



INTERNATIONAL  
STUDENT HANDBOOK



*“Stepping into the future!”*



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# ***WELCOME TO USA Program!***

*Dear Intl. Student:*

*Congratulations! According to the USA Program selection guidelines, the directors of the program have concluded that you qualify to participate in our international school study program.*

*We have matched, as closely as possible, your personality and needs to those of an American host family. All host families who participate in our program have met USA Program strict application guidelines and have been personally interviewed by a USA Program Local Representative. This selection and screening process has been established to determine the compliance and willingness of prospective host families to participate in our program.*

*Our goal is that you have an unforgettable experience in the United States of America that will positively impact your life. To help ensure a beneficial result of your stay in the United States, it is important that you keep a positive attitude toward the new people, culture, and experiences that you will encounter. You must be sincere and responsible in establishing a good relationship with your host family, school, and friends.*

*You should begin the preparation process immediately. The pages that follow in this manual will equip you with important information and instructions to follow that will help ease this process. Most students require approximately two months to become fully prepared for their international student experience.*

*We look forward to your arrival in the United States. We pledge to do all that we can to make this experience as rewarding as possible for you.*

*USA Program Board of Directors*



# INTRODUCTION TO USA PROGRAM

USA, United Students Association, Inc. (USA Program) is a Texas non-profit, public benefic educational and cultural organization, which sponsors international high school students in a private educational program to the United States of America. The USA corporate office is located in Mansfield, Texas.

The primary goal of USA Program is to promote personal development, communication skills, academic progress, cultural understanding, and to encourage intl. students to apply the skills and knowledge acquired in the U.S. upon return to their home countries.

Intl. students participating in the USA Program are granted a unique opportunity to increase their intercultural knowledge and understanding of language, geography, history, sciences, and economic systems. The learning of such subjects in the USA Program is unique due to the fact that the intl. students will be completely immersed in a culture that is different from their own, learning on a twenty-four hour day basis through observation and experience.

The intl. students participating in the USA Program will complete a one-week orientation/preparatory course in the Dallas-Fort Worth "Metroplex" of Texas. The qualified staff of USA Program will provide daily instruction in English as a Second Language and the USA Program Orientation for this one-week duration. In the ESL portion of our training course, students will learn basic conversational English skills and become familiar with common English expressions in order to better prepare them for participation in school and family life. In the orientation portion of the course, the intl. students will use the "Student's Manual" to learn useful information on making necessary personal, cultural, and family adjustments; important facts regarding U.S. high schools; and the USA Program rules and regulations.

USA Program and its staff are committed to serving the intl. students who participate in our program with the utmost in excellence and care. As a team, we will continually take steps to refine and improve each and every aspect of the program to ensure that the USA Program exchange experience is one that will be both rewarding and beneficial to the future of all who participate.

## USA PROGRAM STAFF

USA Program is made up of a highly qualified staff whose goal is to serve everyone participating in our program with the utmost in quality and excellence. Descriptions of the staff follow:

### USA PROGRAM DIRECTORS

**Executive Director:** Responsible for overall operation of USA Program; Recruits, hires, and trains Home Country Representatives; Grants final approval for intl. students; Responsible for overseeing and conducting all intl. students arrival preparation and orientation meetings; Matches intl. students with appropriate host families; Evaluates intl. students' performance on a monthly basis; Assists the intl. students and host families with concerns.

**Administrative Director:** Corporate office administrator; Oversees office duties; Assists in placement process of the intl. students; Communicates with private schools, host families, and USA Program Representatives; Maintains all private school, host family, and intl. student records; Reports to Home Country Representatives/natural families.

**Program Development Director:** Responsible for marketing and developing the growth and direction of USA domestically; Recruits, hires and trains Local Representatives/ Coordinators; Specializes in cultural adjustment and supplies ongoing support and assistance to Local Representatives/Coordinator; Selects and approves host families.

**Assistant Director:** Several Assistant Directors are assigned to USA Program Directors for support and assistance to them in order to facilitate the responsibilities of the Directors.

## USA PROGRAM REPRESENTATIVES

**Home Country Representative:** Responsible for screening, selecting, and completing the intl. student application; Conducts pre-departure orientation meetings and provides assistance to the intl. students' natural families.

**Local Representative:** Serves as the local personal contact for host families, intl. students, and high schools; Selects and personally interviews host families; Conducts a host family orientation *meeting*; Responsible for maintaining regular monthly contact with and evaluations of the intl. students, host families, and private schools; Responsible for ongoing assistance and support.



