

AIFS *Trainee*

PARTICIPANT

ORIENTATION

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PARTICIPANT ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

This handbook is your step-to-step guide of everything that you'll need to know while taking part in your programme with AIFS. From even before you leave your front door, all the way to when you are enjoying your time in the US, we've got your back!

It's lots of hard work, but it is important to remember that AIFS is first and foremost a cultural exchange programme. We are required by the US Department of State Exchange Visitor Program Regulations to operate in the spirit and intent of the legislation that created the J-1 visa. The primary goals of the programme are:

- Mutual understanding
- Personal growth
- Cultural advancement
- Global perspective

In addition, your Programme will enhance your skills and expertise in your academic/occupational field and give you in-depth knowledge of the American working environment. During your time with your host employer you will receive structured and guided training to immerse yourself in your organisation and learn valuable skills that will enhance your future career. After you have completed your time with your host employer, you will then have up to 30 days of free time to travel and holiday throughout the US. Ultimately you should productively and positively interact with Americans, develop your work-based skills in your organisation, experience the lifestyle, and actively engage with the American people both inside and outside of your host employer.

We are confident that through productive dialogue and interpersonal relationships you will return to your home country to share a positive view of the USA and its citizens.

Tell us if at any time you feel that the cultural exchange component may be lacking for you. Likewise, as you forge friendships, gain valuable work and life experience, learn about the world and grow personally please let us know about it. That's what the programme is all about!

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SECTION 1

CONTACTING AIFS

Contacting AIFS

Use the contact details on this page for any queries you may have once you are in the USA. When contacting our U.S. Office in Stamford, Connecticut - please identify yourself clearly by stating your name.

Calling AIFS

 The AIFS US office in Stamford, Connecticut maintains an emergency phone support service. If your enquiry is not of an extreme nature or emergency please send an email to our dedicated help team at trainee@aifs.com and we will get right back to you!

If you do try and call and the phones are busy, please keep trying. It is also important that you always take the name of the staff member you are speaking to so you will be able to ask to speak to that person again (should you require a follow up).

Please Note: If you are calling these numbers from outside the USA you will have to use the appropriate international code at the beginning of the number. From the UK, you would add **001**.

Important Phone Numbers When You Are In The USA:

AIFS FREE PHONE FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE US:

1-866-222-2074

(9am-5pm EST. Mon-Fri - general enquiries; 24/7 for emergencies)

This number is only free if you are calling from a landline/pay phone. Mobile calls will incur a charge.

STATE DEPT/J1 VISA HELPLINE:

1-866-283-9090

jvisas@state.gov

(24-7)

AIFS US OFFICE:

1-800-727-8233

(9am-5pm EST. Mon-Fri)

Free to call from land line/pay phone

US OFFICE – INTERNATIONAL CALLERS:

1-203-399-5409

INSURANCE CLAIMS:

1-855-327-1411

(24 hour)

24-Hour Emergency Number:

1-866-222-2074



General Enquiries - trainee@aifs.com

Email: If your query isn't time sensitive, e-mail is the most efficient and effective means of contacting our office. Remember to first check your Online Account before getting in touch as a lot of information such as your Group Cover details can be found here.

Any emergency calls received to the AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut outside of the times stated will be answered by our Out of Office answering service. This service is not staffed by AIFS and means your call will be noted and then passed on to a member of staff who is on emergency duty. You'll then be phoned back by an AIFS staff member as soon as possible, depending on the urgency of the situation.

Please note that designated sponsors are required to provide the J-1 Visa Hotline number **(1-866-283-9090)** to all incoming exchange visitors.

Designated AIFS Responsible Officer: Andrew Newberry.

Quick Tip: All of these operating hours listed are in Eastern Standard Time (EST). America is BIG. So much so that it spans across NINE different time zones! So please keep in mind it might not be the same time in our AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut that it is with you. Find out what time zone you are in and make sure to do the math to work out the time difference before you call.

Making calls in the US

Calling International Numbers from an American phone in the US:

- 011 – US exit code; dial first for international calls made from the USA
- Country code (E.g. UK -- 44, Poland - 48, Aus - 61, NZ - 64)
- Phone number:
 - Landlines -- area code + local number. Total of 10 digits
 - Mobile phones - 10 digits
- Sample call from the US to a London landline: 011 44 20 ???? ????

Calling an American number in the USA:

- Phone numbers in the USA start with a 1. If you are using a payphone, American mobile or landline phone – just dial 1 then the rest of the number.
- If you are using a UK mobile – put 001 or + before the 1.

SECTION 2

WHAT TO DO IN
AN EMERGENCY

Calling AIFS in an Emergency

The emergency number is answered in out of hours times by call service staff who will help determine the nature of the emergency. When calls are deemed to be urgent the call service will contact the AIFS staff person on duty and arrange for them to call you back and offer our assistance.



Do not call our 24-hour emergency service for questions of a routine nature or anything that can wait until the next business day, when we will happily answer your question. This number goes to a call service that will put you through to a member of AIFS staff, who is on 24-hour duty.

AIFS 24-hour Number:

1-866-222-2074

Hopefully you will not need to use this number but it is good to know who to call, if and when you need help. The AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut maintains a 24-hour emergency service for dire situations that cannot wait until normal business hours.

- You should call this number if, for example, a family member is ill etc.
- We ask that you only call the emergency free phone number outside business hours if your situation involves threats to your physical welfare or an abrupt departure from your assignment.
- If you phone the emergency number outside business hours, please press '0' on your touch tone phone - or hold the line to be connected with the emergency answering service, they will in turn contact our Duty Officer who will try and call you back within an hour.

Please resist the temptation to immediately phone your parents, if/when problems occur. We may be able to solve your problem immediately and your parents will not necessarily be in a position to help. Also keep in mind the time difference, as your parents will not appreciate a phone call at 2am, especially if you are upset.

Extreme Emergencies

911 is the telephone number for police, fire and ambulance in the United States. The use of this number is for emergency circumstances only, and to use it for any other purpose (including non-emergency situations) can be a crime. Dialling 911 from any telephone in the US will link the caller to an emergency dispatch centre, which can send emergency responders to the caller's location in an emergency.

AIFS has arranged for you to be covered by a Travel Emergency Service. *On Call International* are an organisation that can provide assistance in medical or legal emergencies. They have a 24/7 multilingual contact centre with staff (who are not

AIFS staff), who are able to act as a conduit between treating physicians, hospitals, families, our Group Cover provider and ourselves as your programme sponsor. Often, HIPPA privacy laws protect medical status and *On Call International* navigates these sensitivities to assist parents. *On Call International* also arranges all of our nursing accompaniment and medical repatriation.

On a practical level when dealing with any IMMEDIATE health crisis, **911** are the proper resource to contact. *On Call International* can be called for assistance in emergencies such as:

Extreme medical emergencies E.g. if you're involved in a car accident.
Extreme legal emergencies.

On Call International can be reached at:

Phone:

- **1-855-327-1411** (still a free call inside Canada and USA)
- **+1-312-935-1703** (outside the USA call)

Email:

- mail@oncallinternational.com

SECTION 3

ARRIVING IN THE USA

You've made it!

At this point you've departed the plane and you're waiting in-line at Customs & Immigrations; and just about to begin an amazing experience in the US. There are some things that you need to know to make sure that everything goes as smoothly as possible - so read this section carefully!

What To Expect & Have With You At Immigration



You MUST take Customs & Immigration as seriously as the Immigration Official takes it! They have the power to deny you entry to the U.S – so do not make inappropriate or silly jokes of any nature.

You may have heard of ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization), which is the online application you have to submit before you can visit America as a tourist. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO THIS** as you have a J-1 Cultural Exchange Visa!

Note: If you already have an ESTA from a previous trip to the US as a tourist, then this **WILL NOT** affect your entry whatsoever.

You will need to complete the Customs Declaration Form. Usually this form is given to you at check-in, at your departure airport. Failing that, this will be handed to you on the flight or will be available in the Customs arrival area upon your arrival in the USA.

You should have the following documents in your hand luggage before you get to the immigration desk:

- Passport with DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility) for J-1 Exchange Visitor Status and SEVIS I-901 receipt (white forms received in your visa mailing).
- Customs Declaration Form (CF-6059 Blue Form).
- Placement Information – full details of your host employer and contract with them, this can be a screen shot of your AIFS placement page.
- Signed copy of your DS-7002 (Training Plan) Form
- The address of where you will be living for your customs form.
- Phone number for AIFS **1-800-727-8233**.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
FORM APPROVED
OMB NO. 1651-0009

Customs Declaration
19 CFR 122.27, 148.12, 148.13, 148.110, 148.111, 148.8, 31 CFR 53.06

Each arriving traveler or responsible family member must provide the following information (only ONE written declaration per family is required):

1. Family Name
First (Given) _____ Middle _____
2. Birth date Day _____ Month _____ Year _____
3. Number of Family members traveling with you _____
4. (a) U.S. Street Address (hotel name/destination) _____
(b) City _____ (c) State _____
5. Passport issued by (country) _____
6. Passport number _____
7. Country of Residence _____
8. Countries visited on this trip prior to U.S. arrival _____
9. Airline/Flight No. or Vessel Name _____
10. The primary purpose of this trip is **business**: Yes No
11. I am (We are) bringing:
(a) fruits, vegetables, plants, seeds, food, insects: Yes No
(b) meats, animals, animal/wildlife products: Yes No
(c) disease agents, cell cultures, snails: Yes No
(d) soil or have been on a farm/ranch/pasture: Yes No
12. I have (We have) been in close proximity of (such as touching or handling) **livestock**: Yes No
13. I am (We are) carrying **currency or monetary instruments** over \$10,000 U.S. or foreign equivalent: Yes No
(see definition of monetary instruments on reverse)
14. I have (We have) **commercial merchandise**: Yes No
(articles for sale, samples used for soliciting orders, or goods that are not considered personal effects)
15. **Residents** — the **total value of all goods**, including commercial merchandise I/we have purchased or acquired abroad, (including gifts for someone else, but not items mailed to the U.S.) and am/are bringing to the U.S. is: \$ _____
Visitors — the **total value of all articles** that will remain in the U.S., including commercial merchandise is: \$ _____

Read the instructions on the back of this form. Space is provided to list all the items you must declare.

I HAVE READ THE IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS FORM AND HAVE MADE A TRUTHFUL DECLARATION.

X _____
(Signature) Date (day/month/year)

In addition to reviewing your documents, an Immigration Official will:

Take all your biometric details (finger and iris scan). The fingerprinting is electronic, on a digital palm-pad, and the iris scan happens by photograph.

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will:

- Stamp your SEVIS Form for duration of status (“D/S”) for J visa holders, with a date and port of entry.



BE SURE YOU HAVE RECEIVED YOUR DS-2019! If you do not receive this, or lose it during your stay in the US, you will be responsible for any costs to get replacement forms. These fees can be very costly!

- They will also ask you some questions; such as ‘What are you doing in the USA?’ and ‘How long will you be here?’. Be sure to be prepared for this and, again, please answer appropriately.

GETTING TO YOUR ACCOMMODATION!

Now the fun really starts - It’s time to travel to your home for the duration of your stay in the US! You may be staying in local accommodation close to where you will be working or on the site of your Host Employer. Please follow the travel instructions that you have received and start getting to know your new area!

If you have any issues on your journey, then authorised taxi services and Ubers are usually available. You can also call our office on **1-800 727 8233** and we can assist.



Quick Tip: If you have a smartphone with 4G capabilities, **TURN OFF YOUR DATA ROAMING!** Make sure you do this before you leave for the US, because if it is turned on, you will be charged and you will find your phone bill is a lot higher than usual.

SECTION 4

LIFE IN THE US

The information contained within this section is general, as all Host Employers are very different and have their own rules, expectations and culture - but a large majority can be considered the same. This information is still important and will help prepare you for life in the US.

Accommodation and Local Resources

Full details of your accommodation arrangements will have been made before you arrive in the US so you have plenty of time to prepare! Your accommodation location will have been agreed with your Host Employer so it should be easy for you to travel to your organisation if you are not staying on site. This will be your home for the duration of your time in the US so you can get settled in and unpack your belongings! It's time to make friends with your neighbours too – they will most likely be other participants on the Programme or colleagues at your Employer so make sure to say hello!

Try to familiarise yourself with your local area as soon as possible – learn where the nearest bus or public transport stop is, where your local food store and coffee shops are. You may also have access to facilities in your accommodation such as communal kitchens, living areas and gyms so make sure to check these out. Local libraries are a great resource for far more than just books. Local libraries often host various workshops, meet and greets and classes at little or no cost to the attendees. Another underutilized resource are local recreation centers. Typically, local recreation centers have a variety of sports leagues, which are a great way to get out and meet people, while also having some fun! Within your new area, you'll typically have access to several banking institutions, some of which you have in your home country. Should you need to open a bank account, most major banks will allow you to open an account after you obtain your Social Security number.

You will have received instructions from your Host Employer about how to get to your organisation, practice these before your first day so you don't need to panic on day one. Although the area you will be staying in is as safe as possible, we do recommend taking basic safety precautions when exploring, especially in unfamiliar areas.

We expect you to stay in the same accommodation for the duration of your time on the Programme, if this changes you must notify AIFS within ten days so we can update this on the SEVIS registration system. Please also make sure to keep us updated with any change in your contact details – email, phone number within the same timeframe.

Quick Tip: Make sure to learn your new address in full so you can always find how to get home! Google Maps can be very helpful when exploring your new neighbourhood.

What To Do When You First Arrive Checklist

- Familiarise yourself with your new surroundings.

