



**International YMCA**

**Participant  
Program Manual**

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New York, NY

Dear International YMCA Participant,

Welcome to the International YMCA! We are very pleased to be sponsoring you as an Exchange Visitor in the United States.

You are coming to the United States for two very important reasons. First, to learn everything you can about life in the United States and about yourself. Most participants tell us that they learn more about themselves and their own values than about any other topic while in the program. Second, to share your experiences and knowledge about life outside the United States. Your stay in the United States will help those whom you meet better understand cultural differences and similarities.

This handbook provides information for all categories of International YMCA participants: camp counselors; trainees; interns; and summer work & travel students. In it you will find information about participant responsibilities, everything you need to know about the J-1 Visa, cultural information about the United States, and much more. Also included is specific information about each category.

You are responsible for reading and understanding all information in this handbook. Please read carefully and bring the handbook with you to the United States for future reference. You may also download a copy from our web site at [www.internationalymca.org](http://www.internationalymca.org).

We enjoy hearing from participants. Feel free to write or e-mail and tell us how you are doing. You can also check our web site for opportunities to submit on-line information.

Enjoy your stay in the United States!

International YMCA Staff

## INTERNATIONAL YMCA CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Mailing Address:**

International YMCA  
5 W 63 Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10023

### **Telephone:**

#### **1-212-727-8800      General Telephone Line**

The general line is answered between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. For a staff directory, consult the participant resources section of the International YMCA web site.

#### **1-888-477-9622      Toll-free Line**

Our toll-free line is answered between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. The call is free if dialed from a land line within the U.S.

#### **1-917-841-4498      Emergency Line**

The 24-hour emergency line is monitored 24/7 and is for use after hours, weekends, and holidays for genuine emergencies that require immediate assistance.

**Note about emergency numbers:** Please use emergency numbers only for genuine emergencies, such as accidents, injuries, legal problems, or other situations that require immediate assistance. In non-emergency situations, leave a message by calling the general line above and following voice mail instructions.

### **Fax:**

**1-212-724-2344**

### **E-mail:**

**[ips@ymcany.org](mailto:ips@ymcany.org)**

### **Web Site:**

**[www.internationalymca.org](http://www.internationalymca.org)**

## ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL YMCA

### History

Cleveland Dodge, Andrew Carnegie, George Perkins, and William Sloane – the original financial supporters of what is now known as the International YMCA – viewed visiting foreign students as potential future world leaders and saw a need to formally encourage their relations with Americans. The International YMCA was created to fill that need. Since 1911, the International YMCA has been engaging people worldwide through local services and international exchange programs that build global citizens, enhance mutual understanding, foster the exchange of ideas, and bring people together for peace. The International YMCA envisions a more just and peaceful world where youth learn to think of themselves as global citizens, are adept at communicating across cultural lines and are interested in being civically responsible. The International YMCA believes in the unique ability of international exchange to affect lasting change in the lives of young people.

Part of a worldwide association of YMCAs, today the International YMCA is a Branch of the YMCA of Greater New York and offers programs and services to more than 8,000 young people annually, including teenagers, international students, and emerging international professionals from more than 84 countries.

### YMCA Values

As a participant of the YMCA exchange program, you will be a role model to everyone with whom you come into contact. Whether or not your site of activity is a YMCA, you are a participant in a YMCA program. As such, you are expected to model sound values. The YMCA challenge is to accept and demonstrate the four core values in everything you do. Our values:

<b>Caring</b>	Loving others; being sensitive to the well being of others; helping others.
<b>Honesty</b>	Telling the truth; acting in such a way that one is worthy of trust; having integrity; making sure one's actions match one's values.
<b>Respect</b>	Treating others as you would have them treat you; valuing the worth of every person, including yourself.
<b>Responsibility</b>	Doing what you ought to do; being accountable for your behavior and obligations.

We encourage you to accept the challenge!

## INTERNATIONAL YMCA PROGRAMS

### Inbound Programs to the United States

The YMCA International Inbound Programs were established as educational exchange programs recognized by the United States Government. The intent of the programs is to give students and young people from all around the world the opportunity to experience life in the United States.

Participants are admitted to the United States under section 101(a)(15)(j) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of March 2, 1960 and enter the country on a J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa. The International YMCA administers this Exchanges Visitor Program for the following categories:

#### Camp Counselor

Young people from around the world spend 10-16 weeks from May through August working in American summer camps. Operated as the International Camp Counselor Program (ICCP), the International YMCA places counselors from more than 60 countries in a variety of camps throughout the United States.

#### Trainee

The International YMCA Trainee Program provides opportunities for young professionals, who have completed a university degree and have related work experience, to learn about American practices and methodologies through on-the-job training. Training Programs are up to 18 months in length and are customized to the learning objectives of each participant.

### **Intern**

Similar to the Training Program, the International YMCA Intern Program provides training opportunities for enrolled degree candidate post-secondary students. The maximum length of stay is 12 months.

### **Summer Work & Travel**

The International YMCA Summer Work & Travel Program gives students from all around the world an opportunity to experience life in the U.S. during their summer school break. Students may work in the United States for up to 4 months.

## **Outbound Programs from the United States**

### **YMCA Global Teens**

Global Teens is a leadership development program which engages teens in the powerful adventure of global exploration. Program elements include meaningful service projects, youth to youth interaction, home stays, and awareness of cultural and social issues. Teens serve as cultural ambassadors and are asked to communicate their experiences to their local communities upon returning home.

### **YMCA Go Global**

Go Global is a voluntary service and capacity-building program that places skilled American adults (18+) at YMCAs around the world. Go Global volunteers fully immerse themselves in the culture of their host country. Program focuses are youth work, language instruction, and community development.

### **International YMCA Leaders Club**

Leaders Club encourages young people of New York City to serve others on a local, national and global scale, while promoting international awareness and civic engagement. This dynamic group of teens (ages 13 to 18) is led by peer-elected officers and volunteer club advisors. The group meets weekly and holds bi-monthly events to engage the larger community in the work of global awareness and international service.

### **International YMCA Study Tour**

Study Tours offer opportunities for YMCA staff, community leaders, volunteers and interested professionals to visit destinations of interest, in an experiential short-term travel experience. This program is designed to educate and expose participants to our global community, while learning about international social issues, and the YMCA's impact on a global level.

## **The International YMCA and the United Nations**

The International YMCA serves as the World Alliance of the YMCA's liaison to the United Nations headquarters based in New York City. The International YMCA sends delegates to represent the interests of the world-wide YMCA movement to the general assembly and the annual NGO conference.

## **INTERNATIONAL YMCA MEMBERSHIP & BENEFITS**

In addition to the usual support and services of the International YMCA, all active YMCA program participants are entitled to the following program benefits.

### **Participant Newsletters**

Look for special newsletters highlighting current and former program participants and updates on program information and special opportunities such as photo and video competitions. Make sure that your email address is up to date so you don't miss out.

### **Discounted Accommodations**

If you will be traveling through New York and require accommodations before, during, or after your program, take advantage of special rates at YMCAs in New York City. To make a reservation, call the International YMCA at 212-727-8800 and ask to speak with the staff person responsible for making YMCA accommodations reservations. You will need a credit card to make the reservation.

### **eCornell On-line Learning**

The YMCA offers on-line training courses through eCornell, a division of Cornell University, one of the top universities in the U.S. Short courses and certificate programs are available in many fields such as financial management and hospitality management. You can go on-line day or night to finish the 6-8 hour courses. All registration and payment goes through the YMCA of the USA and can be made by check or credit card. Learn more by visiting <http://www.my.ecornell.com/> or contacting Kimberly Riley at [Kimberly.riley@ymca.net](mailto:Kimberly.riley@ymca.net).

### **YMCA Connections**

You can easily find local YMCAs near where you are living, working or training by looking at: <http://www.ymca.net>. The International YMCA will help you contact local YMCA staff and inquire about volunteer opportunities, free temporary memberships, and more.

### **Alumni Updates**

After you return home, look for updates from the International YMCA articles about programs, participants, host sites, and YMCA staff.

## **J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA AND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS**

### **About the J-1 Visa**

A J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa is given by a U.S. Consular Officer in your home country and allows you to enter the United States to perform specific activities. You cannot get a visa to enter the U.S. if you are already in the U.S. For this reason, your form DS-2019 cannot be sent to a U.S. address.

