



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE FOR U.S.-BASED PARTICIPANT TRAINING & EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAMS



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This document was prepared by the Participant Training team in the Office of Education, Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture & Trade.

# CONTENTS

- Introduction ..... 1**
  - Congratulations..... 1
  - Pre-Departure Orientation..... 1
- Program Objectives and Overview ..... 2**
  - About USAID ..... 2
  - Participant Training ..... 3
  - Selection ..... 3
- Administrative and Policy Review ..... 4**
  - Conditions of Sponsorship for U.S.-Based Training ..... 4
  - Your Program Implementer..... 7
  - Stakeholder Compact..... 8
  - Language Proficiency..... 8
  - Participant Action Plans ..... 8
  - Program Costs Funded By USAID..... 9
- U.S. Culture ..... 10**
  - Language ..... 10
  - Talking with Americans..... 10
  - Independence..... 11
  - Religion In The United States ..... 11
  - Friendship..... 12
  - Diversity in America ..... 13
  - Sexual Harassment..... 14
  - Telecommunications..... 14
  - Using the U.S. Postal Service ..... 16
  - Begging ..... 16
  - Stereotypes..... 17
  - Culture Shock..... 17
  - Illegal Drugs ..... 19
  - Alcohol..... 19
  - Smoking..... 19
  - Cuisine ..... 19
  - Grocery Stores, Markets, Restaurants, and Other Eateries..... 20
  - Laws..... 20
  - Geography and Climate of the United States ..... 21
  - Money and Banking ..... 24
  - Tipping and Gratuities ..... 26
  - Clothing Sizes ..... 27
  - Electricity..... 27
  - Temperatures, Weights and Distances ..... 28
  - U.S. Holidays..... 28
- Academics, Training, and the United States Classroom ..... 30**
  - Methods of Teaching ..... 30
  - Academic Honesty ..... 31
  - Missing Class..... 31
  - Language Issues ..... 32
- Pre-Departure Logistics..... 33**
  - Passport..... 33
  - Exchange Visitor Visa and Transit Visas ..... 33
  - Personal Documents..... 33
  - Funds for Expenses During Transit..... 34
  - Airline Regulations and Airport Check-In ..... 34
  - What to Pack..... 39
  - What Not To Bring ..... 40
  - Arrival in the United States..... 41
- In Conclusion..... 44**



# INTRODUCTION

## CONGRATULATIONS

You have been selected into the Participant Training Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We welcome your participation!

The objective of USAID's Participant Training Program is to enhance your current academic or technical skills, so you may contribute significantly to the development of your country when you return home. We look forward to working with you to achieve your goals, along with those of your government and the USAID Mission.

The American people provide the funding that makes your program possible. This pre-departure guide clarifies expectations, roles and responsibilities, to help you receive the maximum results from your learning experience, and to ensure that USAID receives the maximum return from investment in your program. The guide also provides you with information on what living and learning in America is like. We hope the information will be useful for all categories of programs. In the section on Administrative and Policy Review, readers will find special notations for persons who will be in the United States for short-term programs.

## PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION

Prior to departure from your country, most likely you will participate in an orientation program designed to create a solid foundation for your success by reducing uncertainty and eliminating obstacles to meeting program objectives.

The orientation may include other participants and program stakeholders, including staff from USAID, the program implementer, host country officials, and your employer (if applicable). The orientation generally covers four areas: program objectives; administrative and policy issues; cultural aspects; and, methods of learning. This guide covers many of these topics broadly, but the orientation you will receive prior to departure from your country should provide you with specific details that are unique to your particular program. This guide is meant to accompany the orientation session, and it can serve as a reference for you to use before, during, and after your program.



# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW

## ABOUT USAID

The United States has a long history of extending a helping hand to people overseas who are struggling to make a better life, striving to live in a free and democratic country, or recovering from a disaster. This caring stands as a hallmark of the United States, and shows the world our true character as a nation.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), an independent federal government agency working under the guidance of the U.S. Secretary of State, is the principal U.S. agency which extends assistance to countries that are recovering from disasters, working to escape poverty, or engaging in democratic reforms.

USAID provides foreign assistance through close partnerships with private voluntary groups, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, international agencies, other governments and other U.S. government agencies. USAID enjoys working relationships with more than 3,500 American companies and over 300 U.S.-based private voluntary organizations.

USAID provides assistance in five regions of the world: [Sub-Saharan Africa](#), [Asia](#), [Latin America and the Caribbean](#), [Europe and Eurasia](#) and the [Middle East](#).

Programs include:

- Technical assistance and capacity building
- Training and scholarships
- Food aid and disaster relief
- Infrastructure construction
- Small-enterprise loans
- Budget support
- Enterprise funds
- Credit guarantees



USAID measures success through the lives of the thousands of individuals who participate in these programs and the impact assistance has on countries across the world. You can find a record of how American assistance programs bring hope to individuals, families and communities by visiting <http://www.usaid.gov/stories/>.

## **PARTICIPANT TRAINING**

Training, or what we consider human capacity development, is a key component of most USAID projects and is essential to assuring program impact and sustainability.

Most participant training programs are short-term, focusing on technical training, study visits, leadership development or public diplomacy. There are also long-term programs, including academic degree studies, non-degree research and leadership programs held in the United States, in the participant's home country or in a third country.

During 2009, USAID provided training to 2,350,946 individuals, including 3,684 participating in programs in the U.S. USAID frequently selects participants from organizations which partner in a USAID Mission development activity. In this case, training may be one element of a coordinated human and institutional capacity development program which focuses on increased output or productivity in the partner organization.

All training helps individuals acquire new skills, knowledge and attitudes critical to achieving their country's development goals. Training contributes to building self-reliant, productive societies, through developing human resources.

## **SELECTION**

USAID chose you because of your qualifications and potential as a leader who can help improve the performance of your institution. You are a citizen or legal resident of your country; you are proficient in the language of the country where you will receive training; you are in good health and you are able to adjust to a foreign culture while representing your own. Importantly, you represent a commitment to development and a belief that economic, political and social advances are key elements for a prosperous future.

Your selection was also contingent upon your agreement to return home immediately and apply your new knowledge and skills to help solve development challenges in your own community and country. Even at this early stage before you begin your program, we ask that you envision and prepare for your return home equipped with new or enhanced knowledge and skills. We hope you will develop a strategy now and nurture the relationships that will enable you to make full and productive use of what you will gain from the program.

USAID participant training programs can consist of long-term academic degree programs, short or long-term non-degree technical courses in academic or in other settings, seminars, workshops, conferences, on-the-job learning experiences, observational study tours, or distance learning exercises or interventions. Most of the information in this document applies equally to long term, degree-earning programs in U.S. universities and short-term technical training programs.



# ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLICY REVIEW

USAID supports programs in agriculture, democracy and governance, economic growth, the environment, education, health, global partnerships and humanitarian assistance. Your participation represents a unique partnership which offers rewards and includes responsibilities. Please give special attention to the Conditions of Sponsorship for U.S.-based and third-country training, which follow in the next sections.

This section is intended to familiarize you with rules and regulations of USAID, the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

## CONDITIONS OF SPONSORSHIP FOR U.S.-BASED TRAINING

Conditions for sponsorship in U.S.-based training address visa compliance, a return-to-home policy which includes a two-year home residency requirement, health and accident insurance, USAID-provided monetary allowances, filing U.S. income taxes, your obligation to comply with U.S. law and consequences of non-compliance, restrictions on employment, automobile ownership, travel to the U.S. by your dependents, and grounds for termination of your exchange program. Participants of U.S.-based training programs must accept and sign form [AID 1381-6 Conditions of Sponsorship for J-1 Visa Holders](#), which details these requirements. The following is an overview of key points in the agreement.

## VISA COMPLIANCE

You must enter the U.S. on a J-1 visa, processed under USAID sponsorship. You must abide by all terms and take responsibility for keeping the visa current. You must notify your program implementer of any change of address, plans to travel outside the U.S. or changes in program completion, the latter two of which must be authorized by USAID.

## **RETURN-TO-HOME POLICY AND TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

You must agree to return to your home country within three calendar days upon completing your U.S. program (within seven days for long-term training), unless you receive written approval from USAID to extend your stay. You must not attempt to change your non-immigrant status in the U.S., and must acknowledge that marriage to a U.S. citizen, birth of a U.S. citizen child, an offer of employment, change of sponsorship or passage of time in another country will not change your responsibility to return home for a minimum of twenty four months, upon completing the USAID program.

Upon your return, you must endeavor to use the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired for the benefit of your country. You must remain in your home country for a total of two years after completing the program, unless you receive written deferment from the USAID Mission, or approval for a non-immigrant visa from the U.S. Consul.

## **NON-RETURNEES AND RECOVERY OF TRAINING COSTS**

USAID-sponsored participants must depart the U.S. within three calendar days (seven calendar days for long-term training) after the last technical or practical activity of his or her program, unless circumstances arise that would preclude such departure and the sponsoring unit gives the participant written approval for a later return date.

As noted in the Conditions for Sponsorship form, should a participant fail to return immediately to their home country, USAID may require repayment of all training costs, including penalty charges, administrative costs and interest.

## **HEALTH AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

You must be enrolled in the mandatory USAID-authorized Health and Accident Coverage (HAC) plan, which offers insurance premiums paid by USAID. You must accept responsibility for paying insurance deductibles and co-payments related to filing medical claims, and any fees not covered by the limits of the HAC plan. Prior to enrollment you may be screened to identify medical conditions which might limit your ability to complete the training program or might result in excessive costs for medical care for a preexisting condition. You must acknowledge that in many cases the USAID insurance will not cover medical conditions existing prior to your Exchange Visitor program.

The HAC Program covers the “usual, customary, and reasonable” charges for required medical services. HAC coverage begins the day the Participant leaves the home country and remains in effect until the date of return to the home country (by the most direct route).

You will be provided with information related to your insurance coverage, including a card to carry with you.

<p><b>HTH Worldwide Insurance Services</b>  <b>PHARMACY BENEFITS AND MEDICAL INSURANCE ID CARD</b></p> <p>Group: US AGENCY FOR INTL DEV PLAN C  Name:  Certificate No.:                      Coverage Dates:</p> <p>Outpatient Prescription Drugs payable at 100% of actual cost</p> <p>  <small>Limited Dental Benefits must be verified prior to treatment</small></p> <p>Insurance Benefits underwritten by HM Life Insurance Company  Benefits delivered in cooperation with AmeriHealth Administrators.</p>	<p><b>HTH Worldwide Insurance Services MEDICAL INSURANCE ID CARD</b></p> <p>MEMBER CUSTOMER SERVICE:  Toll Free: 1.888.350.2002 Collect: 1.215.793.6925  Fax: 1.888.250.4121 e-mail: <a href="mailto:studentinfo@hthworldwide.com">studentinfo@hthworldwide.com</a>  PROVIDER CUSTOMER SERVICE: Toll Free: 1.800.414.0596</p> <p> PPO / NAP</p> <p>SEND CLAIMS TO:  HTH Worldwide  P.O. Box 30259  Tampa, FL 33630  Payor ID: 60054</p>
<p>ALWAYS CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU <b>hthstudents.com</b> ALWAYS CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Members:</b> visit <a href="http://hthstudents.com">hthstudents.com</a> for comprehensive information and services relating to your insurance. You can: track claims, search for a doctor, view plan information, download forms, and read health and security information. To sign in on the site, go to <a href="http://hthstudents.com">hthstudents.com</a> and click on "Sign In". Then follow the simple instructions to complete the registration.</li> <li>• <b>Important Information:</b> To ensure timely processing of your claim, please include your certificate number found on the front of this card on all claim forms and other correspondence with HTH. To review the status of a claim, go online at <a href="http://hthstudents.com">hthstudents.com</a> or call the Claims Administrator number listed on the front of this card. For other questions, call the Customer Service number on the front of this card.</li> <li>• <b>Physicians and Hospitals:</b> for questions regarding eligibility verification, benefits, billing information or the status of a submitted claim, please call the Claims Administrator listed on the front of this card.</li> </ul>	<p>ALWAYS CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU <b>hthstudents.com</b> ALWAYS CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU</p> <p>  Rx Plan Group #HTH222</p> <p><b>HTH Members:</b> HTH Worldwide members are offered a prescription discount program through Universal Rx. Members must file a claim with the Claims Administrator for reimbursement for any prescription benefits offered through this plan, in accordance with their plan benefits. Call Member Services with questions: <b>1.888.243.2358</b>.</p> <p><b>Pharmacies:</b> Process claims through Pharmacy Data Management (PDM) ; Processor ID/BIN #610020; Processor Control #URX001.</p> <p>For inquiries on electronic claims submission pharmacies may call <b>1.800.329.0988</b>.</p>

## FILING U.S. INCOME TAX

You must file U.S. federal or state tax forms, as appropriate. USAID or one of its contractors may assist you or prepare the forms for you. However, it is your responsibility to verify that the forms are prepared and submitted to the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.

## DEPENDENTS

USAID strongly discourages travel to the U.S. by your dependents. A dependent is a participant's spouse or unmarried minor child, under the age of 21, who wishes to accompany or join you while in the U.S. during your USAID-sponsored program. You must obtain specific USAID approval for dependent travel, and assume complete responsibility for your dependents' compliance with visa and other U.S. legal regulations. USAID provides no funds for dependent expenses. You must follow the policy on participant dependents set by the USAID Mission in your home country. If dependents are allowed to accompany you on your training program, you must meet USAID requirements regarding medical and financial responsibilities. You must have the funds available to purchase tickets to cover the trip to and from the U.S. for each dependent and, to the extent possible, keep the ticket valid for the duration of your dependent's stay in the U.S. You must provide bank documentation showing funds equal to 50 percent of your maintenance for each dependent, for each month they will reside with you during your training program. Dependents must undergo medical examination in your home country, and you must secure health and accident insurance which includes coverage for pregnancy, if appropriate. By signing the form entitled "Conditions of Sponsorship for J-1 Visa Holders" (Form I 381-6) you have acknowledged that cancellation of dependent medical insurance is grounds for terminating your USAID-sponsored program.



## **USAID-PROVIDED MONETARY ALLOWANCES**

You will be eligible for monthly maintenance allowances (if the training is long-term), or per diem (if the training is short-term) or allowances for other program-related costs. The allowance or per diem amount will be determined by USAID. You must not accept any outside funds through scholarships, assistantships or wages without USAID approval. Any financial compensation outside USAID allowances will reduce the amount of your USAID allowance.

## **TERMINATION OF YOUR EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM**

USAID may terminate the exchange visitor program of participants who change their course of study, fail their study requirements, conduct themselves in a manner prejudicial to the USAID program or laws of the U.S., accept public welfare funds, obtain unauthorized employment, are diagnosed with a mental or physical disorder which will unduly delay or prevent successful program completion including the participant's contribution to home-country development, or participants who do not enroll in the mandatory insurance.

## **LEGAL OBLIGATIONS**

USAID will not provide funds for your legal defense, and will not assume responsibility for expenses related to your operating a motor vehicle, for expenses related to criminal or civil law proceedings involving your operation of a motor vehicle, or for any other civil or criminal action for which you are held responsible.

## **AUTOMOBILE OWNERSHIP**

USAID policy prohibits ownership of a vehicle without prior approval. Should you operate a vehicle owned by another person, you must accept responsibility for complying with all state and local laws, ordinances and requirements, and for acquiring all necessary insurance and licenses.

## **CHILD BIRTH**

Giving birth to a child while in the U.S. does not result in automatic U.S. citizenship for the birth parent, nor does it provide an automatic legal right to remain in the U.S. with the child.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

You may not accept employment in the U.S., unless it is an integral, documented component of your USAID-sponsored program, such as an assistantship, on-the-job-training, practical training experience or other employment approved by USAID due to unusual circumstances.

## **YOUR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTER**

USAID uses the services of program implementers (individuals or organizations hired by USAID) to manage its participant training programs. Your program implementer is the first person to contact when you have questions concerning daily scheduling, logistics, technical and administrative needs.

Your implementer also will transmit your medical exam documents to the appropriate offices, prepare or help you prepare your U.S. tax return when required, and in the unlikely event that you encounter legal problems during your training your implementer will report the event to authorities and help you make arrangements for accommodations while you respond to legal requirements.

## **STAKEHOLDER COMPACT**

If your program in the U.S. lasts more than three days, prior to your departure, your program implementer will prepare a written stakeholder compact—a mutual agreement between you, USAID and parties involved in your training. The agreement, also called a Training Agreement or Objectives Memo, sets out your rights and responsibilities. Elements of a stakeholder agreement include:

- A description of expected work performance outcomes from the training or post-training.
- An agreed-upon return-to-work date and stakeholder responsibilities for the post-training follow-on phase.
- Suggested ways of measuring training results and change in your post-training work performance.

The stakeholder compact confirms your understanding of responsibilities as a USAID-sponsored participant, and your agreement with the training objectives and anticipated results.

## **LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

Participants must have sufficient language proficiency to participate successfully in their training program. Unless your program uses interpreters, your sponsoring unit will verify language proficiency.

## **PARTICIPANT ACTION PLANS**

Your program implementer may work with you to detail an action plan showing how you will use your new knowledge, skills and attitudes to assist your country's development when you return home. Your plan may address your country's economic expansion, infrastructure improvement, private sector strengthening and more. Your plan may include:

- Training objectives—a discussion of the goals of your training.
- Personal objectives—a discussion of your personal goals and plans.
- Employment plans—a description of the job you expect to hold upon your return home.
- Specific ways you want the training to improve your job and how the training will contribute to the growth of your organization or company, and your country.



Your action plan will evolve as you progress through your program, acquire new knowledge and have new experiences. Since developing your action plan is an on-going process, it will not be complete until you finish your program. The final product will reflect your strategy for making an impact on development in your home country.

## **PROGRAM COSTS FUNDED BY USAID**

Your program implementer will arrange for funding the following aspects of your training program:

- Expenses related to insurance enrollment
- Expenses related to visa issuance
- Tuition
- Transportation to and from your program site(s)
- Lodging and maintenance allowances (or per diem, if short-term training)
- Books and materials
- Other program components and expenses



# U.S. CULTURE

The purpose of this section is to provide information about the United States, its people and its culture.

## LANGUAGE

Although the United States has no official language at the federal level, 30 states have passed legislation making English the official language and it is widely considered to be the *de facto* national language. Spanish has official status in the commonwealth of Puerto Rico and there are several enclaves throughout the country in which Spanish and other languages are the primary spoken languages.

The following is the percent of the total population's native languages in the United States:

- English (82.1%)
- Spanish (10.7%)
- Other Indo-European languages (3.8%)
- Other Asian or Pacific Islander languages (2.7%)
- Other languages (0.7%)

## AMERICAN ENGLISH

Americans speak with many regional accents and often use slang expressions. Even international visitors who are fluent in English can have problems understanding and being understood, particularly Europeans who have studied British English. If someone is speaking too fast or says something that is unclear, do not hesitate to ask them to speak more slowly or to explain more clearly.

## TALKING WITH AMERICANS

Because the United States is a nation of immigrants, international students look as American as students from the United States. U.S. students are very sensitive about differences, and some do not want to risk offending someone by asking an ignorant or insensitive question. For that reason, some U.S. students may feel shy about approaching you. If they do notice that you have a foreign accent, they may be unaccustomed to talking with someone who is not from the United States. They may wait for you to take the initiative to talk with them first. Many Americans may never have met anyone from another country! Although it may seem awkward, you may find that saying hello to someone in your class and explaining that you are a new international student will give you an opportunity to meet Americans.

## **SUPERFICIAL?**

Sometimes international students feel that U.S. students are superficial because they act very friendly but do not wish to build a friendship. Acting friendly is a U.S. custom. It is intended to create positive feelings. Some new international students feel confused when someone they do not know says hello to them on the street. This casual greeting is not intended to encourage a conversation or express a romantic interest. It is just another form of American friendliness.

### **"HI! HOW ARE YOU?"**

This is a common greeting in the United States, but very often the person who asks the question, "How are you?" does not wait for a response. Some international students think this is very rude, but it is not intended to be. It is not customary for the person asking this question to wait for a lengthy answer. It is customary to reply, "Fine" or "Okay." You may also want to ask how the other person is. She or he will most likely answer with the same brief response.



### **JUST SAY NO!**

The freedom of speech to which Americans have become accustomed has established a way of communicating that is sometimes seen as very direct. There is a certain amount of flexibility that Americans have when speaking with each other. Directness while communicating with others is very acceptable and sometimes expected.

In some countries, open rejection or disagreement may be considered rude. This is not the case in the United States. Here it is quite normal to disagree openly.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

The United States was founded by people who valued independence. An independent spirit is still evident in this culture. Many people from the United States believe that they are responsible for their own destinies. Being self-reliant is considered more important than relying on family and friends. Many people from the United States believe that individuals reach maturity at age 18 and should be ready to make independent decisions. Privacy is valued for many of the same reasons. Even among members of a family, issues such as money, marriage, politics, religion, and career decisions may not be discussed out of respect for a person's privacy.

## **RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES**

Many early settlers to the U.S. came seeking religious freedom, and this has been an important principle of the country since its foundation. Today, there are a wide variety of religions that are freely practiced

in the U.S. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2010*, the self-described religious identification of the adult population is as follows:

Affiliation / Identification	Percent of Adult Population
Christian	75 %
Jewish	2.0%
Muslim	0.59%
Buddhist	0.52%
Unitarian/Universalist	0.26%
Hindu	0.26%
Other religions	1.05%
No religion specified	14.97%
Refused to reply to question	5.18%

While Americans generally embrace the varied cultural and religious practices that reflect the nation's diversity, they also value religion as a largely personal matter. Therefore, Americans are not likely to discuss their religious beliefs and practices with strangers or with people whom they do not know very well. One exception to this is during times of major religious holidays and festivals, when people like to share their practices and celebrate in unity. These are opportune times to learn about other religious and cultural practices and share your own heritage with others.

If an individual invites you to join a particular religious organization, service, or religious activity and you do not wish to attend, you may simply say, "No, thank you." You should not feel pressured by anyone to join such a group or event against your wishes. If you do encounter this situation and do feel pressured, you should discuss your feelings with your program implementer and/or your international students' office. On the other hand, you may see this as an opportunity to learn more about the many varied religions found in the U.S.

## FRIENDSHIP

Many people in the United States have a number of friends with whom they share something in common. A U.S. student may consider you a friend, but he or she may invite you to do something only infrequently. This is not because he or she does not like you. It simply means that life in the United States is very busy and U.S. students tend to have many more commitments (work and family, for instance, in addition to their studies) than students in many other countries.

## DATING

When you first start interacting with Americans, it may seem a little awkward in the way they joke with each other and socialize. Someone you meet may find an interest in you, or you may find an interest in him or her.

- If you like someone: Tell him or her that you are interested and ask him or her to have dinner or coffee with you sometime. It is all right to be direct in these cases. Don't worry—even most Americans find the dating process to be difficult. Do not go out alone with someone you've just

met. If someone asks you on a date and you wish to accept, agree to meet in a public area with other people around.

- If you don't like someone: When he or she asks to see you sometime, simply say, "Probably not, but thank you."
- If you want to break things off or if you are not interested in someone who is pressuring you: Tell him or her directly what you want. Don't be afraid to state your mind or else he or she may assume you are still interested. If someone behaves aggressively or threateningly, end the relationship. You do not need to be polite if someone makes you feel pressured or scared.

## DIVERSITY IN AMERICA

Many people in the United States like to think that all people are equal—race, color, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation are unimportant to our value as human beings. Words like "tolerance" and "appreciation" are words that we may use to describe our relationship with people different from ourselves. For this reason, racist and sexist jokes and comments are not tolerated in many social and business settings. In fact, people who make such comments could lose their jobs.

Despite these principles, many inequalities still exist in the United States. You may hear people make negative comments about other groups. You may even experience discrimination because you are an international student. If this happens to you and you wish to talk about it, go to your training provider or academic advisor, or contact the police if you feel threatened. An advisor who is familiar with these issues will try to understand the situation and make some suggestions for dealing with it.

The population of the United States is made up of people from diverse "races," cultures, and places. For Americans, it is important to be aware of attitudes, perceptions, and feelings about various aspects of diversity. Often, different terms can be used to refer to people who are of a certain race or ethnicity. Many American citizens and residents have specific terms that they prefer to use when referring to their race or ethnicity. For example, some Americans of Spanish or Latin-American descent use the term Hispanic when referring to their ethnicity; others from Latin American prefer the terms Latino or Latina. Many citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in Africa prefer to use the term African American. Similarly, some people with origins in Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent prefer the term Asian, Asian American, the appropriate sub-sect of Asian. By recognizing that differences should be valued and appreciated, individuals can be proud of their cultural heritage and uniqueness instead of being ashamed of their differences. Your experience will be enriched by respecting and celebrating the diverse origins of Americans.

The push for gender equality has resulted in the United States has resulted in a great upheaval and revision of its traditional gender roles. Gender and sex discrimination in employment, housing, education, and other areas is against the law. While the legal progress in ensuring gender equality has been impressive, there are still many areas, such as income and political representation, in which equity has not yet been attained. American men and women have the right to an equal opportunity to pursue their life goals.

Some international students are surprised to hear men and women say they are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. There is a growing community of Americans who openly identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender and do not believe that it is necessary to keep this a secret. This community has become more visible and accepted, and people who are part of this population form a respected part of U.S. society. You will most likely have a professor or training provider, classmate, roommate, or friend who

is gay. Remember to treat the people you meet with the same respect and openness that you would expect of them. Greeting people with a welcoming handshake is always appropriate in the U.S.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

In the U.S. the issue of sexual harassment, particularly of men towards women, has become increasingly serious. In the U.S. there are laws that make it illegal and punishable to sexually harass another person. Any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment.

The following actions may be considered sexual harassment, are punishable under U.S. law and may be grounds for disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of your training program:

- Unwanted sexual advances, propositions, or questions.
- Unwelcome touching of a person's body or clothing.
- Standing close or brushing up against a person, or impeding or blocking movement.
- Sexist, lewd or obscene remarks or jokes.
- Sexual gesturing or leering.
- Public displays of suggestive or sexually demeaning objects, photographs, posters, or cartoons.
- Implied or overt threats, or punitive action as the result of rejection of sexual advances or rejection of romantic involvement.
- Harassing somebody with persistent, inappropriate, and unwanted attention, otherwise known as "stalking."
- Sexual assault.

Discrimination and mistreatment of persons on the basis of gender or sexual orientation are also prohibited under many universities' nondiscrimination and equal opportunity policies.

If you think you may be experiencing sexual harassment, you should consult your training provider who will assist you with filing a complaint if necessary. Informal and formal procedures are in place at universities and training provider institutions to deal with the issue of sexual harassment. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality and to protect the rights of both you and the alleged offender.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

### **TELEPHONES**

Telephone numbers in the United States have 10 digits, including a seven-digit set of numbers that is the prime telephone number. Preceding the seven-digit number is the three-digit area code. The area code serves a wide region, often a large part of a state. Most areas require you to dial both the area code and prime telephone number.

### **CELLULAR OR MOBILE PHONES**

Cellular or mobile phones are widely available in the United States, and most mobile phones purchased in other countries will not work in the United States. If you wish to have a cellular phone, it is best to

get one after you arrive. Many types of phones and a number of service providers are available in most places, so investigate to find those that best suit your needs.

There are two main types of mobile phones: those with pre-paid minutes and those which require you to sign a contract. If you are in the United States for a long term program, it may be cheaper to sign a contract.

Pre-paid phones can be purchased from major electronics stores and from most cellular phone carriers. Cellular phones that require contracts should be purchased from the cellular phone carrier.

## **PRE-PAID PHONE CARDS**

You can call internationally for a set rate using a pre-paid phone card. These cards can be purchased at a variety of places including grocery stores, convenience stores, and gas stations. If you have a credit card you can also purchase calling cards on the internet.

## **EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

In most communities in the United States, when you need police, the fire department, or paramedics in an emergency situation, you simply dial “911.” Once you have dialed 911, the operator will ask you what the emergency is, ask for your address, and then summon the appropriate help. Most of the time, the operator will stay on the line and give you support or advice until help arrives. It is very important to call 911 only in an emergency situation, and it is illegal to use it otherwise.

It is very important to write down emergency numbers (fire, police, doctors, paramedics, campus emergency numbers, and so on) and to keep them near your telephone.

## **INTERNET AND E-MAIL SERVICES**

For those attending U.S. colleges and universities you will most likely be assigned a free e-mail address. Generally, U.S. colleges and universities have several computer rooms where you can check your e-mail, use the internet, or use various software programs for free. Because of the popularity of these services, you might have to stand in line to get access to a computer terminal. Usually, it is easier to have access to public computer terminals early in the morning or late in the evening when there are fewer people competing for time on the computers.



If you want internet and e-mail services to be connected to your home computer, there are many possible alternatives. Private computer service companies, local telephone companies, and some television cable companies also offer home internet connections. These private internet suppliers can be more expensive to use, but their services and connection quality might be better. If you are unsure what to do, ask your international student adviser for advice on home internet connections.

There are also a large number of businesses, such as coffee shops, that offer wireless internet access for free or with the purchase of an item.

## TELEMARKETERS

You may get phone calls from people wanting to sell you things or wanting you to give money to a charity. The people who call may ask for your personal information without telling you why they are asking. They may also keep talking without giving you the chance to talk or explaining things that you don't understand. They will also do their best to keep you on the phone as long as possible. This is their job.

What you can do is say, "No, thank you!" and hang up the telephone. Don't stay on the phone any longer once you have said it. If these people come to your door, just say, "No thanks!" and close your door. Don't worry—they are used to it!

## USING THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

### MAILING ADDRESS

Before you leave home, give your correct mailing address in the United States to family and friends who may be writing to you. If you do not know the address of your American residence before you leave home, have letters sent in care of your international student adviser. Inform people of your permanent address as soon as you can.



### POST OFFICES

Every city has a main post office, and larger cities have several full-service branch post offices and small, minimum-service substations, as well. Substations are often located in drugstores or other places of business. Many universities also have substations or other small, minimum-service post offices on campus. These facilities sell stamps and provide basic services like mailing packages to addresses in the United States. Although you may not be able to send a registered letter or mail packages to foreign countries from these small substations, you can go to a full-service post office or branch office to do these things. Regular post office hours are usually from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday, and 8:30 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. on Saturday. Most post offices deliver mail once a day, except on Sundays and federal holidays.

### POSTAL RATES

Postal rates for mailing letters and packages change occasionally and changes are well advertised. Rate sheets can be obtained from local post offices, or you can access the U.S. Postal Service's rates calculator web page at <http://www.usps.gov>. There are a number of options and types of services available.

## BEGGING

It is very possible that sometime during your program, you will have an encounter with a beggar, or someone asking for money who has little or no money of their own. As poor as they may seem, you have the right not to give them anything if you don't want to. If you don't wish to give them anything,

you can say, “Sorry, I don’t have any change” or “No, thanks.” When you have said what you want to say, keep walking. Or, you can give them a small amount of money, some coins if you like.

## **STEREOTYPES**

In addition to problems related to cultural differences in assumptions and values, there is the further complication posed by stereotypes. People normally have in their minds stereotypes about people who are different from them. Stereotypes are based on limited and incomplete experience and information, but they shape people's thoughts and expectations nonetheless. Americans are likely to have some stereotypes of people from other countries, just as you may have stereotypes of Americans. Some common stereotypes for Americans include their independent nature or their outspoken nature, whereas a stereotype of others may be their hospitable nature. Stereotypes may be negative or positive. While stereotypes are sometimes considered broad generalizations, they should not define or be used to characterize any individual. As you meet new people, refrain from resorting to stereotypes. Instead, try to understand and truly get to know the individual. The person you meet may prove to be a life-long friend!

## **CULTURE SHOCK**

Culture shock is often described as the anxiety or uncertainty someone feels when moving to a completely new environment with a culture different from yours. It is associated with the feelings of not knowing what to do or how to do things in your new environment or not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate in that new location, especially if it is very different from the environment you are coming from. Culture shock is normal and almost everyone experiences it to some degree or another. It usually sets in after the first few weeks of coming to a new place and comes on gradually. It can cause physical or emotional discomfort, but many people feel it can also be a time for personal growth and insight of their own cultural values and the new ones they are experiencing. Sometimes people are not aware that they are experiencing culture shock, but understanding it and its symptoms will help you recognize it better and enable you to cope with it better.

### **SOME SYMPTOMS OF CULTURE SHOCK**

- Extreme homesickness
- Irritability, anger, or unwillingness to interact with others
- Loss of a sense of humor
- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy, depression, or helplessness
- Insomnia, sleeping too much or too little, fatigue
- Difficulty with coursework or concentration or inability to solve simple problems
- Developing stereotypes about new culture
- Aches, pains, obsessions, or other physical complaints

### **PHASES OF CULTURE SHOCK**

Not all people go through all stages of culture shock. For some people, one stage lasts longer than another, and many factors contribute to the way a person experiences and copes with it.

- **Phase 1.** This is the period when everything seems new and exciting and you may feel pleased about all that you encounter.
- **Phase 2.** Alienation/cultural fatigue happens when one realizes it may take some effort to adapt to this new culture and one may resent that effort and feel stressed, isolated, tired, or unmotivated.
- **Phase 3.** In the “rejection of the host culture” phase students may feel hostile toward the culture or people of the new culture that is seemingly causing this discomfort and may make generalizations about that culture or its people and how they can possibly live and act as they do. They may withdraw or refuse to use the new language and associate only with people from their own culture or other foreigners and have doubts about why they ever came to this new culture in the first place.
- **Phase 4.** In this phase, understanding and acceptance of elements of the new culture and greater comfort and familiarity with how to do things there begins to happen more often. One experiences greater pleasure and balance, and their sense of humor returns. They even feel satisfaction that they have learned to live in this new environment and that they can do it and even enjoy it. They may come to evaluate their old ways versus the new ones.
- **Phase 5.** Adaptation to the new culture is a phase accompanied by feelings of being comfortable and effective in the new environment, and often there is a new-found respect for, and enjoyment of, cultural differences.
- **Phase 6.** Re-entry shock happens when one returns to his/her own country of origin and finds that things are not the same or seem different. One may go through some of the phases above again, but gradually readjust with new skills and insights. This phase is sometimes not expected but should not be underestimated. Some people feel this more strongly than culture shock itself.

## COPING WITH CULTURE SHOCK

- Keep an open mind and try to accept new things even if they are different from what you are accustomed to.
- Be patient with yourself and others and be careful of trying too hard.
- Be grateful for what you have and the opportunity to learn more.
- Keep your sense of humor and try not to be easily embarrassed.
- Maintain contact with the new culture and new language and get involved in extracurricular, volunteer, or other activities that will help you practice the language, understand the culture, and meet new friends.
- Take advantage of a gymnasium or other physical activities that will keep you active and help you relieve stress.
- Learn meditation or other techniques to promote relaxation and relieve stress.
- Make new friends among other international students and others.
- Treat people as you would like to be treated.
- Realize that missing things about home, your family and your friends is normal, but do not let feelings of sadness overwhelm you.
- Remember that there are people who understand what you are feeling and are there to support you - your international student advisor, your training provider, your mentor, and your classmates. Call them to talk whenever you need to.

## ILLEGAL DRUGS

Recreational drugs, although often illegal, are common in the United States. You may be offered drugs at a party, a night club, or a bar. Common illegal drugs in the United States include marijuana, cocaine, psilocybin mushrooms, ecstasy (MDMA), nitrous oxide, and ketamine.

Some highly addictive drugs, such as cocaine/crack, heroine, and methamphetamine are deadly and can lead to lifelong addictions. Use or possession of illegal drugs can result in your arrest and detention. Be aware that many drugs are made in people's homes and are cut, or mixed, with deadly substances. Remember that if you are offered drugs that are legal or illegal, you always have the right to say no.

## ALCOHOL

Drinking any alcoholic beverages in cars or in public in non-designated areas (on the streets, in parks, and at beaches) is against the law in the U.S. It is also unusual to see Americans drinking alcohol during work hours. The drinking age in the U.S. is 21. Bars, restaurants, and grocery stores will ask to see an identification card with your birth date on it before serving or selling you alcoholic beverages, including wine or beer. Do not risk your scholarship or training program by violating this law. If you are 21 or older, do not buy alcoholic beverages for younger friends, this is also a violation of the law.

## SMOKING

America is moving towards what are called "smoke-free environments." Most buildings are "smoke-free" and it is against the law to smoke in these building. It is safe to assume that smoking is forbidden everywhere, unless indicated otherwise. It is a good idea to always ask if you are permitted to smoke before lighting up. Aside from courtesy, there are fines for smoking in non-smoking areas.

Airline flights within the United States have a non-smoking policy. In most airports, smoking is banned. Many shopping center malls have become smoke-free as well. It is not normally acceptable to smoke in people's homes and it is common for smokers to step outside to smoke. If in doubt, ask your host what she/he prefers.

## CUISINE

Mainstream American culinary arts are similar to those in other Western countries. Wheat is the primary cereal grain. Traditional American cuisine uses ingredients such as turkey, white-tailed deer venison, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, squash, and maple syrup, indigenous foods employed by American Indians and early European settlers. Slow-cooked pork and beef barbecue, crab cakes, potato chips, and chocolate chip cookies are distinctively American styles. Rice, beans, and a wide variety of other vegetables and fruits are typical table items. Vegetarians and vegans will find ample choices in most locations. Most cuisines from around the world can be found in the United States, particularly in larger cities.

Soul food, developed by African slaves, is popular around the South and among many African Americans elsewhere. Syncretic cuisines such as Louisiana Creole, Cajun, and Tex-Mex are regionally important. Iconic American dishes such as apple pie, fried chicken, pizza, hamburgers, and hot dogs derive from the recipes of various immigrants and domestic innovations. So-called French fries, Mexican dishes such as burritos and tacos, and pasta dishes freely adapted from Italian sources are widely consumed.

Americans generally prefer coffee to tea, with more than half the adult population drinking at least one cup a day. Marketing by U.S. industries is largely responsible for making orange juice and milk (now often fat-reduced) ubiquitous breakfast beverages. During the 1980s and 1990s, Americans' caloric intake rose 24%; frequent dining at fast food outlets is associated with what health officials call the American "obesity epidemic." Highly sweetened soft drinks are widely popular; sugared beverages account for 9% of the average American's daily caloric intake.

## GROCERY STORES, MARKETS, RESTAURANTS, AND OTHER EATERIES

There are many types of eateries in the U.S., from fast food establishments and cafeterias, to restaurants and cafes, to large grocery stores and markets. However, since your stipend or allowance must cover many other extra costs, USAID suggests that you budget your money carefully. It is a good idea to look carefully at the menu before eating in a restaurant. If you have any dietary restrictions you should ask before ordering. Some restaurants may add sugar or salt during cooking which might impact your health.



- Grocery stores and markets are prevalent in the United States and offer a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, meats and cheeses, and other staples that you can purchase to prepare your own meals. These stores offer packaged and frozen food as well. In many large cities it is common to find markets that cater to specific cuisines. These are known as international food stores or ethnic markets.
- Many convenience store and drug stores carry packaged and frozen food.
- Restaurants are the most expensive type of eatery, and generally serve breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Fast food establishments and cafeterias will be the least expensive type of eatery, and most are open to serve breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Cafeterias are often found in large office buildings and at most universities.
- Cafes serve lighter meals than restaurants, but can be just as expensive.

If you are part of a university program, you will have a university meal plan that will cover your meals at university cafeterias and other designated locations. Many dormitories have small cooking facilities available in the building or on the floor where students live. Students can prepare some meals for themselves if they choose, depending on how close the dorm is to a market and how well-equipped the kitchen is.

## LAWS

The United States is governed by laws. There are federal laws, state laws and local laws that apply to all individuals living, visiting, or working here. Laws in the United States may be very different from laws in your home country, and when violated, the punishment may be very different from the punishment you might receive back home. If you are unsure if something that you want to do is legal, ask someone.

# GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE OF THE UNITED STATES

The continental U.S. is divided into eight unique regions. The following characteristics are usually associated with each region:

- **Pacific Coast:** The western coastal region is known for its beautiful environment adjacent to the Pacific Ocean. From the Cascade Mountain range and shimmering bays of the north, to Yosemite National Park and Death Valley in the south, the Pacific Coast offers a variety of scenery. Some of the larger cities of this area include Los Angeles, and San Francisco, California; Portland, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. Industries such as computer components, electronic equipment, agriculture, lumber and tourism all help this region maintain economic stability.



- **Mountain States:** Not unlike the other regions of the U.S., the Mountain States differ greatly geographically. The forests, lakes, and Rocky Mountains of the northern states are very different from the Great Plains and deserts in the south. Major cities in the region include Boise, Idaho; Salt Lake City, Utah; Denver, Colorado; and Las Vegas, Nevada. The markets of agriculture, mining, electronics, computers, non-electrical machinery, manufacturing, retail service and tourism are primary industries.

- **Midwest:** This area of the U.S. encompasses not only rolling hills of the plains states, but the woods and water land of the Great Lakes Region. Cities such as Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Des Moines, Iowa; and Sioux Falls, South Dakota are all within this area. Just as the landscape of the region differs greatly, so does the economy. Agriculture and manufacturing, finance, mining, oil refineries, shipping, export trade employment, auto production and tourism are all characteristic of this region.



- **New England:** The historical north-eastern states add distinct characteristics to the United States. Some of the well-known cities in the area include: Augusta, Maine; Concord, New Hampshire; and Montpelier, Vermont. The Connecticut River divides the states of New Hampshire and Vermont and helps with the transportation of forest industry products. Other industries associated with New England include: textiles, agriculture, industrial and commercial machinery equipment, and tourism.

- **Mid-Atlantic:** In this region, the beauty of the rolling hillsides competes against metropolitan landmarks such as the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and the Empire State Building in New York City. The cities of New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC are all located in the Mid-Atlantic region. Globally, these cities are known for the tremendous influence on political decisions, industrial advancements, and popular culture. Manufacturing, commerce, agriculture, federal government employment, and medical services help maintain the economy as well.



- **Mid-South:** This region is home to the Appalachian and Great Smoky Mountains in the West and to sandy beaches and outer-bank islands scattered along the eastern coast. Well known

cities in the regions include Raleigh, North Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina; and Nashville, Tennessee. The mid-southern region of the U.S. bases its economy on manufactured products such as textiles, tobacco, chemicals, farming, mining, furniture production and tourism.

