



U.S. Department of State

**Bureau of Educational and Cultural
Affairs Private Sector Exchange**



January 3, 2025

Dear Exchange Teacher:

Welcome to the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program! This is the beginning of an exciting adventure. You will make friendships that will last a lifetime, get practice in speaking English, and partake in new traditions. Since 1949, thousands of teachers from around the world have come to share their language, culture, and customs with their American schools and the broader local community. Your participation in this exchange program fosters a greater understanding between our two countries and works towards peaceful relations throughout the world.

The primary purpose of your participation in the BridgeUSA Exchange Visitor Program is to foster mutual understanding and cultural exchange between our countries. This program is designed for you to gain valuable experience and then return to your home country to share your newfound knowledge and skills. While there is a waiver process available under certain circumstances, as outlined in Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, it is important to understand that this program is not intended as a pathway to permanent employment in the United States. We encourage you to fully embrace the exchange experience and to be prepared to return home at the end of your program, enriched by the experiences and insights gained during your time here.

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

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Their information is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is their responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Their emergency telephone contact number can be found in your program orientation materials, and is available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Add this phone number to your contact list.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline 1-866-283-9090, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov. Please add the helpline number and the email address to your contacts to ensure you receive important communications from the Department. Your sponsor and the Department of State are here to ensure your success and safety on the program.

As exciting and enriching as international exchange can be, it may present challenges. The Department of State's concern for your health, safety, and welfare includes your mental health. There are many resources available to help deal with mental health issues. Please reach-out to <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help/immediate-help> for immediate help. BridgeUSA also has other available resources on our website, www.j1visa.state.gov, for you to check out.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca A. Pasini". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

Rebecca A. Pasini
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange