

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Life in the USA



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Welcome to the American Hospitality Academy, “AHA”. AHA prides us in collaborating with the best of the best! You have been selected because of your positive attitude, your dedication to sharing your culture while learning about others, and your desire to learn and grow within the hospitality industry. We congratulate and welcome you to our AHA team.

We understand that you had many choices when deciding which program to select. We thank you for deciding on AHA and feel you made the right choice! AHA is more than just an internship provider, more than a J-1 sponsor, we are passionate about providing experiences that transform lives, advance careers and foster international friendships. We are dedicated to providing a meaningful program of cultural exchange and professional development.

As you begin your cultural journey with AHA, we encourage you to travel with an open heart and mind. Communicate openly and effectively and extend a warm hand of friendship to everyone you meet along the way. Most importantly – **HAVE FUN!**

Best Regards,

The American Hospitality Academy Team

AHA Contact Information

Contact us anytime throughout your program. We are here for you every step of the way!

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Your J-1 Program

Chapter 1 – Introduction - With more than 30 years of experience dedicated to promoting cultural awareness through a wide range of training, education and certificate programs within the US and abroad, AHA has become the leader of providing comprehensive hospitality training and cultural exchange programs. Since 1986 we've successfully matched thousands of international and USA students with premier hotels, resorts and luxury hospitality organizations.

AHA is designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor intern, trainee and summer work and travel programs. As a proud J-1 Visa sponsor and cultural exchange organization, we encourage our participants and professional colleagues to learn about The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, also known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. This important act enables the Government of the United States to:

Increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange.

Strengthen the ties, which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world.

Promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement and thus assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world.

The AHA Difference - Imagine being immersed into a new culture, gaining valuable experience, growing personally and professionally while building international friendships.

Now imagine a little bit more...being a participant with AHA is unlike any other internship, training or work experience program you will find. AHA fosters an environment where diversity is valued, essential skills are developed and individual aspirations are fulfilled. Our unparalleled programs and services are delivered through AHA's World Campus, an online global community connecting participants from around the world with one another and the entire AHA team.

Certification Matters – Earning Your HPC! - Through World Campus you will have access to robust professional development seminars, training tools, leadership forums and the opportunity to earn AHA's Hospitality Professional Certificate (HPC).

Top industry organizations believe that a certificate puts a professional stamp on everything you do. Take advantage of this opportunity with AHA to earn the HPC certification showing your future employers your dedication and commitment to continuous professional development.

The Hospitality Professional Course emphasizes the development of both professional and personal leadership traits needed to be successful in the hospitality industry and in life. AHA's certificate programs draw upon the knowledge, skills, resources and passion of the entire AHA community and are recognized by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

Passport to Culture - Located in World Campus, you are invited to travel the world with Passport to Culture (PTC). Passport to Culture is an innovative collection of cultural activities designed to connect, enrich and empower cultural exchange. Exciting to PLAY! The objective is to collect passport stamps while participating in cultural exchange activities. PTC is more than just a game, each time you earn a stamp you are engaging in fascinating, fun-filled facts about people and places, food and drink, world treasures, greetings and gestures, customs and traditions. Most importantly, Passport to Culture will inspire global connections and friendships along the way

Chapter 2 – Intern, Train and Work Programs - AHA's programs provides students and young professionals primarily with a cultural exchange opportunity while gaining invaluable career training and work experience in the United States. AHA has three unique programs designed to fit the goals and expectations of our participants:

- ❖ J-1 Internship
- ❖ J-1 Training Program
- ❖ J-1 Work and Travel Program

The J-1 Intern and J-1 Trainee programs are designed for university students and young professionals to train at leading hotels and hospitality organizations around the USA for up to 12 months. The Intern/Trainee program provides on-the-job exposure to American techniques, methodologies, expertise, and enhances the participant's knowledge of American culture and society. You can then bring these experiences back with you to your home country. As a result, your new experiences will help further your hospitality career at home. At these locations host properties provide a competitive hourly rate and assistance with housing (you are responsible for the cost of housing and transportation).

J-1 Work and Travel Program - The J-1 Work and Travel programs provide exchange visitors primarily with a cultural exchange opportunity. Participants enjoy the unique opportunity to live and work in the United States during their summer vacation from college or university to experience and to be exposed to the people and way of life in the United States. Through AHA J-1 Visa sponsorship, qualified participants get the opportunity to experience American foods, style of living, citizens, nature, history, and more!

Practical Training Expectations - Having clear expectations of your internship and training experience is extremely important. Many participants have the perceived perception the internship and training program is "A Manager Training Program", this is not correct. The J-1 internship and trainee programs are designed to allow foreign students and young adults the opportunity to come to the United States to gain exposure to U.S. culture and to receive hands-on experience in the U.S. business practices of the hospitality industry – primarily a program of cultural exchange. Participants need to expect to live and train with other participants from various backgrounds, religions and cultures. Although AHA strives for 100% participant satisfaction, AHA cannot guarantee that the program will meet everyone's perceptions.

Compensation - Participants who select the J-1 Intern and Trainee Program or the J-1 Work and Travel Program will receive an hourly rate of pay. The rate of pay on the DS-7002 or SWT Job Placement Form is the average rate and may change as your position changes and you rotate through different learning opportunities and experiences.

If you work in a tipped position, you may receive a tip rate. To learn more about minimum wage, tipped rates and overtime please visit: www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-minimum-wage-chart

Hours - Your host property has agreed to schedule you a minimum of 32 hours per week. Because the hospitality business includes times of busy season, shoulder season, and low season, the number of hours you are scheduled will change as the business demands change. On occasion, you may be scheduled less than 32 hours per week. During the busy season you can expect to be scheduled more than 32 hours, and sometimes be offered overtime. Please be prepared and plan for this – it is part of being in the hospitality industry. However if you begin to see a pattern of your schedule falling below the 32 hours per week average, please contact AHA so we can assist you.

Program Fees - Participants of the Full Placement Service Intern and Train Program have the option to pay their AHA program fees in full or make monthly payments, "Pay As You Earn". Failure to make payments as agreed can result in your program termination. Program fees can be viewed at AHA's website

www.americanhospitalityacademy.com/resource_library

I can't locate my I-94 online. What should I do? - If you tried to retrieve your I-94 from the cbp.gov online system and you receive a response that your I-94 is "Not Found", please read the following questions to help you check for mistakes and try to enter the information again:

- ✓ Did you enter your first and last name the same way it appears on your passport? Do not use dashes or titles.
- ✓ Did you enter the passport number that appears on the upper right hand side of your passport?
- ✓ Did you enter your country of citizenship (country that issued the passport, not where you currently live)?
- ✓ Under Class of Admission, did you enter the visa classification that appears on your U.S. visa OR, if you are traveling under the visa waiver program (VWP) enter WT/WB?
- ✓ If you entered your first and middle name and it is not found, try one name or the other. Also try entering your first and middle name in the first name box.
- ✓ Try entering either your most recent date of entry or your original date of entry into the U.S.

If you still cannot find your I-94, please contact your nearest Customs and

Border Protection Deferred Inspection Site and a CBP Officer will be able to assist you.

Let' RECAP!

Visa expiration date - This is not the date when you have to leave the USA! This is actually the last date when you can enter the USA. For example, if you want to visit Canada while in America, and you have a multiple-entry visa, the visa expiration date is the latest date when you can re-enter the USA.

DS-2019 dates - They show the beginning and end of your program. So if, for example, your program allows you to intern, train or work in the USA, you cannot intern, work before the start date and after the end date outlined on this form.

"Admitted until" date - That's the date on your I-94 - you must leave the USA on or before this date. As a J-1 your date is indicated as D/S. D/S means duration of status (the end date on your DS-2019 plus 30 days grace period).

In other words:

Visa is for entering

DS-2019 is for interning, training, working

I-94 is for staying

Chapter 4 – Applying for the J-1 Visa and Arriving in the USA - You must have your DS 2019 issued before you can apply for the visa. Since visa application requirements often change, it is very important that you follow the most current procedures for J-1 Visa applications at the Embassy or Consulate where you will apply. Helpful websites www.usembassy.gov <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/exchange.html>

Step 1: Pay the SEVIS Fee STOP! Before paying the SEVIS fee, if you are working with an AHA Global Recruiting Partner determine if the partner will be paying and completing this process for you. If you are not working with a recruiting partner who purchases SEVIS on your behalf – you must complete this process.

What is SEVIS? SEVIS is the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, a computerized system that manages data about international students and exchange visitors in the U.S. It tells the U.S. Government where you live, where you work and your legal status on the J-1 Program.

Before you apply for the J-1 Visa at the Embassy/Consulate, you must pay the SEVIS fee, which is paid to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, to cover the SEVIS administration costs. The fee is non-refundable.

As an exchange visitor, you are required to pay the SEVIS fee. However, if you are bringing any dependents, they do not have to pay a SEVIS fee.

If you do not pay the SEVIS fee before your Embassy/Consulate appointment, you will not be granted a J-1 Visa.

When do I purchase SEVIS? Once AHA has received all required documents, payments and proof of insurance, AHA will mail your DS-2019 form – Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Status. Upon receipt of your DS-2019 Form you can purchase SEVIS

How do I purchase SEVIS? In order to pay the SEVIS fee, you must submit Form I-901, using information from your DS-2019 Form. Once you have your DS-2019 form from AHA (you will also want to have your passport handy) go to <https://fmjfee.com/i901fee>

Step 2: Schedule your appointment with the Embassy/Consulate Following the instructions found at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/exchange.html>

Please consult the instructions available on the [embassy or consulate website](#) where you will apply www.usembassy.gov

Inform AHA of your Embassy/Consulate date

Canadian citizens are, in most cases, exempt from an Embassy/Consulate visit and will not need a J-1 Visa to cross the border into the U.S. The DS-2019 Form, however, must be presented at the border. If you are Canadian, contact your local Embassy/Consulate to verify their policies.

Step 3: Review and sign your DS-2019 Form The DS-2019 Form is not a visa application form or a J-1 Visa. Instead, it certifies your eligibility and permits you to apply for a J-1 Visa.

Read both sides and thoroughly check the information (e.g. your name, dates, etc.). Errors on this form could result in a visa denial. Please inform AHA immediately if you discover any errors.

Read the instructions on the back of the form and sign your name at the bottom of page 1 to accept the terms and conditions on page 2. Your signature is an explicit acceptance of the terms of the program. It is your responsibility as a participant of this program to abide by the laws of the federal, state and local governments of the United States as well as the rules and regulations set forth by AHA (your program sponsor).

Keep your DS-2019 Form in good condition throughout the entire visa process and your stay in the U.S.

Step 4: Complete your visa application and gather the required documents and payment

Carefully follow the J-1 Visa application instructions on your Embassy/Consulate's website. Complete any required application forms and gather any supplemental materials (e.g. proof of ties to home country, proof of sufficient funds, photographs, etc.). You will also need your DS-2019 and DS-7002 Forms (Interns and Trainees) or SWT Job Offer.

Although the SEVIS fee is paid prior to your appointment, you will also be required to pay a visa application fee of approximately \$160. Additional fees may be required—confirm the exact amounts for your Embassy/Consulate.

Make copies of your completed application package before submitting it to the Embassy/Consulate.

Submit the following to the Embassy/Consulate:

- ✓ Signed DS-2019 Form
- ✓ Signed DS-7002 Form (for Interns and Trainees) or SWT Job Offer.

- ✓ Your passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond the end date on your DS-2019 Form)
- ✓ Proof of payment of the SEVIS fee and payment or proof of payment of the J-1 Visa fee
- ✓ All visa application forms required by your Embassy/Consulate
- ✓ Any supporting materials or information required by your Embassy/Consulate

Step 5: Receive your visa If your J-1 Visa is granted, the Embassy/Consulate will put the visa sticker in your passport and return it and your DS-2019 form to you. Be sure to collect all of your documents!

If you are denied a visa, please contact AHA immediately to discuss your options for reapplying. In many cases you will be able to reapply and will simply need to bring information that you did not have during your first attempt. Be sure to contact us so we can help you decide if reapplying is a good idea and so we can amend your program dates if necessary.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Interviewing Tips Please review the following tips to prepare for your interview.

Ties to Home Country: Consular officers assume that all non-immigrant visa applicants are intending to immigrate to the U.S. You are responsible for proving that you plan to return home after your program. You must prove you have “compelling ties” to your home country, such as: family members who still live in your home town, university classes to attend after your program, a job lined up after you return, bank statements showing financial assets in your home country, or anything else that indicates your clear intention to leave the U.S. at the end of your program. It is best if you bring supporting documentation such as a job offer letter, proof of student status or documents for assets in your home country. Without this proof, it will be difficult to show you have ties to your country.

Interview Alone: Do not bring parents, family members or friends with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family or friends. If you are not willing to speak on your own behalf, you will not appear mature enough to participate in a cultural exchange program and you will be denied a visa.

Practice Your English Skills: You will be interviewed in English, not in your native language. You should be practicing English every day, preferably with a fluent speaker, in preparation for your U.S. experience. This practice will also help you prepare for your interview.

Relax and Answer Questions Directly: Consular officers often feel pressure to conduct quick interviews because there are many people applying for visas. Then they must decide whether or not to grant you a visa after speaking to you for only a few minutes. Remain calm and try not to be nervous. Do not prepare speeches for the interview, do not be afraid to speak English and answer the consular officer’s questions as best you can.

Know Why You Want a Visa: Be sure that you understand the purpose of the J-1 Visa. You should also be able to identify and explain your own personal reasons for this program to the consular officer.

Be Polite and Positive: Do not argue with the consular officer. If you are denied a J-1 Visa you should ask why, specifically, you were denied. Also, ask the consular officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring if you re-apply or how you can improve your chances receiving a visa in the future.

Arriving in the USA, Arrival Policy - Once you have your J-1 visa, you will be ready to travel to the U.S. It is important you are prepared, adhere to the arrival policy, and understand the arrival process.

Inform AHA and your host property of your arrival details 7 business days prior to arriving. This notification is completed by submitting the AHA arrival form.

If you do not give proper notice, or do not arrive on the dates and times instructed you may not have a place to stay or you may be delayed your first date of training/work. All costs associated with failure to adhere to the arrival policy will

be your responsibility and can become extremely expensive. *Note: You are not permitted to enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to your program start date.*

Pre-Departure Information - Improve Your English Language Skills - Part of your cultural exchange experience is being able to interact with and talk to people in the United States. Speaking English will be the most important tool for you to be able to fully engage and learn about American customs and practices. It is a good idea to practice English as much as possible before you arrive in the U.S., as it will help you adapt more quickly.

- ❖ Take an English language course before the start of your program.
- ❖ Watch English language television or movies; listen to English language radio broadcasts; read English language newspapers, books or magazines.
- ❖ Practice, practice, practice! Speak English as often as possible and don't be afraid to make mistakes. Most native English speakers will be happy to help you choose the right words.

Airline Baggage Allowance- Be sure to check with your airline on how many pieces of luggage you may bring, the size, and weight of those pieces and cost per bag. Please be aware that many airlines in the U.S. have started to charge for luggage on domestic flights. Contact your airline before you depart to find out the latest fees and restrictions.

What to Bring With You - Don't Over Pack!

- ✓ Your passport, J-1 Visa and DS-2019 Form: You cannot get into the United States without these items, so make sure you have them in a carry-on bag. Make a copy of each of these documents and keep them in a separate bag, just in case you lose the originals.
- ✓ Dictionary: A good bilingual dictionary is essential.
- ✓ Pictures: Photographs of your family, friends and your hometown to show new friends.
- ✓ Items from your home country: Pictures, arts & crafts, recipes, or small, locally made gifts are always nice to share with people in the United States.
- ✓ Toiletries: Shampoo, soap, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a razor, and deodorant are essential. You can buy a supply for the duration of your program once you arrive in the U.S., so just bring enough for one week. Liquids in your carry-on luggage must be in 3 ounce (88 mg) bottles. If you bring an electric razor, make sure it is battery powered, because adapters tend to fail.
- ✓ Medications (pack in your carry-on luggage): If possible, you should bring enough medication for the entire time you are in the U.S. and use the original bottle. Also, bring a note (written in English) from your doctor, indicating the type of medicine you take, just in case you need to get more. We recommend that you call your airline first to check what type of medication and how much you are allowed to carry on the airplane.
- ✓ An extra pair of prescription glasses: This will be very important in the event that your glasses are damaged or if you cannot have your contact lens prescription filled while in the U.S.
- ✓ Driver's license: Bring your international driver's license and/or foreign driver's license with you and be sure to pack it in your carry-on luggage. Keep a copy in a safe place.
- ✓ An open mind: Be prepared for things to be different.

What to Leave at Home - Valuables: Expensive jewelry and family heirlooms.

Arrival Process - When you travel to the U.S., have your DS-2019 Form, passport, and J-1 Visa available for review. During your flight, an attendant will give you a Customs Declaration Form (Form CF-6059) to complete before the end of your flight. You must declare items of value before entering the United States. Personal items, such as clothing, portable electronics and toiletries should not be declared on this form. You must also enter your U.S. address on this form (enter your host property address if you do not have your living address). You may be required to pay a duty, or tax, on certain

items. Some types of goods, including most agricultural products, may not be brought into the U.S. For further information regarding how to fill out this forms, visit: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing/traveler_entry_form

Clearing Customs and Border Protection - Upon arriving in the U.S., you will be seen by a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Official. This person is responsible for ensuring that you are authorized to enter the country. To facilitate your entry to the U.S., please tell the CBP official that you are a J-1 Exchange Visitor when presenting your valid passport, including your J-1 Visa for inspection.

Form DS-2019 - The CBP Official may ask you some general questions about your visit, the purpose and duration of your program, and where you will stay during your program. Answer clearly and respectfully, they are routine questions. Have your host property and AHA's address and contact information ready.

The CBP Official will ask you to submit digital finger scans and a digital photograph (part of the US-VISIT program, required for most visa holders).

To learn more about U.S. arrival procedures, visit: <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/clearing>

Entry to the U.S. - Once CBP's inspection is complete, the officer will stamp your passport with the date of admission, class of admission, and the time frame you are authorized to stay in the U.S. The officer should write the letters "D/S" as the time frame; this means "Duration of Status." The duration of status includes the program dates listed on your DS-2019 Form, plus 30 days of travel/personal time immediately after your program end date.

Your arrival record will be recorded electronically by CBP. We recommend accessing and printing your electronic arrival record (I-94 record) by visiting cbp.gov/i94. Keep a printed copy with you when applying for important documents like your Social Security Number or other forms of identification in the U.S.

You will then go through a baggage checkpoint. You may be asked to open your luggage and allow another U.S. Customs Official to examine your belongings. The purpose of this search is to ensure that you have not brought any restricted items with you into the U.S.

Finally, present the Customs declaration form that you received on the plane (6059B).

After passing through Immigration and Customs, you will go to the baggage claim area to collect your checked bags. If you waited a long time at Customs, your bags may have already passed through and been placed on the floor of the baggage area. Ask an airline representative for assistance if necessary.

If your luggage is lost or delayed, you should go to the airline desk and file a lost luggage report. You will need to provide an address for the airline to deliver your bags once they are found (your host property address).

Problems Crossing the Border - It is rare for J-1 Visa holders to encounter difficulties when crossing the U.S. border. However, if you are agitated, act suspiciously or if you are missing any documents, CBP officials may detain you for further questioning. If you do not have your DS-2019 Form available, you will be detained and you may also be flagged in the computer system, thus causing delays on future trips to the U.S.

The best way to assure a smooth entry is to have all of the appropriate forms completed and ready to present to CBP, be friendly and patient in line and with the CBP official, and answer their questions honestly. If you do encounter any problems though, please provide CBP with AHA's contact information so that they can contact us.

Chapter – 5 - U.S. Health Care & Insurance - Health care in the U.S. is very different from health care in other countries. It is extremely important that you understand how your insurance works so that you will not be responsible for costly insurance bills.

AHA suggests you visit your doctor before you leave. Your insurance plan is for emergency medical situations including accidents and sudden illness, but it will not cover pre-existing conditions.

As a J-1 Participant, you are required to have insurance meeting or exceeding the following coverage:

- ✓ Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- ✓ Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- ✓ Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$10,000
- ✓ A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

Accident & Sickness Insurance (General Medical Needs) - It is important to note, the J-1 insurance is accident and sickness insurance, not health insurance. Health insurance is comprehensive and includes preventative care and regular check-ups as well as care for pre-existing and ongoing conditions. J-1 insurance, though, is simply for accidents and unexpected sickness. If you require regular care, you must ensure that you have a health insurance plan in addition to your J-1 insurance coverage. Health insurance must be arranged separately from J-1 accident & sickness insurance.

Employer Insurance – Your host property may offer you health insurance as part of your compensation package. A health insurance policy may be a good addition to the coverage that you have during your program. However, you still may not cancel the J-1 Insurance purchased through the AHA vendors. This policy is designed to meet the requirements for insurance set forth by the U.S. Department of State.

Your insurance is effective only for the dates outlined on your DS-2019. If you arrive before your program start date, you must ensure that you have health insurance plan in place. If you plan to utilize the 30 day Grace Period, you must extend your insurance.

Before Arrival in the U.S.

- ✓ Familiarize yourself with your insurance policy
- ✓ Be sure to understand the maximum amounts of coverage, the services/procedures that are covered, deductibles, co-pays, etc.
- ✓ Basic accident and sickness insurance does not cover pre-existing conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, etc.). If you require regular care, you may take on a more comprehensive health insurance policy on your own
- ✓ Bring any medications that you take on a regular basis with you and ask your doctor to write a prescription if you will need a refill in the U.S.
- ✓ Find a general doctor in your U.S. city who accepts your insurance policy
- ✓ Always carry your Insurance ID card
- ✓ In the U.S., you must show proof of insurance when you need medical treatment. If you do not have proof of insurance, you may be asked to pay more than your co-pay at the time of the visit. This can be very expensive

Getting Medical Attention - The quickest and most convenient way for you to get medical treatment for non-emergency situations is to go to a walk-in clinic or urgent care center. Benefits of these facilities include:

- ✓ They are open on weekends and often in the evenings.
- ✓ The wait is usually much shorter than an emergency room.
- ✓ The cost is less than visiting an emergency room.
- ✓ You do not have to make an appointment or have a relationship with the doctor to be seen and treated.

Emergency rooms and hospitals are for life-threatening situations - If you feel your life is in danger, go directly to the closest hospital for treatment and contact AHA as soon as possible. If you go to the emergency room for a non-

emergency, you will most likely have to wait several hours to be seen and could incur higher costs than your co-pay. If you need to go to the hospital or clinic but it is not life-threatening, take transportation such as a cab, bus, or subway, or ask a friend to drive you. Ambulances are for medical emergencies only. If your plan has a PPO network, you should use these health care providers. When a PPO provider is used, costs are discounted.

When do you call 911? - This is the emergency line in the U.S. that links directly to the local police station in your area. If you have an emergency and need assistance from the police or ambulance, dial 911. Only call this number if it is an emergency (you are or have been a victim of a crime, accident, or fire).

Workers Compensation Insurance (Work-Related Injuries) - All host properties are required to have Workers' Compensation Insurance in place. If you are injured while in the workplace (host property) or on work-related business, speak with your Human Resources department about how to file a Workers' Compensation claim.

Medicine - If you currently take medication and will continue this medication while on the program, you should bring enough to last the duration of the program, and you should have all these products properly packaged and labeled before leaving your home country. Please check with your local embassy about any specific documents you may need to enter the U.S. with this medication. If you lose or run out of your medication, you will have to visit a U.S. doctor. Your prescription from home is not valid in the US. AHA recommends you bring enough medication for the duration of your program. Note that the dispensing of birth control is not a free service in the United States, nor is it covered by your insurance.

Dentist - Your policy has limited dental coverage. AHA recommends seeing a dentist prior to coming on your program.

Chapter 6 - SEVIS - Once you arrive, you are going to be busy starting your program, meeting new friends and experiencing the U.S. BUT it is extremely important you contact AHA to validate your visa in SEVIS.

SEVIS is the U.S. government's system for J-1 participants. Within 24 hours of arrival, validate your visa by logging into your AHA file and enter your living address. AHA cannot validate your visa without an exact living address. If staying in a hotel temporarily, you can register with the hotel address and the hotel room number. When logging in, be prepared to provide the following information (addresses must be valid and in the proper format):

House Number, Street Name	1551 21st Ave. North
Apartment Number or Hotel Room Number	Apt. 12B
City, State, Zip Code	Miami, FL33133
Phone Number	786-220-5692

To Log in and Validate Your Visa:

- 1) Go to: americanhospitalityacademy.com/log-in/
- 2) Enter your e-mail
- 3) Enter your password

If for any reason you cannot login, contact your AHA program manager via email or by phone with your living address. If you do not send your information to us, you will not be permitted to remain in the U.S. and your ability to obtain another visa to enter the U.S. may be jeopardized. You also cannot apply for a Social Security number until your record has been activated in SEVIS for a minimum of 5 days.

Throughout your program, you are required to keep your SEVIS record accurate. If you change your address, phone number, or email address at any time during your program, inform AHA immediately. Failure to validate your J-1 visa and keep your SEVIS records updated can result in the termination of your program.

Chapter 7 - Social Security - After you have contacted AHA and validated your visa, your next task is to apply for a Social Security Number. You need to apply for a Social Security Number so that your employer can pay you and record your taxes properly.

You must wait 5 business days AFTER your visa is validated in SEVIS before applying. Many participants fail to adhere to this simple policy and they apply too soon. If you apply too soon, it will cause a delay in receiving your social security number, which may result in problems with receiving your pay. Do not make this mistake! Validate your visa with AHA 24 hours of arriving, then wait at least 5 business days before applying for your social security number.



Protect your personal ID and confidential information: Your Social Security number is yours alone. Do not allow others to use your number. Record your number in a safe place in case your card is lost or stolen. Protect both your card and your number to prevent misuse.

For more information, please refer to the Social Security and Tax information packet emailed to you and located in the World Campus Library.

Chapter 8 – Important Program Information

Follow Your Training Plan (J-1 Interns and Trainees) - The Training/Intern or Traineeship Placement Plan (T/IPP) DS-7002 form is a description and agreement of your training and outlines tasks and objectives that will be completed during your program. You should expect your host to follow the training plan. Please talk to your supervisor and AHA if your plan is not being followed.

Mandatory Evaluations (J-1 Interns and Trainees) - As part of the J-1 Intern/Trainee Program regulations, you and your host organization must complete evaluations to ensure that all expectations are being met. AHA will email you and your supervisor to notify you when your midterm and final evaluations are due. If you do not submit your evaluations, AHA may have to end or terminate your sponsorship.

Monthly Monitoring and Communication with AHA - Throughout your program AHA will contact you to make sure your program is progressing as planned and you are having a meaningful experience of cultural exchange. Each month you will receive an automated email from AHA - you are required to respond to all communication from AHA.

Early Withdrawal/Resignation - AHA hopes that each participant has a successful experience at their host organization and completes the program as planned. However, we understand that sometimes unexpected circumstances or events occur that require a participant to leave the U.S. earlier than expected. If you need to withdraw from your program for any reason, you should talk to your supervisor and contact AHA as soon as possible to discuss next steps.

The Early Withdrawal process generally includes the following: You and your Host Property will agree to a last day of training. Depending on the situation, this can be immediate, but if possible you should give your Host Property at least two weeks' notice, which gives your Host Organization time to plan the end of your training.

Your DS-2019 will be shortened to reflect the last day at your Host Property. You are not permitted to take a different job and you are not permitted to travel and stay in the United States. Once a participant leaves the program, SEVIS will be updated and Department of Homeland Security will be informed you no longer hold J-1 status.

You will need to contact your insurance to cancel one day after you depart the United States. You will not be eligible for AHA's Hospitality Professional Certificate.

Change of Host Property - As a J-1 participant it is extremely important the commitment of training is upheld and honored. Internships and training programs would not be possible if we did not have hotels and resorts willing to host J1 participants. We understand coming to the United States to participate in the J-1 program is one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. Since your first interview and introduction to AHA we have reiterated the importance of researching and carefully selecting the host organization for your J-1 program as there are only rare and extreme circumstances which will allow you to change the host organization you selected.

You are expected to remain at your original host throughout the duration of your program. AHA maintains a no transfer policy. If you think you need to change your Host Organization, you should contact AHA as soon as possible to discuss your situation. A change of Host Organization is only granted in the rare case when it is determined that a program participant and a Host Organization cannot continue the J-1 program. Acceptable reasons for requesting a change of Host Organization include:

- ✓ Financial difficulties at your Host Organization
- ✓ Unwillingness or inability of the Host Organization to follow the training plan
- ✓ Host Organization unwillingness or inability to provide appropriate support and supervision
- ✓ Conflict between you and your Host Organization that cannot be resolved
- ✓ Physical or emotional abuse, or harassment or similar situation by co-workers or management at your Host Organization

If your reason for wishing a change of host organization is not listed above, please contact AHA to discuss. Although we cannot deviate from this policy we will be able to provide you with guidance and support.

The Process:

What to Expect - If one of the situations listed above occurs, you will be required to write a statement outlining the situation (verbal statements cannot be accepted) so that AHA can properly assist you and the host property in resolving.

AHA will discuss the problems you are experiencing and work with you to address the issue. AHA will also contact your Host Property to discuss the issues and determine their willingness and/or ability to resolve the problem. You will also be requested to submit a personal statement describing why you want to change your Host Property, and whether you have identified a new Host Property.

If it is determined that it is not possible for you to continue your program with your current host property, a change of host property may be granted. Your new host property will need to meet the minimum regulatory requirements of being a host property (full service hotel, resort or similar organization, 25 or more employees, revenue greater than 3 million), completing a conference call with AHA, signing an agreement which reviews the J1 program and its regulations, and signing an approved training plan on form DS-7002.

AHA will only approve a change of host property in extenuating circumstances. You must not change your host property without the consent of AHA. Failure to notify AHA prior to leaving your initial host property will result in your withdrawal from the program, and you will be required to return to your home country.

Repeat Participation in the Internship and Training Program - As a general policy/best practice AHA does not sponsor intern and trainee candidates who previously participated in an intern or trainee program, “repeat programs”. Exceptions to this policy will be reviewed on a case by case. Additionally, if you have previously participated in a J-1 Intern/Trainee program, you are subject to rules regarding repeat programs. You are not considered a repeater if you have previously completed a work and travel J1 program.

As you are aware, the J1 program consists of two categories, Internship and Career Training. You must meet the eligibility requirements for one of these programs to participate in a 2nd program. In addition to the eligibility requirements, the following restrictions apply:

Your Situation:	Minimum waiting period between programs:
You completed a program as an intern and you still qualify as an intern*	60 days required by AHA
You completed a program as an Intern and now qualify as a Trainee*	2 years required by the Department of State
You completed a program as a Trainee and you wish to do another Trainee program*	2 years required by the Department of State
You completed a program as a Trainee and now want to qualify as an Intern*	60 days required by AHA

** J-1 Participant must have maintained outstanding standards and exceptional performance as well as adhered to all rules and regulations of the program. J-1 the regulations do not permit duplicate training; you cannot perform the same duties/training as a previous program. New training must be in a different department/area of training and must be more advanced.*

Two-Year Foreign Residency Requirement - Some individuals may confuse the 212(e) restriction with the J-1 eligibility requirement of waiting 2 years upon completion of J-1 program before becoming eligible to participate in a 2nd J1 program as a trainee. These are two different regulations and they are separate and must be viewed and followed separately/individually.

Under the 212(e) you may be subject to the U.S. government’s home country physical requirements (section 212(e) of the U.S. Immigration & Nationality Act). This requires participants to return to their home country for a minimum of two years before returning to the USA on certain visa types. This requirement is applied at the sole discretion of the Consular Officer performing your visa interview. They will mark it on your J-1 Visa and DS-2019.

For more information, visit

<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student/residency-waiver.html.html>

Under the J-1 eligibility requirements, if you completed a program as a trainee, or as an intern and now qualify as a J-1 trainee you must wait 2 years before you are permitted a 2nd J-1 program, even if you are not subject to the 212(e)

J-1 Visa Extensions - The regulations limit the length of the J-1 program in the field of hospitality to 12 months. If you accepted a placement less than 12 months in length, it may be possible to extend your program by transferring to a new AHA host property. To apply for an extension/transfer contact your AHA Program Manager 60-90 days prior to your current program end date.

Chapter 9 - Policies, Procedures, Rules and Regulations - To achieve success, you must embrace and demonstrate basic qualities expected by all hospitality organizations in the United States.

Upon arrival, your host property will review the rules and regulations of the company, these will include:

- ✓ Performance Standards
- ✓ Guest Service Standards
- ✓ Appearance and Grooming Standards
- ✓ Housing rules and regulations (if provided)
- ✓ Misconduct

It is important that you become familiar with and adhere to all rules and regulations. If you are terminated from your host property for disciplinary reasons, your J-1 visa sponsorship will end and you will be required to return home.

Equally important, you must know and adhere to AHA's rules and regulations. AHA takes great lengths to make certain you succeed and you are aware of the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the program. This handbook, the AHA agreement, orientation, library, and website contain valuable information.

Drug Free Workplace - Host properties have the right to require you to take a drug test. You can be tested before starting the program as well as anytime during your employment. You may also be tested if you are involved in an accident. If you test positive for illegal drugs, expect to be fired by your host property and terminated from J-1 visa sponsorship – you will be required to immediately leave the US and return home.

Additional Employment or Training - If you are unable to support yourself financially throughout your program, you should withdraw from the program before traveling to the U.S.

IMPORTANT FOR INTERNS AND TRAINEES: Under no circumstances are you permitted to seek additional employment or training while in the U.S., so please do not plan to rely on a second job to supplement your income. Working anywhere else besides your internship/training program location is strictly prohibited and is a very serious violation of the terms of your visa. Your program will be terminated and you may not be allowed to return to the U.S. in the future if you violate this rule.

IMPORTANT FOR SUMMER WORK AND TRAVEL: Under no circumstances are you permitted to seek additional employment while in the U.S. without the employment first being approved in writing by AHA. Working anywhere else besides your approved location(s) is strictly prohibited and is a very serious violation of the terms of your visa. Your program will be terminated and you may not be allowed to return to the U.S. in the future if you violate this rule.

Standards of Conduct - Adhering to host employer's rules and regulations is essential to your success. To help prepare and set clear expectations, we have outlined standards you will be expected to follow. Please note, these are not intended to cover every possible situation, but should be considered as guidelines of proper conduct.

- ✓ Attempted or completed unauthorized removal or misappropriation (unauthorized storage, transfer or use) of the property of guests, employees, trainees and AHA and Host properties.

- ✓ Excessive or unexpected absenteeism or lateness, including abuse of sick leave, improper call-in, or violation of any portion of the attendance policy.
- ✓ Interfering with or hindering training/work schedules; failing to report to a shift as scheduled or improperly arranging a replacement on a shift without permission from management.
- ✓ Loafing, sleeping during scheduled shift, or intentional restriction of output.
- ✓ Possession of dangerous or deadly weapons on Host property premises.
- ✓ Rude, immature or indecent conduct, sexual or other unlawful harassment or the aiding and/or abetting of any of these activities.
- ✓ Using abusive, threatening, vulgar, profane or obscene language, engaging in loud arguments or disturbances of any kind, or similar acts toward staff, supervisors, managers or fellow participants.
- ✓ Abusing, damaging, defacing or destroying Host Property, participant housing, or the property of guests or staff.
- ✓ Failing to give a high degree of service and courtesy to any guest, i.e., rudeness, negligence and carelessness.
- ✓ Saying, publishing or distributing false, vicious or malicious statements concerning AHA, the Host Property, guests, participants and/or employees or services.
- ✓ Discrimination against a guest or fellow participant and/or employee or any act of harassment because of race, color, age, sex, national origin, marital status, medical condition, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability or any other protected characteristic.
- ✓ Violation of any safety rule including failure to report an accident, injury or damage to equipment, facilities or persons; or engaging in any act that might endanger the safety of others.
- ✓ Hostile or negative behavior. Engaging in any acts of violence, fighting or threats of violence.
- ✓ Falsifying or altering time records, schedules, payroll records or application, or providing false or misleading information or omitting material information prior to or during your training and/or employment
- ✓ Unauthorized possession, sale, distribution, or use of drugs, alcohol or controlled substances on Host Property premises or reporting to training and/or work under the influence of drugs, alcohol or controlled substance including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, except where such use will not affect an employee's ability to safely perform his or her job. If you are using prescription or over-the-counter drugs which may impair your ability to safely perform your job, you must notify your manager in writing of such use, before starting or resuming work.
- ✓ Insubordination, willful disregard or disrespect toward a supervisor or representative of management or failure to comply or perform training and/or work as required or assigned. If you disagree with your manager's request, always follow the instructions given at the time and discuss it later in private.
- ✓ Soliciting gratuities from guests or commenting in any way regarding the amount of gratuity given. No participant may add or alter a gratuity on a guest check at any time.
- ✓ Unauthorized use of guest facilities, public restrooms, telephones or host property keys.
- ✓ Dining, smoking, snacking or gum chewing at any time other than during meal periods or in areas other than those designated by your manager.
- ✓ Giving confidential or proprietary information to other Participants, companies or agencies, or the news media or discussing confidential or proprietary information of the Host Property or management information with guests or in public areas where a guest could overhear a conversation.
- ✓ Failure to comply with established dress and grooming requirements.
- ✓ Neglect, carelessness or mischief which results in loss, damage, breakage or destruction of Host Property, guest or participant property or other property which contributes to or results in unsafe or unsanitary conditions.
- ✓ If a person does not report to work and does not call in for three (3) consecutive days, he/she is considered to have abandoned the training and/or work (voluntary quit) and is not eligible for rehire.

Appearance Standards - A neat, well-groomed, business-like appearance will reflect your concern for quality and attention to detail. All participants are required to follow the dress and grooming standards. Please take pride and great

care in your personal appearance. It is important that you project a polished, well-groomed and professional image in your overall appearance.

While the following standards are not inclusive, if you display an unprofessional appearance, you will be counseled. Certain locations may have deviations from the standards listed below. It is everyone's responsibility to consistently meet the AHA and Host Property standards. Please let AHA know about any dress/appearance issues that cannot be adhered to.

Hair

- ✓ Hair must be neat, conservative, clean and in place throughout the day.
- ✓ Hair must be a "natural color" defined as one that could be grown naturally (though not necessarily the natural color).
- ✓ No unnatural colored streaks or sparkles in hair.
- ✓ Hairstyles should not be distracting, obtrusive or cover the eyes.
- ✓ No excessive gels or lotions in hair (hair must not look wet).
- ✓ No dreadlocks.
- ✓ Distinct weighted lines or shaven styles are not acceptable.
- ✓ Bangs must be above the eyebrow.
- ✓ Braids must be neatly maintained.
- ✓ No beads or trinkets in hair.

Hair Females

- ✓ Acceptable hair accessories are a headband or hair band (not wider than one inch), a small bow clip, clip barrette or ponytail holder.
- ✓ Hair accessories must be a solid color and match the uniform/attire.
- ✓ Gold, silver or pearl barrettes are also acceptable.
- ✓ Buns, twists, bangs, etc. must not be higher than 3" from the top of the head.
- ✓ Long hair must not fall across or into the face.

Hair Males

- ✓ Hair must be neat and trimmed at or above the standard collar line.
- ✓ Beards and goatees are prohibited except when allowed by host.
- ✓ Face must be clean-shaven at all times except when allowed by host.
- ✓ Sideburns must not extend beyond the lobe nor may they be flared in a "mutton chop" style.

Body and Facial Piercing - Obvious body or facial piercing, with the exception of approved earrings, is not permitted to be worn by men or women.

Tattoos - Tattoos can never be visible and must be covered by your uniform. Please note we have had participants arrive with tattoos that cannot be covered by the issued uniform. Because they did not meet standards, they were terminated from the program – if you have a tattoo and you are unsure if it can be covered by the uniform, ask!

Make-up Female - Make-up should be tastefully applied and not excessive, especially eye shadow and lipstick.

Jewelry

- ✓ Rings: A maximum of two simple rings on each hand is allowed. Wedding/engagement rings are considered one ring.
- ✓ One bracelet or wristwatch per wrist.
- ✓ Necklaces: Extreme styles are not acceptable. Only one (1) necklace.
- ✓ Pins/Brooches: No attachments other than nametag and AHA or host property assigned pins on any uniform.
- ✓ Participants may wear only one pair of earrings, no larger than a quarter. Earrings are not permitted to be worn by male participants.

Fingernails

- ✓ Keep fingernails neatly trimmed and moderate in length.
- ✓ Females may wear polish in conservative shades only.
- ✓ Polish must be maintained, with no chips.

Personal Hygiene

- ✓ Pay special attention to your daily personal hygiene.
- ✓ Use deodorant, brush your teeth, keep your hair clean, bathe, etc.
- ✓ If you use perfume or cologne, use in moderation.

Attendance - It is important that you report for on-the-job training/work as scheduled and on time. This is part of your commitment to AHA and your Host Property. As expected, lateness, frequent absences, and improper call-ins will put you out of favor with AHA, your Host Property, and fellow participants. Therefore, excessive absenteeism or lateness will lead to discipline, up to and including termination. We recognize that there may be times when your absence or lateness cannot be avoided. In such a case, please notify your host property following host property policy.

Statements to the Press - Participants must not communicate with the press, radio, television or film companies either verbally or in writing, on any subject relating to the work or operations of the AHA and Host Property unless permission has first been obtained from the AHA and/or Host Property Management. All requests for media information should be directed to AHA Management or Host Property General Manager.

No Weapon Policy - All participants are prohibited from carrying a weapon while in the course and scope of performing their program. This policy also prohibits weapons at any AHA and Host Property sponsored functions such as parties or picnics.

Prohibited weapons include any form of weapon or explosive restricted under local, state, or federal regulation. This includes all firearms, illegal knives or other weapons covered by the law. (Legal, chemical-dispensing devices such as pepper sprays that are sold commercially for personal protection are not covered by this policy.) Each participant is responsible for making sure that any potentially covered item you possess is not prohibited by this policy.

Termination of Program - Host Property - If you violate policies and procedures of your host property, or fail to perform at a level that was expected by your host property, your employment may be terminated. If your host property addresses any concerns with you, be sure to take steps to make improvements.

Participants can also be terminated with no prior warnings if he/she violates any rules that are considered serious breaches of responsibility, sometimes referred to “gross misconduct”.

If you are terminated from your host, contact AHA immediately to discuss your required departure date and ensure you are complying with program regulations.

Termination of Program - AHA - As per the Agreement signed prior to arrival, AHA declines any legal responsibility for participants terminated or expelled from the program. Termination will result in immediate repatriation and all visa documents will be canceled.

Upon termination, the 30 day grace period is voided. The grace period is only valid at the end of a successful and complete J1 program, or approved early withdraw. AHA shall terminate a participant's participation in the program if the participant:

- ✓ Fails to pursue the activities for which he or she was admitted to the United States or program
- ✓ Fails to adhere to the terms outlined in the participant agreement
- ✓ Is unable to continue, unless otherwise exempted pursuant to these regulations

- ✓ Violates the Exchange Visitor Program regulations and/or the Cultural Exchange Visitor Program regulations and/or the sponsor's rules governing the program, if, in the sponsor's opinion, termination is warranted
- ✓ Willfully fails to maintain the insurance coverage required under Sec. 514.14 of the visa regulations and AHA policy
- ✓ Engages in unauthorized employment (2nd job)
- ✓ Fails to perform training or work assignments to satisfactory level despite warning
- ✓ Fails to adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by Host Property and/or AHA
- ✓ Fails to perform training to satisfactory level despite warning
- ✓ Fails to adhere to local, state and federal laws
- ✓ Commits an act of gross misconduct
- ✓ Falsifies information (written or verbal) given to host property and/or AHA. This includes participating in a false interview (having someone else complete the interview on your behalf), or falsifying knowledge, experience, education or English proficiency
- ✓ Terminated from host property for violation of rules and regulations
- ✓ Fails to pass drug test
- ✓ Fails to adhere to the Pay As You Earn Program

Chapter 10 – At Your Host Property

Host Property Expectations - As a participant on this program you have accepted a position with a host property. You should make an effort to adjust to the environment and do your very best to complete the tasks assigned to you.

You should maintain open communication with your supervisor and colleagues at your host property. If you simply ask, your supervisor will be happy to let you know what goals you should be striving for. Not only that, but your supervisor will appreciate your willingness to communicate about your program.

You Will Be Expected To:

- ✓ Be a Team Player. You will find interning, training and working in the U.S. is all about teamwork! Do your best to work well with your colleagues.
- ✓ Come to work on time. Punctuality is very important and repeated lateness can lead to program termination.
- ✓ Smile and be positive. Americans are prone to smiling; it is required in the hospitality industry.
- ✓ Treat customers and co-workers with respect.
- ✓ Work quickly and efficiently. You will be expected to have a strong work ethic and to manage your time wisely.
- ✓ Be willing to try new things: new foods, sights and activities.
- ✓ Be willing to meet new people. Americans are generally friendly and outgoing and will be curious about your culture and home country.
- ✓ Take care of personal hygiene. Americans tend to be very concerned about cleanliness. Bathe and wash and brush your hair daily and use deodorant. Adhere to appearance standards.
- ✓ Communicate frequently with your manager. Many misunderstandings are simply due to a lack of communication.
- ✓ Be patient. You may feel that the American culture and language are overwhelming at first, but with time, you will learn and understand more.
- ✓ Practice your English as often as possible!
- ✓ U.S. Workplace Characteristics - Below are some characteristics typical to the U.S. workplace. Remember that everyone and every business are different and that learning the dynamics of your particular host property is simply part of the cultural exchange process.

