



AFS-USA Study Guide for US Department of State (DoS) Local Coordinator Training and Certification

1. WELCOME

2. Study Guide Overview and Purpose

- Every year thousands of AFS-USA volunteers work in concert to facilitate cultural learning experiences for international exchange students from all over the world. This training module introduces AFS-USA volunteers to regulations issued by the US Department of State (DoS) and the ways in which these regulations impact our operations.
- You will find many resources within this study guide, as well as links to external sites with more information about AFS-USA standards of compliance.
- This study guide concludes with instructions for accessing the Department of State Local Coordinator Training and Certification. Feel free to refer back to this study guide as you prepare to become a certified AFS-USA Local Coordinator.

3. Learning Objectives

Upon completing this study guide, you will be able to:

- Describe the key points of the US Department of State regulations
- Identify and define common terms used in regulatory language
- Access additional online compliance resources
- Complete the next steps to become a certified Local Coordinator through the US Department of State

4. Compliance in Context

- AFS-USA, along with other youth-serving organizations, must adhere to a certain set of regulations and standards which help ensure the safety of young adults experiencing a semester or year in the United States.
- As staff and volunteers responsible for the support of the students we serve, we must meet these regulations and standards so that we can continue to offer life-changing experiences for everyone involved.
- By completing this study guide, which will guide you through the regulations set forth by the Department of State (DoS), you will be prepared to take the Department of State Local Coordinator Training and Certification.
- PLEASE NOTE:
The DoS terminology may differ from that which AFS-USA commonly uses
- A glossary of key terms and concepts is provided to highlight for your reference.
- In addition:
 - **AFS-USA adheres to additional standards set by the *Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)***
 - **AFS-USA also sets its own organizational standards**

This means that, in some cases, AFS-USA practices go above and beyond the regulations you will encounter in this study guide, which focuses only on inbound, or hosted, students.

5. Key Terms & Concepts

KEY TERM	AFS-USA Definition
Area Supervisor	<i>The Team or Chapter Chair.</i>
Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)	<i>Council that identifies reputable organizations in the youth exchange industry by setting standards, monitoring compliance with these standards and publishing an annual Advisory List for both inbound and outbound programs.</i>
Criminal Background Check(CBC)	<i>Name and social security number based search of nationwide criminal database and sex offender registry.</i>
Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry	<i>A national registry, divided by state jurisdiction, that identifies registered sex offenders. This registry is searched during the criminal background check process.</i>
Department of State (DoS)	<i>The federal agency responsible for representing the United States at home and abroad through diplomatic activities.</i>
Department of State Exchange Visitor Program	<i>The official DoS program that administers cultural and educational exchanges between the United States and other countries; authorized by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961.</i>
Direct Placement	<i>The placement of a student with a specific host family identified by the student, his or her natural family or the school.</i>
Double Placement	<i>The placement of two (2) exchange students in one host family. Students cannot be from the same country or speak the same language.</i>
Form DS–2019	<i>Also known as a "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status"; the form permits a prospective exchange visitor to secure an interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in order to obtain a J visa to enter the United States.</i>
Government Issued Documents	<i>Official government documents, i.e. passports and DS-2019s.</i>
Identification Card	<i>A card distributed to students before they leave their home countries that contains important contact information, including an AFS-USA emergency number and host family contact information.</i>

J-1 visas	<i>A non-immigrant visa category for individuals approved to participate in work and study-based exchange visitor programs like AFS-USA.</i>
Local Coordinators	<i>AFS-USA registered volunteers engaged in the recruitment, screening and selection of host families, orientations and support of host families and participants. When related to contacts and visits, this term refers to a liaison.</i>
Office of Private Sector Exchange	<i>A DoS office within the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau that designates AFS-USA as a J-1 Visa sponsor. The Department of State regulations only apply to inbound programs. This office does not regulate outbound programs.</i>
Organizational Officers, Employees, Representatives, Agents, and Volunteers	<i>All AFS-USA staff members, registered volunteers, and board members.</i>
Proper Documentation	<i>A record of application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews</i>
Public Diplomacy	<i>A U.S. Government tool used to directly engage the people of another country instead of strictly "government- to- government" relations.</i>
Secondary School Student Program	<i>Program for secondary school students to come to the United States to study at a public or private high school. Students live with an American host family or at a U.S. boarding school.</i>
Sponsor Agencies	<i>Organizations, such as AFS-USA, designated by the Department of State to operate J-1 visa programs.</i>
Sporadic or Intermittent Employment	<i>Employment that is not full or part-time, but sporadic and intermittent jobs, such as babysitting or yard work.</i>
Standard Operating Procedures	<i>Procedures created and implemented by AFS-USA for the supervision of volunteers, designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/ agents/volunteers.</i>
Training Certification	<i>A certification test that AFS-USA staff and certain volunteer affiliations must obtain by passing the DoS Local Coordinator Training and Certification module.</i>

6. The Host Family

The US Department of State in late 2010 issued rules and regulations governing all sponsor agencies issuing J-1 visas to international exchange students. The following section highlights current regulations related to host family recruitment, screening, selection and orientation.

Host Family Recruitment – Do's

Sponsors must:

- Ensure that access to student photos and personally identifying information is only made

available to potential host families who have been fully vetted and selected for program participation. Such information, if available online, must also be **password protected**.

Host Family Recruitment – Don'ts

Sponsors must not:

- Publicize the need for host families via any public media that is not sufficiently in advance of the exchange student's arrival.
- Appeal to public pity or guilt, imply in any way that an exchange student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately.
- Include personal student data or contact information (including addresses, phone numbers or email addresses) or photographs of the student on web sites or in other promotional materials.

References and Financial Resources

Sponsors must ensure that each host family has:

- Adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing.
- A good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (i.e., field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family's good reputation and character.

Criminal Background Check (CBC)

Sponsors must verify that the following members of the host family have undergone a criminal background check:

- Every member of the host family household who is 18 years of age or older
- Any new 18+ member added to the household during the exchange
- Any member of the host family household who will turn 18 years of age during the exchange student's stay in that household

Interview, Application & Photos

All family members residing in the home where the student will be living must be present during the in person interview. The host family application must provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, family composition, community and physical environment including photographs of:

- Front exterior and grounds of the home
- Overview of the kitchen
- Student's bedroom (bed & dresser/closet; if sharing a room both beds must be included)
- Overview of the student's bathroom
- Family or living room

The Home

Host families must be able to provide:

- A comfortable and nurturing, clean and sanitary home environment
- A separate bed for the student that is neither convertible nor inflatable in nature
- An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same gender
- Adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings
- Reasonable access to bathroom facilities
- Study space if not otherwise available in the house

- Unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of fire or similar emergency

Single Parent Placements

- Single adult host parents without a child in the home must undergo a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant which demonstrates his or her ties to the community
- Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student's placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

Double Placement

The host family, natural family and students must provide prior written consent for the placement of two (2) host students in one home (double placement).

- Under no circumstance may more than two (2) exchange students be placed with a host family.
- Students from the same country or who speak the same language may not be placed in the same family.

Other Placement Considerations

- Students may not be placed with their relatives residing in the US.
- A specific host family can be identified by a student and his or her natural family to be considered for a direct placement.
- Sponsors must report direct placements to the school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

Host Family Orientation

Host families must receive orientation after being fully vetted and accepted and prior to the student's arrival.

Orientation content must include: AFS philosophy, rules, and regulations

- A copy of DoS regulations
- Strategies for cross-cultural interaction and information about cultural differences
- Instruction to inform the sponsor of any changes in the status of the host family or student

Payment

Host families may not be paid nor given any incentives to host.

Natural Family & Government Issued Documents

Host families must not:

- Deny the student reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and email.
- Remove a student's government issued documents (i.e., passports, Forms DS-2019) from his/her possession

7. School Placement

This section highlights current regulations related to exchange student enrollment and tuition.

Student Enrollment

- Sponsors must obtain written school placement acceptance prior to the student's departure from the home country, including written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof, if applicable.
- **Under no circumstances may a student travel to the United States without school placement paperwork!**
- Copies of these documents must be kept on file for at least three years and are available for DoS inspection, upon request.

- Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.

Charging Tuition

Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS- 2019.

English Transcripts

Sponsors must provide the school with a translated “written English language summary” of the exchange student’s complete academic course work prior to commencement of school in the US, as well as any additional documents the school may require.

More Than 5 Students

Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five (5) exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students from the sponsor.

Academic Calendar

- Sponsors can only offer a program that is at least one semester (or quarter equivalency) and no more than two semesters (or quarter equivalency) in length.
- Sponsors must ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled.

