



**United States Department of State**

*Educational and Cultural Affairs*

*Washington, D.C. 20522*

August 5, 2020

Dear Secondary School Administrator:

Thank you for considering hosting a secondary school student during the upcoming academic year.

Sponsors of programs in the Secondary School Student category of the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State, are currently recruiting secondary schools throughout the United States to participate in this valuable exchange program. A special aspect of this program category is that it requires students to participate in educational and cultural experiences unique to the United States. Exchange students enroll in a classroom-based accredited secondary school and live with an American host family for up to 12 months. After their stay in the United States, exchange students return home to share with family and friends what they learned from their time in our country. Through your school's participation in this program you would be directly furthering U.S. public diplomacy efforts.

This letter is to confirm that, despite COVID-19, programs in the Secondary School Students category will continue to operate during the coming school year when certain health and safety conditions are met.

This letter also confirms that the Presidential Proclamation of June 22, 2020, suspending the issuance of visas for some participants in the EVP, does not apply to those participating in the Secondary School Student category in the EVP. Although participation by students from certain countries may be affected by existing official travel restrictions and the temporary inability of certain U.S. embassies and consulates to issue visas due to the pandemic, many exchange programs for secondary school students will soon be underway.

We note, however, that if a potential host school is not in a position to offer in-person instruction, then it is not, in the Department's view, fully ready to host an exchange student. Schools that will only offer 100 percent online instruction during the fall semester are not suitable to serve as hosts for this educational and cultural exchange program. On the other hand, if your school is able to host an international secondary school student for in-person instruction for all or some of his or her studies, please inform the sponsor that contacted you. There are secondary school students who have already received their visas who are eager to participate in the program. With your concurrence and cooperation, the Department of State hopes secondary school students can begin their program at your school.

In agreeing to accept an exchange visitor, you should know that there is no guarantee that a particular exchange student will be able to obtain a visa for travel to the United States. Since March 20, 2020, in response to significant worldwide challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of State has temporarily suspended the routine issuance of

visas at many U.S. embassies and consulates. In order to participate in the program, the student must be able to arrive at school in time to get academic credit for a full course of study for a semester or school year.

More information about the Exchange Visitor Program, including frequently asked questions, may be found at [J1visa.state.gov](http://J1visa.state.gov). Thank you very much for your interest in becoming a part of the Exchange Visitor Program for the academic year 2020-21.

Sincerely,

Office of Private Sector Exchange  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs