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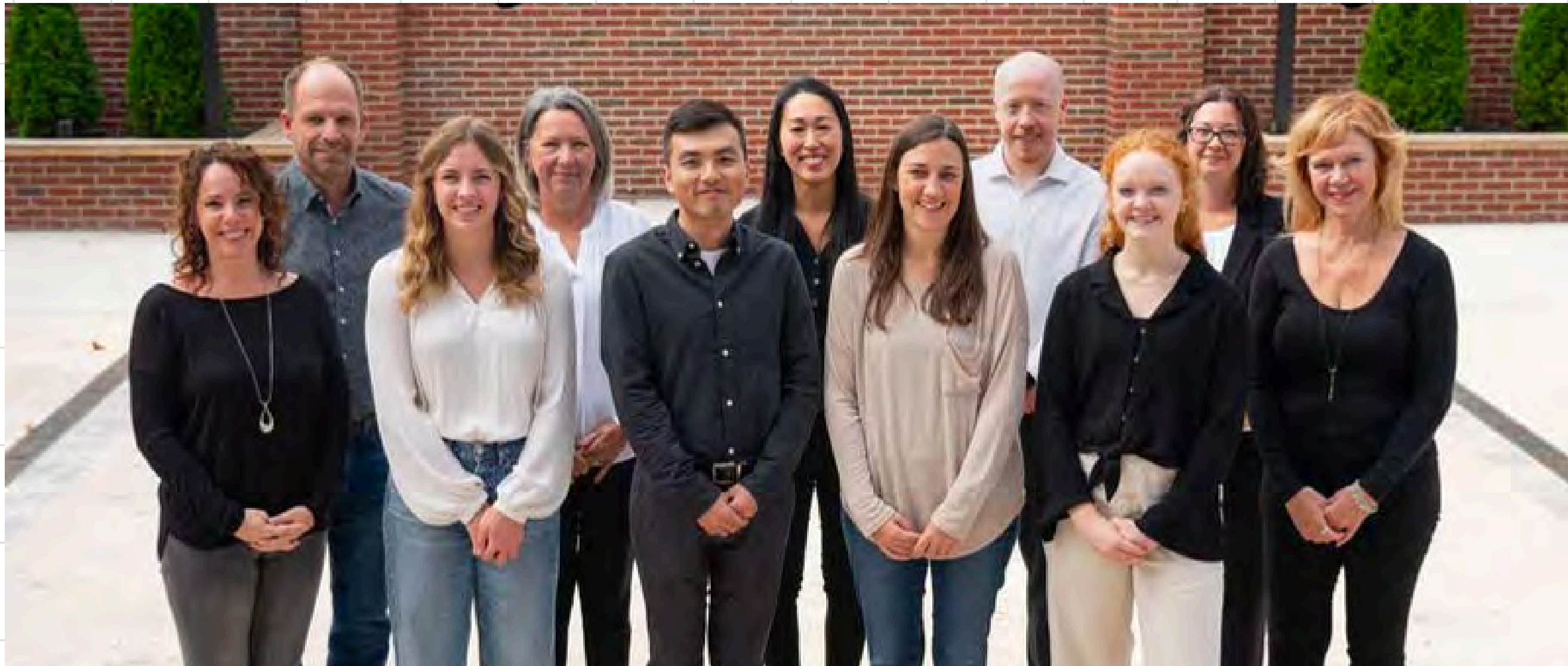
**Teach Exchange  
USA  
Program Orientation**

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# Cenet Welcomes You!

We're happy you're here. As your sponsor organization, Cenet is here to assist throughout your time as an exchange teacher. We hope you find this orientation helpful — remember that you can always contact Cenet with any questions or concerns.



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# A Message from our Executive Director:



Welcome! I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your decision to join the Teach Exchange USA Program. As many of you who have lived abroad know, not only will this experience help to expand your understanding of the world, but you will also gain considerable knowledge about your own individual strengths and weaknesses. In fact, simply accepting the challenge to work abroad inherently demonstrates qualities such as independence, self-confidence, adaptability, tolerance, and an enterprising spirit. While you are in the USA, I would like to encourage you to contact Cenet. Having spent more than 15 years living outside the United States, I am always eager to provide my own individual insight if you ever have any specific questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,  
Robyn Walker

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# Participate with a Purpose



BridgeUSA Programs are an incredible opportunity to share your culture, engage with Americans, make friends from around the world, and participate in meaningful cultural exchange. Please take a moment to watch [this video](#) to see a BridgeUSA program alum reflect on his program experience, 45 years later. We hope this inspires you to get out there and make the most of your time in the U.S!

# Pre-Arrival Preparations



# Program Overview

As a Teacher on the J-1 BridgeUSA Program, you will:

- Teach full-time in your certified subject and grade level
- Share your home culture with U.S. students and community members
- Facilitate **two required cross-cultural activities** per academic year: one to highlight your home country for a U.S. audience, and the other to connect U.S. students with students in your home country
- Attend orientation sessions, check-ins, and professional development with your sponsor, Cenet
- Abide by the length and location of your program as outlined in your offer letter and on your DS-2019 Form





# Travel Preparations

Prior to arrival to the U.S., you should research the area where the school is located. This is where you will be living and working, so it is important that you understand the environment.

Share your arrival information with Cenet and your host school prior to departing your home country.

Before you leave home, plan your transportation from the airport to your housing.

Some host schools will meet you at the airport; others will not. Make sure you understand the arrangements with your host school before you leave.

# Other Preparations

Make sure you have access to the appropriate amount of money.

- Arrival/Emergency Funds: Minimum of \$3,500. Your first paycheck will not be available immediately. You will need money upon arrival to pay for such things as transportation from the airport, rent, housing deposit, food, and personal expenses. In addition, you may need money for unexpected expenses, such as a personal, national or international crisis during your program.

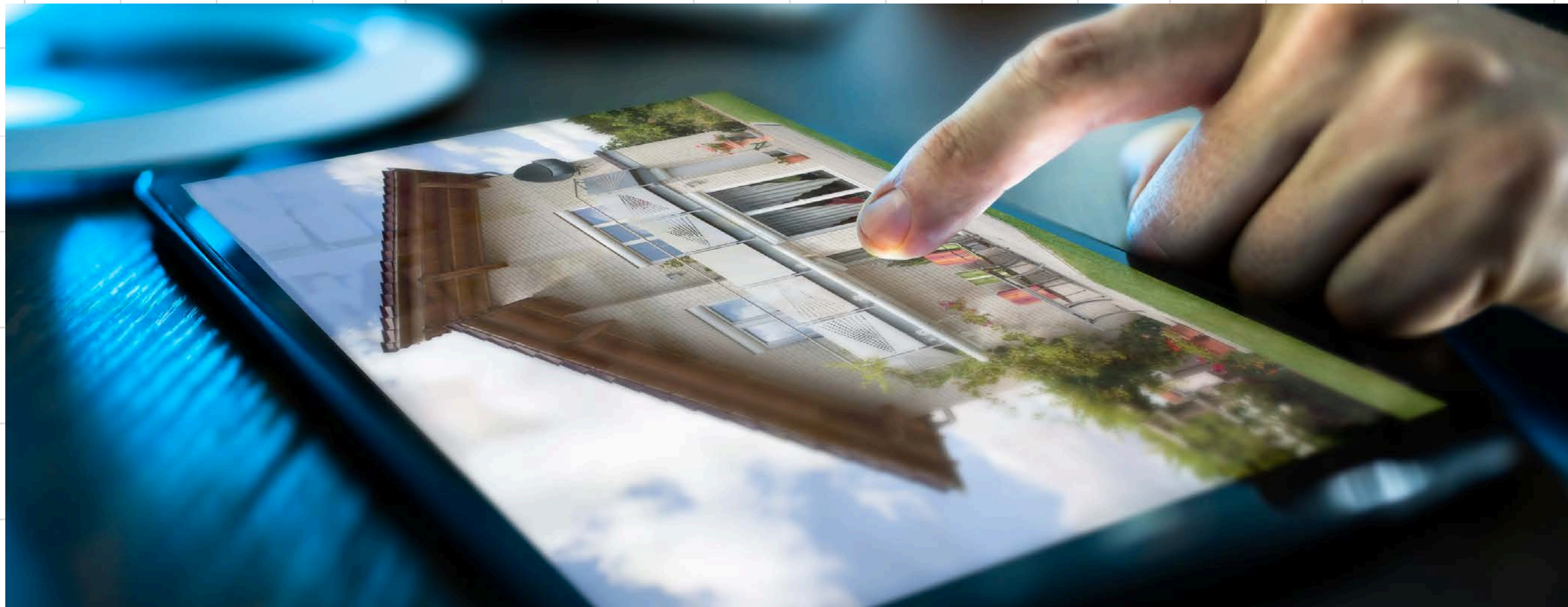
Remember that your online presence can affect how people see you, including coworkers, supervisors and visa officials. Ensure that your social media accounts are set to "public" prior to your visa interview – the visa officer will likely review your online presence as part of their process.



# Housing

You are responsible for finding your own housing in the United States. Your host school may provide advice, support, and suggestions.

In addition, there are several popular platforms for finding housing, whether you're searching for a short-term or longer-term rental, or looking for a roommate. Your participant guidebook has additional details.



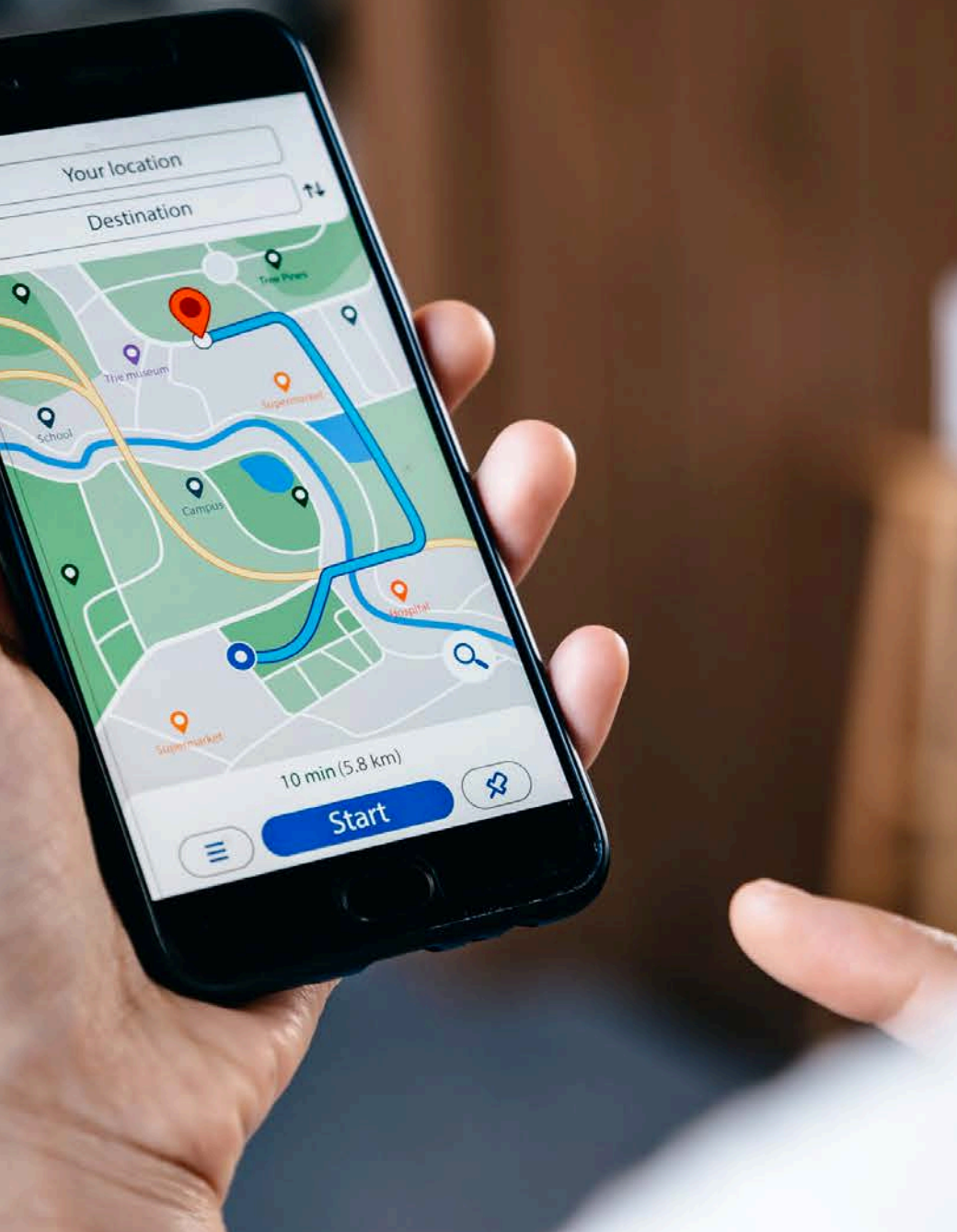
# Transportation & Other Resources

Availability and accessibility of transportation and resources varies greatly by region. We recommend that you:

- Research your host city or town before arrival
- Ask your host school for a local orientation packet
- Use tools like Google Maps, Yelp, or official city websites

## Transportation

- Rural areas have limited or no public transit so you'll need to rely on shared "carpool" rides or personal vehicles.
- Major cities have buses, trains, and/or subways.
  - Use apps like Google Maps, Moovit, or local transit apps for routes and schedules.
  - If public transit is available, check if monthly passes or teacher discounts are available.
- Uber and Lyft operate in many areas, but they may be expensive over time.



# Life and Customs in the U.S.

## Workplace Norms:

- Teachers are expected to be punctual, prepared, and professional.
- Collaboration with colleagues and open communication with parents is encouraged.
- Teachers often participate in staff meetings, professional development, and school events.

## Everyday American Customs:

- Greetings such as “Hello,” “Hi,” and “How are you?” are common and often casual.
- Personal space is important. Direct eye contact is seen as respectful.
- Tipping is customary in restaurants (15–20%), salons, taxis, and delivery services.

## Cultural Adjustment Tips:

- Expect some culture shock; it’s normal and temporary.
- Ask questions—most Americans are happy to explain local norms.
- Stay open-minded and engaged with your community.



# Beginning Your Program in the U.S.



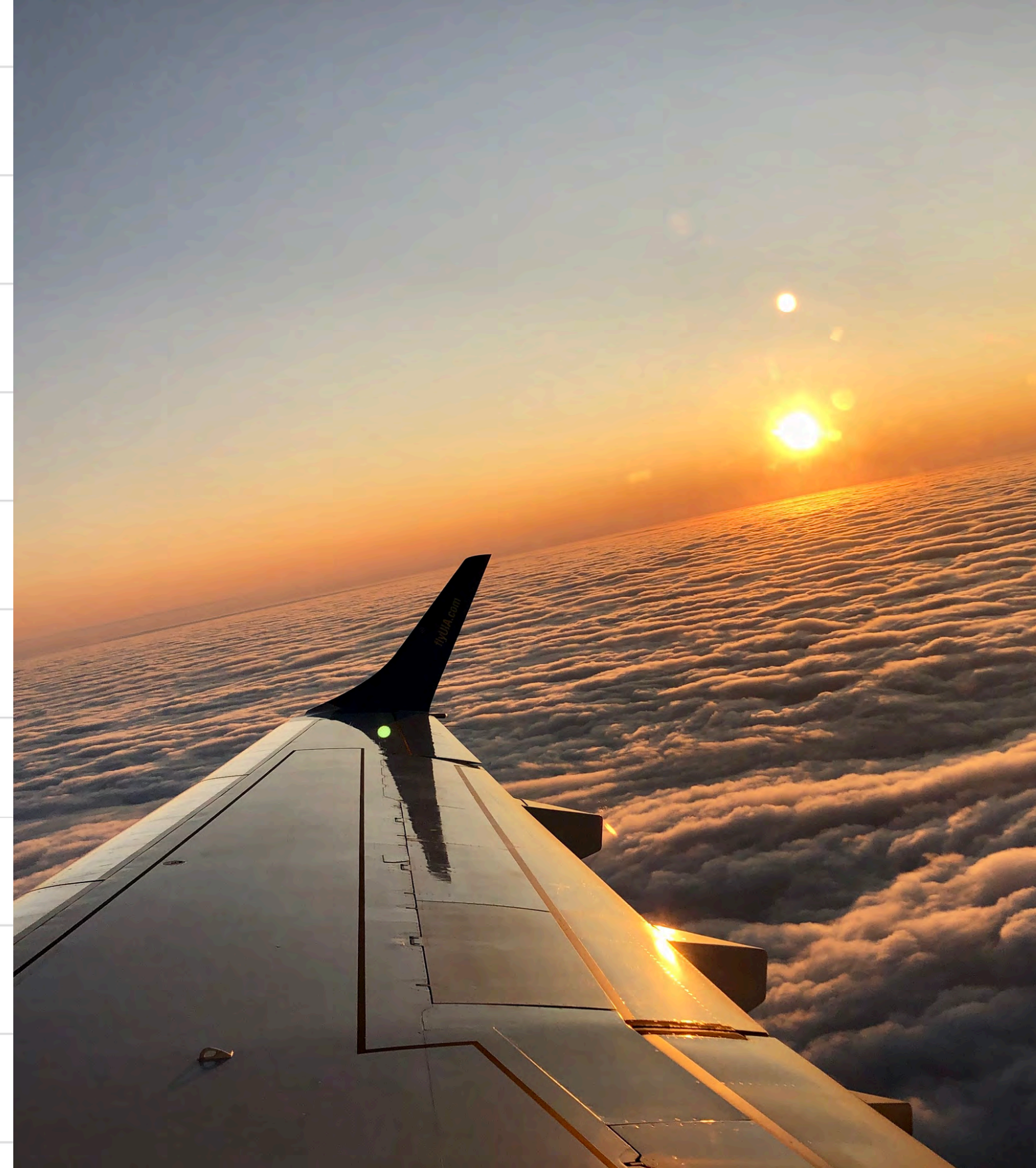
# Upon Arrival

You must **notify Cenet within 72 hours of your arrival in the United States.**

- This arrival notification allows Cenet to activate your health insurance and inform the Social Security Administration and the U.S. State Department of your entrance to the United States.

## **3 ways to submit your arrival notification:**

1. Online Activation (preferred): <https://cenetone.org>
2. Email: [teacher@cenet.org](mailto:teacher@cenet.org)
3. Call free: 1.866.512.3638



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# Host School

If concerns arise during your program:

1. Arrange a meeting with your supervisor and try to reach a solution.
2. Even if you are upset, always remember to showcase professionalism, maturity, and respect when discussing your concerns with your supervisor.
3. If the issue is not resolved, contact Cenet.

**You should not leave the host school shown on your DS-2019 Form without authorization from Cenet. This may result in the termination of your program.**

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**In the event of an emergency or a serious issue, please contact Cenet as soon as possible.**

# Social Security Number

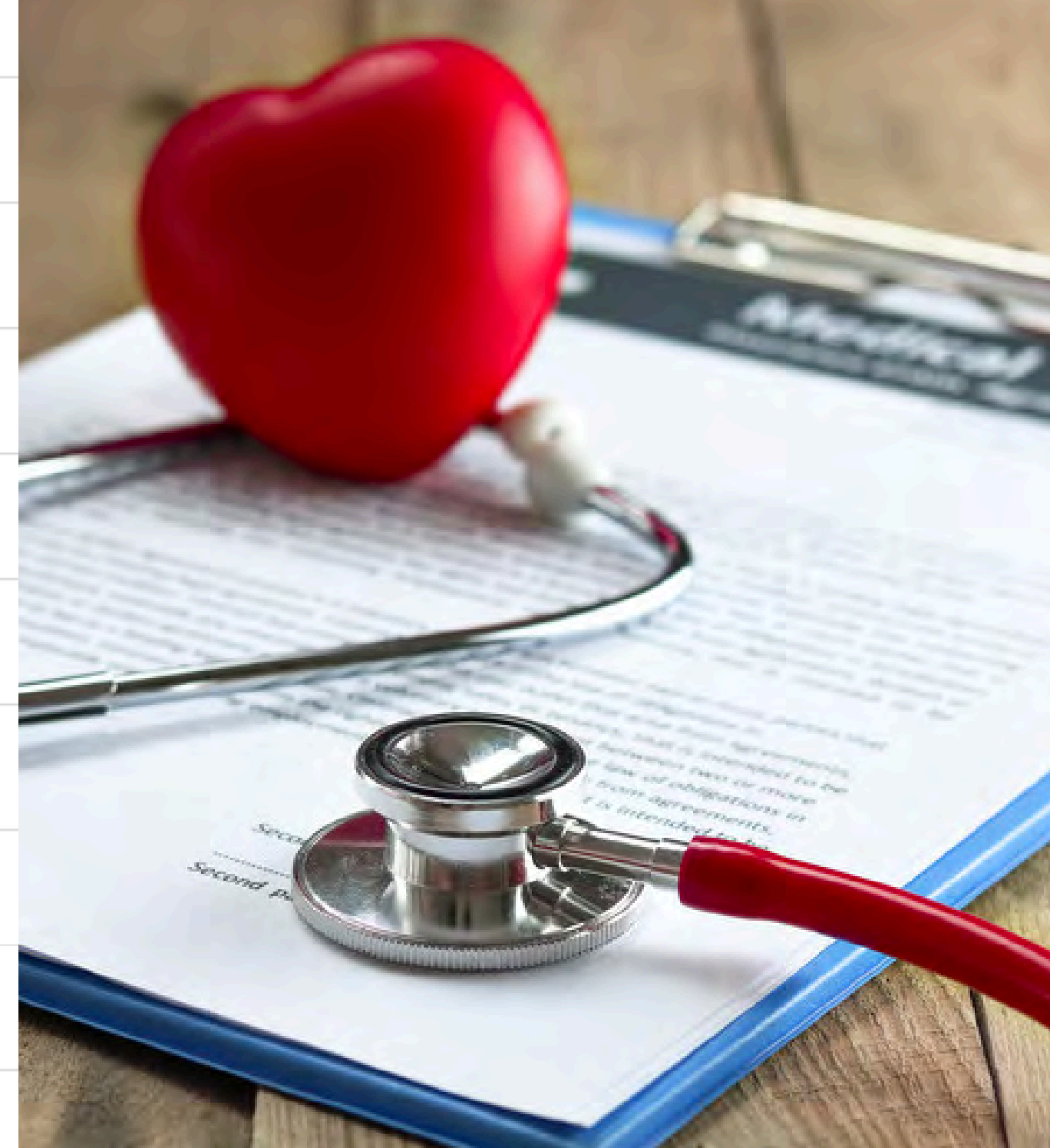
- After you have notified Cenet of your arrival to the U.S., please wait at least 5 days before applying for the Social Security Number.
- You will need to take the following documents with you to the Social Security Administration when applying:
  - DS-2019
  - I-94
  - Offer letter
  - Passport (valid for 6 months beyond your program's end date)
  - Program sponsor letter from Cenet
- It may take several weeks for the number to be issued. You may teach while the card and number are pending. If your host school has questions about this, please have them contact Cenet.



# Health Insurance: Introduction

- You will be covered under a Cenet-arranged health insurance policy for your first 90 days. This insurance will be activated within two days of your arrival notification.
- The U.S. healthcare system is very different from most countries.
- Healthcare in the U.S. is expensive. Your insurance does not cover everything.
- Dental care, eye care, preventative care, and pre-existing conditions are not covered. Consider visiting your doctor before leaving for the U.S., as well as consider getting a flu shot.
- Always carry your health insurance card.

After 90 days, you must be enrolled in an alternative policy, such as your school's employee health insurance plan, to comply with U.S. State Department regulations. Please contact Cenet with any questions about selecting an additional policy.





# Health Insurance: Fees

- You will usually pay a deductible per illness or injury. A "deductible" is an insurance-related fee.
- You will usually pay a deductible per hospital emergency room visit per covered illness (this fee is often waived if you are admitted to the hospital).
- You may be asked to pay for prescription medication upfront and then submit a claim to the insurance provider to receive reimbursement.
- Some medical services may require co-payments. A "co-payment" is a fixed amount you pay for a healthcare service, even if you have insurance.

Check your insurance policy for more details.