## **USA PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

As sponsors of the intl. student exchange program, USA Program is committed to serving and assisting everyone involved in our program with the utmost in excellence and integrity. The responsibilities of USA Program are taken very seriously by our staff and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✓ Conducting a one-week intl. student orientation (as a group), preparatory, and ESL course in the United States;
- ✓ Providing each intl. student with health, hospital and accidental death insurance coverage.
- ✓ Providing an appropriate living and academic environment for each intl. student;
- ✓ Initializing contact with the private high school officials;
- ✓ Local representative training;
- ✓ Host family selection and orientation;
- ✓ Obtaining the proper legal authorization for transferring the intl. students grades earned in the American high school;
- ✓ Assisting and maintaining regular contact with all Local Representatives, private schools, intl. students, and host families;
- ✓ Promptly addressing any expressed concerns from the host families or intl. students through the appropriate staff members;
- ✓ Maintaining regular contact with all Home Country Representatives and natural families.

## **USA PROGRAM IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

- ☒ The intl. students' personal belongings, including: money, luggage, clothes, passports, and any other personal possessions;
- ☒ The intl. students' violation of local, state, or federal laws;
- ☒ Loaning money or managing financial arrangements and/or obligations of the intl. student;
- ☒ Making travel arrangements on behalf of the intl. students other than those to and from the home countries and/or host cities;
- ☒ Finding an alternative host family for any student unless deemed necessary by the appropriate USA representative and where incompatibility is not caused by the student.

## HOST FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

After approval by USA Program, every host family will participate in an orientation conducted by the Local Representative. Here, the host family will become aware of the responsibilities that they must carry out.

These responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✝ Providing the student with room and board.
- ✝ Offering a comfortable, nurturing, and loving Christian family environment to the intl. student.
- ✝ Treating the student as a family member, not as a guest.
- ✝ Showing respect for the intl. student's privacy.
- ✝ Concern for the intl. student's academic and personal growth progress.
- ✝ Ensuring the intl. student's welfare while he is residing with the family.
- ✝ Maintaining regular contact with USA Program staff and representatives.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Every student in the USA program has agreed to abide by the rules and regulations that are set forth by the program. Equally important to be fulfilled by the students include all, but not limited to, the following responsibilities:

- 🌐 Conducting yourself in a mature manner with adequate self-discipline;
- 🌐 Expressing a sincere desire and willingness to learn about the American culture, language, and become a member of your host family;
- 🌐 Working diligently to maintain good grades in school;
- 🌐 Representing yourself, your natural parents, your home country, and the USA Program in a positive manner at all times.

## WHAT IS A HOST FAMILY?

A host family is a special unit of individuals who open their hearts and homes in order to provide you, the intl. student, with the opportunity of a lifetime in the United States. Host families have proven to be the best teachers in demonstrating the American culture and language to intl. students. The relationship formed with your host family will endure for life. Your host family has made a commitment to welcome you as a member of their family.

USA Program enlists host families from some of the following:

- ✓ Church
- ✓ Word of Mouth
- ✓ Friends
- ✓ Schools



- ✓ Previous Host Families
- ✓ Private Clubs and Affiliations
- ✓ Advertisements in Local Publications

## HOST FAMILY SCREENING AND SELECTION

All prospective host families must meet the strict guidelines set forth by USA Program in order to ensure that each student in our program is provided with proper living conditions. We consider prospective host families from every race and ethnic background. USA is an equal opportunity organization.

Each prospective host family must pass through the following phases for determining acceptance:

### PHASE 1:

When a host family shows an interest in hosting a USA Program intl. student, a Local Representative promptly discusses the details and requirements of the organization and initiates the screening process by setting up an appointment for a personal interview.

### PHASE 2:

A USA Program Local Representative conducts a personal interview at the prospective host family's home with all family members present and records his impressions for review.

### PHASE 3:

If the family passes the initial personal interview, the family is presented with and required to complete the "Host Family Application" form.

#### PHASE 4:

The “Local Representative Report” is completed and contains the Local Rep.’s opinion of the host family as a unit, the local high school, his impression of the home and community, and check references. The “Host Family Application” and the “Local Representative Report” are sent to USA for review.

#### PHASE 5:

Once approved, USA Program will match each intl. student with a host family according the “Matching Guidelines” forms that includes hobbies, interests, personalities, etc.

