



Frequently Asked Questions About International Staff Hiring And Commonly Misunderstood Issues

Placement

- 1. Is the camp where a participant is placed or the agency that places the participant responsible to the US government for that participant?**

The placement agency is responsible to the US government for the participant but needs the cooperation of the camp in order to do this well.
- 2. Should the camp or the placement agency conduct in-depth orientations to prepare staff for camp and for the US culture?**

Both – the placement agency should prepare the participant for American culture and camp life in general and the camp should prepare the participant for the specifics of that camp.
- 3. What details might be found in an placement agency agreement with a camp?**

Each placement agency has its own agreement and procedures for business and participant support. Camps need to be aware of what is in each agreement and be prepared to work with the agency in all ways defined.
- 4. How do placement agencies monitor and evaluate the camp experience?**

Each agency has its own method of evaluating the camp experience that might include visits to camps as well as surveys of camps and participants.
- 5. Whose responsibility is it to be sure the participant arrives at camp on time?**

The camp needs to alert the placement agency and the participant of the expected arrival time. The placement agency is then responsible, for the most part; to be sure arrangements have been made with that participant.
- 6. Can a fifty-five year old individual apply to the camp counselor program?**

A fifty-five year old individual can apply to the camp counselor program. There is no upward age limit. A fifty-five year old individual usually cannot apply to the summer work travel program that provides support staff for camp. Summer work travel participants must be full time students.

7. Can I switch a counselor over to work in the kitchen midsummer?

You cannot switch participants between support staff and counselor positions. Each program has its own visa requirements that must be maintained.

8. Why can't an applicant originating in New Zealand take a position as a prep cook?

Summer work travel visas (support staff) are only granted during time off from educational studies. Southern hemisphere participants are in educational studies during the American summer.

9. What types of criminal convictions could preclude an applicant from obtaining a J-1 visa?

Almost anything. J-1 visa participants must complete a "background check" for camp placement and also often for issuing of a visa.

10. As I consider applications from various organizations, how can I make sure that I am being fair to the applicants?

Choose your staff based on the qualifications and skills needed to be successful in your camp. Interview the potential staff member by telephone and email yourself. Honor the placement agency agreements when staff is placed.

11. What safeguards can I put in place to minimize the number of cancellations I get from my international staff?

Choose your staff early to allow ample time for visa processing. Maintain good communication with them throughout the time they and you are preparing for camp. Put them in contact with other staff coming to your camp both American and International.

12. When reviewing health records for my international staff, what if I discover evidence of a condition such as severe depression or other mental health challenges?

Each camp should have a predetermined plan on what type of medical conditions it will be able to tolerate from any camp staff. Review your staff medical forms as early as possible to determine any indication of conditions that would not fit your requirements. Contact your placement agency ASAP if an international staff has such a condition.

Compliance/Regulatory Issues

1. What is SEVIS?

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This system is used by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to track and monitor the whereabouts of all non-immigrant F, M and J visa student and exchange visitors. All placement agencies are required to report to this system.

2. What is the maximum legal length of time a camp counselor can be in the US? Can we extend the visa of my staff? Can we change the visa status?

Camp counselors can participate in up to a four-month program followed by a 4-week travel period in the United States. J-1 visa counselor and summer work travel are non-extendable.

3. Can support staff work at another job in town when he is not working at camp?

Support staff (or summer work travel staff) can work in a similar position in town after the commitment to the camp is completed but only with permission of the sponsoring placement agency.

4. Is it ok for my international staff to travel to Mexico or Canada on their time off?

Yes, as long as they take their passport and form DS 2019 with them. The DS 2019 must be signed by the sponsoring placement agency. The passport must be stamped for multiple entries. They also must contact the Embassy of Canada or Mexico to be sure their nationality does not need a visa entry to those countries.

5. Do I have to put my international on payroll? Do they pay taxes?

The Internal Revenue Service considers your international camp staff employees. You need to treat them as such including withholding of taxes if they are eligible by the amount of pocket money they earn. The international staff member can apply to get a refund of any taxes withheld. You should also check with your placement agency for any staff from countries that have a tax treaty with the United States such as Canada. These staff pay taxes in their home country.

**6. Can international staff work as nannies for camp staff's children over the summer?
Can they work in my home to clean and look after my kids?**

No - International staff in the camp counselor or summer work travel program cannot work as nannies, clean your home and look after your kids. They can do incidental babysitting but not as a part of their camp position.

7. What do we do if we are waiting for a social security number to arrive, but we still want to pay our participant?

You can get a memo from your social security office that the social security number has been applied for. You should enter 999999999 in the payroll system until the card arrives. You can also get a waiver form for the camp staff member to sign that gives permission to get the number from social security before receiving the actual card.

Cultural Differences

1. What is ethnocentrism?

Looking through the filters of our own experiences, values, beliefs and behaviors as the center of our world.

2. What is African time? Do other cultures share this concept?

African time is laid back time and depends little on a clock. Many other cultures share this concept.

3. What message might be given in some cultures if a girl makes eye contact with a male? What about if a child makes eye contact with an adult?

In many cultures, if a girl makes eye contact with a guy, she is perceived as flirting. In 2/3 of the countries in the world, eye contact is perceived very differently than in the United States. In many countries, making eye contact is a sign of disrespect especially between child and adult or adult and someone in authority.

4. What issues about personal space impact the adjustment to camp life? What about theories of discipline of campers?

In many cultures, personal space is "closer" than in the US. Participants from these countries may be perceived as getting in the face of others while inadvertently invading personal space.

Some cultures believe in corporal punishment for children. Others believe in a form of public punishment that might be perceived in the US as public humiliation.

Support for participant and camp

1. What is a camps' responsibility, if any, if the following situations arise: homesickness, health issues, emergencies at camp or at home, arrests, dismissal, death?

The camp should notify the placement agency immediately and should provide the same support for the participant as it would with any other staff member.

2. How are financial obligations determined if a participant leaves the program early?

Financial obligations are usually prorated if a participant leaves the program early.

For additional information about international staffing issues, refer to:

Best Practices For International Staff in American Camp Association Camps

www.ACAcamps.org/international/practices.php

For information about international staff placement agencies, contact any of the ACA Business Affiliates that specialize in international staff placement:

<http://www.acacamps.org/csv.cgi?data=international.csv&template=international.htm>