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# Health Insurance: Seeking Treatment

- Use a Virtual Doctor service, such as Teladoc, when possible.
- For a minor illness/injury, go to a walk-in clinic, urgent care center, or doctor's office.
- Hospital emergency rooms are expensive – do not go there unless it is a TRUE EMERGENCY.
- Call 911 if you need emergency assistance (e.g., ambulance)

For more information about seeking treatment, visit the Cenet Healthcare Zone\* to:

- Find a doctor
- Access telehealth services
- File and track claims
- Access virtual emotional wellness support

\*Available with your Cenet-arranged insurance policy during your first 90 days



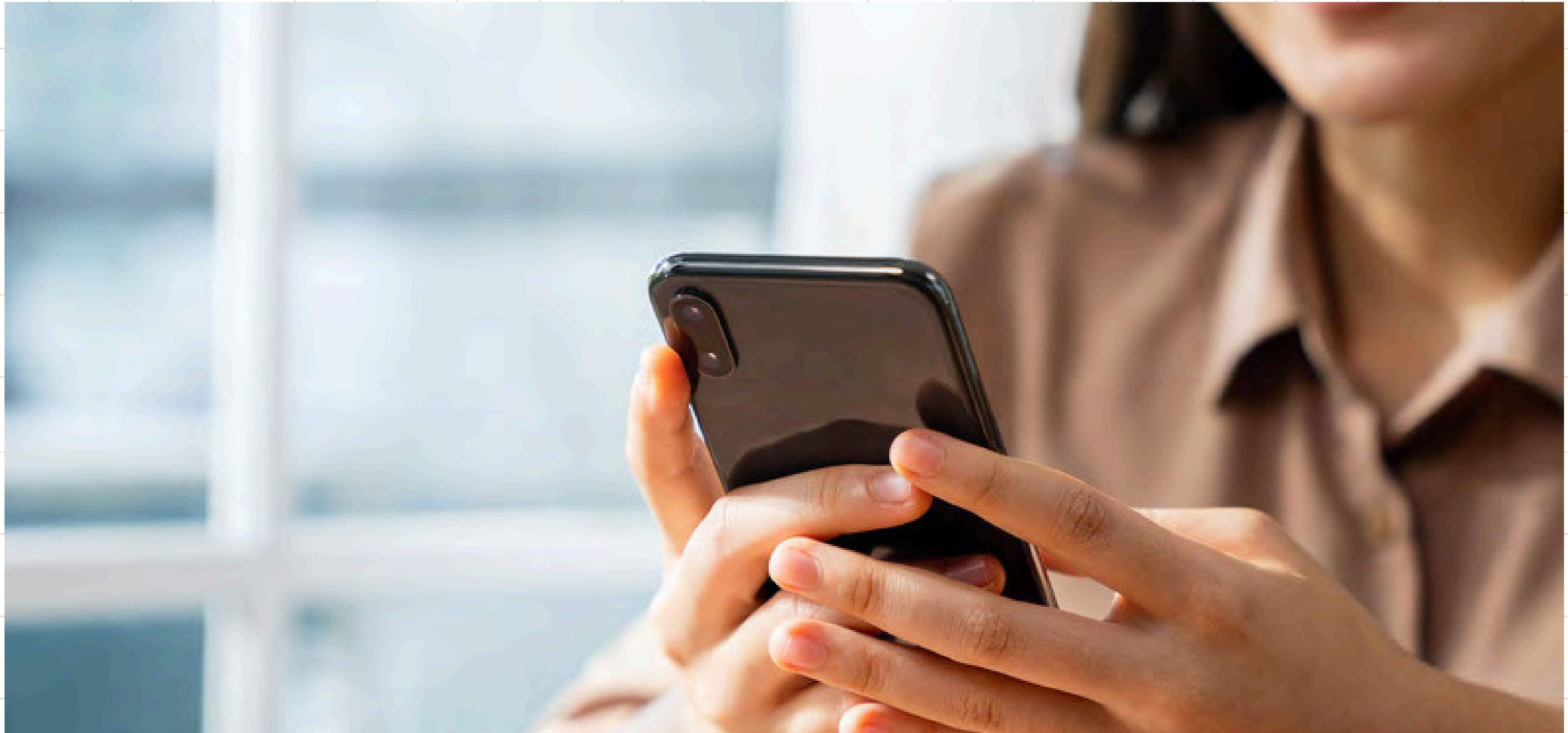
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# Traveling Outside of the U.S.

- If you want to travel outside of the U.S. during your program, you must obtain a travel validation from Cenet.
- To receive a travel validation, please do the following at least two weeks before your departure:
  1. Ask your supervisor to email Cenet their approval for the dates of your travel
  2. Confirm that your visa has not expired
- The travel validation is valid for one year from the date of issuance. If you leave the U.S. multiple times during the year, your employer must send Cenet an email to confirm the dates of each trip.
- Please note that Cenet participants cannot travel outside the U.S. for more than 30 days at a time.



