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Introduction

Introduction and Important Contacts

This handbook will help you prepare for the arrival of your au pair/companion, the training and support you will need to give your au pair and serve as a resource throughout the year long exchange.

Your family and your au pair/companion have become a part of a cluster or group of others within your community who are enrolled with one of our programs. The cluster acts as a support system.

Your Community Counselor is our program's field representative and is there to provide information and guidance to all members of the cluster. Your Community Counselor interviewed you and through orientation will help prepare you for the arrival of your au pair/companion.

Your Community Counselor will work with you to coordinate travel arrangements for your au pair/companion to get to your home. He/she will maintain regular contact, help organize social activities for the au pairs and companions in the cluster, assist your au pair/companion with the educational component of the program and act as facilitator if conflicts arise between you and your au pair/companion.

Note: For purposes of clarity, we will use the pronoun "him" to describe your child, and the pronoun "her" to describe your au pair or companion.

The term au pair refers to participants on our au pair or Extraordinaire program. Companions are participants on our EduCare program.

Your Obligations as a Host Family

As a host family with Au Pair in America you have agreed to comply with the following program rules and regulations. Throughout this document we will explain each of these in detail and offer guidance that we hope will help get you off to the best possible start with your new au pair/companion. You have agreed to do the following:

- limit child care responsibilities to 45 hours a week if participating in the au pair/Extraordinaire program or 30 hours per week for the Educare program
- Scheduled working hours will not exceed 10 hours per day or extend more than five and a half days per week
- The au pair must have one full weekend off each month
- At least one parent will be home during the first 3 days after the au pair has arrived in your home

- Never leave the au pair in sole charge of a child overnight
- Never leave an au pair in sole charge of an infant under 3 months of age
- Provide automobile insurance coverage as required if the au pair is to be driving
- Pay the au pair the current stipend rate for 51 weeks (52 weeks for Year2 au pairs)
- Provide the opportunity for the au pair to attend monthly cluster meetings
- Maintain monthly contact with the community counselor
- Facilitate the opportunity for your au pair to register and take the required educational classes
- Treat the au pair like a member of your family
- Participate in an annual host family day event facilitated by the community counselor
- Sign an agreement with the au pair upon her arrival that outlines days and hours of child care to be provided

Child Care Expectations

Your Expectations

The first crucial step to a successful and mutually satisfying year with your au pair/companion is for you, the host parent, to determine what you expect from your au pair/companion.

There are two specific areas of responsibilities your care provider will have—child care duties and the upbringing of your child.

Child Care Duties

The child care duties you assign might include, depending on the child's age, feeding, bathing and dressing your child, planning your child's daily activities and playing with your child, supervising and babysitting and transporting your child to school, the local pool or park. You will have to think about what kinds of activities you would like your child to do when you are away and convey that to your au pair/companion.

Child care will be your au pair/companion's primary responsibility. Additionally she will be able to help you with chores that relate to your children. The extent to which she can help you with child-related chores will depend on how active your child is and how much of her attention he requires. If she spends most of her day playing with your child and making sure he is happy and safe, she may not have much time to devote to chores. She may not have as much practice as you have watching your child and getting child-related chores done at the same time, and she may be worried your child will get into trouble while she is folding his laundry! Your child's safety and happiness will always come before a neat house. Your au pair/companion can help you by tidying the kitchen after she feeds the children, making the children's beds, doing the children's laundry and tidying up after the children.

Housework or chores such as vacuuming, mopping, dusting, pet care and total responsibility for cleaning your house is not part of your au pair/companion's responsibilities.

Refer to Program regulations for specifics on appropriate responsibilities for your au pair/companion.

The child care questionnaire

Your au pair/companion will receive a questionnaire at Orientation and will be encouraged to complete it with you. The questions are intended to serve as discussion points to help facilitate your training during the first few days after her arrival. Consider how you will respond by reviewing a copy of the questionnaire included in this packet.

Your Child's Upbringing

Your care provider will also play an important part in your child's upbringing. It's important that she follow your philosophy on child rearing, your rules about manners and your methods for disciplining. You will have to think carefully about your ideas on these subjects so that you will be able to clearly explain them. How do these philosophies translate into action? Special note regarding disciplining actions: As you explain your approach to child discipline please keep in mind that au pairs are instructed during their orientation program that hitting or smacking a child is unacceptable.

Changing Needs

Your child care needs may change over the course of the year. Is another child on the way? Will you be going on vacation? Will your child be in school for part or all of the day? What activities will your child be involved in during the summer and how will your au pair/companion's involvement differ during the school year? When will your au pair/companion be taking classes and what transportation arrangements will you be making? Flexibility will be important as you plan schedules over the course of the year.

Living with a Young Adult

Living with a young adult

It's important to remember that your au pair/companion is an adult, but she is a young adult. Her behavior will be appropriate for her age group. When she first arrives everything about your home and community, even your language and the manner in which you do things will be unfamiliar and strange to her. She will require guidance, support and friendship.

Realistic expectations

The most important thing to remember is not to expect any more from your au pair/companion than you would of yourself. Ann Muscare and Wendy Wardell Morrone describe parents' expectations in their book entitled, *Child Care That Works—How Families Can Share Their Lives with Child Care and Thrive*:

"It may comfort you to know that most parents have trouble striking the right tone. In general, parents begin by expecting caregivers to be more consistent than humanly possible. You want a caregiver who will never scream about spilled food or cry after a day with a whiny child or commit any of the other parenting sins that you have been known to commit yourself upon occasion. On the other hand, you may want a care giver to do all the good things that you do—make a fuss about a pretty dress, hug and kiss lavishly, ooh and aah when spoon succeeds in finding mouth...If you have a single care giver, she'll be tired by evening, just as you would be."

Another important thing to remember is that, even though your au pair/companion will be living with you, she will not be available every minute. Don't throw away your list of babysitters! You may still need to call on them.

It is important that you let your au pair/companion know when she will be "on-duty" and when she will have time to herself. Just as you need a break, so too will your au pair/companion. These breaks will be important from the very start when her struggle with a new culture and a new language will be tiring her out just as much as taking care of your child!

Establish an "on-duty" schedule for your au pair/companion that considers her ability to effectively care for your children and keep them safe and happy. Her "on-duty" schedule must not exceed 10 hours per day, 45 hours per week for standard and Extraordinaire participants; 10 hours per day, 30 hours per week for EduCare participants.

Sharing your living space

Your au pair/companion will be living in your home and sharing living space with you. Consider what areas of the home she may have full access to and areas that she may not. Tell your au pair/companion if there are

room(s) you consider your private space and in turn respect the privacy that your au pair/companion would expect in her room.

Physical contact between the host family and au pair/companion is strongly discouraged; while a brief hug and handshake may not be inappropriate depending on the circumstances; such conduct may make your au pair/companion uncomfortable and should be avoided for that reason. The host father in particular should avoid any physical contact with the au pair and must scrupulously adhere to the Sexual Harassment policy set forth in this document.

Communication and Cultural Differences

Communication and cultural differences

The basis for developing a trusting relationship is communication. You may think, “It cannot be that difficult to explain how to take care of my child.” In part, you are right. We communicate with each other every day. We tell each other what we think, how we feel, what to do, and in general, we are usually successful in getting the point across.

People from other parts of the world may not have the same basic assumptions about the world that we, as Americans, share. Once this common ground is taken away, communication becomes much more of a challenge. Words cannot simply be translated from one language to another without some of the meaning being lost because of cultural differences:

“If we view languages only as communication tools, sets of words that can be exchanged for other sets and yield the same meaning, we court the role of ‘fluent fools’ as we translate words without their original cultural context. Language serves as a tool for communication, but in addition it is a system of representation for perception and thinking.”

Most of us are familiar with obvious cultural differences. Americans do not take their shoes off when they enter a room, but the Japanese do. Americans greet each other with a handshake, but the French kiss each other on the cheek. Most cultural patterns are so deeply ingrained in us that we never consider that there may be alternatives to the way we “naturally” act, feel and think.³

American communication styles

The first step to being able to communicate with someone from another country is to recognize how our ways of communicating as Americans are unique. You may not think that the way we speak with each other is strange, but many of the au pairs/companions do! Think about these comments from an au pair from the Netherlands.

“Tell more about American habits: cooking, washing. And!! The way they speak with each other—even strangers. I needed one and a half weeks to know how to speak with people. Even to strangers, people here tell their deepest secrets! Also the way they meet each other I have never seen before.”

She has intuitively hit on many of the things that Americans do that are not part of some other cultures.

Informal & intimate

Initially, your au pair/companion may be surprised at how casually you speak to people, no matter what your

social relationship. Americans are brought up to believe that all people are equal, so we tend to ignore social differences when we speak. We encourage others to call us by our first names from the moment we meet them. (What will your au pair/companion call you?) Even more surprising is our tendency to talk about personal experiences and feelings with people whom we have just met.

Direct

Americans tend to be more direct than people from other countries. Think about when you call someone for a specific purpose. You quickly say hello and then get right to the point. Many au pairs find these traits disconcerting. First, most foreign languages are more formal than English. For example, most languages use two forms of the pronoun “you”—one to be used when talking to family and friends and the other to be used when talking to someone who is older or who has a higher social position. Europeans and others rely on the small talk that precedes the main point of a conversation to determine their relationship to the person with whom they are speaking. When this small talk is shortened to a few sentences and a “you” for your friend suddenly sounds no different than a “you” for your boss, your au pair/companion may become very confused about where she fits in and how she should act. Secondly, the American habit of getting right to the point may also lead your au pair/companion to mistakenly believe that you are being abrupt or harsh. Try to keep this in mind when speaking with your au pair/companion and bring this habit to her attention.

Judgmental

Many au pairs/companions mistakenly believe that their host families are being overly critical of them. Often, this surprises the host parents. They cannot imagine what they said that led to this belief. Americans do not realize that our language, by nature, calls for judgment. Most other languages do not. For example, Americans would ask, “How good is the food here?” The same question in many other languages would translate to “How is the food here?” An international visitor does not need to make any judgment about the food. Their question is completely objective. Americans, on the other hand, must make some kind of assumption about the quality of the food to ask the question.

Our language not only predisposes us to evaluate things, it predisposes us to evaluate things negatively. Americans tend to focus on what should not be done, rather than on what should be done. This habit stems from our belief that creativity is good, and conformity is bad. We are encouraged to decide for ourselves how we will act and what we will do. The creative process of making a decision is almost as valuable as the decision itself. Your au pair/companion may feel that you are criticizing everything that she does simply because you’re concentrating on what she shouldn’t do instead of

suggesting what she should! Be as positive as you can with your au pair/companion.

Questions and answers

Americans believe that the responsibility of communicating rests equally on the speaker and the listener. If we do not understand something that is said, we ask a question. If we disagree, we will share our point of view. This back and forth banter is typical of American conversation. Consequently, you may assume that your au pair/companion has understood all that you have said because she has not asked you any questions. However, in some countries where social lines are more clearly defined, the act of posing a question is interpreted as a challenge to authority and is considered rude. A good example of this trait is the way classes are conducted in foreign universities. Students listen to the professor, but never speak. Encourage your au pair/companion to ask questions. She will feel more comfortable if she knows that you will not think that she is being rude if she does.

Non-verbal cues

Body language also plays an important role in cross-cultural communication. We pay a significant amount of attention to the way people act when they talk. Our tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, the distance we stand from one another and the way we touch each other carry even more meaning than what we actually say. Think about how you encourage certain types of body language from your children. How often have you encouraged your child to look at you when he is speaking? Have you ever told your child that you do not like his tone of voice? Remember that, just as our styles of speaking are different from others around the globe, so too are the non-verbal clues that we use.

So far we have focused on how your au pair/companion may interpret (or misinterpret!) what you say and how you act. Don't forget that you may be tempted to do the same thing. You may think that your au pair/companion meant something that she never intended, simply because you translated her words or actions using your American point of view!

One of the biggest reasons that we, as Americans, are likely to misinterpret international visitors is because we rely so much on the inflection in our voices to determine the nature of a conversation. For example, when you ask someone how she is, and she replies "wonderful" with a rise in her voice, you are likely to think that she really does feel fine. On the other hand, if she says "wonderful" with no change in her voice, you will probably believe that she does not feel well or that she is being sarcastic.

This fact is important to recognize because people who are not Native American English speakers often do not change the inflection in their voices in the same way that we do. (Notice that we have made a distinction between American English and British English!) Typically,

international visitors use the same inflection when they speak in English as they do when they speak in their own language.

The art of cross-cultural communication

When your au pair/companion says or does something that is confusing to you, try to understand the assumptions that she made that led to her behavior and how those assumptions differ from your own. First, you should try to isolate the action or the words that confused you without making any judgments. What was actually said or done? Then explain to your au pair/companion how the event or words translate into American culture. How did you interpret the action? How did you and the members of your family react to what she said, and more importantly, why? You will probably find that her interpretation of the event is much different from your own.³

It's important to realize that communicating with your au pair/companion may require more thought than would be needed if you were communicating with another American. You may find yourself in a hectic situation where it is easy to fall back on typically American ways of communicating, rather than "searching for messages" that your au pair/companion will *understand*. She may be tempted to do the same thing. Take a moment now to think about how you could explain something to your au pair/companion in words and actions that have the least chance of being misconstrued.

"She fit in very well. She explained her customs relative to ours and tried to learn and fit in with her surroundings. She was not afraid to discuss any questions or problems as they arose." – Host parent from Pennsylvania

To fully understand one another; to keep fully apprised of your au pair's ability to effectively care for your children it is important to keep the line of communication between you and your au pair/companion open. If your daily schedules are very busy—plan specific times to talk.

Fundamental qualities for a successful relationship

Mutual respect

"Au pair" means "on par" or equal. Care for her as a full-fledged family member and treat her the way you and your family would like to be treated yourselves. Try to be sensitive to her feelings. Your au pair/companion should treat you in the same way. A solid relationship is one that is built on mutual respect.

Treat your au pair/companion with respect and your child will follow your example. If your child respects your au pair/companion he will pay attention to her.

Many child development experts agree that treating your caregiver with respect is important for the development of your child's self esteem:

"If you give the message that your child care giver is inferior to you, it leaves the child wondering where he is in the pecking order. A child who needs love, time, concern and the certainty that his parents care for him may end up believing that because you are leaving him with an inferior person, that he too must be inferior."⁴

Mutual respect is a vital part of the relationship for you, your au pair/companion, and perhaps most importantly, your child!

Cooperation

You and your au pair/companion will share the responsibility of teaching your child many things over the course of the year. For example, your child may be ready to learn how to tie his shoes. Cooperation is important because it will allow the two of you to be consistent in the way you explain things to your child. Your child is likely to become frustrated and confused if you show him how to tie his shoes one way, and your au pair/companion shows him another. It may become difficult for him to learn simply because you are not using the same words. If your child is an adolescent, your companion may need your assistance on how to relate to him as a young adult and not treat him as a young child.

It's also important that you both expect the same kind of behavior from him and that you are consistent with how and when you discipline him. Sometimes, parents who feel badly about leaving their child with another person during the day are tempted to try to make up for it by letting rules slide when they are home. The time that they spend with their child is so short that they want it to be a good time—free from discipline. However, your child may learn to play you and your au pair/companion off each other under these circumstances instead of learning how you would like him to behave all of the time. This, too, will make it difficult for your au pair/companion to take care of your child.

It's your responsibility to determine what and how things should be taught and to communicate this to your au pair/companion. It will be your au pair/companion's responsibility to follow your lead, even if she does not share your ideas. Your continuing support is essential, even when you are tired!

Flexibility

Building a good relationship will require parents and au pair/companion to "give and take" on a daily basis. It will be important to listen to the needs of your au pair/companion, to state your own needs clearly and to compromise in areas in which you can both feel comfortable. Some host families have described the au pair/companion/host family relationship as marriage

without dating. "Happily ever after" comes with hard work and flexibility.

Host parents and an au pair/companion who take the time to communicate, listen and compromise to reach one another's expectations can build the foundation for a mutually respectful relationship. With that foundation in place you can effectively work together to ensure a safe and happy environment for your children.

Your Au pair/Companion's Arrival

Your au pair/companion's arrival

It's important that you and your family talk about your au pair/companion's arrival before she comes to your home. When she arrives, your daily routine will be temporarily disrupted. Discussing this beforehand and expecting some resentment and irritability from your children will help everyone adjust. Think about what parts of your daily routine may be affected by having a young adult in your home. How will the issues of privacy, semi-nudity, and displays of affection be handled? How about, internet/phone usage, TV time and food supplies?

Take a moment to predict how your child may react to your au pair/companion. How can you help him to adjust? What advice can you give that will help her befriend your child if he is not immediately receptive to her? The transition will be easier if you can minimize the introduction of other new things at the same time.

Learning about your au pair/companion

Before your au pair/companion arrives, communicate as much as possible. Describe your family, send her information about your community and extend a warm welcome. This will help allay her fears and those of her family. This should also be an opportunity to let her know more about all of you, your needs and expectations. Learn as much as you can about your au pair/companion and her country. You can learn more about the country from which your au pair/companion comes by accessing the Au Pair in America Host Family web site, www.aupairinamerica.com.

Orientation

When your au pair/companion first arrives in the U.S. she will attend an orientation program. We recommend that on the second day of her arrival that you call or send a message to welcome her.

The days at orientation prepare your au pair/companion for entry into your family. There is a two-fold purpose for the orientation program. Your au pair/companion needs information on a basic level regarding rules and regulations such as visas, hours, responsibilities and insurance. Through presentations by an experienced and highly skilled orientation team we cover cross-cultural issues, child development, child care safety and emergency procedures, program guidelines and host family expectations.

The program includes an eight-hour child care safety seminar taught in part by the American Red Cross as well as an in-depth child care and child development module which helps your au pair/companion focus on your child's age-appropriate behaviors, activities and needs. Your au pair/companion will arrive in your home with a child care survey that should be completed jointly

with you within the first few days of her arrival. This Child Care Questionnaire (sample included in your host family orientation packet) will lend focus to your conversations with your au pair/companion about your expectations regarding the care of your child(ren).

Au Pair in America partners with AAA, the nation's most trusted name in road safety, to offer an optional custom instructor led class specifically designed for au pairs. Host families can register their au pair and she will arrive at orientation a day early, and attend the AAA class before the main orientation begins. For more information contact orientation@aifs.com

At Orientation your au pair will receive a training booklet. We suggest you ask her if you can review it so you will be more familiar with the information covered during her orientation.

One of the training modules focuses on "The Three No's," which are three very important guidelines that all au pairs must be observant of:

- Au pairs may not use drugs. We explain that possession of an illegal substance in the U.S. is a felony and that use of drugs will result in termination from the program.
- Au pairs may not abuse alcohol. We explain that the drinking age in the U.S. is 21 and discuss the dangers of drinking and driving or drinking alcohol while caring for your children—two actions that are prohibited.
- Au pairs may not abuse children.
 - We stress the importance of using words that will support a child's positive personal image and explain that verbal abuse or using words to hurt a child is not acceptable.
 - We explain that American families generally support a non-physical policy of discipline. Au Pair in America prohibits an au pair/companion from hitting a child, even with permission from the host family. We also discuss the physical damage that could result from shaking a baby and discuss ways to get help if feeling stressed.
 - Finally, we stress no sexual abuse and discuss how Americans define sexual abuse, as this is different from country to country. In particular, we explain that taking pictures of naked children is considered pornography in the U.S.

Orientation is also a time to begin the developmental process of adaptation; self-awareness and integration that your au pair/companion will need to successfully complete her year. While we cannot forecast what the experience will be for each au pair/companion, we try to reduce potential problems by giving the au pairs information and problem-solving skills. We encourage au

pairs to view themselves as part of a team with the host family in finding creative solutions for situations that may arise during the year.

Our goal is that your au pair/companion arrives in your home feeling confident about her ability to adapt to the culture, understand and meet your expectations and successfully complete this very important year in her life.

The Orientation program provided by Au Pair in America is only the beginning of the training your au pair/companion will need to be successful. Training with you begins the day she arrives in your home and continues through the year as needs and expectations change.

The first few hours

When your au pair/companion arrives you will probably ask her if she would like something to eat or drink. You may engage in more polite conversation. Then you might show her to her room. The bed will be neatly made, and there will be clean towels in the bathroom. In short, you will treat her as you treat any guest.

But your au pair/companion is not truly a guest, is she? At some point you will tire of playing the accommodating host. She will soon tire of playing the ever-polite guest.

You will have to break out of this pattern for very practical reasons. Your au pair/companion will need to feel comfortable in her new surroundings before she can really hear and understand the important information you need to impart to her about the care of children, living in your home, and getting around the community. Au pair's needs differ and some suggestions are:

- Allow for rest
- Consider shopping for food items the au pair/companion is accustomed to
- Plan a trip to the pharmacy for toiletries or other personal effects
- Contact with family back home may be important
- In the first few days especially, monitor the amount of instructions you give by your au pair/companion's ability to absorb and understand the information

The training period

You should consider the first month of your au pair/companion's stay as a training period. From the beginning you should make your wishes clear and reiterate the things that you agreed upon during your telephone interview. Ruth S. Elliott, author of *Minding the Kids* recommends that you "amplify, explain, clarify, and take nothing for granted." If you see something that you do not like, discuss it immediately so that it can be changed.

The stress and anxiety of leaving one's home for a year to live in a strange culture can be overwhelming just as the stress and anxiety of accepting and adjusting to a young international visitor in your home can be overwhelming.

Participation in our program is contingent upon adherence to the following minimal stipulations:

- That at least one parent or other responsible adult will remain with your au pair/companion during her first three days in your home.
- If you have a newborn, you or another responsible adult must be with your au pair/companion until your baby reaches three months of age.

These regulations are set as minimal standards and do not serve as a guarantee that your au pair/companion can care for your children with confidence after that period of time. As a parent only you can assess the training required to feel confident that your au pair/companion can appropriately care for your child(ren).

The first few weeks in your home should be viewed as an opportunity for your au pair/companion to begin to feel comfortable in her new environment and for you and your au pair/companion to gain clear understandings of your expectations for the care of your children. It is also a time for you to gain insight into your au pair/companion's expectations and for both of you to gain mutual respect and understanding of one another. Our experience shows that host families who invest time and energy in developing a relationship with their au pair/companion during the first few weeks are more likely to have a successful long-term relationship.

Do not be concerned about giving lots of advice and direction to your au pair/companion. The more you can tell her about your child and your home, the better she will be able to adjust. She will be anxious about her new surroundings in a new country and may need more assistance than you would normally have to give to someone caring for your child.

Organize the training you provide in your home and community

We suggest you organize information about your child, home, and community into categories. Discuss each at separate times. Writing down simple instructions that your au pair/companion can refer back to throughout the year may be useful. Be sure she can comprehend what you have written. Encourage your au pair/companion to ask questions and listen when she offers her impressions. Expect to repeat instructions several times.

Categories of some basic information include, but are not limited to:

Your children... expectations for their care and safety

- Age and stage of development of each child; reference any key social, emotional, or physical attributes that may be important for the au pair/companion to know to better understand each child.
- Handling of sibling rivalry and temper tantrums.
- Activities that each child enjoys; note any activities child may not engage in or may engage in under certain conditions.
- Favorite items (e.g. blanket, pacifier, stuffed toy) which may soothe an upset child or be a matter of habit for naptime.
- Daily routine and schedule – meals, play, homework, household chores
- Meals and snacks—what is and is not permitted
- Hygiene –toileting, bathing, disposal of diapers (there may be cultural differences)
- TV, internet use and computer games – what is acceptable and what is not
- Visiting friends – both in and outside the home
- Maintenance of the child’s room and clothes.
- Appropriate use of all baby and child equipment and safety devices
- Family rules of discipline and tips on how to effectively discipline the children [Note: au pairs/companions are not to slap, hit or spank a child even if it is considered an acceptable form of discipline by you.]
- Illness – how to provide care; when to notify you and/or family doctor; administering medication; location and use of first aid supplies.
- Completion of an emergency medical authorization document (sample included in your confirmation packet and on the host family website under Health Info) for your child to leave with the au pair/companion in the event of an emergency and the au pair/companion is unable to contact you.
- Emergency procedures and medical care may be different in her country. Au pairs/companions are told about the availability of 911 – review and/or convey what is appropriate in your community.

During this training period be sure to discuss appropriate methods of taking disciplinary action with your children. Whether you use a ‘time out’ approach or other method to resolve conflict, be clear about what action you expect your au pair/companion to take and what actions would

be unacceptable. Disciplinary actions vary from culture to culture and you cannot assume your au pair/companion will be familiar with methods commonly used in the U.S.

Refer to the “Orientation” section of this document for information on what is discussed with your au pair/companion during her orientation program.

Review basic safety issues specific to community and home as it relates to the children

- Access and use of pool
- Crossing street/playing in neighborhood—do’s and don’ts
- Rules for use of bikes, skateboards, scooters, etc.
- Guidelines for computer and Internet use for children
- Emphasize where never to leave child unattended
- What to do in an emergency – post in prominent place emergency contact numbers including parent work numbers, doctors clearly indicating when and under what circumstances they are to be used.

A suggestion: Create a “directory” of important information. Include:

- your name
- your home address and home telephone number
- cell phone numbers
- work address and work telephone numbers
- the name of a nearby friend or relative who can help in an emergency
- police, fire, ambulance and poison control phone numbers
- the name and phone number of your child’s pediatrician and dentist
- the name and phone number of the local taxi service
- auto insurance information
- the name and number of your auto mechanic
- names of service people who may come to your home (lawn care, pet care)
- your child’s insurance company and policy number
- your child’s birth date
- your child’s allergies/special medications

An efficient way to do this is to type it on an index card and put it in a magnetic frame to hang on the refrigerator (out of children’s reach!). If your au pair/companion needs to bring this information with her in an emergency,

she will be able to take it down easily. This same information on a wallet size card may also be useful.

Give your au pair/companion's name to the person in your office who answers your phone and make it clear that your au pair/companion must be put through when she calls. Discuss with your au pair/companion situations you feel would merit a phone call to you.

Home and household rules

Orient your au pair/companion to physical space both in and outside home including:

- Door locks and alarm systems
- Escape routes in case of fire
- Dangerous areas/areas that are "off-limits" to your child or your au pair/companion
- Fire alarms/smoke detectors/fire extinguishers (tell her how it sounds when the battery is dying and when smoke is actually detected.)
- Fuse box/circuit breakers
- Linen (towels/bedding for the children and for her)
- Flashlight
- Water/gas meters, thermostats, furnace
- Demonstrate appropriate care of all baby equipment and home safety devices

Appliances and gadgets (Many international visitors experience with these will be different)

- Microwave
- Clothes dryer
- Washing machine
- Garbage disposal
- Trash compactor
- Recycling procedures
- Phone
- Shower/bath
- Security System

Before your au pair/companion uses any appliance make sure that you have instructed her on its use! It might be helpful if you write out detailed instructions and tape them to the appliance or security system.

Household rules the au pair/companion will need to adapt to, including, but not limited to:

- Acceptable hours for coming and going; visitors including overnight visitations; phone calls; car usage

- Limits on noise levels in home
- Limits on use of TV/Computer/internet usage
- Family modesty practices
- Subjects au pair/companion may not talk about with children
- Table manners children are expected to abide by
- Expectations of au pairs participation in family functions and holidays

Privacy issues and sharing information on the internet

As the Internet becomes increasingly accessible on a global level, most of our au pairs subscribe to social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter as well as others. It is very common for au pairs to communicate with friends and family using email, Skype, chat rooms and blogs. During the course of their year and even before their departure to the United States au pairs may post information and photos about their host family on the web.

Prior to the au pair's arrival privacy issues are addressed during the interview in her home country and they are also referenced in the au pair handbook Guidelines for a Successful Year. Every au pair receives a copy of this handbook after she has matched with her host family. At the orientation in Stamford au pairs are warned of the dangers of putting sensitive information on the Internet, especially anything pertaining to children including photographs of children.

Stamford staff and community counselors are educated about our privacy policy and aware of how upsetting it can be when host families or au pairs find that information has been shared without permission. We strongly advise that you take some time to have a specific conversation with your au pair about this issue. Make sure you both understand what has been discussed and what is permissible. We hope this will avoid any situations that may leave a host family or au pair feeling vulnerable and/or at risk.

Community

Plan time to familiarize au pair/companion with neighborhood and community resources, including but not limited to:

- Children's friend's parents and location of their homes
- Shopping center and pharmacy
- Walk-in medical clinic
- Public Library
- Children's schools / community center / playgrounds
- Post secondary institutions where au

pair/companion may attend classes

- Community Counselor's home
- Cultural places of interest
- Locations of particular interest to the au pair/companion, i.e. places of worship/coffee shops
- Caution au pair/companion about areas that may not be safe for her or your children.

During your familiarization assist your au pair/companion with opening a bank account, attaining a Social Security card, library card, state driver's license and registering for classes at a post-secondary institution.

You should plan time during this "training period" when you, your au pair/companion and your child can be together. This will give you the opportunity to teach your au pair/companion how you would like things done and an opportunity for your au pair/companion to observe and learn from you. It will also help your child to feel comfortable with your au pair/companion, and give you the opportunity to see how the two of them interact.

It's important to praise your au pair/companion whenever possible during this time and throughout the exchange. Your au pair/companion will be glad that she is appreciated. It will help to establish a basis for communication at the beginning and also help to nurture the relationship during the exchange.

Schedule a regular time weekly when you can sit quietly together to discuss scheduling and other related issues. Explain that you would like to be aware of your child's accomplishments and how he is behaving. This will help to assure you that everything is going well. More importantly, it will be easier to talk about problems if discussions are a normal part of your routine.

Coping with arrival fatigue

When your au pair/companion arrives she may be suffering from arrival fatigue. Nancy King and Ken Huff define arrival fatigue in their book, *The Host Family Survival Kit*, as the combination of jet lag and the anxiety of feeling like a stranger in an unfamiliar place. Arrival fatigue may also result from language overload.

They recommend the following suggestions to help your au pair/companion overcome arrival fatigue:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere for your au pair/companion. Provide her with a map of your town with your house marked, public transportation schedules and a recent newspaper. Encourage her to put pictures of her family and friends out and to make the room her own. (If she has sent pictures of her family to you, it would be nice if you framed them and put them in her room!)
- Encourage her to contact her family to assure them

that all is well.

- Give her an easy schedule for the first several days. Be confident she can take charge of your children.
- Try not to overwhelm her with too much information. Ask about stomach upsets, especially diarrhea and constipation, and have medication available.
- Make a decision about what she will call you.
- Speaking and hearing English if she is not a native English speaker will add to her fatigue. Many times, international visitors become disappointed with their language skills when they make errors or cannot understand as well as they had anticipated. Try not to be critical of errors and resist the urge to complete your au pair/companion's sentences. When giving directions repeat them using different words until she comprehends them. Speak simply, but not simple-mindedly. Do not raise your voice.
- Be sensitive to differences in food and explain mealtime customs. Don't ask your au pair/companion to start first. She will need to follow your example so she's sure she's doing the "right" thing.

Your au pair/companion's culture shock

Imagine that you are visiting a city in the U.S. that you have never been to before. When you arrive, you check into your hotel. The bellhop brings your bags up to your room, and you tip him. You unpack, freshen up, and then go outside to hail a taxi. You jump in and give the driver the address of the restaurant where you would like to go. When you arrive, you order your favorite meal. After returning to your room, you may relax by reading the paper or a magazine. You'll wake up the next morning, take a shower, and start your day all over again.

You will notice that even though you are in an unfamiliar place, many parts of your day are the same as if you were at home. Certainly, freshening up and taking a shower will be no problem. The plumbing and fixtures will be very similar to the ones at home. You'll be able to talk to the hotel clerk, the taxi driver and the waiter without thinking ahead of time about the words that you are going to use. You will be able to easily understand what they say. You'll understand what's on the menu and will be able to recognize the food on your plate. You will understand how to tip the bellhop and the waiter. You'll be able to buy a newspaper without wondering which coin is a quarter and which coin is a dime. You know that the way you act at home will be appropriate for this new city as well.

Now imagine that all of those things are suddenly unfamiliar. You're not sure how to turn the shower on or how the plumbing works! You can't understand what everyone around you is saying without really making an effort! You have to think hard about what you're going to say and maybe even practice before saying it! You're not

sure what the meat on your plate is! Even the smallest task of buying a newspaper makes you anxious and self-conscious. This is exactly how your au pair/companion will feel after she arrives. Everything that is familiar has been taken away from her. She is suffering from culture shock.

Culture shock occurs when your au pair/companion realizes that the way she normally behaves and thinks is no longer working. Suddenly, the “right” way to behave—the way she learned to behave since she was very little—is challenged at every turn. How might your au pair/companion cope with this? Nancy King and Ken Huff identify several symptoms of culture shock:

- She may lash out at an innocent remark.
- She may retreat to her bedroom and cry over nothing.
- She may mourn the loss of her friends and family.
- She may withdraw at times, become irritable, ignore rules, or become unusually shy or moody.
- She may describe confusing or threatening situations as “stupid” or “dumb.” She may become overly critical of the way you, as an American, do things.
- Minor squabbles may take on giant proportions.
- She may find it difficult to have a normal conversation.
- She may have insomnia, overeat or become preoccupied with her own health, hygiene or safety.

Culture shock may occur quickly after arrival or may be delayed and occur two or more months into the exchange. Often an individual appears to be adapting well and then it strikes. This “culture fatigue,” exhaustion from constantly adapting to “different” food, language and behavior, will manifest itself in some manner in almost everyone.

Many host parents underestimate the impact of culture shock on their au pairs. Since there are few physical symptoms, it’s difficult for us to believe that it really exists. We tend to believe that our au pairs are exaggerating, and if they tried harder everything would be all right. What we must realize is that culture shock is a very real condition that can be difficult to overcome.

Some host parents resent their au pair/companion’s reaction to culture shock. *They mistakenly feel that their hospitality is not being appreciated. They interpret their au pair/companion’s withdrawal as personal rejection.* These feelings, coupled with the au pair/companion’s tendency to be defensive, can become a real barrier to establishing an open, honest and trusting relationship. Instead, you can take positive steps to help your au pair/companion overcome her culture shock.

Overcoming culture shock

The first thing that you can do is to anticipate culture shock. Expect the symptoms and reactions that we noted above. Have understanding, but don’t assume guilt!

The second thing that you can do to help your au pair/companion is to give her “time-outs:”—periods of quiet when all of the pressure from her surroundings and her duties are temporarily removed. During this time she will be able to calm herself and unscramble her mind so that she can function well and think clearly.²² Give her a schedule so that she will be able to anticipate these breaks. Simply knowing that she will have a reprieve may help her to recover from culture shock. Encourage her to make contact with her Community Counselor and other au pairs in the cluster.

Don’t be alarmed by all that we have told you about culture shock. We are simply trying to prepare you for what might happen. Many au pairs adjust very quickly and hardly show any symptoms. In fact, only a small number of au pairs never recover from culture shock. The great majority is able to handle it very well and is able to enjoy their families soon after their arrival.

Host family’s culture shock

As a host family, you may experience a different form of culture shock. Remember that we usually do not give much consideration to the ways we do things. We assume that our way of living is “natural” and “right.” Hosting an international visitor will suddenly make you aware that alternatives exist. As you begin to compare your lifestyle to your au pair/companion’s, you may feel protective and defensive of our American way of life. On the other hand, you may feel curious about her culture, challenged and appreciative of the way we live. No matter what you think, remember that you and your children are lucky to have the opportunity to learn so much about a different culture!

Program Regulations and Legal Requirements

Program regulations

The au pair/companion program has been designated by The Department of State (DOS) as an Exchange Visitor program, which enables it to use J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. Information about the Au Pair in America program and regulations effecting the program are outlined in the Au Pair in America brochure, and The Department of State-promulgated regulations can be found in Addendum A in this handbook. You should review them before your au pair/companion arrives. In this section we mention some of the regulations to highlight their importance and to explain why they are necessary.

On-duty schedule

The Department of State regulations governing au pair/companion programs stipulate that a host family and au pair/companion sign an agreement which affirms a mutual understanding of the hours of child care and responsibilities the au pair/companion will have. It is likely that the actual schedule and nature of care provided will change during the course of the year, and this you should explain to your au pair/companion. A copy of the agreement is enclosed in your Orientation Packet. During your new match assessment with your Community Counselor you will be asked to provide her with an agreement that has been signed by both parties. In developing this agreement you must adhere to the following guidelines established by The Department of State for all au pair/companion programs:

- Your au pair/companion is entitled to a minimum of one full day and one half day off per week. While the time off may be on non-consecutive days, it should include the Sabbath if requested by the au pair/companion.
- Your au pair/companion is entitled to one weekend per month free (Friday evening to Monday morning).
- Your au pair/companion is entitled to two weeks vacation with stipend for each 12-month stay to be arranged at a mutually agreeable time.
- Your au pair (standard/Extraordinaire) is allowed to work up to, but no more than ten (10) hours per day, for a maximum of 45 hours per week caring for your child(ren) and performing tasks related to the care of your children. Companions (EduCare) can work no more than 10 hours per day, for a maximum of 30 hours per week.
- 'Unused' hours from one week cannot be banked and used for another week.

The au pair/companion's responsibilities may include:

- Awakening the children, dressing infants and toddlers, bathing and playing with the children

- Preparing meals for the children, looking after their belongings, making the children's beds, doing their laundry and straightening their room
- Driving children to and from school, appointments or outings requested by the host family
- Caring for the children while the children sleep if a parent is not home. These hours count as part of the 10 hours per day, 45 hours per week for au pairs; 30 hours per week for EduCare companion, maximum child care allowed if no other adult is at home.
- Caring for the children during travel if the au pair/companion is required to accompany the family on a business trip or family vacation.
- The au pair's responsibility may include being home as necessary while children are absent from school due to illness or holidays. Please note; With the EduCare program, due to the companion's educational requirements and more limited child care hours, you need to come to a mutually acceptable agreement as to who will be responsible for your child's care in the event they need to stay home.

The au pair/companion's responsibilities may not include:

- Housework unrelated to the children such as cleaning the home, doing all of the family's laundry, caring for pets or adult family members.
- Caring for a child aged less than three months unless a parent or other responsible adult is present in the home at all times.
- Being responsible for the household or family pets while parents are absent for personal or business travel.

Au pairs/companions are not expected to assume sole responsibility for a child for an extended period of time, i.e. for weekend or business travel by host parents. A responsible adult must live in the home if host parents are traveling and au pair/companion must not work more than 10 hours per day. Host parents are asked to inform their Community Counselor in the event they will be traveling and leaving the au pair and children in the home with a responsible adult.

Weekly Stipend

The au pair/companion program regulations established by The Department of State tied the au pair/companion weekly stipend to a formula driven by the minimum wage less an allowance for room and board. Should the U.S. minimum wage be increased your au pair/companion's weekly stipend will increase. Au Pair in America will notify you of the increased amount if new legislation is passed.

Note:

- The weekly stipend must be paid on a regular weekly basis.
- Payment should not be withheld or delayed for any reason.

Social Security cards

The Social Security Administration will issue a working Social Security Card to an au pair/companion participating in a Department of State authorized au pair/companion program. To obtain the card, your au pair/companion will need: to have been in the United States for at least 4 business days prior to making the request, present her DS 2019 Form, her passport and a her I-94 admission information with her application. For further information regarding Social Security and tax issues associated with hosting an au pair/companion refer to the separate information page found on your host family site under "Resources."

I-9 Forms

I-9 Employment Eligibility Forms: The relationship between you and your au pair/companion is considered by the government to be an employer/employee relationship as the au pair/companion's weekly stipend is considered a wage. As with any employer/employee relationship, the I-9 form is required for all host families/au pairs/companions participating in the program. As a host family you are required by law to keep a copy of the completed form for each au pair/companion in your home, in your possession for three years from the date the au pair/companion first arrived in your home. The document is for your records only and is not required to be mailed to Immigration or Au Pair in America.

Worker's Compensation

Worker's Compensation is not an Au Pair in America requirement; however it may be required in certain states where au pairs are considered to be domestic workers. Please check with your insurance agent to determine whether this is required in your state.

Tax information

Au pairs are subject to Federal Income Tax. More information on au pair taxes and host family responsibility regarding tax issues can be found on the home page of the host family site on the Resources tab in the Essential Links section.

Your Au pair/companion's Vacation

Your au pair/companion is entitled to a minimum of two weeks off with pocket money for each 12-month stay. Vacation time should be scheduled at a time convenient

to both the au pair/companion and the host family. We recommend that one week be taken during the first six months of the exchange and one week during the second six months. Whether planning your family vacation or considering plans your au pair/companion may have for vacation, think about the following:

- Vacation is to be scheduled at a time mutually convenient and agreed upon to by both the au pair/companion and the host family.
- If the vacation is to be broken up into daily segments, the au pair/companion should receive a day off for each day in her standard work week. In addition, she would still receive her weekly free time and one complete weekend (Friday evening until Monday morning) off each month.
- You should not assume that a family trip, which includes the au pair/companion, is her vacation period. Vacation is completely free time for the au pair/companion to use as she wishes. If both you and your au pair/companion agree that you wish to vacation together, and the au pair/companion has no child care responsibilities during the trip, then, of course, the au pair/companion may accompany your family and choose that as her vacation time.
- If your au pair/companion travels with your family as part of her child care responsibilities, it is strongly recommended that a schedule be discussed in advance which encompasses her 45 hours (or 30 hours for EduCare companions) child care limitation.
- Your au pair/companion cannot assume that, in the event your family is out of town with the children, she has vacation and is free to leave the home. You may wish her to remain at home during this period. Under these circumstances, your au pair/companion would be paid her weekly stipend, and these days would not count as vacation days. Before you leave for vacation, expectations should be discussed thoroughly.
- Encourage your au pair/companion to ask for her vacation time as far in advance as possible. Help her appreciate that it may be difficult to arrange alternate child care arrangements without adequate notice and that you may be unable to grant a request due to work schedules and an alternate date may need to be considered.
- There is no special provision for holidays in the contract. While an au pair/companion should not assume that she automatically has a holiday because the host mother or father is on holiday, you should discuss your expectations of her responsibilities in advance, keeping in mind that holidays provide a special opportunity for you to share American and special family traditions. We suggest you encourage your au pair/companion to join you in your special holiday celebrations.

Educational Component

One of the goals of our program is cross-cultural exchange. As a hosting family, you are required to give your au pair/companion the opportunity and encouragement to take advantage of the educational and cultural benefits of your community. Her participation in community activities and educational opportunities is an important way for her to begin to develop friendships and begin to feel “at home” and involved.

The Department of State program regulations require au pairs to register and attend classes for no less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit at an accredited U.S. post secondary institution. This is approximately the equivalent of 80 classroom hours. EduCare companions are required to register and attend classes for no less than 12 semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit at an accredited U.S. post secondary institution. This is approximately the equivalent of 170 classroom hours. Institutions acceptable for fulfilling the educational component include public and private colleges and universities, two-year community colleges, or other local accredited institutions of higher learning provided the selected courses are the equivalent of college-level classes for which college credit hours can be earned.

Courses may include a diverse number of programs depending on the educational, cultural or career interests of each au pair/companion. Au pairs may elect to audit courses at a credit granting institution.

As a host family, you are responsible for contributing up to \$500 for an au pair and \$1,000 for an EduCare companion in tuition and related fees (books, etc.) per year toward education and provide transportation including gasoline, parking, or public transportation costs if applicable to and from the place of instruction. The cost of transportation is in addition to the \$500/\$1,000 allocated to tuition and related fees.

We recommend that this amount be spread out during the year, e.g. 50% for the first six months and 50% for the second six months. If the cost of your au pair/companion’s courses exceeds the amount you are required to contribute she will be responsible for paying the remaining balance.

The Relationship with Your Community Counselor

A three-way relationship:

Your Community Counselor's involvement

While you will be living “on par” with your au pair/companion, you and your au pair/companion will also be in communication with the local Au Pair in America representative in your area—your Community Counselor.

It is important to delineate the responsibilities of the three key parties—the host parents, the au pair/companion and the Community Counselor. By defining the roles of each party the reasons for fostering relationships between all three parties and maintaining open lines of communication can better be understood.

This three-way relationship and responsibilities of each party may be visualized as:

- The host parents will be hosting their au pair/companion and training and monitoring in the appropriate care of their children. Inherent in hosting through an au pair/companion program is providing room and board and accepting and treating the au pair/companion as a full-fledged member of the family.
- The au pair/companion is expected to care for the host's children under the guidance and tutelage of the hosting parents and develop an understanding of the U.S. and its culture through immersion into American family life, community and through educational opportunities.
- The Community Counselor is expected to help the au pair/companion acclimate to the community and monitor the activities of the exchange relationship to ensure they are in keeping with the intent of the cultural exchange child care program established by Au Pair in America and the regulations established by Department of State for all au pair/companion programs. To perform his/her duties properly, the Community Counselor will endeavor to maintain a balanced relationship between you and your au pair/companion.

To maintain open communication among all three parties, you can anticipate being in touch with your Community Counselor at the following times and for these reasons:

Orientation

If you are a new host family and before your au pair/companion arrives, arrange a mutually convenient time to visit with your Community Counselor. Some Community Counselors plan orientation meetings to

include several families who may be expecting au pairs to arrive within a given time period. Often families who have been hosting au pairs for more than a year also find it helpful to participate in an orientation session before their new au pair/companion arrives.

Your Community Counselor can help you prepare for the arrival of your au pair/companion in a way that will help ease the transition of learning to adapt to one another's life styles and to live together in a way that will successfully meet one another's expectations.

Two-week evaluation/New match assessment

Your Community Counselor will need to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet with you and your au pair/companion, in your home, within two weeks of your au pair/companion's arrival in your home. This meeting is an opportunity for the Community Counselor to observe the au pair/companion's relationship to the members of your family, to assess child care responsibilities and to reconfirm program guidelines. This is an opportunity for you and your au pair/companion to discuss cross-cultural adaptation issues and seek clarification of issues or concerns you or your au pair/companion may have. Under au pair/companion program guidelines established by the Department of State this two-week meeting is a requirement. At this meeting your Community Counselor will want to review the schedule of duties and responsibilities to which you and your au pair/companion have agreed. Please be prepared to provide your Community Counselor with a copy of this agreement, which is to be signed by both you and your au pair/companion.

Ongoing contacts

After the New Match Assessment within the first two weeks of the match the community counselor will make ongoing contact with you and your au pair/companion at a minimum of once a month. Your au pair/companion will also be expected to attend a monthly cluster meeting or activity with the Community Counselor.

There must be more frequent communication between the sponsor organization and the host family if the au pair/companion in the home is a replacement for one who was an incompatible match to ensure that the rematch arrangement is satisfactory. For the first two months after rematch, your Community Counselor will be contacting you and your rematch au pair/companion twice monthly. Call your Community Counselor if you have questions or concerns during the month. Check with her/him regarding office hours as evenings and weekends are generally reserved for emergencies.

Annual Host Family Day

Your Community Counselor will schedule an annual Host Family Day that is designed to help foster and promote understanding of cross-cultural issues. Your

participation is a required condition of your program participation.

Aside from these specific times it is likely you will have occasion to need to speak with the Community Counselor. Community Counselors generally maintain standard hours during the week when they are readily available to assist you and/or your au pair/companion. Your Community Counselor will share this information with you during your orientation session.

Effective methods for problem solving

Every family hopes that their year will be trouble-free, and so do we at Au Pair in America. The staff of the Au Pair in America program has taken care to clarify for you and your au pair/companion the program's guidelines and goals. We've given you the opportunity to personally select your au pair/companion to ensure the most compatible match.

Child care, though, by nature is particularly sensitive to conflict. Your child is one of the most important people in your life, and you will be concerned about his care no matter who is taking care of him! Knowing what these issues are will help you to anticipate them and plan on how you will resolve them in advance. You will also realize that these conflicts are not a sufficient reason to start to search for another au pair/companion. You will undoubtedly come up against them with someone else!

Communication is the key to success

The most crucial step that you and your au pair/companion must take to avoid problems is to talk to each other often and honestly! We cannot place enough emphasis on this point! Many families have found that a small problem had grown to major proportions simply because it had not been discussed in a timely manner.

Those most likely to have communication problems have a tendency to be indirect or vague when speaking, have a rigid right-wrong mentality, a low tolerance for stress and ambiguity or a tendency to deny or ignore problems when they arise. If you find that these traits describe you or your au pair/companion be especially sensitive to them.

Don't let small incidents fester! Your au pair/companion will be shocked and hurt if you suddenly snap at something that she has been doing since she first arrived in your home. More importantly, your anger and resentment will be completely out of proportion with the incident. If daily conversations with your au pair/companion are a normal part of your routine, it will not be difficult to discuss problems. While leaving written instructions are often important and necessary, do not fall into a pattern of only communicating by written notes to your au pair/companion. This is a frequent complaint by au pairs who wish to engage in conversations with their host parents.

Finally, be flexible and don't be afraid to compromise! As with any problem, stand firm on the issues that are most important to you, and compromise on others. When you compromise, your au pair/companion will compromise too. Be creative in your resolutions. You may find an answer to your problem that you did not expect, but that will work just as well.

*"We discussed it the first day and we agreed our expectations seemed the same. However, I think I had higher expectations for her help around the house. We had several discussions about it and resolved it."
– Host parent from Massachusetts*

Trouble Shooting Possible Problem Areas

Possible Trouble Areas

Duties and hours

One potential area for problems that may arise is conflict over your au pair/companion's duties and hours. Her "on duty" schedule must not exceed 10 hours per day, 45 hours per week for the au pair standard and the Extraordinaire program, and 30 hours for the EduCare companion. Since your au pair/companion will be living with you, you may be tempted to ask her to watch your child or do chores that you had not agreed upon earlier. Although your child's needs may change over the course of the year, your earlier discussions should have included these schedules as well. If you add hours and ask her to do chores that are not in keeping with the program guidelines, your au pair/companion will feel abused, exploited and resentful.

The au pair may not care for the children of other families unless it is part of an occasional play date with her host family child. An au pair may not take responsibility for a child from another family on a regular basis. Any play date or group activity including other children must be arranged with the full understanding of you, your au pair/companion and the parents of other children involved. She must have a contact number for a parent of a child participating in a play date in case of emergency. If an au pair is uncomfortable caring for a particular child, other than the children of the host family, she has the right to refuse to have the child under her supervision without an additional adult present. All agreements, benefits and guidelines provided by the organization pertain only to the au pair while she is caring for the host family's children. They do not apply to her care of any other child.

Your au pair/companion is to do chores that are associated with taking care of your children. For example, she can do your child's laundry, make your child's bed, prepare meals for your child and clean up afterwards, keep your child's room neat and pick up his toys. Au pairs are not housekeepers, cooks, or maids. They are not responsible for house cleaning. They are not responsible for such duties as doing your personal laundry, yard work, caring for your pets, or cleaning your pool even for additional pay. Responsibilities do not include teaching host children how to drive or serve as the responsible adult with a non-licensed driver.

It is sometimes difficult to determine when your au pair/companion is "on-duty" and when she is not. For example, she may be off-duty during dinner, but may want to help with the dishes. On-duty time is any time that the au pair/companion is either actively or passively responsible for your child and is not free to do something of her own choosing. Obviously, any time that your au

pair/companion is alone with your child should be considered on-duty time. Any time that your au pair/companion is responsible for the well being of your child should be considered on-duty time even if your child is asleep.

One way to avoid problems with duties and hours is to provide your au pair/companion with a written schedule. This way there will be no question about when she is on and off duty. If conflicts do arise, you will be able to see how your au pair/companion's actual schedule compares to her written schedule and make adjustments.

There is no special provision for au pairs to be granted national or religious holidays as a day off. We suggest you discuss holiday schedules with your au pair/companion well in advance. Many host families grant these days as extra vacation days for their au pair/companion or ask them to assist the family in caring for the children for part of the day. Be sensitive to your au pair/companion's need to have free time to celebrate her religious holidays such as Christmas or Hanukkah,. Encourage her to share her country's national and religious holidays and traditions with your family and include her in your holiday celebrations. This mutual exchange provides a special opportunity for you both to experience the holidays and special family traditions of another culture.

- Ironically, duties and hours may be a more difficult issue for parents who are at home during the day than for parents who are away. It may be confusing for the au pair/companion to know when she should be taking care of your child if you are present all the time. Your child may also be confused about who is supposed to be taking care of him. To avoid this, discuss how child care will be divided between you. Clearly explain that she will be on-duty when you are in the house and should exercise the same caution and sense of responsibility that she would if you were absent. If you are both taking care of your child, encourage him to seek your au pair/companion's help as well as your own. If there are times when your au pair/companion will have total responsibility for your child, make sure that your child understands this, so that he will know who to turn to for assistance.
- If an au pair/companion works less than 45 hours in a given week, the unused hours may not be applied to a future week.
- An au pair/companion cannot work extra child care hours or assume extra duties to earn extra money from her host family or any other family.
- An au pair/companion may not engage in any outside employment.

Driving

No matter how much driving experience your au pair/companion may have had, she is now driving in a foreign country. She will need some practice to get used to driving your vehicle, get used to different rules of the road and become acquainted with your community. Advice on the driving practice period is available in our driving brochure *Au Pairs Behind The Wheel*. Your community counselor will also have advise about driving practice. We encourage host families to practice with their au pair/companion until they are confident she can drive safely.

Changing circumstances

As the year together continues, your au pair/companion will start to meet other au pairs and Americans. The opportunity to befriend others her age is important. It will help her to overcome her culture shock, learn more about American life, and start to explore your community. A healthy environment for all of you is one that will include time together and time apart.

"She struck a perfect balance between joining in yet also not being overly intrusive. She enjoyed her free time. She seemed genuinely interested in our lives."
– Host parent from Maryland

Your au pair/companion's new social life will bring with it some issues that you haven't yet had to think about. First, your au pair/companion's friends will affect your child. Often, au pairs meet each other while they are taking care of the children at the local playground, pool or park. Many families find it helpful to introduce their au pairs to their friends' child care providers. Some families introduce their au pairs to their relatives and their friends' children.

Secondly, your au pair/companion's new social life may make it necessary for you to set rules and regulations about coming home late at night, using the car and inviting guests into your home. It is very important to discuss these rules when your au pair/companion first arrives and before they become an issue! An au pair/companion who had lots of freedom before she had a social life will feel as though she is being held prisoner if rules are suddenly set. She may feel that you are being restrictive. Europeans, for example, are generally given more freedom at an earlier age than their American counterparts. You may have little experience in being a "parent" to a young adult and may need to call upon your own experience as a young adult.

When setting household rules, try to find out what rules she was abiding by at home. If they differ drastically from your own ideas, discuss what cultural assumptions lie beneath them. You will probably find that the reasoning behind her parent's rules is different than your own. Some au pairs may have been living on their own already with total independence. Make it clear that you

are not trying to hamper her social life, but that you want to make sure that she is safe while in the U.S.

Family vacations/business trips

If you are planning to go on vacation or on a business trip and would like your au pair/companion to accompany you discuss the arrangements in advance. Decide in advance what her duties will be and when she will be on duty. If you haven't made it clear that you still need her help, it will be easy for her to feel as though she is "on vacation" too. Travel time is considered work time if an au pair/companion travels with the family as part of her child care responsibilities.

Think about how you will divide child care responsibilities between you. Like an au pair/companion who is caring for a child whose parent remains at home during the business day, your au pair/companion may be confused about when she is on and off duty.

If you will be traveling to a place that poses new potential hazards for your child (such as the beach), point them out. Do not assume that your au pair/companion knows about all the precautions that you would normally take in this new setting. Teach her just as you taught her about your home when she first arrived.

Finally, remember that you are still responsible for your au pair/companion's meals even though you are on vacation. Your au pair/companion is not responsible for paying for her share of the bill if you all go out to dinner.

If you will be traveling away from home, please call your Community Counselor and leave a phone number where you can be reached. It is important that the Community Counselor be able to contact your au pair/companion in the event of an emergency.

Au pair's traveling outside the U.S.

If your au pair/companion travels outside the U.S. with you or alone it is important that she ask the embassy or consulate of each country she plans to visit if additional visas are required. Also, it is very important that she check to see if the J-1 Visa (in her passport) will still be valid when she plans to re-enter the country. Your au pair/companion will need to have her DS 2019 signed by an Au Pair in America Responsible Officer based in Stamford, Connecticut, for travel validation. Your Community Counselor can help explain this in greater detail.

The limit of time allowed for an au pair to travel outside the U.S. per State Department guidelines is three weeks. If an au pair remains outside of the U.S. for more than three weeks, it would violate U.S. Department of State regulations regarding monthly contact between au pairs and their community counselors. An au pair should be able to rely on the support of her community counselor

and other au pairs in her cluster if there is a problem that she needs to address.

In addition, this program is an exchange program, for young foreign visitors to fully experience life in the U.S. The intent of this program is for the au pair to remain in the U.S. for most of her year. Traveling outside the U.S. for an extended period of time would not be in compliance with both the regulations and intent of the program.

Illness

During the time that your au pair/companion is an active participant on our program she is covered by a medical insurance policy underwritten by The Insurance Company of the State of Pennsylvania.

Host families should help the au pair identify participating physicians and/or urgent care facilities that accept her insurance policy. A search feature is available on the Au Pair in America website under Resources for Current Au Pairs - Insurance.

Any specific questions about insurance coverage or claims can be addressed to a member of staff at 1-800-303-8120 ext. 5557.

At orientation your au pair/companion will receive instructions on how to file a claim. However, your au pair/companion may need your assistance since she may not have any experience in dealing with a private insurance company. Most international visitors are covered by their country's national health plan.

The basic medical insurance plan does not cover pre-existing conditions, routine dental work, work on teeth that have already been treated, eating disorders, pregnancy or mental illness among other conditions. Please review the au pair "Plan of Insurance" for full policy definitions.

If your au pair/companion becomes ill or injured she may become homesick. Do not be alarmed by this, it is a common reaction. Do be prepared to arrange alternative care for your children during this time. The weekly stipend is to be paid during these unavoidable periods.

If your au pair/companion incurs a serious accident or illness which, in the judgment of Au Pair in America and with the advice of a physician, prevents the au pair/companion from fulfilling child care responsibilities, Au Pair in America will make a reasonable effort to locate an alternate au pair/companion for the host family. In such cases you are expected to host the au pair/companion until appropriate arrangements can be made for your au pair/companion.

Personal liability insurance

Your au pair/companion has personal liability insurance coverage for the period of time she is in your home. The

personal liability benefit covers bodily injury and property damage as a result of the au pair/companion's actions. The personal liability policy does not cover the au pair/companion while operating a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft.

The insurance will pay a specified amount for medical expenses regardless of negligence resulting from an incident found to be caused as a direct result of an au pair/companion's activities which results in bodily injury to a person other than the au pair/companion.

The insurance will pay a specified amount per policy term for any necessary increase in living expenses that results from an incident caused by your au pair/companion that causes damage to your primary place of residence.

If an incident found to be caused by your au pair/companion results in a claim being paid under a valid and collectible homeowner's policy covering the insured location of your primary residence, the insurer will pay the host family the amount of your homeowner's policy deductible not to exceed \$1,000 per au pair/companion, per policy term.

We recommend that host families purchase additional life insurance in the form of an umbrella policy to provide for unforeseen occurrences.

Medical emergencies

Medical emergencies should be handled for your au pair/companion in the same way that they would be handled for any family member. Be sure to apprise your Community Counselor of any emergency medical care your au pair/companion has received within a timely manner. Emergency room visits that are not deemed emergencies will be subject to a deductible.

If you are unable to reach your Community Counselor in a reasonable length of time (what is considered reasonable depends on the nature of the emergency) contact Au Pair in America in Stamford, Connecticut (800-928-7247). The office is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. After hours, you will hear a recording that gives the number for an emergency-only answering service, which is to be used in the event of an emergency that cannot wait until contact can be established with the Community Counselor or during regular office hours.

Phone, computer and e-mail use

From time to time, your au pair/companion may wish to call or e-mail home. An initial phone call when she first arrives will help to calm her fears about being so far away from home and will reassure her family that she has arrived safely. From then on, she may want to check in with them periodically. Phoning home is okay as long as your au pair/companion does not use these calls as a substitute for resolving such issues as culture shock and

homesickness. If phone calls become more frequent, you may need to discuss these issues openly with your au pair/companion and your Community Counselor.

When your au pair/companion arrives discuss specific rules and appropriate use of phone and e-mail, which may include: appropriate usage if there is more than one phone line; proper method for answering the phone and taking messages; rules for use of your home computer which may include restrictions on sites she may or may not access; limits on usage during 'on-duty' hours; restrictions on use you impose for your children. Establish clear rules regarding computer use. Upon arrival, discuss with your au pair any restrictions you may have on accessing websites of questionable nature or content, downloading materials and appropriate use of the Internet.

Your au pair/companion is expected to pay for all of her long distance phone calls, and Au Pair in America is very clear about this in all of the orientation materials your au pair/companion receives. **Au Pair in America is not responsible for any bills or personal debts incurred by the au pair/companion.**

Whether you decide to assume the cost of your au pair/companion's phone expenses or you expect your au pair/companion to pay for her own calls, it is important that you discuss with your au pair/companion her responsibility toward the phone bill. Explain that phone bills are received monthly and clearly itemized.

We urge you to consider the options and put the best plan in place for you:

- Check your long distance carrier to determine when the cheap rates are in effect. We recommend Skype.
- Investigate other international discount calling plans. You can keep your existing service and add the plans, which all cost a nominal fee per month.
- **Place an international block on your telephone service.** Your au pair/companion could place calls by utilizing a prepaid phone card or discount phone services or by using Skype and other free internet calling tools.

Reference: Phone card information is given to your au pair/companion at her orientation.

About two months before the end of your au pair/companion's stay, have a discussion about phone charges incurred before your au pair/companion's departure. Each au pair/companion has different phone habits and shows varying levels of responsibility. You will know your au pair/companion at this point in the year and should work out a mutually agreeable arrangement for the last month's phone usage to ensure that you receive payment for expenses incurred from your au pair/companion.

Personal Debts

Personal debts, credit cards and bank accounts
Any personal debts incurred by the au pair/companion while living with the host family are her responsibility and are to be settled between you and her.

Au Pair in America does not recommend host families allow the au pair/companion to use their credit cards or bankcards under any circumstance. We also do not recommend that you and the au pair/companion open a joint bank account or that you be a co-signer or are in any way responsible for an au pair/companion's checking or bank account.

Car use, Insurance and Accidents

Prior to your au pair/companion's arrival decide what rules will be imposed on the use of your vehicles. Rules you impose are likely to depend on the community you live in and

- whether you require her to drive as part of her child care duties.
- access to reliable and safe public transportation. If you live in a rural or suburban community it is likely that you will need to allow your au pair/companion access to the car for her personal use in order for the exchange to be successful.

Prior to giving your au pair/companion the car keys:

- Arrange to have your au pair/companion covered as a driver under your automobile insurance policy
- Explain the insurance coverage to your au pair/companion and establish what her financial responsibilities will be in the event of an accident (further reference under Insurance below).
- Check to see that your au pair/companion has an International Driving Permit or whether her country license is valid for use in the state. Prior to arrival, check with your DMV office regarding scheduling a driving test and the documents she will need to attain a driver's license. We recommend that your care provider attain a State driver's license and in certain states they may be required. Your local DMV office can best advise you.
- Instruct your au pair/companion on correct use of seat belts and car seats
- Drive, drive, drive with your au pair/companion until you are comfortable with her driving abilities. The driving ability of the au pair/companion should be carefully assessed before granting permission to operate your vehicle, for obvious safety reasons.
- Refer to Driving in your community. Write out instructions for her to follow in the event of an accident, review them with her, and then leave them

in the glove compartment of the car.

Driving in Your Community

Your au pair/companion will be accustomed to driving in her community where road signs and even the side of the road she drives on are different. She will need time to adjust to driving in your community. Some tips to keep in mind as you help your au pair/companion adapt: Your family vehicle may be much larger than what your au pair/companion is accustomed to; an automatic transmission may be a new experience for your au pair/companion.

- Point out locations of road signals and be sure your au pair/companion understands their meaning.
- Discuss speed limits on highways, residential streets, commercial zones and school zones.
- Discuss rules of driving in and around school buses—our rules of not passing a stopped school bus may not be a rule that applies in her country.
- Remind the au pair/companion that she must never drive after drinking any alcoholic beverage, and that this absolute rule applies whether or not children are in the car. Emphasize that there is no “safe” amount of alcohol that can be consumed before driving, because any amount can impair driving ability and police may arrest any driver who has any alcohol on their breath. An arrest will result in termination from the program.
- Give her a road map or provide a GPS device. It would be helpful to mark off select locations, such as schools, shopping areas, the local police station, library, and the Community Counselor’s home.
- Point out areas in the community that are both safe and unsafe places to be day and/or at night.
- Discuss grade of gas used in your automobiles and location of gas stations

Car Use Guidelines

- Determine guidelines for car usage and gain agreement from your au pair/companion to abide by them before she begins driving. In considering what those guidelines will be, you must decide:
- Do you want your au pair/companion to always ask to use the car?
- Are there limits on where she may drive, or particular roads she may not drive on?
- Who may she drive? Your children? Other children? Her own friends?
- Is there a curfew for the car?
- Who pays for gas when the car is used for the au pair/companion’s personal use?
- The au pair/companion is not expected to be

responsible for routine maintenance of the car. Be very specific if you expect her to check the oil, tires, etc.

Note: Under program guidelines the host family is expected to provide transportation for the au pair/companion to attend cluster meetings with her Community Counselor and attend her educational classes. If the transportation is your automobile then gas is part of the cost to be absorbed by the family.

Insurance

Arrange for your au pair/companion to be covered under your automobile insurance carrier at your expense. Determine with your insurance provider whether she will be covered if driving under an international drivers license or specific country license or if she must obtain a state drivers license. Determine whether there is any documentation the au pair/companion needs to bring from home to send to your carrier. Confirm with your au pair/companion prior to her arrival that she has the necessary licenses and documentation required.

Deductibles and Accidents

Discuss the auto insurance with your au pair/companion to be certain that she understands:

- What a ‘deductible’ is
- How much the deductible is
- What you expect her to contribute in the event of an accident (up to a maximum of \$500), and if you intend for the contribution to differ whether the accident occurs while using the car as part of her child care duties or while during her free time.

Most important, is to have this discussion before she begins driving and know that she accepts and understands her responsibilities in the event of an accident.

Note: You can choose not to expect the au pair/companion to pay any of the deductible or you can request that she share the cost with you. Au Pair in America recommends you share the cost, with your au pair/companion paying up to \$250.

Under the terms of your agreement with the Program you agree to provide automobile insurance coverage for your au pair/companion and to have her listed as an operator on your insurance policy if you choose to be fully protected in the event of a motor vehicle accident. You agree to limit the claim against your au pair/companion for uninsured damages resulting from negligent operation of a motor vehicle to a maximum of \$500.

Give specific instructions to your au pair/companion on what she should do in the event of an accident. We recommend placing an envelope in the car marked

“accident”, which has specific procedures on what information you would want her to obtain, whom to call, etc. Review this as well as location of car registration, insurance identification card, car handbooks and any other documents you consider important.

“I would recommend to any Host Family that they put into practice the rules of the road they are teaching their au pair/companion. My au pair/companion was quite surprised when I picked her up from Orientation, entered the highway and proceeded to pass a car on the right hand side. She told me that was illegal in her country and thought it was in ours as well. Since that day, I have always tried to remember not to skirt around good driving rules and pass on the left, just as I would want my au pair/companion to do at all times.”
– Host Family from Connecticut

When your match cannot continue

There may be occasion where the match with your au pair cannot continue. It is very important to discuss the details with your community counselor immediately if you think you may not be able to continue hosting your au pair for any reason. Depending on the circumstances, you may be approved to match with another au pair. Your community counselor will be there to assist you with this process.

During the rematch process you will be expected to continue hosting your au pair for a period of up to two weeks. The rematch period begins on the day that you, your au pair and your community counselor agree that the match will not continue.

Private discussions

No matter what the problem, your child should not be present when you need to settle an issue with your au pair/companion. First, your child will never feel certain that the issue was satisfactorily resolved. Secondly, he may feel guilty or confused about being at the center of a problem. Finally, you will undermine your au pair/companion's authority. Instead, speak to your au pair/companion privately and encourage her to do the same if she has concerns to raise with you.

It's important to remember that developing a trusting relationship means riding out the rough times as well as the good:

“You are not going to get perfection day in and day out. And, a relationship without conflict is not perfect—it's artificial. Like a fragile vase, one crack and it falls to pieces. The relationship that lasts is the one in which you learn to deal with conflicts as they arise and are satisfied with the results, even though they may not be what you imagined.”

Physical Contact

Physical contact between the host family and au pair is discouraged; while a hug or handshake may be appropriate depending on the circumstances, if such

conduct makes the recipient uncomfortable it should be avoided for that reason. The host father and the au pair in particular should avoid any physical contact and everyone must scrupulously adhere to the Sexual Harassment policy set forth below.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is prohibited, and any complaints regarding such conduct will be investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted.

Sexual harassment, whether between people of different sexes or the same sex, is defined to include [but is not limited to] unwanted sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, and other behavior of a sexual, lewd, offensive or suggestive nature. Such conduct, whether verbal or physical, may unreasonably interfere with an individual's right to live and/or study without being subjected to an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

If you or a family member believes they are or have been sexually harassed by their au pair/companion consider the following strategies:

- Say “no” to your harasser. Say it firmly without smiling and apologizing.
- Tell your harasser, in writing, that you object to this behavior.
- Describe the specific behaviors that are offensive or threatening, and keep a copy.

Report your concerns to the Community Counselor. We advise the au pairs/companions to take this same action.

Incompatibility

The first month that your au pair/companion is with you is considered an adjustment period. If there is performance or adjustment problems that you believe may result in alternative placement, it must be brought to your Community Counselor's attention. Resolution of problems can only be solved when both you and your au pair/companion understand the issues. Your Community Counselor can help facilitate this.

In the event that the match ends prematurely, the Host Family will owe the au pair/companion the appropriate percentage of her vacation and educational allowance for the time she has been with your family. It is the host family's obligation to house the au pair for two weeks, if needed, to allow the au pair time to locate a new family or make plans to return to her home country.

For guidelines and information related to alternative placement, please refer to the Au Pair in America brochure, the Program Policies document and the Host Family Agreement and consult with your Community Counselor.

Au Pair Fees and Accountability

Au pair in America pays interviewers, whether they pass or fail an applicant. Interviewers may charge a fee to an au pair for services; the amounts are governed by local market standards.

Au pairs pay fees that vary by country and may include fees for the interview, placement, upgrade insurance and visa processing.

Au pairs in the Standard and Extraordinaire program are required to pay a program fee. Educare companions pay a program fee.

You're Au Pair's Departure

Returning home

Before you realize it, your au pair/companion will be packing her bags and heading home. Your au pair/companion will be contacted several months in advance by the Au Pair in America staff to arrange her return transportation home.

Her departure will bring a variety of reactions from all of you: sadness because your new friend is leaving, some relief that you will be able to resume your old lifestyle, excitement and apprehension if you have chosen a new au pair/companion. Your au pair/companion may also feel sad about leaving and anxious about returning to her family and friends after her experience in America.

It's important for all of you to take time to reflect back on your time together and talk about what you have learned. Talking about your au pair/companion's departure will help all of you when she leaves!

Your au pair/companion's returning flight arrangements

The various combination of U.S. departure cities and worldwide destinations in a range of dates, offer your au pair/companion the flexibility of planning a travel schedule home from convenient locations in the U.S. that will complement her desired plans for travel in the U.S. in her travel month.

Au Pair in America will send her information regarding return flight arrangements approximately four months before the end of her year.

Au Pair in America strives to find the most convenient flights for our au pairs. During peak seasons, however, we may be restricted by flight availability within our contracts; this may mean longer layovers or more than one stop-over for an au pair. Au Pair in America is held to the same change and penalty fees as the general public, therefore, changes made after ticketing may not be possible or the au pair may incur a fee. Au Pair in America cannot guarantee requested flight dates, specific routing or flight time.

For certain destinations, Au Pair in America purchases airline seats in large blocks well in advance of departure dates. Seats that are not utilized are not refundable to Au Pair in America. Therefore, in the event the au pair/companion chooses not to use the return portion of her international flight, the value of her flight is not refundable to the host family.

Visa extensions

Au pairs/companions may request a one-time program extension of six, nine or 12 months. They may extend

their program with their current host family or request to extend with a new host family.

Approximately four months before the end of your au pair/companion's year, you will receive a packet of information explaining the extension option, as well as materials to complete together with your au pair if you chose to extend your time together. Your au pair will also receive a mailing about the extension program with information on how to file for an extension with either her current family or a new host family.

In order to be considered for a program extension, an au pair must be in good standing with the program and must have completed her educational requirement. Proof that she has fulfilled her education must be sent to the Connecticut office before we will submit an extension request to the U.S. Department of State for approval.

It is important to clarify that a program extension allows au pair/companions to continue their participation in the program and extends the validity of their visa status in the U.S. It is not an extension of their J-1 visa, and this has implications on an au pair's ability to travel outside the U.S. during her extension term. The au pair exchange program is still technically a one-year program, and the J-1 visa which is issued to au pair/companions is valid for one year only. When an extension is approved by the U.S. Department of State, the au pair/companion is issued a new DS 2019 form stating her extended program validity dates. Even though her visa may have expired, the au pair/companion will still be in valid J-1 visa status through the extended program dates. It is important to note that the au pair/companion may not be able to travel to certain areas outside the U.S. during her extension term, as a valid visa would be required for re-entry.

Your au pair's return home

Under the terms of your Host Family Agreement you have agreed to relieve your au pair/companion of her duties at the end of her contract, thus enabling her to return to her home country in accordance with the terms of her visa. An au pair/companion cannot perform any child care duties in her travel month. It is also illegal to retain your au pair/companion for child care on a student or a tourist visa.

Most host families find their children adjust well and enjoy the opportunity to meet new au pairs of different cultures each year, just as their schoolteachers change from year to year.

<http://www.state.gov/>

Important Contacts

We hope this document gives you insight and answers to issues and concerns you may have during the year.

Of course, there are many things we cannot describe. Every relationship is unique and the number of enjoyable, enriching, new experiences you can have are endless.

In the event you have concerns that you have not been able to resolve through communication with your local community counselor, you may contact your regional program manager in the Stamford, CT office to discuss the situation. You can find the telephone number and e-mail address of your Regional Program Manager by contacting the office toll-free at (800) 928-7247. If you feel that you still require additional assistance, you may contact Ruth Ferry, the Director of Au Pair in America at (800) 399-5025, or by e-mail at rferry@aifs.com.

In addition, if you have any questions, complaints or incidents related to compliance with Department of State regulations for the Au Pair Program, you can contact the Compliance Unit of the U.S. Department of State, Exchange Visitor Program Services at AuPairProgram@state.gov or at the address below:

Office of Private Sector Exchange Division
SA-44, 301 4TH Street SW
Washington, DC 20547
Telephone: 202.203.7803

As a host family, your advice and input are invaluable to us and the many families that will follow in your footsteps. As you proceed through the year, please take the time to write to us and let us know about your experiences. At year-end you will receive an evaluation form from us, which we encourage you to complete. As a host family, you will be the best source of advice and the most positive testimony to our program. We wish you much success this year.

Addendum

Addendum A - Exchange Visitor Program Regulations

**United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Exchange Visitor Program
Au Pair and EduCare Regulations**

[Code of Federal Regulations]

[Title 22, Volume 1]

[Revised as of April 1, 2002]

From the U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO
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[Page 306-310]

TITLE 22--FOREIGN RELATIONS
CHAPTER I--DEPARTMENT OF STATE
PART 62--EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

Table of Contents

Subpart B--Specific Program Provisions

62.31 Au pairs.

(a) Introduction. This section governs Department of State-designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign nationals are afforded the opportunity to live with an American host family and participate directly in the home life of the host family. All au pair participants provide child care services to the host family and attend a U.S. post-secondary educational institution. Au pair participants provide up to forty-five hours of child care services per week and pursue not less than six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent during their year of program participation. Au pairs participating in the EduCare program provide up to thirty hours of child care services per week and pursue not less than twelve semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent during their year of program participation.

(b) Program designation. The Department of State may, in its sole discretion, designate bona fide programs satisfying the objectives set forth in paragraph (a) of this section. Such designation shall be for a period of two years and may be revoked by the Department of State for good cause.

(c) Program eligibility. Sponsors designated by the Department of State to conduct an au pair exchange program shall;

(1) Limit the participation of foreign nationals in such programs to not more than one year;

(2) Limit the number of hours an EduCare au pair participant is obligated to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 30 hours per week and limit the number of hours all other au pair

participants are obligated to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 45 hours per week;

(3) Require that EduCare au pair participants register and attend classes offered by an accredited U.S. post-secondary institution for not less than twelve semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent and that all other au pair participants register and attend classes offered by an accredited U.S. post-secondary institution for not less than six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent;

(4) Require that all officers, employees, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf are adequately trained and supervised;

(5) Require that the au pair participant is placed with a host family within one hour's driving time of the home of the local organizational representative authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from the au pair's participation in their exchange program;

(6) Require that each local organizational representative maintain a record of all personal monthly contacts (or more frequently as required) with each au pair and host family for which he or she is responsible and issues or problems discussed;

(7) Require that all local organizational representatives contact au pair participants and host families twice monthly for the first two months following a placement other than the initial placement for which the au pair entered the United States.

(8) Require that local organizational representatives not devoting their full time and attention to their program obligations are responsible for no more than fifteen au pairs and host families; and

(9) Require that each local organizational representative is provided adequate support services by a regional organizational representative.

(d) Au pair selection. In addition to satisfying the requirements of §62.10(a), sponsors shall ensure that all participants in a designated au pair exchange program:

(1) Are between the ages of 18 and 26;

(2) Are a secondary school graduate, or equivalent;

(3) Are proficient in spoken English;

(4) Are capable of fully participating in the program as evidenced by the satisfactory completion of a physical;

(5) Have been personally interviewed, in English, by an organizational representative who shall prepare a report of the interview which shall be provided to the host family; and

(6) Have successfully passed a background investigation that includes verification of school, three, non-family related personal and employment references, a criminal background check or its recognized equivalent and a personality profile. Such personality profile will be based upon a psychometric test designed to measure differences in characteristics among applicants against those characteristics considered most important to successfully participate in the au pair program.

(e) Au pair placement. Sponsors shall secure, prior to the au pair's departure from the home country, a host family placement for each participant. Sponsors shall not:

(1) Place an au pair with a family unless the family has specifically agreed that a parent or other responsible adult will remain in the home for the first three days following the au pair's arrival;

(2) Place an au pair with a family having a child aged less than three months unless a parent or other responsible adult is present in the home;

(3) Place an au pair with a host family having children under the age of two, unless the au pair has at least 200 hours of documented infant child care experience. An au pair participating in the EduCare program shall not be placed with a family having pre-school children in the home unless alternative full-time arrangements for the supervision of such pre-school children are in place;

(4) Place an au pair with a host family having a special needs child, as so identified by the host family, unless the au pair has specifically identified his or her prior experience, skills, or training in the care of special needs children and the host family has reviewed and acknowledged in writing the au pair's prior experience, skills, or training so identified;

(5) Place an au pair with a host family unless a written agreement between the au pair and the host family detailing the au pair's obligation to provide child care has been signed by both the au pair and the host family prior to the au pair's departure from his or her home country. Such agreement shall clearly state whether the au pair is an EduCare program participant or not. Such agreement shall limit the obligation to provide child care services to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 45 hours per week unless the au pair is an EduCare participant. Such agreement shall limit the obligation of an EduCare participant to provide child care service to not more than 10 hours per day or more than 30 hours per week.

(6) Place the au pair with a family who cannot provide the au pair with a suitable private bedroom; and

(7) Place an au pair with a host family unless the host family has interviewed the au pair by telephone prior to the au pair's departure from his or her home country.

(f) Au pair orientation. In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at §62.10, all sponsors shall provide au pairs, prior to their departure from the home country, with the following information:

(1) A copy of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations, including a grievance process, which govern the au pair's participation in the exchange program;

(2) A detailed profile of the family and community in which the au pair will be placed;

(3) A detailed profile of the educational institutions in the community where the au pair will be placed, including the financial cost of attendance at these institutions;

(4) A detailed summary of travel arrangements; and

(5) A copy of the Department of State's written statement and brochure regarding the au pair program.

(g) Au pair training. Sponsors shall provide the au pair participant with child development and child safety instruction, as follows:

(1) Prior to placement with the host family, the au pair participant shall receive not less than eight hours of child safety instruction no less than 4 of which shall be infant-related; and

(2) Prior to placement with the American host family, the au pair participant shall receive not less than twenty-four hours of child development instruction of which no less than 4 shall be devoted to specific training for children under the age of two.

(h) Host family selection. Sponsors shall adequately screen all potential host families and at a minimum shall:

(1) Require that the host parents are U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents;

(2) Require that host parents are fluent in spoken English;

(3) Require that all adult family members resident in the home have been personally interviewed by an organizational representative;

(4) Require that host parents and other adults living full-time in the household have successfully passed a background investigation including employment and personal character references;

(5) Require that the host family have adequate financial resources to undertake all hosting obligations;

(6) Provide a written detailed summary of the exchange program and the parameters of their and the au pair's duties, participation, and obligations; and

(7) Provide the host family with the prospective au pair participant's complete application, including all references.

(i) Host family orientation. In addition to the requirements set forth at §62.10 sponsors shall:

(1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange program and provide all families with a copy of the Department of State's written statement and brochure regarding the au pair program;

(2) Provide all selected host families with a complete copy of Department of State-promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations, including the supplemental information thereto;

(3) Advise all selected host families of their obligation to attend at least one family day conference to be sponsored by the au pair organization during the course of the placement year. Host family attendance at such a gathering is a condition of program participation and failure to attend will be grounds for possible termination of their continued or future program participation; and

(4) Require that the organization's local counselor responsible for the au pair placement contacts the host family and au pair within forth-eight hours of the au pair's arrival and meets, in person, with the host family and au pair within two weeks of the au pair's arrival at the host family home.

(j) Wages and hours. Sponsors shall require that au pair participants:

(1) Are compensated at a weekly rate based upon 45 hours of child care services per week and paid in conformance with the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act as interpreted and implemented by the United States Department of Labor. EduCare participants shall be compensated at a weekly rate that is 75% of the weekly rate paid to non-EduCare participants;

(2) Do not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day, or more than 45 hours of child care in any one week. EduCare participants may not provide more than 10 hours of child care per day or more than 30 hours of child care in any one week;

(3) Receive a minimum of one and one half days off per week in addition to one complete weekend off each month; and

(4) Receive two weeks of paid vacation.

(k) Educational component. Sponsors must:

(1) Require that during their initial period of program participation, all EduCare au pair participants complete not less than 12 semester hours (or their equivalent) of

academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions and that all other au pair participants complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs in accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic course work in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for EduCare au pair participants and in an amount not to exceed \$500 for all other au pair participants.

(2) Require that during any extension of program participation, all participants (i.e. , Au Pair or EduCare) satisfy an additional educational requirement, as follows:

(i) For a nine or 12-month extension, all au pair participants and host families shall have the same obligation for coursework and payment therefore as is required during the initial period of program participation.

(ii) For a six-month extension, EduCare au pair participants must complete not less than six semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$500. All other au pair participants must complete not less than three semester hours (or their equivalent) of academic credit in formal educational settings at accredited U.S. post-secondary institutions. As a condition of program participation, host family participants must agree to facilitate the enrollment and attendance of au pairs at accredited U.S. post secondary institutions and to pay the cost of such academic coursework in an amount not to exceed \$250.

(l) Monitoring. Sponsors shall fully monitor all au pair exchanges, and at a minimum shall:

(1) Require monthly personal contact by the local counselor with each au pair and host family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(2) Require quarterly contact by the regional counselor with each au pair and host family for which the counselor is responsible. Counselors shall maintain a record of this contact;

(3) Require that all local and regional counselors are appraised of their obligation to report unusual or serious situations or incidents involving either the au pair or host family; and

(4) Promptly report to the Department of State any incidents involving or alleging a crime of moral turpitude or violence.

(m) Reporting requirements. Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at §62.17, sponsors shall file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) A summation of the results of an annual survey of all host family and au pair participants regarding satisfaction with the program, its strengths and weaknesses;

(2) A summation of all complaints regarding host family or au pair participation in the program, specifying the nature of the complaint, its resolution, and whether any unresolved complaints are outstanding;

(3) A summation of all situations which resulted in the placement of au pair participant with more than one host family;

(4) A report by a certified public accountant, conducted pursuant to a format designated by the Department of State, attesting to the sponsor's compliance with the procedures and reporting requirements set forth in this subpart;

(5) A report detailing the name of the au pair, his or her host family placement, location, and the names of the local and regional organizational representatives; and

(6) A complete set of all promotional materials, brochures, or pamphlets distributed to either host family or au pair participants.

(n) Sanctions. In addition to the sanctions provisions set forth at §62.50, the Department of State may undertake immediate program revocation procedures upon documented evidence that a sponsor has failed to:

(1) Comply with the au pair placement requirements set forth in paragraph (e) of this section;

(2) Satisfy the selection requirements for each individual au pair as set forth in paragraph (d) of this section; and

(3) Enforce and monitor host family's compliance with the stipend and hours requirements set forth in paragraph (j) of this section.

(o) Extension of program. The Department, in its sole discretion, may approve extensions for au pair participants beyond the initial 12-month program. Applications to the Department for extensions of six, nine, or 12 months, must be received by the Department not less than 30 calendar days prior to the expiration of the exchange visitor's initial authorized stay in either the Au Pair or EduCare program (i.e. , 30-calendar days prior to the program end date listed on the exchange

visitor's Form DS-2019). The request for an extension beyond the maximum duration of the initial 12-month program must be submitted electronically in the Department of Homeland Security's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Supporting documentation must be submitted to the Department on the sponsor's organizational letterhead and contain the following information:

(1) Au pair's name, SEVIS identification number, date of birth, the length of the extension period being requested;

(2) Verification that the au pair completed the educational requirements of the initial program; and

(3) Payment of the required non-refundable fee (see 22 CFR 62.90) via Pay.gov.

(p) Repeat participation. A foreign national who enters the United States as an au pair Exchange Visitor Program participant and who has successfully completed his or her program is eligible to participate again as an au pair participant, provided that he or she has resided outside the United States for at least two years following completion of his or her initial au pair program.

[60 FR 8552, Feb. 15, 1995, as amended at 62 FR 34633, June 27, 1997; 64 FR 53930, Oct. 5, 1999. Redesignated at 64 FR 54539, Oct. 7, 1999; 66 FR 43087, Aug. 17, 2001; 71 FR 33238, June 8, 2006; 73 FR 34862, June 19, 2008]

Addendum B - Visa information

Program participants should be aware of the terms and conditions under which the United States government issues the J-1 visa. Such visas are reserved for individuals participating in a bona fide cultural exchange opportunity.

Definition of terms:

DS-2019: The Department of State Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitors J-1 Status.

This form is required by the United States Embassy or Consulate Office as proof of acceptance into a cultural exchange program. This white form will be stamped by Immigration inspectors upon entry into the United States. The au pair/companion should keep this form in a safe place with her passport.

J-1 Visa: The document placed in the au pair/companion's passport by the United States Embassy or Consulate Office upon approval for participation in a cultural exchange program. This is the au pair/companion's application to enter the United States.

The DS-2019 form should be valid for at least one year from the date the au pair/companion entered the United States. This would be indicated by a stamp indicating the au pair/companion's arrival date and the code "J-1 D/S". This stamp and code would be located in the middle of the I-94 card and in box number 6 of the DS-2019 form.

If the au pair/companion leaves the United States, even for only one day, she must have her passport, DS-2019 form,. When planning a trip outside the United States, the au pair/companion should:

- Send her DS-2019 form to the Program Compliance Coordinator/Responsible Officer: Au Pair in America. Telephone (800) 727-2437 ext. 5027.

This form should be sent at least three weeks prior to travel plans outside the country. Au pairs should only send their DS-2019 form. Passports should never be sent to Au Pair in America or leave the property of the au pair/companion.

- Include a letter with the DS-2019 form stating where the au pair/companion will be going and dates of her trip. A self-addressed, stamped envelope should accompany all DS-2019 forms.

If there are less than three weeks before departure, an au pair/companion can expedite the process by using Express Mail or Federal Express. If the au pair/companion wishes to have her validated DS-2019 returned to her by UPS, she must include a check or money order for \$10 payable to AIFS. A complete mailing address must accompany the check, as Au Pair in America cannot send mail overnight to a post office box number. Au pairs should also include their daytime telephone number with this information.

Understandably, not all travel plans (i.e. emergencies) can be made with advance notice. When an au pair/companion schedules an out of country trip with insufficient time to send her DS-2019 form in for a signature, she must call the Stamford office to discuss the special circumstances.

Under the au pair regulations and the terms of agreement the au pair/companion and host family have with Au Pair in America, the au pair/companion is to return home at the end of the program. After returning home, the au pair /companion is free to apply for another visa to re-enter the United States.

Should the au pair/companion remain in the United States beyond the months authorized by the program, Au Pair in America is required by Exchange Visitor Program Regulations to notify the immigration authorities. If the au pair/companion's participation in the program is terminated either by the au pair/companion or by Au Pair in America prior to the date listed on her DS-2019 form, Au Pair in America is required to notify the

Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security of the date on which her participation was terminated.

If at any point an au pair/companion is deported by Immigration, her chances of obtaining another visa in the future would be seriously jeopardized.

Au Pair in America will be offering the au pair/companion a flight home at the end of her exchange. An au pair/companion may remain in the United States for an additional month should she wish to travel to other regions of the United States. If this is the case, Au Pair in America will arrange a return flight home during the travel month. The au pair/companion cannot leave and re-enter the U.S. during the travel month (for example Canada, Mexico).

Resources

¹ Muscari, Ann and Morrone, Wendy Wardell, *Child Care That Works—How Families Can Share Their Lives with Child Care and Thrive* (NY: Doubleday, 1989), p. 83

² Stewart, Edward C. and Bennett, Milton J., *American Cultural Patterns, A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, (ME: Intercultural Press, 1985) p. 45

³ King, Nancy and Huff, Ken, *The Host Family Survival Kit, A Guide for American Host Families*, (ME: Intercultural Press, 1985), p. 81

⁴ Elliott, Ruth S. with Savage, Jim, *Minding the Kids, A Practical Guide to Employing Nannies, Caregivers, Baby Sitters and Au Pairs*, (Prentice Hall Press, 1990), p. 121