Student Handbook

PAX - Program of Academic Exchange

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

PAX maintains a 24-hour, 365-day per year answering service for after business hours emergencies. Any PAX participant (host family, student, school administrator, or coordinator) may call the national office at our regular toll-free number **1.800.555.6211**. After hours, the caller receives instructions to access the emergency response system.

The number to call for emergencies in which the police, fire department, or an ambulance are immediately required is 911.

Dear Student,

Your high school year in America with PAX will be a unique cultural and educational experience which you will remember for the rest of your life! You will meet new people, improve your English, learn about what life is really like in the U.S., and most of all, learn more about yourself.

This handbook provides information about your role and responsibilities as an exchange student. It also describes some practical information which will be helpful. Reading this handbook will help you know what to expect, so that your year as an exchange student will be a successful experience.

Of course, we cannot cover every topic and every question you have. Every host family, school, and community placement is different. Every student has a different experience. Use this guide as part of your preparation. The details which you need to know about your host community will be provided upon your arrival.

As an exchange student, you will be an ambassador for your country. You should expect a lot of questions about your home country. We encourage you to exchange viewpoints and discuss the similarities and differences between your country and the U.S. Cultures are different. This does not mean one culture is better than another. The differences are what help us to learn and grow and see the world in a new way.

The PAX team is dedicated to providing quality educational exchange programs for our students and their host families. During your stay, you will have the full support of a community coordinator as well as the support of our national office. We are always here to help you.

Have a happy and successful year!

Sincerely,

Bradley Smith
President & CEO

United States Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20522

January 30, 2026

Dear Secondary School Student:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the beginning of an exciting adventures in your life. During your time in the United States, you will obtain an American high school education and experience life as part of an American family. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime, get lots of practice in speaking English, and partake in family traditions. Since 1949, thousands of students from around the world have come to share their language, culture, and customs with their American host families, American schools, and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

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

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program
(J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program or need assistance of any kind while you are here, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials and identification card, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Add this phone number to your contact list.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov. Please add the helpline number and the email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

We are pleased that you made the decision to study in the United States and hope you enjoy your stay.

Sincerely,

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange

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AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1990, PAX is a not-for-profit organization committed to global education and exchange opportunities for students, host families, schools, and communities to open doors, embrace cultures, and become family. A network of community coordinators throughout the U.S. along with sending organizations from around the world support PAX in the fulfillment of this mission.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMS

PAX is honored to administer two U.S. Department of State (USDOS) programs with funding provided by the U.S. Government. Known as "FLEX" and "YES," these two USDOS Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs programs are presented below.

Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program

In 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, America reached out to the Newly Independent States in the form of the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program, which provides scholarships for high school students from Eurasia to spend one academic year in the United States. In recent years, the FLEX program has expanded and now includes new countries, including countries in central and eastern Europe and the Balkans, in addition to Mongolia.

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program was established by Congress in October 2002. The program provides scholarships for high school students from countries of strategic importance around the world to live and study for an academic year in the United States.

PAX KEY PLAYERS

PAX Partner Abroad ("sending organization")

PAX works in partnership with sending organizations from around the world. In the case of FLEX and YES, these sending organizations are through American Councils for International Education.

PAX Community Coordinator

The national office carefully selects responsible community members to represent PAX at the local level. A PAX community coordinator must have good judgment, solid interpersonal and communication skills, and a real fondness for teenagers.

PAX National Office

The program is headquartered in New York. Experienced, full-time staff manage the program by providing leadership, direction, and support to PAX community coordinators in towns across the U.S.

Important Web Addresses

Track/Submit Volunteer Hours: pax.org/volunteers

Submit Visitor Request: pax.org/visitor-request

Obtain Travel Approval: pax.org/travel-request

Review High-Risk Activities: pax.org/high-risk

THE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

PAX PRESS NEWSPAPER

From here on, this handbook will speak to many different aspects of your exchange experience. These include the adjustment cycle, making friends, getting involved at school and in the community, sharing special events with your host family, volunteering, and much more. We hope you will revisit these pages throughout your time in the U.S. to help guide you through the experience.

We also hope you will consider sharing your experience with the PAX community. You can do this through our newspaper *PAX Press*. Document your exchange experience with photos, videos, reflective essays, poems, songs, drawings…whatever! Then, send to paxpress@pax.org–we're always collecting stories. Wondering what type of things have been shared in the past? Visit pax.org/newspaper to peruse more than a dozen years' worth of issues. And with that, let's consider your expectations ahead of this important experience in America.

EXPECTATIONS

You already have ideas about what to expect from your year in the United States. Many of your expectations come from American television and movies, or perhaps from a vacation or pictures you have seen.

These images probably do not represent an accurate picture of life in the United States. For example, a common assumption made by people from other countries is that most Americans are wealthy. In reality, most Americans are hardworking people who belong to the "middle class." Most live in comfortable but modest homes.

Think about your expectations. Do you think they represent everyday life in America? As an exchange student, you will discover the true American lifestyle by living everyday life over the course of a semester or school year. You will be disappointed if you think the U.S. is like glamorous movies or TV shows. It is better to be open minded and to appreciate the unique experience that only you will have.

Good Advice

- Be flexible and adaptable. Keep a positive attitude even if you find your situation to be very different from what you expected.
- From the location to the family to the school, each exchange experience is different. The best way to be a successful exchange student is to focus on your own experience and avoid comparing it to others'.
- The best way to enjoy school and to make friends is to get involved right away. Most schools have many clubs and teams from which you can choose.
- Remember that this is not a travel or vacation program. You have come to the U.S. to live with a family and attend school.

CULTURE SHOCK

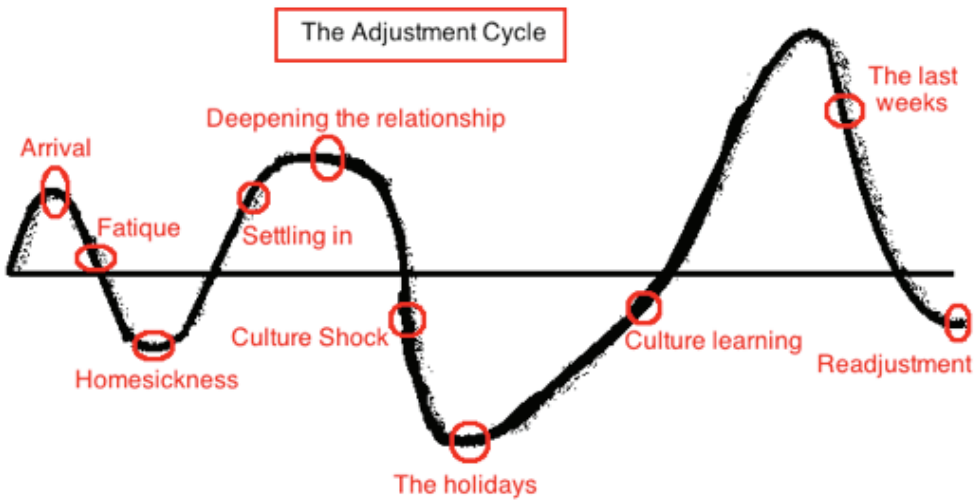
You have probably traveled as a tourist to a new and different place. Everything was exciting and fascinating, and after a short time, you went home with your nice memories. Now, you will be living for five or ten months in another country with a different language, culture, school, family, diet, climate, and friends. All of your familiar surroundings will be replaced. It is possible that you will experience what is known as "culture shock."

"Culture shock" is common and natural. It is a reaction: excitement, frustration, or anxiety to new and unfamiliar surroundings. Everyone reacts in different ways and on different timelines, but students often experience four predictable cycles or phases.

THE CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

Phase 1 Excitement and curiosity prevail as everything is new and interesting. You arrive full of adventure and ready to adapt to anything. This can be referred to as the "honeymoon stage."

Phase 2 Reality begins to set in. The excitement of arrival has been replaced by the routine of daily life. You may feel homesick or lonely. Characterized by a defensive attitude, you may become critical of your host country and think that everything is better back in your home country.



Source: Bettina Hansel, *The Exchange Student Survival Kit,* Boston, Intercultural Press, 2007.

Phase 3 You begin to succeed in adjusting to your new culture. Instead of being critical, a sense of humor returns, and you are once again genuinely interested in the country and the people. While these phases come at different times for each participant, it is important to note that many students report a slump in the adjustment cycle around the winter holidays. In some cases, this is due to the fact that their own extended family is also spending more time with one another back home during this time for similar celebrations. If the student's natural family does not typically spend extra time with one another around the time of winter holidays in the U.S., the time off of school along with being reminded of large family gatherings can contribute to feelings of homesickness.

Phase 4 In the fourth stage, anxieties and worries subside, and you not only understand and accept the customs of the new country, but you really enjoy them. When you return home, you might have mixed feelings. There will be a re-adjustment period into your home culture during which you may glorify your life back in the U.S.

Good Advice

If you are feeling lonely or homesick, sad or very tired, during your year in the U.S., look back at this page and see if what you are feeling might be "culture shock." It is perfectly normal. Speak to your host family or PAX community coordinator, and remember, PAX has a strong support network available to help ensure you have a successful program.

10 TIPS FOR BEING A SUCCESSFUL EXCHANGE STUDENT

You will likely experience some cultural adjustment challenges during your time in the U.S. as most exchange students do. Research on intercultural adjustment has identified the following 10 characteristics as proven indicators of success. We recommend that you consider and apply them as tips on how to successfully handle the adjustment challenges you will face in the U.S.

1. **Open-mindedness:** The ability to keep one's opinions flexible and receptive to new stimuli is important to intercultural adjustment.
2. **Sense of humor:** A sense of humor is important, because in another culture there are many things which could lead one to become angry, annoyed, depressed, discouraged, or embarrassed. The ability to laugh in a situation which is less than ideal will help you guard against this.
3. **Ability to cope with failure:** The ability to tolerate failure is critical, because everyone fails at something overseas. Students who go overseas are often those who have been the most successful in their home environments, have rarely experienced failure, and therefore never developed ways of coping with failure.
4. **Communicativeness:** The ability and willingness to communicate one's feelings and thoughts to others, verbally or non-verbally, is a critical skill for successful intercultural communicators.
5. **Flexibility and adaptability:** The ability to respond to or tolerate the ambiguity of new situations is very important to intercultural success. Keeping options open and judgmental behavior to a minimum describes an adaptable or flexible person.
6. **Curiosity:** Curiosity is the demonstrated desire to know about other people, places, ideas, etc. This skill or personality trait is significant for intercultural travelers, because they need to learn many things to adapt to their new environment.
7. **Positive and realistic expectations:** There is a strong correlation between positive expectations for an intercultural experience and successful adjustment overseas. Students must also be realistic about what they expect and what is expected of them on an exchange.
8. **Tolerance for differences:** A sympathy with, or indulgence for, beliefs or practices differing from one's own is beneficial to successful intercultural adjustment.
9. **Positive regard for others:** The ability to express warmth, empathy, respect, and positive regard for other persons is a central component of effective intercultural relations.
10. **A strong sense of self:** A clear, secure feeling about one's self usually yields individuals who are neither weak nor overbearing in their relations with others. Persons with a strong sense of themselves stand up for what they believe but do not need to cling to those beliefs.

PAX PLUS & VOLUNTEERING

PAX PLUS means exactly what it sounds like–going above and beyond as an exchange student, especially through community engagement projects like volunteering. The benefits of volunteering your time to help others are enormous to both you and your community. The right match can help you find friends, make you feel closer to your community, and keep busy while combatting culture shock–not to mention the many important skills you can develop: leadership, project management, and teamwork to name a few.

As you may also know, volunteering plays an important role in American society. As such, all PAX students are highly encouraged to participate in at least two related activities at specific points in the year: a cultural presentation in November and a volunteer project in April. As scholarship recipients, PAX's FLEX and YES students are also expected to volunteer at least 30 hours. All other PAX students are highly encouraged to follow the FLEX/YES lead and dedicate themselves to logging 30 volunteer hours.

Share Your Culture Presentations

All students are expected to give at least one cultural presentation during their exchange year. As part of a coordinated effort, students are encouraged to present about their home country or culture during the third week of November (or as close to that week as possible). This is a great way to give back to the American community that has welcomed you. Many students present for their high school classmates, but younger students, senior citizens, community groups, etc. are also common audiences.

As you prepare, think about what is truly unique about your culture (the music, food, stories, clothing, language, history, etc.) and how you might best share that. Will you create a PowerPoint presentation? Did you bring any physical objects you might be able to share? Ever tried your hand at cooking a national dish? Many presentations are fun and simple, but depending on how sophisticated your audience is, maybe you want to present important social, economic, political, linguistic, or historical aspects of your culture. Cultural performances (singing, dancing, etc.) also go over well for audiences of all ages. For a bit of motivation, check out some past cultural presentation recaps at pax.org/tag/culture-sharing.

April Volunteer Projects
In the spirt of "PAX PLUS," all PAX students–regardless of program or country of origin–are expected to participate in an April volunteer project. PAX reminders will focus on the final weekend of April, but feel free to complete your activity as near to those dates as possible.

As the end of April is late in the program year, you might think of the April volunteer project as the culminating volunteer event of your exchange program. As you begin thinking about what you will do, check out pax.org/tag/volunteering to see what type of activities PAX students have done throughout the years. Of course, we'll be sure to share more information as it gets closer to April.

Earn Volunteer Award
As previously noted, PAX's FLEX and YES students are expected to volunteer at least 30 hours. Meanwhile, PAX students not on the FLEX and YES programs can earn a PAX PLUS certificate for reaching that same number of hours (30). Regardless of what program you are on, if you go way above and beyond (100 hours or more), your efforts will be recognized with a special certificate. At the end of the program year, PAX awards these certificates to students who have properly logged the qualifying hours on PAX Volunteers (and had them approved by their PAX community coordinator) by April 15.

Tracking and Submitting Volunteer Hours
The process students use to track and submit volunteer hours is entirely online using the PAX Volunteers system accessible at pax.org/volunteers. Students can log in using their PAX ID (e.g. FSA00126) and date of birth. Once logged in, students can easily submit and track their volunteer activities and reflections. The complete student guide can be found at pax.org/volunteers/help/students.

RESPONSIBILITIES
Being an exchange student is not unlike being a member of a family. It comes with rewards and with responsibilities. PAX students have many responsibilities: to their host families, to the PAX program, and to the U.S. Government.

One of the cultural differences you may find is the American attitude toward rules. Whether they are government laws, host family rules, PAX rules, or school rules, rules are taken very seriously. Even if you do not agree with some of the rules, you are expected to obey them. They are for your safety.

Below you will find the list of PAX rules which each student agrees to obey. Host families and community coordinators have been informed of these rules. When you arrive, you will learn about your host family's household rules and will discuss those individually with your host family.

PAX PROGRAM RULES
All exchange students are expected to follow these PAX program rules and U.S. laws. Violation of these rules may result in a student Guidance Letter, Probation, or Disqualification from the program. PAX's "Disciplinary Policy" is discussed in greater detail in the section named as such.

1. Students must always remain aware that they are student ambassadors representing their home country and the PAX program. Exchange students are held to a higher standard of behavior than other teenagers and should take care to maintain a positive reputation in their host community. Students must behave responsibly and be honest and respectful in their actions and communications with others.
2. Students should act as a member of the host family by following host family rules, helping with family chores, and voluntarily participating in family activities. Students should prioritize interaction with family members during time spent at home and minimize time spent on the computer or internet. Students must not go out or invite guests to the host family home without permission from the host parents. Students must not speak negatively about their host family or discuss their host family's private affairs with anyone (whether in person or on the internet) other than a PAX representative or school guidance counselor.
3. Students must follow PAX guidance regarding public health issues. Students must receive an updated influenza vaccine during the program year if requested by the host family, host school, or PAX staff. As with all vaccines taken while on program, the costs associated will be borne by the student and natural family.
4. Students must follow school rules, attend school daily, complete all school assignments, and maintain at least a "C" grade in each class at all times. Students are expected to enroll in at least four academic courses per term, including one course in English or American Literature and one course in American History, Government, Sociology, or Economics.

5. Students are not permitted to travel outside the local area either alone or with other teenagers. Overnight travel with the host family, an approved school group, or a responsible adult chaperone is allowed if the student submits a Travel Request Form and receives written permission from the PAX national office. Program travel policies may be updated periodically and can be found online at pax.org/travel-request. Students are responsible for knowing and following these policies at all times.
6. Hitchhiking or soliciting a ride from a stranger is prohibited. Students are not permitted to ride in a car with a teenage driver without the permission of the host parents.
7. Students are not allowed to make life-altering decisions during the program year, including marriage, religious conversion, or entering into any contractual agreement. Students are also not allowed to make permanent or drastic changes in their personal appearance, including tattoos or body piercings.
8. Students may not be employed during the program year. The only exceptions are occasional jobs in the neighborhood, such as yard work or shoveling snow.
9. PAX discourages natural family visits prior to the end of the student's stay. No visits to or from the student's natural family or friends are permitted before March 1. Approved visits should be no more than four days (unless at the very end of the program, after school is out). The natural family should not stay in the host family home and students should not miss school. For more information, visit pax.org/visitor-request.
10. Students may not return home for a visit during the program year. In the case of the sudden death of a natural family member, the student may request permission to return home for up to two weeks and then return to the program.
11. PAX students must return home within two weeks of the student's last day of classes or by June 30, whichever is earlier. YES and FLEX scholarship students must return home based on YES and FLEX program requirements. Students who fail to depart the U.S. when instructed by PAX will be in violation of their visa and reported to immigration authorities.
12. Students' personal property is neither the responsibility of PAX nor the host family. Students should not keep large amounts of cash in their possession or at the host family home. Students should not establish a joint bank account or cell phone contract with the host family. Students should not borrow money from the host family and should not lend the host family money for any reason.
13. Students must behave responsibly and appropriately when using the internet. Students should not send or post inappropriate pictures, offensive comments or materials, sexual content, or negative comments or complaints about others by email, text message (SMS), social networking sites or apps, blogs, or other websites. Students who post or share information or media showing behavior that violates PAX rules may be dismissed from the program. Students may also be subject to prosecution for any violation of law.
14. Students are not permitted to change host families or schools without the approval of the PAX national office. Students should not attempt to arrange a host family or school change on their own.
15. Students are not permitted to participate in skydiving, hang gliding, bungee jumping, parasailing, water skiing, scuba diving, whitewater rafting (rapids rated above Class III), mountaineering, rock climbing, spelunking, hunting, boxing, combat sports, or any other dangerous activities including those found on the official list of PAX High-Risk Activities. Students are not allowed to drive nor ride as a passenger on a motorcycle, dirt bike, motor scooter, electric scooter, electric bike, ATV, UTV, snowmobile, Jet Ski, or private airplane.
16. Students are not allowed to handle a gun or any kind of firearm. Students are not allowed to handle a bow and arrow, except while participating in an archery class or club under the guidance of an authorized school instructor.
17. Students are expected to refrain from sexual intercourse while on the program. Students are not allowed to visit sex-related businesses or view pornographic websites or materials.
18. Students are expected to obey all local, state, and federal laws. The following are U.S. laws and therefore are PAX program rules as well:
    a. It is against the law for anyone under 21 years of age to purchase or possess tobacco products.
    b. It is against the law for persons under 21 years of age to purchase or consume alcohol.
    c. It is against the law to purchase, possess, or consume illegal drugs.
19. Regardless of student age or state law, students are not permitted to smoke or vape any substance while on program. Students are also not allowed to purchase, possess, or use tobacco, marijuana, or vaping materials during the program year.
20. Students are not permitted to drive a car, motorcycle, or any other motorized vehicle. There are no exceptions to this rule. If the student is enrolled in a driver's education program, the student may not participate in the driving portion of the class.
21. Students must follow the instructions of PAX staff at all times. Students should respond promptly to communications from their community coordinator and PAX staff.

YOUR HOST FAMILY

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION

It is not easy to find good host families. A host family is a kind and generous family, willing to accept a stranger into their home for five or ten months. Families make a big commitment when they agree to host an exchange student. In return, you should be a responsible and courteous member of the household at all times.

Why do families agree to host? Partly because they are adventurous people; they like teenagers; they are interested in learning about your culture; and they look forward to a wonderful learning experience. But mostly, families host because they are caring people who wish to share their home and family life and culture with you.

In return, your family hopes you will be enthusiastic about their life and grateful for their kindness. Let them know that you appreciate their efforts. If they cook a special meal, respond by saying "how delicious!" If they show you a special place or cultural site, show your interest.

It is your responsibility to express appreciation for what has been done for you. Always say, "Thank you!" A silent reaction is discouraging to the family, and they may decide it is not worth it to do special things for you in the future.

If the family invites you to participate in an activity with them, you should accept. This is part of your homestay experience.

Good Advice

- PAX host families are volunteers, meaning they are not paid for hosting. They host because they want to share their daily life with an exchange student.
- Be sure to show your family a cooperative attitude, enthusiasm for their efforts, and a warm and appreciative response.
- You cannot say "thank you" too often.
- Try your best to fit in and be positive.
- Do not expect special trips and vacations.

HOST SIBLINGS

Host brothers and sisters can look forward to having a special relationship with a new sibling. This friendship, however, may need time to develop and grow. At times, your siblings might feel jealous or resentful about the extra attention their parents or the friends you have in common give to you. This is normal. Imagine how it would feel to be in the same situation. Pay special attention to your host brother or host sister's feelings, and try to develop a good relationship with them. If you end up not having a very close relationship with your host sibling, that is ok. That said, you do need to remain respectful of one another.

HELPING OUT

As an exchange student, you will become a member of your host family. You will not be a guest. Do not expect special treatment!

Americans are busy people. Often both parents work at jobs outside the home. This means that the entire family must share the tasks of running the household. You will be expected to do the same chores as your host sibling(s) and host parents. Most families work out a schedule and assign chores to each family member.

Good Advice

- Help with simple chores like cooking and cleaning.
- Volunteer to do a chore that hasn't been assigned to you. For example, if you know that your host parent has been meaning to wash the car or mow the lawn, offer to do it together.
- Limit time spent texting or on social media and prioritize time spent together with your family–even if it's something as small as chatting for a while after dinner or joining them in the living room to watch a show or game.

10 TIPS FOR FITTING IN

Always remember, it is your responsibility to adapt to your host family and school. They cannot be expected to change their daily routine, traditions, and other ways of living to accommodate you. As you try to adapt to your host family's lifestyle, it helps to remain flexible and observant. Here are some tips for fitting in:

1. Keep your room and bathroom neat and clean.
2. Be on time for meals. Ask permission to miss or arrive late at a meal. Know whether or not it is your job to make your own lunch to take to school. Some families expect you to prepare your own breakfast too.
3. Be courageous in trying new foods, and don't expect to be provided specialty items that are halal, kosher, or organic. When your host family is eating together, eat what your family eats. Do not cook a separate meal for yourself or order food delivery. Whether or not you like a particular food, be polite at all times. Check if bringing food or drinks in your bedroom is allowed.
4. Be considerate: talk to your family about your plans; ask permission to bring a friend to the house; talk about chores and rules; ask whether your plans are convenient for the family.
5. Show respect for others' values, beliefs, and behaviors. Tell your family about yourself and your culture.
6. Join in your family's activities. Cleaning the car or helping prepare a birthday cake are ways to become a real family member.
7. Use good manners. Americans feel it is important to use words such as "please" and "thank you." Say "thank you" often.
8. Do something special for your host family; give an occasional small gift of appreciation. You could cook a special meal, bring home some flowers, or buy someone's favorite chocolate bar.
9. Communicate. If you have a question, problem, don't understand something, or are unhappy, talk with your family.
10. Laugh at your mistakes. You will find people very willing to help you!

Remember, it will take time to adjust. It is okay to be shy at first, but make an effort to fit in and be part of your host family's life. Also keep in mind that your family will be just as nervous for you to like them. Cultural sharing is a two-way street.

HOST FAMILY RULES

PAX program rule number two states that you must follow host family rules. It is your responsibility to follow this rule at all times. Many family rules are spoken. "No television until your homework is done," might be one such rule. Some families try to keep rules to a minimum by saying, "Be honest; give your best effort in school; and always call home whenever you will be late."

Many house rules, however, are unspoken rules that are rarely talked about or written down. One example might be, "If a bedroom door is closed, that means a person needs some private, quiet time." Other unspoken family rules may be about where to put the mail each day or which is Dad's favorite chair for TV. Make a note of your host family household routine. Observe the schedule and the relationship of the host family members. Respect their privacy and possessions.

It is likely that the host family will ask you to complete the Worksheet for Living Together within a few days of arrival. This will cover the following topics.

- Pets (inside or outdoors, who feeds them what and when)
- Laundry (where is dirty laundry kept, how often is laundry done, who does it)
- Bathroom etiquette
- Personal hygiene (taking a shower every day and wearing clean clothes)

- House and garage doors (locked or unlocked)
- Expressions of appreciation and thanks
- Expressions of disagreement
- Refrigerator rules
- Punctuality in the family
- Private property (off limits) compared to what can be shared by all in the home
- Rules for entertaining friends
- The meaning of closed bedroom and bathroom doors
- Chores
- Mealtimes
- Curfew
- Dating
- Bedtime
- Computer and TV rules

It is important to note that host families will expect to know where you are, who you are with, and when you will return at all times. This is a basic courtesy which all family members show one another. Your host family has accepted responsibility for you, and in return, it is your responsibility to follow this rule.

Many students have more freedom at home than they do in the U.S. Some American families might be socially conservative in comparison to families in your country, and all American host families feel responsible for the safety of their PAX student. Especially at the beginning, your host family may have strict rules. If you gain their trust, they will know what to expect from you.

If you face a problem, don't let it become a big one! It's so important to keep the lines of communication open at all times. This cannot be stressed enough. If small aggravations are ignored, they can become big problems later; if small problems are left to fester, they will turn into major resentments. Try not to let this happen.

SOLVING PROBLEMS

No exchange year is perfect. Almost all students have some problems during the year. Some problems take care of themselves. Some just go away. But usually, it takes work to solve a problem. This is part of growing and learning.

To solve a problem, you have to talk about it. That said, the first step is to take some time and think how you will approach the situation. We recommend not to try to solve the problem when you or the host family is upset. Give yourself and your host family time to "cool down" and reflect on recent incidents (if any) that could be at the root of the problem.

The next step is to sit down with your host family, and discuss the problem. It can be very helpful to start your conversation by saying, "I am sorry" even if you feel the fault is not yours. You are apologizing for the situation; you are not admitting guilt. Such an approach creates grounds for open communication and reduces tension.

Once you apologize for the situation, do not be afraid to speak openly and honestly (but calmly). Remember, little problems will become big problems if you don't talk about them in the beginning.

If you do not think you can talk to your host family, you should call your community coordinator. Your coordinator will talk to you about your problem and help you think of possible solutions.

With any problem, there are some things you can do that will help and others that will not. Here are some "DOs" and "DON'Ts" for solving problems.

DO speak up, and tell someone about your problem. Depending on the situation, this can be your community coordinator, your host family, or the PAX national office. You can also use your guidance counselor at school for advice.

DON'T hide the problem. If you do, no one can help you!

DO talk with your host family first. Your family will like the fact that you feel enough trust to approach them, and they will be happy to give you advice.

DON'T be afraid that talking about a problem will hurt your family's feelings. If this is done objectively with tact and respect, the host family will be willing to listen.

DO call your community coordinator if you cannot solve the problem on your own, you need more help or advice, or if you are not comfortable talking to your host family.

DON'T wait until it's too late. Your coordinator would rather help you solve a small problem than a big one!

DO use the support network that PAX provides for you. This includes your family, your coordinator, and staff in the national office. PAX is here to help you!

DON'T contact home the minute you have a problem. Your natural family lacks culture-specific context of the U.S. and therefore won't be able to help solve the problem. Using the tools described above, see if you can solve the problem first. You will learn from the experience and avoid needlessly worrying your parents.

"I" MESSAGES

One of the most important communication skills to learn is the use of "I" messages. Begin to use the words "I feel" when talking with your host family. For example, "I feel unappreciated when you forget to thank me for helping you carry in the groceries," is much more effective than, "You never say 'thank you.' You act like I'm your servant."

The "you" statement is a blaming statement and will often start or escalate an argument. An "I" statement just reports feelings and makes it easier for your host family to respond to your concern in a positive way.

Good Advice

- Become familiar with the ways your culture differs from your host family's or friends'. You need to be patient, reflect on what happened, and ask for clarification in order to avoid misunderstandings next time. The root of many issues lies in cultural differences and misinterpretations.
- Understand that there is a chance that your behavior might have confused or bothered the other party as well.
- Be positive and communicate respectfully.

PAX COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

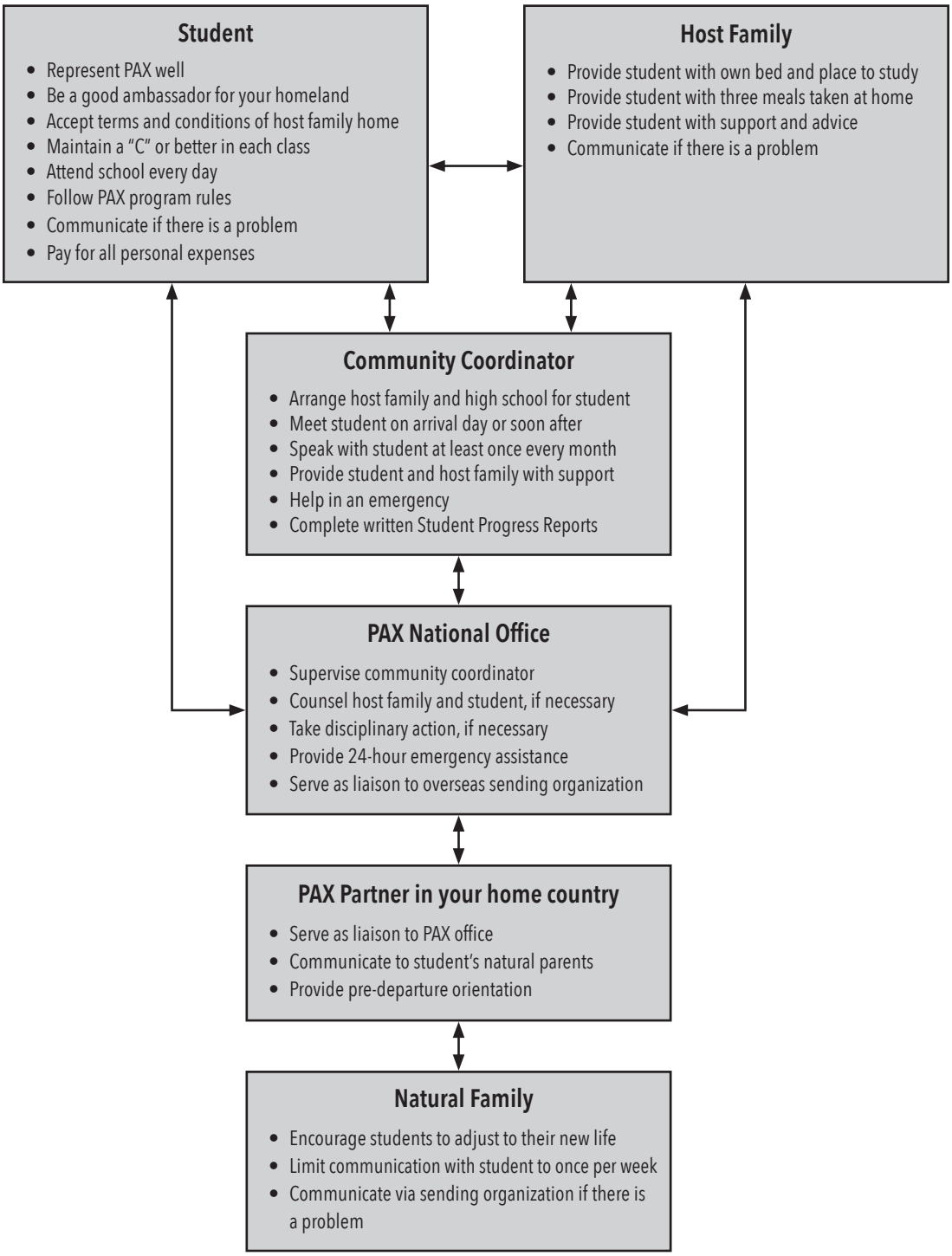
Please, do not call or email home if you have a problem! The PAX program will support you, answer your questions, and help to resolve your concerns. Always talk to your host family first if you have questions or problems. Don't assume that they won't understand or that you will hurt or upset them.

If you don't feel you can talk to your host family, you should call your community coordinator for help and advice. The most common mistake exchange students make is not telephoning the community coordinator with questions and problems. You should not assume that your community coordinator is "best friends" with your host family. Your community coordinator is there, nearby, to help you. If you cannot reach your community coordinator, the PAX national office is available to help. You may call 1.800.555.6211 and ask to

speak with your regional director. Your regional director can answer your questions, help you to solve problems with your school, family, or coordinator, and is in communication with the sending organization in your home country, who will inform your natural family about your concerns.

If you have an emergency, and it is after 5:00 p.m., you can dial the same number (1.800.555.6211) and follow the instructions in the recording to speak to a PAX representative. This is possible 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

THE PROPER CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES



HOST FAMILY CHANGES

The vast majority of student placements in host families are successful. There are cases, however, in which the student must be placed with another family. It is the responsibility of the PAX community coordinator to locate and screen the new family. PAX makes every effort to ensure that students remain in the same school, so that there is limited disruption to the academic portion of the program.

Why do some placements fail? It is normal that problems arise when people live together. With patience, goodwill, and support, these problems can usually be solved. When they cannot, there is no single reason, and usually no one party is at fault. The most common reasons for moving a student include: a poor personality fit, communication breakdowns, sudden changes or extenuating circumstances (illness, relocation, etc.), and unmet expectations.

Remember that students are not permitted to change host families without the approval of the PAX national office. Students should never attempt to arrange a host family change on their own. Only PAX can determine if a host family change is necessary, usually after an attempt is made to address the issues that are causing difficulty in the student's original placement. If it becomes necessary to move to another family, your community coordinator is available for counsel and support.

Welcome Host Families

- Temporary or "welcome" families are those who agree to host a student for a period at the beginning of the exchange experience.
- Welcome host families are common and are vetted the same as permanent host families.
- Students who initially live with a welcome host family can be assured that their high school does not change throughout the program as a result of living with a welcome family.

YOUR COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

Your community coordinator is the local representative of PAX and is part of a network of more than 300 PAX community coordinators across the United States. This is the person who did the work to find a family and school for you and who will help you during your stay in the U.S.

PAX community coordinators are not necessarily fluent in foreign languages, experts on various cultures, or world travelers. Our average coordinator is a busy professional and an active individual. Working with host families and exchange students is something most of our coordinators do in their spare time. They have a desire to meet and work with young people from other countries, help them, and enrich their own lives in the process. They have been selected to represent PAX because of their interest in intercultural learning, their spirit of community activism, and their personal and professional credentials and experience.

Your community coordinator is neither a tour leader nor a travel agent; your coordinator is a friend and advisor. At various times throughout the year, you may call upon your PAX community coordinator for any number of reasons. In addition to serving as liaisons with the PAX national office, coordinators address questions or concerns, offer advice on practical matters, and serve as mediators.

Your coordinator is trained to remain objective at all times and weigh equally the interests of the host family and the student. That being said, it is important to remember that your coordinator's primary role is that of a student advocate.

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

PAX community coordinators take on many responsibilities. They must juggle the various and sometimes conflicting interests of the community, school, host family, PAX national office, U.S. Government, and of course, you–the PAX student!

The coordinator is responsible for:

- Promoting the PAX program within the local community
- Finding appropriate host families, visiting their homes, and conducting host family interviews and reference checks
- Helping to match host families with PAX students
- Securing enrollment at a local high school
- Filing host family and high school documentation with the PAX national office in accordance with U.S. Department of State regulations
- Providing PAX host families and PAX students with orientation meetings to prepare for the exchange year
- Contacting students and host families each month either by phone or in person (The coordinator will contact the student in person within two weeks of his or her arrival. Likewise, once per semester, the coordinator will contact the student and the host family in person.)
- Responding promptly throughout the year to all questions and concerns raised by the school, family, or student–with a personal visit if necessary
- Communicating any and all events, accomplishments, problems, or concerns involving host families, schools, and students to the PAX national office by the next business day
- Finding a permanent host family within the same school district for a PAX student in the event that the original placement does not work out and only after all efforts to keep the first placement from failing have been exhausted

As you can see, PAX coordinators are accountable to a number of parties. When you take into account that most coordinators place three to four PAX students in local homes and sometimes at more than one high school, you can begin to understand how challenging (and rewarding) it can be to be a PAX community coordinator.

For their efforts, coordinators are rewarded with getting to meet, befriend, advise, and counsel young students from around the globe. They also reap the benefits of getting to know their own communities and neighbors a little bit better.

PAX community coordinators receive small stipends for their services. These stipends are intended to defray the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by coordinators for phone calls, mileage, postage, and photocopies.

YOUR HIGH SCHOOL

It is a privilege for a foreign student to be accepted in a U.S. high school. PAX is grateful to the host schools that agree to enroll PAX exchange students and works in close cooperation with them. PAX respects the policies in place at each school and expects each PAX student, as a guest in the school, to do the same. The grade level in which you will be placed will be determined by the high school in which you are enrolled. We understand students from some countries are required to keep up with courses back home and prepare for upcoming home country tests. That said, while on the PAX program, the experience in the U.S. must be prioritized.

CLASSES

Attendance at school is mandatory. You will be expected to show a positive attitude toward school, turn in all assignments, and maintain a "C" or better in each of your classes (and at all times) throughout the program year. In order to maintain a "C" or better, it is important that you are familiar with your school's particular grading scale (e.g. is a 70 a "C"?) and that you monitor your grades throughout the year. Most schools have an online portal where you can check your grades and assignments. Please note that PAX will also need access to your online portal in order to track your progress. If you are making a sincere effort but are still unsuccessful with your grades, contact your community coordinator to discuss arranging for a tutor–either through the school or independently. Maybe, you need a little extra help.

When you get to your U.S. high school, you will be assigned a guidance counselor. It is helpful to get to know this person. He or she will arrange your class schedule in the beginning of the year and help you when you have a school question or problem. Some high schools arrange for a "buddy" to help an exchange student get around during the first few days of school–this is a good question for your guidance counselor. Most schools publish a handbook which gives details about rules, dress codes, holidays, clubs, and activities. You can get this information when you go to register for your classes. You are expected to follow school rules, including those concerning attendance, dress code, cell phone use, AI use, and academic integrity.

You are expected to carry a full course load. Additionally, PAX requires that every student enroll in four "core" academic courses. One course must be in English or American Literature; one course in American History, Government, Sociology, or Economics; and the two others must be academic in nature, such as a science or math course. Electives such as art, music, drama, PE, or business classes are encouraged but do not count as one of the four "core" academic courses.

GRADUATION/DIPLOMA

Many U.S. high schools will not award a diploma to exchange students nor will they permit them to participate in graduation ceremonies. If your high school has such policies, you must accept them and not make any requests for special consideration. Even if you are enrolled as a senior, you may not be invited to participate in graduation ceremonies. Policies affecting exchange students vary from school to school. PAX always respects individual school practices. PAX does not guarantee any applicant a high school diploma. For more information, please refer to the appendix to review the PAX Academic Agreement to which you agreed prior to being accepted into the PAX program.

COURSE CREDIT/CONVALIDATION

Please be aware that coursework which you complete in the U.S. may not be accepted for credit or considered valid when you return home. In order to receive credit, some students need to follow a prescribed procedure or be enrolled in a particular grade. Before you leave home, you are advised to check with the policies in your home country and school. PAX cannot guarantee academic credit for courses you have taken while on the program. Additionally, please be aware that if you need to obtain a transcript or apostille at the end of your program, this is the sole responsibility of you, the student.

FRIENDS, SPORTS, ACTIVITIES

The best way to enjoy school and to make friends is to get involved. Most schools have many clubs and teams from which you can choose. If you are interested in competitive sports, you will have to participate in "tryouts" along with your classmates. Almost all of your friends will come from school, so join clubs, participate, and get involved! You are sure to find an activity that interests you. Don't be afraid to try something new. Pick up a hobby you would have never thought to join at home.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

LANGUAGE

One of the major reasons for coming to the United States is to improve your English. Achieving this goal will take lots of practice. You must be prepared to communicate in English.

In the beginning, speaking English will take a lot of concentration. This is hard work and can be exhausting. Be patient and keep trying. Keep a dictionary handy. Tell people when you do not understand. Try different ways of expressing yourself, and do not give up. Keep practicing, and your hard work will bring rewards.

Good Advice

- Don't spend time speaking your native language to other students from your homeland (including at school and PAX events). Make new American friends and practice your English instead.
- Don't pretend you understand if you don't. Ask the person to repeat and to speak more slowly.
- Don't be embarrassed if you make mistakes. Ask your host family and friends to correct you if you do.

RELIGION

Participation in the host family's religious activities can be an important part of the exchange experience. For some families, religious services and other activities offered by their places of worship are important to their weekly routine. For others, religion is not an important part of their lives. Students are encouraged but not required to attend the host family religious services.

Joining your host family in religious activities can be an opportunity to observe another aspect of American culture. In many areas of the United States, religious institutions are centers not only of religious life, but also of musical, recreational, and social life. When religious beliefs make it impossible for you to attend services with your host family, you are encouraged to take advantage of the many other social activities offered by most U.S. churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, etc. For example in attending a church youth group, you may find a much better opportunity for friendships and social activities than expected.

It is important that you respect your host family's right to their own beliefs. In return, they are expected to respect yours. If you have any concerns about this issue, please contact your community coordinator or the PAX national office.