- ✓ Do not be surprised if your manager is younger than you or if your coworkers are a different race, sex or religion. The U.S. is amazingly diverse and this is one of its strengths.
- ✓ It is important to emphasize that workplace relations between men and women may be slightly different than in your home country, and flirting or physical contact is frowned upon. Generally, a professional, mature, responsible and respectful attitude is expected at work.
- ✓ Privacy is thought to be the right of every individual. A coworker may be unwilling to share certain information with you or spend time with you. Often, this is not out of rudeness but out of a desire to maintain one's privacy.
- ✓ Americans can be blunt and honest.
- ✓ Ignorance about life outside the U.S. is common. Part of your U.S. experience is to teach Americans about your culture and country. Share information with your coworkers, and those who are interested will ask questions—this is a great opportunity for cultural exchange!
- ✓ Americans like to joke, smile, laugh and talk. They will try to fill up the conversation with small talk.
- ✓ Americans like direct eye contact, but they often do not like to be touched or to stand too close to one another while talking.
- ✓ Americans are very concerned about personal hygiene and cleanliness. It is not unusual to take one or even two showers a day and wear a different outfit each day of the week. Wash clothes regularly.
- ✓ Many Americans you meet are informal. They greet each other with a “Hi” or “How are you?” In some cases, “How are you?” is simply meant to be a greeting. Do not be offended if someone says, “How are you?” and keeps walking!
- ✓ Most Americans are friendly and sociable, even with strangers. You should feel free to introduce yourself in social circumstances. People that you see in elevators or on the street, particularly outside of larger cities, will often say “Hello,” even though they do not know you.

Chapter 11 - Tax Information - Participants who earn a wage while completing the J-1 USA Hourly Intern, Train, Work Program are required to pay taxes to the U.S. Government.

J-1 USA Hourly Intern, Train and Work Participants Must Pay:

- ✓ Federal income tax
- ✓ State income tax
- ✓ Local income tax

J-1 USA Hourly Intern, Train and Work Participants do not pay:

- ✓ Social Security taxes
- ✓ Medicare taxes
- ✓ Federal unemployment taxes
- ✓ To verify that the proper taxes are being withheld from your paycheck, you should review your wage details in your paycheck. If you see deductions that say FICA, FUTA, S.S. or Social Security, please notify your host property promptly.

W-4 Form - For tax purposes, you are required to fill out a W-4 Employee Withholding Allowance Certificate as soon as you start your intern/train/work program. Based on the information you provide on the W-4 Form, your host property will calculate the amount of federal, state and local taxes to be withheld from your paycheck. U.S. law requires that you pay federal, state and local taxes. Your host employer will deduct money from your paycheck every pay period. As an income-earning individual, you will be taxed on income from salaries, wages, and tips. Your host property will submit the amount withheld directly to the federal government. Deductions for state and local taxes will vary. Some states do not

have a personal income tax; others may tax income as much as 8%. Similarly, local taxes will vary but will be lower than state taxes.

How to Complete the W-4 Form - Your host property may tell you to follow the instructions printed on the form, but this is not correct. The instructions on the W-4 Form are for U.S. residents—not exchange visitors.

- ✓ Do not complete the Personal Allowances Worksheet—this does not apply to exchange visitors
- ✓ Home address: Indicate your permanent U.S. mailing address
- ✓ Box 2: Enter your Social Security number if you already have it. If you do not have your number yet, inform Human Resources at your host property that you have applied for a number and provide a copy of your receipt
- ✓ Box 3: Mark or check “Single”, even if you are married
- ✓ Box 4: Leave blank
- ✓ Box 5: Write “1”
- ✓ Box 6: Write “NRA” for “Non-Resident Alien”
- ✓ Box 7: Leave blank
- ✓ Box 8-10: Leave blank, then sign and date your form to complete

Tax Returns - As a participant who paid taxes, you may be entitled to a refund of some or all of the taxes you paid while you worked in the U.S. You are required by law to file a U.S. tax return, even if you will be in your home country when it is time to do this. Tax returns must be filed by April 15 for the previous tax year (January 1 - December 31).

Some participants will need to file two tax returns because of the time of the year they worked in the U.S. For example, if your DS-2019 dates are November 15, 2016 through March 15, 2017, you will file a tax return in 2016 for wages earned November 15 through December 31, 2016. You will also complete a second tax return in 2017 for wages earned January 1 through March 15, 2017.

W-2 Form - Before your last day at work, give your contact information (address, email, telephone, etc.) to your host property so they can mail you your W-2 Form for tax purposes. This form is sent by the host property(s) after the tax year ends and it details the total wages and the amount of each tax that was withheld. At the beginning of the calendar year after your J1 program, you will receive a W-2 form from your U.S. host property detailing what taxes you paid while under their employment. The W-2 must legally be issued by January 31, and you can expect to receive it in February or March at the latest. If you have not received your W-2 by January 31st, please contact your host property.

Filing Your Tax Return - You can file your tax return yourself or you can use a company to file the tax return for you. If using a company to file your tax return for you, AHA suggests Taxback. Taxback offers a 10% discount to AHA participants. In order to receive the 10% discount you must:

Visit the tax back website using the following tracking web link: www.aha.lnk.taxback.com. Answer "American Hospitality Academy" when asked you heard about Taxback.

Chapter 12 – Traveling During and After Your J-1 Program

During Your Program During your program, you should be able to travel internationally and return to the U.S. without any problem if **ALL** is true:

- You have received permission from your host property to take time off during your program.
- You have a valid, unexpired passport.
- Your J-1 Visa is marked with an "M" under "Entries" in your passport. This means you are allowed multiple entries to the U.S.
- Your J-1 Visa is not expired (SPLIT program/Extension participants, please read below)
- Your DS-2019 Form is still valid.

Before traveling you **MUST** following these steps:

- **At least 3 weeks before travel, email AHA a copy of your passport, visa page.** AHA will confirm you have a valid multi-entry visa, allowing you to re-enter the USA. Please email Amy@AmericanHospitalityAcademy.com
- Submit the Travel Request Form to your employer for signature (form attached below).
- Your DS-2019 form **MUST** be signed by AHA for travel validation. The signature confirms you are in good standing continues to be sponsored by AHA.
- Mail your DS-2019 to AHA along with the Travel Request Form signed by your supervisor (attached) with a pre-paid return envelope at least 14 days before travel. Mail these documents to:

Amy Frank
American Hospitality Academy
243 Treetop Spur
Copley, OH 44321

- Include a **prepaid return envelope** from AHA to your U.S. mailing address. When possible mail the DS form to your host property in care of your manager or Human Resources using FedEx, UPS, or the U.S. Postal Service (trackable method).

AHA will sign and return your DS-2019 in the prepaid envelope you provided. You will need to present this document to the U.S. Customs Official upon your return to the U.S.

PLEASE NOTE - If enough time is not provided to AHA to sign and return your form, you will receive a scanned copy and be required to send international address and pay the cost of international shipping plus \$25 administration fee.

Other Important Notes About Traveling Outside the U.S.

- You may not spend more than 30 consecutive days outside of the U.S. during your J-1 program.
- You may only return to the U.S. before your J-1 Visa Expiration Date, and your J-1 Visa must be for “multiple” entries. The number of times you can enter the U.S. is indicated on your J-1 Visa under the “entries” section:
- Check with your insurance before you travel. In most cases travel to Mexico, Canada, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas) is covered by your insurance. Travel anywhere else outside the U.S. is not covered.
- You need to check the visa requirements of the country you are traveling to and secure any necessary visas.
- You need to take your passport, DS-2019 Form, and I-94 card or printout of your electronic I-94 record with you.
- AHA must be notified of your international travel plans and sign your DS-2019 Form before you travel.

International Travel During Your Extension Period (Split Programs) If you have been approved for a program extension (sometimes referred to as split program), AHA will issue a new DS-2019 Form reflecting your new extended program dates. This form represents your legal status to continue your program.

Although you will receive a new DS-2019 Form, the J-1 Visa in your passport will still expire according to the expiration date printed on the visa itself. You are allowed to remain in the U.S. for the duration of your extension, but if you travel outside of the U.S., you will not be allowed to re-enter, even with a valid extension DS-2019 Form, unless you apply for a new, valid J-1 Visa.

While it might be possible to apply for a new J-1 Visa back in your home country, there is no guarantee the visa will be granted, so please consider this carefully before traveling internationally during your extension period.

Travel at the End of Your Program: The 30-Day Grace Period At the end of your program, you will have a grace period of up to 30 days for personal travel. If you decide to take advantage of the grace period to **travel in the U.S.** (international travel is not permitted), you must be aware of these important details:

Both your DS-2019 Form and J-1 Visa will be expired during this time and you are no longer eligible for automatic visa revalidation. **If you leave the U.S. at all during this travel period, you will not be allowed to re-enter the U.S.**

You will no longer be covered by your insurance – **you must purchase additional insurance for travel.**

AHA sponsorship ends on the date of the DS-2019, AHA will no longer be responsible for you.

Additional Rules for Traveling

- If you are terminated from your J-1 program, you are expected to depart the U.S. immediately. You will not be entitled to the 30-day travel grace period.
- Always keep your passport up-to-date. You must have at least six months remaining on your passport before it expires to re-enter the U.S.
- You may need a visa to enter the country that you are planning to visit. Your U.S. J-1 Visa does not give you the ability to enter any country except the United States. To check visa requirements, visit that country's embassy website before you travel.
- When you travel, you will need to take all your original documents with you. Photocopies are not valid travel documentation.
- If you lost your passport during your program and need a replacement, you will not be able to travel internationally and return to the U.S., as your replacement passport will not have a J-1 Visa in it.
- The decision regarding whether you are allowed back into the United States is not determined by AHA. While participants have rarely had problems in the past, there is always a small chance you will not be allowed back into the U.S. You will need to take this into consideration when making your decision about whether to travel.

Chapter 13 – Open Door Policy, Workplace Problems or Concerns

Open Door Policy - AHA is committed to creating the best training environment - a place where everyone's voice is heard, where issues are promptly addressed and resolved without the fear of retaliation when this input is shared in good faith. AHA promises a training environment where you have that right:

- ✓ To voice any concern or complaint
- ✓ To be heard with respect and without fear of discrimination or retaliation

- ✓ To have your complaint addressed by management in a timely manner
- ✓ To bring your complaint to higher levels of management and/or AHA if you are not satisfied with the response.

While there may not be an easy answer or solution to every concern, and we cannot guarantee that we will always solve problems to your satisfaction, but we would like the opportunity to try.

Your first step should always be to discuss the problem with your host property, as it is usually better for your host property to hear your concerns from you first before being contacted by us. However, it is also important you keep AHA updated; we are here to assist and support you. We care about your program, therefore always contact AHA even if you've already informed your host property.

If you encounter a problem that your host property is unable to address, please contact us directly to assist you. You may contact any manager at AHA, including the following: Karin Morrison, Responsible Officer, CEO – Karin@AmericanHospitalityAcademy.com direct line 305-395-8881.

Host Property Problems or Concerns - Workplaces are naturally stressful environment. If any area of your J-1 program at your host property is causing you concern, you have the responsibility to address your concern with a supervisor or manager. It is common practice in the U.S. to address problems and concerns with your supervisor, manager or the Human Resources department. By understanding the issue and taking positive action, you and your host property have the opportunity to work together to fix any issues that may arise during your program.

Whether you have a problem, a complaint, a suggestion, or an observation, your managers want to hear from you. By listening to you, your host property is able to improve, to address complaints, and to foster open communication and understanding of the rationale for practices, processes, and decisions.

Your host property has an established Open Door Policy, Guarantee of Fair Treatment, Non Harassment Tolerance Policy and/or similar policies in place. You are encouraged to become familiar with these policies and procedures.

Sexual Harassment and Discrimination - It is essential that you treat everyone you encounter at your host property, housing, city and during your travels with respect. You should insist on being treated with respect, too! Harassment or discrimination of any form is never acceptable. Sexual harassment is behavior of a sexual nature that is uninvited, unwanted, and unwelcomed by the recipient. The behaviors include physical contact, verbal abuse, gestures, jokes or written messages. If you feel uncomfortable about how another individual is acting towards you, speak with your supervisor, Human Resources department and AHA regarding your concerns. Some behavior may simply be a matter of cultural differences, but you have the right to feel comfortable in the workplace. Always contact AHA even if you've already informed your host property.