A visa is a legal document indicating the U.S. Consular Officer has determined you have the proper background and sponsorship to enter the U.S. If the Consular Officer cannot verify your background, you will be denied the visa. J-1 visas are issued only in your country of legal residence.

You should apply for the J-1 visa as soon as you can (at least six weeks prior to your planned departure date). Do not wait until the last minute. Also, do not make your travel arrangements until you actually have your visa. Unplanned delays in getting your visa are common. Form DS-2019 is not valid without the J-1 visa, and the J-1 visa is not valid without form DS-2019. You must keep the two together at all times.

Make two copies of your J-1 visa and your passport biographic page. Leave one with your parents at home and take one with you and keep in a safe location away from your originals.

### **Certificate of Eligibility (form DS-2019)**

Form DS-2019 is evidence that the International YMCA is the sponsor for your J-1 visa. This form allows you to apply at the American Embassy or Consulate in your home country for an Exchange Visitor visa (J-1). The dates of your program are printed on form DS-2019, not the dates on the J-1 visa in your passport.

You will receive form DS-2019 from the International YMCA, signed in blue ink by a Responsible or Alternate Responsible Officer. You must read the conditions on page two of the form and sign the certification at the bottom of page one before applying for a J-1 visa. Follow these instructions to complete the DS-2019 form:

- Carefully review your information (name, birth date, country of residence, etc.) on form DS-2019 and confirm that it matches information in your passport. Contact your recruiter immediately if you find any errors.
- Carefully read page two and understand what you are signing.
- Sign the bottom of page one.

Make two copies of your DS-2019 form. Leave one with your parents at home and take one with you and keep in a safe location away from your originals.

### **Arrival-Departure Record (form I-94)**

Form I-94 is a white card, which you complete either during your flight to the U.S. or upon arrival. Enter information on the form exactly as it appears in your passport. When you pass through immigration, the inspector determines your length of stay and records a date on form I-94. In most cases it will be marked "D/S." This stands for "Duration of Stay" and means that you can stay until the expiration date on your form DS-2019 plus 30 days for travel.

Before you leave the immigration window, make sure that your form I-94 is marked "J-1" (this is your visa category).

## Passport

Your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after the end date printed on your form DS-2019.

## Understanding Important Documents

It is very important that you understand the function of these documents and the corresponding dates of each.

<b>J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa</b>	Allows you to enter the U.S. up until the expiration date of the J-1 visa.
<b>Form DS-2019</b>	Allows you to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program between the dates indicated in section 3 of the form.
<b>Form I-94</b>	Allows you to stay in the U.S. up to 30 days after the end date of the DS-2019 if "D/S" is indicated on your I-94 card.

## Terms and Conditions of the J-1 Visa

You must keep form DS-2019 in your passport with your J-1 Visa at all times.

The J-1 Visa is issued with the understanding that at the end of the program you will return to your country. The International YMCA may not extend sponsorship of your visa beyond the maximum limit. In some rare instances, the International YMCA may extend your program within the allowed maximum program limits. Extensions must be completed at least 30 days before the originally scheduled program end date. The International YMCA does not assist in processing a change of visa status.

You must pursue the activities of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program for your visa category. For example, a Summer Work & Travel participant may not work as a Camp Counselor. Similarly, you may not end your program and use the J-1 Visa for travel.

Again, your J-1 Visa cannot be extended beyond the maximum limit for your Exchange Visitor category.

## Applying for a J-1 Visa

If your local recruiter does not provide detailed visa application information or if you did not apply to the International YMCA through a local recruiter, you should contact the United States Embassy or Consulate for specific application information. You can find web sites for United States Embassies at <http://usembassy.state.gov>. Applications procedures are not the same in every country, so make sure that you know exactly which application forms you must complete and which supporting documents you must provide.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Canadian citizens are not required to apply for a J-1 Visa. Canadians are required to show a valid passport, form DS-2019, and proof of SEVIS payment at the United States point of entry.**

Most United States Consulates require an in-person interview. Find out the interview requirements and process for making an appointment. Wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information is available at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php).

The United States Consulate charges a visa application fee of \$131. This fee is in addition to program fees that you may have already paid. Visa application fees are non-refundable.

During the visa application process, usually at the interview, a quick ink-free fingerprint scan will be taken. Some applicants will need additional screening, and will be notified when they apply.

Having form DS-2019 does not guarantee that you will be issued a visa. Form DS-2019 is certification that your visa sponsor has determined you to be eligible for the visa. You have the responsibility to prove to the consular officer that you are going to leave the U.S. within the time period stipulated by the visa. Section 214 (b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act states:

"Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for a visa, and the immigration officers, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a nonimmigrant status...."

During the brief interview and review of your visa application and supporting documents, you must show that you have a permanent residence and other ties in your home country that would compel you to leave the U.S. at the end of your temporary stay.

To prove your home ties, bring along with your form DS-2019 as many of the following documents as you can:

- Evidence that you own or rent a house or an apartment.
- Evidence you have a job upon your return.
- A letter from your University stating you are enrolled and you are expected to return by a specific date.
- An acceptance letter from a University to study upon your return.
- Marriage certificate.
- Birth certificates of any children you have.
- Names and addresses of family members in your home country.
- Recent bank statement.
- Voter registration card.
- Letter from a religious institution attesting to your intention to return.
- Character reference from a professional person stating their confidence in your intent to return.
- Copy of the travel itinerary for your return home (you should NOT purchase your travel tickets before receiving your visa).
- Evidence of other commitments that require you to return home.

### **SEVIS Fee**

J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors are required to pay a SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) fee and present a receipt (form I-901) showing payment. You will have to show the receipt at your visa interview or when you submit your visa application. You will find instructions for paying the SEVIS fee at: <http://www.fmjfee.com/index:jhtml>

### **Getting the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa**

When the Consular Officer approves your visa, your passport with J-1 visa and form DS-2019 will be returned to you.

### **If Your Visa is Denied**

If your J-1 visa application is denied and you would like to re-apply, follow these steps:

- Politely ask the United States Consulate for the official reason for the visa denial. You may or may not be given a reason other than section 214 (b) described above.
- Notify your recruiter immediately.
- Determine if supplying additional information might result in a different decision.
- Reapply for the J-1 visa and supply any required additional information.
- Pay the visa application fee of \$131.

### **Protecting Documents**

Keep your passport, form DS-2019, and form I-94 in a safe secure place. If you can, store your documents in a locked drawer or safe.

When you must take your documents with you, keep them together and with you at all times. Do not pack your documents in checked luggage and do not put them in a purse, backpack, or carry-on bag. Use a passport pouch that you can wear around your neck.

If you lose your documents before you travel, immediately inform your local recruiter. You may not travel to the U.S. until all documents are replaced.

If your documents are lost or stolen after you arrive in the U.S., contact the International YMCA immediately and file a report with the local police. The International YMCA will issue replacement form DS-2019. The replacement fee is \$75. To replace your passport, you must contact your Embassy in Washington, DC or a local Consulate. For instructions on how to replace form I-94, you must file form I-102. The International YMCA will assist you in getting form I-102.

You can also replace a lost form I-94 document at the office of Deferred Inspection Unit of the airport where you arrived in the U.S.

## BEFORE TRAVEL

### Information from the International YMCA

The International YMCA will give all program participants, either directly or via a local recruiter:

- Welcome letter or placement notice;
- Form DS-2019;
- Form I-901 SEVIS payment receipt (if the International YMCA paid your fee);
- Insurance information and ID card (if the International YMCA arranged and paid for your insurance);
- Instructions for J-1 Visa application;
- Letter of support to present at the United States Consulate with your visa application;
- Letter to be presented to the Social Security Administration with Social Security Number application; and
- Letter of introduction to a YMCA near where you may live in the U.S.

Depending on the program category, participants may also receive the following:

- Site of activity letter to be given to supervisor upon arrival; or
- Signed training plan (form DS-7002).

### Contact Site of Activity

You are responsible for maintaining contact with your site of activity regardless of who arranged for your placement at the site.

Before you travel, confirm details of your program such as:

- Name of your supervisor, address, telephone, and e-mail.
- When you are expected to arrive and when you are expected to start your program.
- Travel arrangements from your port of entry in the U.S. to the site of activity.
- Compensation and when you will be paid.
- Arrangements for and cost of accommodations and how much you will need to pay upon arrival.
- Arrangements for transportation from your where you live to the site of activity.
- Any other special requirements such as a drivers license or uniform.

Do not forget to notify your supervisor at the site of activity of your arrival details; you can also call or email a few days before you travel to confirm. If your travel plans change, contact your supervisor and your local recruiter immediately.

### Medical Report

Some sites of activity, such as summer camps, require a medical report. We recommend visiting your doctor and getting a medical report before you travel. Medical reports or "check-ups" are not covered by the YMCA's health and accident insurance and will cost approximately \$150 or more in the United States.

### Packing Advice

Rules for checked baggage and carry-on items have changed. Some airlines allow one checked item and some allow two. Others have weight and size restrictions. American carriers have additional security requirements. For up-to-date information, check with your airline.

It is best to travel with only what you can carry yourself. If you plan to do any traveling around the U.S., we suggest a backpack as it is much easier to manage than a suitcase.

Pack according to the season of your stay and the region where you will live and work. Do some research regarding the temperature and climate of the state and area you will be living in the U.S.

Remember that you may have to go a whole week between laundries. Bring enough clothing to get through the week. Think twice about bringing valuables. You may have difficulty finding a secure place for them.

### Money

You are responsible for your finances in the U.S. Bring with you enough money to pay for items such as: travel expenses upon arrival; initial rent and housing deposits; living expenses; and local transportation. Keep in mind that you may not receive your first check for 2-3 weeks after you begin your program.

Here are a few tips concerning money and travel.

### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks are safer than cash. You can purchase them at any bank and if they are lost or stolen can be replaced. Buy checks from a recognized company, such as American Express, Thomas Cook, or Visa.

### **Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs) and Debit Cards**

If you do not have a credit card, a bank card/debit card may prove just as valuable; however, limit withdrawals from ATMs to emergencies, as service fees are high, especially for international transactions.

### **Credit Cards**

Having a major credit card such as American Express, Visa, or MasterCard is a good thing to have in case of an emergency. This, however, does not mean that you should rely on "plastic money" to go on a shopping spree. Keep a separate record of the account number and date of expiration in the event that the card is lost or stolen.

### **Transferring Funds**

If you find yourself low on cash, you can have your parents "wire" you money via Western Union. Western Union operates throughout the world and can have your money available to you at the nearest Western Union branch within 24 hours. To find the nearest local Western Union, call toll free number 1-800-325-6000.

### **Sales Tax**

In the USA, a sales tax is added to the ticketed retail price of an item. Sales taxes vary from state to state and even from region to region within a state. Remember that sales tax is always in addition to the marked purchase price. Sales tax runs between 3 and 9% of the purchased item.

### **Check Cashing**

USA banking is not national. If you are given a check written against a checking account in your state, you must cash it at a bank in your state, therefore, if you are going out of state upon the completion of your program, be sure to cash checks before you leave.

### **Tipping**

Tipping is expected, particularly in the service industry, such as restaurants, hotels, cafes, bars, taxis, etc. In restaurants tipping ranges between 10-20% of the total bill. Service industry workers supplement their low wages with the tips earned.

### **Copy Important Documents**

Make copies of all your important documents before you travel: passport (biographical data page with your passport number); visa in your passport; form DS-2019; Social Security card, if you already have one; other picture IDs; and any other important documents. Take copies with you and keep with you separate from your documents. Leave copies at home with your designated emergency contact in case they are lost or stolen while traveling.

After you arrive in the United States, make copies of your form I-94.

### **Pre-departure Checklist**

When you travel to the U.S., don't forget to take the following items with you:

- This handbook
- Blue or black pen
- Passport with J-1 Visa
- Form DS-2019
- Important documents sent with form DS-2019
- ID cards
- Driver's license
- Insurance information
- Placement notice or confirmation from site of activity
- Prescriptions
- Enough money to cover housing deposits and expenses until you receive your first paycheck
- Phone card

## UPON ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

### Clearing Immigration and Customs

All J-1 Exchange Visitors complete a white form I-94 prior to arriving in the United States. In most cases you will receive form I-94 from flight attendants en route to the United States. (Canadians should ask for the form at the border if traveling by car.)

Print your name on all forms in block letters exactly as it appears in your passport. Ensure that you write your birth date in the proper format. If you do not, you may have problems applying for your Social Security Number.

When you pass through immigration, present your passport, form DS-2019, form I-94, and customs declaration card. You may also be asked for a copy of your job confirmation form, training plan, camp placement notice, onward flight ticket, and return flight ticket, so keep these documents handy.

Be prepared to tell the immigration inspector the reason you are coming to the United States, where you are going, what you will be doing, and other information about your program.

You will be admitted to the United States as a J-1 Exchange Visitor. Make sure that J-1 is written on your form I-94 before you leave immigration.

After immigration you will claim your luggage and pass through customs. If you will make a connecting flight, re-check your luggage after exiting customs.

### SEVIS and Validating Your Program

The Student and Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS) is a web-based system for maintaining information on international students and exchange visitors in the United States. It is administered by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), a division of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). For detailed information about SEVIS, frequently asked questions, and what to expect when you arrive in the U.S., look at: <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/>.

To validate your participation in the program, you must inform the YMCA of your residential address in the U.S. within 5 days of your arrival in the U.S. Validate your arrival on-line at: <http://www.internationalymca.org> Enter your name and form DS-2019 number (beginning with N000 and located in the upper right-hand corner of the form) exactly as they appear on your form DS-2019. After receiving your information, the YMCA will validate your record in SEVIS and your status will be changed to "Active." You will receive an e-mail with a validation confirmation number after submitting on-line. If you do not receive a confirmation number, please contact the YMCA as soon as possible.

Failure to inform the YMCA of your residential address in the U.S. will result in your status changing in SEVIS to "No Show." If your SEVIS status changes to "No Show," you will be required to leave the U.S. and may have difficulty being approved for future visas to enter the U.S.

Your status in SEVIS must be "Active" before the Social Security Administration will process your application for a Social Security number.

### Applying for a Social Security Number

If you do not already have a Social Security Number, apply in person at the nearest Social Security Office after you arrive. Show your DS-2019 form, your passport with your J-1 visa, I-94 card, and the "Sponsor Letter" you received, or will receive, with your form DS-2019.

To find the nearest Social Security Administration office, visit: <http://www.ssa.gov/>.

Your supervisor may also be able to assist you in finding the nearest Social Security Administration office and even offer transportation to the office.

When filling out the application form, fill in your name exactly as it is printed in your passport. You will need to know your mother's maiden name (her family name at birth). Use your employer's address on your application, not your home address. Mark on the application that you're a "Legal Alien Allowed to Work" (you're not a student). Remember that dates at the U.S. are written month, day, and year (mm/dd/yy). Social Security, as

well as the YMCA, recommends you wait at least 10 days after submitting your U.S. arrival validation to allow time for your SEVIS status to become "Active."

Your application for a Social Security number will not be processed until you have reported your U.S. address to the YMCA, you have been in the U.S. for 10 days, and your status in SEVIS "Active."

Social Security Numbers are issued for your lifetime. If you return to the United States in the future, you will use the same number.

### **I-9 Authorization for Sites of Activity and Tax Withholding**

All employers are required by law to verify that employees, both citizens and non-resident aliens, are eligible to work. Your supervisor will ask to see your passport, J-1 visa, form DS-2019, form I-94, and "Sponsor Letter." These documents prove your eligibility and identity. You will also be asked to sign a form I-9, which shows that your employer has proven your eligibility to work.

The U.S. tax office, the International Revenue Service (IRS), refers to J-1 visa holders as "non-resident aliens." As a participant on a J-1 visa program, you are exempt from paying Social Security and Federal Unemployment taxes. Generally, federal, state and local taxes must be deducted. State and local taxes vary depending on the state and city. If you are subject to taxes, they will be withheld from your pay. Your employer reports your withholdings to the IRS. You should get your withholdings back after you submit a tax return.

To determine how much tax you will pay, you must complete IRS form W-4 within three days of being added to the payroll. Your employer will give you the form. Non-resident aliens should fill out the forms as follows.

- In box 3 check "Single" regardless of actual marital status.
- On line 5 claim only one exemption (unless you are from Canada, Mexico, American Samoa, Japan, Korea, or India, in which case a tax treaty may allow additional personal exemptions).

Your country may have a tax treaty with the U.S. that changes the amount of taxes you pay on income earned in the U.S. If it does, complete IRS form 8233 and give it to your employer with form W-4. Individual treaties specify the amount of money you can earn without being subject to tax. International treaty language is very confusing. You may want to check with your Consulate in the U.S. to find out how these treaties may affect your U.S. and home country tax obligations. IRS Publication 901 has information about all tax treaties.

For more information about taxes, please look at the International YMCA web site.

## **CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT**

### **American Characteristics**

The United States is a large country with people from many different backgrounds. There are many variations among the people of the U.S. due to regional, ethnic, religious, and economic differences. No matter what we tell you about the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of people in the United States, you will find a part of our population that does not fit the description.

There are some characteristic that are fairly common for most Americans:

**Informality:** Everyone is treated more or less alike regardless of differences in social status.

**Tact:** Americans can be indirect when trying to communicate information that may cause another person to feel uncomfortable.

**Direct:** In some parts of the country, residents can seem overly blunt when answering questions or giving advice.

**Materialism:** A strong respect for personal property and expectation of being asked before using other's personal belongings.

**Touching:** While it may be common for some friends to hug upon greeting, touching or handholding is often seen as a sign of sexual attraction.

**Time:** Time is considered a thing that can be saved, spent or budgeted. Your job site will highly value your being "on time" to your scheduled work or other called meetings. Being late can be considered rude.

Consistent tardiness could lead to being fired from your employment, which may lead to your exchange program being canceled.

**Assertive:** Those who take initiative are admired. Don't wait to be introduced, or for people to speak to you first, if you want to meet others. If you don't make the first move, the assumption may be you want to be left alone.

**Roles:** There are no separate jobs for men and woman. Men do house cleaning, so do women. Women construct buildings, so do men. You should expect to do jobs you would not be asked to do at home. Remember, you reviewed and signed a contract to perform you job duties before you left for the U.S. and are expected to fulfill your job obligations.

**Servants:** Many Americans don't understand why people would have a servant to do what they can do for themselves. Everyone is expected to assist with chores so there will be more free time for activities. Not offering to help is considered rude.

**Uninformed:** Most Americans know a lot about issues which affect them on a daily basis, but many times little about what affects the rest of the world. So much effort is spent trying to understand this nation and its diverse culture that there is little energy given to learning about other places in the world.

**Friendly:** A high value is placed on a warm, informal, open, and positive attitude towards people. Highly dependent relationships with other people tend not to be established. Friends respect another's independence and give personal space to "be yourself." People are friendly without getting highly involved in each other's lives.

**Security:** World events have led to a strong concern for security. You will notice that you will show your passport at every security checkpoint in all airports. You can expect to be asked to take off your shoes at the airline boarding gate. The YMCA must report your U.S. residential address to the U.S. government and be able to always contact you within 24 hours while you are in the U.S.

### **Adjusting to a New Environment**

Most people who move to a new cultural environment experience a series of emotional ups and downs, especially during the early weeks when most of the adjustments are taking place. Your reaction to time changes, foods, sleeping accommodations, bathrooms arrangements, and language patterns will cause some emotionally low periods. Of course, the excitement of new people, places, and experiences will also cause some equally emotionally high periods.

Cultural stress occurs when you are cut off from familiar ways of communicating and interacting with others. Most of us unconsciously believe the way we have always done things at home is the "right" way such as the subjects we speak with one another about, the way we talk together, the times we eat, the frequency we bathe, and/or the clothes we wear. Our personal identity and self-esteem are put into crisis when things are done differently. Here are some common reactions:

- Homesickness
- Irritability
- Boredom
- Withdrawal
- Hostility towards Hosts and co-workers
- Crying
- Illness
- Excessive sleeping
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Stereotyping of Hosts and co-workers
- Chauvinism

### **Tips for Adapting**

So, if you find yourself unable to feel enthusiasm, not wanting to be around people, or worried about becoming sick. what do you do to improve your situation? Here are some suggestions:

- **Reduce unpredictability:** Ask questions.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Make sure you're getting enough carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, and minerals.
- **Hydrate:** Drink plenty of liquids, but avoid too many beverages with sugar and alcohol (if you are of age to legally drink alcohol).
- **Exercise:** Do 20 minutes of aerobics exercises three times at week.
- **Get enough sleep:** But, be aware that too much sleep can cause depression.
- **Lower your expectations:** Learn to accept what happens on its own merits.
- **Communicate:** Talk with your supervisor(s) and peers.

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS OR SITE OF ACTIVITY

If you change your address during the program, you must notify the YMCA of the new address within 5 business days. The YMCA will update your information in SEVIS. If you fail to report your new address, sponsorship of your J-1 Visa may be terminated.

You are not allowed to change your site of activity without first contacting the YMCA. If you do not contact the YMCA, sponsorship of your visa may be terminated.

## ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS INSURANCE

**IMPORTANT NOTE: If your insurance was arranged by one of the YMCA's International Partners, it is your responsibility to understand the insurance coverage and the process for filing a claim.**

You must be covered by accident and sickness insurance while you are a participant in the program (dates are on your DS-2019). You are responsible for accident and sickness insurance for any days in the United States before your program starts or after it ends.

If you are covered by the YMCA's sickness and accident insurance during the program, your policy is underwritten by Nationwide Insurance. The insurance policy is administered by Consolidated Health Plans. You will receive insurance information and two ID cards from the International YMCA. Please read all insurance information carefully.

Keep one of the two ID cards with you at all times and present it whenever you see a doctor. The front of the card shows your ID Number, Group Name and Number, and deductible.

There is a \$100,000 limit per accident or illness with this insurance. Be aware that there is a deductible of \$10 per sickness or accident (programs up to 4 months) or \$100 per accident or illness (programs longer than 4 months). A deductible is the amount that must be paid by you. Be sure to read the insurance information in detail to understand what is and what is not covered.

If you are hurt while working, your employer's Workmen's Compensation plan should provide insurance. Your employer will know how to handle this.

If you have any questions about your insurance, call the YMCA. You may also call Nationwide Insurance directly at 1-800-525-8669.

If you are traveling and have an emergency that requires travel assistance services, contact the On Call International call center at 1-800- 407-7307.

If you need insurance information or a copy of the insurance policy and claim form, you may download it from the International YMCA web site.

### Printing ID Card and Policy Information

About one week after you receive your forms DS-2019, you can print your ID card and the insurance policy information. Follow these steps:

- Go to [www.internationalymca.org](http://www.internationalymca.org) and click on "International YMCA Participant Information"
- Type "PART09" when prompted for a password
- Click on "Insurance"
- To print an ID card, click on "Print ID Card" and follow the instructions.
- To print policy information and a claim form, click on the appropriate link.

If you lose your ID card, you can print a replacement card using the same steps above.

### Pre-Existing Conditions, Dental Care, and Eye Care

A pre-existing condition is an illness or condition that existed before you arrived in the U.S. and may not be covered by the insurance under this program. Dental care is not covered. Since you will be in the U.S for an extended stay, you should have a dental check-up before leaving home. Routine eye care is not covered. Be sure to bring any prescription you may have for eyeglasses or contact lenses.

## Seeing a Doctor

If you need to see a doctor, or visit a clinic, you must take the medical claim form with you. Most clinics and hospitals will not treat you until you can prove with the claim form that you have insurance. Again, there is a deductible of \$10 per sickness or accident (programs up to 4 months) or \$100 per accident or illness (programs longer than 4 months). Sign the medical claim form and leave it with the doctor, clinic, or hospital before you leave. The doctor, clinic, or hospital sends the claim form directly to the insurance company. If you forget to leave the claim form, you could become responsible for the cost of the medical treatment beyond the deductible.

If you received health services and did not give the medical office your insurance claim form, or the office refused to bill the insurance company, you will have to pay the expenses yourself and get a reimbursement by sending the claim form along with the original medical bill to Nationwide. Keep photocopies of all documents for yourself.

Nationwide Insurance  
P.O. Box 420  
Springfield, MA 01104-0420

DO NOT SEND CLAIMS FORMS TO THE YMCA.

Advice: Remembering what you need and where things are when you are ill can be difficult. Keep a medical claim form with your passport along with money for the deductible. You will then have everything you need in one place.