In case you wish to observe your own religion practices, please ask your host family or local coordinator to help you find an appropriate place of worship. Please be advised that sometimes due to distances to the places of worship or conflicting agendas, your host family or community coordinator won't be able to accommodate your needs.

POLITICS

Political point of views can vary from country to country, from family to family, and from person to person. Often, political issues can create intense debates, especially if there are elections in the U.S. or your home country during your exchange year.

You might be used to discussing politics in everyday conversations in your home country. Be aware that this might not be common among your host family or with your friends. Therefore, you should be mindful about comments that you make about American politics. On the other hand, you might not be used to sharing political views and discussing politics, but politics may be a favorite topic of your host family or host community. Be advised that you may be asked to share your view regarding political events in your home country or to give an opinion about politics in the U.S. It is important to know that if you do not have an opinion or if you are uncomfortable sharing your opinion, you should feel free to decline. However, if you decide to participate in political discussions and share your opinion, make sure that you share your views in a polite way and remain objective when describing your understanding of different political views in your home country.

In addition, be prepared to be asked potentially difficult or awkward questions about your religion, culture, or government. Sometimes you may even feel hurt by the type of question or the generalization about your country. It is always important to think before responding: Where did the perception come from? Where did the questioner get this information? Ask some questions to clarify the issue. When a discussion becomes emotional, pride is involved, listening ceases, and one often feels a moral obligation to "win." Don't be defensive. Rather than saying "You're wrong!" try beginning with, "Yes, but…." Be aware of the level of politeness of your speech. When speaking in English, your speech may be interpreted as more confrontational and impolite than you expect; try to be careful about how you phrase your thoughts.

It is also important to respect the opinions of your host family and friends regarding topics such as sports, arts, hobbies, etc. Some people are very passionate about certain topics. Therefore, you should keep in mind that you should listen politely and respectfully even if you have a different personal view on the matter.

MONEY MATTERS

Student Responsibilities

You will be responsible for budgeting and covering your own expenses. Your pocket money will have to cover the cost of your free time activities (movies, shopping, pizza out with your friends, etc.) and also costs such as telephone calls, toiletries, school supplies, and a cell phone. When it comes to schoolday lunches, if your host family offers food for you to pack a lunch but you prefer not to eat the offered items, you should purchase the school lunch at your own expense.

We suggest that when you leave your home country, you bring enough pocket money with you for one to two months. It may take this long to settle into your host community and find an automated teller machine (ATM) that accepts your card. Students not on the FLEX or YES program are advised to bring spending money in the amount of roughly $400 per month.

You may need a bit more money at the beginning of school for books, supplies, and various "fees," such as technology, lab, and sports fees. Remember that immunizations (except for YES students) and sports physicals are not covered by insurance; the cost of these items is the responsibility of the student. Additional expenses also often come up at the end of the year: school prom, a yearbook, a trip, a gift for your host family, or presents for friends and family at home.

Special Funds for FLEX and YES Students

Funds are available through the FLEX and YES grants to reimburse FLEX and YES students for certain expenses throughout the program. The amount and scope of these reimbursable expenses are limited. Please find full details on PAX's FLEX and YES "Money Matters" handout. The FLEX and YES grants also provide these students with a monthly stipend to be used as spending money. At the beginning of their program, FLEX and YES scholarship students will receive a ReliaCard (reloadable, prepaid debit card issued by U.S. Bank). Each month for the duration of the program, a monthly stipend of $200 will be loaded onto the card. This stipend is to be spent on program. It is not to be used to purchase expensive electronics nor saved to be taken home.

Managing Your Money

While money is important for everyday life, it unfortunately also has the potential to cause tension and problems between friends and family. This includes between you and your friends or host family in the U.S. To avoid any potential unpleasantness in this regard, follow the guidelines in this section related to your finances.

1. Do not borrow or lend money to anyone.
2. Do not keep large sums of money in your suitcase, your room, or on your person.
3. Make sure to pay all bills before you return to your home country.

In terms of replenishing money throughout the year, electronic banking cards ("ATM cards") are very useful, because you can withdraw money from an overseas bank account directly by using an automated teller machine (ATM). Fees for this vary from bank to bank, so look around for the best place in your area to withdraw funds.

As an alternative to an ATM card, prepaid cards (sometimes called "prepaid debit cards" or "prepaid credit cards"), are a useful option and most likely can be purchased in your home country before you arrive in the U.S. The most widely-accepted credit cards in the U.S. include Visa, MasterCard, and American Express–all of which offer prepaid cards.

Unlike a traditional debit card, the money on a prepaid card does not come directly out of a bank account. The user pays in advance to load funds onto a prepaid card, and then uses the money loaded onto the card. In most cases, you can't spend more money than you have already loaded onto your prepaid card. When there is no more money on the prepaid card, your parents or family in your home country can add more, often online. Additionally, prepaid cards can typically be used to get cash at ATMs (as long as there is money on the card). As with an ATM card, expect to pay a fee for using your prepaid card to get cash at the ATM. Finally, there can be an "activation fee" the first time you use the card or similar fees each time the card is reloaded. You will want to consider these fees before deciding to use a prepaid card.

If using an ATM or prepaid card throughout the year is not an option for you, international wire transfers through financial service companies such as Western Union serve as another option. If all else fails, opening a bank account in the U.S. may be an option. That said, student bank accounts should be completely separate. They should not be shared or co-signed with any host family member(s).

PART-TIME JOBS

Exchange students on a J-1 visa are not permitted to be employed while in the U.S. Students may do yard work, shovel snow, walk dogs, and babysit to earn pocket money. Students are not permitted to babysit for their host family nor are they permitted to work in a host family-owned business.

STAYING IN TOUCH

Although in the beginning it may be a challenge, students should limit all forms of communication with natural family and friends back home to no more than once per week. People who have worked with exchange students for many years have observed that communicating with home too often can interfere with your ability to adapt to your host family and school. While telephone calls are a common means of communication, less expensive options are now available. These include Skype, WhatsApp, and Viber–apps which can be downloaded and accessed for free.

Snail Mail

Nowadays, most people use electronic means of communication. If you need to send a letter or package via the regular post, please note that you can buy stamps directly from the post office.

Mailboxes are usually blue and can be found on street corners or at the post office. Check the local post office for hours of operation. When posting a letter to an address in the United States, make sure to use the zip code. Here is an example of the correct way to address an envelope:

The Smith Family
100 Main Street
Boise, ID 24869

Telephone System

Telephone numbers in the United States look like this: (555) 555-5555. Alternatively, they may be written 555-555-5555 or 555.555.5555. Any way you do it, the first three numbers are the "area code." There is no U.S. phone number containing all "5"s. As such, we will use "5" as an example throughout this section.

Making a Local Call from a Home Phone ("Landline")

555 5555 or 1 555 555 5555

Making a Long Distance Call within the U.S. from a Home Phone ("Landline")

1 555 555 5555

Making a Call Anywhere in the U.S. on a Cellular ("Mobile") Phone

555 555 5555 or 1 555 555 5555

Making an International Call from the U.S. on any Phone

International phone calls can be very expensive. As such, you should always first consider using a pre-paid phone card or an app like Skype, WhatsApp, or Viber. To call a different country from the U.S., first dial "011" for an international line ("011" is a specific "exit code" for the U.S.): 011 + (country code) + (city code) + (number). For a complete list of country codes, visit www.countrycode.org.

- To consider a concrete example, the country code for Germany is "49". As such to call Germany from the U.S., you would dial the following: 011 49 555 555555.

That's a lot of numbers, let's break that down.

- 011 (U.S. exit code) 49 (German country code) 555 (Germany city code) 555555 (German phone number)

Calling the Operator from any Phone

For the operator, dial: "0" for local, "01" for international.

Telephone Bills

Students are responsible for any personal bills incurred during the program, including long distance telephone calls charged to the host family's account. If your host family allows you to use their phone to call home or make other long distance calls, you must pay your part of the bill when it arrives each month. At the end of the year, you will need to leave some money for the final bill. Make sure to get your host family's approval before using their phone for long distance calls. Sometimes, the long distance calls through a landline or cell phone are expensive. Calls are less expensive if dialed directly from the United States using a pre-paid phone card. As mentioned earlier, there are several options for international telecommunication (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp, or Viber).

Cellular (Mobile) Phones

You should wait until after you arrive in your host community to set up a cell phone plan so that you can choose a local phone number (one that shares the same "area code" as others in your host community). This allows your host family and friends to call your cell phone without charge from a local landline phone, and will make it easier for some people to contact you. We encourage you to have a U.S. phone number, so your host family and PAX can easily contact you in case of emergency.

There are two options when purchasing a cell phone plan in the United States: no contract (often "prepaid" or "pay as you go") and contract.

- No contract ("prepaid" or "pay as you go"): Pay for call time (credit) in advance, and use it as you make calls. When you run out of credit, you purchase more. Some cell phone providers may offer prepaid flat-fee monthly plans that include unlimited domestic calls, texting, and/or data (internet) for a monthly fee.
- Contract: Requires you to sign a contract for a set term (usually two years) and make monthly payments and receive the same pre-agreed amount of call time (credit) each month until your contract ends. Some plans may have an initial fee to start the contract. Many contract plans will last longer than you will be in the U.S. and ending your contract early will mean paying a significant penalty fee often referred to as an "early termination fee."

We strongly recommend that you choose a "no contract" plan, as these can more easily be changed or cancelled if you find that the plan does not meet your needs or you have to go home early. This type of plan may allow you to use the cell phone that you brought from your home country. Check with your cell phone provider to see if this is an option.

Most cell phone companies will not allow a student under the age of 18 to sign a cell phone contract. Students are not permitted to ask a host parent to sign a cell phone contract on their behalf nor to finance a cell phone purchase using a host parent's name.

When choosing a cell phone provider, one important consideration is how clear your calls will be in your part of the country (often referred to as "reception" or "coverage"). This can vary a great deal, so be sure to ask your host family which cell phone providers have the best coverage for your particular area.

Finally, while it may be tempting to rely entirely on Wi-Fi instead of procuring a plan with cellular data, this is discouraged. Experience shows this can make it very difficult for your host family to arrange plans and rides with you. This can lead to significant frustration. It is also a safety issue should you find yourself in a dangerous situation without the ability to make a call.

COMPUTER, INTERNET, AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

PAX discourages excessive use of social media, as it can interfere with a student's cultural adjustment. Time spent communicating with people in your home country is time lost for making new friends, engaging with your host family, and improving your English.

