect to see women and men sharing the same jobs and having equal responsibility.

Foreign Languages

If a trainee/intern is with a group of mainly English-speaking people and the conversation is going on in English, it is not polite to speak in the trainee's/intern's own or another foreign language. Avoid swear words in any language (people are often surprised when someone else has a comprehension of the language they are speaking). Swear words are not acceptable in professional settings. They carry a much stronger offensive meaning in the United States than they might in other English speaking countries.

Formal and Informal Attire

For some people, and in some regions of the United States, "informal" means blue jeans and T-shirts. For some others, it means sports jackets and ties. Ask specific questions about the expected attire for an event. Even if informal clothing is in order, clothes should be kept clean and neat. The phrase "formal" (also referred to as "Black Tie") means tuxedos for men and evening dresses for women. Semi-formal means business suits (jacket and tie) for men and cocktail dresses for women.

Public Services

The term "public services" refers to services available to consumers offered by private stores, corporations and companies, rather than by the government or not-for-profit organizations.

Products and services vary greatly in quality, accessibility, price and suitability. Visitors will have to become an informed consumer to get the greatest value and working knowledge out of the American markets.

Newspapers

Newspapers are as a convenient tool to scan the local businesses, services and resources. Newspapers often have discount coupons that can be presented to merchants for savings on many products and services. Weekend editions of newspapers contain valuable information about the specific city including movies, concerts, special events and other items of interest.

Public Libraries

Trainees/Interns are encouraged to search out the local public libraries to familiarize themselves with the facilities. Most libraries have consumer information, books on getting the most value for the dollar, orientation lectures and booklets, Internet services and free consumer-oriented publications and pamphlets. The public library is simply the best source for information about practically anything.

Photo Developing

Film can be developed at many discount and drug stores at reasonable prices and the pictures are returned in a few days. Some stores offer 24-hour service at no extra charge. Other photo stores advertise "One Hour" developing. The charges are generally higher for faster service.

Drug Stores

Drug stores in America sell more than medicine, though all will have a section where prescription drugs are dispensed. Drug stores can be as big as supermarkets, with aisles selling stationery supplies, light bulbs, food and greeting cards. Drug stores are also called "pharmacies."

Public Restrooms (toilets)

Public restrooms in the United States vary widely. Most of them can be used without paying a fee. In the middle of large cities, hotels are the easiest places to find a clean restroom facility. On the road, service (gasoline) stations and fast food restaurants have free restroom facilities.

Tipping for Services

It is important to realize that for many professions, particularly waiters and waitresses, taxi drivers, porters and bellhops, tip income is at least half of the worker's total income. If in doubt, tip a little more than usual, especially if service was good or the person was friendly.

Restaurant Tipping

In America, when served by a waiter or waitress at a “sit-down” restaurant, people are expected to leave a tip or gratuity of 15 to 20 percent of the bill. Service is almost never included in the price of the meal. In some restaurants, a service charge will be added to the bill, which means the group does not have to leave a tip, but this practice is rare. If consumers receive poor or rude service, this is expressed with a smaller tip. If the restaurant check is divided with several other people, the diners would then take the sales tax and tip into consideration when figuring out how much each person owes.

Delivery people

When people order take-out food or groceries, there should be tip of 5 to 10 per cent of the total bill.

Taxi drivers

Taxi drivers are usually tipped 10 -15% of the total bill.

Porters, skycaps and bellhops

The general etiquette is to give porters at least \$1 for each bag.

Hairdressers and barbers

Hairdressers are generally tipped at least 15%.

Coat check

When someone checks his or her coat, it is appropriate to tip \$1 if there is no charge for the service.

Hotel services

The maids (housekeepers) are generally tipped two dollars a day or more, depending on how messy you are. Room service waiters are tipped at 15% of the food bill. If the hotel concierge goes out of his or her way to help someone, a tip from \$10 - \$20 is expected.

Valet parking

Valet parking attendants expect a \$2 – \$3 tip for their services.

American Money

The basic unit of American currency is the dollar (\$1). Coins are in the value of 1 cent (a penny), 5 cents (a nickel), 10 cents (a dime), 25 cents (a quarter), 50 cents (a half dollar), and one dollar.

American paper money is the same color and the same size in all denominations. \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100 dollar bills are most commonly used. Each bill will have a picture of a

famous American on the front, and the bill's numerical denomination on each of the four front corners. Trainees/Interns will have to be careful at first not to confuse the denominations.

American coins are even more confusing than currency notes. American coins do not have a number value on them but instead the amounts are spelled out. Nor are the coins minted in size order. Commonly used coins are the one cent piece (penny), five cent piece (nickel), ten cent piece (dime) and 25 cent piece (quarter). Fifty-cent coins are rarely seen. Dollar coins are often given as change from public transportation ticket machines. Be careful not to confuse the dollar and quarter coins as they are similar in size.

Banking Services

Trainees/Interns may want to open a checking account at a local bank as soon as they can upon arrival. Services and fees vary from bank to bank and area to area. Checking accounts may have fees per month and per check. It is advised to check with several different banks to find the one that best suits your individual needs. Also ask what documents the bank will need to see in order to open an account.

Automatic Teller Machines (ATM)

Most bank accounts provide bank cards that can be used at 24 hour automated teller machines (ATMs). At least two banking networks, the Cirrus network and the Plus network, offer services at machines in many locations across the United States. When staying in major cities, a bank card may prove as useful as traveler's checks or credit cards. Trainees/Interns will want to check with their local financial institution before leaving home to verify if they are able to use their bank card at these machines.

Banks may charge a fee of between \$1-2 or more per withdrawal for using an ATM machine belonging to another bank. Some banks do not have a service charge for using their own company ATM.

Getting Money in a Hurry

Traveler's Checks

Traveler's Checks are perhaps the most convenient and safest way to finance travel expenses. They are refundable if lost or stolen, and can be purchased at any bank. Making a separate list of check numbers and buying small denominations are pro-active measures when using Traveler's Checks. Some establishments do not accept Traveler's Checks, and trainees/interns will need to ask before shopping. Where an establishment specifies, "no checks accepted", this usually refers to personal checks from the bank account, not Traveler's Checks.

Western Union

This service makes it possible to transfer money from the trainees's/intern's home country or state to anywhere in the United States within 15 minutes on any day of the week. There is a

handling charge, which will vary according to the amount of money sent. The trainee/intern can call 1-800-325-6000 to learn more about Western Union services.

Wire Transfer

This allows the trainee/intern to transfer money from a bank in their home country or state to a bank in the United States. This can often take a week or longer. The charge varies from bank to bank, and both the receiving and sending banks may charge the trainee/intern. Not all banks offer this service - check in advance.

Bankers Drafts

These can be bought from the trainee's/intern's home bank and then mailed through the Post Office's Express Service. This usually takes between three and seven days. Participants sometimes have difficulty cashing them at banks where they do not have an account. Trainees/Interns will want to designate an emergency contact in their home country or state in case this service is used.

Credit Cards

Most Americans have credit cards. They are a convenient and safe way to make large purchases, or to get cash advances from banks. Be careful about overspending with "plastic money"- all debts have to be paid eventually. A credit card is also handy if you plan to stay in a hotel or rent a car while in the country. A credit card can also be useful with unexpected emergencies that may arise.

Please note: It will be very difficult for exchange visitors to be approved for a credit card in the United States because they will have little income and no previous American credit history. If the trainee/intern has a credit card issued from home, it is recommended to bring it with them.

Sales Tax

Sales tax is added when consumers pay for any retail items. Sales tax varies from state to state and from region to region. For example, the sales tax is 7 ½% in Florida and between 5-8% in South Carolina.

Sales taxes exist in most, but not all, states. Merchants are responsible for collecting sales tax on purchases and then giving it to the state. Not all products are taxed. Often food and clothing is exempt, depending upon the state. Many services, hotel rooms, gasoline and other items may be taxed.

Electricity

The United States electrical system uses 110 volts, 60 hertz (cycles). It is the same system throughout the entire 50 states. If bringing appliances from home, the trainee/intern will need to purchase a transformer and plug adapter that can handle the wattage of the particular appliance.

Time Differences

The United States is divided into five time zones - Eastern, Central, Mountain, Pacific and Hawaii-Aleutian. Most, but not all, states maintain Daylight Savings Time. www.timeanddate.com/worldclock is a good web site for figuring time changes.

Please note that most Americans view time as a commodity that can be spent or saved. Being “on time” is valued. Being late can be seen as evidence of disrespect or disinterest. If you find that you are going to be more than five minutes late for an appointment, you will be expected to call with your apology and expected time of arrival.

Temperature Measurement

In judging temperatures, there is an easy formula for roughly translating Fahrenheit to Celsius. Subtract thirty from the Fahrenheit number and divide by two to calculate the Celsius temperature. To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply the Celsius number by two and add thirty. (If you need to be totally accurate, the actual formula is to subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit temperature, divide the result by 9, and multiple this result by 5. Surely, you can quickly do that in your head!)

United States Holidays

Like in any country, holidays are a time to reflect and celebrate. All holidays are observed by the United States population, but this does not mean that trainees/interns are guaranteed holidays off. Each employer sets its own policy with regard to holidays. While it is common for employers to observe at least 6 holidays each year, (New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas), the Federal Government also observes Martin Luther King Day, President’s Day and Veteran’s Day. Private employers often close on fewer holidays.

Official and Unofficial holidays in the United States reflect our immigrant history. You will note that many of the “unofficial Holidays” in the following list were brought to the US by specific nationalities or religious groups. As the traditions have adapted to American culture, the holidays have been embraced outside of the groups that originally brought them. Thus, you may find yourself invited to festivities regardless of ethnicity or national heritage. You may also find very different traditions for celebrating the holidays in your home country. Celebrating holidays with your new friends is a great way to discover how multiple cultures have blended to create “American culture.”

New Year’s Day: January 1

Official holiday. New Year’s Eve, December 31, is more important to Americans than New Year’s Day itself.

Martin Luther King Day

Official holiday. Martin Luther King Day is a relatively recent holiday, commemorating the birth (January 15) of the Civil Rights Leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who was assassinated in 1968. It is observed the third Monday in January in most states.

Groundhog Day: February 2

The groundhog or woodchuck is a burrowing animal that hibernates during the winter months. Traditionally, if the groundhog comes out of its hole, sees its shadow and runs back into the hole out of fright, spring will take a full six weeks to come. If the groundhog doesn't see its shadow, spring will come early, in about six weeks.

Presidents Day: 3rd Monday in February

Official holiday. Originally scheduled to fall between George Washington's birthday (the first President of the United States) and Abraham Lincoln's birthday (the President during the American Civil War), the holiday now commemorates all U.S. Presidents.

Valentine's Day: February 14

This is when lovers exchange their vows of love. Elaborate greeting cards and gifts are exchanged.

Saint Patrick's Day: March 17

St. Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland and Irish immigrants brought this holiday to America. People celebrate this holiday by wearing something green.

April Fool's Day: April 1

This day is marked by the custom of playing practical jokes on friends and colleagues. However, practical jokes may not be appropriate in a professional or work environment.

Easter: A Sunday in March or April

A religious holiday for Christians who believe that on this day Christ rose from the dead. Many folk traditions are now connected with Easter, including the decoration of brightly colored eggs and the Easter Bunny giving gift baskets to children.

Passover

Passover is an eight day Jewish holiday celebrating the liberation of the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt over 3000 years ago. Passover is celebrated with a special ritual dinner called a "Seder."

Mother's Day: Second Sunday in May

On this day Americans honor their mothers by sending flowers, buying small gifts and taking their mothers out to eat so that they don't have to cook or do work around the house.

Father's Day: Third Sunday in June

Fathers are honored on this day. Children give their father's cards and gifts.

Memorial Day: Last Monday in May

Official holiday. Memorial Day is the day on which Americans commemorate those who have died in military service for their country. The day is marked with patriotic parades and speeches. This day is considered the beginning of the summer season.