## How to Find a Doctor

Your insurance plan offers a preferred provider network of hospitals, physicians and other health care providers. You are welcome to use any providers you wish, but choosing preferred providers can save you money. You can locate preferred providers online at [www.phcs.com](http://www.phcs.com). To find a doctor:

1. go to [www.phcs.com](http://www.phcs.com)
2. select "PHCS Network (PPO)" and click on "submit"
3. select "doctor" and click on "continue"
4. enter your location and the type of doctor you want to see and click on "continue"

## How to Extend Your Insurance

Your insurance is valid for the dates of your program as printed on your form DS-2019. If you would like to extend your insurance for up to 30 days (the time you are allowed to stay in the U.S. after completing your program), you must contact the YMCA at least 2 weeks before your program ends. The cost of extending your insurance is: \$15 per week if your program was 4 months or less; or \$28 per week if your program was more than 4 months. All insurance must be pre-paid before the YMCA extends the insurance.

## AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Illnesses

You may decide to have a sexual relationship with another adult while you are in the U.S. If so, you will need to consider how to protect yourself from sexually transmitted illnesses.

AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease, which attacks the body's immune system and can be contracted in the U.S. Even more common are herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, and yeast infections. The only safe sex is no sex. However, if you choose to be sexually active, be certain to protect yourself from illnesses. Do not take chances. For information on HIV/AIDS, go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/dhap.htm>

## INCOME TAXES AND FILING A TAX RETURN

The U.S. tax office, the International Revenue Service (IRS), refers to J-1 visa holders as "non-resident aliens." As a participant on a J-1 visa program, you are exempt from paying Social Security and Federal Unemployment taxes. Generally, federal, state and local taxes must be deducted. State and local taxes vary depending on the state and city. If you are subject to taxes, they will be withheld from your pay. Your employer reports your withholdings to the IRS. You should get your withholdings back after you submit a tax return.

For more information about U.S. taxes, look at the International YMCA web site.

## Completing Form W-4 and Form 8233

All non-residents must complete the IRS form W-4 within three days of being added to the payroll. Non-resident aliens should fill out the forms as follows.

- In box 3 check "Single" regardless of actual marital status.
- On line 5 claim only one exemption (unless you are from Canada, Mexico, American Samoa, Japan, Korea, or India, in which case a tax treaty may allow additional personal exemptions).

Your country may have a tax treaty with the U.S. that changes the amount of taxes you pay on income earned in the U.S. If it does, complete IRS form 8233 and give it to your employer with form W-4. Individual treaties specify the amount of money you can earn without being subject to tax. International treaty language is very confusing. You may want to check with your Consulate in the U.S. to find out how these treaties may affect your U.S. and home country tax obligations. IRS Publication 901 has information about all tax treaties.

## Filing a U.S. Tax Return

U.S. law requires employers to provide each employee with a Form W-2 showing income earned and taxes withheld during the calendar year. These forms are sent out before the end of January of the following year. Form W-2 is used with form 1040NR-EZ to file your tax return. You can download the Form 1040NR-EZ at: <http://www.irs.gov/>

You will have until April 15 to file your income tax return. Instructions on how to fill out the 1040NR-EZ and where to send it are found in IRS Publication 519. You can expect anything you read from the IRS to be extremely confusing. You can find help from the IRS Officer at the U.S. Embassy in your country.

After you send your completed form 1040NR-EZ to the IRS, you can expect to receive a U.S. Treasury check in a few months for any overpayment of taxes owed to you. If you have trouble cashing this check, contact the U.S. Embassy in your home country. Refunds can also be directly deposited to bank accounts in the U.S.

Each state in the U.S. has its own state tax regulations. If you have any tax questions about a particular state, visit the following link information: <http://www.taxsites.com/agencies.html>

## IRS Forms and Publications

You can order all IRS forms and publications in the United States by calling 1-800-TAX FORM (1-800-829-3676). You can also download them at <http://www.irs.gov/>.

### IRS Forms

W-4	Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate
W-2	Wage and Tax Statement
1042	Annual Withholding Tax Return for U.S. Source Income for Foreign Persons
1042S	Foreign Person's U.S. Source Income Subject to Withholding
1040NR	Non-Resident Alien Tax Return (multiple sources of income)
1040NR-EZ	Non-Resident Alien Tax Return (single source of income)
8233	Exemption from Withholding on Compensation for Independent Personal Services of a Nonresident Alien Individual

### IRS Publication

515	Withholding of Tax on Nonresident Alien and Foreign Corporations
901	U.S. Tax Treaties
519	U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens

## CHALLENGES, PROBLEMS, AND SOLUTIONS

### Problem Resolution

At some point during your stay a problem may occur. Problems create opportunities for learning experiences. Be prepared to be challenged and mentally stretched during your stay in the United States. One of the most challenging issues you will face is defining just what the real problem is, not the symptom of the problem. If you are having a problem, you may find that your site of activity has already established a standard operating procedure for dealing with the problem. Ask your supervisor for help. If your problem is with your supervisor, ask for some uninterrupted time to discuss your concerns. If you feel uncomfortable speaking with your supervisor, go to the Human Resources Department to discuss your issue. Again, make sure you have clearly

identified the problem before you begin the discussion. Stick to facts and specific behavior. Do not let your judgment be clouded by personalities and emotional reaction. Remember that you will be experiencing life in a different culture where the assumptions about what is common or normal could be very different from those you grew up with.

If possible, solve your problems with the help of your supervisor or your peers. If you need YMCA staff assistance, call or send an e-mail. Do not simply leave the site of activity. Leaving before contacting the YMCA could jeopardize your visa status and future visa approval to enter the United States.

### **Guidelines for Successful Adjustment**

**Respect the rules:** If you are not allowed to smoke or drink, then DON'T SMOKE OR DRINK!! If another staff person breaks the rules, it does not mean you can do so as well.

Be aware of local, state, and national laws. Many states strictly enforce laws prohibiting the purchase or consumption of alcohol by individuals under the age of 21. Sexual relations with a minor (anyone under the age of 18) are illegal even though that person may be willing. Use of marijuana and/or other narcotics is against the law. Stealing/theft is also a crime so be sure you do not take anything that is not yours unless you have paid for it or received permission from the actual owner to take it. If you break the law, you could be put in jail. It has happened to former participants. There is little that the YMCA can do in these cases. You may also jeopardize an opportunity to return to the U.S. in the future. REMEMBER, the International YMCA expects you to obey the law.

**Be open to new surroundings:** Adjustment usually occurs gradually. Ask questions if you don't understand. Make friends with your supervisor. If you feel overwhelmed by your surroundings and/or are unhappy, talk to your colleagues.

**Give it two weeks.** Don't give up. Try to talk over and work through any problems for at least two weeks. The first two weeks are the most difficult, but most people find that they eventually meet more people, become accustomed, and start enjoying themselves more after about two weeks.

If you find yourself experiencing serious problems, please contact the YMCA. We will provide support and give advice as appropriate.

### **ILLEGAL AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR**

You can expect to have a terrific experience in the U.S, but every year a few participants find themselves serious trouble. We do not want you to be one of these participants, so we want you to carefully read the following information.

Please understand that should you find yourself in legal or criminal trouble while working in the U.S., the YMCA may not be able to provide support or counsel to you. The YMCA will assist you in contacting your Consulate and make sure that you have legal counsel.

If you are convicted of a crime, the YMCA will terminate sponsorship of your visa. If sponsorship of your visa is terminated, you may have difficulties in the future applying for any type of visa to the United States.

#### **Alcohol**

You must be 21 in order to drink or purchase alcohol in the U.S. Under no circumstances may you buy or drink alcohol if you are not 21. If you are 21, you may not buy for or provide to anyone who is not 21.

If you are 21 and choose to drink alcohol:

- You must be prepared to resume your duties upon returning to the site of activity.
- Your actions are a reflection on you, the YMCA, and your country.
- Your insurance does not cover accidents resulting from the use of alcohol.
- You are not allowed to drink alcohol while working.
- If you are a camp counselor, you will be immediately terminated if you bring alcohol to camp. Some camps also have rules about their employees drinking alcohol in the community during their free time.
- Even if you are allowed to drink alcohol in your country, you are not allowed to do so in the United States unless you are 21 and permitted by the site of activity. "I didn't know" or "in my country it's different" are not excuses.

## **Drinking and Driving**

The United States has very strict laws about driving after drinking alcohol. In some states as little as one drink is enough to make you legally drunk. Past YMCA participants have been sentenced to jail for drinking and driving. Remember:

- Be safe. Be smart. Be responsible.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Do not get into a vehicle driven by someone who has been drinking.

## **Smoking**

In the United States there are federal regulations regarding smoking in public places. There are also numerous state and local codes. Some sites of activity have rules about smoking as well. If smoking is not permitted at the site of activity, don't smoke. If smoking is allowed in designated areas, smoke only in that area. It is wise to ask whether you are allowed to smoke in an area before lighting up. That said, the YMCA does not advocate smoking.

## **Drugs and Illegal Substances**

Participants found to be intoxicated with drugs or illegal substances, possessing drugs or illegal substances, or trafficking drugs or illegal substances are subject to prosecution by United States law. Don't use or be involved with any type of drug or illegal substance. The result of doing so will likely result in:

- Being charged with a crime.
- Serving time in jail.
- Paying a fine.
- Termination of sponsorship of your visa.

## **Stealing and Shoplifting**

Stealing is taking anything that does not belong to you or taking something without paying for it. If something does not belong to you, do not take it for yourself or take it for someone else. You may be arrested for theft.

Some examples of stealing include:

- Taking an item from a store, canteen, or shop where you work without paying.
- Not collecting money from another person or friend for an item if you work as a cashier.
- Taking from someone else anything that does not belong to you.

Shoplifting is removing anything from a store without paying for it. Shoplifting is not an innocent prank, but a serious offense. Many stores have a zero tolerance for shoplifters and will notify the police no matter the value of the item taken. All stores have hidden cameras and there is always someone watching for shoplifters. If you shoplift, you will be caught.

If you are caught stealing or shoplifting, you will be arrested.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs when somebody says or does something sexually related that you don't want them to say or do, regardless of who it is. For example:

- Talking about sexual experiences or asking about yours.
- Referencing or inquiring people's sexual preferences.
- Telling sexual jokes, stories, or making comments.
- Continually asking someone for a date and not accepting an answer of "no."
- Touching someone, threatening someone, or forcing someone to have sex in exchange for a job, raise, to retain a job, get a better grade, or special treatment, or to escape physical violence.

## **Sexual Relationships and Sexual Consent**

In the U.S. the legal age of consent is 18 in most states, regardless of whether or not the other person agrees to have a sexual relationship. Consent means that at the time of the act, there are actual words or physical conduct indicating freely given agreement to have sexual intercourse or sexual contact. Consenting adults are expected to refrain from sexual activity during work.

If you commit any type of sexual assault, you will be arrested.

## **Child Abuse**

The YMCA is serious about the safety of children and does not tolerate any mistreatment of children.

The United States has very strict laws regarding the abuse of children. If you will work with children, you will learn more about physical or emotional abuse in the state of your site of activity. If your site of activity is a

camp, you will definitely have specific training. You may find that what is considered an acceptable action in your country is considered child abuse in the U.S.

There are four types of child abuse:

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse of children is inappropriately introducing sex, touching, or sexual topics to an individual through conversation, exposure, force, or trickery. Abusive touch can begin anywhere on the body and it is not limited to an individual's private parts.

Sexual abuse can also involve oral, anal or vaginal penetration. Rape is sexual abuse with penetration. A way to describe penetration is to say that one part of a person's body (finger, tongue or penis) goes into a part of another person's body (vagina, anus, mouth). Penetration may occur with an object or a body part. There is also sexual abuse without touching. For example, exposure-during which a staff member forces or tricks a child to look at the staff member's genitals or a staff member may force or trick a child into exposing his or her genitals. Another type of sexual abuse without touch is an obscene telephone call, text message, or a chat line conversation, in which a person calls and talks or writes about sex (ways he/she wants to touch a person's body or have that person touch his/hers).

If you have direct contact with children, the laws in the state of your site of activity may require that you report any suspicion that a child has been sexually abused.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse involves a physical injury as a result of punching, beating, kicking, biting, burning, shaking, pulling or harming a child. In many countries, it is acceptable to control a child's behavior with a physical action. In the U.S., hitting a child is considered abuse.

### **Emotional abuse (Psychological/Verbal/Mental Injury)**

Emotional abuse may include using obscene language in front of children. If these words are part of your English vocabulary, leave them at home. It may also include embarrassing or demeaning a child, causing a child to perform some action which results in embarrassment or ridiculing a child in front of peers are considered forms of child abuse. Punishment, such as the confinement of a child in a dark closet, is also abuse.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the failure to provide for the child's basic needs (food and shelter) and is the failure to provide with appropriate supervision, failure to provide necessary medical treatment, abandonment, and inattention of a child's emotional needs.

**The YMCA is a mandated reporter of abuse. If you are aware of any abuse, you are required to report it.**

Here are some simple precautions which you should always practice and follow:

- Always be in view of others. If you need to speak with a child alone, do so in an area where you are in view of others.
- Do not allow children into private staff areas or into staff housing areas, staff meeting rooms, storage rooms, etc.
- Know your site of activity's procedure for handling discipline. If you do not understand how your site of activity handles discipline by the end of staff training, ask your supervisor.
- Be aware of what information you share. It is not unusual for children to imagine romantic relationships with camp staff members. So, use discretion with what information you share, especially regarding details about your private life.
- Report and/or record suspicious or unusual observations. If a child is acting in a way you consider unusual, report this behavior to your supervisor. Keep a written record of your observations. In rare occasions, parents may accuse you of being the person who caused the behavior. Your reported observations will help you protect yourself from unfair accusations.
- Supervise private activities in pairs. If you are supervising children during times when they are changing clothes, putting on bathing suits, taking showers, or otherwise using the bathroom, make sure another staff person, who is of the same gender as the children, is with you.
- Do not force your attention on a child. It may be common for you to want to hug or touch a child who is hurt or homesick. Before you do, make sure the child understands your action.
- Never be alone with a child.

## INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DURING THE PROGRAM

If you will travel outside the U.S. during your program, you may do so if: your visa and form DS-2019 have not expired; you hold a multiple-entry visa (marked M under "Entries"); and your passport is still valid.

Before you leave the United States, however, International YMCA staff must sign the travel authorization section on Form DS-2019 to show that you are in good standing.

To receive travel authorization from the International, you must send at least two weeks before you travel:

- A letter from your site of activity indicating the exact date of your planned departure and return, the reason for your travel, and permission that you may travel;
- Your form DS-2019; and
- A self-addressed pre-paid envelope (UPS, FedEx, or other service that can be tracked is best) for the return of your form DS-2019.

Send the above documents using a service that can be tracked, such as UPS or FedEx. The International YMCA is not responsible for lost or delayed documents.

It is your responsibility to determine if a visa is needed for the country you plan to visit.

If you have an emergency and there is no time to receive travel authorization, contact the International YMCA for special instructions. You will not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. if your form DS-2019 is not signed.

## SAFETY AND ADVICE

### Bike Safety

If you ride a bike, follow this safety advice.

- **Dress Appropriately:** Wear a sturdy helmet to protect your head. Wear reflective clothing.
- **Obey Traffic Signs and Signals:** Do not attempt to run red lights or speed up to catch a light that has turned from green to yellow.
- **Do Not Ride Against Traffic:** Like other motorists, the law requires that you move in the same direction of vehicles.
- **Ride in Bike Lanes:** When such lanes are available to you, ride in designated lanes.
- **Do Not Weave Against Parked Cars:** Motorists may not see you when you try to move back into traffic.
- **Follow Line Markings:** Don't turn left from the right lane and vice versa. Don't go straight in a lane marked "right-turn only."
- **Avoid Road Hazards:** Watch out for parallel-slat sewer grates, gravel, ice, or debris. Cross railroad tracks at right angles.
- **Keep Bike in Good Repair:** Adjust your bike to fit you and keep it working properly. Check brakes and tires regularly.
- **Use Lights:** If you ride at night, use bike lights.

### Car Rentals

- Before renting a car, it is helpful to have an International Drivers License.
- Take all insurance possible. Be sure to ask about a collision damage waiver (CDW) and liability coverage. CDW covers any damage to the car you are driving. Liability covers damage you do to someone else while driving. Ultimately, it's up to you to make sure you're covered. So plan ahead.
- If you are under the age of 25, you may be required to purchase additional insurance.
- Obey traffic laws.
- You will need a credit card to rent a car.
- Only authorized drivers may drive a rental car.

## RETURN HOME

### Evaluation

We value your opinion, so please complete a program evaluation before you leave your site of activity. You will find the evaluation on the International YMCA web site.

## **Re-Entry**

You've finally made it to the end of your program and are on your way back to your home country. You are proud of yourself for surviving all of the ordeals of "culture shock" thinking that it's all over now that you have left the U.S. Warning! It is not all over.

For many people, the process of readjusting to life in their own country is just as, if not more, complicated than their adjustments to the foreign culture they have returned from. When you travel abroad you expect things to be different and they are. However, having difficulty adjusting to the familiar surroundings of their home country comes as a surprise.

If you are like most people, you will go back home expecting everything to be just like you left it. However, two things will have happened: (1) all of your friends and family are continuing with their lives while you are away, so things will not just be as you left them, and (2) after living in a new culture you may form new ideas and return home a slightly different person with a new outlook on certain matters.

While being immersed in a foreign culture in the U.S., you will obviously learn about the customs and society of the country. You may not realize it, but you will also learn a few things about yourself and your home country. As a result of your new observations, you will now look at your own culture from a slightly different perspective. After returning home, you may notice that some comments or observations you make to friends or family are interpreted as being critical of your own culture. Maybe you lived in an American community where there was a nearby store always open (24 hours a day) and you got used to the fact that you could go out and buy a soda or a sandwich any time you wanted, whether it is 3:00 in the afternoon or 3:00 in the morning. When you return home and are first reminded that you can no longer find a store that is always open, you may comment on how you liked the fact that almost everything is accessible at almost any time in the U.S. If you complain too much about stores closing early in your own country, your friends and family may become annoyed that you are criticizing your own culture (and their culture).

Those who make more complete adjustments to a foreign culture are usually the ones who return home and more openly observe their own culture. And they are the ones who may experience more confusion as they try to re-adjust to their familiar culture. This is a sign of your success in adapting to the U.S., but may cause your re-adjustment to take a bit longer.

Be aware of all of these cultural issues that you will undoubtedly encounter and use them as opportunities to learn about different cultures around the world-observe how they are different and learn what they have in common. Even though there may be difficult times that are caused by living in a different culture, you will find this experience to be one of the most enlightening of the program.

## **Stay Involved**

We encourage you to stay in touch by joining our alumni group and to stay in contact with your local recruiter and YMCA.

## **PROGRAM SPECIFIC: INTERNATIONAL CAMP COUNSELOR PROGRAM**

### **About Camping**

Camping is an American tradition and a YMCA tradition that dates back to the 1860's. Organized camping defined by the American Camp Association "ACA" is a "sustained experience which provides a creative, recreational, and educational opportunity in group living in the out-of-doors. It utilizes trained leadership and the resources of natural surroundings to contribute to each camper's mental, physical, social, and spiritual growth." Every summer in the U.S., over 12,000 organized youth camps cater to 7 million children. ICCP works with hundreds of these camps. These camps are all different in size, programs and in the way they are operated, however, the characteristic common to all camps, without exception, is their focus on the well-being and welfare of the campers. Every activity, facility and rule that you come across at camp has been developed over the years for the benefit of the campers.

Most camps are on the outskirts of the city, thereby, providing a primitive "wilderness" experience for urban children. Many camps try to recreate for their campers the experience of going into the wilderness to build a sense of community away from the influences of "modern life." ICCP participants working in such camps should not expect to find modern toilets, showers, or buildings. Other adjustments might include living in a tent for the summer, dealing with new plants, animals and insects, or learning how to properly care for a pit toilet.

The one thing that you must remember is that there is no “typical American summer camp”. They differ in facilities, campers and activities provided.

Some of the types of camps that ICCP works with include: YMCA, Girl Scouts, religious, special needs, private and agency-sponsored camps. These camps may be day, overnight, or both. Camp programs may be geared toward special populations, such as the mentally or physically challenged. Others have a large population of children from mostly low income families. Some camps also serve adults or families. Many camps are a combination of things. For example, a camp may describe itself as a YMCA overnight religious camp serving physically-challenged children.

It is mandatory that camps make every effort to include physically and mentally-challenged individuals in their regular program.

### **Types of Camps**

Camps may be categorized by areas of specialty or concentration. For example, there are sports camps (tennis camps, soccer camps, etc.), environmental education camps, computer camps, art camps, etc. Generally, ICCP places participants in the following types of camps:

#### **Overnight/Resident**

They are located in rural areas away from the town and transportation. Campers and staff stay at the camp, experiencing a full schedule of activities during the day, and sleeping in cabins or tents at night. There is very little free time or privacy. Most of the camps are resident camps. Some resident camps offer day camp programs.

#### **Wilderness Camping**

Many overnight camps have trip and/or biking programs. The staff working in these areas will take groups of children away from camp for hiking, canoeing, or just tent camping for many days.

#### **Girl Scout Camps**

They are highly scheduled and serve young girls. The staff and campers live in platform tents, and living conditions are generally rustic.

#### **YMCA Camps**

The YMCA is a Christian organization. Although it does not belong to any specific denomination, prayers and worship may be part of the camp's activities. YMCA Camps serve their communities by promoting positive values through their programs, which are open to all.

#### **Religious**

Operated by religiously-affiliated organizations, these camps provide a broad range of outdoor activities within the framework of promoting positive life values, based on the religion's particular traditions.

#### **Underprivileged or Agency Camps**

At these camps, children referred by social service organizations are given the opportunity to experience positive, outdoor activities outside the troubled urban environments in which they live.

#### **Special Needs (Physically, Mentally and Developmentally Challenged)**

At these camps, children and adults with physical limitations and/or learning disabilities are provided special attention and facilities to make it possible for them to enjoy a wide range of camp activities and to achieve their fullest potential. Working with special populations in a summer camp environment can be physically and emotionally demanding; however, it is one of the most rewarding experiences. The definition for Special Needs Camps is very broad. With these types of camps, you may find camps for cancer patients or survivors, diabetes, obesity, etc.

#### **Conference Center**

Some ICCP participants are placed at conference centers. Conference centers differ from camps in that they offer educational activities to primarily adult populations. ICCP participants assigned to conference centers are typically those who have applied for kitchen, office, maintenance, and housekeeping positions.

## Day Camps

These camps are usually located in urban settings. Campers arrive at camp each morning and return home in the afternoon. In most cases, international staff members live with "host families" and are able to experience United States community life.

## Code of Ethics for Camp Staff

The American Camp Association "ACA" recognizes the camp counselor and camp staff person as the primary instrument through which the objectives, goals, and philosophy of the camp director/owner are transmitted to the child/camper. As such, the counselor/staff person should be aware of the following ethical practices recommended by ACA. As a camp staff you are agreeing to uphold the following:

- Endeavor to understand and faithfully interpret the camp's philosophy, objectives, and goals in your relationship with campers and all staff.
- Conduct yourself in an exemplary manner, recognizing that you are an adult role model for your campers. By your behavior you will always try to demonstrate high moral values. Recognize that your conduct (when you are away from the camp premises) also reflects the camp.
- You will always seek to be truthful, honest, and fair in your communication and interaction with campers and all staff, including directors.
- You accept the challenge of helping campers to increase their awareness, responsibility to others, and to the world of nature while helping them gain self-confidence, self-concept, and the teaching of new skills.
- You will refrain from abusive language and any form of corporal punishment or embarrassment in your dealing with campers and other staff.
- You will be accepting of the diverse racial, national, religious, and cultural background of your campers and not seek to impose your own particular views. (It is recognized and accepted that a camp operated either by or on behalf of an established church for bona fide religious purpose may include religious teachings as part of its program.)

## Camp Job Descriptions

Regardless of the position international staff members hold at camp, one thing never changes: the main concern for everyone is to meet the needs of the camper. Everyone at camp works to ensure the safety and well-being of the campers. Camp rules apply to everyone. Following are descriptions of various jobs at camp.

**General/Cabin Counselor:** Counselors can make the difference in a child's experience because they fulfill the most important role at camp—*In Loco Parentis*. This Latin term, meaning "in place of parents," represents the counselor's greatest responsibility in the cabin. Parents turn over the care of their children and loved ones to the counselors and it is expected that you rise to the occasion in every aspect.

