

AU PAIR USA

Host Family Handbook

 InterExchange

Table of Contents

- Chapter 1 - Welcome..... 1
- Chapter 2 - Host Family Application 2
- Chapter 3 - Au Pair Application 3
- Chapter 4 - The Matching Process 4
- Chapter 5 - Pre-Matched Au Pairs & Host Families 6
- Chapter 6 - The J-1 Visa 7
- Chapter 7 - Getting Ready for the Year Ahead 8
- Chapter 8 - The Au Pair Orientation & Training Program 9
- Chapter 9 - The Host Family - Au Pair Relationship 11
- Chapter 10 - When Your Au Pair Arrives 12
- Chapter 11 - Communication 13
- Chapter 12 - Duties of the Au Pair, Hours & Time Off 14
- Chapter 13 - The Role of Your Local Coordinator 18
- Chapter 14 - The Au Pair Educational Requirements 20
- Chapter 15 - The Au Pair’s Insurance 21
- Chapter 16 - Driving 22
- Chapter 17 - International Communication 23
- Chapter 18 - Culture Shock 24
- Chapter 19 - The Extension Program 25
- Chapter 20 - The Host Family Reapplication Process 26
- Chapter 21 - Taxes 27
- Chapter 22 - Transitions & Reassignment 28
- Chapter 23 - Unexpected Challenges: Visa Delays and Denials 30

- U.S. Department of State J-1 Visa Regulations 31

KEEP IN TOUCH!

InterExchange Au Pair USA

161 6th Avenue, 10th Floor

New York, NY 10013

1.212.924.0446

1-800-AU-PAIRS

www.interexchange.org/aupairusa

Email: aupair@interexchange.org

Compliance Team:

Tel: 917-305-5469

Fax: 917-720-9158

compliance@interexchange.org

Become a Fan on Facebook:

InterExchange Au Pair USA

Follow us on Twitter:

Au Pair USA

Chapter 1 - Welcome

InterExchange welcomes you to the world of cultural exchange and the Au Pair USA program.

InterExchange is a non-profit organization with more than 40 years of experience dedicated to promoting cultural awareness through a wide range of affordable and exciting au pair, work & travel, professional training, internship, camp, language and volunteer programs within the U.S. and abroad. InterExchange is designated by the U.S. Government to sponsor a variety of J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor programs..

InterExchange Programs

- ▶ **Au Pair USA** is one of the largest au pair agencies in the United States and was designated in 1989 by the U.S. Department of State to offer the au pair program. The program offers a unique cultural exchange opportunity for young people from more than 40 countries worldwide to experience American family life while providing a legal, affordable alternative to traditional child care for American host families.

This is a 12-month program, extendable to 24 months, available to qualified young adults. “Au pair” means “on par” or equal and as a family member, au pairs participate in daily American family life which, once the year ends, often leads to relationships that last for years. Living with an American family enables the au pair to gain a deeper insight into American culture than he/she would traveling as a tourist. In addition, living within a family environment provides a level of security and comfort.

U.S. Department of State regulations create a framework for recruiting, placing and monitoring of host family/au pair matches. The regulations were created to ensure that the host family and the au pair benefit equally from the program and that the spirit of cultural exchange remains a major component of the program.

- ▶ **Camp USA** places international participants in U.S. Summer Camps in counselor or support staff positions from May until September.
- ▶ **Career Training USA** assists international students and young professionals to secure visa sponsorship for internships and practical training programs in the U.S..
- ▶ **Work & Travel USA** offers international university students the opportunity to live and work in the U.S. for up to 4 months during their summer vacation. Students work in hotels, inns, amusement parks, national parks, retail stores, ski resorts.
- ▶ **Working Abroad** enables U.S. citizens to experience diverse volunteer and work experiences overseas. We offer programs in Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, China, Ghana, India, and various European countries.
- ▶ **The InterExchange Foundation** was established in 2006 to provide grants to young Americans who wish to help further cultural awareness through meaningful work abroad experiences.

The New York Office of InterExchange Au Pair USA

We have a talented and dedicated team at our New York office. The **Admissions and Compliance Coordinators** receive and review au pair and host family applications. **Placement Specialists** propose candidates that fit each family’s specific interests and needs. **Transition Coordinators** work with host families and au pairs whose relationship has ended prematurely. Au Pair USA also has a number of full-time staff who organize all of the logistics of the program, including the international travel arrangements, the au pair’s accident and sickness insurance, visa application forms and completion certificates.

Our **Local Coordinators** serve as Au Pair USA’s representative in host family communities or “cluster”. Local Coordinators are a vital part of the organization’s efforts to service au pairs and host families throughout their year together. They interact directly with both parties serving as an informational resource, monitoring the placement during the 12-month period, and occasionally serving as a mediator if problems arise.

Our **International Cooperators** are located in over 40 countries all over the world. They are responsible for marketing, screening, interviewing and the preliminary selection of au pairs from their countries.

Chapter 2 - Host Family Application

All host families participating in the Au Pair USA program must:

- ▶ Live in an area covered by a Local Coordinator
- ▶ Provide a private room and meals for the au pair
- ▶ Be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident
- ▶ Speak fluent English
- ▶ Complete an application and submit to an in-home interview with the Local Coordinator
- ▶ Treat the au pair as an extended family member

Each accepted host family must agree to adhere to the Host Family Agreement which includes:

- ▶ The number of hours the au pair provides child care are limited to a maximum of 45 hours per week, over no more than five and one half days per week. The au pair will not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day.
- ▶ The host family is required to pay the au pair a stipend on a mutually agreed upon day.
- ▶ The au pair is allowed 1.5 days off each week, and one complete weekend off each month (from Friday evening to Monday morning).
- ▶ The host family gives the au pair, in addition to weekly time off, a minimum of two weeks paid vacation time during the one-year program.
- ▶ The host family provides the au pair with tuition and fees of up to \$500 per year for enrollment in appropriate course work to fulfill their educational requirement. The host family must also facilitate transportation for the au pair to and from educational classes.
- ▶ Families participate in one Au Pair USA sponsored “Family Day Conference” annually.
- ▶ At least one host parent or other responsible adult must remain at home with the au pair during the first three days with the family to help in training and adapting the au pair to the child care responsibilities, new home and community.
- ▶ The host family agrees to maintain monthly contact with the Local Coordinator.
- ▶ Upon the au pair’s arrival, the host family will prepare a schedule that outlines the days and hours of child care to be provided.
- ▶ A parent or responsible adult will be in the home with the au pair if a child is less than three months of age. In such instances the au pair will not be the primary child care provider for an infant less than three months of age for any amount of time.

Host Family Orientation & Interview: What to Expect

Purpose of the host family orientation and interview:

- ▶ Inform and educate the family about the program
- ▶ Determine the family’s needs and expectations
- ▶ Ascertain the suitability of a family as a host family

The orientation and interview is critical in aiding the host family’s success with the au pair experience. While this time is an opportunity to share information regarding the placement of an au pair, it is also a time to help a family further assess the appropriateness of the program for their particular needs. The more realistic expectations a family has regarding both the program regulations and living with a young adult, the more likely they will be able to adapt to hosting au pair. All adult members of the home must be present during the orientation and interview meeting. The Local Coordinator should also meet the host parent’s children during the course of the meeting.

The Au Pair’s Bedroom

The Local Coordinator will ask to see the bedroom designated for the au pair. The bedroom must have a window and be exclusively for the au pair. If the Local Coordinator does not believe that the room is appropriate for the au pair to live in for a year, he/she will address such concerns with the host family.

Question and Answer Session

The final portion of the formal interview will be devoted to answering any outstanding questions the host family has about the program and to share with them the next steps in the process.

Chapter 3 - Au Pair Application

All au pair applicants must:

- ▶ Complete an application and participate in a thorough one-to-one personal interview
- ▶ Be between the ages of 18 and 26 (traveling to the USA prior to the au pair's 27th birthday)
- ▶ Enjoy working with and have practical experience caring for children
- ▶ Have at least 200 hours of infant care experience to qualify for placement in a family with children under two years of age
- ▶ Speak and understand English to an acceptable level
- ▶ Commit to a twelve-month placement
- ▶ Be of good character and provide at least two child care references and one character reference
- ▶ Agree to follow the program's code of conduct, which includes adherence to all U.S. federal, state and local laws, forbids the use of illegal drugs and excessive use of alcohol, and expects the au pair to be courteous, considerate, and respectful
- ▶ Be prepared to enter into an agreement with the host family upon arrival that outlines the days and hours (which may change) of child care services to be provided
- ▶ Have earned a secondary school diploma or certificate
- ▶ Possess a valid International Driver's License and have a minimum of 50 hours of driving experience
- ▶ Have no criminal record and be able to secure proof of this from a recognized authority in the applicant's home country
- ▶ Be in good health and provide a medical report completed by a qualified medical doctor
- ▶ Participate in an intensive orientation and training program upon arrival in the USA
- ▶ Have not participated previously in an au pair program in the USA in the past 24 months

Au Pair Application & Interview

The interviewer's role is to gather information about an applicant so that he/she can assess the applicant's suitability for the program. The interviewer will try to gain an understanding of the applicant's family background, motivation for applying to the program and personality traits. The interviewer is also assessing the applicant's English language ability and child care skills.

An au pair interview generally takes about two hours and will include:

- ▶ Meeting the candidate
- ▶ Reviewing the candidate's application and required documents
- ▶ Questioning the applicant in English
- ▶ Providing information to the applicant and answering questions about the program
- ▶ Having the applicant complete the Booraem-Flowers Psychometric Au Pair Selection Test
- ▶ Sharing the next steps with the applicant

Once the interview is completed, the International Cooperator will assess the candidate's appropriateness for the program and review the submitted application. Candidates who do not appear to be properly motivated or well suited for the program may not be accepted.

Chapter 4 - The Matching Process

Au Pair USA employs a special one-on-one matching process to find you the perfect au pair. Your Placement Specialist will work directly with your family to find the best available au pair for your family. Candidates will be selected based on their qualifications and how they meet your family's needs and preferences. Due to the fact that your family will have exclusive access to an au pair's application, we utilize a 48-hour viewing policy. You need not make your final decision during this period, and may request an extension on your viewing deadline from your Placement Specialist. If you are not interested in a candidate, your Placement Specialist will be happy to propose other available au pairs that meet your family's profile.

If you are interested in an applicant, you should telephone them during the "best time to call" time period indicated on the candidate's application. You should use the telephone interview suggestions outlined in this handbook, and supplement these with questions related to issues unique to your family situation and the au pair's application.

At the conclusion of the telephone interview and if you are interested in the au pair, you will schedule a second telephone call. The second telephone call will be the opportunity for both of you to ask any remaining questions and to make a final decision about the match. If the match is not made at this point, it will not be possible to match later once the au pair's application has been sent out to another family. Placements must be confirmed over the phone with each other, by both the au pair and the family.

Once your family and the au pair have agreed to match, your family will need to submit this confirmation via our website's Host Family Confirmation Form. The New York staff will then send your family a confirmation packet with your au pair's arrival information and original photographs.

Shortly thereafter, the Au Pair USA Placement Specialists will send a copy of the Host Family Application along with their original photographs, to the International Cooperator. This package will also include the documentation the applicant will need to get a J-1 Visa, information for the New York orientation and their transportation information for traveling from the New York area airport to the orientation hotel. The International Cooperator ensures that the applicant receives this information and applies for and secures the J-1 Visa in a timely fashion.