Chapter 14 - After Your Program - Here are a few things to remember once you have successfully completed your program and returned to your home country:

- ✓ Remember to complete your Final Evaluation
- ✓ Discuss with your host property how your last paycheck will be issued and received.
- ✓ Provide your host property with your home mailing address
- ✓ Remember to file your income tax returns.
- ✓ Earn AHA's HPC Certificate.
- ✓ Share your experience with others! Tell your friends and colleagues about AHA
- ✓ Safe Travels!

You should now be prepared to travel to the U.S. and begin your internship/training program. We hope that you have an amazing experience, and we look forward to speaking with or even meeting you while you are in the U.S. Please contact us throughout your program with any questions or concerns you may have and we will be very happy to help.

Remember to consult this handbook as necessary throughout your program. Other helpful resources are located in the World Campus Library, AHA website and in Orientation.

Life in the USA

Chapter 15 - U.S. Culture & Culture Shock

U.S. Culture - The United States is called a “melting pot” - a place where people from countries all over the world come to build their lives and homes. The U.S. is home to people from all different cultures and nationalities. Each group has its own background, customs, and values, which form what we call the American culture. It is a culture that is continually being reshaped and redefined as more people from other countries immigrate to the U.S., but it is also influenced by the visitors who share information about their cultures when they interact with people who live in this country.

One of the best opportunities you will have over the course of your time in the United States is to learn more about the American culture. That’s what cultural exchange is all about. You will discover new things about Americans every day, and as a result you may decide to change some of your behaviors in order to adapt. Remember that adaptation is part of the fun of experiencing a new culture. It is not always easy, but remember that you are temporarily in the United States for a new learning experience; you will be returning to your familiar lifestyle afterward, so it’s important to be flexible about making changes to how you do things. The key to a successful program is to stay positive and explore all the opportunities given to you.

Part of the excitement of living in a new culture is learning about how it differs from your own culture. You might compare your values and customs with the new values and customs you observe every day. The American way of life may be very different from your own, and that difference is part of your cultural exchange experience. Your time in the U.S. is designed to be a great learning opportunity, so take advantage of it!

Characteristics of U.S. Culture - Keep in mind that the following characteristics are generalizations, and as with any country or culture, there are many exceptions and lifestyles that may be quite different.

- ✓ Being on time is important.
- ✓ Americans like their privacy and their own space.
- ✓ Americans can be very direct and honest and might appear rude to people from other cultures.
- ✓ Americans are polite and say “please” and “thank you” a lot.
- ✓ Americans wait their turn. Everyone is expected to stand in an orderly line (queue), without pushing to be first.
- ✓ Americans may not know much about your country or other cultures.
- ✓ Americans value independent thinking.
- ✓ The role of the mother and father in an American family is more or less equal regarding child care and household responsibilities.
- ✓ There is an emphasis on education and learning for everyone.
- ✓ Americans like to joke, smile, and talk. They will try to fill up quiet time with “small talk” about the weather and sports. They like direct eye contact, but they don’t like to stand too close to one another or be touched while talking.
- ✓ Nudity is usually not accepted in the home and definitely not in public.
- ✓ Americans are very concerned about personal hygiene and cleanliness; it is not unusual to take one or even two showers a day, and almost everyone uses deodorant.

- ✓ American family life and child-rearing practices are very child centered. Children in the United States are encouraged from an early age to express themselves, take responsibility for their actions and help in the house. Parents believe such an upbringing will help children develop confidence and self-esteem.
- ✓ Very few Americans employ household staff. Even guests are expected to make their own beds and offer to help with chores.

Cultural Shock - Adjusting to a new culture and way of life can be both exciting and challenging. It's very possible that you will experience good and bad times during your stay in the U.S. You'll be on the adventure of a lifetime and in a new environment that you may find strange and difficult at times. During times of difficulty, just remind yourself that cultural differences and new adventures are the reason we all love to travel, to experience the unknown! Your time in the US will be brief when you look back later in your life.

While everyone responds differently to a new culture, there are typically four stages most people experience:

Stage 1 - You will probably experience a great deal of excitement and happiness, due to new things around you. You'll feel positive about the culture and be fascinated by it.

Stage 2 - You begin to adjust to daily life in the U.S. and the sense of adventure wears off. You will begin to find things different, strange, and even frustrating. The behavior of Americans might seem unusual and unpredictable. You might begin to dislike the culture, feel anxious, or want to be alone. It is helpful to recognize when this is happening and know that this phase doesn't last too long for most people.

Stage 3 - You'll have a routine and feel more confident in dealing with the new culture. Once the values and characteristics of people in the U.S. become more familiar to you, day to day life will become easier. This is your true adjustment to American life!

Stage 4 - You will feel at home in the U.S. You'll enjoy being in the culture and function well in it. You might be surprised by your enthusiasm and realize that you prefer certain American cultural traits over your own. Perhaps you'll leave the U.S. and adopt certain behaviors that appeal to you the most. This is what cultural exchange is all about.

No matter what stage you are experiencing, remember that you're never alone. You can call AHA at any time to talk about the feelings you're experiencing. We're happy to help you at any time!

Signs of Culture Shock - Culture shock is described as the anxiety, feelings of frustration, alienation, and anger that may occur when a person is placed in a new culture. Many of the customs here may seem odd or uncomfortably different from those of your home country. Being in a new and unfamiliar place can be challenging even for the experienced traveler, and some feelings of isolation and frustration are totally normal. Participants experience culture shock to varying degrees; some hardly notice it at all, while others can find it very difficult to adapt to their new environment. Many may not attribute their problems to culture shock. Whatever the case may be, understanding these issues and why they happen will help you.

Some common symptoms of culture shock are:

- ✓ You may feel isolated and frustrated. You may become nervous and/or excessively tired.
- ✓ You may sleep a lot, even after you have recovered from jet lag.
- ✓ You may be excessively homesick. It is normal to miss home, family and friends. But if you can think of nothing else, write or call home all the time and perhaps cry a lot, you are probably suffering from culture shock.
- ✓ Due to your discomfort, you may feel resentment toward your new environment or the people around you.

- ✓ You may become dependent upon other participants from your home country. These friendships are important and are extremely supportive. However, if you spend time exclusively with people from your home country, you will miss the experience of interacting with people from the U.S. and other countries. AHA separates participants from the same country as often as possible so that they can more fully immerse themselves in English language and culture.
- ✓ You may be anxious about your job: “Why does my employer speak so loudly and quickly?” or “Will I be able to repay my parents the money they lent me?” This stress can become overwhelming and cause tension.
- ✓ You may feel reluctant to speak English or associate with people.
- ✓ How to Cope With Culture Shock
- ✓ Maintain your perspective.
- ✓ Keep an open mind and a sense of humor. People in the U.S. may do or say things people in your home country would not.
- ✓ Talk to people about how you are feeling. You are not alone and do not have to go through the adjustment by yourself.
- ✓ Stay positive! Remember the time before you came to the U.S., and remind yourself why you wanted to participate in the program.
- ✓ Talk with your friends and your employer. They will be understanding and supportive.
- ✓ Speak English. In order to overcome culture shock you must accept certain aspects of the new culture.
- ✓ Make friends with people from other countries.
- ✓ Take Care of Yourself - Like all rewarding experiences, being a participant in a cultural exchange program is sometimes difficult. Dealing with your stress will help to make your time abroad more fun, and it will also make you a better worker. Use these tips to make your days easier:
- ✓ Relax when you feel stressed.
- ✓ Keep a journal. This will help you to enjoy the wonderful days, and to get through the more difficult days.
- ✓ Communicate often with your employer. If you are feeling frustrated, see what you can change about the situation.
- ✓ Talk with other participants. You can support and encourage each other.
- ✓ If you have had a hard day, spend some quiet time without television or other distractions. Listen to music. Take a shower. Read a book. Exercise. Take a walk.
- ✓ Get plenty of sleep. If you are tired, you are more likely to get frustrated and sick.
- ✓ Eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, and exercise regularly so that you have the energy needed to make the most of each day.
- ✓ Take vitamins to stay healthy.
- ✓ Wash your hands often. This will help you avoid getting sick.
- ✓ When you do get sick, be careful with cold medicine. Many cold medicines will make you very sleepy, which will make your work more difficult. Make sure any medicine you take while you are working is “non-drowsy.” This means it will not make you sleepy.
- ✓ Think about the things you enjoy about the U.S. or plans you’ve made to travel during your 30-Day Grace Period.

Important Note for Non-Native English Speakers - You should always try to speak in English during your program. You may be uncomfortable with your skills and even feel embarrassed, but you will quickly notice that people will correct your mistakes in a positive way. Your English abilities will improve through your mistakes. Everyone will appreciate your willingness and desire to improve.

The worst mistake you can make is to keep silent. If you don’t speak, your employer may think you are incapable of performing your job. You must be able to communicate. Practice and repetition are the only ways you will improve your English skills.

Chapter 16– U.S. Laws - It's important to remember that breaking a U.S. law of any kind while in the program, you will have to pay significant fines and/or go to jail and it might be very difficult to be released. AHA will be forced to immediately terminate sponsorship of visa and the participant may be prevented from visiting the U.S. in the future.

Local Laws - Unlike most countries, laws in the United States vary from state to state, and even city to city. It is important for participants to become familiar with and obey the local laws in the town or city where they are living to avoid any potential legal difficulties.

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 participant. In order to maintain order, the local police often strictly enforce minor laws.

Participants are encouraged to ask questions before their arrival in the United States so that all federal and state laws are understood and obeyed. Participants enrolled in the AHA Program are expected to conduct themselves according to the local laws and any infractions of these laws are the responsibility of the participant, not AHA.

Drugs - 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. Any type of illegal drug use while in the U.S. may have serious consequences. You are subject to fines and possible time in jail for any drug possession or association with people who have drugs.

It is important to note, even though marijuana use is legal in certain states, under state law, it is still ILLEGAL under federal law. J-1 Participants should not consider that they are safe from law enforcement, just because they are in Colorado, nor that they are exempt from workplace drug testing.

Alcohol - In the United States, the legal drinking age is 21. Participants that are under the age of 21 and are found with alcohol may be arrested and subject to fines. In addition, purchasing alcohol for persons under 21 is illegal. Drinking alcohol in public areas is also illegal in many places. You may be subject to fines if:

- ✓ You are under 21 and are found with alcohol
- ✓ You purchase alcohol for persons under 21
- ✓ You drink alcohol in public areas (drinking alcohol in public is prohibited in many parts of the U.S.)

Many bars, restaurants, and liquor stores will only accept a driver's license or identification card from the Department of Motor Vehicles as proof of age. Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles for information on the procedure for obtaining an identification card.

Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or Driving Under the Influence (DUI) - Do NOT drive a car if you have been drinking alcohol, and do not get into a car if the driver has been drinking. Find safe and sober transportation. Not only is your safety in danger if you drive while intoxicated, but DWI/DUI laws are very strict. Having the keys in the ignition, even if the car is not in motion, is subject to DWI/DUI laws as well. You might have to pay up to \$5,000 or go to jail if found guilty of DWI/DUI. Americans often choose a "designated driver" when going out with a group of friends. This person agrees to not drink alcoholic beverages and drives the rest of the group to and from their destination.

Smoking - Americans are much less tolerant of smoking than people in other countries. It is illegal to smoke in many public places, so look around before lighting up. No Smoking signs are usually posted in a clear, visible location. Smoking is restricted in office buildings, restaurants, and public transportation, among other places.

Other examples of illegal activities include:

- ✓ Theft or stealing of any kind

- ✓ Cashing a check in another person's name
- ✓ Using personal information such as an ID number, social security number, or credit card number of another person to open a bank account or buy items
- ✓ Any type of assault, such as fights or sexual harassment.

Breaking US Laws - It's important to remember that if you break any US laws while you are on your program, you will have to pay significant fines and/or go to jail and it might be very difficult to be released and AHA will be forced to immediately terminate our sponsorship of your visa and you may be prevented from visiting the U.S. in the future

Legal Rights - Program participants have the same rights as U.S. citizens if accused of a crime:

- ✓ You have the right to know the crime you are being charged with.
- ✓ You have the right to remain silent and to refuse to answer any question if you so choose.
- ✓ No person accused of a crime may be forced to confess or give evidence against themselves.
- ✓ You have the right not to be searched unless the police officer has a warrant.
- ✓ Most importantly, you have the right to be represented by a lawyer, and to be provided with a lawyer to represent you if you cannot afford to hire one.
- ✓ You are entitled to be released from jail upon posting of a bail bond (money paid to ensure that the person reports for trial) set by the court while you await trial.
- ✓ You are entitled to a fair trial conducted according to all the rules of evidence and court procedures.
- ✓ Above all, you are presumed innocent until proven guilty. You do not have to prove your innocence, but rather the prosecution must prove your guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If you are arrested - If you are arrested, you are allowed one phone call. It is important that you call AHA at 305.395.8881 to notify us of your situation. We will update your representative and your parents in your home country immediately. Please let AHA know the name and contact information of the jail that you are being held in, what the charges are against you, and the date of your court hearing. AHA is in direct and constant communication with your employer and with your representative in your home country, who is in communication with your parents.

If you are accused of committing a crime, the best advice in most circumstances is to talk to a AHA staff member before you answer any questions regarding charges. AHA can advise about the availability of free or low-cost legal services in your area.

If Arrested, the Following May Happen:

- ✓ You may have to fill out paperwork.
- ✓ You could be charged with a crime and fingerprinted.
- ✓ You could be held in jail until bail is posted.
- ✓ You could see a court judge who hears preliminary details and drops the charges against you or sets a court date within the next 30 days. Sometimes court dates can be set sooner, especially if you remind the judge that you are only legally able to stay in the U.S. until your expected date of departure (program end date).
- ✓ Depending on the severity of the charges, you may have to stay in the area in order to attend your court date.
- ✓ If you are found guilty of a crime, possible penalties include:
 - ✓ Monetary fine
 - ✓ Community service
 - ✓ Jail time
 - ✓ Deportation

Posting Bail - Whenever you are arrested and charged, a judge will decide how much bail you must pay for your release pending trial. Bail is a deposit that must be paid to ensure your appearance at the set trial date. Your bail is determined by the severity of your crime. If you are unable to pay your full bail, bondsmen can be hired to cover this cost. AHA can advise you on the procedures of paying your own bail or, if necessary, help you contact a local bail bondsman.

For example, if the court sets your bail at \$500 and you do not have that much money available, a bail bondsman will charge you about 10% (in this case \$50). The bondsman will pay the remaining \$450 towards your bail, and will keep your \$50 as his fee.

Failure to appear at your assigned court date will result in the loss of the bail money, which has been posted by you or the bondsman. If you used a bail bondsman, you will owe him the full fee. Failure to appear in court may also increase the severity of charges against you, may go on your permanent record, and may negatively affect the process of applying for a visa to come to the U.S. in the future.

Please remember that breaking a U.S. law or being arrested may affect your employment as well as your AHA J-1 program. Please follow our safety tips and abide by all U.S. and local laws while you are on the program. If you have questions or issues contact AHA immediately.

Chapter 17 – Safety - In general, the United States is a very safe place. You should feel comfortable in your host community. However, it is always a good idea to keep security and safety in mind, especially when traveling after your program has ended. Overall, you will find this country full of warm, friendly people who will enjoy meeting you, sharing their culture with you, and learning about your culture. By using common sense, you will be able to avoid most difficulties and have a wonderful, safe time in the United States.

- ✓ Do not hitchhike - it is illegal and dangerous.
- ✓ Do not accept rides from strangers.
- ✓ Do not walk across highways or jaywalk.
- ✓ Do not jog or walk alone at night.
- ✓ Do not carry more money than you will need for the day.
- ✓ Do not accept any form of money from strangers.
- ✓ Do not carry your passport with you if you don't need it. Carry a different form of identification, such as your driver's license or a copy of your passport.
- ✓ Protect your personal ID and confidential information: your Social Security number is yours alone. Do not allow others to use your number. Record your number in a safe place in case your card is lost or stolen. Protect both your card and your number to prevent misuse.
- ✓ During local emergencies, obey all warnings and advice from authorities and AHA.
- ✓ Internet Safety: Don't respond to emails from strangers, or provide personal information over the Internet unless on a trusted website with appropriate security.
- ✓ Avoid parks, woods and remote areas when you are alone, especially at night.
- ✓ Be alert to your surroundings when using an ATM. Take extra caution at night.
- ✓ Always let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Contact them if your plans change.
- ✓ Always wear a bike helmet and obey all traffic laws when riding a bike. Use lights and reflective clothing at night.
- ✓ If you feel you are being followed, cross the street and observe what the other person does. Put space between yourself and the person following you. Pretend to see a friend, even if it is a person you do not know and call out or wave to that person. You should try to attract attention and scare away the person following you. If a store, restaurant or business nearby is open, go inside and ask for help.
- ✓ If you think you are being followed while driving, drive to the nearest police or fire station.

- ✓ Remember that cars drive on the right side of the road in the USA.
- ✓ Notify the authorities and AHA immediately if you are threatened by your employer, colleagues, landlord or anyone else.
- ✓ Do not engage in threatening, immature, unlawful or antisocial behavior.
- ✓ Be careful if drinking in a bar or restaurant. Watch your drink at all times, stay sober, and do not leave with anyone you don't already know.
- ✓ Do not get into a car with anyone who has been drinking.

Be aware of Wilberforce laws that protect you: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>

If you are interested in learning more about how to be safe while in the U.S., check out the website ncpc.org.

Emergencies - In the event of an emergency, call 911 for the police, fire department, or an ambulance. Make sure you answer all questions clearly and carefully. Do not be afraid to approach the police at any time.

When dealing with the law authorities, AHA will provide verification of your status to law enforcement officers, but you will be expected to pay any fines or face any charges you have incurred. To avoid problems, take the time to learn the state and local laws for the city in which you are residing, e.g., minimum drinking age, traffic regulation, and drug enforcement policies. If you are accused of having committed a crime, the best advice in most circumstances is to talk to AHA and a lawyer before you answer any questions.

What is Not an Emergency?

- ✓ General information about jobs and housing
- ✓ Social Security and tax problems
- ✓ Employee/employer concerns
- ✓ Loss of DS-2019 form and/or I-94 form
- ✓ Loss of passport
- ✓ Basic legal information
- ✓ Change of flight –contact airline directly
- ✓ Homesickness
- ✓ Disliking position

What Is an Emergency?

- ✓ Death
- ✓ Medical Mental Health emergency
- ✓ Victim of crime
- ✓ An arrest

Chapter 18 - The Telephone System in the U.S.

Local, Regional and Long Distance Calls - If you call a number within or outside of your area, you will usually need to dial 1 plus the area code (e.g. 843) and then the 7-digit local number (e.g. 353-1970). Some small towns with only one area code may only require you to dial the 7-digit local number. Ask your host or dial "0" for help from an operator. A cell phone will automatically add 1 to the beginning of any long distance call.

International Calls - When making international calls you must dial "011" followed by the country code, city code (you must drop the "0" before the city code) and number. These calls tend to be expensive, so you should not use your employer's telephone without his/her permission. It is much cheaper to use a phone card such as those provided by eKit

(pay as you go). Most phone cards designed for international use will have better rates than your employer's telephone plan. To find out the country code for your country, visit www.countrycallingcodes.com

Emergency Phone Number – 911 - Wherever you are in the U.S., you can dial 911 on any telephone in an emergency. You will be connected to emergency services (fire department, police and ambulance). This is always a free call. Do not call 911 for non-emergencies.

Skype - If you've brought along a laptop or have access to a computer, you can use Skype to make cheap or free international calls. Visit www.skype.com to set up an account and add credit. Never download Skype software onto a public or work computer without asking for permission first.

Chapter 19- Money and U.S. Postal Service

U.S. Money - You will probably earn enough money to buy souvenirs, go out in your free time, travel after the program is over, and perhaps even save some money.

You should prepare to have a few different ways to access money while in the United States, such as an ATM card or a credit card. Handling your money in these ways is simply safer than carrying around large amounts of cash.

Banks - U.S. banks are mostly regional, so you won't find the same bank everywhere in the country. Banks are usually open from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, but many are open on Saturdays. If you open an account in the U.S., try to find a bank with many locations so you can withdraw money and cash paychecks without incurring fees. You can research branch locations and ATM locations by checking the bank's website. Your employer may also be able to suggest a convenient bank.

Bank Machines (Automatic Teller Machines — ATMs) - ATMs are almost everywhere and they work the same way they do in your home country; they will allow you to get cash from your bank account as well as perform deposits and other transactions. Your bank card from home is likely to work in ATMs in the United States, but you should check with your home bank just to be certain. Remember, you will probably be charged a small fee to use an ATM outside of your home country. Many ATMs charge a fee to withdraw money.

How to Write a Check - The following YouTube video outlines how to write a bank check:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3SKXfEMSYY

Bank Account Tips and Security

- ✓ Always know how much money you have in your account to avoid overdraft fees
- ✓ Never share your ATM card or password, and be sure to check your account statements frequently for unauthorized charges. Cards in the U.S. must have magnetic strips on them
- ✓ Never accept money or money transfers from a stranger

Credit Cards - Credit cards are accepted almost everywhere, but be careful! You will have to pay the bill when you get home. To report a lost or stolen credit card call:

American Express	1.800.297.8500
MasterCard	1.800.627.8372
VISA	1.800.847.2911

Sending Money Home - Every year participants on our programs work hard, save as much money as possible, and then wonder how they can get it home safely. Over the years, AHA has heard many sad stories about participants who carried

their earnings in cash and had it all stolen before they reached home. Never carry large amounts of cash. Do not carry your savings in cash. We want to make sure that you hold onto your hard-earned savings.

If you have a bank account in your home country, you should be able to transfer money to it fairly easily, especially if it is a U.S. dollar account. The transfer usually costs you approximately \$30 and may take 3-4 weeks to appear in your account at home. In most countries your bank will charge between 0.5-1% of the total sum to withdraw cash from the account. Please consult directly with the bank regarding international money transfers and associated fees.

International postal money orders may also be a good option for some participants. The fee varies depending on the destination country and is usually between \$3 and \$9 per money order. Each money order can be a maximum of \$700 and there is no limit to how many can be sent in a given time period. International postal money orders are generally issued in U.S. dollars and then converted into local currency at the time they are cashed according to the current exchange rate. Most large post offices should be able to offer this service.

If you open a U.S. bank account during your program, it is also possible to leave it open and use your ATM card to withdraw money as you travel as well as after you return home. Most ATM cards can now be used internationally. There may be ATM fees that vary from country to country but this still may be a good option for you. It is also easy for you to close your account by mail after returning home.

It may not be possible to cash a check in your home country, so please make arrangements with your employer to receive your last paycheck before you leave the state in which you worked. Checks have an expiration date, so be sure to cash or deposit your paychecks before they expire.

U.S. Mail - All prices accurate at time of printing.

