U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Private Sector Exchange

BridgeUSA

January 3, 2025

Dear American Host Family:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, we would like to thank you for your decision to host an international exchange student. People-to-people exchanges are a valuable tool of foreign policy. BridgeUSA programs allow you to experience first-hand the richness and diversity of a culture different from your own, as you exemplify American values and culture to an exchange student. Through this program, you will join thousands of American families who serve as citizen ambassadors of the United States. Many families have found hosting an exchange student to be a rewarding and memorable experience.

High School exchange programs have been a part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts since 1949. Approximately 20,000 exchange students from around the world participate in this program each year. The good will of American host families in opening their homes to these young international visitors is vital to this program's success. The exchange student is a guest in your home and in our country and you may be the first Americans this young person meets. Your hospitality will create a lasting impression of our country and its people.

The health, safety, and well-being of the young people who participate in this program are our highest priority. A host family has many responsibilities, the most important of which is properly caring for an international student during his/her program. The regulations governing the secondary school student program are found at eCFR — Exchange Visitor Program regulations (22 CFR 62 - Exchange Visitor Program). These regulations address the most frequently asked questions about the program and provide the rules under which the program operates. It is extremely important that you notify your sponsor representative if you have any concerns or if the exchange student's personal health, safety, or well-being is threatened in any way. If the sponsoring organization is not responsive to your concerns, you should contact the Department of State directly through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov.

The BridgeUSA program will create a strong life-long bond between you, your international student, and your local community. We are pleased that you made the decision to be part of this impactful exchange program.

Sincerely,

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange