



United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, DC 20522

November 1, 2021

Dear Secondary School Student:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program and beginning one of the most important and exciting adventures of your life. Not only will you obtain an American high school education but will experience life as part of an American family. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime. You will have the opportunity to meet many Americans, as well as partake in family traditions and customs.

As an exchange student, never forget that you are part of a larger mission and vision. Like the thousands of students from around the world who have come before you since 1949, you will have the opportunity to share your language, culture and customs with your American host family, your American school, and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

We want you to have a meaningful and successful experience. You will be living with a host family and attending a new school, both of which may have different rules and ways of life from what you are used to, so keeping an open mind will be very important to your success. Your goal should be to learn as much as you can about American customs, values and culture and to build strong relationships with your host family, new classmates, and new friends.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Your sponsor is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, if you need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right to you, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is your sponsor's responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Your U.S. sponsor should have given you an emergency telephone contact number in your program orientation materials. This telephone number should be available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline (1-866-283-9090), which is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to be part of this amazing program. I hope you enjoy your stay in the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Elkon".

Nicole Elkon
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange