



High School USA



STUDENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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Regular office hours are Monday–Friday, 10:00am–6:00pm EST
24-hour emergency service is available at 800.448.9944

CIEE High School USA students are covered while in the U.S. by the CIEE/Aetna insurance plan. American medical care and insurance may be very different from what you are used to at home. It is important to remember that anytime a student seeks medical attention while in the CIEE program, the student or the host family should contact CIEE prior to setting up an appointment either by calling 1.800.448.9944 or emailing insurance@clee.org

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CIEE is designated by the U.S. Department of State as a sponsor of Work & Travel, Trainee, and Secondary Student programs.

U.S. Department of State
Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
Private Sector Programs Division ECA/EC/D/PS
SA-4E, Room E-B001
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Department of State Emergency Hotline: 1.866.283.9090
Fax: 202.203.5087
Email: jvisas@state.gov
Website: <http://exchanges.state.gov>

WELCOME!

You've made it! You've embarked on what will probably be one of the greatest experiences of your entire life. As a CIEE student, you'll find that your time in the USA is filled with ups and downs, good times and not-so-good times, easy times and difficult times. You will end up with quite an education—you'll learn about another culture, pick up a second language, make new friends, find a new favorite food, change your outlook on the world...the list is endless. But most importantly, you will learn more about yourself and improve your own "life skills" and have some fun along the way! You've taken a big step in leaving all that is familiar—your friends and family and the comforts of being in a place where everything makes sense to you. You probably feel like you've left the Earth and landed on Mars! While here on this new planet, you'll no doubt run into times when you just can't believe you've embarked on this wild and crazy journey. Don't panic! It's normal, and we're here to help you. We've got loads of advice, and we don't mind listening when you need to talk about stuff like being homesick, having a tough time making friends, etc. So give us a call anytime, day or night, at 1.800.448.9944.

We want to hear about your experiences! Send in your photos, videos, e-mails to our team or share your memories on social media. And don't forget to check out the CIEE online resources on our website, ciee.org/highschoolusa. Once again, a very warm welcome to the CIEE family! We are proud to have you as a part of our program, and we wish you the very best as you embark on the adventure of a lifetime.

Most importantly—enjoy your new experience!

CIEE High School USA Staff



@CIEEUSAHighSchool



@CIEE_USAHS



@CIEEHSUSA

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ORIENTATION MEETINGS

As your program begins, you will attend an in-community orientation led by your Local Coordinator in your host family's community. These orientations are intended to welcome you to the United States and to the High School USA program and to prepare you for your semester or year ahead.

You will be given information about what to expect upon arrival in your host community, tips for making friends, and ideas on how to solve a problem when one arises. The group leaders will encourage role-playing and will attempt to get each student involved in the discussions. Most students arrive at orientation excited and eager to move on to their host family, but they often find themselves nervous as the departure day gets closer. This is a good opportunity to talk about your fears and your expectations.

TYPES OF FAMILIES

American host families come in all shapes, sizes, ages, and ethnicities. Many host families consist of a mother, father, and their children all living at home together. Some of these families may include step-parents or step-siblings, some of whom may not live in the home but who visit or are visited on weekends or at other intervals. These families may be very busy and may run their household in a structured manner. Their children may be able to introduce the exchange student to other teens, or the children may be much younger and eager for the attention of their new older “sister” or “brother.” Communication and cooperation are especially important for successful integration into family life.

Why does a family decide to host an exchange student? There are perhaps as many answers to this question as there are families who host.

The main reasons most families say they choose to host an exchange student are:

- The family views hosting as a special way for them to help a young person achieve a goal.
- The family has a special interest in another country or region of the world because of family ties or because of current or past study of the language or area.
- The family is proud of the United States and wishes to share their lifestyle and culture with others.

Whatever their reason, all CIEE host families are volunteers. They receive no money or other compensation for hosting. They do it out of a sincere desire to do something good!

Some host families have children who are grown up and no longer live at home. The children may live in the same town or in a nearby town; however, it is not uncommon for a family's children to move far away from their parents.

Other host families may simply consist of a husband and wife who do not have children, or a single parent with children. On certain occasions, and with special permission from the student and his/her natural parents, a host family may consist of a single adult who has special opportunities to offer an exchange student. These types of families may offer slightly more individual attention to the exchange student; however, the student may find it necessary to be more assertive when it comes to making friends. Some students may have the opportunity to live with another exchange student from a different country and cultural background. This can be a great opportunity to share your experience with another student and learn about the culture and traditions of their home country.

Your host family will either be “permanent,” meaning their intention is to host you for the duration of your program, or “welcome,” meaning their intention is to host you for just a few weeks until a permanent host family can be secured.

What do all of these types of families have in common? They are all able to provide, in their individual ways, a loving and supportive environment and their own unique perspectives about life in America.

FAMILY LIFE IN THE U.S.

Household Rules and Routines

Every family has its own household routine and expectations regarding the responsibilities and behavior of each family member. Parents do require their children, including their “exchange children,” to always seek permission before going out with friends or to an unsupervised activity. They require advance knowledge of whom their children are with and what they will be doing before they permit the children to participate. This is especially true with their “exchange children.” Host families take their responsibilities seriously and know that the natural parents and CIEE staff are relying on them as the primary caregiver and protector of the exchange student. They may be extra cautious and protective until they get to know you personally and begin to meet and trust your friends.

Chores

American children frequently are given chores (housework) for which they are responsible. Such chores are considered part of routine daily life. CIEE encourages host families to treat their exchange student as they would treat their own child, including the assignment of chores. Your host family may ask you to simply keep your room clean, or they may ask more, such as helping with dishes, vacuuming the house, cleaning the bathroom, etc. We ask the host families to divide the work fairly between family members and the exchange student.

If you are unaccustomed to helping with cleaning a house, then pay careful attention to the instructions your host family gives you. Ask them to show you where cleaning supplies are kept, which supplies are used for the chores you must do, and, if necessary, how the chore should be done. After one or two tries, you should be able to do a good job without help. Understand when the chores must be done, and do not wait to be asked to do them.

Even if your host family does not assign you specific tasks you should help around the house everyday as a way to show your appreciation.

Curfew

Parents usually have an established curfew (a time at night before which you are expected to return home) for their children. You will be expected to abide by the curfew, too.

Curfews vary from family to family and even from town to town. A curfew is set with your safety in mind. It may be different on weekdays and on weekends.

Plan your activities so that you will always “make curfew” (be home on time). Families will often consider it breaking curfew if you return even a few minutes after the agreed upon time. If you think you will be late for curfew, always call your host family and tell them you will be late. While it may not excuse you from consequences, it will alleviate their worry and anxiety, and possibly prevent an angry confrontation upon your return.

Household Discipline

As mentioned previously, CIEE has asked host families to treat their exchange student as they would treat their own child. This includes enforcing the house rules, which, if broken, may have consequences. Punishments for being late for curfew, abusing phone privileges, or not doing chores may result in “grounding” (restricting the student from certain activities or associating with certain people) or being given added chores for a period of time. These are only typical examples of common punishments. Your host parents are free to enact any reasonable consequence appropriate to the offense.

Hygiene

Every culture has different standards regarding what is considered “clean.” For example, bathing once a week may be considered socially acceptable in one country, but in the U.S. it would be considered dirty and offensive. In the United States people normally bathe daily or possibly every two days, depending on the person’s level of activity.

This, in addition to shampooing hair and washing clothes frequently, allows people to remain free from body odor which Americans find offensive. Despite their strong feelings on the subject, however, Americans are embarrassed to talk about such things, and they may not say anything to you until they cannot tolerate it any longer. Instead, they will probably avoid being near you. To prevent this problem, always bathe regularly and shampoo, wash your clothes often, and use personal hygiene products such as deodorant daily.

Technology and How You Communicate

While you are in the U.S., you may find yourself feeling tired, frustrated, or homesick as you adapt to a new culture. When feeling this way, it is very tempting to call a family member or friend from home. You may think that calling home or speaking in your home language will make you feel better; and it may, but only for a short time!

In the long run, spending a lot of time on the phone/Internet/texting may only create problems with your host family, and actually make your homesickness worse. The more time you spend on the Internet/phone/texting with friends and family from home, the less time you are spending on adapting to life in the U.S. with your host family and friends. To avoid these problems, CIEE recommends setting limits for Internet/phone/text usage.

There are positives and negatives to using technology while abroad. Keeping that in mind, think about the following while on the CIEE High School USA program:

Computers/Laptops/Tablets

- Use technology to share movies, pictures, recipes, etc., about your country.
- Host families may not have Wi-Fi, and you need to be respectful of rules at home and at school with regard to use of computers/laptops/tablets.
- Only bring your technology with you when absolutely necessary, and be careful that it is not stolen/lost.
- Be mindful of what you download, as sometimes downloads will turn out to be viruses or other inappropriate things.
- Try changing your computer/phone to English to help you adapt to life in the U.S.

Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.)

- Think about using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat to connect with your community to find community service opportunities or other activities to be involved in.
- Be careful of what you post on Facebook and pictures you share—people are watching what you post, and once you share something, it is no longer private.
- Social media can be a good way to share your experience, but not a good place to express your anger or frustrations toward your school/host family—don't post negative things on Facebook.
- You can use email or Facebook to communicate with CIEE, but remember that your Local Coordinator needs to speak with you on the phone or in person once every month.

Cell Phones/iPhones

- Do not spend an excessive amount of time texting friends (both in the U.S. and your home country).
- Schools and families may have rules about cell phone usage, and respecting them will help you avoid problems.
- Be careful what you write about in text messages, and don't rely on text messages to communicate with host family/LC.

Blogs

- Blogging is a great way to share with your friends and family back home—and practice your English.
- Make sure that you keep it honest and do not post negative thoughts about your host family or host community—this is not the time or place.
- Keep in mind, you are a representative of your country and your blog will shape people's opinion toward your country.



Communication (Skype, email, etc.)

- CIEE suggests that you contact family back home once or twice a month, as more frequent contact can create problems and make you more prone to homesickness.
- Keep communication back home positive and constructive.
- Emailing daily is not ideal: think about writing one long letter once or twice a month.
- Keep Skype time to a minimum, and make sure it is at a time that is okay for your host family as well.

It can be tempting to try to keep up with everything back home, but do your best to keep “both feet” in the U.S. and immerse yourself in your community, school, and host family. Tools of technology and communication are wonderful, when used carefully and with a positive attitude. Keep the above tips in mind and you’ll be sure to have a terrific time while on the CIEE High School USA program!

Your Money

You and your natural parents have worked very hard to send you on this program and to supply you with the spending money you will need. You want to fully enjoy every opportunity that comes along, but you must also think about the cost. As a young person with perhaps a large amount of money, it is tempting to shop often and foolishly. Avoid this by preparing a budget with your natural parents prior to your departure. Ask your host family or Local Coordinator for help. Begin by understanding your required weekly expenses, such as lunches (if you would prefer to buy lunch), personal entertainment, school fees, etc. CIEE recommends that you have \$200-\$300 per month for spending money. Pay

careful attention to the amount of money you spend so that one day you don't discover suddenly that you no longer have any. Be sure to set aside money at the beginning of the month so that you don't spend it all. Students typically need more money at the beginning of the program for school and activity fees and at the end of the program for domestic plane tickets, gifts, or souvenirs. If you have to ask for more money from home, do it when you have at least two weeks' worth of money remaining. Sending money, even by bank-to-bank wire transfer, can take up to two weeks. Avoid putting yourself in the position of asking to borrow money from others, including your host family. Avoid lending money to others, including your host family. Part of this experience is learning to be responsible for yourself and your actions, and budgeting money is part of the process.

Planning Activities

It is important to involve yourself in your host family's daily activities, which may include visiting relatives, grocery shopping, or possibly weekend or day trips. You should expect to pay for activities such as excursions, movies, and other forms of entertainment (while with host family or friends). Communicate with your host family about upcoming plans or activities that they or you may be planning so that schedules can be arranged and you can save enough money in your budget for these events. Also understand that you may have to decline some opportunities in order to participate in more important ones if your budget is limited.

When planning activities with friends, always seek permission from your host family first and know what your limitations might be (curfew, where you may go, etc.). Do you need transportation? If so, ask your host family well in advance of the activity so that they can tell you if they are able to provide it. You may notice that public transportation is not as common in the U.S., which could be quite different from your home country. While living in the U.S. with your host family, you will have to be proactive in arranging transportation to afterschool and weekend activities. Do not be afraid to ask for assistance from your host family and friends. If friends routinely drive you places, offer to contribute money to their gasoline expense as a gesture of appreciation on your part.

Gun Safety

In the USA many families have guns at home. Guns are dangerous and can easily injure or kill you. In order to keep students safe, CIEE has some simple rules to follow if you live in a home that has guns.

- Do not touch a gun without the permission of host parents.
- Never fool around or play with guns.
- Never touch a gun when the adult is not present with you in the same room, even if you have permission.
- Some states in the United States have what are called "Stand Your Ground" laws. This means that in those states a homeowner or even a person walking the streets, has a right to defend themselves, through use of guns or other means, against someone whom he or she thinks poses a meaningful danger to him or her. As a result, you should never go onto a property without express permission.

Please remember: There are no second chances with a gun and the rules for safe gun handling must always be followed to avoid accidents.

Host Siblings

If you have host siblings, sometimes the hardest part of adjusting to a host family's way of life can be getting along with them. Everyone—you, your host family, your Local Coordinator, and CIEE—hope that you and your host siblings (if any) will become fast friends. Most of the time, this is the case. However, sometimes problems occur. Jealousy on their part or yours can cause poor behavior and hurt feelings. Sharing a room can be difficult at times unless both people are fully cooperative and willing to compromise. Younger children may constantly seek your attention, and unless you are accustomed to younger brothers and sisters at home, this may be difficult to adjust to. Instead of getting angry and deciding that you cannot live with it, first try talking to the other person about the problem. If that doesn't help, ask for help from your host parents. Be prepared to make sacrifices and compromises. Remember, conflicts with siblings are natural—both at home and abroad. How you handle the conflicts will make the difference between a good relationship and a bad one.

Contact your Local Coordinator or Support Coordinator if you need assistance or advice.



Religion

Your host family may belong to an organized religion and they may (or may not) attend services regularly. While CIEE does not encourage students to convert to a different religion, we do encourage students to at least try attending religious services with their host families as a cultural experience. In many communities, church has an important social function as well as a religious function. Most churches have youth groups where exchange students are often successful at making friends, and many churches offer both youth and family activities either after services or on different days of the week. If you try it and decide you are unable to attend because of your own strong personal beliefs, or if you prefer to attend services of your own denomination, speak to your host family about how you can make other arrangements. Regardless, CIEE does not require any student to attend religious services or activities.

Illness

You may wonder what to do if you become sick or have an accident. If this happens at home, talk to a host parent right away. They may have non-prescription medication that will help you, or they may decide that you need to see a doctor. If a condition is life threatening or needs urgent attention, you should go to the hospital emergency room immediately. If you get sick or hurt while at school, ask permission from your teacher to visit the nurse's office. The nurse will then decide whether you can remain at school or if you must return home or see a doctor. There is usually no cost to visit the school nurse, but the school nurse may be limited in what medication he/she can provide to you. Also understand that you are not allowed to leave school because of illness unless the school nurse or your parent approves it first. If you go to the doctor, urgent care, hospital, or emergency room, you must contact CIEE to inform them immediately at 1.800.448.9944.