# Communicating with Cenet



# Staying in Contact with Cenet

You must maintain contact with Cenet throughout your program. This includes but is not limited to:

- Notifying Cenet of your arrival and housing address
- Checking your email and responding to all messages
- Notifying Cenet immediately of any changes in living arrangement or employment status
- Notifying Cenet if you plan to travel outside the U.S.
- Notifying Cenet of departure arrangements
- Submitting cultural activities to Cenet
- Replying to all check-in and evaluation requests
- Contacting Cenet in the event of any issues or concerns

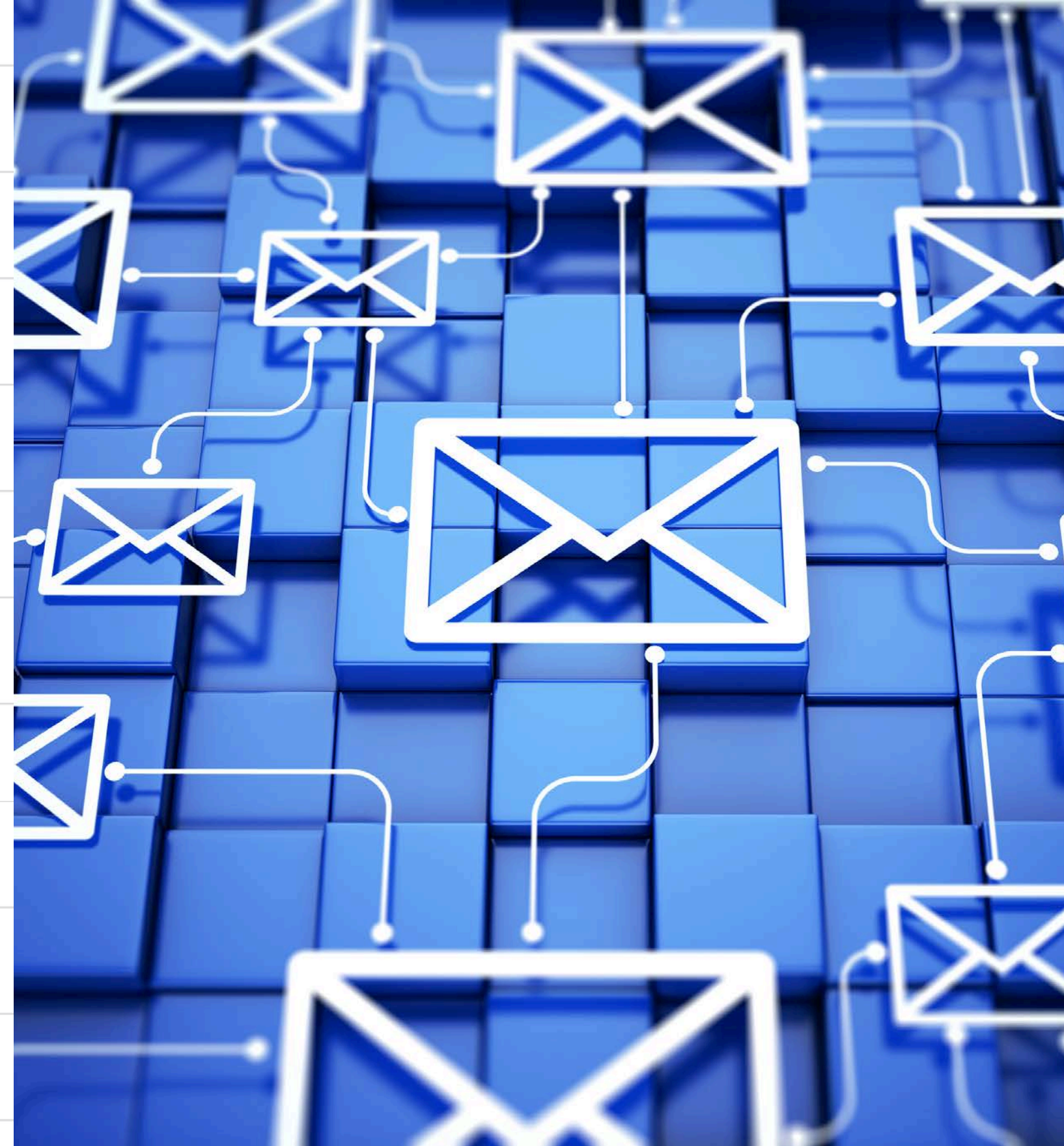


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# Emails from Cenet

- Cenet will send important messages and reminders via email.
- Cenet will also send mid-term and end-term evaluations.
- Your email should be checked at least twice weekly.
- Do not unsubscribe from Cenet emails.
- You must answer all Cenet emails within 10 days or by the deadline stated in the email.
- If you change your email address, notify Cenet immediately.

**Cenet must know your housing address and telephone number at all times.**





# Required Cross-Cultural Activities

As part of your program, you are required to organize and conduct two cross-cultural activities per academic year.

