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work exchange usa

Program Orientation



Welcome to the Cenet family.

We’re happy you’re here. As your sponsor organization, Cenet is here to assist throughout your time as a Work + Travel participant. 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 work abroad. 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,
Executive Director

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Pre-Arrival Preparations

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Travel Preparations

- Before you accept a job offer, you should research the area where your host company is located. This is where you will be living and working, so it is important that you understand the atmosphere and environment of the city.
- Share your arrival information with Cenet and your supervisor before you depart your home country.
- Before you leave home, plan your transportation from the airport to your host company and/or housing.
- Some host companies will meet you at the airport; others will not. Make sure you understand the arrangements with your host company before you leave home.

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Other Preparations

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

- **Arrival Funds:** Minimum of $1,000. 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.
- **Emergency Funds:** Minimum of $1,500. You should have access to this additional money in case of 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.

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Housing

- Some host companies arrange housing; others do not. Consult your job offer for information specific to your program.
- In some cases, you may need to make temporary arrangements (e.g., hotel) and then look for longer-term accommodations after you arrive. If you decide this option is best for you, ensure that you reserve a hotel room before you depart your home country.
- Know what you will need to pay upon arrival – in the U.S., you usually pay your first month's rent + a deposit.
- Understand the check-in date/time requirements before booking your flight.

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Housing

- You will be expected to care for your housing in a responsible manner. You must not damage the accommodations or furnishings.
- You will be financially responsible for the pre-determined period stated on your lease and/or housing agreement, regardless of the date you move out of your housing unit.
- If you move out early, your housing deposit may not be returned.

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Transportation

- Transportation options vary among different cities in the U.S. Be sure to research available options in your community.
- Public transport may not be available. You may need to purchase a bicycle or walk between your housing and employment site.
- Transportation details specific to your program can be found on your job offer.

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Beginning Your Program in the U.S.

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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.
- 3 ways to submit your arrival notification:
  1. **Submit online: cenetone.org and select "I'm here."** (preferred method)
  2. Email: summer@cenet.org
  3. Call free: 1.866.512.3638

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In the event of an emergency or a serious problem, please contact Cenet immediately.

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Social Security Number

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

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Health Insurance: Introduction

- Your health insurance will be activated within 2 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.

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Health Insurance: Fees

- A “deductible” is an insurance-related fee.
- You will pay a $50 deductible per illness or injury.
- You will pay a $350 deductible per hospital emergency room visit per covered illness (this fee will be waived if you are admitted to the hospital).
- You will pay for prescription medication upfront and then submit a claim to the insurance provider to receive reimbursement.

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Health Insurance: Seeking Treatment

- Use a Virtual Doctor service, such as Teladoc – this is included in your insurance plan at no charge!
- 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.
- For more information, visit the Cenet Healthcare Zone.

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Traveling Outside of the U.S.

- During programs, Cenet does not approve travel outside the United States, except in special cases.
  - In this case, you need to request a travel validation from Cenet before you depart the United States.
- If you would like to travel outside the United States (e.g., Canada, Mexico), plan your travel during your grace period and depart from that country to go home – do not plan to re-enter the United States during the grace period.

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Communication 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 need to travel outside the U.S.
- Notifying Cenet of departure arrangements
- Sharing your cultural activities with Cenet
- Replying to all check-in and evaluation requests
- Contacting Cenet in the event of any concerns

Emails from Cenet

- Email should be checked at least twice weekly.
- Do not unsubscribe from Cenet emails.
- Cenet will send check-in emails every month.
- Cenet will send important messages and reminders via email.
- You must answer all Cenet emails within 7 days or by the deadline stated in the email.
- If you change your email address, notify Cenet immediately.

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

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Cultural Activities

- The Work Exchange USA Program is a cultural exchange program. Please plan to enjoy U.S. culture in your free time and share your own culture as well.
- We encourage you to engage in cultural activities as much as possible throughout your program.
- Please send us photos, short videos, or updates on your program—we want to hear from you!
- Tag Cenet in your social media posts (@cenetexchange) or use our hashtag (#mycenetstory)!

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Cultural Activities

Examples of cultural activities can include the following:

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

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

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Program Regulations and Expectations

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Program Regulations and Expectations

- Contact Cenet upon your arrival in the United States.
- Inform Cenet of your new phone number and address within 72 hours of any changes.
- Report to the host company listed on your DS-2019 Form and remain with this host company throughout your entire program. Failure to do so may result in termination of your program.
- Participate only at approved host company sites.
- Represent your country and Cenet with dignity and professionalism.
- Maintain contact with Cenet and reply to all Cenet emails.

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Program Regulations and Expectations

- Obtain the necessary authorization from Cenet before you travel outside the U.S. during your program (if approved)
- Use the grace period for the intended purposes only (no working)
- Provide documentation of participation in cultural events
- Understand that the J-1 BridgeUSA Program is not a way to obtain a permanent position in the U.S. or a way to immigrate

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Program Regulations and Expectations

- Comply with all employment, housing, 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 company, your landlord, and Cenet.
- Understand that failure to comply with these policies can result in program termination and early return home at your own expense.

Employment Expectations

- This program is not for everyone.
- There will be challenges.
- There will be good days and there will be bad days – just like you experience at home.
- The challenges you will face represent an opportunity for lifetime learning and personal growth.

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Employment Expectations

- You must be prepared for the position you accepted on your job offer.
- Any medical conditions, allergies or other concerns should have already been disclosed.
- If you do not disclose important information until after you are in the U.S., it could have serious consequences for your program.

Contact summer@cenet.org immediately if you need to report something that could negatively impact your ability to perform your duties.

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Employment Expectations

- You must complete the FULL term of your job offer – make sure that the start and end dates match your travel plans before you sign.
- Second jobs must be approved by Cenet BEFORE you start working – your primary employer is not obligated to change your schedule to fit a second job.

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Employment Expectations

- U.S. employers value being on time, following rules, working hard, and having a positive attitude.
- You must comply with all company policies. This is a job, and you must behave professionally and respectfully – just as you would in a job in your home country.
- Failure to meet employment expectations can result in position and program termination.

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Other Expectations

- This is a cultural exchange program that will help you to better understand our multi-cultural world.
- By participating, you will develop skills in adaptability, flexibility, open-mindedness, tolerance, language awareness, and conflict resolution. These are also key skills of interest to future employers.
- Be mindful that you will be living and working alongside a variety of people. You must be respectful and tolerant.

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Host Company

If concerns at work 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 company listed on your DS-2019 Form without authorization from Cenet. Doing so may result in the termination of your program.

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General Safety Tips

- Keep your important documents in a safe place at all times.
- Carry your Cenet emergency ID card & your insurance card with you at all times.
- 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 room. A bank account is a better option for your earnings.
- Ensure you have access to at least $1,500 in emergency funds.
- Be mindful that traffic and biking rules may differ from your country. Review Cenet's health + safety resources - these can help keep you safe!

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

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Sponsor Information

- Your Sponsor: Cenet
  - 338 Broadway Street, Suite 620
    Cape Girardeau, Missouri 63701 USA
- Officers
  - Robyn Walker, Responsible Officer
  - Chris Gao, Alternate Responsible Officer
  - Caroline Eom, Alternate Responsible Officer
- Email or Call
  - summer@cenet.org
  - 1.866.512.3638



Contact Information

- For questions or concerns, please email Cenet:
  - **summer@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**
- We like you. Like us, too!
  - Facebook: **@cenetexchange**
  - Instagram: **@cenetexchange**

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



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GOING PLACES, TOGETHER.