Timing: The Typical Placement Calendar

Families should apply three months in advance of a requested au pair arrival date. All Local Coordinators and International Cooperators are given a "Matching Calendar" each year that lists all the scheduled arrival dates for au pairs to come to the United States. This calendar is also sent to your family when you apply, and can be accessed on our website under Hiring An Au Pair - Resources. If your family has special needs, has more than three children or has certain placement restrictions, we encourage you to begin the process earlier to allow enough time to match with an au pair.

Important Dates:

- ▶ **Confirmation Deadline:** This is the last date that a host family can confirm their acceptance of an au pair applicant for that arrival date. This deadline is generally 4 to 6 weeks before the arrival date in New York, because that is the amount of time it normally takes to secure a J-1 Visa for the au pair.
- ▶ **New York City Arrival:** Au pairs always arrive on Mondays to begin their orientation and training program in New York.
- ▶ **Host Family Arrival Date:** Au pairs always arrive at your home on Fridays from the orientation in New York. Families in the greater New York area may pick up their au pairs after 6:00 p.m. on Thursday.

Families are encouraged to contact prospective au pairs as soon as possible, and to accept or release applications after they have had them exclusively for two days so that those au pairs can be considered by other families.

Telephone Interviews with the Au Pair Candidate

Host families are required by the U.S. Department of State regulations to call the au pair at least twice prior to agreeing to match. It is a good idea to have the first call be more informational; tell the au pair about your community, about your family, your typical schedule and what might be expected of the au pair in your household. End the call by saying that you will call the au pair back at a designated time, and that the au pair should be prepared to ask questions about your family that they might have thought of, and to be prepared to answer questions from the host family about their qualifications to be an au pair. The first call allows the family the chance to tell the au pair about their family and ask some questions of the au pair.

Sample first-call questions you might ask an au pair candidate:

- ▶ Why do you want to become an au pair?
- ▶ Have you ever lived away from your family before? What will you do if you feel homesick?
- ▶ What will be the most difficult part about spending a year in the U.S. as an au pair?
- ▶ What did you study in school? How many years have you studied English?
- ▶ What type of job have you had recently?
- ▶ What do you enjoy most about working with children?
- ▶ What do you do in your free time?
- ▶ Do you drive? How often? Do you have an International Driving License? When did you begin driving?
- ▶ Do you like pets? Would you be willing to take the dog for walks or feed the dog?
- ▶ Are you a vegetarian or vegan? Will you cook meat for the children?
- ▶ Do you smoke? How often?
- ▶ Have you been to the United States before?
- ▶ What are your plans for the future when you finish your au pair year and return home?

Sample second-call questions you might ask an au pair candidate:

The second call is a chance for the au pair to speak more fully and ask their own questions. If you have specific questions regarding how the au pair candidate will care for your children of certain ages, now is the time to ask them. This second call also allows you to determine the au pair's English level.

- ▶ What is your child care experience? Have you baby sat for kids or worked in a camp or kindergarten? Have you ever bathed or cooked meals for children? What are the ages of the children you have cared for in the past?
- ▶ How do you discipline children? How were you disciplined as a child?
- ▶ How does your family feel about you coming to America for a year?
- ▶ Would you be happy in our community if it is a city/suburban/rural?
- ▶ Part of this program is about being a part of our family. How will you communicate with us if you have concerns or problems?
- ▶ What type of household chores are expected of you in your home? Do you have to make dinner, wash the dinner plates, take out the garbage?
- ▶ Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend? How do they feel about you leaving for a year? Are they going to visit?
- ▶ Do you like sports, travel, swimming, the beach, etc?
- ▶ Do you understand what it's like to spend 45 hours a week with young children? Have you ever cared for a child for a long period of time?
- ▶ Do you cook? What types of meals do you think you could cook for the children?
- ▶ Do you consider yourself a tidy or messy person? Would you have a problem joining a very messy or very neat household?
- ▶ Who do you live with at the moment? If you live by yourself, how will you feel about joining a family and having to respect their house rules?

Chapter 5 - Pre-Matched Au Pairs and Host Families

Pre-matching refers to the process when a family has recruited an au pair applicant independent of the Au Pair USA program but would like this individual to come to their family through the program. Both the family and the au pair applicant involved in a pre-match must meet the same eligibility requirements that any other host family and au pair must meet. Au pair applicants must be able to provide adequate child care experiences and references even in those situations where the individual has been caring for the host family's children for a period of time while the family lived abroad. The applicant cannot be related to the host family, no matter how distant the relation.

Many host families assume that a pre-match au pair will be able to arrive more quickly than a normal placement, but this is not the case. Pre-matches need to be completed in the same detail as non-pre-matches, and often require even more time and effort from Au Pair USA staff in order to make sure the match goes through smoothly. All applicants in the program must go through the same application and screening procedures, regardless of whether they are a pre-match or not.

Pre-matching host families need to follow these procedures to ensure a smooth placement process and timely arrival of their au pair:

- ▶ The au pair applicant must contact the New York office to be put in contact with our International Cooperator in their country to begin the process of applying.
- ▶ The au pair should inform the interviewer that he/she is pre-matching with a family. The host family's name, address and telephone number should be clearly written on the upper right corner of the application following pre-match. The International Cooperator will verify that the host family is in an area of the country where there is a Local Coordinator.
- ▶ Meanwhile, the host family should have already submitted their application and selected "Pre-Match" on their application in the upper right corner followed by the au pair applicant's name, address and telephone number. The Local Coordinator will interview the family consistent with the procedures established for all families.
- ▶ Once the au pair candidate's complete application package is received by the New York office and entered in the database system, a copy will be sent to both the host family and the Local Coordinator. As with any candidate, the host family must formally advise the Local Coordinator and the New York placement staff of the family's acceptance of the applicant. The family must be sensitive to the confirmation deadlines for arrivals as these dates will be the same regardless of the pre-match status of the placement.

Chapter 6 - The J-1 Visa

Au pairs participating in the Au Pair USA program must acquire a J-1 Visa, valid for one year. No other visa is valid for participation in the program. The vast majority of our au pair candidates get the J-1 Visa without any problems.

InterExchange Au Pair USA is designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor the J-1 Visa and issues a DS-2019 Form for the au pair so that they can go to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate in their home country to apply for the visa. The DS-2019 form identifies InterExchange as the program sponsor, outlines the purpose of the program, and states the exact period during which the applicant is legally permitted to work as an au pair in the USA. ***Although Au Pair USA provides the appropriate forms and the International Cooperator assists the applicant through the process, it is the U.S. Consular Official who makes the determination as to whether the applicant will receive the J-1 Visa.***

If the au pair's application is accepted, the Consular Officer will put a J-1 Visa stamp in the au pair's passport. The J-1 Visa provides permission to enter the USA as an au pair participating in a cultural exchange program.

- ▶ Once the au pair arrives in the United States, the immigration officer will validate the visa by stamping the passport and the accompanying DS-2019 form. The immigration officer will also staple the "I-94 Arrival and Departure Card" in the au pair's passport.
- ▶ The DS-2019 form should be kept with the au pair's passport. It is recommended that au pairs carry photocopies of both of these documents, and leave the originals in a safe place. If the DS-2019 form is lost or stolen, the Logistics Coordinator in the New York office should be contacted immediately and a replacement form will be issued. If the passport is lost or stolen, the au pair must contact their Embassy immediately to obtain a replacement passport.
- ▶ The validity period shown on the non-immigrant J-1 Visa stamped in the passport refers only to the period during which it may be used to **enter** the United States. When the immigration officer validates the au pair's visa at the time of their arrival in New York, the DS-2019 form is stamped "J-1 D/S." This grants the au pair permission to stay under the J-1 Visa for the "Duration of Status" of the program. The duration of status is the date range indicated in box #3 of the DS-2019 form: the au pair's arrival date to one year after their arrival date.

What can/cannot an au pair do under the terms of their visa?

Your au pair can be directly responsible for the children and their needs, including laundry, cleaning of the children's bedrooms, play areas and eating areas. Some au pairs help with meal preparation and clean-up if the host family eats together. The au pair may not earn extra money by working during their stay (either for the host family, working over 45 hours, or in work outside the home). Even baby-sitting at the home of a neighbor is considered employment outside the parameters of the J-1 Visa for au pairs and is not allowed.

Travel Outside of the United States During the Au Pair Year

Au pairs may travel outside of the U.S. during their original program year (this may not be the case during an Extension). However, the intent of the program is for the au pair to experience American culture through living in a host family's home and community. Therefore, extended stays (of more than four weeks) with or without the host family would not be in the spirit of the program and should be discussed with the Local Coordinator.

It is the au pair's responsibility to research the visa requirements for travel outside the U.S., including Canada and Mexico. This is usually done by contacting the Consulate of the country he/she plans to visit. The au pair must have their DS-2019 form signed by a designated member of the New York staff indicating that the au pair is in "good standing." Advanced planning is important. It may take up to three weeks to get the DS-2019 form signed and returned. Without this signature, there may be difficulty re-entering the U.S.

The Au Pair program regulations permit au pairs on a J-1 Visa to travel around the U.S. for an additional month at the end of their 12-month program year. The J-1 Visa is not valid for re-entry into the U.S. during this period so travel outside the country, even to Canada or Mexico, should not be part of the au pair's travel plans in the 13th month if they intend to re-enter the U.S. before returning to their home country. Au pairs must have medical coverage for travel during the 13th month as the program insurance coverage expires at the end of the 12th month. Au pairs may purchase additional insurance from Au Pair USA to cover themselves for medical expenses during this time.

Chapter 7 - Getting Ready for the Year Ahead

Ten Tips for the Best Start to a Wonderful Year:

1. Communicate with your au pair while they are still abroad. The more you work to establish a relationship with your au pair before they arrive in your home, the easier it will be for everyone to adapt to one another. Talking on the telephone, exchanging emails or sending a picture drawn by the children are good ways to connect with the au pair.
2. Prepare the au pair's room. The room should be ready for the au pair to move right in.
3. Draft a typical weekly schedule and a simply worded list of tasks, including times and locations.
4. Use the Au Pair USA *Communication Log*. This should include a detailed review of the spoken and unspoken rules of the home, which will help the au pair understand what is expected of him/her.
5. Check with your insurance carrier to ensure adequate coverage for the au pair driving the car(s). The coverage should include collision.
6. Make travel arrangements for the au pair to get from the New York City orientation and training site to the host community and communicate these arrangements to the Au Pair USA Logistics Coordinator in New York. Instructions for contacting Globe Travel to make these arrangements are included in the placement confirmation letter sent to host families (and contact details are listed below).
7. Talk with the pediatrician's office to find out what type of medical release form might be needed to allow the au pair to take responsibility for the child's care in an emergency.
8. Think about how to orient a new au pair to your home. Make a list of all the things you will want to be sure to show your au pair (i.e. dishwasher, washer/dryer, alarm systems).
9. Think about how to orient a new au pair to your community. Make a list of all the places in your community that you will want to be sure and show your au pair (i.e. schools, doctor's office, post office, supermarket, bank, pharmacy, etc.)
10. Have your children make a sign to welcome the au pair or do things that will make the au pair feel right at home. If you know the au pair's favorite food, prepare dinner. Small gestures go a long way!

Travel Arrangements

Travel arrangements for au pairs from the home country to New York City are arranged by Au Pair USA in New York. Au Pair USA provides a one-way ticket prior to the au pair's departure from the home country, and at the end of the au pair's year, will again provide another one-way ticket for the au pair's return.

