



WORK & TRAVEL USA



# ORIENTATION HANDBOOK

# Handbook Contents

- COVID-19 Information.....2**
  - COVID-19 Participant Declaration:.....3
- Section 1 – Welcome.....4**
  - About International Exchange.....4
  - Stay Curious.....5
- Section 2 – Let’s Get Started.....5**
  - Prepare for a Great Experience.....5
  - Essential Documents.....5
  - Plan Your Finances.....6
  - Health Check.....7
  - IMPORTANT: Plan Ahead for Housing.....7
  - Housing Resources.....7
- Section 3 – Traveling to the United States.....8**
  - Travel to the United States.....8
  - Immigration and Customs.....9
  - Prepare for Travel Challenges.....9
- Section 4 – First Days in the United States.....10**
  - MANDATORY: Call CIEE to register for SEVIS.....10
  - Your First Day at Work.....10
  - MANDATORY: Apply for a Social Security Number.....10
  - Your First Paycheck.....11
  - Opening a Bank Account.....11
  - Best Practices for Housing.....12
- Section 5 – Living in the United States.....12**
  - MANDATORY: Follow All Program Rules.....12
  - CIEE Monthly Survey.....13
  - Laws in the United States.....13
  - Transportation Safety.....14
  - Water Safety.....15
  - Emergencies.....16
  - CIEE Insurance.....17
  - Healthcare Resources.....17
- Section 6 – Working in the United States.....17**
  - The U.S. Workplace.....17
  - Challenges at Work.....18
  - Your Rights as a Worker in the U.S.....19
  - Before You Leave Your Job.....20
- Section 7 – Traveling in America, and Returning Home.....20**
  - More Sight, More Opportunities for Discovery.....20
  - Completing Your Job.....20
  - Moving Out of Housing.....21
  - Taxes.....21
  - Staying Connected with CIEE.....21
  - Thank You!.....22

## COVID-19 Information

As a participant on a cultural exchange program, it is your responsibility to educate yourself and be prepared for the potential impacts of COVID-19. The circumstances in the U.S. and around the world will continue to change, as will guidance from governments and medical experts. Please stay informed and be flexible. Follow the advice of officials, CIEE, your international representative and host employer, and take the necessary precautions to protect yourself and others.

**Vaccines play a key role in ending the pandemic.** Therefore, all participants on CIEE programs are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to their arrival. In addition, we ask that all participants be **informed, safe, smart, and respectful** while on their CIEE BridgeUSA program.

### Stay Informed

- In preparation for your departure, check with your local government, the local U.S. consulate, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC), and your airline to understand the travel restrictions or requirements specific to your circumstances.
- Know the [signs and symptoms](#). We recommend reviewing the latest updates from the [CDC](#) and the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) to understand the latest science behind the impacts of the virus.
- Check in with your host to understand restrictions or cultural norms surrounding COVID-19 in your U.S. community, as well as any health and safety policies related to your job.
- Identify the nearest COVID-19 testing facility in your area.

### Play It Safe

- Practice [healthy habits](#) and preventative measures such as proper hand hygiene, masking, and social distancing whenever possible and appropriate.
- If you feel ill, inform your host and CIEE! Check in with your host for guidance and support on quarantine and testing needed to return to work.

### Be Respectful

- Self-isolate immediately if you begin to feel ill. This critical step may stop the transmission of the virus to a colleague, roommate, friend, or community member.
- Taking preventative measures, such as masking and social distancing, are important even when you are not feeling sick because we know that the virus can be spread even by individuals who do not have symptoms ([asymptomatic transmission](#)).
- Be courteous and respectful towards others' who may ask for social distancing or masking.
- Please be aware people in the U.S. and around the world have varying opinions about the pandemic and conversations may be difficult or emotional. [Research](#) finds that discussions are most productive when we listen, ask others for their perspective, and remain friendly and objective.

### Make Smart Decisions

- Bring extra money in case you should need to quarantine or miss work while on your program.
- Think critically about where you plan to [travel](#) within the U.S. Understand any restrictions and look to attractions within your region, and avoid large crowds when possible.

### COVID-19 Participant Declaration:

In light of the current circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S. and around the world, and in order to participate in a CIEE Work & Travel USA, Camp Exchange USA, Internship USA, Career Training USA or Scholar USA program, you must review and commit to the following terms.