- Walk around, as you will feel more in control if you know the neighbourhood your accommodation is in, where your closest public transport stop is, where your Host Employer is etc.
- Make friends. It is a big step to alleviating homesickness.
- Keep in touch with the people back home, but put a limit on telephoning. Write letters, e-mails or WhatsApp messages of your activities and new experiences. Let them know you'd like to hear from them, too.
- Seek new opportunities. As scary as it is to be in a new professional environment you are there to learn new skills and it will provide opportunities to meet people who can teach you new skills.
- Do something! Look for someone to help out!
- Find the new staff. It's always nice to know you are not the only one feeling a little lost.

Quick Tip: Make it your intention to get to know **EVERY SINGLE PERSON** who you will be working with. The more people you know, the better your experience will be!

Your Host Employer

Your first few days at your host employer are going to be a completely new way of life and this is what's so exciting about it all! You're going to be tired and jet-lagged from the time change and are going to be forced to adapt to a way of living and working, which is completely foreign to you. Remember that this is why you signed up for this experience; you want to try new things and meet new people!

When you arrive at your Host Employer you will have training, which will be specific to the routine and rules of your organisation. This is may be called

ORIENTATION or INDUCTION.

This will outline the policies in place at your Host Employer and will familiarise you with your new working environment. You will be introduced to your colleagues and your Supervisor who will be overseeing your placement. Take the chance to ask any questions you have so you know where to go if you need help and what is expected of you.

Your Training Plan will be one of your most important documents during your placement so make sure to keep it safe! Your Employer will be using this to guide your time with them and it details what is expected of you, outlines your roles and

responsibilities as well as how you will be supervised and evaluated and ultimately what skills you hope to achieve. By now you should be very familiar with this but it can help if you have any questions while you settle in.

The aim of your time with your Host Employer is to gain hands-on experience in your work area and develop professionally so do make the most of any training opportunities or courses you are offered! Learn as much as you can from your American colleagues and also share your ideas and professional experiences with them so they can learn too.

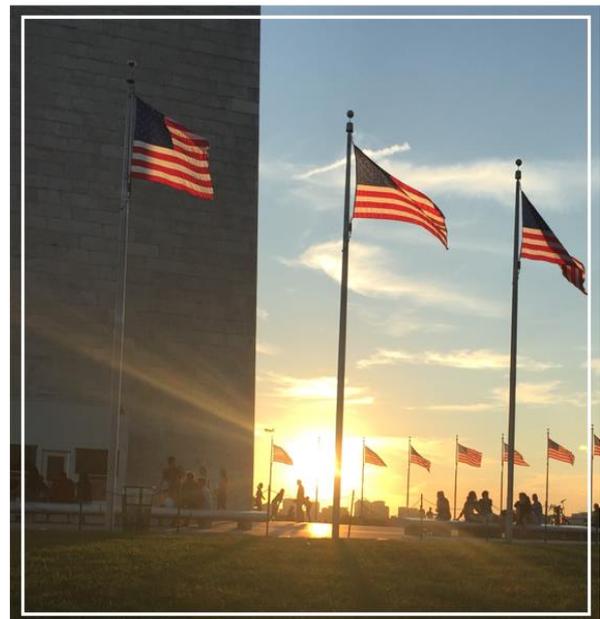
Your Host Employer and Supervisor are there to support you in your experience, please do speak with them if you have any issues or problems (AIFS is also here to help with any unresolvable issues). They will help you understand your responsibilities and settle into the professional environment whilst expanding your existing knowledge. They will also provide evaluations for your time on the Programme.

We do recommend keeping a log of hours that you work, any payments received and any trainings that you attend. It would also be useful to note any skills you have learned and review this against your Training Plan so you know your objectives of your placement are being met. This will be useful for you to reflect on after you have returned back to your professional field at home too!

If you do have any issues with your Host Employer or feel that your Training Plan is not being followed please call AIFS for assistance.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is often the term used to refer to the feeling of disorientation that you feel when you find yourself in an environment different to the one you're used to. You might presume culture shock is only suffered by those going to exotic locations. The US is so familiar from our TV screens so why would you find yourself struggling to adapt? But it's not unusual that many people participating on the programme are likely to suffer. Culture shock is for the most part a temporary stage of your experience and it does pass. The best way to cope with it is to understand what to expect and know you will come out the other side!



Initially you will be excited about your new adventure, you will have coped with the initial fear of getting on a plane on your own, will have spoken with your host employer and potentially your new colleagues and made your way to your

accommodation. The first 24 – 48 hours of arriving to the US can be the most difficult.

Yes, there's lots of excitement about the adventure ahead, but the reality of travel can mean jetlag and exhaustion. Getting to your accommodation can be stressful (navigating US railways, buses or more flights is not always easy!) and your arrival may not be what you imagined. You will also have the nerves of starting at your host employer and quickly being orientated into a new environment which may have lots of difference regulations from what you are used to at home. It's not uncommon for people to think they made a mistake coming on the programme. The great news though, is that you are surrounded by people who want you to succeed in your placement and are looking forward to helping you progress your career. You can speak to your host employer about any concerns. AIFS will also help get you in touch with other participants on our programme who are experiencing the same thing as you. Meeting people just like you who are new to the US and far from home, is your first secret weapon in combating culture shock! Reach out and make friends. Share your experiences and learn about your new home for the duration of your programme together.

The first week or so with your host employer can feel very strange. Often, you'll be taking part in orientations and inductions, learning your new working environment and meeting colleagues as well as settling into your new accommodation. Experience has shown us that if you can fully commit to learning about your organisation and say yes to any trainings or social opportunities you are offered this will help keep your mind off missing home and will help you get used to life in the US.

For some, the excitement of the new adventure soon starts to wear off ...and now you might find you are in the 'frustrated' phase of culture shock. This is the time when small problems or issues seem overwhelming. You are missing home and your friends and family, everything that was new and exciting is now not like home - 'Why don't they have 'proper' bread that isn't sweet?'. 'Why does the milk taste different?'. 'What is with the gap in the public toilet doors!?' You feel anxious and might have bouts of feeling down. You'll have self-doubts and feelings of alienation; you might resent that others don't seem to be struggling as you are and feel that you just can't cope.

How do you survive? Well, our experience shows that the following can be helpful...

- **Be prepared.** Expect you will have these low times and know there isn't anything wrong with you. It is normal, and it will pass.
- **Make your accommodation feel like home.** Decorate it with pictures, mascots and stuff from home. Craft your own little corner in your host organisation too, whether it's your desk or locker...

- **Bring a couple of treats with you and save them for the down times.** If you know you are fussy about your tea, bring the teabags you like, or BRITISH chocolate.
- **Talk to someone.** Find a friend on the programme or a colleague and let them know you are struggling. Don't be embarrassed, talking really does help. This is a normal part of settling into your new home. You can also call into our US or UK offices. Our staff have faced the same challenges – so don't suffer alone!
- **Make contact with home.** Facebook/WhatsApp can be better than a phone call if you worry that you won't keep things together for a call. Tell your friends and family that you miss them and would like to hear from them. Tell them what home comforts you are missing and ask them to send these to you. A care package from home can go a long way to help you cope, so even think of leaving a note at home with instructions of what to send to arrive a couple of weeks after you've left.
- **Give support to others.** Nothing works better to take your mind off your own troubles than helping someone else with theirs! Different people will be affected on different timescales to different degrees, so reach out to friends you have made on the programme. Helping someone share what they are missing and talking through their feelings, sharing yours, helps you make deeper connections with those around you – and that is the secret to settling in.