- **Deep South:** This region is known for “southern hospitality” and remembered as where the Civil War both began and ended. Small agricultural communities are a striking contrast to the booming economies of the larger cities. Such cities as Atlanta, Georgia; Miami and Orlando, Florida; Montgomery, Alabama; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana have all changed the stereotype of the original quiet southern plantations of the south. Recent developments in industries such as agribusiness, textile manufacturing, transportation equipment, mining, forestry, petrochemicals and tourism have shown that the south is prepared to compete in the 21st century.
- **South West:** The Southwestern region has been popularized by old west tales of cowboys and Indians, but many things have changed in the area. The economy of the region has become quite diverse and includes such industries as mining, electronics, fabricated metals, agriculture, oil and natural gas, food products, lumber, scientific technology and tourism. Many large cities have experienced tremendous growth from recent economic developments in the south. Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico have recently become well known cities in the U.S.



## CLIMATE ZONES

The type of climate and weather you will experience on your program in the U.S. depends a great deal on the location of your university. Temperatures vary a lot throughout the U.S. and seven climate zones can be found across the country. Winter brings frequent snowfalls in the northern states, while the South generally remains temperate throughout the year. The Southwest tends to have hot, dry air, whereas the Southeast has hot, humid air. However, to some extent Americans are insulated from the natural weather extremes by their routine use of air-conditioning and heat. Homes, office, cars and buses are generally air-conditioned or heated to maintain 20-22° C (68-72° F). The United States is a very large country and as a result you may encounter, as isolated circumstances, certain weather conditions you would not be familiar with in Europe such as tornados or hurricanes. You will usually be alerted (by email from your university or on a local weather or news channel) if your area may be involved in such a weather pattern and what to do.

## CLIMATE OF 51 SELECTED U.S. CITIES

City	Average monthly temperature (°F)				Precipitation		Snowfall
	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Average annual		Average annual (in.)
					(in.)	(days)	
Albuquerque, New Mexico	35.7	55.6	78.5	57.3	9.47	60	11.0
Anchorage, Alaska	15.8	36.3	58.4	34.1	16.08	115	70.8
Atlanta, Georgia	42.7	61.6	80.0	62.8	50.20	115	2.1
Baltimore, Maryland	32.3	53.2	76.5	55.4	41.94	115	21.5

City	Average monthly temperature (°F)				Precipitation		Snowfall
	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Average annual		Average annual (in.)
					(in.)	(days)	
Billings, Montana	24.0	46.1	72.0	48.1	14.77	96	56.9
Bismarck, North Dakota	10.2	43.3	70.4	45.2	16.84	96	44.3
Boise, Idaho	30.2	50.6	74.7	52.8	12.19	89	20.6
Boston, Massachusetts	29.3	48.3	73.9	54.1	42.53	127	42.8
Burlington, Vermont	18.0	43.5	70.6	47.7	36.05	154	79.3
Casper, Wyoming	22.3	42.7	70.0	45.7	13.03	94	77.8
Charleston, W. Virginia	33.4	54.3	73.9	55.1	44.05	151	34.0
Charlotte, North Carolina	41.7	60.9	80.3	61.7	43.51	112	5.6
Chicago, Illinois	22.0	47.8	73.3	52.1	36.27	125	38.0
Columbia, South Carolina	44.6	63.2	82.0	63.7	48.27	109	1.9
Columbus, Ohio	28.3	52.0	75.1	54.7	38.52	137	28.2
Concord, New Hampshire	20.1	44.6	70.0	47.8	37.60	127	64.5
Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas	44.1	65.0	85.0	67.2	34.73	79	2.6
Denver, Colorado	29.2	47.6	73.4	51.0	15.81	89	60.3
Des Moines, Iowa	20.4	50.6	76.1	52.8	34.72	108	33.3
Detroit, Michigan	24.5	48.1	73.5	51.9	32.89	135	41.3
Hartford, Connecticut	25.7	48.9	73.7	51.9	46.16	128	49.6
Honolulu, Hawaii	73.0	75.6	80.8	80.2	18.29	96	0.0
Indianapolis, Indiana	26.5	52.0	75.4	54.6	40.95	126	23.9
Jackson, Mississippi	45.0	63.4	81.4	64.4	55.95	110	1.0
Kansas City, Missouri	26.9	54.4	78.5	56.8	37.98	104	19.9
Las Vegas, Nevada	47.0	66.0	91.2	68.7	4.49	26	1.2
Little Rock, Arkansas	40.1	61.4	82.4	63.3	50.93	104	5.2
Los Angeles, California	57.1	60.8	69.3	66.9	13.15	35	trace
Louisville, Kentucky	33.0	56.4	78.4	58.5	44.54	124	16.4
Miami, Florida	68.1	75.7	83.7	78.8	58.53	131	trace
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	20.7	45.2	72.0	51.4	34.81	125	47.0
Minneapolis–St. Paul, Minnesota	13.1	46.6	73.2	48.7	29.41	115	49.9
Montgomery, Alabama	46.6	64.3	81.8	65.4	54.77	108	0.4
Nashville, Tennessee	36.8	58.5	79.1	59.9	48.11	119	10.1
Newark, New Jersey	31.3	52.3	77.2	56.4	46.25	122	28.3
New Orleans, Louisiana	52.6	68.2	82.7	70.0	64.16	114	0.2
New York City, New York	32.1	52.5	76.5	56.6	49.69	121	28.6
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	36.7	59.7	82.0	62.0	35.85	83	9.5
Omaha, Nebraska	21.7	51.4	76.7	53.2	30.22	99	30.1
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	32.3	53.1	77.6	57.2	42.05	117	20.8
Phoenix, Arizona	54.2	70.2	92.8	74.6	8.29	36	trace
Portland, Maine	21.7	43.7	68.7	47.7	45.83	129	70.4

City	Average monthly temperature (°F)				Precipitation		Snowfall
	Jan.	April	July	Oct.	Average annual		Average annual (in.)
					(in.)	(days)	
Portland, Oregon	39.9	51.2	68.1	54.3	37.07	153	6.5
Providence, Rhode Island	28.7	48.6	73.3	53.0	46.45	124	36.0
Richmond, Virginia	36.4	57.1	77.9	58.3	43.91	114	13.8
Salt Lake City, Utah	29.2	50.0	77.0	52.5	16.50	91	58.7
Seattle-Tacoma, Washington	40.9	50.2	65.3	52.7	37.07	155	11.4
Sioux Falls, South Dakota	14.0	45.7	73.0	48.0	24.69	98	41.2
Washington, D.C.	34.9	56.1	79.2	58.8	39.35	113	17.1
Wichita, Kansas	30.2	55.3	81.0	58.6	30.38	85	15.9
Wilmington, Delaware	31.5	52.4	76.6	55.8	42.81	117	21.1

## TIME ZONES

There are four time zones in the continental United States: Pacific (on the west coast), Mountain (further inland), Central (in the heartland of the U.S.) and Eastern (on the east coast). Schedules for travel and USAID training programs reference these zones. You can find time-zone maps in the opening pages of most U.S. telephone books. Five additional time zones cover non-contiguous U.S. states (Alaska and Hawaii) and U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands). United States Minor Outlying Islands are outside standard time zones and operate on nautical time.

The U.S. follows a 12-hour time system, rather than the 24-hour system used in Europe. “A.M.” (ante meridian) refers to times before noon; “P.M.” (post meridian) refers to afternoon and evening hours.

## MONEY AND BANKING

### AMERICAN CURRENCY AND DENOMINATIONS

The base currency in the U.S. is the dollar, printed in denominations of \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50 and \$100. Since all bills are roughly the same color and the same size, take your time when you make payments to avoid costly mistakes.

Unlike paper money in the U.S., coin denominations vary in size. However the size of the coin does not determine the value. Denominations are \$0.01, \$0.05, \$0.10, \$0.25 and \$1.00. Images on coins vary depending upon the year they were minted. The following are descriptions of coins commonly in circulation.



U.S. Coin Denominations and Approximate Size				
	Penny	\$0.01 or 1 cent	100 pennies = 1 dollar (\$1.00)	
	Nickel	\$0.05 or 5 cents = 5 pennies	20 nickels = 1 dollar (\$1.00)	
	Dime	\$0.10 or 10 cents = 10 pennies	10 dimes = 1 dollar (\$1.00)	
	Quarter	\$0.25 or 25 cents = 25 pennies	4 quarters = 1 dollar (\$1.00)	
	Dollar	\$1.00 or 100 cents = 100 pennies	1 dollar coin = 1 dollar bill (\$1.00)	

Banks in large cities generally are open from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. Some banks have evening and Saturday hours. All banks close on Sundays and national holidays.

Participants in long-term, U.S.-based training may consider opening a bank account which offers checking with an ATM card (automatic teller machine card). While you may not frequently write checks, most commercial establishments accept ATM cards in lieu of cash. When you use an ATM card, funds for your purchases are deducted directly from your bank account. If you do not have sufficient funds in your account, the bank will not honor your request and will charge an overdraft fee.

Careful use of an ATM card offers the safety of not carrying large sums of cash. Since you use the card as you would cash in your account, do not loan the card to others and be mindful not to lose or misplace it.

You also may use your account to receive funds from your home country. When you open a bank account, carefully review the bank services, requirements and charges with the bank representative, so you will not deplete your funds with bank fees unexpectedly.

## **USING CASH**

For safety and convenience reasons, Americans do not carry a lot of cash. They often pay by check, debit card, or credit card. Note: Some fast food restaurants and taxis may require payment by cash.

## **DEBIT CARDS**

Debit cards are issued by your bank. You can use debit cards to make payments at locations that accept credit cards, but, unlike credit cards, the money is taken directly out of your bank account.

## **CREDIT CARDS**

Credit cards allow you to pay for things without cash or checks, then you pay the credit card company monthly. You are charged interest for any charges you do not pay back that month. If you do not pay the bill in full each month, you may build up considerable debt. Shop around for cards with low interest rates, stay within your budget, and pay your credit card bills in full each month.

## **CASHING CHECKS**

You may be asked to show some documents of personal identification when you pay for something with a check or get cash at your bank from a check. Forms of identification include a passport, driver's license, national or state ID card, or credit card.

## **BANKING SERVICES**

You will need to set up an account at a bank in order to deposit money and write and cash checks. Banks offer a variety of services and charge varying amounts for those services. If you are new to the United States, explain that to the bank representative when you set up an account. Ask him or her to explain the services available to you and to explain terms you may not understand. Ask American friends or colleagues for advice. Ask about checking accounts, savings accounts, bank cards, debit cards, and credit cards. Different banks charge different types of fees, and in different amounts. If you overdraw from your checking account you may be charged a fee. Before selecting a bank and opening an account, make sure that you are aware of any fees that you may be charged, including Automated Teller Machine (ATM) fees.

## **CHECKS DRAWN ON FOREIGN BANKS**

If you deposit a check drawn on a foreign bank in your U.S. checking account, it may take several weeks before the money is credited to your account. A faster method is to have the money wired to your U.S. account.

## **TIPPING AND GRATUITIES**

The term tipping refers to extra money given for service provided. There are some areas in which tipping is always expected:

- Baggage handling in airports – \$1.00 per suitcase.
- Taxis – 10% of the fare.

- Hotel – \$1.00 per suitcase to porters.
- Hair Salon – 15%.
- Restaurants – 15%-20% of the bill when served at the table by a waiter or waitress. Restaurants usually include the tip in the total bill for large groups (6 or more people), in which case no tip is necessary. Check on the bill or ask the waiter if a tip is already included.

## CLOTHING SIZES

The sizes below are meant as a tentative guide. It is always wise to try something on and most stores have dressing rooms, although they may limit how many items you can take to a dressing room at one time. You may want to consider taking a measuring tape and measurements with you of people you will buy presents for.

### WOMEN'S SIZES

Blouses / Dresses		Shoes	
U.S.	Metric	U.S.	Metric
5-6	34-36	5	35
7-8	37-38	6	36
9-10	39-40	7	37
11-12	41-42	8	38
13-14	43-44	9	39
15-16	46	10	40
17-18	48	11	41
19-20	50+		

### MEN'S SIZES

Suits / Coats		Shoes	
U.S.	Metric	U.S.	Metric
36	46	6	39
38	48	7	40
40	50	8	41
42	52	9	42
44	54	10	43
46	56	11	44

## ELECTRICITY

Electrical power is standard across the U.S. and set at 110 volts, 60 cycles, with 220 volts used only for large home appliances such as refrigerators, washers and dryers. Standard electric plugs have two flat blades. Plugs on newer appliances have a third round grounding pin. Most homes and offices have electrical outlets which accommodate either type of plug.



For electrical appliances such as razors and hair dryers, you may need a plug adapter for the receptacle and a current transformer to convert power to the necessary voltage. It may be more convenient to purchase hair dryers, curling irons and other grooming appliances in the U.S., since they are available in most cities for about \$10-\$20.

Please note that most televisions (N.T.S.C.) and many electric clocks and timers sold in the U.S. may not work in your home country, even with a power convertor.

## TEMPERATURES, WEIGHTS AND DISTANCES

Few Americans use weights and measurements in metric terms.

Temperature*	
Fahrenheit (F)	Celsius (C)
23°	-5°
32°	0°
41°	5°
50°	10°
68°	20°
77°	25°
90°	32°
95°	35°
104°	40°
212°	100°
* F = 9/5 C + 32°	

Weight	
U.S. Pounds	Metric
2.2 pounds (lb.)	1 kilogram (kg)

Distance	
U.S. Measure	Metric
12 inches = 1 foot	30.48 centimeters
3 feet = 1 yard	91.44 centimeters
1 mile	1.6 kilometers

## U.S. HOLIDAYS

### NEW YEAR'S DAY – JANUARY 1

Beginning on the evening of December 31, Americans celebrate the new year.

### BIRTHDAY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. – THIRD MONDAY IN JANUARY

This holiday celebrates the life of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a leader of the U.S. civil rights movement.

### PRESIDENT'S DAY – THIRD MONDAY OF FEBRUARY

This is a day to remember past U.S. presidents George Washington, the first U.S. president, and Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president who led the country during the Civil War and is credited with abolishing slavery. Both were born in this month.

### MEMORIAL DAY – LAST MONDAY IN MAY

This holiday is a time when Americans remember all of those who died in war for the United States.

## **INDEPENDENCE DAY – JULY 4**

On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence, a document the United States used to declare its independence from England, was signed. Americans celebrate this holiday with picnics and fireworks.

## **LABOR DAY – FIRST MONDAY IN SEPTEMBER**

This holiday recognizes the efforts of American workers.

## **COLUMBUS DAY – SECOND MONDAY IN OCTOBER**

Celebrated since 1792 in New York City, honors Christopher Columbus, who landed on Haiti (which at the time was part of the Arawak Islands and belonged to the Taino people) on October 12, 1492.

## **VETERANS DAY – NOVEMBER 11**

Also known as Armistice Day, and (although rarely in the U.S.) occasionally called "Remembrance Day," 'Veterans Day' is the American name for the international holiday which commemorates the signing of the Armistice ending World War I. In the United States, the holiday honors all veterans of the United States Armed Forces, whether or not they have served in a conflict.

## **THANKSGIVING DAY – LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER**

According to legend, the first European settlers of the United States gave thanks for their first harvest season by eating a feast with Native Americans. This is a traditional time for families and friends to eat a large dinner together.

## **CHRISTMAS DAY – DECEMBER 25**

This holiday, at one time a traditionally Christian one, is now a time for most people to exchange gifts, decorate homes, and attend gatherings and parties for the few weeks preceding December 25.



# ACADEMICS, TRAINING, AND THE UNITED STATES CLASSROOM

Educational systems vary from country to country. Here are some things you need to know about academic life in the U.S.

In many cultures, there is a great difference in status between students and teachers. For example, students may be expected to listen quietly, not questioning what the teacher says. In the United States, it is acceptable and usually expected for students to ask questions and discuss topics with each other and the teacher. During the first class meeting, your instructor will most likely give you a syllabus, which lists when and how he or she can be reached. If you have a problem with the material presented in class, it is expected that you will see the instructor during office hours and ask for help. The syllabus also tells when assignments are due. Dress is informal in U.S. classrooms. Smoking is not permitted in classrooms or in university offices. Some instructors permit students to have food and beverages in the classroom.

## METHODS OF TEACHING

The way a course is taught is often the result of an instructor's preference. However, the course content, the academic level of the student, and the number of students enrolled in a class are also determinants of the method by which the material is presented.

Some courses may be taught using lecture or lecture-discussion methods. The lecture method, in which an instructor relates the material to a silent but note-taking group of students for the entire class session, is used less and less frequently. It has developed into the lecture-discussion style in which the instructor pauses frequently in his or her presentation of the course material so that the students may comment on or question that portion of the material. Often teachers assign certain topics for discussion during the class period, the actual lecturing is reduced to a minimum.

The seminar method is another method of teaching. In this method, the material is studied in greater depth, students are usually required to do some research, and some of the discussion time is given to an analysis of student and scholarly theory and opinion.

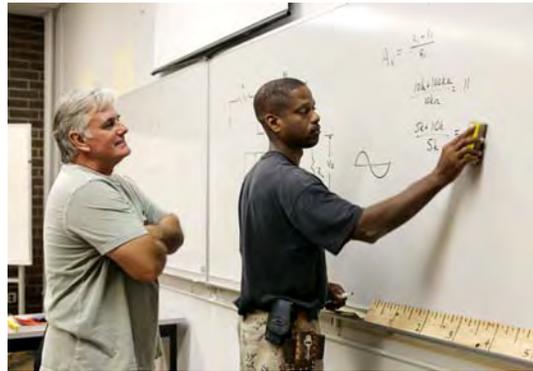
A structured exercises and facilitated group discussion may also be a part of your education or training. Structured exercises push everyone to reflect, focus, offer ideas and insights, and become engaged in learning. They offer a range of opportunities for participation and discussion, practicing skills, and involving learners who have a range of learning styles and capabilities. Facilitated group discussion is a participant-centered, interactive form of education where learners share their knowledge, problems, and experiences with other group members while discussing specific topics.

The teaching methods listed above are just a few examples of a great many approaches that may be utilized throughout your program. Be prepared as best as you can and ask for help if and when you need it.

## PARTICIPATION

You are expected to talk in class. How often? A good rule to follow is to raise your hand to ask a question or to make a comment when appropriate. If a professor calls on you to answer a question, you should say something—you could even say that you do not know the answer. In most classes, it is okay to give a wrong answer.

Some professors include class participation as part of the final grade for the course. In addition, students are encouraged to visit their professors after class to discuss course material which needs further clarification, to clarify a poor grade on a test, or to request tutorial assistance.



## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Sometimes, students in the U.S. get into trouble for what is called "cheating" or "plagiarism." "Cheating" means getting help that a student is not supposed to get on an assignment, quiz, or examination. "Plagiarism" refers specifically to the practice of copying from a book or other publication and not acknowledging in your own paper that the words or ideas used are someone else's.

In general, students in the U.S. academic system are expected to do their own academic work without getting excessive assistance from other people. This does not mean that you cannot ask other students to help with class work. It is permissible and, sometimes even advisable, to seek help, outside of class, in understanding what is happening in a class and what a specific assignment is about. Things which are not permissible and, indeed, are classified as cheating include: copying other students' assignments, copying other students' answers to examination questions, taking notes or books to an examination and secretly referring to them for assistance to answering examination questions, and using an author's work without citing your source through the use of footnotes or endnotes.

## MISSING CLASS

You are expected to go to class on time, to notify your teacher ahead of time if you will be absent, and to participate in class discussions. It is better to be late to class than to skip a class. If you must miss class because of illness, you may need a doctor's excuse, especially if you have a long illness and you must miss several classes. Ask your instructors for their policies on missing class. Those policies may also be included in the syllabus.

If you are feeling stressed about your course work:

- **Continue to go to class.** Attendance records are kept for many classes. The biggest mistake that international students can make in the classroom is to stop attending class because they feel overwhelmed. This will make your situation even more difficult.

- **See your instructor** Many instructors complain that although they have office hours, none of their students visit them. You don't have to wait until you feel overwhelmed.
- **Hire a tutor.** Some departments, residence halls, and businesses offer tutoring services. If you need help with writing, you can ask someone to tutor you or attempt to find a professional tutor for a fee. Sometimes a classmate or friend will tutor you for free.
- **Take time to enjoy your life.** International students often feel a great deal of pressure to succeed or excel in classes. However, it is not possible to succeed if you feel too much stress or anxiety. Try to spend time meeting new friends and enjoying sports, movies, and other activities.

## LANGUAGE ISSUES

Please also note that many U.S. universities have special classes in English writing, etc. for all students (not just international students) that you may want to consider and some have special services where other students assist you with your report writing skills in a way that does not violate the university honor code.

Participants in long-term study may consider taking classes in English to become familiar with American writing style as well as conversation.



# PRE-DEPARTURE LOGISTICS

## PASSPORT

Your passport must be current and valid for six months beyond the end of your training program. If you do not have a passport, or you need to renew your existing passport, allow a minimum of 60 days before your travel date to receive the new document.

## EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA AND TRANSIT VISAS

As discussed in the Conditions of Sponsorship for U.S.-based training, you must obtain and use a J-1 visa for entry into the United States. Please allow a minimum of 60 days for obtaining a J-1 visa. If you have more than one visa in your passport, including a business or tourist visa for the U.S. please be sure to mention that you are using your J-1 visa when you go before the Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. port of entry.