I agree to:

- Be fully vaccinated in advance of traveling and be prepared to show a proof of vaccine when requested.
- Educate myself on the risks associated with travel and participating in a cultural exchange program abroad.
- Purchase a round trip ticket to the U.S. (if program is shorter than six months)
- Travel to the U.S. with \$1,500 USD and additional funds to support myself in case of an emergency, for a repatriation flight, or to support myself in the event of a shelter-in-place order.
- Provide CIEE with an email address and phone number that I check regularly and respond to all CIEE communication requesting a reply.
- Inform CIEE and my host employer promptly if I am exposed to or test positive for COVID-19, and follow appropriate measures as advised by a medical professional.
- Follow the instructions of my host employer and/or CIEE in the case of an outbreak in workplace or housing.
- Respect others' wishes for social distancing and wear personal protection equipment, such as a mask, whenever appropriate.

I understand that:

- There may be disruptions to my program due to COVID-19.
- I may be required to change placements or move locations in the U.S. as instructed by CIEE (not applicable to Scholar USA program).
- I may need to return to my home country immediately if instructed by CIEE, my university, or government (U.S. or home government).
- I must follow CIEE's instructions and respond to outreach as requested.
- I am responsible for supporting myself financially in case of quarantine or a shelter in place order in my community.



## Section 1 – Welcome

### About International Exchange

[CIEE Work & Travel USA](#) is so much more than a job. It's an exciting journey of cultural discovery, full of opportunities to engage with new people and explore new places. This [BridgeUSA](#) program is part of the much larger U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program. The **J-1 visa is not a tourism visa**; it is designed to provide a richer, more meaningful experience by bringing foreign nationals to the United States to explore our culture and make lasting connections with Americans.

With this unique opportunity, you'll make new friends, live in the United States like an American, gain confidence, independence, and experience – and have an unforgettable program!

### Meet Your Sponsor, CIEE

**CIEE** – the Council on International Educational Exchange – is your J-1 visa sponsor for your Work & Travel USA program.

The U.S. Department of State has approved us to sponsor program participants like you while you visit the United States. We issue paperwork for your visa, make sure you are aware of and follow program rules, and look out for your safety and well-being while you are here.



In other words, we are here to help you have a great experience! Reach out with any questions or concerns about your paycheck, your job, your housing, your health, or anything else.

**There are two easy ways to reach us:**

1. Call **888-268-6245** during business hours or 24/7 for emergencies. **Add it to your phone now.**
2. Email [contact@cīee.org](mailto:contact@cīee.org). We'll respond as soon as possible.

**Check your email frequently** while you're in the States so you don't miss reminders for required tasks, cultural insights, news about cultural activities near you, and other updates.

The CIEE team is not just here for problems. We love to hear from you! Tag us in your photos and videos with the hashtag **#CIEEWorkTravelers**, and we may share your photos!

- Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cīeevat/>
- Find us on Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/cīee\\_workandtravel\\_usa/](https://www.instagram.com/cīee_workandtravel_usa/)
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cīeeWorkandTravel>

## Stay Curious

The United States is a vast and vibrant country. One thing is certain: no matter where you go, it will be different from your home country. Some things will be positive, while others may be negative. We encourage you to keep an open mind and respond to each day with curiosity. We also encourage you to:

- **Be prepared for a period of cultural adjustment.** At first, most participants are excited and happy to be in a new place. However, as you begin to adjust, it's normal for excitement to wear off. This may leave you feeling anxious, frustrated, or homesick. Give yourself time to develop a new routine and gain confidence.
- **Be flexible.** To avoid feeling frustrated, misled, or let down, keep your expectations, schedule, and outlook as open and flexible as possible.
- **Be patient** with yourself and others.
- **Be curious** about yourself and everything around you. Take part in and reflect about the differences between the U.S. and your own country. It's the best way to adapt, to learn, to grow, and to make the most of your program.

### Remember That We're Here to Help!

No matter how you are feeling, you are never alone. You can contact CIEE by calling 888-268-6245 any time. We are always happy to hear from you.

## Section 2 – Let's Get Started

### Prepare for a Great Experience

Set yourself up for a rewarding adventure in the U.S. by carefully researching your job and host community. Follow these steps:

1. **Review your job offer form**  
Make sure all information is accurate. If you have any questions about your offer, contact your agent or CIEE.
2. **Contact your employer**  
Introduce yourself and ask questions. (e.g. Ask about housing options, transportation from the airport, and what to expect during the first weeks of your program).
3. **Learn about your destination**  
Find out what there is to see and do. Know what temperature and weather to expect. This will help you plan and pack for your stay.

### Helpful Information About Your Summer Work & Travel Program – Download and Print

[U.S. State Department Exchange Visitor Welcome brochure \(PDF\)](#)

[Summer Work Travel USA Participant Welcome letter \(PDF\)](#)

[Summer Work Travel USA brochure \(PDF\)](#)

[Wilberforce pamphlet: Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers](#)

## Essential Documents

---

### Document Checklist

You must have certain documents in hand to enter the U.S. Some of these documents will come from your international representative, CIEE, or your employer while others, such as your passport, are your own responsibility.

**TRAVEL TIP:** Make two photocopies of each document and pack both sets in different places in your carry-on luggage! Scan and email a copy of these documents to your personal email account.

#### Documents provided by your international representative, employer, or CIEE:

- DS-2019 form
- SEVIS receipt
- Job offer form
- Confirmation of insurance
- Insurance identification card

#### Documents you must obtain on your own:

- Passport valid for at least 6 months after the program end date
- U.S. J-1 visa
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination
- Customs Declaration Form 6059B

You should always have a copy of these documents in your possession when traveling and during your stay in the U.S.. Your documents are your identification while you are in the U.S. and law enforcement authorities might request to see them at any time. [Learn more](#) about these important documents. Still confused? Contact your international representative with questions.

## Plan Your Finances

CIEE strongly recommends that you have access to **at least \$1,500 when you arrive to the U.S.** – whether that be in cash, travelers' checks, or credit/debit cards. U.S. Customs might also ask for proof that you have at least \$800 with you (cash and bank statements are acceptable.) additionally, it may take several weeks for your first paycheck to arrive. In the meantime, you'll need to pay all of your expenses. These may include a housing deposit, transportation to and from work, transportation to and from the Social Security Office, a uniform, and daily meals.

#### Typical expenses for the start of your stay:

- Airport hotel: \$50-\$150 per night
- Taxi from airport to housing: \$20-\$100
- Housing deposit: \$100-\$400
- Rent for the first month: \$300-\$500
- Groceries: \$200-\$250
- Public transportation: \$30-\$50
- Uniform: \$25-\$50
- Bicycle, light, and helmet: \$25-\$200

## Health Check

### Take Care of Your Health Before You Depart

if you have CIEE Insurance, it covers most accidents and sudden illnesses while you are in the U.S., but does not cover routine medical care, annual examinations, or regular dental treatments. **Visit your doctor and dentist before you depart!**

Now is the time to:

- Set up and complete medical and dental appointments.
- Order any prescription medications you'll need – enough to last the duration of your stay in the U.S.  
TIP: Ask your local U.S. embassy if there are documents you need to enter the country with your medication.

Visit CIEE [insurance website](#) for a detailed explanation of your CIEE insurance benefits.

*Please note: Work & Travel USA program participants in Ireland have a separate insurance plan. Contact your international representative for more information.*

## IMPORTANT: Plan Ahead for Housing

It's important to plan ahead for housing. We recommend that:

- **Start your search now.** The more you know about what to expect before you leave your home country, the easier it will be to get settled once you arrive in the U.S. Use the Internet to research housing, transportation, and geography, as well as destinations and activities.
- **Find housing before you come to the U.S.** If your employer does not provide housing, you can still ask them about housing options near your workplace. Look out for housing scams: unusually low rent, requests to wire money, or to give cash to people you do not know are warning signs. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Use your instincts. If you are unsure, talk with your employer or agent, or call CIEE.
- **Have a place to stay when you arrive.** If you are unable to find long-term housing before you leave for the U.S., you must arrange short-term accommodation such as a hotel, hostel, or motel. If you will travel by bus or train to your final destination, you may need to arrange accommodations in more than one place.

## Housing Resources

If your employer does not provide housing, use this list of online resources to start your search:

- [Craigslist.org](#) – This free classified advertisement website serves many areas of the U.S. There is no cost to place an ad on Craigslist, so here you'll find many listings for affordable housing.
- [Apartmentlist.com](#) – Search by neighborhood with many filtering options. Log in with your Facebook account to access special features.



- [Apartments.com](http://Apartments.com) – Apartment listings by state and city. Sign up and ask for listings to be emailed to you. Includes an iPhone app.
- [Roommates.com](http://Roommates.com) – Lists apartments where people are looking for roommates. Services like this are often free to join, but often charge fees and may take longer than other options.
- [Airbnb.com](http://Airbnb.com) – Offers short-term stays in private apartments and lists monthly rentals.
- [Facebook.com](http://Facebook.com) – Join CIEE Work & Travel USA on Facebook to connect with other students looking for roommates near you.

Read [this document](#), and start looking for a place to live!

## Section 3 – Traveling to the United States

### Travel to the United States

Have a Plan!

Plan to arrive a day or two before the start date specified on your job offer form. Check the dates on your DS-2019 form with your employer, and make sure their information matches yours. When you've made your travel plans, share your flight information with your employer and international representative.



Plan how you will get from the airport to your place of employment or your temporary accommodation. If your employer doesn't arrange transportation for you, search online for bus schedules or other public transportation options. Let your employer know what your plans are when they are finalized.

**Create a travel checklist.** Think through your entire journey – from when you leave your home to when you arrive at your temporary or long-term housing in the U.S. Questions to consider:

- Do you have all important documents, money, prescription drugs, and valuables where you can access them in your carry-on luggage?
- Will you need to spend a night at an airport hotel before traveling to your final destination? Did you make a reservation?
- How will you get from the airport to your housing?
- Do you have the phone numbers for your employer, friends you may be traveling with, and CIEE (888-268-6245) with you?

Not sure what to pack? Check out our helpful [packing guide](#)!

## Immigration and Customs

### Arrival

When arriving in the U.S., you must pass through immigration and customs. There may be separate lines for U.S. citizens and Green Card-holders and other visitors. Make sure you join the line for visitors!

### Immigration

At immigration, officials will verify your passport, DS-2019 form, I-94 number, and J-1 visa. Officials will take your photograph and fingerprint, then ask questions about your citizenship, your program, and where you will stay. They will also ask about information on your documents. This process is straightforward, customary, and required for most people entering the U.S.

Please note: Many airports now have automated passport control, where you go through these steps at an electronic kiosk.

### Customs

Next, you will get your luggage and continue to Customs. Expect officials to open your luggage for inspection and ask for your customs declaration form, which tells them what you are bringing into the country.

## Prepare for Travel Challenges

### Travel Challenges

Even when you plan travel well, sometimes things go wrong. Here are some common travel issues and advice on how to handle them:

- **Missed connecting flight**  
If you miss a connecting flight due to travel delays, find an agent with your airline and ask him or her to book you on the next flight. You can also call your airline's toll-free number and talk to an agent about a new itinerary. There are often free telephones in major airports. Remember to also call or email your employer if you will arrive later than expected.
- **Lost luggage**  
Check with your airline's lost luggage office at airport baggage claim.
- **Lost documents**  
If you lose one or more documents, use your backup photocopies. Report a lost passport to airport security and to CIEE right away.

For more tips, check out our useful [arrival guide!](#)

## Section 4 – First Days in the United States

### MANDATORY: Call CIEE to register for SEVIS

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security keeps track of visitors with a system called **SEVIS, or the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System**. All J-1 visa holders must register. You cannot register until you've arrived in the United States. You have **10 days** after the start date on your DS-2019 form to complete registration. If you fail to register, you will have to return home immediately.

To register, call CIEE at 888-268-6245. Have the following information ready:

- DS-2019 number
- U.S. address
- U.S. work address
- Email address
- U.S. phone number, if applicable

### Your First Day at Work

#### What to Expect on Your First Day

Your employer expects you to start working on the date listed on your job offer. The first day will include completing paperwork and training. You will also meet with your supervisor or a representative from the human resources department. When you arrive at work, feel free to ask questions if you're unsure of anything.

Bring these documents with you on the first day:

- Passport
- J-1 visa
- DS-2019 form
- I-94: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94>
- If you are a returning participant, bring a copy of your Social Security card
- If you are a first-time participant, proof that you've applied for a Social Security number (a copy of the application form or a copy of application receipt)

*Note: In the event that you have not already applied for a Social Security number before your first day of work, please be sure you speak with your employer in order to come up with a plan to apply for it promptly.*

### MANDATORY: Apply for a Social Security Number

You need a Social Security number (SSN) to get paid, open a bank account, and pay taxes. You might also need to share your SSN with your landlord. If you are a returning participant and

already have a Social Security number, bring your card with you to the U.S.

### Application Instructions

1. Apply for a Social Security number at least **five (5) business** days after completing SEVIS registration by visiting a local Social Security office. [Find one here.](#)
2. Bring the following documents with you:
  - a. DS-2019 form
  - b. Passport with J-1 Visa
3. You will get a receipt upon completing your application. **Keep this important document safe.** You will need to send it to your employer to prove that you are eligible to work. You may also need it to open a bank account or rent an apartment.
4. **Treat your Social Security number as confidential information;** avoid giving it out unnecessarily. Once you receive your Social Security card, keep it in a safe place. Don't carry it with you unless you need to show it to an employer or service provider.

## Your First Paycheck

Be aware you may need to wait several weeks for your first paycheck. This means it's important to be able to pay your expenses for up to one month.

When you receive your paycheck, review it carefully to make sure it is correct and that you are not paying either Social Security or Medicare taxes. You **ARE** required to pay federal, state, and sometimes local taxes, which are deducted automatically from your pay. If you ever have a question about your paycheck, speak with your manager as soon as possible.

### Important Note

Your first paycheck may also be smaller than expected if you started work in the middle of a pay period (most are two weeks), if you're working fewer hours during training, or if it's early in the season and your employer is not yet busy enough to give you full hours. Remember: the weekly hours listed in your job profile are based on an **average of the entire season.**

## Opening a Bank Account

Having a U.S. bank account makes living in the United States easier, and it's a smart way to protect your money. Banks offer different types of accounts – **choose a checking account.** Look for banks that do not require a minimum balance or charge ATM fees. If you can, choose a bank with a location or ATM near where you work or live.

Bring these documents to the bank to open an account:

- Passport with J-1 Visa
- DS-2019 form
- Your Social Security application receipt or your Social Security number
- A letter from your employer confirming your employment

## Best Practices for Housing

Before you agree to rent a room or apartment, ask questions. This is the best way to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to problems like noisy neighbors or having to pay for damage that occurred before you moved in.

Check out this list of [helpful questions](#) to ask landlords and roommates.

### Security Deposits, Leases, and Rental Agreements

Landlords are allowed by law to collect a security deposit when a tenant moves in. This deposit is usually equal to one month's rent. This money will be returned to you when you leave, as long as there has been no damage to the apartment and you have not broken the lease agreement.

As you can see, it's important to inspect your apartment with your landlord before signing a lease or rental agreement. You should also get a written record from your landlord that includes any existing damage and a list of all furnishings and their condition. You may also want to take photos when you first move in for your own records.

For a sample housing agreement, [read this document!](#)

### Agreements with Roommates

If you share housing with other people, you don't need to be best friends, but you do need to respect each other and set clear expectations. Make an agreement in writing about how you will share costs for rent, electricity, water, food, and more. Talk about cleaning and chores, personal space, privacy, food, guests, and noise before you move in.

For more tips on housing, [read this document!](#)

## Section 5 – Living in the United States

### MANDATORY: Follow All Program Rules

If you do not follow CIEE program rules, you are at risk of CIEE **shortening** your Work & Travel program. Shortening your program means that your CIEE sponsorship and insurance will be ended. You will no longer be legally allowed to work. If you stay in the U.S. after your program has been shortened, you will be here at your own risk and will not have insurance.

Your program may be shortened if:

- You fail to respond to CIEE communication (check your email frequently!)
- You change or leave your job without approval from CIEE
- You break any local, state, or federal laws



For more serious violations, your status may be **terminated**. That means both your sponsorship and insurance will be ended. You will no longer be legally allowed to work in the U.S. In addition, you will be required to return home immediately – unless you are being held by officials pending a trial in the U.S. court system. Being terminated will have a negative impact on future attempts to obtain a U.S. visa or enter the United States.

Your status may be terminated if:

- You are arrested for a serious crime in the United States
- You do not register for SEVIS within 10 days of your arrival in the United States
- You work at a job without CIEE approval
- You do not report a change of housing
- You do not complete the CIEE email survey every 30 days

CIEE reserves the right to terminate or withdraw program sponsorship in cases of serious crime or visa revocation.

## CIEE Monthly Survey

All CIEE Work & Travel USA participants are required to complete a survey every 30 days. **We'll send the survey by email.** You will have 10 days to complete it. If you have trouble completing the survey online, call CIEE at **888-268-6245**. We'll be happy to help you complete it by phone.

**Failure to complete the survey on time can lead to termination of your program.**

Be sure to check your email regularly so you don't miss any messages from CIEE. In addition to surveys, we will share news of upcoming events in your area and other important information.

## Laws in the United States

As a cultural ambassador, you represent your own country and all exchange visitors to the U.S. while you are here. If you break a law, your program may end and you could be sent home. Unlike most countries, U.S. laws vary from state to state and even city to city. To avoid unfortunate mistakes, it is important to know and follow the local laws in the town or city where you are living.

### Alcohol and Legal Drinking Age

You must be 21 years old to legally drink alcohol in the U.S. You could be arrested or fined if you are under 21 and found with alcohol. Do not drive if you have been drinking alcohol and do not get in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

### Drugs

All unlawful use, possession, or distribution of illegal drugs is prohibited in the United States. If you are caught with illegal drugs, you could be arrested and charged with a crime. The use or possession of marijuana is a violation of federal law despite being legalized at the state level in

some parts of the U.S. The consumption of marijuana in any way (smoking, edibles, etc.) is not legal in the U.S. and accidents or illness that occur under the influence of drugs and alcohol is not covered under your program insurance.

### Shoplifting

Stealing things from stores, also known as shoplifting, is illegal and could result in jail time or criminal charges.

### If You Are Arrested

You will be allowed one phone call. **Be sure to make that call to CIEE at 888-268-6245.**

Breaking laws or being arrested can affect your employment, as well as your ability to participate in the CIEE Work & Travel USA program. If you have questions or issues, please contact CIEE immediately.

Learn more about [U.S. laws and program rules](#).

## Transportation Safety

At CIEE, our goal is to make it easier and more affordable for you to get around your community. That is why we recommend Work & Travel USA participants use public transportation, walk, or bike as much as possible.



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Biking can be dangerous. This is especially true in the U.S., where using a bike as a means of transit is less common than in many other countries. As a result, many American motorists are unaccustomed to sharing the road with bikes.

To protect yourself, please **follow the guidelines below:**

- In the U.S., bicyclists are considered vehicle operators. This means you are required to follow and obey [traffic laws](#), stop signs, and [right of way](#).
- Wear a bicycle helmet; in the event of an accident, this will reduce the odds of a head injury by 50%.
- Ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Ride in the road, rather than on the sidewalk.
- If there is a bike lane, use it.
- Wear brightly colored clothing.
- Install reflectors and lights on the front and back of your bike, and always use lights at night.
- Use hand signals at intersections to let cars know where you are going.
- Check your tires, brakes, and gears before each use.

Learn more about [walking, biking, and public transportation](#) in the United States.

## Water Safety

Open water swimming is different from swimming in a pool. We want your time at the beach to be as safe as it is fun. Follow these tips to stay safe in the water:

- **Swim in designated areas.**  
Always swim in designated swimming areas supervised by lifeguards. Watch for flags posted at many beach access sites signifying water conditions.
- **Daytime is the safest time for swimming.**
- **Never swim alone.**  
Bring a friend and always let someone know where you are going.
- **Stay close to the shore and swim parallel to the beach.**
- **Remember that swimming and alcohol can be a deadly combination.**

Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury death in the United States. The ocean is a complex body of water with some natural dangers:

- **Rip currents** are channeled currents of water that flow away from shore and can quickly pull even the strongest swimmers out to sea. 80% of rescues by lifeguards at ocean beaches are caused by rip currents. Since the current flows under water, it's important to know the signs of a rip current and avoid the water in that area. **If you are caught in a rip current, don't fight it by trying to swim directly to shore.** Instead, swim parallel to shore until you feel the current relax, then swim to shore. Most rip currents are narrow. A short swim **parallel** to shore will bring you to safety. Learn how to recognize and break the grip of the rip current [here](#).
- **Large waves** are more powerful than you might think. Dive under one before it breaks and remember: never turn your back to the ocean when you are in the water.

Find more information on water and beach safety, visit this [link](#).

## Extreme Weather

Many parts of the country experience extreme weather. In the summer months, this can include severe hot weather, flash floods, lightning, or strong winds that can be very dangerous if you do not take safe measures to protect yourself. In the winter months, severe cold weather can bring winter storms, blizzards, freezing rain, ice, and high winds that are also very dangerous. If you live in area with extreme weather, it is important to practice common sense. Here are some helpful tips.

**Hot weather:** Always apply sunscreen when outside and don't forget to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

**Cold weather:** Winter weather will vary by community but will often range from temperatures of 0 degrees to 40 Fahrenheit (that's -17 to 4 degrees Celsius!). Make sure to bring layers and warm clothes with you to stay warm inside and outside. It is not uncommon for water pipes to

freeze during extreme winter weather. Should this happen, notify your landlord right away and keep CIEE in the informed if you need assistance.

**Severe storms:** Flash floods, lightening, blizzards, freezing rain, ice, or strong winds can occur very quickly in some parts of the United States depending on the season. If any of these conditions happen in your area, be sure to follow the safety instructions available television or radio stations. Do not drive or go outside during these times.

Be sure you are aware of the extreme weather that is common to your community. You can do this by learning about the climate and geography that can occur in your community especially during the summer months. For more information on how to stay safe in extreme weather, visit this [link](#).

Remember to check your email. In cases of extreme weather, such as hurricanes or wildfires, CIEE will be in contact to share information and confirm your location and safety. Responses to CIEE's emails in cases of extreme weather is required.

## Emergencies

If you have an emergency and need immediate assistance or care from safety officials, **dial 911** from any telephone. **Use this number only in true emergencies.** In some cities, you could be fined if you abuse this service. Examples of emergencies include:

- Fires
- Crimes in progress
- Traffic accidents resulting in injury
- You or someone you know is in immediate danger

### Call CIEE Anytime

The CIEE team is here for you whenever there's a problem with our 24-hour emergency support line. Call **888-268-6245** if:

- You are the victim of a crime.
- You are arrested.
- You are involved in a car accident.
- You are in a situation that involves police, immigration, or media coverage.
- You are evicted from housing.
- You experience emotional distress or need urgent counseling for any reason.

For all other concerns, call CIEE during our regular business hours at **888-268-6245** or send us an [email](#).

## CIEE Insurance

For most participants of Work & Travel USA, insurance is included as a program benefit\*. When you see a doctor, you will be asked for your insurance identification (ID) card, and you may have to pay a small fee, called a copayment or copay. To see the approximate costs of copays, review your [Summary of Benefits](#).

Have a question about insurance? Email us at [contact@cīee.org](mailto:contact@cīee.org).

### What's Not Covered by CIEE Insurance

Your CIEE insurance does not cover:

- Routine examinations, vaccinations, regular dental treatment, or vision services. (Take care of these needs before you travel!)
- Expenses related to pre-existing conditions. If you have a chronic disease such as asthma or diabetes, make sure your health insurance at home covers you for costs related to these conditions while you're in the U.S.

Click [here](#) to learn more about your CIEE insurance plan, including further exclusions.

If you require medical attention that is not emergency care, find an in-network doctor who accepts your insurance using [DocFind tool online](#). Contact CIEE if you need help.

*\*Students who purchase their Work & Travel USA program in Ireland have a separate insurance plan. Contact CIEE or your international representative for more information.*

## Healthcare Resources

We hope you won't experience a medical emergency in the U.S., but we're here to help if you do. Call CIEE at 1-888-268-6245 as soon as possible in the event of an emergency. You may also want to review our [healthcare and insurance guide](#).

## Section 6 – Working in the United States

### The U.S. Workplace

With a positive outlook and willingness to be part of a team, your time at work can be rich and rewarding. Your attitude can help you look forward to going to work every day, and help you build friendships with co-workers.

**But working in the U.S. may be different than you expect.** Every workplace, after all, is unique. While most are relaxed and informal, we expect CIEE employers and their employees to **be professional** at all times. What does this mean? That you:

- Arrive on time.
- Be friendly, polite, and respectful.



- Do your best at every task that's given to you.
- Dress appropriately and wear your uniform properly if one is required.

Customer service is valued highly in the United States. We're known for it worldwide. That's why it is so important to be professional at all times and to meet expectations whenever possible. If you're not sure about a task or procedure at work, ask your manager for help.

### Second Jobs

You may choose to work at a second job if you are interested and have the availability. Remember that your first job is your priority, and to speak with your manager so they can help you with your schedule. Additionally, all jobs must first be approved by CIEE before you can begin working. You can visit CIEE's website to learn more about appropriate jobs, how to prepare for a great interview, and how to obtain CIEE's approval. As always, you can also contact CIEE Customer Service (1-888-268-6245 or [contact@cieee.org](mailto:contact@cieee.org)) to learn more as well!

## Challenges at Work

CIEE works with America's best seasonal employers. Still, problems may arise at work. For example, you may think an employer doesn't notice your effort or treats you unfairly. If this happens, talk with your supervisor calmly, professionally, and constructively. If you need advice or guidance, know that CIEE is always here to help.

[Call CIEE immediately at 888-268-6245 if you experience any of the following:](tel:1-888-268-6245)

### SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

These are serious matters in the United States, and there are laws in place to protect you.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment in the workplace is illegal in the United States. Sexual harassment can be defined as:

- unwelcome sexual advances
- requests for sexual favors
- other verbal, nonverbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature

Sexual harassment can interfere with your work performance and create an uncomfortable work environment. The victim of sexual harassment and the harasser can be either a woman or a man or could be of the same sex.

#### EXAMPLES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Sexually suggestive notes or e-mails
- Inappropriate sexual gestures
- Sharing sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos
- Commenting (offline or online) on someone's clothing, body, or appearance
- Inappropriate or unwanted touching
- Offensive comments about a co-worker's gender identity or sexual orientation

Please note: The above list is not complete. Sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviors that can be verbal, visual, or physical. As such, you should always treat people – in and beyond the workplace – with respect and dignity. Expect the same treatment in return.

### IF YOU ARE THE VICTIM OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

If you are being sexually harassed, the first thing you should do is tell your harasser that their behavior is unwelcome. If their behavior doesn't stop immediately, contact your supervisor or manager. If your supervisor or manager is your harasser, you should contact your employer's Human Resource (HR) Department instead. You may feel afraid or ashamed that reporting a sexual harassment incident will put your job at risk. It is illegal to punish anyone who reports sexual harassment, and your employer does not have the authority to cancel your visa. In either case, you should always contact CIEE at **888-268-6245**. We will work to resolve the situation. You should never feel uncomfortable in your work environment. If the problem cannot be resolved at your current employer, do not worry; we will find you a new and safe place to work. For more facts about sexual harassment, please [click here](#).

### LAYOFFS OR FIRINGS

Employees could be laid off work if business is slow and your employer needs fewer workers. If you're fired, on the other hand, your employer is probably unhappy with your performance. To avoid this, handle any issues that come up before they become major problems. Talk to your employer or call CIEE if you have questions, or you think work isn't going smoothly. We're here to help.