As unexpectedly as culture shock arrives.... it also passes. You'll find that you have reached an acceptance stage. You realise you don't need to fully understand or accept everything in your new culture in order to thrive in your new surroundings. You will feel more connected to the people around you and understand them better. You will stop needing to compare everything to home, and just accept differences without judgement, and over the following weeks you just might find your new accommodation now feels like home!

Sharing Your Culture

You can share your culture by talking with people and showing them what is important to you, sharing your experiences and thoughts, showing pictures of your family and home etc. You can also share your professional experiences – what is similar in your usual professional environment, what is different. Sharing ideas with your colleagues is a great chance for you all to enhance your current skills!

As you talk with your colleagues you will learn more about them and who they are. Cultural exchange is easy really – it is opening up to people, sharing and in turn being interested in them and understanding an American perspective.

You are taking part on a cultural exchange programme and you should make the most of what is at your disposal - people from all walks of life, backgrounds and cultures.

Life & Culture in the USA

America is **HUGE!** So the people, landscape and traditions can be extremely different from one state to the next. Overall, Americans are generally very positive people. So, expect lots of high fives, use of the word 'awesome' and big welcoming smiles. Americans love to meet people from outside of the USA, so don't be surprised if you get asked where you're from as soon as a local hears your accent.

One major difference that you may notice in America is that tipping is expected for service - especially at almost all sit-down restaurants. Generally, the average tip is **15% to 20%** of the total meal cost. There's a handy '[GlobeTips](#)' app that you can download that will help you calculate how much tip you should be leaving.

Common Policies:

Alcohol, Drugs & Smoking



The legal drinking age in the USA is 21. Do not attempt to purchase or consume alcohol if you are not of age as you will find yourself returning home quicker than you expected. It is also illegal to purchase alcohol for anyone else under the age of 21!

Drinking is prohibited during the workday, you must be ready to deal with any situation that can and will arise and you will not be able to perform to a satisfactory and safe level if you are drunk or suffering from the effects of alcohol. This will be considered as seriously unprofessional by your host employer and may result in disciplinary action. Smoking will only be allowed during designated breaks in clearly marked areas, please follow the policies of your organisation. **Do not make the mistake of jeopardising your entire experience by being irresponsible with alcohol.**

Sexual Harassment

AIFS advocates and most Host Employers operate a very strict no sexual harassment policy, this will be detailed in your orientation/induction, however it is important to be aware of the below.

Sexual harassment can take many forms, but can include:

Unwanted sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favours, and other behaviour or communications of a sexual, lewd, offensive or suggestive nature.

It's worth remembering that the US is very culturally different from other countries – particularly in relation to areas related to sex - so a joke or anecdote that may be acceptable in your own country may not be acceptable in the US. It's worthwhile considering how comments, gestures or communications may be received by your fellow colleagues and supervisors before you make any. You have a responsibility to ensure you do not engage in any activity that can be deemed sexual harassment. Equally you have a right to protection yourself and should not feel your position at your Host Employer is dependent on a relationship of a sexual nature with anyone else.

If you believe you are being sexually harassed (and you are not in immediate danger) you can consider doing the following:

Tell your harasser in writing that you object to their behaviour. Describe the specific behaviours that you object to and ask them to stop.

Talk to a supervisor or someone else in a position of authority. Tell them you feel uncomfortable and ask for their help in managing the situation and bringing it to an end.

Call AIFS for support or assistance at **1-800-727-8233**.

Make sure the person who is harassing you is completely aware you do not return their advances or find anything about their behaviour amusing or attractive. Be sure to say "no" firmly and without smiling or apologising.

If you have been injured, assaulted or threatened - or if you believe your physical safety is at risk, then you should let a senior member of staff know immediately and report this to the police, by telephoning **911**. Any report you make must be truthful! Making a false report is against the law.

Child Protection

Within your employment you may be working with children or adults and if so you should understand your responsibilities. AIFS expects our participants to not only abide by our safeguarding policy but also promote the welfare of children. AIFS believes that children and vulnerable adults should never experience abuse of any kind. We are committed to work in a way that keeps Child Protection and Safeguarding at the centre of our practices and procedures. We require all participants to understand that any inappropriate behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults in the USA will be reported to law enforcement authorities and the full force of the law will be brought to bear on perpetrators of abuse.



IMPORTANT: Under U.S Law, anyone under the age of 18 years old is considered a child. Any sexual relations with a person under the age of 18, even with their consent, is considered statutory rape and child abuse. Also, exposing minors to explicit photos, profane song lyrics or sexual discussions can be regarded as child abuse. So protect yourself in order to avoid any accusations regarding these.

Social Networking Sites

Social Networking Sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are awesome! Everyone loves them. AIFS loves them! They are a great way to learn more about your organisation and meet old and new staff members, before you even get there.



But you must be careful about what content you have on your profile!

Your host organisation may look at your online profile prior to departure and this could impact your employment offer or create misunderstandings before your arrival. This is now very common as part of the more general employment process so just think sensibly about what is appropriate to have on your profile. What is okay for your friends to see is not okay for your new employer, or new colleagues - who will want to try and find you online.

Keep in mind the cultural difference between where you are from and America. With alcohol specifically, it is illegal for anyone under 21 to consume alcohol at all, so host employers will not expect to see pictures of you excessively drinking or demonstrating lewd, drunken behaviour.

We are not saying that you should delete your profiles, as they are one of the best ways to keep in contact with all the new people you will meet during your Programme - but do make sure that you completely lock down the privacy settings on your social media accounts.

Sick Days

Imagine you're due to arrive at your Host Employer and you're not feeling well... what will you do? Your organisation sickness policy will have been explained to you at your orientation/induction, please follow this policy. It is usual to inform your Direct Supervisor via email or phone call as soon as you know you are unwell and may not be able to perform your duties. You may also need to seek medical care – the emergency number in the US is 911, this is for emergencies only. If you need to visit a local Medical Provider for less urgent care please look at the Group Cover tab on your AIFS profile to assist you in finding local providers. If you have an illness or injury requiring outside medical attention, remember you may be responsible for the first \$50 - \$250 of each illness or injury. If you are ill for an extended period of time or need additional support, please call our AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut.

Time Off

You should expect to work a minimum of 32 hours a week, although your full hours will have been agreed with your host employer before departure. On occasion you may be required to help with some additional tasks which have been detailed in your Training Plan. Holiday entitlement will be determined by your host employer. You should have some time to enjoy the culture and explore the US whilst on the programme.



Quick Tip: Try and take advantage of the local community resources like local transportation to get you around on days off, as well as recreation centres and even the odd museum!

