



Educational Consortium Institute

J-1 VISA STUDENT HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Educational Consortium Institute (ECI) welcomes your child to our Exchange visitor Program in California. We are looking forward to sharing this year with your child. Our goal is to help the students in this program increase their fluency in English, deepen their understanding of American culture, and provide them with a safe and friendly environment in which to mature and develop in a positive and productive manner.

As you prepare to send your child to our program, there are many questions you will have. We have prepared this document to help answer those questions. If at any time you have further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM INSTITUTE

Educational Consortium Institute (ECI) is a California nonprofit corporation. ECI's goal is to offer opportunities for high school-age students from other countries to come to California to study the language and culture for one semester or longer to strengthen cross-cultural understanding and communication, and thereby strengthen the bonds between our respective countries.

Students in this program will be placed in a public or private school and will stay with a nearby host family or school dormitory. Each student will be assigned a Homestay Coordinator. In turn, the Homestay Coordinator is managed by ECI's Homestay Supervisor. A Bilingual Assistant will also be available to students in this program to facilitate communication and assist the student, host family, school, and Homestay Coordinator.

Approximately once each month, ECI will conduct a cross-cultural event in which students, host families and community members are encouraged to participate. These activities may include outings to local attractions, cultural demonstrations, potluck meals, etc.

Educational Consortium Institute does not discriminate against students or applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, disabilities, or national or ethnic origins.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for ECI's Exchange Visitor program, applicants must complete the following items as part of their application package:

1. Program Application signed by applicant and parents or guardian with \$100 USD nonrefundable deposit.
2. Official TOEFL results **or proof of English proficiency** to pass Embassy interview and to successfully participate in American academic classroom. ECI is aware that some students do not have access to TOEFL test centers and is willing to accept other assessments of English ability.
3. Homestay Application.
4. Two evaluations from recent teachers or school administrators.
5. Official school transcripts and attendance records from school currently attending.
6. Letter from current school indicating that applicant is in good standing.

To be accepted into the program, the student must be currently enrolled at a school in their home country and may not have yet entered the 12th grade.

The application process requires that a deposit be paid with the application. Once the DS2019 is issued a copy will be sent to you for confirmation that you have been accepted into the program. At this time, one year's fee for the J-1 program must be deposited with ECI. ECI will then send the original documents for your US Embassy interview. **The applicant must have the original DS2019 form before they can go to the US Embassy or Consulate.** The applicant must then go to the U.S. Embassy for an oral interview. The individual conducting the interview will determine whether or not to issue the J-1 visa to the applicant based on the results of the oral interview. ECI has no influence over that decision, and all decisions by U.S. Embassy staff are final. If the student used an agency, the agency must wire one year's to ECI immediately. In all cases it must be before the student leaves their home country, or the student will be refused entry into the US at the point of entry. In the event the student is denied a J-1 visa, 100% of all funds will be returned to the student minus any wiring fees and the \$100 nonrefundable deposit.

SAFETY

Our number one concern is for the safety of the student. We have conducted a thorough interview and background check on the family with whom your child will be staying. We have visited the host family's home on more than one occasion. In many cases, the host families we have chosen have hosted other international students from our programs.

Educational Consortium Institute will provide you with the name, address, telephone number, fax number and email address of your child's host family, Homestay Coordinator, and Homestay Supervisor not less than three weeks prior to your child's arrival in the U.S. Your child's Homestay Coordinator will live not more than 150 miles from your child's host family.

If your child stays in the dormitory of a private school, all contact information will be provided at least three weeks prior to the arrival of your child.

Your child's Homestay Coordinator will make frequent and regular contact with your child and the host family throughout his/her stay. The coordinator will keep records of all such contacts and note if any issues should arise and what actions have been taken. You and your child will be able to contact the Homestay Coordinator or the Homestay Supervisor at any time.

We encourage participants in this program to contact their Homestay Coordinator immediately should any concerns or problems arise.

HOST FAMILY

Public school students will stay with a host family during the school year. Host families are carefully selected, screened and matched with the student they will host. ECI makes more than one visit to the host family's home prior to the arrival of the student. The Homestay Coordinator conducts an in-person interview with all members of the host family. ECI

conducts a thorough review and background check of each host family before placing a student in a home. Once a student is placed with a host family, he/she is expected to stay with that host family for the duration of the program.