## MATCHING & PLACEMENT PROCESS

USA Program takes deliberate steps to ensure that all intl. students participating in our international student program have a positive experience and ideal living arrangements. To help us in matching you with the host family that will best suit your needs, you must completely and honestly fill out your application and any additional paperwork that USA Program requests from you. The prospective host families are also required to fill out specific paperwork concerning their preferences and family lifestyle.

At the time that USA Program determines that a family is eligible to host one of our intl. students, we must review several factors before final placement is arranged. Some important matching guidelines and preferences to which we give consideration include allergies, parents, siblings, lifestyle, religion, hobbies and community. It is very important that you notify USA Program immediately if any aspect of your situation has changed, or if you feel that you have additional information that we should become aware of.



Although USA Program makes it a priority to carefully match intl. students and host families based on the information and preferences supplied to us, you should expect some degree of diversity. **Diversity** is the very nature of any intercultural experience. By participating in an international student program, you will have a unique opportunity to learn and share many differences that will be of great value to your life. You will broaden your cultural knowledge and experience a different way of life. You should always strive to view differences as an opportunity to learn something new. By keeping this in mind, your entire experience in the United States will be a success.

# PREPARING YOURSELF

## Two Months Before Departure

Once USA Program has accepted you to participate in our international student program, you should begin preparing yourself for your experience in the United States. This usually requires at least two months' time. It is very important that you spend extra time studying the English language and maintaining high grades in your school.

Your USA Program Home Country Representative will provide you with an orientation meeting prior your departure, which will serve the purpose of providing you and your natural family with information and assistance regarding every aspect of your exchange experience.

The importance of communication is stressed in your orientation meeting, and you should state any and all questions or concerns that you may have at this time. Your Home Country Representative is there to help you minimize or avoid any possible cultural conflicts and will keep you informed of upcoming meetings and events. He will also help you answer the following questions:

1. What type of clothing should I bring to the United States?
2. What personal items and how much spending money should I bring?
3. What type of climate will I face?
4. Is my attitude and frame of mind in check regarding my cultural exchange experience to the United States?
5. Am I adequately informed about my host country, people, and culture?
6. What types of medical exam/vaccinations are required?
7. How do I apply for my Visa?



## CLOTHING

Americans tend to be quite conservative in dress, and you should be as well. The most important factor to consider when packing your clothes is comfort and versatility. Climates in different regions of the United States vary widely. You should become aware of the type of climate that you may expect in your particular host city.

Bring a medium to heavy-weight jacket and long pants. Purchasing clothes in the United States can become quite costly, especially when you're on a budget, so try to come as prepared as possible.

## PACKING

By limiting the amount of your luggage, you will be doing yourself a favor. Try to limit yourself to no more than two suitcases and one carry-on bag. You will be responsible for your luggage, including carrying it to and from airports and other means of transportation. Remember this fact when you pack your luggage. Do not make them heavier than what you, alone, can handle.

Before you pack, use **USA Program Packing list handbook** for all that you need to bring, including prescribed medications, eye glasses, a bi-lingual dictionary, versatile clothing, addresses of friends and relatives, and any other important items.

## PROPER ATTITUDE

Your attitude will “make or break” your experience in the United States. A good attitude will lead to success. You must possess a genuine desire and willingness to learn about the American culture, the English language, and to maintain good academic standing. You will be a “Cultural Ambassador” for your home country, representing yourself, your home country, your natural parents, and the USA program. You must do so in a positive manner at all times.

## MENTAL PREPARATION

Mental preparation for your experience should begin the moment that you complete your application form. You must have a sincere desire to travel and to experience all of the “newness” that the immersion into a culture different from your own will bring. Always keep an open mind. Answering the following questions may help you determine your frame of mind regarding this experience:

- ✓ What are my goals?
- ✓ What do I expect to gain from this experience?
- ✓ What is my maturity level?
- ✓ Will I be able to adapt to a culture different from my own for an extended period of time?



If you were able to answer these questions in a timely and positive manner, then you probably possess the proper frame of mind that is required for the international experience. However, if you have reservations concerning the exchange experience, you should immediately re-evaluate your motives for participating in the USA Program.

# UNDERSTANDING AND SHARING

## THE UNITED STATES

The United States has often been referred to as the “great melting pot” due to all of the diverse cultures that make up its population. In most cases, people throughout the world form opinions about Americans and their culture based on what they see on television, in movies, on the radio, and in magazines. These sources aren't, however, completely accurate.