1. One should highlight your home country for a U.S. audience
2. One should connect American students and students in your home country

You will be asked to submit cultural activity reports to Cenet.

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# Required Cross-Cultural Activities: Ideas

Here are some ideas for your required cultural activities!

## **Classroom-Based Activities**

Show-and-tell about your country; thematic lessons; fun language lessons; pen pal program; virtual guest speakers from your home country

## **Community Engagement**

Organize a Cultural Night at the library or community center; organize or take part in volunteer projects to share your culture; represent your country at a cultural booth at a fair or festival; host parent workshops about cultural differences in education and family life

## **Share U.S. Culture With Your Home Country**

Blog or social media updates; virtual tours or class introductions – have your American students introduce their school to students in your home country





# Cultural Activities

We also encourage you to take part in non-required cultural activities as much as possible during your program.

Examples of cultural activities:

- Visiting a museum or historical site
- Attending a sports event, concert, or play
- Celebrating American holidays
- Exploring your host city or region
- Traveling throughout the U.S.
- Visiting national parks or other local natural sites
- And many more possibilities!

**If you need assistance finding ways to experience U.S. culture or share your own culture, please contact Cenet. We are happy to help you!**

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# Program Regulations and Expectations



# Program Regulations and Expectations

- Contact Cenet upon your arrival in the United States.
- Inform Cenet about any changes to your phone number, email address, current housing address, or placement within 72 hours.
- Report to the host school shown on your DS-2019 Form and remain with this host school throughout your entire program.
- Second jobs are not allowed.
- Represent your country and Cenet with dignity and professionalism.
- Maintain contact with Cenet and reply to all Cenet emails.





# Program Regulations and Expectations

- Obtain the necessary authorization from Cenet before you travel outside the U.S. during your program.
- Contact your supervisor with any issues or concerns. If the issue continues, contact Cenet.
- Use the grace period for the intended purposes only and return home afterwards.
- Provide documentation of participation in cultural events.
- Understand that the BridgeUSA Program is not a way to obtain a permanent position in the U.S. or a way to immigrate.
- Understand that Cenet prohibits changes of visa status during a BridgeUSA Program.

# Program Regulations and Expectations

- Comply with all health and safety policies issued by your home country government, the U.S. federal government, the state and local government where you will be residing, your host school, your landlord, and Cenet.
- Understand that failure to comply with health and safety policies will result in program termination and early return home at your own expense.
- Comply with the repeat participation regulation (those who have already completed a Teach exchange program in the U.S. can take part again if they have lived outside the U.S. for at least two years since their last program and still meet the program's requirements).
- Understand that participants may be subject to Section 212(e): the 2-year home country physical presence requirement (learn more about Section 212(e) and applying for a waiver here).





# General Safety Tips

- Always keep important documents in a safe place.
- Always carry your Cenet emergency ID card and your insurance card with you.
- Save copies of your passport and your DS-2019 Form on your phone. Having these documents readily available in emergency situations can be very helpful.
- Do not keep large amounts of cash with you or in your housing. A bank account is the safest option.
- Ensure you have access to at least \$3,500 in arrival/emergency funds.
- Be mindful that traffic and biking rules may differ from your country. Review Cenet's [health+safety resources](#) – following these can help keep you safe!



**Pro tip: Cenet's online guidebook is full of helpful information regarding all aspects of your program.**

**Refer to the Resources section of your CenetOne account.**

# Sponsor Information

## Your Sponsor: Cenet

- 338 Broadway Street, Suite 620
- Cape Girardeau, Missouri 63701 USA

## Officers

- Robyn Walker, Responsible Officer  
[robyn@cenet.org](mailto:robyn@cenet.org)
- Rebecca Anderson, Alternate Responsible Officer  
[rebecca@cenet.org](mailto:rebecca@cenet.org)
- Eleanor Villforth, Alternate Responsible Officer  
[eleanor@cenet.org](mailto:eleanor@cenet.org)
- Greg Pobst, Alternate Responsible Officer  
[greg@cenet.org](mailto:greg@cenet.org)
- Ian Curran, Alternate Responsible Officer  
[ian@cenet.org](mailto:ian@cenet.org)

## Email or Call

- [teacher@cenet.org](mailto:teacher@cenet.org)
- 1.866.512.3638 or 1.573.335.7111



Cenet Headquarters in Cape Girardeau, Missouri

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# Contact Information

For questions or concerns, please email Cenet:

- [teacher@cenet.org](mailto:teacher@cenet.org)

If you need urgent assistance:

- 24-hour Cenet help line: **1.866.512.3638**
- For emergencies, call: **911**

Check out our website for additional information:

- [www.cenet.org](http://www.cenet.org)

We like you. Like us, too!

- Facebook: **@cenetexchange**
- Instagram: **@cenetexchange**



**Wherever you're from, we are happy you  
chose to be a BridgeUSA Participant.  
Enjoy your program!**



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# A Window to the World – See, Learn, and Grow

Cenet inspires future global leaders, through international education and cultural exploration.



[cenet.org](https://cenet.org)