Use of the internet, whether on the family's computer or on your own laptop or device, is a privilege to be treated with courtesy and respect. PAX encourages host families to be proactive about setting limits on the use of computers and the internet. This includes times of day, number of hours, sites that are off limits, issues of privacy, etc. Talk to your host family, so you can learn and follow rules for using computers, the internet, and mobile devices. A good time to discuss this is soon after your arrival while going through the Worksheet for Living Together. Possible topics might include:

- Which sites you can visit.
- What you are allowed to download.
- What apps you are allowed to use.
- When and where you can use the family computer or your own device (laptop, tablet, or smartphone).
- How long you can be on the computer or on your own device (laptop, tablet, or smartphone) each day.

Finally, many American families utilize safety apps to keep tabs on their children. These family location-sharing apps include Life360 and Find My Friends. Your host family may utilize these or similar apps within the family and wish to add you. As a member of the family for the time you are with your hosts, PAX expects you to cooperate with such wishes.

Bullying/Cyberbullying

Bullying stops us from being who we want to be and prevents us from expressing ourselves freely. It might even make us feel unsafe. Bullying does not only happen at school. It can happen anywhere, including via text messages (SMS), the internet, or social media. Cyberbullying can take the form of an email message or instant message on social networking sites in which someone mocks or threatens you. To avoid cyberbullying, you should protect the sensitive information you post on social sites. You are advised to keep high privacy settings on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social sites. For more information, please visit www.stopbullying.gov and www.stopcyberbullying.org. If for any reason you feel that you are a victim of bullying or cyberbullying, immediately bring the issue to the attention of your host family, coordinator, or guidance counselor. You can also call the PAX national office and emergency line (after hours) at 800.555.6211.

"Sexting"

Sending sexually-revealing photos or video or sexually-explicit messages via text message (SMS) is called "sexting". If anyone involved in this behavior (you, the person in the photo, or the person you are sending the text message to) is a minor (under 18 years old), then this is against the law.

In addition, the following actions may violate U.S. state or federal laws:

- Possession of a sexually explicit image (including photo or video) of a minor.
- Taking a sexually explicit photo or video of a minor.
- Sending a sexually explicit image of a minor (including yourself) to others by email, text message, Instagram, SnapChat, WhatsApp, or any other application.
- Asking or encouraging a minor to take or send sexually explicit photos or video to you or others.

Engaging in any of these actions is a violation of PAX program rules and may result in disciplinary action, including Probation or Disqualification. You may also face disciplinary consequences at school (i.e. Suspension or Expulsion) and/or criminal prosecution.

COMMON SENSE SAFETY TIPS

The following personal information should not be given to anyone without host parent permission:

- Host family member names or addresses
- Home or cell phone numbers
- Credit card numbers
- Name and location of your school

In addition:

- You should not send or post pictures of yourself or other host family members without their permission.
- You should not give out internet passwords to anyone other than your host parents.
- You should never agree to meet in person with anyone that you have "met" on the internet.
- You should never download, install, or copy anything from the internet or disks without asking your host family for permission.
- Never, under any circumstances, are students permitted to visit pornographic sites.

Students must behave responsibly and appropriately when using the internet. Students should not post inappropriate pictures, offensive comments or materials, sexual content, or negative comments or complaints about others on social networking sites or apps, blogs, or other websites. Students who post or share information or media showing behavior that violates PAX rules may be dismissed from the program. Students may also be subject to prosecution for any violation of law. Be cyber smart!

VISITORS

PAX discourages visits to or from natural family and friends from the exchange student's home country. Such visits are potentially disruptive and can leave the student feeling homesick. If your natural family or friends from home plan to visit, the very end of your program (after school is over) is the recommended time. No visits to or from natural family and friends are permitted before March 1, and all visits must be approved by PAX national office staff in advance. Approval is not guaranteed.

Approved visits should be no more than four days (unless at the very end of the program, after school is out). The natural family should not stay in the host family home and students should not miss school. The Visitor Request Form along with the most up-to-date policy governing visitors from the exchange student's home country, can be found at pax.org/visitor-request.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation here in the U.S. (or the lack thereof) is one of the most common challenges many exchange students face. Many PAX students come from fairly urban environments and are used to having buses, taxis, streetcars, or subways available for them to get around.

Moreover, activities and other destinations may be situated more closely to each other at home than in the U.S. where it's not uncommon to drive miles just to get to the supermarket. Add to this the fact that you are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicle while on the program and, as a result, it is likely that you may feel isolated or frustrated having to be dependent on others for rides.

Be advised that what you perceive as a frustration is an accepted way of life for American teens. Perhaps your host family has a bicycle available for short trips. Upon arrival, discuss with your host family how they arrange for everyone to get where they need to go. Be understanding and realistic and look into what other options might be available, such as public transportation or carpooling. Please be aware that PAX students require host family permission to ride with other drivers.

DRIVING

Students are not permitted to drive a car, motorcycle, or any motorized vehicle. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you are enrolled in an accredited driver's education program, you may not participate in the driving portion of the class.

This rule is intended to protect both host families and students against property damage, personal injury, and the possibility of a civil lawsuit. It is also important to remember that PAX students' medical insurance will not cover treatment for injuries resulting from a student's operation of a motor vehicle.

TRAVEL

Exchange students do not come to the U.S. as tourists, and host families are not obligated to show their student other parts of the country. This is not a travel program but a cross-cultural exchange program with the purpose of sharing life with an American family on a day-to-day basis. That said, it should be noted that the U.S. Department of State (the body which regulates exchange visitor programs) encourages travel, so students may experience other parts of the U.S. PAX concurs and encourages students to participate on trips planned by the coordinator, host family, school, church, etc.

Obtaining Travel Approval
PAX is responsible for its students at all times. This includes trips throughout the program year. For this reason, PAX maintains a detailed policy for on-program travel to ensure we are properly informed of all trips and that the necessary approval has been provided for qualifying travel. Please find this travel policy at pax.org/travel-request.

In the policy, you will see that all travel requires PAX approval. Conveniently, on this same webpage (pax.org/travel-request) you will also find complete instructions for submitting your travel requests in addition to links to all necessary forms. We encourage you to get your requests in as early as possible. For domestic travel, the Travel Request Form must be submitted at least two weeks in advance. For international travel, the Travel Request Form must be submitted at least one month in advance.

Please note that travel policy changes are at the discretion of PAX and the most up-to-date information can always be found at pax.org/travel-request.

Cannot Be Approved
If the proposed on-program travel meets one of the below criteria, it unfortunately cannot be approved. Note that not all possible scenarios are covered here and final approval of any travel request is at the sole discretion of PAX. As ever, the most up-to-date information can be found at pax.org/travel-request.

- International travel without host parents
- Travel with chaperone under 25 years of age
- Female student traveling alone overnight with a male chaperone
- Non-Fast-Pass travel without proper advance notice
- Trips involving a visit with natural family or friends from home country before March 1
- International travel to a country or area designated under U.S. Department of State (USDOS) Travel Advisories as "Level 4 - Do Not Travel" (Travel to countries that carry a Level 2 or Level 3 Travel Advisory require permission from the student's natural parents and (for FLEX and YES students) USDOS.)

PAX understands that last-minute trips happen and will try to accommodate them as best possible. That said if less than the requested lead time is given, PAX cannot guarantee the trip will be approved in time.

International Travel
International trips involve steps not necessary when traveling within the U.S. Students must get their multiple entry DS-2019 forms signed. Unless the original form is validated (signed by the proper authority), exchange students may not be able to re-enter the U.S. on the way back. Additionally, some countries maintain policies specific to minors traveling without their natural parents. For full details on international travel during the program year, please visit pax.org/travel-request and follow the corresponding hyperlink.

Unauthorized Independent Travel
If a student engages in unauthorized independent travel (travel without approval from PAX), the student will be considered off program. This means the student will be reported to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, marked in violation of his or her visa, no longer covered by program insurance, and responsible for any future plans or travel.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY
PAX maintains a discipline policy, and a discipline committee is in place to review cases and enforce PAX rules. The committee consists of senior staff members in the national office and includes your regional director, the supervision director, and the supervision case manager in consultation with your community coordinator and any other appropriate actors.

When a problem or concern arises within your host family, your coordinator will usually begin by holding a "3-point meeting," a facilitated discussion with you and your host family. The coordinator serves as an objective moderator, making sure that everyone's thoughts and feelings are heard. A form outlining the concerns of each party and the next steps to be taken is completed and signed to make sure that everyone is in agreement. Sometimes, formal disciplinary action is required in addition to the 3-point meeting.

Guidance Letter
There are three levels of discipline. The first, and least serious, is a Guidance Letter. After speaking with the coordinator, host family, school (if appropriate), and the student, a member of the PAX supervision team issues a Guidance Letter to the student, notifying the student of his or her disciplinary status (the first of three disciplinary steps) with the PAX program. The letter specifies the student's infraction, which rules were violated, and the action the student needs to take to remedy the situation. Copies of the letter are sent to the host family, coordinator, school (if appropriate), and the overseas sending organization who, in turn, will share the letter with the natural parents.

Guidance Letters are issued for a variety of reasons, including lack of effort to engage with the host family, failure to obey host family or school rules, failure to maintain a "C" or better in each class, breaking a PAX program rule, etc. Once a student receives a Guidance Letter, he or she remains in this disciplinary status (the first of three disciplinary steps) for the duration of the program.

Probation
If the student's behavior persists, or if the initial infraction is serious enough, the student may be placed on Probation. The decision to place a student on Probation rests with the PAX discipline committee. A PAX national office staff member (usually the supervision case manager) will speak with all parties (the student, host family, coordinator, and school if appropriate) and present a case to the discipline committee. If a student is placed on Probation, a letter of Probation is sent to the student. The student may be required to meet specific obligations, such as writing letters of apology, engaging a tutor, making restitution, etc. Copies of the Probation letter are sent to the host family, coordinator, school (if appropriate), and the overseas sending organization who, in turn, will share the letter with the natural parents. Probations do not expire.

Disqualification
Disqualification of a student is rare and follows the same procedures as cases of Probation. PAX views Disqualification as a last resort. Before reaching this decision, every effort is made to allow the student to amend his or her behavior, learn from mistakes, and finish the program successfully.

Although PAX ordinarily follows a three-step process (Guidance Letter, Probation, and Disqualification) in disciplinary matters, students may face immediate Disqualification in particularly serious cases (e.g. driving, alcohol or drug use, school expulsion, violation of state or federal law, violent behavior, or behavior that places the safety of student or others at risk) or when PAX determines that the student's physical or mental health is in jeopardy.

It is important to note that while a host family may refuse to continue to host a student who has caused disciplinary problems, only PAX has the authority to send a student home. Disqualification of a student involves canceling the student's J-1 visa and making arrangements for the student to return home–usually within one week.

MEDICAL CARE
While you hopefully will not need to seek medical care during your PAX program, there are some important things to keep in mind if you do. First, always be sure to notify your community coordinator if you are sick, injured, or need to see a doctor. Whenever you see a healthcare professional, be sure to present your insurance card. Likewise, after your visit, you will always want to save any receipts (for reimbursement). Additionally, always get an After Visit Summary (often needed for the insurance process) before leaving the doctor's office. This should document your diagnosis, what you were seen for, and any treatment.

It is also important to keep in mind that you should only go to the emergency room in the event of a true emergency (serious and life-threatening situations). Students should use urgent care or walk-in clinics for the treatment of sports injuries, sore throats, minor cuts, cold/flu, sprains, earaches, urinary tract infections, simple fractures, or minor burns.

HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES
While all participants are covered by insurance in the event of illness or injury, it is our hope that students will remain healthy and safe during their exchange year. Insurance providers exclude high-risk activities from coverage under their policies. To that end, we have established official policy governing activities PAX students may engage in while in the U.S. Be sure to review this policy carefully by visiting pax.org/high-risk.

Students who violate this policy may face disciplinary action, including Guidance Letter, Probation, or Disqualification.

The lists found at pax.org/high-risk do not include all high-risk activities. We strongly suggest that the student's insurance policy be consulted before a student is permitted to participate in any activity not listed. If you are unsure whether an activity is permitted, feel free to email the PAX Support and Supervision team at supervision@pax.org for guidance. Please remember that the primary concern is risk of injury to the student, not whether an activity is covered by insurance.

PAX SURVEYS

All PAX students are asked to complete surveys during the program year. This enables PAX to monitor student well-being, respond to concerns, and improve the program. We encourage you to respond to PAX monthly surveys sent via Survey Monkey.

SOME FINAL ADVICE FOR YOUR EXCHANGE YEAR

Your success as an exchange student will be determined in large part by your attitude. It is important to remain positive and flexible and try to maintain your sense of humor. As you gain confidence and your English improves, you will still make mistakes along the way. Remember to laugh at yourself.

Do not expect things to be the same as in your home country; it will be different. You will enjoy yourself a lot more if you can appreciate these differences. After all, that is why you decided to come.

Remember that while you are in the U.S., you are an ambassador representing your country, family, and school. Make them proud of your performance and achievements. By setting a good example today, you are making it possible for future students to be given the same opportunity you have been given.

Finally, remember that you are not alone. In addition to your host family and community coordinator, the dedicated staff in the PAX national office is there to help. This includes a regional director for your part of the country and a dedicated team of support and supervision professionals.

RETURNING HOME

As the end of your exchange experience approaches, you will face another major transition: saying goodbye and returning home. The return home is perhaps better described as a re-entry that carries the possibility of reverse culture shock. This is the time to prepare to readjust to your own culture.

If you think that you will not face any problems when you return home, you might return home unprepared. The exchange experience will likely change you. While you are away, things in your home country might change, too. These changes may not be major, but they are new and unexpected for you. It might not be possible to deal with these changes until you return home, but it is important to be prepared when returning to your home country.

In fact, you might need to go through the same steps of the Cultural Adjustment Cycle outlined in this handbook. Your community coordinator will assist you in preparing for saying goodbye and for your re-entry into your home culture.

Good Advice

"Reverse culture shock is a transition and an important learning experience. Use this time to rebuild relationships, interests, and your new worldly self." –*Office of International Studies, Northeastern University*

Return Travel Policy
PAX Program Rules specify when students must return home. Rule #11 stipulates:

PAX students must return home within two weeks of the student's last day of classes or by June 30, whichever is earlier. YES and FLEX scholarship students must return home based on YES and FLEX program requirements. Students who fail to depart the U.S. when instructed by PAX will be in violation of their visa and reported to immigration authorities.

Please note that the last day of classes may depend on the grade level in which the student is classified and any adjustments to the school calendar. If you have any questions about this policy, please contact your community coordinator or the PAX national office.

YOUR ROLE AS A PAX ALUMNUS OR ALUMNA
Once you return home, you become an alumnus or alumna of the PAX program. Countless alumni can confirm that you will be digesting the experience for some time to come and that it will profoundly influence the way you view the world for the rest of your life. As you encounter key moments in which the lessons of this experience crystallize, share them with the PAX community.

These lessons are useful for us to share with potential families and educators to underline the impact of international exchange. We may also share them with current and future students as a way of helping them prepare for their own experience or understand that challenges they may be encountering are not uncommon.

Additionally, we would just plain like to hear what you are doing and what you've recently accomplished–new degree, marriage, child, career?

- Tell us what you're doing by writing short articles, sending photos or videos, etc. to paxpress@pax.org next year, the year after, the year after that, the year after that…you get the idea!
- Post updates about you and your group of exchange students on our Facebook page and encourage other alums to do the same.
- Engage with our Instagram, YouTube, and (perhaps as you get older) LinkedIn pages/channels.

The next time you read this you'll think, "Wow–the year flew by," but your exchange experience doesn't have to end when you get on the airplane for your home country. By remaining an active member of the 27,000-strong PAX alumni community, you will always maintain a connection to this important time in your life!

APPENDIX A

Academic Agreement

PAX is a school-based program. Every PAX student is enrolled as a fully participating high school student in an accredited U.S. high school and is expected to carry a full course load. The student is also encouraged to participate in school activities, including sports, clubs, and social activities. It is a privilege for a foreign student to be accepted in a U.S. high school. The student is a guest, and schools do not receive government funds for exchange students. PAX is grateful to these host high schools and works in close cooperation with them. PAX respects the policies in place at each school and expects PAX students to do the same.

The following terms and conditions govern school placement and academic performance for PAX students:

1. I understand that I will be placed in a grade level determined by the high school in which I am enrolled. PAX will make every effort to place me in the grade I should be in based on my academic history. However, PAX cannot guarantee placement in a particular grade nor the availability of specific classes/courses at the host school.
2. I understand that I must carry a full course load, including at least four academic subjects. These subjects must include one English or American Literature course and one course in American History, Government, Sociology, or Economics.
3. I understand that I must maintain a grade of "C" or better in each class at all times. I agree to demonstrate full effort and commitment to my schoolwork, including attending all classes daily and completing all school assignments on time. I understand that PAX will monitor my grades during my exchange program and agree to grant PAX staff the same access to my grades and academic records that a parent would have.
4. I understand that most U.S. high schools will not permit exchange students to participate in graduation ceremonies. If my high school has a policy that exchange students cannot participate in graduation ceremonies, I accept that policy and will not make any requests for special consideration.
5. I understand that most U.S. high schools will not award a diploma to an exchange student. I also understand that regulations of the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) prohibit programs like PAX from promising diplomas to exchange students. I will come to the U.S. understanding that I will <u>not</u> receive a diploma, and I will not request a diploma from my host high school.
6. I understand that athletic eligibility and/or participation in U.S. high school extra-curricular activities is not guaranteed to exchange students. This is in accordance with U.S. Department of State regulation 22CFR 62.25(h) *Student extra-curricular activities. Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extra-curricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is: (1) Authorized by the local school district in which the student is enrolled; and (2) Authorized by the state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility, if applicable.*
7. I understand that due to public health measures, classes may temporarily meet online or a hybrid (combination) approach, and that class formats may change throughout the year based on local conditions. I understand that sport and extra-curricular activity offerings may be modified or limited due to public health guidelines or school policies.
8. I understand that I may be required to seek tutoring if deemed necessary by my host school or PAX program staff. Tutoring may be required to provide support in a specific academic subject or to improve my overall English language abilities. I understand that the cost of such tutoring is my own responsibility.
9. I understand that culture sharing is central to the PAX program and that volunteering plays an important role in American society. As such, I agree to hold at least one presentation relating to my country/culture in November and complete at least one volunteer activity in April. All students are strongly encouraged to volunteer at least 30 hours during the program year and can earn a "PAX PLUS Volunteer Award" for doing so.
10. I understand that if I need to have my U.S. school transcripts notarized or authenticated by apostille that I am solely responsible for completing this process as well as paying all related fees.

We understand these policies and agree to follow PAX guidelines governing high school placement, academic performance, extra-curricular activities, graduation, and diplomas.

Student Name | Student Signature | Date

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE DS-2019 FORM

U.S. Department of State

OMB APPROVAL NO.1405-0119
EXPIRES: 10/31/2020
ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min
*See Page 2

CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR STATUS (J-NONIMMIGRANT)

N0027664521

J-1

1. Surname/Primary Name: | Given Name: | Gender:

Date of Birth *(mm-dd-yyyy)* : | City of Birth: | Country of Birth: | Citizenship Country Code: | Citizenship Country:

Legal Permanent Residence Country Code: | Legal Permanent Residence Country: | Position Code: | Position: SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

Primary Site of Activity: PAX - Program of Academic Exchange
271 NORTH AVENUE, SUITE 601
NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK 10801

2. Program Sponsor: P.A.X. Program of Academic Exchange | Program Number:

Participating Program Official Description:

Purpose of this form:

3. Form Covers Period:
From *(mm-dd-yyyy)* :
To *(mm-dd-yyyy)* :

4. Exchange Visitor Category:
Subject/Field Code: | Subject/Field Code Remarks:

5. During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support *(in U.S. $)* is to be provided to the exchange visitor by:
Personal funds :
Total :

6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICER OR ALTERNATE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER ATTESTATION: I attest that prior to issuing this Form DS-2019, the Program Sponsor organization identified above, for which I serve as the Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer, has verified, in accordance with the requirements of 22 CFR 62.12(b), that each prospective exchange visitor: (i) is eligible and qualified for, and accepted into, the program in which he or she will participate;(ii) possesses adequate financial resources to participate in and complete his or her exchange visitor program; and (iii) possesses adequate financial resources to support an accompanying spouse and dependents, if any. I also attest that upon printing and signing this form, I am physically present in the United States or in a U.S. territory. A notification copy of this form has been provided to the U.S. Department of State.

Name of Official Preparing Form | Title

Address of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer | Telephone Number

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer | Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)*

8. Statement of Responsible Officer for Releasing Sponsor *(FOR TRANSFER OF PROGRAM)*
Effective date *(mm-dd-yyyy)* : _____ . Transfer of this exchange visitor from program number _____ sponsored by _____ to the program specified in item 2 is necessary or highly desirable and is in conformity with the objectives of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended.