The consular officer at the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country will seal your immigration documents in an envelope attached to your passport, which you must not open. Only the Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. port of entry may open this envelope. You can review requirements for [U.S. Exchange Visitor visas](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#24) at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1267.html#24](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#24).

Often, a visa will only be issued for a period of one year, even though the DS 2019 form is for a longer period. This does not mean you will be out of status after one year. The I-94 card you receive on entry to the U.S. will be stamped to show duration of stay (D/S) meaning your stay in the U.S. is legal as long as you have a valid DS 2019 form. If you travel home during your program, you should arrange with the USAID Mission to visit the Consul to obtain a new visa stamp.

## PERSONAL DOCUMENTS

For participants traveling to the U.S., you also must carry on your person and have ready access to the following documents:

- Passport with Form DS 2019
- Letter of acceptance into your USAID-sponsored program
- Documents and correspondence related to your training

- Name and contact information of your program implementer and the organization or university where you will receive training

Before departure from your country, your program implementer will provide a leaflet listing telephone numbers of people to contact for assistance upon arrival. Keep the leaflet in your passport so you will have it if needed.

It is good practice to make copies of important documents, such as airline tickets, credit cards, and the first few pages of your passport including J-1 visa stamp, and third-country and transit visas. Keep copies in a safe place, separate from the original documents. Leave copies of travel documents with someone in your home country. Should you lose the originals, it is easier to cancel or replace them when you have copies.

## FUNDS FOR EXPENSES DURING TRANSIT

Prior to travel, arrange to have sufficient funds to cover expenses during the trip. At your bank or USAID Mission, verify the rate of exchange between your country and the country of training. If you are uncertain in which country to convert funds, ask your program implementer whether it is advisable to exchange currency in your country or upon arrival at your destination.



Plan also to have cash on hand to cover costs for taxi cabs, bus fares, gratuities for airport porters and restaurant servers, or other incidental expenses. Most international airports offer currency exchange, however it may be more convenient to convert a small amount of cash while in your home country. For travel to the U.S., plan to bring a minimum of \$100 to \$150 in cash.

## AIRLINE REGULATIONS AND AIRPORT CHECK-IN

While procedures for passenger travel vary with the airline and country, the following are universal standards for international flights.

- Confirm flight arrangements with the airlines at least 72 hours before departure.
- Advise the airlines of dietary restrictions at least one week before departure, so they may respond to your request. If you have diarrhea, do not get on the plane, particularly if it is a very long flight.
- Arrive at the appropriate airline check-in counter at least three hours before departure to ensure you have adequate time to check baggage, secure boarding passes, and clear security.
- Select your seat at check-in before you receive your boarding passes. You also may request your seat when your program implementer secures your flight. A window seat offers an exterior view of your departure, arrival and flight path. An aisle seat enables you to leave your seat more easily, when allowed by the flight attendant.
- If you miss your international or connecting flight, notify your program implementer immediately so they may modify your itinerary.

## CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

On international and domestic flights in most countries, you may bring one piece of small luggage or “carry-on” on board with you. The bag must fit under your seat or in the overhead bin. The standard maximum dimensions for carry-on baggage are 55cm x 35cm x 22cm (22in x 19in x 9in) or a total of 112cm (45in). Standard weights for carry-on luggage vary from 5kg to 22kg (11lbs to 50lbs).

Each airline has its own requirements and may change its policies at any time without notice. Do not assume that your flight will have sufficient onboard storage space to accommodate the carry-on baggage for all passengers. In some cases the airline may not allow the maximum baggage on board, and may require passengers to check the bags they planned to carry on.

In most situations, you may carry-on a small bag, in addition to small personal items, which include:

- Briefcase, portfolio or backpack
- Handbag or purse
- Laptop (in a carrying case)
- Small book-bag or tote
- Umbrella
- Walking cane
- Small camera in its case
- Overcoat or blanket
- Small amount of reading material

Note that in some cases a briefcase may count as one carry-on bag, while an average sized woman's purse will count as a personal item.

In some circumstances you may carry one bag of photographic equipment, in addition to one carry-on and one personal item. The camera bag must comply with the airline's carry-on restrictions for size and weight. Verify with your airline that you may carry-on your camera bag as an additional personal item.

<b>Checklist of Items to Bring from Home</b>	
	Important addresses and phone numbers in your country of training and home country
	Information on your training site in the U.S.
	Information on the U.S. (received in USAID Mission orientation)
	Important papers and records (see below)
	Clothing appropriate for climate and activities at training site
	Medications, extra pair of eyeglasses or extra contact lenses
	Items for physical comfort during travel, such as toothpaste, soap, loose clothing on plane, cologne, hand cream, reading material
	Replaceable photos of family, friends, home country
	Camera (bring proof of purchase)
	Voltage adapter for electric devices, as needed
	Small souvenirs from home to offer as gifts
<b>Items to Carry on your Person</b>	
	Passport with visas
	Training-related documents, including health insurance
	Inoculation records
	Names and telephone numbers of person to contact upon arrival
	Valuables, such as your camera (leave valuable jewelry and non-replaceable items at home)
	Money belt, or some secure method of carrying cash and traveler's checks
<b>Items to Pack in Your Carry-On Bag</b>	
	Medications prescribed by your doctor (in original prescription bottles)
	Medical and dental records
	School records
	Extra passport photos
	Inventory of all items in carry-on and checked luggage
<b>Considerations for Participants in Long-Term Training</b>	
	Medical prescriptions, translated into the language of the country of training
	Register to obtain absentee ballots for elections which occur during travel
	Set up power of attorney, or someone to manage home affairs during travel

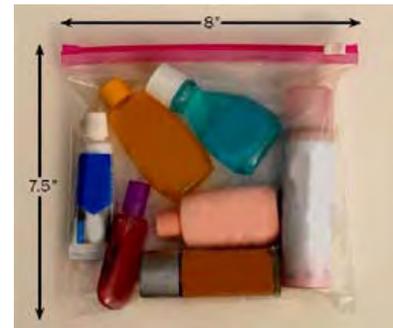
Security screening equipment may damage undeveloped film. If your camera uses film, request hand inspection of the film at the security checkpoint. Remove the undeveloped film from the canister and pack it in a clear plastic bag to facilitate inspection.

Security screening equipment will not affect digital cameras and electronic image storage cards.

During your flight, attendants will inform you which appliances may be used inside the aircraft. Certain devices interfere with electronic aviation systems and may not be used during flight. Mobile phones must remain completely turned off during your entire flight.

## LIQUIDS AND MEDICATIONS IN CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

Each passenger may carry one, clear, quart-sized zip-top bag containing bottles of 100ml (3.4-oz) or less of liquids, including, gels and creams, aerosols, roll-on deodorants, drinks of all kinds, foams of all kinds, liquid lipsticks (such as lip gloss), liquid mascara, liquid/solid mixtures, lotions, oils, pastes, perfumes, toothpaste and products of similar consistency. Each zip-top bag must pass security screening. If you are uncertain of the size or volume of your liquids, pack them in your checked luggage. Visit the U.S. Transportation Security Administration for [restriction updates](http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm): <http://www.tsa.gov/311/index.shtm>.



You may bring all prescription and over-the-counter medications (liquids, gels and aerosols) including petroleum jelly, eye drops and saline solution for medical purposes.

If during your flight you will need medications, baby formula and food, or breast milk in excess of 100ml, declare these items separately at the security inspection checkpoint.

To find details on allowances for [Travelers with Disabilities and Medical Conditions](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1059.shtm), visit the U.S. Transportation Security Administration at [http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial\\_1059.shtm](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1059.shtm).

## DUTY-FREE PURCHASES

Due to security restrictions on the size and volume of liquids allowed in carry-on baggage, airport vendors and shops must place all duty-free items in special sealed, tamper-evident bags, in order for purchases to pass through security checkpoints. This regulation applies to all countries which implement restrictions on liquids in carry-on bags, including the European Union, Iceland, Norway, Singapore, and Australia.

Please note that you can purchase water to bring with you on the plane if it is available after passing the last security checkpoint. If you wish to purchase liquids, gels or aerosols in a duty-free zone, make your purchase either in the airport or on the plane during the last leg of your journey. You must not open your purchase. Keep it properly sealed, with the receipt showing the date and purchase location.

For further details on regulations affecting passengers traveling to and from the U.S. on direct and connecting flights, and to avoid the risk of having to abandon your liquid, gel or aerosol duty-free items

at a security checkpoint, visit the U.S. Transportation Security Administration at [Duty-Free Travel Information](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/duty_free_travel_alert.shtm), [http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/duty\\_free\\_travel\\_alert.shtm](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/assistant/duty_free_travel_alert.shtm).

## **CHECKED LUGGAGE**

Luggage not hand-carried onto the airplane will travel in the airplane's baggage compartment. Place in these larger suitcases everything you do not need to use during your flight, your interview with customs officials, or on route to lodging at your destination.

The luggage guidelines below summarize specific baggage allowances from a variety of airlines. Check with your airline for current restrictions on the number and weight of bags you may check, before you will be charged fees for overweight or excess baggage. You are responsible for baggage fees, therefore plan to have enough cash on hand to cover these and other expenses on route to your training.

For travel to the U.S., most airlines allow two suitcases no larger than 158cm/62.2in each (total length, width and height). Each bag usually must not weigh more than 20kg/44lbs for economy class tickets.

You incur a luggage fee based on the weight of your bags. Verify weight allowances and overweight fees with your airline so you will not be surprised.

Many airlines originating within the U.S. now charge fees for all checked luggage. Costs range from \$15 to more than \$35 varying by airline for the first two bags checked in (the preferred limit), and higher amounts for certain additional baggage. Verify allowances and fees with the airlines providing flights within the U.S. which connect to your destination.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR BAGGAGE**

Never leave your luggage, attaché or handbag unattended in any public place. Attach to each item a name tag or business card along with the temporary airline tag. Include on the tag you name, address, telephone and email address in both your home country and at your destination. Place the same information and a copy of your itinerary inside your luggage on top of the contents, so officials may identify them in the event the exterior tags are lost. Please note that in most cases your luggage must be unlocked so it can be checked by security officers. If you do lock your luggage, it is highly recommended that you use a Transportation Security Administration-approved lock.

If prior to your departure you do not have the address at your destination, use the contact information for your program implementer: mark the label "to the attention of," followed by the name of your program implementer, their address, phone number and email address.

Remember to confirm that your luggage is checked through from your home country to your final destination. If you must retrieve your luggage before your destination (for a change of flights or for customs clearance), ask where you claim it and what procedures you need to follow.

Upon arrival at your first airport in the U.S., you must claim your baggage to go through U.S. Customs inspection, even if it is checked through to your final destination. Once you clear customs, you may recheck your luggage at the transit desk if you have an ongoing flight.

Keep baggage claim tickets in a safe place. You will need them to locate your luggage if it is delayed or lost.

## **DAMAGED OR LOST LUGGAGE**

All airlines are responsible for lost or damaged luggage. Most airlines offer reimbursement for damaged luggage. To ensure your reimbursement, notify the agent in the baggage claim area immediately, then file a claim or report before you leave the airport.

Lost luggage usually arrives on the next flight if you have transferred planes. Most claims and reports take from a few days to several weeks to process. In most cases airlines will deliver lost luggage to you at your final destination at no cost. If you arrived at U.S. Customs inspection without your luggage you will have to return to the nearest airport to claim it.

Please advise your program implementer if your luggage was lost or damaged so they may help you.

## **AIRPORT SAFETY**

In any city in the world there are people who are friendly and happy to help; and there are those who may try to take advantage of you. For your safety, do not accept things from others and watch your bags until you hand them to the airline check-in attendant.

## **RANDOM BAGGAGE SEARCHES**

All carry-on luggage and checked baggage is x-rayed and possibly searched. It is a normal and customary part of the security process to conduct random baggage searches. This security procedure applies to everyone in an airport; however travelers who are not citizens of the departure, transit or destination country are more likely to be searched. Cooperate with security officials should they request that you open your luggage.

## **BODY SEARCHES**

Airport security officials may conduct random body searches using an electronic device they wave over you, or in some cases by using a machine that x-rays the entire body. Make certain to remove metal items, such as belts, watches and jewelry. In some cases a security officer, of the same gender as you, may conduct a body search using their hands, or ask you to remove your shoes for inspection. Citizens of all countries may be searched.



## **DISTRACTION**

The world's airports are full of people carrying cash, travelers' checks, credit cards, passports and other valuable. As a result, airports may be active places for thieves. Keep track of your possessions, particularly while you focus on checking in, boarding, getting your bags, finding a restroom, buying food or water, or other activity. Be alert to anyone who suspiciously tries to distract you by asking directions, knocking over your coffee, reaching under a bathroom stall, or other attention-getting gestures. Remain aware of your surroundings to ensure safe and pleasant travel.



Since you will be responsible for your own laundry, minimize items which require dry-cleaning. Plan how you will launder your wardrobe. Neat clothing and proper hygiene are important factors of the training environment.

## **VOLTAGE ADAPTERS FOR ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Be certain to bring voltage adapters for electronic devices such as razors and device chargers which may not run on the electrical current of the U.S. or elsewhere.

## **SPECIAL PERSONAL ITEMS**

Consider bringing a few photographs of your family, your favorite music or other personal items to help make your temporary accommodations feel like home. Do not bring sentimental items which cannot be replaced.

## **WHAT NOT TO BRING**

Thoughtful packing of your luggage will better ensure that you pass security screening with few delays.

## **FOOD FOR PERSONAL USE**

Many fruits, vegetables and most meats, poultry, fish (whether fresh, dried or canned), plants and seeds are either prohibited from entering the U.S. or require a phytosanitary certificate from the country of origin. Bakery items, candy, chocolate, cured cheese and dairy items may be admissible. Every food item must be declared to customs and border protection officers, and must be presented for inspection. Failure to declare food products can result in a \$10,000 fine.

## **SHARP ITEMS**

Do not place sharp items in your carry-on bag. If you need to bring sharp items, such as scissors or razor blades not in a cartridge, be certain they are sheathed or wrapped carefully to prevent injury to inspectors and pack them in your checked luggage.

## **SPORTING GOODS**

Do not attempt to hand-carry potentially dangerous sports items, such as golf clubs, ski poles or baseball bats. If you must bring sporting goods, pack them in your checked luggage and prepare to review them with security inspectors.

You must not bring weaponry, illegal drugs, fireworks, flammable liquids or hazardous materials of any kind.

## **HEAVY OR BULKY ITEMS**

During long-term training programs, you may be responsible for items required for daily living, such as bath towels, bed linens and pillows. It usually is more practical to purchase heavy and bulky items in the country of training, rather than paying overweight baggage fees to ship them. Some programs provide a

small allowance for on-site purchase of basic necessities. Speak with your program implementer about any questions that you have.

## **ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES**

Please maintain communication with your program implementer, so that you both have the latest updates on your arrival location and time.

Some participants may arrive at other ports of entry on route to their training site. Should you need assistance with onward travel, please seek an airline attendant during the flight, or the traveler's aid station in your transit airport.



### **UNITED STATES CUSTOMS: WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOU ARRIVE**

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) regulates who and what may enter the United States. On a typical day, CBP welcomes more than 1.1 million international travelers at air, land and sea ports. CBP officers use the latest technologies and procedures to ensure travelers have a pleasant and efficient experience entering the U.S. Nonetheless, security protocol is rigorous and may involve waiting lines and many questions. Remember to be patient and honest; these are usual and customary procedures.

#### ***CBP FORM I-94***

During your flight, an attendant will distribute [CBP Form I-94](#) (white form), the arrival-departure record for non-immigrant visitors with a U.S. entry visa. The form asks for your contact and passport information, and where in the U.S. you will stay. Complete both the arrival and departure sections of the form, and keep them ready for customs inspection. Make a photocopy of the stamped I-94. Make absolutely sure that you turn in the second half of the I-94 to airline or security personnel when you depart the U.S.

#### ***CBP FORM 6059B***

Flight attendants also will distribute [CBP Form 6059B](#), your declaration of potentially prohibited items (such as plants and foods) and gifts you would like to bring into the U.S. and their monetary value. The customs officer will determine disposition of all items. If the total cost of goods or purchases exceeds an exempted limit, the customs officer will assess duty fees as appropriate.

If you do not understand a form, ask a flight attendant for assistance.

Upon arrival, airline or airport personnel will direct you to customs inspection. Look for the lane designated for non-U.S. citizens. A CBP official will review your passport, J-1 visa, I-94 and DS-2019 forms. (Your program implementer provides the DS-2019 in advance of your J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.) These documents prove you meet Immigration and Naturalization (INS) regulations.

Immigration and customs officers ask routine questions about your visit to the U.S, including why you are here, where you will visit and how long you will stay. You must be prepared to understand and respond in English. It is important to tell the CBP officer that you are a USAID-sponsored student or exchange visitor. Have your USAID program correspondence on hand to document your response. Remember that a polite, respectful attitude is helpful, and that the immigration officer will be making the final determination about your entry into the U.S.

When your immigration inspection is complete, the CBP officer will stamp your passport and customs declaration. The officer will keep the arrival portion of your Form I-94, and return the customs declaration and departure portion of Form I-94, along with your passport. The I-94 now shows your immigration classification and how long you may stay in the U.S. Do not lose the departure portion!

Please note you may not go to Canada or Mexico, your home country, or any country and return to the U.S. without the proper prior authorization. Regardless of why you are traveling, your DS 2019 form must be signed in the section on the form for “travel validation.” Many missions will not permit travel except to and from the home country and will not approve “vacation” travel other than a return to your home country to visit family. Contact your program implementer before any travel which is not part of your training.

Know and understand the limitations of your J-1 visa and protect your ability to enter or reenter the U.S. by following the proper procedures in a timely fashion. Keep Form I-94 and your passport on you at all times until you depart the U.S. It is your responsibility to submit your I-94 departure form to CBP officials at the end of your visit to the U.S.

## **MISSING FORMS OR INADEQUATE VERIFICATION**

If the inspector cannot easily verify your information or you do not have all the required documentation, a CBP officer may escort you to a “secondary inspection” area, where CPB personnel will conduct additional research to verify your information. It is usual and customary to conduct secondary inspections away from the primary waiting lines so that individual cases do not cause delays for other arriving passengers.

Please have readily available the name and phone number of your program implementer and other persons responsible for your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, in case CBP officials need to verify your participation. In the event you arrive during non-business hours (evenings, weekends, holidays), have an additional phone number where CBP officials can reach these persons during non-business hours.

## **CUSTOMS DECLARATION AND INSPECTION**

After your immigration inspection, collect your luggage from the baggage claim area and proceed to the customs desk. In most airports, you may use luggage carts to move your bags. Be prepared with small change (dollar bills or quarters) to pay for luggage cart rental if free carts are not available.

At the customs desk, the CBP officer will request your passport, along with customs declaration form 6059B, which you completed during your flight before landing. Remember that security checks are random and be prepared to open your bags.

## ARRIVAL BY LAND OR SEA

Should you enter the U.S. by land CBP officials will provide the I-94 Arrival-Departure Record and the 6059B Customs Declaration at the port of entry. If you do not understand a form, ask the CBP officer for assistance.

The entry procedures for land and sea are similar to those for arrival by air. A CBP official will review your I-94 and 6059B forms, along with your passport, J-1 visa and DS-2019 form. Your program implementer provides the DS-2019 in advance of your J-1 Exchange Visitor visa.

Please have readily available the name and phone number of your program implementer and other persons responsible for your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program, in case CBP officials need to verify your participation. In the event you arrive during non-business hours (evenings, weekends, holidays), have an additional phone number where CBP officials can reach these persons.

## GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Your program implementer may arrange ground transportation for you, and provide details before you depart for the U.S. Please keep transportation information with your travel documents.

Should you need to arrange transportation when you arrive, consult the airport ground transportation information desk for assistance. While airport shuttle vans or buses generally cost less than private taxis, fees will vary with the city and the distance you need to travel.

Taxi cabs generally are more expensive than van or bus service; however they are available at every airport. Many taxis will transport more than one passenger, allowing you to divide the cost and gratuity or tip (generally 10 percent of the total fare). In this case, the fee for a taxi may not be more expensive than a bus or van. Ask the ground transportation assistant about the kinds of services available and the approximate rates to your destination. Always verify the estimated fare before entering a taxi. Note the driver's license number and taxi company name, if you believe you have been overcharged.

If you must pay for ground transportation, remember to keep your receipts so you can be reimbursed for the expense.

## PORTERS AND LUGGAGE CARTS

Porters will carry luggage to your ground transportation for a minimal fee—usually \$1.00 per suitcase. If you prefer to use an airport luggage cart, be prepared with small change (dollar bills or quarters) to rent a cart in the baggage claim area, if no free carts are available.





# IN CONCLUSION

The citizens of the United States welcome you to America and wish you the best as you experience living and learning here. In fact, we are *thrilled* that you are here! We hope that your visit will enrich your life and result in even greater opportunities for you when you return home.

Through this guide, we have attempted to provide you with some of the basic information that you will need in order to ensure that your time in the United States is the best that it possibly can be. Please use this guide as a reference before, during, and after your program. Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to cover *all* of the information that you will need throughout the course of your visit. You will pick up many other pieces of information while you are here. Please do not hesitate to ask your program implementer, USAID contact person, and others any questions that you may have.

Remember that the experience you have will depend, in part, on you! We encourage you to work hard and pay attention during your classes, develop friendships with Americans, and make the most of your time while you are here.