It is the host family's responsibility to make the travel arrangements for their au pair to get from the New York orientation and training hotel to their home. Please contact the travel agency we work with, Globe Travel (details below). Globe Travel can arrange air and train tickets for the au pair's domestic travel upon arrival. Families are strongly encouraged to purchase refundable/transferable/changeable tickets. Au Pair USA is unable to reimburse families for the cost of domestic flight tickets that have been bought by families for arriving au pairs who were subsequently denied the J-1 Visa or who cannot come on the planned arrival date. **Please send the travel information to logistics@interexchange.org so we can give it to the au pairs during the Orientation week.**

Families that prefer to use their own travel agent or those who plan to pick up their au pair from the hotel by car, need to contact the Logistics Coordinator so that he/she can make a note of the travel arrangements for each au pair. The Logistics Coordinator will need to collect tickets purchased directly by host families well in advance of the au pair's arrival.

Au Pair USA Logistics Department
917-305-5463
logistics@interexchange.org

Globe Travel
1-800-892-9385 (ask for Elaine Messier)
elaine@globetvl.com

Chapter 8 - The Au Pair Orientation & Training Program in New York City

Au Pair USA provides an Orientation and Training Program in accordance with the U.S. Department of State's regulations governing au pair programs. While the program meets these requirements, it is not intended to replace the host family's training of an au pair on how they want their children cared for. Nor is it intended to make an au pair a professional child care provider.

The program was designed and is taught by professionals from both the education and health-care fields. The format includes the use of workbooks, lectures, videos and hands-on training. The content includes general information regarding health, safety and childhood development ranging from newborns to age 12. In addition, there are discussions about cultural differences, adjusting to the United States and their new life living with an American family. The J-1 Visa regulations, Au Pair USA program information and policies, insurance information, Social Security cards, bank accounts in the USA, and other related topics are also reviewed.

The goals for the orientation week are to:

- ▶ Help the au pair adjust to a new country before joining his/her American host family
- ▶ Give the au pair information regarding the ages and stages of child development and how to safely care for children
- ▶ Provide an opportunity to reinforce the U.S. government regulations for au pair programs
- ▶ Help au pairs cope with the challenges of living in a new culture by discussing cultural issues
- ▶ Respond to any questions or concerns au pairs may have and to clarify program policies as needed

Logistics

The program is held at a hotel in the heart of New York City. An Au Pair USA representative will be available in the lobby of the hotel on Monday from mid-afternoon until late at night, when the majority of au pairs arrive. Most au pairs will travel from the airport to the hotel on a Super Shuttle van. The Pre-Arrival Packet includes a section on transportation information, with information on the Super Shuttle as well as convenient alternatives for traveling from the airport to the hotel in New York City.

Cultural Adaptation & Culture Shock

Much of the introductory phase of the orientation & training program focuses on American culture and cultural adaptation. The trainers discuss American values and how they might differ from those found in the au pair's native culture. The different phases of culture shock are reviewed so that au pairs can recognize the signs of culture shock should they experience it, and be reassured that these feelings are common for people who leave their home environment for an extended period of time.

Child Development Training

The child development session explores the development of children from newborns through school-aged children. Two separate training workshops are used to share information about the various ages and stages of a child's growth and development. One session focuses on infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and kindergartners, while the other explores the growth and development of school-age children 6 to 11 years.

In discussing caring for very young children, the au pairs review charts that outline the physical, intellectual/cognitive, and emotional/social development of young children. They also receive packets that contain worksheets, written work and sample situations that are used to help the au pairs understand the needs of young children.

The basic skills of feeding, bathing, changing diapers and responding to a sick child are demonstrated through role-playing exercises. The use of videos, art, songs, games, finger plays, poems and activities that focus on cultural exchange among the au pairs all add to the fun and learning that takes place during this workshop.

The second workshop focuses on specific important areas of growth and development that take place with school-age children. Au pairs talk about "the average child" at this age, but are reminded to keep in mind that every child is an individual, with his/her own personality and ability. Au pairs must always do "developmentally appropriate" activities with a child to challenge him/her without overwhelming the child.

The group talks about intellectual growth, personality changes, peer-group influence, physical growth, the importance of play, discipline issues and problem solving with the school-age child. The session reviews special situations and conflict resolution

in respect to the entire family. Au pairs participate in role-plays, exercises, hands-on projects, and work together in groups to bring together ideas, activities, and reactions to situations that will help au pairs work effectively, creatively, and assure a respectful and fun relationship with the school-age child. Au pairs also share their ideas with the group.

The house rules established by the host parents are the rules the au pair will need to follow with regard to all aspects of caring for the children. The last part of this portion of the program leads the au pairs through a discussion of ways to communicate with the parents about the children.

Child Health and Safety Training

While the orientation and training program is comprehensive in providing information on child development and child health and safety, the au pair must ultimately gain direction and instructions from the host family that he/she works for. Each child is unique and develops at his/her own pace, and each family has their own philosophy on child rearing and their own instructions on what to do in emergencies. The host family must discuss with the au pair all critical information and instructions pertaining to their children, before leaving the children in the au pair's care.

The child health and safety portion of the training and orientation program is led by licensed American Red Cross instructors. Information and demonstrations about first aid techniques, recognizing illnesses, avoiding common accidents with children and how to respond to flood, fire, gas and related emergencies are addressed. Instruction on infant and child CPR and the Heimlich maneuver are provided. Prior to arriving in the United States, au pairs receive a copy of the *Au Pair USA Child Care Guide*, which covers important topics on child development as well as important topics on child health and safety.

Chapter 9 - The Host Family - Au Pair Relationship

The First Six Weeks

In addition to covering the basics and opening the lines of communication, the first six weeks are crucial to the development of a good host family/au pair relationship. Families and au pairs should use their first few weeks together to forge alliances and build trust. The effort will be worthwhile and enable both the new au pair and the host family to become a family unit. Adjustments will need to be made and challenges may be encountered. Au pairs will be occupied with learning to assume child care and household duties, along with the building of their relationship with the family. Au pairs will also be working to establish credibility with the host children. These introductory steps take time and effort on both parts, and it is important to keep in mind the following points:

- ▶ It is typical for au pairs not to share everything about him/herself, at first; he/she may be tired, or even shy and hesitant in new surroundings
- ▶ Initially, the children may not trust or obey the new au pair and will need some time before they accept the au pair's authority. The host parents will need to help the au pair gain the children's trust
- ▶ The host family may feel a loss of privacy as a result of sharing their home with a young adult whose tastes may vastly differ from their own

It is important to set realistic expectations for the development of the relationship between au pair and host family. Some relationships develop more gradually than others. Open, honest and regular communication will help build a solid foundation for a lasting relationship.

As outlined in previous sections, it is important to spend extra time together in the beginning by sharing activities, talking and learning about each other's likes, dislikes, interests, values, expectations, lifestyles, and child-rearing beliefs. While spending time together is important, it is also necessary for the au pair to have a certain amount of private time each day to relieve the stress of learning new information and using a second language. He/she will also need time to study, attend classes and participate in local activities.

During the Program

Flexibility

When problems arise, host families and au pairs will need to be able to listen to one another's needs and work toward a compromise where both can feel comfortable. The relationship may require a lot of "give and take," but the end result is a more satisfying placement for everyone.

Cooperation

There are many areas where cooperation is necessary but none is more important than in the care of the children. Given the important responsibility the au pair has with respect to the children, cooperation between the host parents and their au pair is essential to ensure consistency in the way the children are cared for by all involved. One of the many benefits of in-home care is the opportunity for the caregiver and the parents to observe one another and work together in raising the children. The au pair will need to cooperate and respect the host family's wishes for the care of the children even when he/she may not agree with the family's approach or child care ideas.

Mutual Respect

The host family will need to remember to treat the au pair as an adult member of the family. This means that you should treat them the same way you would want to be treated: with respect. It is important for both the host parents and the au pair to demonstrate mutual respect so they can begin developing a good relationship and so that the children can feel a greater sense of security.

Chapter 10 - When Your Au Pair Arrives

The first few days after the au pair's arrival may be hectic and somewhat disruptive to the family's normal routine. You will need to spend time orienting the au pair to your home and community and your children may have a hard time adjusting to this new person in their home. The au pair may also still be jet lagged or tired. For some au pairs, this trip to the U.S. may be the first time they traveled by plane and experienced time zone differences. Everyone will need to be patient.

While the program regulations require host parents to remain at home with the au pair for the first three days following the au pair's arrival, to acclimate and train the au pair, the reality is that the training period takes longer. Host families are encouraged to continuously share information and reinforce their needs until the au pair has adjusted to his/her role in the home. Nothing should be taken for granted as the au pair is experiencing so many new things at once and even the simplest tasks may feel strange to him or her. Host families who invest time in helping the au pair adjust and learn his/her responsibilities are generally rewarded with a successful year-long relationship.

Home Orientation checklist

- Tour of your home
- Demonstration of home equipment and appliances, no matter how simple or complex
- Tour of the outside of the home and, if possible, of the neighborhood
- Driving tour of the area including directions to important locations such as the children's school, doctor's office, playgrounds, and the supermarket.
- Meeting your children – allow the au pair to observe your interactions with your children and permit the au pair to spend individual time with each child so they can get acquainted and the au pair can learn each one.
- A test drive with your au pair to acclimate the him/her to driving in the United States and understanding driving rules.

The Au Pair's Adaptation to Your Home

Local Coordinators will call au pairs within 48 hours of arrival to greet them and make sure all is well. Au pairs may also be assigned a "buddy" who is another au pair who has been in the U.S. for some time already and is in the same cluster. These au pairs will understand the feelings and emotions that a newly arriving au pair may feel and will be a source of support for the new au pair.

The Local Coordinator will give information to the au pair about your local area and classes. The sooner they get out in the community and more comfortable with their surroundings, the easier it will be to adapt to life in America. Enrolling in educational courses early on in the year will not only help fulfill the educational requirements of the program but the au pair will also have an opportunity to interact with others and make friends.

There are a number of things the host family can do to help the au pair settle in to their home and begin adapting to the new environment. These include:

- ▶ Suggesting that they call or email family members to let them know he/she has arrived
- ▶ Giving the au pair an easy schedule the first few days and planning a minimum of three days to orient the au pair
- ▶ Thinking about the differences in food and explaining their mealtime customs so that the au pair can begin to feel comfortable dining with the family. Consider taking the au pair with them on a trip to the food store and encourage him/her to let the family know what special foods he/she might enjoy. While au pairs should try to adapt to the family's lifestyle including meal preparations, they may feel more welcome and comfortable with a few familiar items from home
- ▶ For au pairs who are struggling with the language, families should avoid correcting their every word. Families should talk to their au pair about how he/she would like them to help with language improvement and encourage the au pair to speak English
- ▶ Not overwhelming the au pair with too much information and giving the au pair an au pair notebook that is simple and clear

Chapter 11 - Communication

Like all relationships, the host family/au pair relationship relies on good communication to function effectively. Au pairs are encouraged to talk directly to the family about any concerns they may have and vice versa. If the attempts to communicate a concern are not productive, they may ask the Local Coordinator for advice or to assist. In most cases, though, we believe that host families and au pairs should talk about a problem or concern with each other first, before involving a third party. It is important to remember that the host family/au pair relationship is built on trust and communication and that no individual can help resolve a problem or address a concern if they are unaware that one exists.

Host parents and au pairs should take time at the end of each day to talk to each other about the children and what went on in the parents' absence. Casual conversation over dinner about whatever might be going on in the au pair's life will show the au pair that the family also takes a personal interest in his/her life outside of the home. This is also an opportunity for the au pair to learn more about the host family.

The Communication Log

The Communication Log should not be a replacement for communicating with your au pair but it is a good way for the host family to clarify the scope of your au pair's responsibilities and your own expectations. It will also facilitate better daily communication and more meaningful weekly meetings. It is particularly helpful to share this log during the first few days, as your au pair may still be tired and slightly overwhelmed.

The Communication Log should include:

- Parents' work addresses and phone numbers
- Full names, addresses and phone numbers of other close relatives or neighbors
- Emergency numbers for police and fire department, family doctor or pediatrician
- Names and addresses of the children's schools and teachers, sports clubs, etc.

A tentative schedule

Having a weekly schedule in advance will allow for better planning and less stress. Give the au pair an outline of the normal schedule. This shows the au pair what your needs are, within the 45-hour per week limit. Differentiate between activities that must be done at a particular time (such as picking up the children from the school bus), and activities that the au pair may schedule in when time allows (such as doing the children's laundry).

Weekend and vacation information

Au pairs get one full weekend off a month: Friday evening to Monday morning, and two weeks of paid vacation during the year. Think about how you want your au pair to arrange these vacations. We recommend that your family and your au pair use one central calendar to list the planned events and time off.

House rules

Every home has its own acceptable rules of behavior. Your rules should be reasonable, considerate and explained clearly to the au pair. Some areas to consider in this section are smoking, telephone usage, curfew, house guests, car use, etc.

Food

List the types of food you want your children to eat and the way they are used to having them prepared.

Other important thoughts

These are all the little things about living in your home and with your family that your au pair needs to know. You might want to have such entries as these: "never walk on Elm Street after dark; the best fresh vegetables are at Krueger's Farm Stand; always park at the corner of Maple and Oak when you pick up the children from school; the gas meter is read once a month let the meter reader in, but check his ID; always turn the house alarm on when leaving" and so on. The goal is to make your au pair feel welcome and aware of his/her place in the family.

"My children want you to know..."

This section belongs to your children. Children need to be reassured that they count and that things are not going to be totally different. You can assure your children of the continuation of love and routine by letting them tell the au pair what is important to them. Even a young child can dictate a list of things that make daily life feel secure, such as: "I always sleep with my teddy, I like my milk in my green cup, I like to dance, I love hugs..."

This is important with your first and each succeeding au pair. It makes the future less frightening to your children and helps them say good-bye to the current au pair.

Child Care

To help your au pair give you the kind of quality child care you expect, you must both model and explain your parental approach. By your example, and in this Communication Log, you are giving your au pair the tools to build your desired au pair/child relationship. Contents will vary, but use specifics and give choices.

- ▶ **Free time and creative play:** What do your children like to do, what do you want the au pair to do with them. Be specific, give a list of suggestions and encourage the au pair to choose and add to the list.
- ▶ **Discipline:** List specific behaviors you encourage and those you do not tolerate.
- ▶ **Consequences when children misbehave:** Give your au pair a menu of choices you use and then empower him/her to impose the consequences. When you give this structure, the children know that they are with someone you trust.
- ▶ **Distractions and bribes:** What do you use, what is acceptable and what is not.

Weekly Meeting Topics

Many families and au pairs find that weekly, structured meetings work well for them. For many working parents, such meetings are the only time they have to really talk with their au pair. Meetings should be held at the same time each week when both the parents and the au pair can attend, and should generally last for about an hour. Some host parents also use this as the time to give the au pair the weekly stipend.

Topics to Discuss during the Weekly Meeting

- ▶ **Positive conversation:** What the au pair did the previous week that you liked or appreciated. Everyone attending the meeting should have something positive to say. You might ask the au pair if he/she is happy, is he/she feeling homesick, how classes are going, etc.
- ▶ **The weekly schedule:** You should let the au pair know the schedule as far in advance as possible so that plans can be made for time off. It is also helpful for au pairs to know ahead of time which weekend that month they will have free. Au pairs also should let the host parents know in advance of any time in particular that they would like off, such as for au pair outings or vacation. Any upcoming birthdays, holidays, house guests or school activities could also be discussed.
- ▶ **Child care:** It is very important for host parents to share with their au pair any goals they have set for their children. Host parents could come up with a comprehensive plan with their au pair of how to best reach these goals together.
- ▶ **Children's behavioral issues:** It is crucial for host parents to educate your au pair on your personal philosophy of behavior management. Caring for the children needs to be a cooperative effort between both the host parents and the au pair. Discuss what goes on with the children in your absence. Host parents could suggest creative and active things to do with the children.
- ▶ **Any concerns or demonstrations:** This is the time for you to mention anything that may be concerning you about how the au pair is caring for the children, about the family car(s), or any health and safety issues. Also, this is a good opportunity for you to discuss with any practical household information. Examples include: how to change a flat tire; what to do if there is a loss of electricity; review of any medical or allergy information; a review of the au pair notebook; or a practice fire drill.
- ▶ **Cultural awareness:** Host families might ask if their au pair has any questions, confusions, or observations since their arrival here, into a new country. The host family could explain to their au pair about any upcoming holidays and events. Au pairs could teach the host family some words or phrases in their native language, ask if there is something from their own culture the host family would like to know or learn more about, or show the host family pictures from their home country.

Chapter 12 - Duties of the Au Pair, Hours and Time Off

One of the most common areas of concern that arise in host family/au pair relationship is conflict over the au pair's responsibilities, child care and/or household duties, hours to be worked and their time off. It is important to make sure that a clear schedule is written down for the au pair each week, and that the au pair clearly understands their responsibilities.

The au pair may not provide more than 10 hours per day, nor more than 45 hours per week of child care for the host family. This regulation is strictly enforced by the U.S. government and must be adhered to by host families and au pairs. These limits are in place to ensure the safety of the host family's children and the au pair.

Host families who ask their au pair to do household chores that are not in keeping with the program guidelines, or ask their au pair to work more than 10 hours in a day or 45 hours in a week, will be violating program regulations and may be asked to withdraw from the program.

If the host family develops a strong, honest and respectful relationship with their au pair, he/she will most likely be pleased to pitch-in, in a true emergency (i.e. to change a daily or weekly schedule at the last minute). If all agree that the au pair's household responsibility as a member of the family is to empty the dishwasher every day, that's fine. If, on the other hand, the family expands this responsibility to include washing the kitchen floor, preparing the evening meal for the entire family on a regular basis, or cleaning the entire house, this would not be in keeping with the program rules.

Au Pair's Schedule

- ▶ Au pairs are entitled to a minimum of one and one-half days off per week (the program recommends that one of these days be a weekend day, so that the au pair may enjoy a Saturday or Sunday with American friends who may only be free on the weekends)
- ▶ They are entitled to one weekend off each month (Friday evening to Monday morning)
- ▶ The au pair's last work day is the day before the one year anniversary of the date he/she arrived in the USA a year earlier
- ▶ Host families cannot "bank" unused hours one week for use at a later time, nor can au pairs "bank" time off
- ▶ Child care is hard work and limiting the hours to a maximum of 10 hours per day and a maximum of 45 hours per week helps the au pair keep alert to offer safe care of the children
- ▶ Holidays are not necessarily time-off for au pairs. Generally au pairs are expected to share in holiday celebrations with their host families

Given the nature of the "live-in family member" status au pairs hold in the home, it can be difficult at times to assess when they are on-duty versus when they are off-duty. It is clear when the au pair is alone with the children that they are on-duty, but it can become less clear when for example, the parents are at home in the evening preparing dinner. Families with an at-home parent should be particularly clear about the au pair's schedule (see "Scheduling Tips for Stay at Home Parents"). Written schedules are the best way to avoid any confusion. The au pair is considered on duty whenever he/she has responsibility for the well-being of the children.

Scheduling Tips

What is considered the au pair's "on time" and "off time" can become vague in certain situations and particularly when there is a parent present in the home. Therefore, it is extremely important for au pairs to have their scheduled hours clearly laid out. The following guidelines will help you create and maintain a mutually agreeable schedule with your au pair:

Decide on your au pair's weekly time off before making any other plans. Block it out and keep it consistent. If this cannot be done for an extended period of time, then at least try to do it month-to-month. This way your au pair will know which days he/she will have off and he/she can make plans accordingly. This is also a good time to schedule your au pair's full free weekend for the month. When that is set, begin thinking about when the really busy times in your household are and schedule your au pair to work those times. For example, households with school-age children usually become quite active in the late afternoon.

After these hours have been scheduled in, you can then determine how many hours are left over for that week (up to a maximum of 45 hours). Then think about your children's school and activity schedules, as well as your own routine appointments and obligations throughout the week. Of course, this schedule will tend to fluctuate a bit more from week to week, and you will want it to be flexible. However, it is important for your au pair to know in advance when his/her time off will be. This will enable him/her to attend classes (required under the educational component), visit friends (a necessary social outlet) and generally recuperate from working within a foreign culture and foreign language.

Keep your au pair's time off sacred. If it is the au pair's day off and you need to run out on an errand, get a sitter. If this is done, your au pair will trust that time off is respected.

Schedule in weekly meetings. Weekly meetings can keep you and your au pair from getting frustrated beyond normal levels. View the schedule as a dynamic tool that will help you and your au pair have a successful and productive experience with each other.

Work on communication and trust early on in the relationship. Discussing these feelings will help both parties be considerate of each other's expectations.

Never have your au pair "on-call" during the day. This lack of scheduling has been known to cause very tense and distrustful situations. It is important for au pairs to have time when they can separate themselves from their duties and relax. Remember that your au pair is not only working with your children, but also with cultural and language adjustments requiring much energy and concentration.

Time Off: Cluster Meetings & Classes

Au pairs are required to attend cluster meetings and complete the educational component of the program. The host family must make a weekly schedule for the au pair which permits the au pair to attend all cluster meetings and all regularly scheduled classes that the au pair is taking to complete the required educational component of the program. Disregard for these program regulations can jeopardize the au pair's successful completion of the program. Host families must make it possible for au pairs to attend the monthly cluster meetings and provide transportation. The cluster meetings, whether social or educational in nature, are an important part of the program and provide a much needed support network for the au pair during the year.

The successful completion of the educational component of the program is also required of au pairs. Host families must allow consecutive periods of time off each week, for the au pair to take classes at a local accredited educational institution. When au pairs are arranging their class schedules, they should consult with the host family to make sure the schedule is mutually convenient.

Vacation Time

As stated in the U.S. Department of State regulations for au pair programs, au pairs are entitled to two-weeks paid vacation (11 working days) during their 12 month program in the U.S. In other words, au pairs earn one full vacation day per month, after the first month. This vacation time should be scheduled at a time that is mutually convenient for both the host family and the au pair.