8. The Exchange Student

Host Family and School Profile

Sponsors must provide to the exchange student:

- A detailed profile of the host family that states whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary/arrival family.
- A detailed profile of the school and community, including whether the student will pay tuition

Identification Card

Prior to departure, students must be given an identification card that includes the following:

- Exchange student’s name
- Host family address and telephone numbers (land-line and cellular)
- Sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers
- Name and telephone numbers (land-line and/or cellular) of the local coordinator and area representative
- Telephone number of State Department’s Office of Designation
- Secondary School student program toll free emergency telephone number
- Name of the health insurance provider and policy number

Such cards must be corrected, reprinted and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student’s placement.

Orientation

Exchange student orientations must include:

- A summary of all operating procedures, rules and regulations governing student participation

- in the exchange visitor program along with a detailed summary of travel arrangements
- A copy of the Department of State's welcome letter to exchange students
- Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation.

Extra-Curricular Activities & Athletics

- Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extra-curricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is authorized by the local school district and state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility.
- **Sponsors shall not knowingly be party to a placement based on athletic abilities** (inclusive of direct placements), whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party.

Employment

Exchange students may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis, but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

9. Contacts and Visits

This section highlights regulations pertaining to contact with the exchange student, host family and school.

Monthly Contact with Student

- Personal contact between the Local Coordinator and the Exchange Student must take place at minimum, on a monthly basis.
- The first monthly contact with the student must be **in-person**.
- All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail.*
- All monthly contacts must be properly documented.

** CSJET and AFS-USA standards do not permit email as a valid form of monthly contact.*

Monthly Contact with Host Family

- Personal contact between the Local Coordinator and the Host Family must take place at minimum, on a monthly basis.
- At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester the contact by the Local Coordinator with the host family must be **in-person**.
- All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail.*
- All monthly contacts must be properly documented.

** CSJET and AFS-USA standards do not permit email as a valid form of monthly contact.*

School Contact

Sponsors must provide host schools with contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department of State's Office of Designation.

In-Home Visit

A sponsor representative, other than the person who recruited, screened and selected the host family*, must visit the exchange student/host family home within:

- 60 days of arrival in the case of a **permanent placement**
- 30 days of arrival in the case of a **welcome or temporary placement**

**This means the volunteer performing the in-home visit may not be the same volunteer who conducted the host family interview*

If the exchange student remains in the welcome or temporary placement beyond 30 days, an in-home visit must take place **once every 30 days** until the participant is moved to a permanent placement. If the student moves at any point during the program, the above rules apply to the new placement as well.

10. The Local Coordinator

This section describes those regulations pertaining to the vetting, training and terms of service of the Local Coordinator (liaison).

Criminal Background Check (CBC)

Sponsors must ensure that all organizational officers, employees, representatives, agents, and Volunteers acting on their behalf have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry).

Training

Sponsors must administer training for Local Coordinators that specifically includes, at minimum, instruction in:

- Conflict Resolution
- Reporting emergency situations
- Sexual conduct and participant safety and well-being
- Screening and selection of host families.

All Local Coordinators must also complete the **Department of State Local Coordinator Training and Certification**.

Hosting Guidelines

Local Coordinators/Liaisons must not act as:

- Both a host family and Local Coordinator for the same exchange student.
- A host family for one sponsor and an active Local Coordinator for another.
- A Local Coordinator for an exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student's teacher or principal (not applicable to boarding school placements).

120 Mile Rule

The local coordinator/liaison must reside within 120 miles of the host family/student to whom he or she has been assigned.

11. Additional Resources

AFS-USA & the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel- Long-Term Inbound Standards
<https://www.csiet.org/csiet-long-term-inbound-standards/>

AFS-USA & the US Department of State
https://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/high-school-final-rule-10_27_2010.pdf

Accessing the DoS Local Coordinator Training & Certification

You are now ready to take the **Department of State Local Coordinator Training**.

*****But first, before logging on, you might consider taking time to read the following information:***

REMEMBER: You will need to use your AFS-USA username and password to access this site.

Time:

- Read through the content carefully, clicking "**Next**" to advance pages and "**Previous**" to return to pages (both buttons are located on the right hand side of the page).
- After reading the content, **you have 60 minutes to answer 30 multiple choice questions** about the topics covered in the study guide. Some questions may include hypothetical situations, so please read the questions carefully.

Training Instructions:

Click the link below for a step-by-step guide on how to complete the training.

myafshelp.afsusa.org/hc/article_attachments/115013032048/Instructions_for_taking_DoS_Training.pdf

Click this link to access the Department of State Local Coordinator Training and Certification:

<https://usa.afsglobal.org/course/DOSCertification>

Please email DoSTraining@afs.org if you have any questions or need any assistance!