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer | Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)* of Signature

PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICER REGARDING SECTION 212(e) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND PL 94-484, AS AMENDED *(see item 1(a) of page 2).*

The Exchange Visitor in the above program:

1. ☐ Not subject to the two-year residence requirement.
2. ☐ Subject to two-year residence requirement based on:
   A. ☐ Government financing and/or
   B. ☐ The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or
   C. ☐ PL 94-484 as amended

(ALL USAID PARTICIPANTS G-2-00263 AND ALL ALIEN PHYSICIANS SPONSORED BY P-3-04510 ARE SUBJECT TO THE TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT)

Name | Title

Signature of Consular or Immigration Officer | Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)*

THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING 212 *(e)*.

TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
(Maximum validation period is 1 year)*

***EXCEPT:** Maximum validation period is up to 6 months for Short-term Scholars and 4 months for Camp Counselors and Summer Work/Travel.

(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)*

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

(2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)*

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION: I have read and agree with the statement in item 2 on page 2 of this document.

Signature of Applicant | Place | Date *(mm-dd-yyyy)*

DS-2019
07-2011

Page 1 of 2

APPENDIX C

EXERCISES
The section includes exercises which you will work on at orientation in the U.S.

Exercise 1: PAX Program Rules Quiz

1. I am not allowed to drive except
   a. when my host mother or father is in the car.
   b. during the course of an accredited driver's education program.
   c. I am never allowed to operate any motorized vehicle.

2. It is best if my parents visit me
   a. for the Christmas holidays.
   b. at the end of the program year.
   c. only if I am homesick.

3. During my PAX program year, it is okay if I
   a. ride in a car with a teenage driver without the permission of my host parents.
   b. pierce my eyebrow.
   c. get a tattoo.
   d. none of the above.

4. It is against U.S. state laws for persons under 21 to purchase or consume alcohol. This means:
   a. It is okay for me to drink beer, but nothing stronger.
   b. It is okay to drink as long as I don't get caught by the police.
   c. It is okay for me to drink if I am with friends who are drinking.
   d. None of the above.

5. Smoking marijuana is
   a. permitted, as long as I don't buy it.
   b. permitted, if my natural parents say it is okay.
   c. never permitted under any circumstances.

6. I must follow all of my host family's rules
   a. only if I agree with them.
   b. only if they ask me nicely.
   c. only for the first two months, or until I have adjusted to life in the U.S.
   d. always, with no exceptions.

7. I may travel outside my host family's local area
   a. if I have adult supervision, inform my community coordinator, complete the Student Travel Request Form (or fast-pass request), and receive permission from the PAX national office.
   b. if I arrange my own travel.
   c. if I go with a friend my own age.

8. During the program year, I am allowed to:
   a. get married.
   b. get baptized or join a new religion.
   c. get a job at the local pizza shop.
   d. none of the above.

9. Smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes ("vaping") is
    a. permitted, as long as I don't buy them.
    b. permitted, if my natural parents agree.
    c. not permitted, as PAX is a no smoking program.

10. In regards to electronics, internet, and social media use,
    a. I should avoid excessive use, as it can interfere with my cultural adjustment.
    b. I should observe my host family's rules, including where and when I may use these.
    c. I should never, for any reason, visit a pornographic site.
    d. all of the above

11. When setting up my bank account, PAX strongly advises that I
    a. open an account that is separate from that of my host family.
    b. open a joint account with my host family.

12. If I have brought a large sum of money with me, it is best to
    a. keep it in my suitcase.
    b. hide it in a drawer in my room.
    c. keep it in my wallet (purse).
    d. give it to my host family.
    e. deposit the money in my own personal bank account.

13. Each school has a different policy about graduation and diplomas. If I want to graduate or receive a diploma, but my school's policy does not permit it, I should
    a. respect the school's policy.
    b. request that the school make an exception for me.
    c. demand that the school give me a diploma and allow me to graduate.

14. As a PAX participant, I am allowed to use guns
    a. only when hunting with my host family.
    b. if I am taking a class with an authorized instructor.
    c. never under any circumstances.

15. If I have a problem during the year or I am unhappy, I should
    a. call my parents at home.
    b. go to the bedroom and close the door.
    c. talk to my host family or call my community coordinator.

Exercise 2: Reflecting on Hopes, Fears, and Goals for Your Exchange Year

HOPES	FEARS

5 Goals for My Exchange Year

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Exercise 3: What Would You Do?
No matter how great your exchange experience, there will be times when you question a program rule, disagree with your host family, or find yourself in a difficult position. Here are some situations, based upon real life that you may want to consider and then review with your host family and community coordinator.

1. You disagree with one of your host family's rules. They say you are not allowed to go out with friends unless they have met them first. What will you do?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - You are here for only 10 months at most, or five months if you are a semester student.
   - The challenge for you during this program year is to learn to do things in a new way and adapt to a lifestyle different than your own.
   - You are a guest in your host family's home and are expected to live by their rules.
   - Your host family cares about you, and their rules are intended to help keep you safe.
   - Open communication is very important. You must be willing to speak openly and honestly with your host family about your feelings but also be prepared to accept their guidelines.

2. You are placed in a small town where you are not able to do all of the things you do at home. How will you find things to do?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - You will experience the greatest growth this year as a result of creatively solving your biggest challenges.
   - One big challenge for you during this program year is to learn to do new things that you could never have imagined doing before you arrived. For example: milking a cow, shoveling snow, volunteering at a "soup kitchen," performing in a school play, etc.
   - Your host family and school friends have lived in your host town for years and are prepared to introduce you to the local resources. In many small American towns, the church is at the center of a lot of social events and activities.

3. Your host family is stricter than your family at home. They want you to be home at 10:00 p.m. on Saturday night. At home, you often stay out until midnight or later. What do you do?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - You are here for only 10 months at most, or five months if you are a semester student.
   - The challenge for you during this program year is to learn to do things in a new way and adapt to a lifestyle different than your own.
   - You are a guest in your host family's home and are expected to live by their rules.
   - Your host family cares about you, and their rules are intended to help keep you safe.
   - Open communication is very important. You must be willing to speak openly and honestly with your host family about your feelings but also be prepared to accept the guidelines they have set.
   - Building a relationship of mutual trust with your host family is extremely important. It is possible that when you have earned your host parents' trust, they might be willing to consider adjusting your curfew.

4. You have made plans for the weekend with some friends. Your host family tells you they have made other plans and want you to join them. What do you do?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - Your host family chose to host you, because they wanted to share their life with you. Participating in your host family activities is one of the best ways to build a strong, positive relationship with them.
   - Open communication is very important. You must be willing to speak openly and honestly with your host family about your feelings and be open to discussing and/or compromising.

5. You have a host brother who introduces you to all of his friends. You all get along and go to parties and activities together. After some time, you begin to go out with these friends without your host brother. He becomes jealous. How would you handle this?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - You and your host brother are sharing a home life together, and any tension that develops between the two of you can spill over into your relationship with your host family.
   - Open communication is very important. You must be willing to speak openly and honestly with your host brother about the situation and about his feelings.
   - Your community coordinator or host parents may be able to give you some good advice in a case like this.

6. You are the kind of person who always waits until the very last minute to get something done. Your family likes to plan ahead. How will you cope with this?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - The challenge for you during this program year is to learn to do things in a new way and adapt to a lifestyle different than your own.
   - You will experience the greatest growth this year by finding creative solutions to the biggest challenges you face.
   - Open communication is very important. You must be willing to speak openly and honestly with your host family about your habit of waiting until the last minute and be willing to set some new goals for yourself that will help you get better at planning ahead.

7. Your family asks you to attend church with them every Sunday. You are not accustomed to going to church. What concerns might you bring up with them?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - Curiosity and openness are important qualities for getting the most out of your exchange experience.
   - During your program year, you are an anthropologist of sorts. You are here to learn about who Americans are, what they do, and why and how they do what they do.
   - In many small American towns, the church is at the center of the community's social life.
   - Participating in your host family's activities is one of the best ways to build a strong, positive relationship with them.
   - Your host family has been told that they must respect your beliefs (or non-belief) and not pressure you in any way to change your religious beliefs.
   - You are not required to attend church services with your host family.

8. You share a room with your host sister and have become very close. You discover that she attends parties where there is drinking. She invites you to go to a party. What do you do?

   Things to keep in mind:
   - Drinking alcohol of any kind while on the program—even a sip of beer—is not only against the law but is also against PAX program rules.
   - When attending a party where other teens are drinking, there is always the risk that the police will show up, in which case you may be taken to the police station along with others at the party, even if you have not had anything to drink.
   - Open communication is very important. Your host sister needs to understand that the consequences you face are very serious and that if you get caught drinking, you can be sent home.
   - Every year, there are PAX students who get disqualified from the program for drinking alcohol and/or smoking marijuana.

9. Your curfew is midnight, but your ride home is late. You know that your host family will be asleep, but the rule is that you let them know whenever you will be late. What do you do?

Things to keep in mind:

- Following your host family rules is an important way to build trust in your relationship with them.
- Open communication is very important. When discussing your host family rules, ask your host parents how they would like you to handle a situation like this if it should ever occur.

10. You missed an exam at school, because you were sick and now you are behind in the subject. You worry about how you will catch up. What can you do?

    Things to keep in mind:

    - Missing school due to sickness is generally considered an excused absence and teachers are prepared to reschedule exams for reasons like this.
    - Teachers in American schools are usually very open to helping a student catch up if the student expresses a willingness to be helped.
    - Open communication with your teachers is very important. Your school guidance counselor, community coordinator, or host parents may also be able to give you some support and good advice if they know you are worried.

Exercise 4: Practicing "I" Messages

One of the most important communication skills to learn is the use of "I" messages. Begin to use the words "I feel" when you would like to express important emotions but do not want to hurt someone else's feelings.

For example, "I feel unimportant when you're late for dinner and don't call," is much more effective than saying, "You are always late. You don't care about anyone but yourself."

The "you" statement is a blaming statement and will often start or escalate into an argument. An "I" statement just reports feelings and is easier for your partner to respond in a positive way.

Keep practicing "I" messages until it becomes a habit for you to express yourself in this way.

Following are some exercises that will help you get comfortable using "I" messages.

Feeling words include words such as hurt, angry, frustrated, lonely, inadequate, happy, or loving. Think of something someone did that upset you and write how it made you feel–as if you were telling them at the time.

I feel _____

(*your feeling*)

when_____

(*the other person's behavior*)

because _____

(*effect on you)*

Be careful not to use the following word combinations, which can also be perceived as blaming statements. When you say, "I feel that you…," "I feel as though you…," or "I feel like you…," you are analyzing your partner, not expressing your feelings.

Think of something else your partner did that may have upset you, and write how it made you feel–as if you were telling them at the time.

I feel _____

(*my feeling*)

when_____

(*the other person's behavior*)

because _____

(*effect on me*)

I feel _____

(*my feeling)*

when_____

(*the other person's behavior*)

because _____

(*effect on me*)

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