When a host family is planning to take a vacation, they will need to be very clear with their au pair about their role during this period. Both parties should consider the following:

- ▶ Host families should never consider a family trip, which includes the au pair, as an au pair's vacation period. Vacation is completely free time for the au pair to use as he/she wishes. If you both want to vacation together and the au pair has no child care responsibilities during the trip, then the au pair should certainly join the family and consider this as vacation time.
- ▶ If an au pair is to travel with the family on their vacation and care for the children during this time period, it is not vacation time for the au pair and a schedule should be arranged to ensure that the au pair is working no more than 45 hours a week. Being away from home with different family activities taking place at all hours can create uncertainty as to on-duty versus off-duty time.
- ▶ If a family is out of town with the children on a trip that does not include the au pair, the au pair should not assume that he/she is on vacation. The family will need to be clear about their expectations during this period.
- ▶ A family might arrange a trip that does not include the au pair and ask that the au pair take his/her own vacation during this time as well. This may help the parents avoid having to take future days off work or having to hire another caregiver when the au pair would be vacationing.

Au pairs and host families should discuss vacation plans early in the year so that everyone has an opportunity to plan ahead. Both the host family and the au pair should work together in determining when the au pair should schedule vacation time. A fair way to do this is for the family to choose one of the weeks as a convenient time for them, and for the au pair to choose the other week. Host families should also understand that most au pairs are not prepared to take vacation until after their first 6 months, when they have had a chance to find travel companions, save some money and decide where they would like to travel.

The vacation earned per month becomes an important factor only if an au pair leaves a host family prematurely. Unused vacation time accrued should be paid to the au pair by the host family at \$35.50/day, before the au pair leaves the home. Likewise, au pairs that used vacation not fully earned, will be required to reimburse the host family for those days before he/she leaves the home, at the same rate of \$35.50/day. If an au pair is reassigned to a new family, he/she will begin again accruing vacation days with the new host family for each month he/she is with the family.

Au pairs planning to travel outside the U.S. during their au pair year must plan ahead and allow time for their DS-2019 form to be signed by the responsible officer in the New York office of Au Pair USA. Au pairs must research the visa requirements for countries they are planning to travel to and secure all appropriate documents.

Sick Days

Occasionally your au pair may get sick and won't be able to work. These days are not considered vacation time and cannot be deducted from the au pair's weekly stipend. If your au pair becomes seriously ill or is injured for a long period of time, please contact your Local Coordinator to discuss the situation.

Chapter 13 - The Role of Your Local Coordinator

Your Local Coordinator is always available to answer questions and provide assistance. She also meets with host families and au pairs throughout the program—especially during the early stages of the au pair’s placement.

48-Hour Contact

U.S. government regulations require that each Local Coordinator make contact with the host family and au pair within 48 hours of the au pair’s arrival in the host family’s home. As au pairs arrive at the host family’s home on either Thursday night or Friday, this means that this contact needs to take place by either Saturday or Sunday. The host family and au pair should therefore be prepared to hear from their Local Coordinator on either of these days, usually by telephone. The Local Coordinator is there to support both the au pair and the host family, and the purpose of the “48 hour contact” is to answer any questions that may have arisen during the first day or two of the au pair’s arrival.

Two-Week Visit

The second type of contact required by U.S. government regulations is the two-week visit. Since the two weeks after an au pair’s arrival can be a very hectic time for everyone, the Local Coordinator will schedule an appointment for the two-week visit ahead of time. The Local Coordinator will most likely meet with the family and the au pair separately and then together, as this approach helps each party speak more freely with the Local Coordinator.

If a cluster meeting is held around the same time as a two-week meeting, the Local Coordinator may meet with the au pair after the meeting, although a separate meeting with the host family must still be scheduled. At the end of the meeting with the au pair, the Local Coordinator will collect the au pair’s Arrival Evaluation Form.

The two-week visit provides an opportunity to talk to the host family and au pair about adapting to one another, the children and the quality of care being provided, and communication issues between the au pair and the parents. It is also a time to review the au pair’s duties, responsibilities and the schedule that has been established. The visit is intended to be the first formal evaluation of the placement and it provides an excellent forum to clarify issues, which left alone, might develop into problems later in the year.

Monthly Contact

The Local Coordinator is required to make monthly contact with you and your au pair. The majority of your contact with the Local Coordinator throughout the year will most likely be by telephone. Each month the Local Coordinator will set aside a time to telephone each host family in the cluster. You should inform your Local Coordinator of the best times to reach you. It is imperative that host families respond to any messages left for you from your Local Coordinator.

Support

Au pairs and host families should feel confident that their Local Coordinator is a year-round source of support. A Local Coordinator may have set office hours during the day, but she will always check messages and return calls in a timely manner and be available to discuss ideas or assist in mediating disputes before they turn into overwhelming problems.

Handling Emergencies

All unusual or serious situations involving either an au pair or a host family need to be reported to your Local Coordinator and in turn to Au Pair USA management as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the problem, Au Pair USA will need to report the incident to the U.S. State Department branch governing au pair programs.

The Local Coordinator is often the first point of contact for both the au pair and the host family when a crisis occurs. If it is after business hours, Local Coordinators may be in contact with a member of Au Pair USA’s management staff in a true emergency.

Cluster Activities

One of the most enjoyable tasks of the Local Coordinator is to facilitate programs and activities on a monthly basis for the au pairs in the cluster. Cluster activities can take a variety of forms, however all meetings or events normally:

- ▶ Provide support among au pairs
- ▶ Create a sense of unity among program participants
- ▶ Provide opportunities for the au pairs to learn more about the United States and the area they are now living in for a year
- ▶ Help au pairs feel supported by the Local Coordinator and the Au Pair USA organization

Many creative, fun and informative meetings and events have been planned by Local Coordinators in the past including: holiday parties, seminars on child development and child safety, career counseling sessions, sports/athletic events, trips to local museums/attractions and workshops on travel opportunities, to just name a few.

Monthly cluster meetings are planned well in advance so that au pairs (and their host families) can plan on the au pair's attendance. Meetings are mandatory and au pairs must call the Local Coordinator in advance if they are unable to attend the meeting. Au pairs who miss monthly meetings consistently will be reminded that they are required to attend the meetings and non-attendance may result in being cancelled from the program.

Cluster Newsletters

Each month, Local Coordinators will prepare and e-mail a cluster newsletter to all au pairs and host families in the cluster. Au pairs are encouraged to send information to their Local Coordinator for inclusion in the newsletter. These might include recipes, movie reviews, current holiday celebrations in their homeland and any other information you feel may appeal to other au pairs and host families. The content of the newsletters may include:

- ▶ Information about newly arriving au pairs that will be joining the cluster
- ▶ A reminder of upcoming cluster meeting dates, times and venues
- ▶ A reminder about any upcoming Host Family Day events or conferences
- ▶ General information about upcoming events or things to enjoy in the community (i.e. parades, fairs, outdoor art and craft shows)
- ▶ Information about upcoming American holidays
- ▶ Recognition of au pairs' birthdays
- ▶ Answers to frequently asked questions or general reminders of program regulations and policies
- ▶ An updated cluster list

Host Family Day Conferences

Each year, host families are required to participate in a Host Family Day Conference organized by the Local Coordinator. These workshops are intended to help further educate the host parents about various aspects of the program. The Local Coordinator, sometimes in cooperation with a neighboring Local Coordinator, will organize a meeting at least once, and possibly twice a year so that all host families will have an opportunity to attend a session. Attendance in at least one Host Family Day Conference is required and failure to attend such a meeting could jeopardize a family's continued participation in the program.

Chapter 14 - The Au Pair Educational Requirement

Local Coordinators will prepare a list of appropriate educational institutions in the community for au pairs, including the contact information and average costs. Under the current U.S. State Department regulations, only classes held at the following institutions count toward satisfying the educational component requirements:

- ▶ Public and private colleges and universities
- ▶ Community colleges
- ▶ Adult education courses held at university/college campuses only

Since au pairs are not considered permanent residents of the host family's community/state, they do not normally qualify for in-state tuition. Community colleges, adult education programs and other accredited institutions offer interesting courses that are less expensive and less academically rigorous than those found in a university setting. Au pairs may also "audit" classes, provided the school allows this, and this approach is less costly than paying per credit.

Understanding the Educational Requirements of the U.S. Government

The government regulations for au pair programs require au pairs to "enroll in an accredited post-secondary institution for not less than six credit hours of academic credit or its equivalent." Courses must be academic in nature. To check whether a program of study is "accredited," please refer to <http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>

The host family and the au pair should set up a work schedule that provides sufficient opportunity for the au pair to fulfill the educational requirement.

In addition, the host family must also:

- ▶ Schedule consecutive hours of free time each week so that the au pair can actually attend the class
- ▶ Facilitate transportation for the au pair to and from educational classes
- ▶ Offer support and advice in choosing an educational institution and particular coursework. Many au pairs will have a good idea of the classes they want to take during their year, others will not. Most au pairs will need guidance on how to register for classes.

The spirit of the program requirement is that au pairs should be enrolled in some form of academic pursuit more or less throughout the year. If the course taken is not designed as a "for credit" class, each 10 hours of class time will count as one credit.

Au pairs should get started with their educational responsibilities within the first month or two after their arrival. If this time does not coincide with the beginning of a school term, au pairs are encouraged to at least begin researching future class options and think about how they will complete their required hours in the time that they have left. Local Coordinators often find that if au pairs wait too long, they will not have enough time to complete the program requirements. If this happens, au pairs will forfeit the balance of their educational allowance. ***Families should never pay an au pair money in lieu of taking classes and all unused educational money simply remains with the host family.***

The education allowance can only be used to pay for tuition and books or materials required for the course. The cost of transportation to and from classes should not be deducted from the \$500 education stipend. If the au pair has used the entire educational allowance paid by the family and he/she has not completed the educational requirement, the au pair is financially obligated to pay for the remaining tuition to fulfill the program requirement. Host families may choose to pay half of the educational allowance during the first six months and the remainder during the second half of the year.

If an au pair chooses not to enroll in course work, he/she will be violating the terms of the J-1 Visa and the program may send the au pair home at his/her own expense. Au pairs who have not completed the educational requirements will not be eligible to extend their program as part of the Au Pair USA Extension Program.

Chapter 15 - The Au Pair's Insurance

As part of the program guidelines, Au Pair USA provides each au pair with accident and sickness insurance for the whole program. Currently this insurance coverage is administered by Travel Insurance Services. The most up-to-date informational brochure is sent to each au pair as part of the Pre-Arrival Packet, before traveling to the U.S. During the orientation program, the orientation trainers review the insurance policy with au pairs, including the scope of coverage and information on how to file a claim for reimbursement of medical expenses. The insurance does not cover pre-existing conditions. Au pairs should be aware that this insurance will not cover pre-existing conditions. Any au pair traveling to the U.S. to take part in the Au Pair USA program who has a medical condition that requires medication or treatments throughout the year will have to arrange for such medication or treatments personally. Each au pair has a copy of his/her insurance. Please visit our website for more details:

Extra 30 Days for Travel

Au pairs are not insured for the optional travel period at the end of their 12 month program year. InterExchange has made arrangements to allow au pairs to purchase one extra month of insurance if they will be staying in the U.S. for this optional travel period. We strongly recommend au pairs purchase this insurance so they will be covered during this period.

Emergency Medical Assistance

In the event of a medical emergency, please contact the 24-hour helpline 1-800-690-6295 and refer to policy GLB-9109322.

Going to the Doctor - Instructions for Au Pairs

1. Find a doctor on the preferred provider network at www.interexchange.org/ap-insurance. You may also contact: Beech Street Network at www.beechstreet.com or 1-800-432-1776 or National Preferred Provider Network at www.nppn.com or 1-800-557-1656
2. Give the doctor your insurance card (from orientation) and personal policy number (from your local coordinator).
3. Ask if the doctor is or is not going to send the itemized treatment bill directly to the insurance company.
4. Download the claim form from the above link and fill it in.
5. Make a copy of the claim form.
6. Mail the completed form, signed and dated, to the address at the top of the claim form page along with the itemized treatment bill if your medical provider did not submit the bill. If your provider did submit the bill, just send in the claim form.

Chapter 16 - Driving

Local Coordinators will discuss with you the use of the family car and the following topics:

- ▶ The need for a state driving license if required in your state. If you are unsure, your state's Department of Motor Vehicles will have information as to the driver's license requirements in your state
- ▶ The need to drive with the au pair soon after his/her arrival to determine comfort level with his/her driving ability (a driving course may be a good idea to help an au pair become comfortable with local roads and local driving laws)
- ▶ The need for the host family to have adequate automobile insurance, including collision
- ▶ The rules regarding the extent of damages (or the amount of the deductible) paid by au pairs in the case of an accident
- ▶ The need to be clear with their au pair about car maintenance, gasoline payments, curfews and drinking and driving
- ▶ The need to explain to their au pair what to do in the case of an accident, where the registration and insurance documents are located and who he/she should call
- ▶ The need for them to train the au pair in the use of children's car seats, and safe driving with the children

Accidents While Driving On-Duty

In the case of an automobile accident that occurs while the au pair is driving while on-duty, the au pair is not responsible for any costs associated with damages and their repairs. Au pairs are responsible for all fines or tickets they receive.

Accidents While Driving Off-Duty

In the case of an automobile accident that occurs while the au pair is driving while off-duty, the au pair will be responsible for half of the first \$1,000 of the repair bill or insurance deductible. If the repairs to the car should total more than \$1,000, the au pair is still only responsible for one-half of the first \$1,000 (meaning \$500). For example, if the repairs are \$600, the au pair will pay \$300 and the family will pay \$300. If the damages are \$1,200, the au pair will pay \$500 and the family will pay the remaining \$700. Host families must share the repair receipts or estimates of damages to the car, with their au pair.

Au pairs will need to understand that use of the car is a privilege, not a right. Host families will need to understand that with few exceptions, au pairs will need access to the family car to enjoy the social and cultural opportunities that will help make the year enjoyable.

If a family does not live in the city where public transportation is the norm, they must consider the use of the family car by their au pair as a normal extension of how they treat all adult members of the family. A family may not want to have the au pair drive the children as part of their child care duties and that is their choice, but he/she will need the freedom to drive the car to social activities, classes and for other personal reasons. Communicating needs and expectations will lead to a successful relationship.

During the initial three-day home orientation, families need to get in the car and drive with their au pair to both show them the area and directions to places, but equally important, to assess the au pair's driving ability. Most au pairs arrive with an International License. There are however, a few countries where these are not available. These licenses are generally used by tourists, however many states do not recognize this document and require that au pairs obtain a state driver's license. Regardless of what your state requires, host families are encouraged to have their au pair get a state driving license as this will assure that he/she has read the "rules of the road" booklet provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles and that his/her driving is acceptable.

Chapter 17 - International Communication

Telephone

For au pairs, the telephone provides instant communication with family and friends both in the USA and abroad. We encourage au pairs and host families to be respectful of each other's telephone needs, and not to let telephone use become a source of conflict between the au pair and the host family.

During the Orientation and Training program for au pairs, there is a discussion on appropriate telephone use and the importance of not abusing this privilege, however au pairs who are in their first few months with the family are often still surprised by the cost of all their telephone calls back home. One phone bill is often enough for au pairs to curtail their calling and they will begin to find less costly ways to communicate (writing letters or emailing). Au pairs must remember that all telephone charges are their responsibility. Au pairs are encouraged to make all long distance calls using a calling card.

If a host family agrees to let au pairs make long distance calls directly from their home phone, a system should be agreed upon for the au pair to pay the host family for those calls. The host family and the au pair should also agree to some method of repayment for phone calls that will appear on the following month's phone bill after the au pair leaves at the end of the year.

Host families must be aware that Au Pair USA will not assume responsibility for outstanding debts left by an au pair and that it is the family's responsibility to collect telephone or any other debts left by an au pair from him or her directly before he/she returns home. Again, host families and au pairs must resolve debt issues prior to the au pair's departure from the host family.

Computer and Internet

Please work out a schedule with your au pair for use of the family computer and Internet. Au pairs may also want to communicate with friends and family by using Skype or messenger programs. These can be very cost-effective (or free) alternatives to the telephone and may offer video options. Please talk to your au pair before he/she downloads any messenger software onto your computer.

Chapter 18 - Culture Shock

Culture shock is a form of complex emotional stress that happens when people move from one culture to another. Anthropologists studying this concept have called it a form of disorientation anxiety that results from becoming aware that some of the most basic assumptions about life and the way we live seem no longer appropriate or comfortable in a new environment. Dealing with language differences, unspoken rules and new physical surroundings can create tremendous anxiety. The Au Pair USA trainers at the NYC orientation and training program attended by au pairs at the beginning of their year emphasize the need for au pairs to accept that they may go through one or all of the typical phases of culture shock and they provide them with the tools to help them get through these experiences. Often, both the host family and the au pair will experience some form of culture shock as they learn to adapt to one another.

► Pre-Arrival

For the au pair, the pre-arrival phase combines pre-departure excitement and anxiety as the au pair looks forward to a new adventure. The host family meanwhile, is combining the anticipation of the au pair's arrival and how much help he/she will be with the anxieties about the au pair's role and how they will fit in to the family.

► The Honeymoon

During this arrival period, the au pair is emotionally excited and everything is new and wonderful. The host family is working hard to make the au pair feel at home and they are excited that the au pair has finally arrived.

► Flight and Fight

The newness of things begins to wear thin and au pairs begin to find everything annoying or inconvenient. Confronted with unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations, one reaction is to withdraw or remove oneself from the situation, taking "flight" from the new environment.

The au pair may choose to be only with friends of the same nationality or he/she may reject or ignore the American way of doing things. In turn, the family may respond critically and reject the au pair's approach. During the "flight" phase, the au pair may seem to place "blame" on either the local population, for lack of "understanding," or on him/herself for an inability to handle new experiences.

In the "fight" phase the au pair may think that he/she can somehow change others to their way of thinking or doing things. The host family may become irritated with the au pair for making them feel ill at ease in their own home.

► Filter and Flex (Cultural Adjustment and Adaptation)

During this phase, au pairs may have become more comfortable with speaking English, communicating is less difficult. The au pair becomes more relaxed and perhaps more confident and the host family seems more accepting and trusting as the dialogue improves and most problems are successfully resolved. Rather than rejecting or trying to change behaviors, the au pair begins to filter information and examine things more objectively. The family and the au pair learn to be more and more flexible with one another in accepting personality and cultural differences. This flexibility strengthens both the host family/au pair relationship and the au pair's ability to continue deepening the relationship with the host culture.

► Pre/Post Departure Reentry Adjustment

Toward the end of the year, some au pairs will begin to feel anxious anticipating having to say goodbye to their host family, the children and their new friends. The family also begins to consider the inevitable goodbye and sadness of losing a member of the family and they may become anxious about their next child care provider.

Chapter 19 - Extension Program

The Au Pair USA Extension Program allows host families and au pairs to extend their match beyond their first year for an additional 6, 9 or 12 months. Host families benefit from a more stable child care environment and au pairs benefit from having more time to experience life in the United States. Host families also save money by paying reduced fees, making this program one of the most affordable child care options available. Au pairs continue to receive the weekly stipend and are entitled to pro-rated vacation days and an educational allowance.

What is required for an extension?

Only au pairs and host families in “good standing” are eligible to extend.

Au pairs have abided by all program rules, attended their Cluster Meetings and completed the Educational Requirement.

Host families have abided by all program rules and do not have any outstanding balance due to InterExchange.

Extension Application

All au pairs and host families who wish to extend their program must complete an Extension Application. You can receive the necessary Extension Application from your Local Coordinator, the New York office or by downloading it from our website: www.interexchange.org/aupairusa. Be sure to read all instructions carefully, paying special attention to deadlines and fees.

The U.S. State Department charges an Extension Processing Fee of \$233 for each application and requires this amount to be paid through InterExchange Au Pair USA. InterExchange must receive payment of this \$233 before we will submit the application on your behalf. We strongly recommend that au pairs take charge of this process since it is their visa status that depends on the successful completion of all necessary steps. Any failure to meet the deadlines involved will result in a denial of the Extension Application.

The U.S. Department of State requires InterExchange to pre-approve all Extension Applications and then send the paperwork to their office by courier post for final approval. All paperwork and fees must be received by the U.S. Department of State no less than 30 days before the original program end dates on the au pair’s DS-2019 Form. InterExchange must therefore receive the paperwork from the host family or au pair at least 7 days before this deadline to ensure timely delivery.

Once an Extension Application is approved by the U.S. Department of State, we will print a new DS-2019 form that reflects the amended program dates and send it to the au pair by mail. Au pairs must keep this new DS-2019 together with their original DS-2019 form.

Travel During the Extension Period

Please note that while the DS-2019 form has been amended to reflect the new dates, the original J-1 Visa in the au pair’s passport has not been changed. This means that the au pair is allowed to remain in the USA during the extension period, but if he/she wishes to travel abroad and re-enter the U.S., he/she will have to acquire a new visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

Chapter 20 - The Host Family Reapplication Process

All host families active in the program will automatically be contacted and asked to reapply four months before the end of their current contract year. Re-applying host families are required to submit a complete new application each year. Every other year, the interview held by the Local Coordinator may be done by telephone, as opposed to in person. Repeat families must only submit one reference and don't need employment verification.

Host families are encouraged to send in their new applications and have their interviews as soon as possible.

Scheduling the Au Pair's Return Flight Home

Return Flight Home Information and Request Forms are sent from Globe Travel to the au pair approximately four months prior to the scheduled departure date. The au pair will be asked to select a departure date which should be somewhere between the end of the 12th month and the end of what would be the 13th month in the country. Au pairs are allowed to stay in the U.S., for travel purposes only, for 30 days after the end date on the DS-2019 form. Stays in the U.S. beyond the 13th month are violating the rules of the au pair's J-1 Visa. If an au pair does not leave the USA by the end of the 13th month, the au pair will forfeit the return airline ticket home and Completion Certificate.

Chapter 21 - Taxes

While Au Pair USA is not licensed to provide official tax advice and cannot counsel host families or au pairs in regard to program fee and wage inquiries, we do list resources on our website. We also put updates on our blogs and send out information to au pairs every year about filing taxes.

Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

Stipends paid to au pairs are eligible under the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. You must obtain a Social Security number or ITIN (Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) for your au pair from your local branch of the Social Security Administration. To claim the credit, you can file Form 1040, Form 1040A or Form 1040-T. Use your au pair's Social Security number or ITIN as the tax identification number for the child care provider.

Au pair stipends typically qualify as a dependent care provider expense under employers' Dependent Care Reimbursement programs. Please note that the program fees paid to Au Pair USA will not qualify as a child or dependent care expense. Contact your employer for specific guidance on this issue.

Au Pair Tax Status

In 1994, the U.S. Department of Labor determined that the au pair stipend constitutes "wages" because an employer-employee relationship exists. The weekly stipend as of July 2010 is \$195.75. Refer to IRS Publication 926, Household Employer's Tax Guide.

