

Student Handbook

Pre-Arrival



National Headquarters

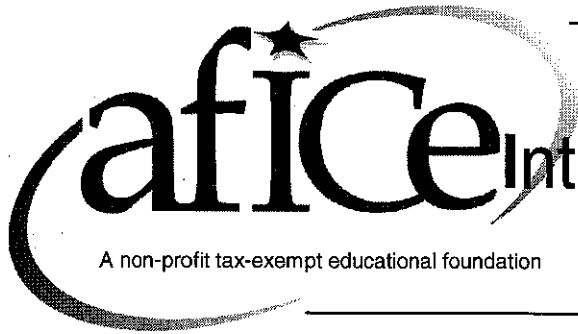
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www.afice.org

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FOR STUDENT: _____



Academic Foundation *for* International Cultural Exchange

7242 La Jolla Blvd, La Jolla, CA 92037
Telephone: (858) 455-0302 Fax: (858) 455-0335

Dear _____

Congratulations on being accepted to the AFICE Student Exchange Program!

Attached is your ***Pre-Arrival*** Student Handbook. It will help you to prepare for a successful exchange year in the United States. Make sure you read this handbook thoroughly so you can better understand what the next year will be like for you.

To make sure we know you have received the handbook, we are asking that you sign the 'Acknowledgement' page in the back of the handbook, and send the signed page back to AFICE.

Both you and your natural parents must sign and date the form, and send it back to us before you arrive in the U.S.

We look forward to having you on the AFICE program!



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

www.state.gov

Dear Student,

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, welcome to the Secondary School Student exchange program. This program is a great opportunity for you to experience the culture and diversity of the United States. As a participant in this program, you are among thousands of high school students from around the world serving as your country's citizen ambassador in the United States. We want your experience to be rewarding.

As a participant in this program, you will attend a public or private high school, while living with an American host family who has opened their home and hearts to welcome you to the United States. With a positive attitude and respect for others, you will have a close relationship with your host family.

We know that you may have some worries about leaving your family and friends to come to the United States. Those are very normal feelings. Your decision to come to the United States is exciting to us and your health, safety, and well-being are our most important concern. If you ever feel unsafe, or are in a situation that makes you uncomfortable in any way, please notify your sponsor as soon as possible. If you don't think your sponsor is paying attention or is not helping, you may always contact the Department of State directly through the phone number or email address provided below. Somebody will answer and will help you.

Your sponsor will provide you with an identification card, which lists your host family, home address, and telephone numbers. You will also find on this card separate telephone numbers for immediate contact with your sponsor and the sponsor's local representative, as well as the Department of State's toll free number (1-866-283-9090) and email address (jvisas@state.gov). You should keep this card with you at all times and contact us if you have any concerns about your health, safety, or well-being.

Best wishes for a rewarding and fun experience. Welcome to the United States!

Sincerely,

Robin J. Lerner
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange

Introduction

Welcome to the Academic Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (AFICE) Program. We hope that during your stay in America on the AFICE program you will come to understand the American culture, and be able to share *your* culture with your new Host Family and friends.

Traveling to a new country is always an exciting experience, but it can also be confusing, especially during the first days after you arrive. So many things will be new and different, and you will feel very far away from home. Just remember that all of your feelings are perfectly normal. You are not alone. Not only is your new Host Family there to help you and answer your questions, but there are others at AFICE whose main goal is to ensure that you have a safe and rewarding experience.

This book will help you try to understand America before you arrive. It will explain what to expect while living in America, how to learn from it and how to enjoy it. Be sure to ask your Host Family or Community Rep if you don't understand something.

All of us at AFICE hope you will have an exciting and rewarding year living in the United States.

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Your Community Representative

You will be assigned a community representative once you have been placed with a Host Family. Your community rep is there to guide you and help you through any problems you have during your stay. You should never hesitate to contact your community rep if you have any questions or concerns.

In the space below, please fill in the name and phone number of your community rep so you will always have the information handy.

Your Community Rep

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: () _____

EMAIL: _____

NATIONAL OFFICE

AFICE – 7242 La Jolla Blvd. La Jolla, CA 92037 * PHONE: (858) 455-0302 * FAX: (858) 455-0335

Website: www.afice.org

Email: contact@afice.org

Preparing For Travel

LUGGAGE

Since you will be in the U.S. for a year, you need to take special care in planning and preparing the things you will take with you. Generally, you may take two suitcases, each weighing under 23 kg / 50 lbs. and one carry-on bag that will fit under your seat. You must also double check with your airline carrier about the restrictions they have on the weight, size and number of pieces of luggage you are allowed to take on international flights. We strongly suggest you pack at least one change of clothing into your carry-on, in case your luggage is delayed. Before you decide what clothing you will take with you, ask your Host Family to explain the kind of weather their area in the U.S. will have and plan accordingly. You may want to buy some items of clothing in the U.S. because the items are less expensive than in your home country, but it should not be expected that your Host Family take you shopping for clothes days after you arrive. You should pack enough clothing to last you long enough so that you can focus on school, settling in to your host family and becoming comfortable first.

PASSPORT

You should already have a valid passport when you applied to the program. It is your responsibility to make sure that your passport will be valid for the full length of your program stay. Neither AFICE, your Host Family, or your Community Rep is responsible for making sure your passport is extended – this must be done prior to your arrival and a copy of the new passport must be sent to the AFICE main office for verification. You must bring your passport with you and keep it in a safe, convenient place once you arrive to your host family.

VISA and DS-2019 FORM

Your participation in the program will require that you have a valid J-1 student visa. AFICE will issue you a form called DS-2019, also known as "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status". This document is sent from AFICE to the Exchange Student Organization through which you applied in your home country. They will then forward the form to you. Be sure to fill in the information where requested before taking the form to your nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy where you will apply for your visa. The visa will be placed in your passport to give you permission to come to the United States for one academic school year.

I-94 and CUSTOMS DECLARATION PAGE

On the plane to the United States, you will be asked to complete an I-94 Form. You will give the completed form to the Immigration Officer at the airport. The Immigration Officer will stamp it and staple it into your passport. You will then be given a "Customs Declaration" form. You must complete this form and have it ready to give to the Customs Official at the airport. The Customs Official may ask you to show them the gifts you are bringing with you. It is against the law to bring any fresh meat, plant products, or any other living things with you. Because of the U.S. Visit program in various airports across the U.S., you might also be expected to have your photograph and fingerprints taken when your international flight arrives to the U.S.

Making Flight Arrangements

Congratulations! You have now been placed with a Host Family and School in the U.S.!

By now you are very excited and nervous, and feel you have so much to do in order to prepare for your year abroad. No doubt your Host Family is excited also. Your first step should be to begin communicating with your host family. This can be done by sending them an email, or calling them on the phone. Please make sure before calling that you check the time difference between your home country and where your Host Family is located (you do not want to call them in the middle of the night)! You should be aware of the start date of your school in the U.S., and travel arrangements should be made that you arrive no more than 5 days before you begin school. Any arrival prior to 5 days before school begins must be approved first. It will be necessary to speak with your host family before you make flight arrangements. Do not assume that you can arrive any day or any time you want, or to any airport, just because it is more convenient or cheaper for you to do so. It is respectful to coordinate with your Host Family for a good time and date to pick you up at the airport. You should be flexible and understand that your host family might not be available on certain dates to pick you up – work together to form a compromise. It is also dis-respectful to arrange your flight to arrive at an airport that is far away from where your Host Family lives. The arrival airport should be the one that is closest and most convenient to your host family. You may have to arrive at a large international airport, and then book a connecting flight to a smaller airport closer to your host family. Doing these extra steps will make a good start to your relationship with your host family.

Once the flight itinerary is made, a copy should be sent to your Exchange Agency in your home country. They are required to forward your flight itinerary to the AFICE main office. AFICE will forward your itinerary to your Host Family and your Community Rep. Failure to notify AFICE of your flight itinerary may mean you arrive at the airport with no one to greet you.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE YOU TO ARRIVE IN THE U.S. BEFORE HAVING A CONFIRMED HOST FAMILY AND SCHOOL – ARRIVAL PRIOR TO THIS MAY BE CAUSE FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME IMMEDIATELY.

AFICE students are required to purchase round-trip tickets when making flight arrangements. The return date should be based on when your last day of school is. You should be arranging to return home no more than 5 days after school is over. If for any reason your school extends the school year by a few days (which sometimes happens because of weather) you can easily call the airline and ask for a change of return flight date. Any change of your flight itinerary must be sent to the AFICE main office. If your agency back home is making your travel arrangements, you must notify them of any changes that you need to make.

Any student whose return flight is booked later than 5 days after school ends must have approval from the AFICE main office. Although your visa states that it expires on June 15th, you are still allowed a grace period to account for any flight changes that may occur. This does not mean you can extend your stay as long as you want. AFICE is under an obligation by the State Department to make sure you return to your home country in a timely manner. Failure to return as scheduled will mean you are off the AFICE program, your AFICE Medical Coverage will be terminated and the State Department will be contacted to let them know you are no longer on the AFICE program and we are not responsible for you any longer.

Medical Insurance

During your AFICE program year you will be covered through an insurance carrier (unless your exchange agency has their own coverage). Your Medical ID card will be waiting for you when you arrive at your Host Family's home. Please make sure you keep the card in a safe place and where it is convenient for you to find if you need it. A good suggestion is to always carry it in your purse or wallet.

Your insurance will cover an illness or injury that you sustain during the exchange year. If at any time during your program year you need to see a doctor, you must show your insurance card at the time of the visit. The doctor's office may tell you that they will file a claim; however, you must pay at the time of your visit. You are responsible for any co-pays, and anything that is not covered. You may receive a bill from the doctor sometime after your visit. It will show the charges incurred at the time, what the insurance covered, and how much you (the patient) owes the doctor's office. You are responsible for paying this bill in a timely manner, and out of your own pocket. Your host family is not responsible for paying the bill, and at no time should you ask them. If necessary, you can contact your natural parents and have them send money to you to cover the costs.

Your insurance does not cover dental care. If you need any dental work done during your stay here, be it a cleaning, filling a cavity, or fixing a tooth ache – the cost of the dental work will have to be paid out of your own pocket. The only exception would be if you were to have an accident which caused you to need emergency dental care. Dental work due to a medical emergency is covered under your AFICE insurance (minus any deductibles owed). Dental work done in the U.S. can be very costly. It would be a good idea to have your dental examination and any dental work that needs to be done in your home country before you depart for the U.S.

Your insurance also does not cover optical (eye) care. If at any time during your program you need to be fitted for new glasses, or lose your contact lenses, or your current glasses break, it is your responsibility to pay for this out of your own pocket. That includes any eye examinations you may need. Optical care can be very expensive in the U.S. If you feel your glasses need changing, or you need new contact lenses, have them made before your arrival.

Your insurance does not cover Vaccinations. When you applied to the AFICE program, you were required to have your personal physician fill in your list of all vaccinations you have received since birth. If you were missing any needed vaccinations required to attend school in the U.S., AFICE notified your agency back home what was missing. If they did not send us verification that you received the needed vaccines, then your school in the U.S. may deny you entrance until they see proof that they were received. This can delay your start of school and be an inconvenience to your host family, as they will need to find a clinic that will administer the vaccines you need. If you are required to have vaccines, you will need to pay the costs out of your own pocket.

YOUR HOST FAMILY IS NOT RESPONSIBLE TO PAY FOR ANY OF YOUR MEDICAL NEEDS. AT NO TIME SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR HOST FAMILY TO COVER THESE COSTS.

Traveling During Your Program Stay

Once you arrive to your host family in the U.S., it is important to remember that you are part of a new family, and will need to adapt to new rules and habits. Involving yourself in family activities and becoming part of the family will allow you to have a rewarding experience.

The U.S. is a vast country, and there are probably many places you would like to visit, and things you would like to see. You might feel that you are tired of the same routines of school, homework, chores, and family life, and dream about visiting other places during your stay. Maybe your parents have friends in the U.S. that you want to visit, or maybe there is a distant relative who lives in another state, who would like for you to spend time with them while you are here. You need to be aware that you are on an educational visa, and any traveling or visiting must be done at the end of your program after you have completed school. Going on trips without your host family is strictly forbidden, and doing so would violate the AFICE rules, and you will be sent home immediately.

You are here to experience life in the U.S., which includes American traditions such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas or Hanukah. These traditions for Americans are a time for family celebrations. You are part of a family and will be able to experience these traditions just as your host family does. It may be very tempting to spend holidays with a relative who lives in the U.S., but this is not allowed. It would be very rude to your host family, who has spent the last few months making you part of their family to tell them you do not want to be included in their traditions. Remember, failure to abide by the rules will be grounds for you to return home immediately.

The same can be said for family relatives or friends who wish to visit you during these times. Visits from your family or family friends are not allowed during your stay in the U.S. If your parents are insisting that they visit you during your stay, you must remind them that doing so may be cause for you to return home immediately and you will not be able to finish the program.

Visits back to your home country during your stay are also prohibited. The only exception would be a death of a family member. Requests to return home for an emergency (such as a death in the family) must be in writing, and if during a holiday time period, AFICE must have documentation of the family emergency from your overseas exchange agency. Failure to do so may put you at risk for returning to the U.S., and AFICE will have to contact the State Department to tell them you are no longer on the program.

If your natural parents plan on visiting you at the end of your program, they must make arrangements to stay in a hotel. They should not request that your host family make room for them during their visit. During a visit with your parents at the end of your program, you will still be required to stay with your host family until your AFICE program is complete.

REMEMBER – TRAVEL FORMS ARE REQUIRED TO BE COMPLETED AND APPROVED BY THE AFICE MAIN OFFICE BEFORE ANY TRAVELING TAKES PLACE. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY BE GROUNDS FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME IMMEDIATELY

Rules to Remember

Here is a quick list of some of the rules to remember about your exchange year in the U.S.:

- 1. No smoking**
- 2. No drinking of alcoholic beverages including beer and wine**
- 3. No ingesting of any non-prescribed drugs or illegal drugs**
- 4. No association with anyone involved with drugs in anyway**
- 5. No engaging in any illegal activity**
- 6. No driving of any automobile or motorized vehicle at any time**
- 7. No Hitchhiking**
- 8. No traveling outside your area without your host family**
- 9. No relatives or friends of family can visit you during your stay**
- 10. School grades must be maintained at a 'C' or above at all times**

Violation of any of the above is grounds for you to return to your home country immediately

Here are the things to remember to make your stay a rewarding experience:

- 1. I will abide by the rules of my host family and help with chores if necessary**
- 2. I will limit my time on the internet and spend more time socializing in person**
- 3. I will not expect my host family to pay for any of my personal expenses, such as a cell phone, clothing, or entertainment**
- 4. I will show independence by helping prepare my food, make my bed, and keeping the areas I use clean**
- 5. I will make sure my natural parents send me the required money needed each month for me to pay for my personal expenses, and will not ask my host parents for money**
- 6. I will ask my host parents to explain something if I don't understand**
- 7. I will respect my host parents' house rules pertaining to computer time**
- 8. I will be a good student at school, complete all assignments, and ask for help when I need it.**
- 9. I will not make any major changes to my appearance or body during my stay**
- 10. I will always tell my host family where I am going and who I will be with**

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received and read the
AFICE Pre-Arrival Student Handbook

I have read through my pre-arrival handbook and I understand the contents. I will abide by the AFICE rules and will do my best to make the most of my year in the U.S., and will be a good ambassador to my home country.

Student's Name (please print) Date

Student's Signature Country of Origin

Natural Father's Signature Date

Natural Mother's Signature Date

After signing this acknowledgement page, please send it back to AFICE

You may fax the signed form back to AFICE, or scan and send via Email

Email: contact@afice.org

Fax: (858) 455-0335