Host families represent the communities in which they live. Families of all ages, with and without children, may host a student. Single-parent families may also host, however, girls will not be placed in single-parent homes where only the father is present. Likewise, boys will not be placed in single-parent homes where only a mother is present.

The host family will provide a private room or a shared room with a child of the same sex and approximate age. The host family will also provide bedding, towels, access to a washing machine and dryer, and meals for the duration of the program.

ECI is available to students and families alike to help resolve any issue which may arise. We encourage students and families to work through any misunderstandings that may occur and to better communicate with one another.

GETTING ALONG WITH YOUR HOST FAMILY

Each host family is different, and as such, what they will be able to offer you will reflect what makes them unique. Some families will live in large homes, others in small homes. Some families will have pets, others will not. Some families will have one parent, others will have two. Some host parents may be young, others will be middle-aged, and some may be older. Some host families will have young children, while others will have older children or none at all. All host families have one thing in common; they have expressed a sincere interest in getting to know someone from another culture and welcoming you into their home as a member of their family.

Here are some general guidelines that will make your stay with your host family mutually beneficial:

- If you are going to be late for dinner, please call your host family to let them know. Provide them with the telephone number and name of the family you are visiting.
- Pick up after yourself. Make your bed every day before you leave and keep your room clean.
- Help with household chores including meal preparation and clean up. Offer to do so without being asked.
- Ask your family if you can invite a friend over BEFORE you extend an invitation.
- Do not make long-distance phone calls unless you are calling collect or using a prepaid phone card, or your own cell phone. Don't make or receive calls after 9:00 p.m. or very early in the morning.

- If you want to join a school club or participate in an outing, please consult your family first. Make sure they can arrange for your transportation to and from events.
- Do not ride public transportation alone until your family, you and your Homestay Coordinator, decides it is safe for you to do so.
- Do not go anywhere at night alone or without the knowledge and consent of your host family.
- If you have any problems with your friends, at school, or with your host family, please talk to your Homestay Coordinator or Bilingual Assistant BEFORE you call your parents.
- Please make sure you understand your host family's rules and abide by them.
- Remember that your host family wants you to have a good experience and be safe at all times. If you ask to do something and they say no, it is probably for your own safety and protection.

MONEY ISSUES

The invoiced price sent to the student or agency handling the students file must be received before the arrival of the student. In the event that your child cancels or leaves the program early the amount owed will be determined by the refund policy, and the remaining funds will be returned to you not more than eight weeks after your child returns home. Costs associated with bank wires, bank drafts and postage will be deducted from the total amount due you. ECI will use any remaining funds to pay for any additional expenses incurred by your child such as the cost of a return airplane ticket or medical treatment. If no such funds are needed, the entire amount will be returned in accordance with the standards set forth above. In the event your child is required to return home for violation of school rules, or violation of US law, there will be no refund.

Should your child withdraw from the program for any reason, he/she must return to his/her home country immediately.

Funds for your child should be wired to the following account, and all wire transfer fees should be paid by the sender.

Bank Name: Bank of America Aptos Branch #1109
 783 Rio Del Mar Blvd. Aptos 95003 USA
 ABA No. 121000358
 Educational Consortium Institute
 Account No. 11095-02681

We recommend that you send your child with traveler's checks and/or a credit card to pay for any incidental expenses during his/her stay. Please do not send him/her with a lot of cash. Further, we recommend that you exchange money in your home country, as the

exchange rate in the U.S. is generally less favorable. The cost of this program includes placement in a public/private school, placement with a host family, bilingual assistance, regular contact with the Homestay Coordinator, and participation in ECI-sponsored cross-cultural activities.

Your child will be expected to purchase personal items, such as toiletries, clothing, school supplies and other incidentals with his/her own money. Further, we recommend that you provide your child with extra spending money for snacks and entertainment.

It is now possible for international students to open an American bank account so you can wire funds directly to your child.

ACCIDENT & HEALTH INSURANCE

Students are required to have insurance in effect which covers them for illness or accidents for the entire term of their stay in the United States. It is the responsibility of the participant's family to purchase this policy prior to departure from his/her home country. Proof of insurance must be submitted to ECI prior to the arrival of the student and the US Customs Officer may require the student to provide proof of insurance before allowing them to enter the United States..

Minimum coverage must provide:

- Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness;
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500;
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the student to his or her home country in the amount of \$10,000;
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident

As insurance policy secured to fulfill these requirements:

- May require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions which is reasonable as determined by current industry standards;
- May include provision for co-insurance under the terms of which the student may be required to pay up to 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness; and
- Shall not unreasonably exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of this program

Any insurance policy, plan or contract purchased for the above purpose, must, at minimum, be:

- Underwritten by an insurance corporation having an A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above, an Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of "A-I" or above, a Standard & Poor's Claims-paying Ability rating of "A-" or above, a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of B+ or above; or
- Backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the student's home country

Any participant in this program who fails to maintain the insurance coverage according to the standards set forth above or who willfully misrepresents the coverage he/she has secured will be required by law to return to his/her home country.

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Immunization requirements for the U.S. are much stricter than those in other countries because of the large number of immigrants who come to the U.S. each year. Your child must have the required immunizations to be enrolled in the Exchange Visitor Program. All required immunizations must be completed prior to your child's arrival in the U.S. Completed medical forms must be received thirty days in advance of your child's arrival.

If your child would like to participate in one of our educational trips, payment is due not less than thirty days prior to the beginning of that trip. Because most trips involve advance non-refundable purchase of plane tickets and admission tickets, students who cancel after signing up for a trip will not be eligible for a full refund. Trips during the winter break may include skiing, Disneyland, San Francisco to name just a few.

VISITING YOUR CHILD

ECI asks that you schedule your visits to coincide with school holidays so that your child does not miss regularly scheduled classes. ECI will provide you with a list of the exact dates of those holidays.

If you need help with transportation from the airport, rental car or hotel reservations, please let ECI know. ECI will be happy to help you make those arrangements if you can inform them of your needs well in advance. Please be advised that public transportation in California is not usually convenient. We recommend whenever possible that you rent a car during your visit. If you plan to stay in the area for several days and will not be renting car, ECI can make arrangements with a private company for a driver for you. The cost for a driver for the day ranges from \$150 to \$200, depending on your scheduled course.

TRANSPORTATION FOR YOUR CHILD

ECI will pick your child up at the airport on the day he/she arrives and take him/her back to the airport on the day he/she leaves. If your child plans to visit a friend or relative during one of his/her school holidays, ECI will make the reservations for his/her trip. We do not recommend that he/she fly alone until his/her English skills are such that he/she can easily make his/her needs known. If he/she is to fly alone, we must have your permission in writing. ECI will make every effort to provide your child's transportation to and from the airport. If no one from ECI is available, ECI will arrange with a private company to transport your child to and from the airport. **For safety reasons, we ask that students consult ECI before making any reservations.** ECI is happy to help students purchase airplane tickets at the best available rates.

TOEFL

ECI can provide your child with the opportunity to take a Computer-Based TOEFL. As of this year, the cost is \$160 per test. ECI will register your child and transport him/her to the test if desired. There is no additional fee for registering and transporting your child to the test. However, ECI needs a three month timeframe in order to make a reservation due the testing facilities filling up quickly.

ATTENDANCE & GRADES

Each school has its own rules for attendance and grades. A student may not be absent from class without the permission of the host family. Upon returning to school, your child must have a note explaining the reason for his/her absence and signed by a host parent.

Students are expected to maintain at least a "C" average. If your child is having trouble in any classes, ECI can help arrange for a tutor. If your child drops below a 2.0 average, he/she may be required to attend a special class after school.

BEHAVIOR & ATTITUDE

Students in the Exchange Visitor Program are expected to demonstrate good judgment with regard to their behavior and attitude. Participants are strictly forbidden to smoke, drink alcohol, use illegal drugs or engage in any illegal activities. Participants who do so will be removed from their host families immediately and returned to their home country at their own expense.

Furthermore, students are expected to respect and abide by the rules and expectations set by their host family and school. ECI's Homestay Supervisor shall have the authority to terminate a student's study in California if he/she determines the participant is unfit to continue.

CONTACTING YOUR CHILD AND ECI

All participants will be given detailed information on their host family prior to arriving in California

For ECI, you or your child may reach ECI at any time by calling 831-684-2661 or fax 831-684-2753, or email contact@eci-ca.org.

We recommend that your child bring their own cellular phone, purchase a prepaid telephone card in the United States, or bring a card with him/her from home that he/she can use to call you. Your child can get assistance from an operator in her native language in most cases. Please have your child ask his/her host family for help contacting an operator for assistance.

PREPARING FOR CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

ECI has found that students experience ups and downs the first several months that they are in the United States as they adjust to living in a different culture. Students have to become accustomed to living with an American family who may have different standard of neatness, punctuality, manners, diet and sleep schedules. Every effort is made to place your child with a compatible family. ECI encourages students and host families to work with one another to resolve any issues that may arise. We consider this process a valuable component of the students' education.

For some students, this is the first time to experience being away from home. Students are expected to do their own laundry and clean their own room and be generally independent.

ECI encourages students to become involved in school clubs and activities as a way to make new friends. We ask that students remember to advise their host families of their extracurricular activities. In some cases it may not always be possible for the host family to provide the transportation back and forth to these events. Please encourage your child to use his/her homestay coordinator to help facilitate his/her needs while in the U.S.

SOME CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

You will discover many differences between the way things are done in the U.S. and the way they are done in your own country. Here are some differences you may notice, but remember, not all Americans will conform to these generalizations.

Americans...

- do not peel their fruit because the skins are thin and easy to eat
- use dinnertime to talk as a family about how their day has gone
- usually shower in the morning
- use soap in the bath
- don't usually take their shoes off when entering the house
- usually stay awake when driving in the car to look at the beautiful scenery
- value independence; children are usually asked to help with household chores & meal preparation
- turn out the lights and turn off the heat when they are away from home to conserve energy
- make eye contact and smile
- value a good sense of humor
- rarely use umbrellas
- usually share responsibilities for taking care of the children and between father & mother particularly if both parents work
- have many hobbies that they enjoy in their free time
- have strong opinions about many things and express those opinions freely
- consider the number 7 lucky and the number 13 unlucky
- sometimes associate personality traits or future happenings based on their astrological sign (Pisces, Gemini, Scorpio, Cancer, etc)
- eat large portions
- eat more bread and pasta than rice
- come from many different cultures so the way your host family does something may be completely different from the way other American families do that thing
- celebrate birthdays of everyone in the family
- usually celebrate Thanksgiving with their family
- usually celebrate New Years with their friends
- usually celebrate either Hanukkah or Christmas, but not both
- often go to church or temple on a regular basis

We look forward to helping your child further their English language education and know that he or she will enjoy their time here in the United States.

ECI has brought over 2,300 students to the United States, with most of these students staying with a host family. We have been very fortunate having great host families and wonderful students. There are behaviors that can result in the immediate cancellation of your visa and program that would require you to return home early. Please use common sense. If it is against the law or school rule, don't do it! If you are not sure if you should or can do something, ask your teacher, host family or an ECI representative. We are here to help and protect you. The following behaviors will cause your program to be terminated.

- Drinking alcohol: The purchase, possession and/or use of alcoholic beverages is forbidden.
- Dangerous Activities: Skydiving, hang gliding, parachute jumping, parasailing, jet skiing, bungee jumping and riding hot air balloons is forbidden.
- Tattoos: Tattoos of any type are forbidden
- Driving: Exchange students are forbidden from driving.
- Drugs: Possession or use of illegal drugs is forbidden.
- Smoking is not permitted and is illegal for minors.
- Insubordination to school personnel, ECI staff, or host family will result in immediate termination of program.
- Any violation of the conditions and regulations, such as working, missing school, will result in termination of the program.
- Leaving the country. Students can return home for emergencies or the longer vacations, or even tour another country with their host family or school tour. Before a student can leave the United States they must notify ECI and have their I-20 endorsed. If a student leaves without this endorsement they will not be allowed back in the US and their funds are forfeited.
- Students traveling in and outside of the country for more than one day and overnight must notify their Supervisor. The names, address and phone numbers must be given to ECI before the start of any trip.

Termination of Program:

At the end of studies you are required to leave within one week. ECI must be notified of any planned stay beyond this one week and the location of the stay. ECI is not responsible for any student staying beyond this grace period. ECI accepts no responsibility for students staying beyond the end of school or end of their semester.

LIABILITY WAIVER

We, as the parents or legal guardian of the student in this program hereby release all officers, Board of Directors employees, representatives and volunteers from and against all claims, damages, losses and expenses including attorney fees arising out of this exchange program. We also release anyone directly or indirectly employed by ECI or anyone for whose acts any of them may be liable, except where caused by the active negligence, sole negligence, or willful misconduct of State of California, their officers, employees, representatives and volunteers.

Signature of father or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

Signature of mother or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION

We authorize ECI to make decisions on my behalf for participation in activities that may require my child to travel, such as school activities, home leave travel by car, bus or train. Under the rules and regulations of the schools, laws, regulations and the policy as established by ECI. ECI will contact me for my permission for any trips outside of these conditions.

Signature of father or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

Signature of mother or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We have read, understand or have explained to us the student handbook and the rules and regulations as they apply to this program. We also acknowledge that we have received the student handbook and accept responsibility for knowledge of its content.

Signature of student: _____ date: _____

Signature of father or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

Signature of mother or legal guardian: _____ date: _____

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR PROMOTION

I understand that by participating in this program I also give ECI permission to take and use my pictures to send to my family and use for promotional purposes.

Signature of student: _____ date: _____

PROBLEM SOLVING

While most homestays are positive experiences for both the host and the student, occasionally misunderstandings arise. ECI is available to host families and students alike on a 24-hour basis to help you resolve any issues, problems or questions that may arise.

In addition to your Homestay Coordinator, you may contact ECI's officers at 831-684-2661; fax 831-684-2753; or email contact@eci-ca.org.

It is our hope that participation in this program will provide the foundation for a life-long friendship between you and your student.

ECI Contact Numbers

ECI Office: 831-684-2661 Always leave a message on this line while
Attempting to reach us on individual phones lines

ECI Fax: 831-684-2753 www.eci-ca.org

Barney Eredia 831-750-2538 barney@eci-ca.org

Lynn Schmitt 831-688-8283 Home
Exec. Director 831-818-9788 Cell
lynn@eci-ca.org

Eriko Yokoyama 831-724-7133 Home
Liaison Director 831-419-9372 Cell
eriko@eci-ca.org

Shellie Ervin 831-661-0287 Home
Student Advisor 831-419-9644 Cell
Shellie@eci-ca.org

Coordinator _____

ECI REFUND POLICY

The following is the refund policy for all ECI programs.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS:

All applicants are required to submit one year's fees in advance of receiving the original I-20 for F-1 or the DS2019 for the J-1 visa.

In most cases only the school required application fee (unless specified by the issuing school) will be required to start the application process until the issuance of the I-20 or the DS2019.

Once the I-20 or DS2019 has been issued by the school or this agency a scan of the original will be sent to the applicant. The fees must then be sent to the ECI bank account (see below) before the originals will be sent. The applicant must have the original I-20 and DS2019 plus our letters of sponsorship and guardianship to go for the visa interview. Bank Information:

Bank of America Aptos Branch #1109
783 Rio Del Mar Blvd., Aptos, CA 95003-USA
ABA No. 121000358
Educational Consortium Institute
Account #: 11095-02681

In the event the applicant does not receive their visa, all fees will be returned to the application minus wiring fees (currently \$65.00) within 30 days of notification.

REFUNDS FOR ACCEPTED STUDENTS:

All students are expected to report to and attend the school designated by the issuing school or agency. There are no refunds for students deciding to return home early or for transferring to another school before completion of one year of attendance at the issuing school or agency.

There is no refund for any expulsion or suspension from the school. If the student must return to their country because of family emergency or health reasons, a partial refund may be granted on a per diem basis based on a case-by-case situation with final decision residing with ECI.