The Role of Mum & Dad

Just because you are halfway around the world, it does not mean your parents will not be worried about you. Truth is, it's probably going to be the opposite! So what role can they take during your stay in the USA? During your programme your parents can be the reassuring figure you need when things do not always go well. On the other hand, they may assume things and take action that you did not request. Here are some helpful hints to keep your parents assured you are still alive and well:

- It's not uncommon to be having a fantastic time and for you to forget to call home. This will worry your parents; as for the most part they cannot contact you. This is especially true during any travels. If an emergency situation were to occur during your travels (natural disasters, major news breaking events etc.) please contact your parents right away to let them know you are safe.
- Be careful how you explain things to your parents. You may say something in casual conversation, but they may take it as a call for help. Many times parents have called our offices to express their concerns, without the participant's knowledge. This may cause unnecessary embarrassment should we call your supervisor to investigate a problem that may not exist.
- Keep your parents updated. As soon as you know your travel plans - including your return flight details - please keep your parents informed, so they know where you are.

Contacting Home

Getting in touch with home is important, but not always easy with time differences and other commitments. Mobile reception may also be poor (if existent at all) and even sending emails can be difficult. You will hopefully be able to use a computer at your host employer to email home. On your days and time-off too, you will also be able to spend more time contacting your friends and family – but we just want you to realise that it is not as easy as it is at home.

SECTION 5

MONEY MATTERS

Payment

The AIFS Trainee programme is fundamentally for the experience. However, you may have agreed a payment with your Host Employer for your time with them. This will be outlined in your contract and you will need to speak with your Employer about when and how you will be paid. This may be in weekly, bi-weekly or monthly instalments and you will need to work out your budget so this will fund your whole experience in the US including your travel plans! You should also speak with your Employer about how they will pay you – will they be able to pay into your usual bank account (make sure to speak with your bank about any fees due for international payments and to confirm their exchange rate) or most likely, will you need to open a US bank account. Your Employer will be able to assist you in setting this up. Please keep any documentation of payments received as this will be useful when completing your tax forms.

Budget

You are responsible for your living and travel costs whilst in the US. You may receive some meals whilst with your Host Employer and this will have been confirmed with you prior to your arrival. You should expect to cover any social events, trips on days off, food costs and other general living costs and will need to budget accordingly.

To give you a rough idea of costs in the USA, check out our guide below...

	Starbucks (tall coffee): approx \$4
	Cinema ticket: approx \$10
	McDonalds meal: approx \$6
	Subway meal deal: approx \$7

Staff within our offices have participated in lots of different cultural exchange opportunities and to help you budget we asked them how much money they would spend and we came out with:

Average spent on a day off: \$50 - \$100

Some Host Employers may also offer the opportunity to travel and have nights away during your time off, so it may also be worth chatting with your Host Employer to find out more.

AIFS Fees

When you sign-up for a programme like the AIFS Trainee Program you are signing-up to take full advantage of the placement service and back-up that AIFS provides. We have been designated a J1 visa sponsor by the US Department of State, and we take the roles and responsibilities of this designation very seriously. We work hard to ensure we maintain the standards of customer service and support that are outlined in the visa regulations, and while we aim to make your placement process as smooth as possible there is a lot going on behind the scenes! Payment is taken by AIFS and you may see deductions for this outlined in any Payment documentation received from your Employer.

SECTION 6

QUITTING & BEING FIRED

Quitting

It is not unusual to feel unhappy at some point during your first two weeks. With the combination of culture shock, being in an unfamiliar place/country, missing friends and family - you may start to wonder what you've gotten yourself into! Please do not panic or worry yourself - as this is completely normal! If you feel this way, please speak to other participants on the programme - as there's a good chance that they'll be feeling exactly the same as you. Your host employer and colleagues are there to support you too! The best advice we can give you is to give 100% and get stuck into American life. After a while you will forget that you ever missed the world at home!

If you are still unhappy after 4 weeks, here is what we suggest that you do:

- Speak with your supervisors. They were new once and will understand the problems that you are having. If there are particular issues with your work or responsibilities they may be able to help you come up with some strategies to make this easier and are ultimately there to support you so take the opportunity to speak with them!
- Contact the AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut if you are still unhappy and have tried all other solutions.



IMPORTANT: Never leave your placement without contacting the AIFS US Office In Stamford, Connecticut first!

Quitting your job with AIFS is not as simple as quitting your job at home. It's not appropriate for you to just up and leave and if you do decide to quit, here is what you need to do:

- Talk to your supervisor during normal business hours and let them know why you are quitting.
- There may be financial responsibility for breaking your contract.
- Call the AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut so that we can help you with the situation.
- We can then let you know your options and assist with moving or arranging travel plans.



Note on quitting: Please remember that it is a serious decision to leave. Consult first with us so that we may attempt to resolve the situation together. If there is a true mismatch, our professional staff will work toward saving your cultural exchange experience. Think hard, however, before deciding to end your programme early. You will be responsible for domestic and international travel costs and other financial implications related to leaving the programme and

breaking its terms and conditions. There is also the matter of your J1 visa status that may reflect cessation of employment.

If You Face Disciplinary Action or are Fired

We hope that you will not be in this situation, however we are here to support you throughout the process if needed. The disciplinary procedure for your host employer will be explained to you at your orientation/induction and you can expect this to be followed. The severity of the disciplinary outcome will depend on the circumstances. Please do speak with your host employer if you are unsure of any details or do not understand the process. Many issues will hopefully be able to be resolved without early termination of your contract, however this may be a possibility. If this happens it will reduce the length of your visa and you may be responsible for any additional travel or flight change costs.

Please call AIFS **1-800-727-8233** as soon as possible so we can support you and assist further in the process.

SECTION 7

VISAS and Medical Information

VISAS

What is a DS-2019 form?

The DS-2019 form is your visa form (Certificate of Eligibility). The DS-2019 form contains your programme start and end dates, employer's address, and your personal biographical data. This form must be taken to the Embassy on the day of your appointment. Failure to do so will lead to you being turned away from your appointment and therefore delay your visa application process, which could possibly lead to losing your placement. Please read carefully the visa instructions sent to you by AIFS and follow the correct procedures. After your visa interview, your DS-2019 will be returned to you by the Embassy or Consulate.



You must keep your DS-2019 and SEVIS I-901 receipt together. If you try and enter the US without them it may delay your entry or lead you to being denied entry! If you lose either of these forms prior to departure (or do not receive your DS-2019 back from the Embassy) please contact AIFS immediately.

Note: The Embassy or Consulate are unlikely to retain your SEVIS I-901 at interview but if they do and it is not returned afterwards, again please notify AIFS.

I have lost my DS-2019 on the day of my flight! Should I fly?

Yes! Although the officer at the Port of Entry has the right to refuse you entrance, you will more than likely be given temporary entrance to the US. If this is the case, you will be given instructions to send documents to a specific address, which will activate your J-1 visa. Contact AIFS if this happens or you have any questions about your DS-2019 form. **Please Note:** If you do enter without the form, it is IMPERATIVE that you send the necessary paperwork and documents to the US Department of Homeland Security within the time frame specified. Failure to do so can affect your status in the US and continued participation on the programme.