General/Cabin Counselors should have the ability to:

- Work with campers outdoors.
- Relate well to other staff.
- Accept supervision and guidance.
- Assist in teaching an activity.
- Show and demonstrate good character, integrity, adaptability, enthusiasm, sense of humor, patience, and self-control at all times.
- General counselors are the responsibility of the head counselor or the camp director.

Specific responsibilities may include but are not limited to:

- Learning the likes/dislikes of each camper.
- Recognizing and responding to opportunities for problem solving in the group.
- Developing opportunities for interaction between campers and staff.
- Providing opportunities for the group so that individuals experience success during camp.
- Providing opportunities for discussion of individual or group problems or concerns.
- Helping participants meet goals established by the camp for camper development.
- Guiding cabin or unit groups and individual campers in participating successfully in all aspects of camp activities.
- Carrying out established roles for supervising camper health.
- Carrying out established roles in enforcing camp safety regulations.
- Developing cabin or unit activity plans with participants as appropriate.
- Supervising all assigned aspects of the campers' day, including morning wake-up, cabin clean-up, meal times, rest hour, evening activities, getting ready for bed, and after-hours duty as assigned.
- Instructing campers in emergency procedures, such as fire-drills, evacuating the cabins, etc.
- Helping campers plan their participation in unit-wide or cabin programs, special events, and activities.

- Assisting in teaching or leading an activity, as assigned.
- Preparing for and actively participating in staff training, meetings, and supervisory conferences.
- Being a role model; setting a good example for campers and others, including cleanliness, punctuality, sharing clean-up and chores, sportsmanship, and table manners.
- Following camp rules and regulations pertaining to smoking, use of alcoholic beverages, and use of drugs, etc.
- Encouraging respect for personal property, camp equipment, and facilities.
- Managing personal time off in accordance with camp policy.
- Maintaining good public relations with campers' parents.
- Submitting all required reports on time.
- Sharing your culture in both formal and informal ways.

**Program Specialists:** Many ICCP participants are employed as program specialists, working as lifeguards, art and crafts teachers, horse-riding instructors, trip leaders, etc. If your camp director notifies you that your job will be in a specific area of the camp program, be sure to bring to the United States original copies of any formal certification you have that relates to your role. Most states have strong regulations regarding the training and experience program specialists must have. This is particularly true of waterfront workers and trip leaders. Your camp director may also ask you to bring special clothing if you are a trip leader. If you have not received a letter from your camp director, write and ask for advice on what to bring and what to leave at home. Keep in mind that though you may be hired as a specialist, you will also be required to assist as a cabin counselor.

**Special Needs Counselor:** Responsibility in a special needs camp (children or adults) may include but is not limited to:

- Assist campers with organizational, hygienic and independent living tasks.
- Live with the campers and assist general counselors with their duties.
- Teach special activities often geared to the needs of individual campers
- Strictly supervision of campers.
- Have lots of energy, enthusiasm, commitment.

This position in most cases requires lifting, feeding, diapering, and bathing of the camper.

**Support Staff:** Support staff are critical to the overall efficiency of the camp operations. Support staff, though most of the time is not in direct contact with campers, is the one who ensure that camp runs smoothly. Support staff workers are very important for camp life. If you apply to be a support staff participant, your responsibilities may be in:

**Food Service:** The kitchen staff rises early in the morning to get ready for Breakfast, and their day usually finishes after Dinner clean up. Kitchen Staff work in food prep, cooking, cleaning, and service.

**Kitchen Aid/Dishwasher:** This person is supervised by the food service manager. Kitchen Aid/Dishwasher responsibilities include:

- Sweeping and mopping kitchen and dining room.
- Washing dishes, glasses and silverware by hand or machine.
- Taking out trash cans at least every other day; daily if needed.
- Cutting, peeling, and washing vegetables, as needed.
- Washing pots and pans as needed.
- Mixing juice, and serving juice, milk, and water.
- Helping unload supply trucks and putting supplies away.
- Making sure the dishwasher area is kept clean; straightening counters and cleaning after each meal.
- Cleaning spillage in the kitchen or dining room.
- Helping in any area of the kitchen or dining room as requested by the food service manager.
- Adhering to all state-mandated health codes and regulations.

**Maintenance:** This position is responsible for attending to the camp's physical plant and facilities. With the assistance of the full time care-taking staff, the maintenance workers make repairs around camp, handle upkeep and appearance of the area, work on building projects and perform other similar duties.

**Laundry:** This position is responsible for washing camper's and staff clothes, and camp linens. This job requires you to be on your feet most of the time. Laundry is done mostly everyday at camp.

**Office:** Camp maintains an office on site which coordinates all of the camp's communication, materials, scheduling and other needs, making the office a very demanding place. Your job will be to answer the phones, type letters and act as a receptionist. English and communication skills must be excellent for this position.  
**Waiter or Waitress:** This position is responsible for serving to campers and staff, this position also ensures the dining hall is ready for food serving.

#### **Other Resources**

Visit the International YMCA web site for other helpful information specific to camp.

### **PROGRAM SPECIFIC: SUMMER WORK & TRAVEL PROGRAM**

#### **Changing Sites of Activity**

Generally the YMCA does not approve changing your site of activity. From time to time, some participants may have a very good reason to change. In these instances, you must: 1) contact the YMCA; 2) submit a new Employer Offer Agreement Form to the YMCA; and 3) receive written e-mail permission from the YMCA authorizing the change. The YMCA will terminate sponsorship of J-1 visas for participants who change sites of activity without prior written permission from the YMCA.

#### **Additional Sites of Activity**

A second or additional site of activity is generally approved by the YMCA as long as you first receive permission from your primary site of activity and it does not interfere with your schedule. You may not begin with a second site of activity without first: 1) getting permission from your primary site of activity; 2) contacting the YMCA; 3) submitting a new Employer Offer Agreement Form to the YMCA; and 4) receiving written e-mail permission from the YMCA. The YMCA will terminate sponsorship of J-1 visas for participants who do not follow these procedures.

#### **Authorized Sites of Activity**

Summer Work & Travel participants may work in many jobs. There are a few exceptions, however, which are listed below:

- Promote or work in any casino gambling floors as a slot host, cashier or dealer. This includes other gambling venues, such as horse tracks and sports betting parlors;
- Work as a camp counselor under any circumstance;
- Work in positions that require you to treat patients, have patient contact, or provide in-home childcare;
- Work as domestic employee;
- Work in positions that require purchase of inventory or the leasing of equipment;
- Work in door-to-door sales;
- Staffing or temp agencies;
- Work at an employer's place of residence (telemarketing, on-line business, travel agencies, etc.); or
- Employment establishments that are not listed in public records and phone directories.

#### **WEB LINKS**

- To find your nearest YMCA, have a look at: <http://www.ymca.net/>.
- HopStop is a city transit guide. The web site provides door-to-door subway, bus, and railroad directions and maps for Boston, San Francisco, Chicago, New Jersey, the New York City metro area, and Washington, DC. You may visit HopStop at: <http://www.hopstop.com/>.
- For detailed information on individual medical centers, including services provided, you may visit the <http://www.americanhospitals.com./hospitals/statelocator.htm>
- PublicLibraries.com provides easy access to the use of public libraries at: <http://www.publiclibraries.com/>
- For additional state government information and resources visit the FirstGov.gov web site at: [http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/State\\_and\\_Territories.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/State_and_Territories.shtml)
- For additional local government information and resources visit the FirstGov.gov web site at: <http://www.firstgov.gov/Agencies/Local.shtml>
- For information on any YMCA, you may visit the YMCA of the USA web site at: <http://www.ymca.net/index.jsp>
- The Visa International Service Association web site provides an ATM Locator. To visit the Visa International Service Association web site got to: <http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/jsp/SearchPage.jsp>

- For business listings and locations, visit <http://www.superpages.com/>.



**Identity Card  
International YMCA  
Exchange Visitor Programs**

\_\_\_\_\_ is a  
Program Participant of the International YMCA and  
admitted to the United States on a J-1 Exchange  
Visitor Program as authorized by the U.S.  
Department of State.

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**1-917-841-4498**

For emergencies evenings, holidays, and weekends.