Social Security and Medicare Taxes

Au pair wages are not usually subject to Social Security and Medicare taxes because of the au pair's status as a J-1 non-immigrant and as a non-resident alien. If the au pair is a resident alien and his/her annual au pair wages exceed the applicable dollar threshold, then the host family must withhold Social Security and Medicare taxes and report them on Schedule H of Form 1040 and on Form W-2. You will need to apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN) if it is required to withhold tax and file Form W-2.

Income Tax Withholding

Because au pair wages are paid for domestic service in a private home, they are not subject to U.S. income tax withholding and reporting on Forms 941 and W-2. However, au pair wages are included in the gross income of the recipients, and au pairs are required to file U.S. individual income tax returns. Subject to change, au pairs will only have to file a 1040 NR-EZ if they earn more than the standard deduction.

Federal Unemployment Taxes (FUTA)

Most au pairs are non-resident aliens, and therefore their host families would be exempt from paying federal unemployment taxes on their au pair wages. However, an au pair who had previously been in the United States as a student, teacher, trainee, or researcher in F, J, M, or Q nonimmigrant status might be considered a resident alien during their current stay in the United States.

Income Tax Filing

An au pair will almost always be a non-resident alien (NR), and will be required to file Form 1040NR-EZ to report au pair wages. As a non-resident alien, the au pair is ineligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Hope Credit and the Lifetime Learning Credit. An au pair is not a student in the United States, and therefore is not eligible to exclude au pair wages from gross income under the student article of any U.S. income tax treaty.

Additional Resources

Internal Revenue Service Web Site: www.irs.ustreas.gov

Internal Revenue Service Information: 800.829.1040

We hope this information will be useful for your tax planning purposes. Should you have any questions, please consult the resources listed above.

Chapter 22 - Transitions & Reassignment

Au Pair USA refers to the process of ending the host family/au pair relationship early as a “transition”. Although it is a problem faced by few families and au pairs, transitions do happen. A transition occurs when a family and their au pair decide that they are truly incompatible, or there are extenuating circumstances which lead the host family and au pair to end their relationship with one another, and that a reassignment or withdrawal from the program are the only options available to them.

Three-Point Meeting

A “three-point meeting” between the Local Coordinator, host family and au pair allows everyone to discuss the problems and come to a common decision about how to proceed. This can simply be a meeting to discuss the situation or it can be a meeting to discuss re-assignment. Any party can ask for a three-point meeting if they feel they need the Local Coordinator’s assistance. Mediation is the goal of these meetings.

Ending the Placement

If it is decided that the relationship will end early, the Local Coordinator will go through the following information and complete some Au Pair USA forms. It is also necessary to clarify any outstanding financial obligations such as vacation and educational allowance owed and outstanding bills such as telephone, gym, etc. InterExchange Au Pair USA will assist au pairs and host families to resolve their issues, but we cannot be responsible for determining or collecting any outstanding debts owed to either party.

Au Pair Stipend

Au pairs receive a stipend for each week they fulfill their duties as an au pair. Au pairs that leave their host family and stay with their Local Coordinator or a temporary family while waiting for a new placement, or au pairs that stay with their present host family but are not providing child care duties are considered to be “temp-housed” and are not entitled to the stipend.

Au Pair Debts to the Host Family

Au pairs are responsible for any outstanding telephone bills or miscellaneous items that they may owe to the host family. Au pairs and host families must resolve these issues together before the au pair leaves the host family’s home. Once the au pair leaves the host family’s home it becomes increasingly difficult for the host family and the au pair to resolve these issues.

Please Note: Local Coordinators and Au Pair USA staff will do everything possible to help host families and au pairs communicate with each other and resolve issues, but we are unable to collect funds that either party may feel they are due. It is in your own best interest to resolve financial issues prior to the au pair leaving your home.

Vacation

Au pairs accrue one day per month of vacation after the first month. Au pairs are to receive \$35.50/day for unused vacation that the au pair earned prior to the transition. Au pairs who used vacation that they had not fully earned, will be required to reimburse the host family for those days, at \$35.50/day.

Education

Au pairs receive \$500 for the year from the host family to complete the Educational Requirement. Should an au pair leave the host family prior to the end of the year, they are to receive \$42/month for each month they were an au pair with the present host family, to be used for educational courses already taken, or future educational pursuits in the new host family’s community only. Should the au pair have received all or part of the educational stipend prior to leaving the family early, the au pair is required to reimburse the family \$42/month for time that was not earned.

Transition Policies

▶ Two-Week Notice

Au Pair USA enforces a two-week notice policy after the family and the au pair have decided to terminate their relationship. This requires the host family and au pair to stay together for 2 weeks from the time their transition papers are received in the New York office. This policy was initiated to secure housing for the au pair until he/she can go to another host family.

▶ No Eviction

A host family may never evict an au pair from their home. If a host family tries to evict an au pair, they are violating the spirit of the cross-cultural exchange and the requirements of program participation. In this case, Au Pair USA will reconsider whether the family is suitable for this type of exchange program.

▶ No Self-Matching

Au pairs wishing to be reassigned must do so through the transitions office of InterExchange. Au pairs are not allowed to find their own host families or arrange their own matches.

Host families with children under the age of two and/or more than three children should note that it may be difficult to re-match them in a timely manner. For this reason, we strongly recommend that host families research alternative forms of short-term child care.

Program Violations

Host families who have broken the program regulations or have mistreated the au pair in violation of InterExchange's policies or the "spirit of the program" will not be re-matched with another au pair and will be cancelled from the program.

Host families who show a pattern of unsuccessful matches will be asked to leave the program.

Au pairs who violate program regulations will be cancelled from the program and will have to return to their home countries immediately at their own expense.

Self-Repatriation (Leaving the Program)

Any au pair who leaves the host family without contacting InterExchange will be considered off the program. We are required to alert Department of Homeland Security and will do so. Having such information on your record could prevent you and your family from being able to obtain another visa to the U.S. or other countries.

Back-Up Child Care

InterExchange does not guarantee to provide continuous child care from au pairs. During a transition, a family may be without an au pair for several weeks while waiting for a new match. For this reason, it is important that families have back-up plans for child care not only during transitions, but also throughout the year.

Reassignment

Families in transition will work directly with a Transitions Coordinator in the New York office to find another au pair. This may be either an au pair who is in transition or out of country. Once the participants are reassigned, the Local Coordinator is required to be in contact with the host family every two weeks for the first two months following the reassignment.

Au Pair USA is aware that transitions can be an extremely stressful time for all parties. The New York office works as quickly as possible in these situations to reassign the au pair and the host family. The New York transition team is always aware of the pressing child care needs of families and the inconvenience the two-week notice may impose on a family. However, the ultimate goal is to find the best match for the family and the au pair to help ensure a successful reassignment.

Chapter 23 - Unexpected Challenges: Visa Delays & Denials

Although visa delays and denials are rare and seldom happen to au pairs, there are no guarantees that every applicant who applies to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad will be granted a J-1 Visa. Currently, all au pair candidates are required to go to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for an interview. It is entirely up to the Consular Officer to decide if an applicant will be granted a visa or not.

Delays are often a result of:

- ▶ A backlog of visa appointments at the embassy or consulate during the busy seasons
- ▶ The procedures of specific embassies or consulates such as returning the passport/visas by post

Denials are often due to one of the following:

- ▶ The applicant's inability to demonstrate strong ties, and therefore reasons to return, to his/her home country. This may be highlighted by the applicant's lack of: a job, school enrollment, extended family or money in the bank in his/her home country.
- ▶ If an applicant had been denied a visa in the past or has had a previous visa cancelled by the U.S. government, he/she will have difficulty securing a visa now. International Cooperators discuss these issues with each applicant during the pre-screening process so as to deter unforeseen difficulties later on.

When an applicant is denied a visa, the International Cooperator will notify the Au Pair USA staff in New York. Depending on whether the au pair contacts the host family directly after the interview, the family may find out this news before the New York office. In either instance, the Local Coordinator and the host family will be notified as soon as possible. Our staff will investigate the situation; often communicating with the Embassy/Consulate abroad in an attempt to gain a clear understanding of why the application was denied.

Au pairs may re-apply at the consulate, which may take days or weeks, depending on whether the consulate will be able to offer a new interview date quickly or not. In this case, Au Pair USA will send a letter of support on behalf of the au pair, requesting that the au pair's visa application be reconsidered.

Often these problems will arise very late in the process, perhaps even a day or two before the scheduled arrival, and it may not be possible to find another appropriate au pair for the family by the planned arrival date. For this reason, families must have alternative child care arrangements available. They will however, be given top priority in the placement process to select an alternative applicant. In addition to considering out-of-country applicants, families in these situations may be given the opportunity to consider in-country au pairs who need a new host family.

U.S. Department of State Au Pair Program Regulations

Sec. 62.31 Au Pairs

(a) Introduction. This section governs Department of State-designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign nationals are afforded the opportunity to live with an American Host Family and participate directly in the home life of the Host Family. All au pair participants provide child care services to the Host Family and attend a U.S. post-secondary educational institution. Au pair participants provide up to forty-five hours of child care services per week and pursue not less than six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent during their year of program participation. Au pairs participating in the EduCare program provide up to thirty hours of child care services per week and pursue not less than twelve semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent during their year of program participation.

(b) Program designation. The Department of State may, in its sole discretion, designate bona fide programs satisfying the objectives set forth in paragraph (a) of this section. Such designation shall be for a period of two years and may be revoked by the Department of State for good cause.

(c) Program eligibility. Sponsors designated by the Department of State to conduct an au pair exchange program shall:

(1) Limit the participation of foreign nationals in such programs to not more than one year;

(2) Limit the number of hours an EduCare au pair participant is obligated to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 30 hours per week and limit the number of hours all other au pair participants are obligated to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 45 hours per week;

(3) Require that EduCare au pair participants register and attend classes offered by an accredited U.S. post-secondary institution for not less than twelve semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent and that all other au pair participants register and attend classes offered by an accredited U.S. post-secondary institution for not less than six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent;

(4) Require that all officers, employees, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf are adequately trained and supervised;

(5) Require that the au pair participant is placed with a Host Family within one hour's driving time of the home of the local organizational representative authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from the au pair's participation in their exchange program;

(6) Require that each local organizational representative maintain a record of all personal monthly contacts (or more frequently as required) with each au pair and Host Family for which he or she is responsible and issues or problems discussed;

(7) Require that all local organizational representatives contact au pair participants and Host Families twice monthly for the first two months following a placement other than the initial placement for which the au pair entered the United States.

(8) Require that local organizational representatives not devoting their full time and attention to their program obligations are responsible for no more than fifteen au pairs and Host Families; and

(9) Require that each local organizational representative is provided adequate support services by a regional organizational representative.

(d) Au pair selection. In addition to satisfying the requirements of §62.10(a), sponsors shall ensure that all participants in a designated au pair exchange program:

(1) Are between the ages of 18 and 26;

(2) Are a secondary school graduate, or equivalent;

(3) Are proficient in spoken English;

(4) Are capable of fully participating in the program as evidenced by the satisfactory completion of a physical;

(5) Have been personally interviewed, in English, by an organizational representative who shall prepare a report of the interview which shall be provided to the Host Family; and

(6) Have successfully passed a background investigation that includes verification of school, three, non-family related personal and employment references, a criminal background check or its recognized equivalent and a personality profile. Such personality profile will be based upon a psychometric test designed to measure differences in characteristics among applicants against those characteristics considered most important to successfully participate in the au pair program.

(e) Au pair placement. Sponsors shall secure, prior to the au pair's departure from the home country, a Host Family placement for each participant. Sponsors shall not:

(1) Place an au pair with a family unless the family has specifically agreed that a parent or other responsible adult will remain in the home for the first three days following the au pair's arrival;

(2) Place an au pair with a family having a child aged less than three months unless a parent or other responsible adult is present in the home;

(3) Place an au pair with a Host Family having children under the age of two, unless the au pair has at least 200 hours of documented infant child care experience. An au pair participating in the EduCare program shall not be placed with a family having pre-school children in the home unless alternative full-time arrangements for the supervision of such pre-school children are in place;

(4) Place an au pair with a Host Family having a special needs child, as so identified by the Host Family, unless the au pair has specifically identified his or her prior experience, skills, or training in the care of special needs children and the Host Family has reviewed and acknowledged in writing the au pair's prior experience, skills, or training so identified;

(5) Place an au pair with a Host Family unless a written agreement between the au pair and the Host Family detailing the au pair's obligation to provide child care has been signed by both the au pair and the Host Family prior to the au pair's departure from his or her home country. Such agreement shall clearly state whether the au pair is an EduCare program participant or not. Such agreement shall limit the obligation to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 45 hours per week unless the au pair is an EduCare participant. Such agreement shall limit the obligation of an EduCare participant to provide child care service to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 30 hours per week.

(6) Place the au pair with a family who cannot provide the au pair with a suitable private bedroom; and

(7) Place an au pair with a Host Family unless the Host Family has interviewed the au pair by telephone prior to the au pair's departure from his or her home country.

(f) Au pair orientation. In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at §62.10, all sponsors shall provide au pairs, prior to their departure from the home country, with the following information:

(1) A copy of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations, including a grievance process, which govern the au pair's participation in the exchange program;

(2) A detailed profile of the family and community in which the au pair will be placed;

(3) A detailed profile of the educational institutions in the community where the au pair will be placed, including the financial cost of attendance at these institutions;

(4) A detailed summary of travel arrangements; and

(5) A copy of the Department of State's written statement and brochure regarding the au pair program.

(g) Au pair training. Sponsors shall provide the au pair participant with child development and child safety instruction, as follows:

(1) Prior to placement with the Host Family, the au pair participant shall receive not less than eight hours of child safety instruction no less than 4 of which shall be infant-related; and

(2) Prior to placement with the American Host Family, the au pair participant shall receive not less than twenty-four hours of child development instruction of which no less than 4 shall be devoted to specific training for children under the age of two.

(h) Host Family selection. Sponsors shall adequately screen all potential Host Families and at a minimum shall:

(1) Require that the host parents are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents;

(2) Require that host parents are fluent in spoken English;

(3) Require that all adult family members resident in the home have been personally interviewed by an organizational representative;

(4) Require that host parents and other adults living full-time in the household have successfully passed a background investigation including employment and personal character references;

(5) Require that the Host Family have adequate financial resources to undertake all hosting obligations;

(6) Provide a written detailed summary of the exchange program and the parameters of their and the au pair's duties, participation, and obligations; and

(7) Provide the Host Family with the prospective au pair participant's complete application, including all references.

(i) Host Family orientation. In addition to the requirements set forth at §62.10 sponsors shall:

(1) Inform all Host Families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange program and provide all families with a copy of the Department of State's written statement and brochure regarding the au pair program;

(2) Provide all selected Host Families with a complete copy of Department of State-promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations, including the supplemental information thereto;

(3) Advise all selected Host Families of their obligation to attend at least one family day conference to be sponsored by the au pair organization during the course of the placement year. Host Family attendance at such a gathering is a condition of program participation and failure to attend will be grounds for possible termination of their continued or future program participation; and

(4) Require that the organization's local counselor responsible for the au pair placement contacts the Host Family and au pair within forth-eight hours of the au pair's arrival and meets, in person, with the Host Family and au pair within two weeks of the au pair's arrival at the Host Family home.

(j) Wages and hours. Sponsors shall require that au pair participants:

(1) Are compensated at a weekly rate based upon 45 hours of child care services per week and paid in conformance with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act as interpreted and implemented by the United States Department of Labor. EduCare participants shall be compensated at a weekly rate that is 75% of the weekly rate paid to non-EduCare participants;

(2) Do not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day, or more than 45 hours of child care in any one week. EduCare participants may not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day or more than 30 hours of child care in any one week;

(3) Receive a minimum of one and one half days off per week in addition to one complete weekend off each month; and

(4) Receive two weeks of paid vacation.

(k) Educational component. Sponsors must:

(1) Require that during their initial period of program participation, all EduCare au pair participants complete not less than 12 semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions and that all other au pair participants complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, Host Family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs in accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic course work in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for EduCare au pair participants and in an amount not to exceed \$500 for all other au pair participants.

(2) Require that during any extension of program participation, all participants (i.e. , Au Pair or EduCare) satisfy an additional educational requirement, as follows:

(i) For a nine or 12-month extension, all au pair participants and Host Families shall have the same obligation for coursework and payment therefore as is required during the initial period of program participation.

(ii) For a six-month extension, EduCare au pair participants must complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of participation, Host Family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$500. All other au pair participants must complete not less than three semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, Host Family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$250.

(l) Monitoring. Sponsors shall fully monitor all au pair exchanges, and at a minimum shall:

(1) Require monthly personal contact by the local counselor with each au pair and Host Family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(2) Require quarterly contact by the regional counselor with each au pair and Host Family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(3) Require that all local and regional counselors are appraised of their obligation to report unusual or serious situations or incidents involving either the au pair or Host Family; and

(4) Promptly report to the Department of State any incidents involving or alleging a crime of moral turpitude or violence.

(m) Reporting requirements. Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at §62.17, sponsors shall file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) A summation of the results of an annual survey of all Host Family and au pair participants regarding satisfaction with the program, its strengths and weaknesses;

(2) A summation of all complaints regarding Host Family or au pair participation in the program, specifying the nature of the complaint, its resolution, and whether any unresolved complaints are outstanding;

(3) A summation of all situations which resulted in the placement of au pair participant with more than one Host Family;

(4) A report by a certified public accountant, conducted pursuant to a format designated by the Department of State, attesting to the sponsor's compliance with the procedures and reporting requirements set forth in this subpart;

(5) A report detailing the name of the au pair, his or her Host Family placement, location, and the names of the local and regional organizational representatives; and

(6) A complete set of all promotional materials, brochures, or pamphlets distributed to either Host Family or au pair participants.

(n) Sanctions. In addition to the sanctions provisions set forth at §62.50, the Department of State may undertake immediate program revocation procedures upon documented evidence that a sponsor has failed to:

(1) Comply with the au pair placement requirements set forth in paragraph (e) of this section;

(2) Satisfy the selection requirements for each individual au pair as set forth in paragraph (d) of this section; and

(3) Enforce and monitor Host Family's compliance with the stipend and hours requirements set forth in paragraph (j) of this section. 75% of the weekly rate paid to non-EduCare participants;

(2) Do not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day, or more than 45 hours of child care in any one week. EduCare participants may not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day or more than 30 hours of child care in any one week;

(3) Receive a minimum of one and one half days off per week in addition to one complete weekend off each month; and

(4) Receive two weeks of paid vacation.

(k) Educational component. Sponsors must:

(1) Require that during their initial period of program participation, all EduCare au pair participants complete not less than 12 semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions and that all other au pair participants complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs in accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic course work in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for EduCare au pair participants and in an amount not to exceed \$500 for all other au pair participants.

(2) Require that during any extension of program participation, all participants (i.e., Au Pair or EduCare) satisfy an additional educational requirement, as follows:

(i) For a nine or 12-month extension, all au pair participants and host families shall have the same obligation for coursework and payment therefore as is

required during the initial period of program participation.

(ii) For a six-month extension, EduCare au pair participants must complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$500. All other au pair participants must complete not less than three semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$250.

(l) Monitoring. Sponsors shall fully monitor all au pair exchanges, and at a minimum shall:

(1) Require monthly personal contact by the local counselor with each au pair and host family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(2) Require quarterly contact by the regional counselor with each au pair and host family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(3) Require that all local and regional counselors are appraised of their obligation to report unusual or serious situations or incidents involving either the au pair or host family; and

(4) Promptly report to the Department of State any incidents involving or alleging a crime of moral turpitude or violence.

(m) Reporting requirements. Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at §62.17, sponsors shall file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) A summation of the results of an annual survey of all host family and au pair participants regarding satisfaction with the program, its strengths and weaknesses;

(2) A summation of all complaints regarding host family or au pair participation in the program, specifying the nature of the complaint, its resolution, and whether any unresolved complaints are outstanding;

(3) A summation of all situations which resulted in the placement of au pair participant with more than one host family;

(4) A report by a certified public accountant, conducted pursuant to a format designated by the Department of State, attesting to the sponsor's compliance with the procedures and reporting requirements set forth in this subpart;

(5) A report detailing the name of the au pair, his or her host family placement, location, and the names of the local and regional organizational representatives; and

(6) A complete set of all promotional materials, brochures, or pamphlets distributed to either host family or au pair participants.

(n) Sanctions. In addition to the sanctions provisions set forth at §62.50, the Department of State may undertake immediate program revocation procedures upon documented evidence that a sponsor has failed to:

(1) Comply with the au pair placement requirements set forth in paragraph (e) of this section;

(2) Satisfy the selection requirements for each individual au pair as set forth in paragraph (d) of this section; and

(3) Enforce and monitor host family's compliance with the stipend and hours

requirements set forth in paragraph (j) of this section.

(o) Extension of program. The Department, in its sole discretion, may approve extensions for au pair participants beyond the initial 12-month program.

Applications to the Department for extensions of six, nine, or 12 months, must be received by the Department not less than 30 calendar days prior to the expiration of the exchange visitor's initial authorized stay in either the Au Pair or EduCare program (i.e. , 30-calendar days prior to the program end date listed on the exchange visitor's Form DS-2019). The request for an extension beyond the maximum duration of the initial 12-month program must be submitted electronically in the Department of Homeland Security's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Supporting documentation must be submitted to the Department on the sponsor's organizational letterhead and contain the following information:

(1) Au pair's name, SEVIS identification number, date of birth, the length of the extension period being requested;

(2) Verification that the au pair completed the educational requirements of the initial program; and

(3) Payment of the required non-refundable fee (see 22 CFR 62.90) via Pay.gov.

(p) Repeat participation. A foreign national who enters the United States as an au pair Exchange Visitor Program participant and who has successfully completed his or her program is eligible to participate again as an au pair participant, provided that he or she has resided outside the United States for at least two years following completion of his or her initial au pair program.

[60 FR 8552, Feb. 15, 1995, as amended at 62 FR 34633, June 27, 1997; 64 FR 53930, Oct. 5, 1999. Redesignated at 64 FR 54539, Oct. 7, 1999; 66 FR 43087, Aug. 17, 2001; 71 FR 33238, June 8, 2006; 73 FR 34862, June 19, 2008]



161 Sixth Avenue, New York, NY 10013
TEL 212.924.0446 or 1.800.287.2477
FAX 212.924.0575
www.InterExchange.org