Independence Day: July 4

Official holiday. Independence Day commemorates the day the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. The holiday is celebrated all over the country with picnics, parades, political speeches and community get-togethers that culminate in fireworks displays.

Labor Day: First Monday in September

Official holiday. This holiday was established in recognition of the labor movement's contribution to the productivity of the country. This day is the last holiday of the summer season and is celebrated with picnics and other outdoor events.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Late September/Early October

Rosh Hashanah, commemorating the creation of the world, is the first of the Ten Days of Penitence, which ends with Yom Kippur, the most solemn of Jewish holidays. For Rosh Hashanah, families gather for a feast in which an apple is dipped in honey to express hope for a sweet year ahead. In Judaism, Yom Kippur is a day of judgment; on the eve of Yom Kippur, Jews ask forgiveness from those they may have wronged.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. Lasting for the entire month, Muslims fast during the daylight hours and in the evening eat small meals and visit with friends and family. It is a time of worship and contemplation and a time to strengthen family and community ties.

Columbus Day: Second Monday in October

Official holiday. Columbus Day celebrates the "discovery" of America by Christopher Columbus on October 12, 1492.

Halloween: October 31

It is celebrated mostly as a children's holiday. Traditions include carving out pumpkins with funny faces as well as dressing up in costumes and going around the neighborhood to receive treats. When people come to the door, children say, "trick or treat," meaning, "if the person doesn't give me a treat, I will trick the person."

Election Day: the first Tuesday after the First Monday in November

Voting Day for all national and most state and local elections. Many local communities may have their local elections at varying times throughout the year.

Veterans Day: November 11

Official holiday. Veterans Day honors veterans of America's wars.

Thanksgiving Day: Fourth Thursday in November

Official holiday. The most widely celebrated holiday in the United States, Thanksgiving is associated with early settlers to Massachusetts, the Pilgrims, who in 1621 gave God their thanks for having survived their first year in America (traditionally with the help of the local indigenous tribe). It was declared an official holiday by Abraham Lincoln in 1863 as a day for Americans to reflect and give thanks.

Hanukkah: Eight days, usually in December

A Jewish holiday known as the Festival of Lights. The tradition can be traced back almost 2,400 years. Hanukkah celebrates a miracle 2,400 years ago in Jewish history. When the time came to light the Eternal Light of the Temple, the Jews could find only one enough sanctified oil to last one evening. The lamp was lit with this small jar of oil and, miraculously, stayed lit for eight days, until more oil suitable for the temple was made. Today, Hanukkah is marked with parties, games, gifts for children and the lighting of the nine candles of the menorah.

Christmas: December 25

Official holiday. Traditionally commemorates the birth of Christ. Although its origins are religious in nature, it is a holiday widely celebrated, often as an occasion for families to gather and exchange gifts. Families decorate a Christmas tree, join in the festivities of the Christmas season and wait for Santa Claus to arrive.

Kwanzaa: December 26 through January 1

Kwanzaa is a holiday celebrated by many African-Americans. Created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa, which means "first fruits," celebrates the oneness and goodness of life, and puts particular emphasis on family life and African-American continuity with the past.

United States Units of Measurement

Metric Conversion

In spite of many years of government attempts to get the U.S. population to use the metric system as the standard of measurement, few Americans “think metric.” Temperatures are given in Fahrenheit. Distance is measured in inches, feet, yards, and miles. Volume is understood in ounces, pints, and gallons. (And the US gallon has four quarts to the Canadian gallon with five.) Americans can actually feel the difference between 78 and 79 degrees Fahrenheit. They can hold their thumb and finger apart by one inch, but not by one centimeter. After many, many years, they will buy a liter of cola, but still purchase a gallon of milk. Yes, the metric system is easier, but Americans don’t feel comfortable with metric measurements. It’s a culture thing.

Trainees/Interns who want more information about the metric conversion are encouraged to check out www.infoplease.com and search for conversion factors.

IMPORTANT FORMS

Form DS-156 Questions

Hello J-1 Trainee/Intern:

In order to obtain your J-1 visa from a US Consulate and enter the United States to participate in The American Immigration Council's Exchange Program, you will need to complete the DS-156 form. The American Immigration Council often receives questions regarding answers to a few of the questions. Below, we have tried to help you in filling out this form so as to ensure speedy issuance of the J-1 visa. Please let us know if you have any questions.

24. "At What Address Will You Stay in The U.S.?" Most American Immigration Council J-1 trainees/interns do not know the address where they will stay during their training programs in the United States. If this is the case for you, you should write the address of your host company.

25. "Name and Telephone Numbers of Person in U.S. Who You Will Be Staying With or Visiting for Tourism or Business." You are not traveling to the US for "tourism or business". You are coming to the United States for an Exchange Visitor Program which falls into a separate category. Regardless, you should write the name of your Training Supervisor and his or her telephone contact information in this section. Make sure you write "Training Supervisor" as the title of your US contact.

26. "How Long Do You Intend To Stay in The U.S.?" While you are in J-1 status, you are permitted to stay for the duration of your program plus 30 days. These are the dates listed on your latest Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Status.

27. "What is The Purpose of Your Trip?" Since you have been sponsored by the American Immigration Council, you are permitted to come to the United States for an Exchange Visitor Training Program.

28. "Who Will Pay For Your Trip?" You should write the organization or company that is going to pay your remuneration during your program.

32. "Do You Intend To Work in The U.S.?" You should write, "Only as required by training program."

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS, WEBSITES, & ADDRESSES

American Immigration Council
Suite 200, 1331 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: (202) 507-7500
Fax: (202) 742-5619
www.aifl.org/exchange

Social Security Administration
Tel: 1-800-772-1213
www.ssa.gov

Internal Revenue Service
1-800-829-1040
www.irs.gov

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Tel: (202) 401-9810
exchanges.state.gov
Directory of U.S. Embassies abroad
usembassy.state.gov

CALL 911 for MEDICAL OR POLICE ASSISTANCE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DS-2019 form: The Certificate of Eligibility provided to you by the American Immigration Council that allows you to obtain a J-1 visa. You will need this to enter the U.S. on a J-1 visa and to obtain a Social Security card and work authorization. You will also need this form signed by the American Immigration Council before you leave the U.S. at any time during your training/internship.

Federal Income Tax: Taxes paid to the U.S. government by all income earners, including participants in trainee/intern programs.

IRS: Internal Revenue Service. The federal agency that enforces tax laws and collects taxes for the U.S. government.

I-94 card: Your arrival and departure record. The card is white and usually stapled in your passport. You receive the card on the airplane before you enter the country and Immigration

officials will take half of the card upon your arrival and return the other half to you stamped with the date and “J-1 D/S”. “D/S” stands for “Duration of Status” and means that you may stay lawfully in the United States pursuing your training/internship program for the length of time listed on item 3 (dates of program) of your DS-2019. If your I-94 card does not say “J-1 D/S”, please contact the American Immigration Council.

I-901 form: The receipt that the \$100 SEVIS fee was paid.

J-1 visa: The visa obtained from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate which stamped in your passport. The visa gives the dates and number of times during which you can enter the United States.

Medicare: A government fund to provide health care to elderly U.S. citizens. Medicare taxes are withheld from the checks of U.S. citizens but you are exempt from this tax

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

Port of entry: the location where you 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. You must be in “Active” status in SEVIS to maintain your J-1 visa status while in the United States.

Social Security Number: A taxpayer identification number used for payroll purposes in the United States.

USCIS: United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. The federal agency that exclusively focuses on immigration and citizenship services and can assist you with information on forms and fees concerning your stay in the U.S.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL

The American Immigration Council is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, educational, charitable organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of immigration law and policy, and the value of immigration to American society; to promoting public service and excellence in the practice of immigration law; and to advancing fundamental fairness and due process under the law for immigrants.

AMERICAN IMMIGRATION COUNCIL
Suite 200, 1331 G Street, Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 507-7500 • Fax: (202) 742-5619
E-mail: info@ailf.org • Website: www.ailf.org