Programme Participants

The State Department have stipulated, an applicant's start and end date of their DS-2019 form must correspond exactly with their placement duration. Therefore, if your placement begins June 1st and ends March 14th, then you can stay for this duration plus an extra 30 days.

The additional 30 days you can stay is known as the Grace Period. During the Grace Period, you are prohibited from leaving the US and returning on your J-1 visa. This means that you will not be able to travel to Canada, Mexico - or any of the adjacent islands - and then re-enter the US. You may have heard instances of applicants leaving the US during their Grace Period and then re-entering on the Visa Waiver Programme or ESTA - but you should not expect that this will happen to you if you decide to leave and try and re-enter. The decision to allow someone to re-enter is at the sole discretion of an immigration official and the advice from the US Embassy for anyone who wishes to leave the US and re-enter during their Grace Period, is that they should apply for a B-2 Tourist Visa, prior to departure. For more information on doing this, please contact your local Embassy or Consulate.

Whilst you are on your grace period you are NOT allowed to work.

Please Note: The programme is designed for you to experience professional development and life within the US and you should primarily be resident in the US for the duration of your Programme. You are able to leave the US for a short period of time, however you must not reside for more than 30 days outside of the US during your time on the Programme.

If you wish to leave the US and enter Canada, Mexico or an adjacent island/territory **DURING** your placement and whilst your DS-2019 is still valid, please read the information below regarding the Travel Validation Signature. To re-enter the USA, your DS-2019 and visa must be valid. If your visa expires before the end date on your DS-2019 then you will **NOT** be able to re-enter the USA.

Visa Sponsorship

At AIFS, we're very proud of our J1 visa sponsorship. It sets us aside from other companies and we work really hard to maintain our standards and provide the best possible customer service.

AIFS Visa Sponsor Info:

American Institute for Foreign Study – Trainee Program
1 High Ridge Park
Stamford, CT 06905

Phone: 1-800-727-8233

Responsible Officer: Andrew Newberry | anewberry@campamerica.com | 203-399-5117

Alternate Responsible Officer: Ashley DiCarlo | adicarlo@campamerica.com | 203-399-5106

Alternate Responsible Officer: Graeme Marshall | gmarshall@campamerica.com | 203-399-5102

Alternate Responsible Officer: Jenna Hasskarl | jhasskarl@campamerica.com | 203-399-5067

Office of Designation:

<https://j1visa.state.gov/>

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

Tel: 202-632-2805
Fax: 202-632-2701
Email: Jvisas@state.gov

[Exchange Visitor Program Participant Welcome Brochure](#)

Sponsor Rules for Exchange Visitors

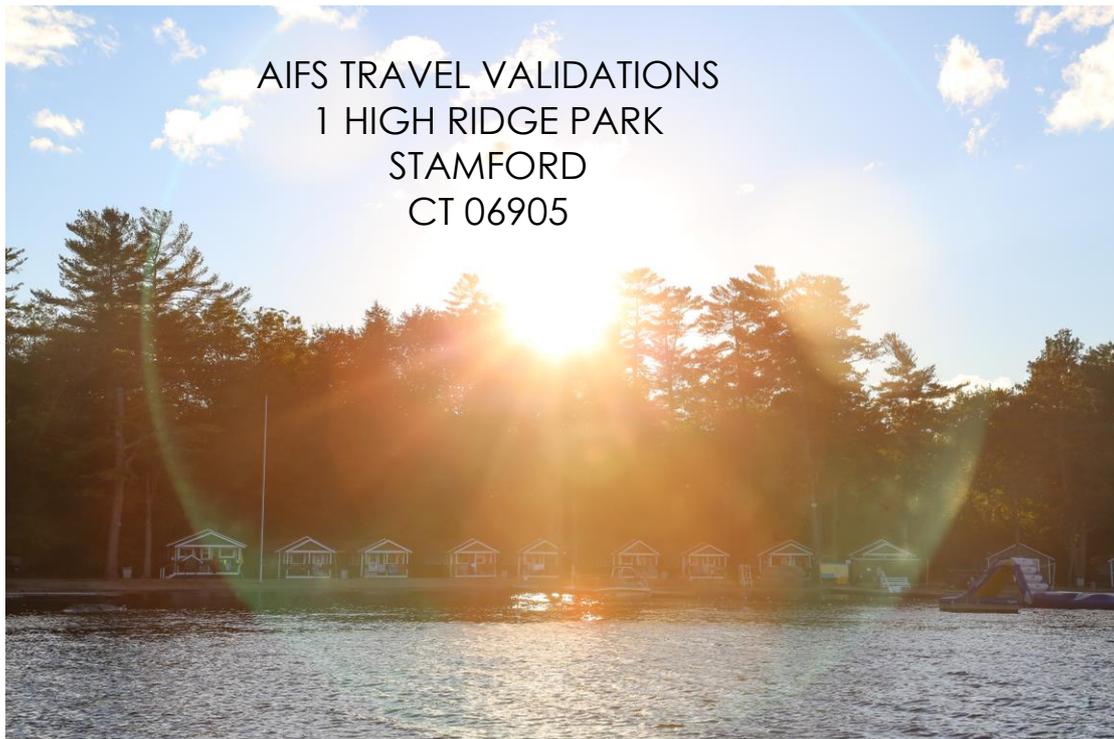
While participating in the Trainee J-1 Visa program, you must adhere to the following regulations:

- You are required to complete the duration of your contract.
- Alert AIFS to any changes in your contract, training plan or contact information, including but not limited to, changes in your email address, phone number or residential address
- Not obtain a second job. You are only permitted to work for your host employer
- Complete program evaluations in a timely manner when instructed to by your J-1 Visa Sponsor, AIFS
- Agree to abide by all appropriate regulations and instructions of the U.S. Government, including returning home within the designated 30 days following the successful completion of the program

Travel Validation Signature

You must have a Travel Validation signature on your DS-2019 form if you are traveling to a country or island that does **NOT** border the US (territories not requiring a signature are: Canada, Mexico, The Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Cuba, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Miquelon, Saint Pierre Martinique, Trinidad, The Windward & Leeward Islands, and other British, French, Netherlands territories or possessions in or bordering on the Caribbean Sea). It is required for travel to ALL countries not listed.

This signature can only be obtained within the USA (it cannot be signed before departure) and the purpose of the signature is to notify US Customs and Border Officials that you are still in good standing on the programme. It can be obtained by mailing your DS-2019 form to our AIFS US Office in Stamford, Connecticut **AT LEAST 2 WEEKS PRIOR** to your planned date of departure from the US. Applicants **MUST** include either \$15 to cover the cost of express shipping the form back to you or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:



Know Before You Go

When departing the US with a future intent to return, applicants require:

- Passport, with visa stamp (Your visa must have an M on it, making you eligible for multiple entries).
- Your DS-2019 with Travel Validation Signature.
- Possibly a tourist visa/card for country you are visiting. **Note:** A visitor visa is now required for travel to or transit through Canada by air.