HIGH SCHOOL IN THE U.S.

This program, and others like it, would not exist without the generosity of American high schools. Schools choose to host an exchange student because of the diversity it brings to their classrooms. In addition, teachers and administrators often enjoy showing foreign exchange students the American perspective. Since many resources and lots of time go into teaching foreign exchange students, they expect that in return you will always try your best to do well in your classes, to make friends, and to participate in school activities. They welcome your perspective, since that allows other students to learn from your experiences.

School Spirit

Some aspects of school life are unique to the American school system. Among them is the concept of school spirit. School spirit is having pride in one's school and its achievements—most notably in the area of sports and other competitions. Typically, cheerleaders will lead pep rallies, which generate excitement for the school's sports teams. Students may be asked to wear clothing in the school colors (which are different for each school) or to bring banners and signs made in the school colors to the sports competitions.

School Activities and Clubs

Social and sports activities are often organized by clubs and teams at school. There are organized clubs and activities to fit many interests ranging from sports (like American football, soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball, field hockey, etc.) to academic interests (such as the speech/debate team, the school newspaper, or foreign language clubs) to social or community service organizations (the International Club, Circle K, or student government). You should attempt to join at least one club during your stay. It's a great way to make friends and really become a part of the school.

School Fees

You must pay a fee in order to participate in most activities. The amount varies with each activity. Clubs often ask members to pay a membership fee, which is used toward planning club activities. Other fees you can expect to pay that are associated with school include your lunches (should you choose to buy them), fees for library books you have returned late, and the school yearbook if you want to order one. You may also be required to pay back fees for your course and to pay fees associated with participation in athletics.

Guidance Counselors

American schools assign guidance counselors to students. In some cases your guidance counselor is the person who helps you register for your classes. He or she is a valuable resource for information at school about such things as

school policies, school life, and even activities that may be available to you. Your guidance counselor will monitor your academic progress and speak with you and your teachers if there are problems. If you do have a problem, he or she can help you understand what the problem is and can suggest ways to solve it. The important thing to remember is that you can always ask a guidance counselor for help before a problem becomes too big. You should also contact your Local Coordinator or Support Coordinator for assistance.

Appropriate Dress

Most schools do not have strict dress codes, but they do pay attention to what students wear. They expect students to dress respectfully and tastefully without showing too much of their bodies. Schools reserve the right to tell students to return home to change clothes if their clothing violates the school's expectations or creates a disturbance in the classroom. Some schools publish strict dress codes that must be followed, and other schools require that the students wear uniforms. Always remember that most Americans, especially those in smaller towns, are very modest and you will be expected to dress accordingly.

**For grant students, a portion of these fees may be refundable as part of your incidental fund.*

Studying and Grades

Most exchange students find the first couple of months at school the most difficult. Your English skills may need quick improvement, and you may find that teachers use very different teaching methods that you are not accustomed to. You can help yourself most by using your dictionary frequently to learn new words and increase your vocabulary, asking questions about anything you do not understand, and reserving a lot of time at home to complete your homework and class assignments. Homework is an important part of the American school system. Most students can expect homework assignments (usually they are due the next day) in almost every class almost every day. You must complete these assignments and return them to the teacher when you are told in order to receive full credit for your work. Your overall grade will be lowered if you do not do your homework assignments, and your ability to learn the subject could be greatly reduced.

Difficulty in School

Understanding teachers can be especially hard at first because they sometimes speak quickly and use vocabulary words that you do not yet know. Depending on which part of the country you live in, you may also realize that people speak with an accent that is unfamiliar to you (eventually, you may even develop the same accent in your own speech!). Pay careful attention during class to what your teacher is saying. Most teachers want their students to raise their hands and to ask them questions in class if they do not understand. This includes foreign exchange students. If you are not yet comfortable speaking in class, then after the class ends, stay to ask the teacher your questions. Please understand that your teacher may have little time to prepare himself or herself for the next class, so he/she could ask you to come back at the end of the school day or before school the next day. Take any opportunity to ask for extra help until you

understand better. Preparing homework assignments, which are usually due the next day, is a pressure that you may not yet be accustomed to. If you do not understand the teacher or the homework assignment, you might decide not to do it at all. This is a mistake. Review the homework assignment before you leave school. If you do not understand it, ask the teacher or another classmate to explain it to you. If you are at home and cannot understand it, ask a host family member to explain what you do not understand. Schedule your activities to allow enough time (usually two hours) to complete your schoolwork each day. Do not wait until right before you go to bed to start your homework. You will already be exhausted, and it will become twice as hard for you to do.

As stated in the Student/Parent Agreement, you will be expected to achieve a C+ average or higher in all classes. There are several ways to get help if you are having trouble maintaining a C+ average.

- You can ask your teachers for help when you don't understand something. This could require that you spend some extra time after class or before or after school. Your teachers will usually want to help you as long as you show them you are interested in learning and that you are trying hard.
- Ask your classmates. Many of them would be happy to help you and it's a good way to make new friends.
- The members of your host family, especially your host parents, are expecting that you will need help with school and would enjoy helping you.
- If you still need additional help, ask your Local Coordinator if he/she can help you find a tutor. This will be a cost that you will be responsible for paying.

Community Service Project

Community service is an important and fun part of the High School USA Program. Through community service, you can directly impact your town by donating your time, energy, and skills to a specific cause. In addition, the community service project enables you to immerse yourself in American culture and form meaningful connections with those around you. Successful completion of your Community Service Project is necessary to receive your Certificate of Completion for the CIEE High School USA Program. Students must complete a minimum of eight (8) hours of community service per semester.

Some examples of community service projects are: helping out at your local library, volunteering at a soup kitchen or animal shelter, and presenting on your country to your host community. For more information you can go to the Community Service Project website: <https://www.ciee.org/in-the-usa/academics/high-school-usa/about-high-school-usa/rules-policies>

Diplomas and Graduation

Each high school has its own policies regarding exchange students and their grade level. Sometimes these policies are even governed by the state. It is up to

the school to decide if you will be allowed to receive a diploma and participate in the graduation ceremony. Some schools will allow you to participate in graduation and receive your Certificate of Completion at the ceremony. Other schools may not even allow you to be admitted into the school at the senior, or 12th-grade, level. CIEE cannot change the policies that the high schools have regarding foreign exchange students. Likewise, CIEE cannot move you to a new school so that you may receive a diploma. It is important to remember that regardless of the school's policies, you came here to experience the American culture and lifestyle while perfecting your English. Don't allow the issue of diplomas and graduation to ruin your experience.

Making Friends

You will be eager to meet other young people and form friendships that will last a lifetime. If you have a teenage host sibling, perhaps he or she will introduce you to his or her friends and you will find common interests. Or you may decide to find different friends, which is also fine. To do this, you will have to be outgoing and assertive as you attempt to meet people.

The school day offers little time for socializing with classmates, and you will find that each class has different classmates, possibly making it harder to get to know any one person very well during the school day. Some students report that making friends is harder than expected. Understand that it may take some time before you develop strong friendships with other students. American students often pass each other in the halls and say "Hello, how are you?" as they walk by but do not stop to talk. Do not be offended by this and decide that Americans are unfriendly and not worth knowing. This is simply a standard greeting. You can talk to them longer at other times—perhaps in the halls before classes start in the morning, at lunch, or, better yet, after school at an activity you have joined. The best thing you can do to make friends is to join clubs and sports or youth group activities to meet other people with common interests. Do not be shy about talking to other students. With your host family's permission, invite classmates for visits or activities after school or on weekends. As a precaution, your host family will want to meet your new friends before you go out at night with them. Graciously allow your host parents this courtesy, as they have only your best interest in mind. Finally, be prepared that some students may seem superficial to you and you may get discouraged from wanting to form friendships. Some exchange students have experienced this in the past, but the successful exchange students did not let it prevent them from finding good friends. The difference is that it takes more work and determination, but ultimately the reward is long-lasting friendship.

Dating

Different host families have different rules and expectations regarding dating that their children and you must follow. Ask your host parents about these rules so that you can prevent any misunderstandings or problems. Exchange students who become seriously involved with one boyfriend or girlfriend find that their experience may be severely limited and is often filled with more emotional ups and downs than usual.

Being an exchange student is a challenge. You will come across many obstacles

in your path throughout your time abroad. However, this semester/year also has the potential of being one of the most important learning experiences in your life. With the knowledge of what is expected of you, along with some tips on how to handle conflict or problems that arise, you are well on your way! There is a support system in place, such as your Local Coordinator or Support Coordinator, so take advantage of it and remember that you are not alone. As a reminder, the support toll-free number is 1.800.448.9944.

MAKING IT WORK

The Expectations of CIEE

During your experience, CIEE expects that you will represent yourself, your natural parents, your country, and the program well. Remember that you may be the only person from your country that your host family and host community ever meet! The impressions that you leave on these people will influence their ongoing impressions of your family and your country. Additionally, it will reflect on the program as well. You are an ambassador in every sense of the word. CIEE expects that you will work hard to improve your English skills, as this is presumably one of the main reasons you decided to join an exchange program. Increase your vocabulary, practice correct language usage, and even learn some slang!

Finally, we hope that you will enjoy the many opportunities that are waiting for you, that you will experience as much of the American lifestyle as you can, and that you will appreciate the generosity of everyone who has contributed to making your exchange a successful and rewarding experience. Express your gratitude at every opportunity. Show others how much you appreciate them. Saying “please” and “thank you” will mean a lot to your host family and Local Coordinator.

Having a Successful Experience

An exchange student who succeeds at having an enriching, interesting, and unique exchange experience is usually one who is open-minded, tolerant, flexible and patient and has a great sense of humor. Understanding that there is often more than one way to do something or to think reflects the quality of open-mindedness. The ability to cope with differences on a continuous basis is tolerance. Flexibility with your thoughts and with your lifestyle will allow you to adjust to the many differences you will encounter. Patience will help you develop an appreciation for those differences. And having a sense of humor—being able to laugh at yourself and at the world in general—will promise you some enjoyment of even the most difficult situations.

When you encounter a problem, ask yourself:

- Have I been open-minded about this issue?
- Have I been tolerant to other ways?
- Am I flexible in the way I approach this problem?
- Have I been patient in finding a solution?
- Is there anything funny about my actions or the actions of others that together we can all laugh at?