To have a better idea of the average American, read the following:

- ✎ Americans are not all blonde and blue-eyed. There are numerous cultural groups and looks that make up the American population.
- ✎ Most Americans do not have fast-paced and glamorous lifestyles.
- ✎ Americans are generally conservative and family oriented.
- ✎ Most are not are not racists and are usually polite.
- ✎ Many Americans are affiliated with a religious group and attend church.
- ✎ Most Americans are middle-class and live in houses.
- ✎ In most families, both parents work for financial support.
- ✎ American families usually eat home-cooked meals.
- ✎ Most Americans do not have maids. Household chores are divided among family members.

## YOUR HOME COUNTRY

Just as you desire to gain a wide array of cultural knowledge about the United States, your host family and new American friends will be interested to learn about your home country's culture and people.

Use the information that you have gathered on your “Student's Cultural Perspective” and the Home Country portion of your “Cultural Awareness Questionnaire” to share your country's heritage, history, customs, and significance.

By sharing such information, you will have the reward of furthering the cultural awareness and understanding between people of different nations.

# MEDICAL INFORMATION

USA Program requires that all intl. students participating in our exchange program have complete medical examinations prior to departing their home countries. You will receive a "Student Health Record" form which must be completed in English and signed by your physician.



This form will contain all of your medical and immunization history, as well as the medical release authorization signed by your natural parents. All immunizations listed on the form **must be up to date** (within ten years) before you will be permitted to attend an American high school.

The completion and accuracy of the "Student Health Record" form is imperative. If this form is incomplete, inaccurate, or outdated, the result will be:

- 1) The intl. student will lose time in school classes.
- 2) The natural parents/intl. student will incur extra costs that will not be covered by the insurance policy.
- 3) The host family will be greatly inconvenienced.



In addition to medical examinations, all USA Program intl. students must receive complete dental and eye examinations. Prior to leaving your home country, it is important that you visit your dentist and optometrist for a full examination. With the exception of injury, dental and vision problems are not covered by your program insurance policy.



# DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Before departing from your home country, you are required to obtain the following documentation:

## PASSPORT

You should obtain your passport as soon as possible. Its expiration date must extend for six months beyond the completion date of the international student program.

## AIRLINE TICKET



You must purchase a round-trip international airline ticket to the United States, plus a domestic airline ticket from Dallas /Fort Worth, TX are (DFW intl. airport) to your host city in the United States. Your Home Country Representative will inform you of the appropriate airlines and destinations during the home country orientation meetings.

## IDENTIFICATION CARDS (ID)

In addition to your passport identification, you will receive an ID card from USA Program and from your private school.

## VISA

In order to enter the United States, you must apply for your Visa at the nearest American Embassy or Consulate. Upon applying for your Visa, you should have in your possession the following:

- 1) Valid Passport and two passport-sized photographs
- 2) Form I-20 (F-1 visa)
- 3) Consular fees and forms



Upon arrival to the American Embassy or Consulate, you will be required to fill out applications. The official in charge of issuing your visa will notify you if additional documents are needed. If you have any questions concerning these steps, contact your Home County Representative.

## BON VOYAGE PARTY

Saying “good-bye” is never an easy thing to do, even if it is temporary. However, it may be easier when you realize the opportunity that lies ahead of you. The anticipation of experiencing the American culture should be joyous. If your goals for the international experience are positive and sincere in nature, your departure will be a rewarding and maturing step in your life. Be sure to exchange addresses with your friends and family in your home country.



Keep in mind that you have an American host family anxiously awaiting your arrival. Continue to study and prepare for your exchange experience.

## ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

### CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

As a USA Program international student (F-1 visa), you will most likely arrive to the United States with other students who are participating in the program. Everyone entering the United States must comply with immigration and customs requirements. On the airplane, you will be presented with an INS I-94 form to fill out, required by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

You will need your host family's name and home address in order to complete this form, so have it readily available. You will also fill in personal information regarding your citizenship, date of birth, etc.

In addition to the INS I-94 form, you must complete the Customs Declaration form on the plane. Have your passport and Visa readily accessible to present to the proper officials upon landing. Your luggage will be inspected. You should have all medical prescriptions and any other pertinent documents available. Once you have cleared customs and gotten your luggage, you will be greeted by USA directors who will transport you to your lodging.



**USA Program is not responsible** for your luggage, money, or any other personal belongings.



*"Embrace & Achieve!"*  
*"Embrace & Achieve!"*



**The world is in the palm of your hand.**

**What are you going to do about it?**