Applicants must also understand:

- Visa dates must be valid for re-entry and if the visa has expired or Grace Period has begun, applicants will not be allowed to re-enter on the J1 and must apply for another visa.
- You are only allowed to travel outside of the country and re-enter on the J1 visa **DURING** your programme dates. After you leave your host employer, you are on your Grace Period and must remain within the United States during your travels if you want to remain on the J1.

Need to Know:

Travel outside the U.S. is covered (no coverage in your home country) while you are a participant of the programme. This includes Canada and Mexico. If you require medical attention outside of the USA it is most likely that you will be required to pay for this treatment at the time. You can then submit a claim.

MEXICO

Mexican Consulate
27 E 39th Street
New York, NY 10016
1-(212) 217-6400

<http://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/nuevayork/>

CANADA

Canadian Consulate
1251 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020
1-(212) 596-1628

http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/new_york/



How to Remain Lawful Non-Immigrant Status

To be compliant with the US Government regulations, which govern the J-1 Visa program, all participants are required to follow the following rules:

- As your sponsor, AIFS must be notified of your arrival within ten days after you arrive in the United States. Your Host Employer will need to notify us so that we can validate you as safely arrived at camp in the SEVIS system (the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is the web-based system used by the Department of Homeland Security for maintaining information on international non-immigrant students and exchange visitors in the United States).
- Our sponsorship is only valid for the Host Employer that we have placed you on.
- You must report to AIFS within ten days any changes in your phone number, email address and U.S. address.

US Office 24/7 Contact Number: 1-866-222-2074

Please bear in mind that as your sponsor we will have to terminate the program of participants who fail to comply with the regulations. Note that failure to maintain health/medical cover, conviction of a crime, disciplinary action, engaging in unauthorized employment, violating sponsor rules or regulations and involuntary suspension from the most recent exchange program are also ground for termination of your program.

GROUP INTERNATIONAL ACCIDENT & SICKNESS COVERAGE

All participants are enrolled in Group International Accident & Sickness coverage arranged for the American Institute for Foreign Study, Inc which meets the US Department of State requirements for J1 visa programmes.

Getting Sick whilst in the US

The first thing to understand is that the US does not provide free healthcare for US citizens nor for foreign visitors. This includes visits to Accident & Emergency departments (ER) at hospitals, provision of Ambulances or visits to a local doctor. There is always a charge, and costs in the US are amongst the highest in the world. Your Group Cover provided through AIFS covers you (to specified levels as detailed in the policy document) throughout the period that you are under our J1 visa sponsorship. This includes during your 30 days travel. For full details on coverage period, levels of cover and exclusions and endorsements see the policy document linked on your AIFS application.

The Group Cover does have 'deductible' charges. This means that you are responsible for certain initial costs on each claim you make. If you go to a hospital emergency room (ER) for an illness or injury and are not admitted as an inpatient for treatment, you will be required to pay the initial \$250 of the costs claimed. Treatment provided at other medical facilities will have an initial cost of \$50 that you will need to pay.

If you become sick or have an injury during your time on the Programme, then the following information may help you find the best help. Remember you will have a lower deductible charge if you attend an Urgent Care Facility rather than ER.

Firstly, you need to know that in an emergency, you dial 911 to access Police, Fire and Ambulance services. Generally, like in your home country, you should only use emergency services in immediate and life-threatening situations.

If emergency services are not required, then you are likely to have some choices and decisions to make. The following information, and that on the Group Cover pages of your online account will help you find the most appropriate help for your situation. If you are struggling for a solution, give us a call and we will be happy to assist you.

The main places to access medical help and assistance are as follows:

Pharmacies

If you are looking for advice on general low-level colds and infections then the local Pharmacy can be a good place to start. The Pharmacist can give you advice on the best cold remedy and pain relief that you might need, and they can help you understand equivalencies to medications that you might have used at home. Advice in a pharmacy is often freely available and you only pay for the costs of the medication.

Urgent Care Centres

Urgent Care is a category of walk-in clinic focused on the delivery of care in a dedicated medical facility outside of a traditional emergency room. Urgent Care Centers primarily treat injuries or illnesses requiring immediate care, but not serious enough to require an ER visit. Staff at an Urgent Care facility can prescribe medication from antibiotics to pain medications, stitch small wounds and treat uncomplicated sprains and broken bones. Urgent Care Centers will usually be open for extended hours from early morning through to evening, and including weekends and holidays, some might offer 24-hour service. The majority of Urgent Care Centers treat on a "first come, first serve" basis and do not require an appointment. The wait times to see a physician are much less than a larger emergency department at a hospital.

Emergency Room (ER)

ER (maybe you know it as Accident & Emergency, or Casualty) is a department of a hospital and provides immediate treatment for illnesses or injuries. Patients are generally triaged when they arrive so that the more severe cases are addressed first with the less severe cases waiting longer. Emergency departments have access to all the equipment and resources their supporting hospital does (always attached to the building or at least on the same campus). Emergency services should be used for more urgent cases such as injuries or life-threatening illnesses.

Hospitalisation for psychiatric conditions is unlikely to be covered by your Group Cover policy. If you are admitted because of concerns for your mental health or you are at risk of hurting yourself or others it is likely that you will be required to stay for a set period of evaluation and assessment. In such cases, you may be personally responsible for the costs incurred.



Drink or drug abuse will render your Group Cover void. Be responsible for making sensible decisions for your own welfare and for those around you. Stay healthy for the best summer!

SECTION 8

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

You are required to obtain a social security number so must apply in person in the United States to an official of the Social Security Administration. But please note that you must wait until at least two business days after your Host Employer has validated you in the SEVIS* system as having safely arrived. You may consult the SSA website at www.ssa.gov for the nearest branch office. However, please note that it can take up to 14 days for the Social Security Office database to sync up with the SEVIS system.

*** 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 F and M students in the United States and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools that enrol them. SEVIS also maintains information on Department of State designated exchange visitor program sponsors and J-1 visa exchange visitor program participants. SEVIS is a critical tool in our mission to protect national security while supporting the legal entry of the more than one million F, M and J non-immigrants to the United States for education and cultural exchange.**

The Social Security system in the United States originated as a supplemental retirement benefit for all citizens. Legislation requires that all employees in the U.S. be given a unique number to identify them as eligible for this benefit. As a J-1 Cultural Exchange visitor this benefit will not apply to you and you will be exempt from FICA/FUTA taxes. Although, you may still be required to obtain the number in order to receive any payment agreed.

At the first point of entry into the United States, information from your passport and DS-2019 is copied and entered into a database. This database is controlled by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) and is used for tracking purposes.

It is not guaranteed that once you apply for a social security card, you will receive one. This is determined through Social Security Association and CIS verification.

Having a social security number does not entitle you to work anywhere you wish in the United States. If you do not show up at your destination, or leave your position without advising us, we are obligated to formally terminate your visa status. Once we do this, all benefits associated with your entry into the United States - including your social security number - become null and void.