In cooperation with your CIEE Local Coordinator, the CIEE support team works from the Portland main office to assist with student concerns during the program year.

The support team staff maintains close communication with your Local Coordinator to receive regular updates on your adjustment throughout the year. While the Local Coordinator is the first source of assistance locally, the Support Team is always available as a resource for you, your host family, and your host high school. The Support Team is trained and experienced in managing conflict, assisting with cultural adjustment issues, and providing support for emergency situations. Our staff is knowledgeable, experienced, and has lived amongst other cultures. They will be more than happy to answer questions, provide assistance, or discuss your concerns.

The support team can be reached by calling 1.800.448.9944. Office hours are between 9am-5pm EST. Staff are also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for emergency support through our after-hours emergency call system, which can be reached by dialing the above number and following the prompts for emergency service.

You can also learn more about the High School USA support team at <http://www.ciee.org/highschool/students/support.aspx>

Convalidation

Please note that depending on your country's requirements, you may need to convalidate your grades from your high school in the US. Convalidation is the process that exchange students use to translate their US grades and transfer credit for their home high schools abroad. Generally, this process involves sending an official school transcript to an appropriate government agency to receive a seal of validation, which certifies the grades as authentic. The convalidation process is different for every country. Please contact CIEE if you have questions about your home country's specific instructions.

Program Rules

When you applied to the High School USA program, you and your parents signed an agreement. Most likely, you'll have no problem in following the guidelines that you agreed to, as they are quite basic and help to make sure that you and your host family have a wonderful experience. Make sure that you read them and that you understand them. You'll hear about them at your orientation, and your Local Coordinator and the CIEE staff can help you if you have any questions.

What happens if the program rules are not followed? Our goal at CIEE is to help you and your host family through the ups and downs. We all make mistakes now and then, but it's important that CIEE students show maturity and a willingness to correct mistakes. Your Local Coordinator will work with you to change any behaviors or actions that do not comply with the CIEE program guidelines. It's all about communication. Be open and honest with your host family and your Local Coordinator. Show flexibility and a willingness to change when your actions are creating conflicts and uncomfortable situations. As long as you take this

approach, almost any situation can be resolved. Of course, if a resolution cannot be found within a reasonable amount of time, CIEE has certain disciplinary procedures to follow, which you will read about in this section of your handbook. We hope that these steps won't be necessary, but it's good to know about them as you begin your experience. We're here to support you throughout your time here in the USA, and we will do everything possible to guide you in making it work!

CIEE PROGRAM RULES

1. Obey the regulations of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa and the U.S. State Department.
2. Abide by the federal, state, and local laws of the United States and host town. Under these laws, consumption of alcoholic beverages by anyone under the age of 21, and the use or possession of illegal drugs is prohibited. These laws may also include local curfews. Be aware of these laws, and be mindful that they may be different from laws in your home country and that violations may lead to serious punishment.
3. Attend an arrival orientation as assigned by CIEE, including In Community Orientation (ICO) as needed. Students cannot arrive in the U.S. for personal travel prior to orientation.
4. Accept placement with a family of any race, color, religion, or sexual orientation. Live as a member of your host family, respect your host family and their rules and customs, and accept the responsibilities given to you. CIEE, in its sole discretion, is responsible for choosing a student's host family placement.
5. The Applicant is responsible for considering his or her personal health and safety needs when applying for and participating in the Program. CIEE retains the right, in its sole discretion, to refuse an applicant if the applicant's participation in the program may indicate any risk to the applicant's own health and safety or to the health and safety of others.
6. Read and carefully consider all materials made available that relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural and religious conditions in your host town. Be aware of local conditions that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions.
7. Respect the host high school's guidelines and policies, including those with regard to conduct, delinquency, grade levels, participation in graduation ceremonies, and issuance of a high school diploma.
8. Maintain a C+ average or higher in all courses at the host high school. Courses must include English (other than English as a second language) and an American History course and two other academic courses. Attend

school every day that it is in session and follow school policies with regards to absences.

9. Students may be required to hire tutors, at their expense, if they cannot maintain passing grades through the regular course of study.
10. Students must maintain monthly contact with their Local Coordinator.
11. Travel only with adult members of the Host Family, the Local Coordinator, official school, or group organized trips. Students must obtain written permission from CIEE's national office if traveling by air, travelling internationally and/or if travel results in school absences. Travel with or visits from natural family members are not permitted before January of the ten month program and not at all during a five-month program. Any visit from the natural family must be approved by CIEE before the family members travel to the U.S. Visits from friends from your home country are not permitted at any time during the program. Travel to your home country is not permitted during the program, unless approved by CIEE.
12. Driving or purchasing a motorized vehicle (car, motorcycle, boat, or any other vehicle requiring a driver's license) is prohibited. Driving is permitted with the instructor of an official driver's education course and only during class hours. This is solely for the purpose of obtaining a driving license and does not allow the student to drive after a license is obtained.
13. Have access to a minimum of \$200 to \$300 U.S. dollars per month to cover personal expenses. Do not borrow money from your host family. Do not lend money to your host family.
14. Students who indicate that they do not smoke on their application may not smoke during the program year. Students who indicate that they do smoke must follow any and all guidelines their family and community may have in regards to smoking. In some States, communities, and schools, it is against the law for students under a certain age to smoke or possess tobacco or tobacco related items.
15. The program terminates within two weeks after the last day of school, and arrangements must be made to return home within this time.
16. Students should not have previously participated on an academic year or semester high school program in the U.S. in either the J-1 or F-1 category.
17. Students with Dual U.S. citizenship or who hold a U.S. Passport are not accepted on the J-1 exchange program.
18. Participation in extra-curricular activities or athletics is not guaranteed. Employment is not allowed on either a full or part-time basis while on the J-1 visa high school program. However, students may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.
19. Student's primary intention for participation in the program, and primary focus during the program, should be the cultural exchange experience and not graduation from an American high school or enrollment in an American college or university.

20. Students are expected to complete a minimum of 8 hours of community service per semester
21. Students may not initiate any life-changing decisions or actions while on the program, including changing religions (though a student is free to explore the tenets of any religion), pregnancy or marriage. Students may not alter their body in any way while on the program (for example, with tattoos or body piercings).
22. Students may be dismissed from the program if they suffer from a life-threatening medical condition or debilitating psychological condition.
23. Refrain from obscene, indecent, violent or disorderly conduct while on the program. Students shall also refrain from perpetrating any form of sexual harassment, or engaging in any self-endangering behaviors. In addition, students shall refrain from any other conduct likely to bring the U.S. State Department or CIEE into notoriety or disrepute.
24. Any material that a student publishes on the internet (such as on social networking sites or blogs) that violates Program Rules will be grounds for student dismissal.
25. Acknowledge that CIEE reserves the right to dismiss any student who fails to uphold any and all of the above rules. In the event that a student is dismissed from the program, the parent or natural guardians are responsible for all additional expenses incurred above those of the regular program costs. In the case of early dismissal, program fees will not be reimbursed.
26. Acknowledge that CIEE is not acting in the capacity of in loco parentis with respect to you, and that your natural parents still retain all of their rights and obligations and are expected to maintain regular and frequent (once or twice per month) contact with you telephonically, electronically or in person (if possible, after five months of your program start date).

Program Discipline

The CIEE High School USA program has a formal disciplinary system with different steps of discipline. These steps are: warning, probation, and dismissal. Disciplinary decisions are made by the High School Exchange program support team based on communication with the Local Coordinator, the student, the host family, and the high school. There may be cases in which a student is immediately put on probation or even dismissed from the High School USA program without following the procedure outlined below. Such cases are rare and would involve serious infractions of CIEE rules or U.S. law. CIEE High School USA's management team would make the decision for immediate disqualification.

***The US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is the program sponsor for CIEE's grant students. Students must adhere to an additional set of rules as stated in their program application. The ECA is informed of behavioral issues and probations. Program dismissals are*

requested by CIEE and approved by the ECA.

The normal disciplinary procedure is:

Warning

If a student violates a rule or conducts him or herself in inappropriate ways, the Local Coordinator may request a written letter of warning.

A member of the CIEE High School USA staff will issue this letter. The Local Coordinator, host family, and natural family (through the overseas office) will be sent copies of the warning letter when it is issued. The intent of the letter of warning is to make the student aware that this is a serious situation. The points of the warning include:

- Informing the student of the specific unacceptable behavior or program violation, and that there should be no further infractions
- Advising the student that CIEE has discussed the student's behavior with the Local Coordinator. He or she should speak with the Local Coordinator or a CIEE staff member if the reasons for the warning letter are unclear
- Advising the student that through the CIEE office, the overseas partner and the student's parents have been formally informed
- Informing the student of the specific steps that must be taken by the student to avoid probation, which is the next possible step in this process
- Identifying a time frame for reviewing the student's performance

Probation

Probation is the next step in the discipline process. If a student does not meet the terms of the letter of warning and continues the inappropriate behavior, the student will be placed on probation. This is a very serious action and is taken only by the CIEE office. The intent of formal probation is:

- To advise the student that he or she is in very serious trouble and if the student does not adjust his or her behavior, withdrawal from the CIEE High School USA program will result
- To inform the student that the overseas partner and the student's natural parents have been formally notified of the student's disciplinary status and possible consequences

Dismissal

Ultimately, when a student is dismissed from the High School USA program, his or her program sponsorship and insurance will become invalid and the student must return to the student's home country.

Dismissal is the most serious step in the discipline process. It is a step everyone would like to avoid. Therefore, all alternatives are exhausted prior to taking this step. If a student continues to violate the rules and fails to adhere to the conditions of the letters of warning and probation, CIEE will terminate the student's participation in the High School USA program. Some more serious violations of the program rules (such as drinking, using drugs, or driving) can result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Academic Policy

There is a strong academic component to the program and you are expected to work hard and maintain a C+ average in all course. We recognize that going to school in a different language will understandably pose its challenges, students in poor academic standing are expected to make an extra effort to improve their grades. Students who receive a failing grade will be placed on academic warning. Failure to improve grades in the stated time frame will result in academic probation, and possible dismissal from your High School USA program. Students in poor academic standing are expected to make an extra effort to improve their grades. They should consult with teachers about ways in which they can work toward improving their grades in the affected classes. Students may be required to hire tutors, at their expense, if they cannot maintain passing grades through the regular course of study.

Continuing Academic Study in the U.S.

The High School USA program is a five- or ten-month academic program. All participants receive J-1 visa sponsorship through CIEE for a maximum of 10 months. Each student's program terminates two weeks after the school end date. At this time, all host family responsibility, and supervision and medical insurance end. CIEE advises that students depart the U.S. at this time. During the program, many students express interest in pursuing future study in the U.S., either at the secondary school or collegiate level. Some students even participate in the SAT or TOEFL exams during their stay in order to gain admittance to U.S. colleges and universities. While CIEE supports the academic interests of exchange students, it is important that the focus of your program remains dedicated to your current host family, friends, and school. Students who devote excessive time to their studies and college applications risk distancing their host families, teachers, and peers, and ultimately creating problems within the home and at school.

Students should be aware that the High School USA program is, first and foremost, a cultural exchange program. While all students are required to maintain a C+ minimum grade average, CIEE values a balanced student who devotes equal time to studies, school activities, host family, and community. Any student who devotes excessive time to the pursuit of advanced study may be placed on probation and risks disciplinary action.

Insurance

All CIEE students are covered by health insurance. Most students are covered by a policy arranged through CIEE. Other students are covered by a health insurance policy arranged by one of our partner organizations. When visiting a doctor's office or medical facility, take your insurance card and Permission for Emergency Treatment Form. Be sure to contact CIEE at 1.800.448.9944 if you require medical attention. CIEE has trained staff to assist you in finding medical providers to answer your insurance questions. If the doctor's office will not bill the insurance company for you, then you are responsible for paying the doctor's office and you will then need to submit a claim form to the insurance company for reimbursement.

A Message from the United States Department of State

The Exchange Visitor Program
WELCOME BROCHURE
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Private Sector Exchange
United States Department of State

The Department of State welcomes you to the United States. We are pleased to receive you as an exchange visitor. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will acquire an experience in the United States, and as an ambassador of your country, you will help educate the American people about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations that are most relevant to you.

The Exchange Visitor Program

The U.S. Department Of State administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

Sponsors

The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer Exchange Visitor Programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide participants with pre-arrival information, and an orientation and monitor their activities throughout their exchange program.

Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. Exchange visitors are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.

Responsible Officers

Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019) and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of

your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is the sponsor. Unless provided with specific contact information by your sponsor, you should contact the person whose name and telephone number can be found on your Form DS-2019.

Exchange Visitor

An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an Exchange Visitor Program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Regulations and Rules

It is important that you understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws, and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your responsible officer will help you keep current with any change that may affect your J-1 visa status. Some requirements of federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

SEVIS Information

Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This system is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor's program during their stay in the United States.

Activities and Program Provisions

You entered the United States in a specific program category, and are required to engage in that category and the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions and regulations relating to your exchange category.

Maintenance of Valid Program Status

You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program.

Required Notifications to Sponsors

You must inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence) or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your Exchange Visitor Program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting responsibilities to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program status.

Current Regulations

The Exchange Visitor Program Regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations (22 CFR, Part 62). The regulations are generally available for review at the office of your sponsor, universities, law schools, or large public libraries. They are also available on the Internet at exchanges.state.gov.

For Further Information

Additional requirements that may apply to you are set forth in the Exchange Visitor Program Regulations. Review a copy of the current regulations and consult with your responsible officer.

Contacting the Department of State

The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

The Office of Designation and the Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance are located at:

U.S. Department of State
Office of Private Sector Exchange Designation
Private Sector Programs Division ECA/EC/D/PS
SA-4E, Room E-B001
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Department of State Emergency Hotline: 1.866.283.9090
Fax: 202.203.5087
Email: jvisas@state.gov
Website: <http://exchanges.state.gov>

The Office of Designation is organized under two divisions: the Academic and Government Programs Division, and the Private Sector Program Division. Contact information and the exchange categories for the divisions are identified below.

The Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance is responsible for monitoring designated sponsors for regulatory compliance. Inquiries regarding sponsors and the program can be emailed to Compliance by using JVisas@state.gov.

Worldwide Welcome!

We hope you've found the information in this handbook to be useful! Refer to it often for tips and advice. If there's anything that you're not sure about, contact your Local Coordinator. You can also contact the High School USA support team at 1.800.448.9944 for assistance during business hours, or for emergencies outside of normal business hours, please call 1.800.448.9944.

Once again, a warm welcome to the CIEE worldwide family. Our goal is to make sure that you and your host families have a positive and memorable experience. Please contact us if there's any way that we can help you. You can always email us at support@ciee.org and we look forward to connecting with you on social media.

Best wishes for a wonderful experience!

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Founded in 1947, CIEE is the world leader in international exchange, delivering the highest-quality programs that increase global understanding and intercultural knowledge. We provide participants with skills, competencies, and experiences that elevate their ability to contribute positively to our global community.

CIEE: Council on International Educational Exchange

300 Fore Street
Portland, ME 04101
Tel. 800-448-9944

www.ciee.org/highschool
highschool@ciee.org

THE WORLD IS OUR CLASSROOM. JOIN US.