## Your Rights as a Worker in the U.S.

As a participant in a J-1 Exchange Visitor program temporarily in the U.S., you have the same workplace rights as an American. You have the right to:

- Be treated and paid fairly
- Not be held in a job against your will
- Keep your passport and other identification documents in your possession
- Report abuse without retaliation
- Request help from unions, immigrant and labor rights groups and other groups; and
- Seek justice in U.S. courts.

For a full explanation of these rights and others, please see the [Wilberforce Pamphlet](#) from the U.S. Department of State. If you feel that your rights are being violated, notify CIEE right away at 1.888.268.6245.

Human trafficking is a serious crime and a violation of human rights. Human trafficking occurs whenever a person is recruited, transported, or kept against his or her will by means of the threat of violence or other forms of intimidation, for purposes of exploitation such as forced labor or prostitution. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, traffickers look for people who are susceptible for a variety of reasons, including political instability, economic hardship, or psychological vulnerability.

Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims.

If you encounter someone who you think is a victim or a perpetrator of human trafficking, **you should report it right away**. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911.

To report any suspected abuses, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center's 24 Hour Toll-Free Hotline at 1.888.373.7888.

Additional resources on workers' rights and human trafficking

- [U.S. Department of State Rights and Protections for Temporary Workers](#)
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign to end human trafficking](#)
- [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)
- [U.S. Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#)

## Before You Leave Your Job

If you are having issues at work, try to resolve them with your employer. If this doesn't help and you decide to leave your job, you must contact CIEE first. If you quit or change jobs without approval from CIEE, you risk having your CIEE Work & Travel USA program shortened. Please note that your new job must be approved by CIEE before you begin work.

Learn more about [leaving your job](#).

## Section 7 – Traveling in America, and Returning Home

### More Sights, More Opportunities for Discovery

#### Planning Your Adventures

One of the great things about CIEE Work & Travel USA is the opportunity to explore this amazing country on your own. Go anywhere you like! The only limits are your imagination, your budget, and the date you need to return to your home country. Remember that if you want to take a short trip while still at your job, you will need to ask your employer for time off.



You may travel in the United States for up to 30 days after your DS-2019 expires. Plan your travel dates before you come to the United States and make sure you have insurance coverage for this period. You cannot change your travel or departure dates after you arrive in the United States. You must also go home in time to start school.

Check out these [CIEE travel tips](#).

### Completing Your Job

Finish your job on a positive note. This is the best way to leave a good impression, which helps other international students visit the United States in the future. Make sure you stay through the end date you and your employer agreed to at the start of your program. If you do a great

job, your employer may ask you to come back next year!

### Your Social Security status

If you do not have a Social Security number one month before your DS-2019 ends, please visit a local Social Security Administration office and check the status of your application. You do not have to visit the same office where you originally filed your application. [Find a Social Security office.](#)

### Your final paycheck

Collect your final paycheck. If your employer cannot give it to you before you depart, make sure your employer knows how to mail it to you or deposit it in your bank account.

### Contact information

Keep your employer's contact information in case you need to contact them after you return home.

## Moving Out of Housing

Know your lease agreement, so you understand how much – if any – notice must be given to your landlord before you move out. Leave the apartment clean and in the same condition as when you moved in. This will help ensure that you get your entire security deposit back.

Follow the same guidelines if you're staying in housing provided by your employer.

## Taxes

### Filing Your Tax Return

You are required to pay federal, state, and sometimes local taxes. You may be entitled to a partial refund of the taxes you paid while you worked in the United States by filing a tax return. Filing your taxes is a requirement. You will need a W2 form from your employer, though this form is not made available until February or March of next year and will be mailed to you. [Click here](#) for more information on filing a U.S. tax return.

## Staying Connected with CIEE

### Join the CIEE Alumni Global Network

When you complete your CIEE Work & Travel USA program, you'll be one of more than 300,000 students who have enriched their lives by experiencing a different culture. Make the most of that fact by joining the [CIEE Alumni Global Network](#), a diverse and dynamic community that makes it easy to connect with active alumni in nearly every industry and country on Earth.

You also have the option to join the [CIEE Work & Travel USA Ambassadors group](#) on LinkedIn. In this virtual space, our alumni can connect with each other and form new relationships with potential colleagues and mentors, share ideas, and discuss the impact of international

exchange.

Keep in touch with us by following CIEE on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

## Thank You!

Thank you for completing the CIEE Work & Travel USA Orientation. We are thrilled that you've decided to spend your program with us, and we're confident that you're ready to explore, make new friends, and gain work experience.

Check out the experiences of other [#CIEEWorkTravelers](#) and have an amazing program!