The processing of a Social Security application

To prepare for your visit to the Social Security office:

1. Visit www.ssa.gov to find the nearest branch**.
2. Find out if your branch requires a sponsor letter (We can provide one upon request).
3. Make sure that your Host Employer has validated you in the SEVIS system as having safely arrived at least two business days prior to visiting your local Social Security office.

4. Go to the local Social Security office and apply in person.
5. Bring your valid passport, copy of DS-2019 and I-94 card with you. This can be printed at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>.
6. Put down your U.S. address on the application so it can be mailed there***.
7. Ask for a "Letter of Acknowledgment" as proof that you applied.
8. If you encounter problems with any payment due because of social security issues, please call us at **1-800-727-8233**.

****It is important to note that each social security branch may operate differently, or may not be as familiar with the processes as others, based on location and volume.**

***** Your social security card will only be mailed to the address you provide on the application.**

Helpful suggestions:

- Print a Social Security application from the website, www.ssa.gov in advance of appearing at the social security office.
- Follow these suggested guidelines to help fill out the application form properly.

IMPORTANT! IMPORTANT! IMPORTANT!

Before you fill out this application, you will need your mailing address and phone number in the United States.

Item 1: **NAME** – First name, middle name and last name (family name).

Item 2: This refers to a US Social Security number. If you already have one of these and you have your card, you do NOT need to reapply. If you lost your card, complete this form and you will be sent a replacement card with the same number.

Item 3: **PLACE OF BIRTH** – City/town and country of birth.

Item 4: **DATE OF BIRTH** – The date should be written: month/day/year.

Item 5: **CITIZENSHIP** – Please check "legal alien allowed to work".

Items 6&7: Check appropriate boxes (item 6 and 7 is voluntary).

Item 8: **SEX** Choose between Male and Female.

Item 9a: **MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME** – Must be completed whether living or deceased. Write your mother's first name and her last name given at birth.

Item 9b: Leave blank.

Item 10a: **FATHER'S NAME** – Must be completed whether living or deceased. Write your father's first and last name.

Items 11-13: Only complete these items if you are applying for a replacement of a lost US Social Security Card.

Item 14: **TODAY'S DATE** – month/date/year.

Item 15: **DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER** – while in the US.

Item 16: **MAILING ADDRESS** while in the US.

Item 17: **YOUR SIGNATURE** – sign here.

Item 18: **YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE PERSON IN ITEM 1 IS**
– check.

In the event of a delay, you can still be registered on the payroll using the date you submitted the social security application. The Social Security Administration provides information on what your employer should do if this happens:

www.ssa.gov/employer/hiring.htm.

- Click on employers (on the right side under Information For).
- Click on Employer Responsibilities when Hiring Foreign Workers (3rd entry under resources).

General information about social security numbers for J1 visa holders (and foreign workers) can be found on the web as follows: www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10107.pdf.

Here you will be able to find information on what to do if you do not receive your Social Security number in a timely manner.

Over time the social security number has grown in importance and is used as an individual identification number for everything from insurance policies to bank accounts. Many establishments require social security numbers for individuals who receive compensation of any sort. This includes you, even though social security and

employment taxes do not apply to J1 visa holders nor, obviously, will you receive any retirement benefits.



Once again without exception, having a social security number does not entitle you to work wherever you wish in the United States.

SECTION 9

TAX

Due to changes to the tax laws in the U.S. income tax system, and the elimination of personal exemptions (which was \$4,050 per individual in 2017), participants who hold J-1 visas will now have taxes deducted from any payment received and will be required to file a U.S. Federal income tax return and in certain cases, a State income tax return to satisfy their U.S. income tax liability.



As AIFS is not a licensed U.S. tax advisor, we cannot give any advice or guidance for the completion of U.S. tax return forms.

Kindly note that as a non-resident alien of the U.S., the due date to file your income tax return for is usually 15th April.

Please note that our organisation does not have tax preparation capabilities but can provide a referral to an accounting firm which can assist with completing and filing the foregoing tax forms and remitting the tax due to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service ("IRS"). Below is an outline of the documents that you would be required to submit in connection with your U.S. tax reporting obligations.

What you will need to file your tax return(s):

1. **W-4 Form:** Employees must submit IRS Form W-4 (Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate) to their employers so that the proper amount of federal taxes could be withheld from their wages.
2. **W-2 Form:** This form is your U.S. earnings statement for the year, usually received in the January for the previous year. You will need to submit a copy to your tax preparer should you decide to retain an accounting firm to complete your Federal and State (if required) income tax returns. Employers are required by law to supply a W-2 but if you chose to prepare your tax return(s) yourself and know the amount of taxes that have been withheld, even though we do not recommend it, you might be able to calculate your income tax liability before your receive your W-2.
3. **IRS 1040 NREZ Form:** Declare your federal taxes using this form. Please be sure to read the form's instructions before filling it out.

4. **State Tax Form:** Declare your state tax- each state is different, so use the link to find information on your state's tax filing forms and procedures.

How to complete your tax declaration:

1. You can choose to file your tax declaration by yourself.
2. You can use designated tax software, such as Sprintax, that will guide you through the process in simple steps for a fee.



Further information about your Tax filing services will be sent out along with a reminder of the need to file a U.S. tax return in January/February.

SECTION 10

POST PLACEMENT TRAVEL

Once you're finished at your Host Employer you've got the whole of the US to explore. REMEMBER, you've got 30 days to travel after your Programme ends! You have the opportunity to further your cultural exchange experience by seeing some of the greatest sites and tourist attractions in the world!



Again, we recommend that it is not the time to leave the US to go to Mexico or Canada due to the impact of COVID-19. You will not be able to re-enter the country on your J1 Visa, and with different travel restrictions in place around the world due to COVID-19, it will make your life easier to stick to exploring the US during your post-placement travel.

This is the time where you should be in contact most with your parents. As soon as you leave your organisation, we have no idea where in America you might be. So, we are no use to any parents ringing up worried because their child hasn't been in contact for a while. So please keep this in mind when you are travelling and get in touch with your parents just to let them know where you are and that you're safe.

SECTION 11

CONCLUSION

This Participant Orientation Handbook is your guide to a great experience! It will help you with any problems you may have in the USA and will provide you with lots of handy tips and advice, so please make sure you have read through all sections carefully.

We also recommend that you print a copy of the handbook and pack it along with your luggage OR save it to your iBooks/Android alternative. That way you'll always have it with you in case you need it!

If you have any questions about any of the content in the Participant Orientation Handbook, then please get in contact with AIFS.

Another important resource for your time in the US is the [linked](#) Wilberforce Pamphlet issued by the Department of State outlining your Rights whilst in your work placement. Please do read this before departure and save a copy in case you need to access later on.

Remember, you are taking part in a cultural exchange and have been hired to develop your professional skills in your current field. Show America what you and your country have to offer and what they can learn from you, as well what you can learn from them.

Have an amazing time!