Domestic mail weighing less than one ounce requires a 47-cent stamp (\$0.47). Postage for other items varies depending on size, weight and—in the case of international mail— destination. Postal service prices are subject to regular changes. To find out updated prices, contact your local post office or visit the U.S. Postal Service on the Internet at postcalc.usps.com.

The U.S. Post Office can also send packages, by air or surface transport. If you need something to be delivered quickly and need to track it, then FedEx or UPS are usually your best options. Both offer domestic overnight and 2 to 5 day service worldwide. The faster you want your package to arrive, the more it will cost. U.S. mail is delivered Monday through Saturday, except national holidays.

Chapter 20– Housing - Do your best to find housing long before your arrival in the U.S. In many cases, your employer may have recommendations for short- or long-term housing near your workplace. If you are beginning the search on your own, use the resources below. Most importantly, don't arrive in the U.S. without any pre-arranged housing.

For the first few nights in the U.S. you may need short-term housing. Hostels, affordable motels, or universities and colleges are good options. It's even better if you can travel and share expenses with other AHA J-1 program participants. Make reservations ahead of time to make sure you have a bed or room when you arrive.

When planning your long term-housing, consider living with other AHA J-1 Program participants -- this is a great way to make new friends and save money. Also consider whether or not the housing is furnished, includes utilities, and whether it is close to work or is close to public transportation, as these can all affect your monthly costs.

Avoiding Scams - There are a lot of housing scams, especially on the Internet, so you must conduct your housing search carefully. It is highly recommended that you secure short-term housing upon arrival (e.g. in a hostel) and conduct your housing search once you are in the U.S. If you absolutely must secure permanent housing before arriving in the U.S., it is

recommended that you look for an established university or residence facility rather than an individual apartment owner.

Finding Long-Term Housing - Employers: Ask your employer or future coworkers for suggestions. Many employers either provide housing, are happy to help you arrange housing, or have recommendations.

- ✓ www.craigslist.org : This website has pages for an increasing number of cities. There is no cost to place an ad on Craigslist, so it is common to find affordable housing here.
- ✓ www.apartmentlist.com: This website allows you to search by neighborhood, and has lots of options for filtering your search. You can also log in with your Facebook account to access special features.
- ✓ www.apartments.com: This website lists apartments for rent by state and city. You can also sign up for apartment listings to be emailed to you and they even have an iPhone application.
- ✓ www.roommates.com: This service, and ones like it, list apartments where people are looking for roommates. A service like this can help you not only find an apartment, but someone to help pay the rent. In this situation it is very likely you'll share an apartment with an American and this will add to the cultural aspect of your J-1 Program experience. Be aware that roommate services like this can be free to join, but will generally charge a fee and can take longer.
- ✓ University Listings and Bulletin Boards: Many campuses have bulletin boards where students post notices looking for roommates. Keep in mind that many students with year-long leases need to sublet their apartments for the summer, and often do so with affordable prices. Most universities also have an Off-Campus Housing Office, with lists of available housing and rental options in the local area.
- ✓ Classified Advertisements: Another place to look for available housing is the classified section of a local newspaper, either online or in print. Note that the Sunday edition often has the most listings.

Questions to Ask - When looking at options, consider the following questions:

- ✓ What is the lease length?
- ✓ Are utilities included?
- ✓ Is furniture provided? Furnished will be more expensive; however, may cut down on the cost of purchasing individually.
- ✓ Is it within walking distance of my job? Is it near public transportation?
- ✓ How accessible are stores, banks, entertainment, etc.?
- ✓ What's the average rent for a place this size in the neighborhood?
- ✓ How soon can I move in?
- ✓ How much do I have to pay before I move in (security deposit, first month's rent, etc.)?
- ✓ Does it have laundry facilities?

Safety - Safety should be a high priority when looking for housing. The best thing to do is to visit a neighborhood before moving there. Do not accept the landlord's word. Be sure you are satisfied with the security of the neighborhood and the apartment/house itself. You can also ask other people for their opinion. Trust your instincts!

Signing a Rental Agreement (Lease) - If you rent or sublet, you should make sure you sign a rental agreement. Keep a copy for yourself. A rental agreement may be optional, but you should still insist on signing one. The contract should define the terms you are agreeing to, including rental amount and dates, and protects the tenant and landlord. Before you sign any rental agreement, be sure to read it carefully and get an explanation of any terms that are unclear. Remember that only written information on a rental agreement makes an official legal contract.

Many leases last for one year so look for a lease that will allow you to rent month-to-month or for a shorter term. Do not sign a lease for a period longer than you think you are going to stay in the housing, because you may be charged a fee for breaking the lease if you move out early.

Security Deposits - All states allow landlords to collect a security deposit when a tenant moves in. Security deposits are usually one month's rent. Your security deposit will be returned to you when you leave, as long as there has been no damage to the apartment during your occupancy and you fulfilled the lease agreement. It is a very good idea to inspect your new apartment with your landlord before signing an agreement. Be sure to get a written record of existing damages and a list of all included furnishings and their condition. You can also take photos of the apartment's condition when you first move in to make a visual record.

Budgeting - When looking for an apartment, know how much you can afford to pay for housing and think about your additional living and entertainment expenses. Be smart with your budget so that you have enough money left for food and other necessities after you pay your rent. Make sure you have enough money to pay the first month's rent and security deposit when you arrive in the U.S.

Being a Good Tenant and Roommate - When you share your housing, you should make sure that everyone understands financial and other responsibilities within the apartment. Request a written agreement about the cost of housing and be sure to ask any questions that will be important to you. Some suggested questions you might ask are (write these down, and consider if there are other questions to ask before making a decision):

- ✓ How much does each person pay for additional expenses like electricity and Internet?
- ✓ How do you feel about having guests in the apartment?
- ✓ How do you feel about drinking and smoking in the apartment?
- ✓ Are there any things or areas in the apartment that will be private?
- ✓ How should grocery expenses be handled?
- ✓ Are you messy or neat?
- ✓ What should we do about keeping the apartment clean?

Eviction - "Eviction" means being removed from your housing, and there are many reasons your landlord can do this, including: not paying rent on time, making too much noise, or damaging property. If you are evicted from your housing, you should get an eviction notice and be given a deadline to leave the housing.

Do not let eviction happen to you! Be respectful of your living situation. This means paying the rent on time, taking care of your property, and following all of the rules in your lease or living agreement. If you have any concerns, talk to your landlord or the person responsible.

Chapter 21 - Driving in the United States

Driving in the United States –AHA recommends that you use public transportation such as buses, trains, and airplanes when possible. In the event that public transportation is not available and you choose to rent a vehicle, you **MUST** obtain the proper auto insurance that covers medical and liability requirements in your state. AHA recommends purchasing above the minimum requirements for both medical and liability. Though it is more expensive, the coverage is necessary if you are involved in an accident. Some car rental companies also require an international permit in addition to your international driver's license. Most car rental agencies will not rent an automobile to persons under 25 years of age.

If You Choose to Rent a Vehicle, You Should Know the Following:

- ✓ Motorcycles/mopeds and recreational vehicles are NOT covered on your J-1 Insurance plan
- ✓ J-1 insurance is NOT Auto Insurance
- ✓ Each state has unique minimum insurance requirements and it is your responsibility to know them and to ensure you meet them.
- ✓ You must have a valid license
- ✓ Basic Safety Tips for Driving in the U.S.:
- ✓ Always wear your seatbelt—it is the law
- ✓ Do NOT text and drive (in many states, this is the law)
- ✓ Follow the rules and speed limits posted on the road
- ✓ Do not drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- ✓ Do not drive when you are tired
- ✓ Do not use your cell phone while driving; it is against the law in many states
- ✓ Remember that cars drive on the right side of the road in the USA.

Local Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV) - If you plan to drive in the U.S., you must understand the local, state and federal laws regarding driving. The best recommendation is to consult the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in the state in which you would like to drive.

Local DMV offices may be found through an Internet search, or by visiting the state's official DMV website. For more details about the DMV and driving in the U.S., please refer to the Resources section of our website.

International Driver's License - If you intend to drive in the U.S., we strongly recommend that you get an international driver's license before you leave your home country. You cannot get one in the U.S. Depending on the day you obtain your International Driver's License; it should be valid in any state for up to one year.

Foreign Driver's License (Home Country Driver's License) - All U.S. states recognize foreign drivers' licenses. In most cases, your license will be valid for up to 4 months after the date you enter the U.S. Consult the DMV in the state where you wish to drive to confirm the length of validity and the rules for driving with a foreign driver's license. Your foreign license is valid if accompanied by your international passport.

Obtaining a Driver's License in the U.S. - Contact the local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for the state where you will be working to find out whether you are eligible to apply for a U.S. driver's license. If eligible, obtain a copy of the state driver's manual from the DMV so that you can learn the state's driving rules, and study for the written test and the driving test. Ask which documents you need to present to the DMV when applying for a license.

At a minimum, you will probably be required to show the following documents in order to apply for a state license:

- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Home country driver's license
- ✓ International driver's license
- ✓ Social Security card
- ✓ Motorcycles require a special driver's license, and many states have laws requiring that you wear a helmet. The accident and sickness insurance provided by AHA will not cover you in the event of an accident while you are driving a motorcycle.

What to Do in the Event of a Car Accident - In the event of a car accident, do not leave the scene of the accident. Contact the police immediately, and then call AHA. Find out if anyone involved is injured. If someone requires medical

attention, or to report the accident, dial 911 from any phone. 911 is the free direct number for emergency services with the local police anywhere in the U.S. If possible, do not move your car until the police arrive and are able to assess the accident scene. While waiting for the police, exchange the following information with the driver of the other car:

- ✓ Name, telephone number and license ID number.
- ✓ License plate number, model and year of the car.
- ✓ Registration number and expiration date.
- ✓ Name of the insurance company and policy number.

If there are any witnesses, ask for their names, telephone number and address in the event of insurance problems. If you have hit a parked car, you must leave your name, phone number and license plate number on a piece of paper and put it under the windshield wiper, so they may contact you. Also write down the car's license number and model of the car.

Failure to leave your information or report the accident is considered a crime. Make sure that any car you drive has insurance that will cover you as a driver or a passenger in the event of an accident. You are responsible for any fines for moving violations or parking tickets. Failure to honor these fines may impair your ability to get a visa to the U.S. in the future.

- ✓ Use Extra Caution
- ✓ Stay on marked roads
- ✓ Be aware of special weather and road conditions (e.g., snow, fog, and flooding)
- ✓ Use extra care around school buses
- ✓ Follow parking rules

Bicycles, Motorcycles, Mopeds and Recreational Vehicles

Bicycle Safety - A bicycle is the best and most cost effective way for you to get around. There are many sports or bicycle stores that sell used bicycles. You can also check the local paper or online classified ads to find bicycles for sale in your area. Make sure that you purchase a bicycle helmet as well.

Motorists in some parts of the U.S. are not accustomed to sharing the road with bicycles, so it is very important that you are cautious and alert when riding a bicycle. Bicyclists are considered vehicle operators and are required to follow and obey traffic laws. Following these tips will help to make sure that your experience is a safe one:

- ✓ Wear a bicycle helmet
- ✓ Wear bright clothing
- ✓ Install reflectors and lights on the front and back of the bicycle, and always use lights at night
- ✓ Ride in the same direction as traffic
- ✓ Bike on the road where cars will see you, not on sidewalks
- ✓ Use hand signals so others can anticipate your actions

For information on bicycle safety, proper hand signals, and more, check out the following websites:

www.BicycleSafe.com or National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Motorcycles, Mopeds, and Recreational Vehicles - Your J-1 insurance does not cover any injuries or accidents while you are driving or riding on a moped, motorcycle, or recreational vehicle. If you decide to purchase or ride on one of these vehicles, you are responsible for purchasing additional health and motor vehicle insurance.