



# **Trainee Handbook**

**ASSE ASPIRE Training Program**



an ASSE affiliated program

Dear Trainee,

Welcome to the ASSE ASPIRE Worldwide Training Program! We are very pleased that you have selected us to be your program sponsor. We take pride in offering you a program that will allow you to visit the USA, meet people and learn about the culture while training in an American company. In turn, your participation will enrich the lives of the people you meet by giving them the chance to learn about you, your culture and your country.

To make your adjustment to the USA as easy as possible, we have prepared this handbook for your use throughout the program. Hopefully it will answer most of your questions and prepare you for your experience in the USA.

Again, we welcome you to the United States and wish you a rewarding training experience during your visit!

Sincerely yours,

The ASPIRE Team

228 N Coast Hwy, Laguna Beach, CA 92651 USA

\* Tel: 1.888.327.7473 \* Fax: 1.949.494.4280

E-mail: [info@aspireww.com](mailto:info@aspireww.com) • Web Site: [www.aspireww.com](http://www.aspireww.com)

## Important Items to Bring

- Passport**
- Original DS-2019 Form**
- Training/Internship Placement Plan DS-7002 Form**
- Sponsor Letter**
- ASPIRE Identification Card**
- Insurance Card**
- ASPIRE Trainee Handbook**
- International Driver's License**
- \$1,500 in US dollars for initial expenses**
- Credit Card**

## Don't forget to download our ASSE Aspire App

To download our app  
from Google Play Store,  
scan this QR code



To download our app  
from iTunes Store,  
scan this QR code



## Insurance

**Insurance Company: IMG - UnitedHealthCare Network**

**Toll-Free 24-Hour Assistance: 1.800.628.4664**

**Student Portal: <https://www.envisageglobalinsurance.com/student-zone/aspire/>**

All insurance information is found on your Insurance Identification Card, also via email before you arrive for your program.

### **Non-Life Threatening (Emergency) Sickness and Injuries**

Always call the insurance company's assistance service, before seeking medical care. Contact details for the insurance company are listed on your Insurance Identification Card. The insurance company can help you to locate approved medical providers (doctors, clinics, urgent care, hospitals, etc) in your area. You can also log onto student zone to find a list of medical providers near you.

### **Where to go? Hospitals, urgent care, walk-in clinics or doctors office?**

In non-life threatening situations, choose urgent care clinics, walk-in clinics and doctors' offices that will have a \$50 deductible.

**Choose Hospital Emergency Room ONLY in emergency situations.** The cost to you for the Emergency Room (ER) treatment for a non-emergency will have a \$350 deductible.

If you visit a hospital, please first ask the hospital to call the insurance company for authorization of your treatment.

### **Types of Medical Providers:**

#### **• In-Network**

This group is always the best option. In-Network medical providers will bill the insurance company directly, so you will only pay the co-pay amount (first \$50). The In-Network medical providers can be found at <https://www.envisageglobalinsurance.com/student-zone/aspire/providers.php> or by calling the insurance company directly.

#### **• Out of Network**

The out of network providers will not bill the insurance company directly. Therefore, you will need to pay for your entire visit upfront (out of your pocket) at the time of service. This payment will be reimbursed to you by the insurance company less the deductible once you file a claim. You must submit a Claim Form to the insurance company, for Out of Network medical providers. With the Claim Form you are required to submit the itemized bill, any additional receipts and medical records from your visit.

**All claims must be submitted within 60 days from the date of the incident or illness.**

The Claim Form can be found at: <https://www.envisageglobalinsurance.com/student-zone/aspire/claims.php>

## Social Security

**You must apply for your social security number.**

If you already have a Social Security Number from previous visit in the USA, you do not need to apply again.

You need to wait for at least 48 hours after you have completed your arrival check-in before you apply.

**Purpose of Social Security Number:** For the employer payroll purposes, and when applying for tax refund.

**Where is the Social Security Office:** visit [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or call toll free: 1.800.772.1213

**Documents to take with you to the Social Security office:**

- Original DS-2019 Form
- Passport with Your J1 Visa
- I-94 Number (record of admission). Find it at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>
- Sponsor Letter

Make sure that you request an official Certificate/Receipt or an Official Letter from the Social Security Administration confirming your attempt to apply for a Social Security Card. This Certificate/Receipt or Letter should be shown to your employer.

You must report your Social Security Number to your employer immediately. Otherwise, you will have difficulty filing your tax return documentation. Keep the Social Security Card in a safe place.



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### Experience of ASSE ASPIRE Worldwide's Founding Organization ASSE International

ASSE International Student Exchange Programs (ASSE) was founded by the Swedish Ministry of Education. It cooperates closely with the provincial Ministries of Education in Canada. In the United States, ASSE has been designated by the US Department of State as an “exchange-visitor program” and adheres strictly to all Department of State regulations. ASSE is a full member of the Alliance Exchange, the World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation and GWEA. ASSE has also been approved for listing by the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET).

The history of ASSE goes back to the 1930's when the Swedish Parliament instituted an exchange program for Swedish and German students. In the post World War II era, this expanded to include England, France, Spain and Switzerland. The USA entity was added in the 1960's, when the Swedish government's National Department of Education organized in the USA. In 1976, the program was incorporated by

“ The history of ASSE goes back to the 1930's when the Swedish Parliament instituted an exchange program for Swedish and German students.”

the Swedish Ministry of Education in North America as American Scandinavian Student Exchange (ASSE) to provide student exchange opportunities between the Scandinavian countries and the USA. ASSE has evolved and expanded in size and scope to provide academic year home-stay programs in Canada (English and French-speaking), Australia, the USA, Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland), France, Germany, German-speaking Switzerland, Great Britain, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union, Mexico, Japan, China, Taiwan, Thailand, South Africa, Turkey, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mongolia, Philippines, India and Brazil.

ASSE also provides short term homestay language study and campus programs in Europe, as well as 3-month reciprocal exchanges with France, Germany and Spain. ASSE is proud to participate in the prestigious Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program between the USA and Germany, as well as the FLEX program (Future Leaders Exchange Program), a USA government-sponsored program that brings hundreds of students to the USA from the Independent Republics of the

former Soviet Union.

In addition to all the above, ASSE founded in 1989 the EurAupair Program, a not-for-profit, public benefit organization. In 2000, ASSE ASPIRE Worldwide's Program became a designated sponsor for the Summer Work Travel Program, which provides summer employment opportunities to university students in the USA, and the ASSE ASPIRE Internship and Training Programs, which facilitates recently graduated professionals and specialists to spend up to 18 months training in their field in an American company. While the above programs are separate and completely different entities, they share a common mission and philosophy: To improve understanding among people of different countries through educational and cultural exchange.

ASSE maintains its headquarters in Laguna Beach, California, USA, an international coordinating office in Germany, four regional American offices, one Canadian. In addition, ASSE maintains a network of affiliated organizations throughout the rest of the world with 1,500 ASSE Area Representatives throughout the Americas, Europe, Australia, South Africa, and Asia.

In several countries, ASSE has a very active alumni group, which is composed of students who have participated in past programs. The members act as counselors, helpers, interviewers and resource people for students embarking on ASSE programs, or taking part in them. They provide a singularly effective support group when a student, far from home, or about to begin a big adventure, needs preparation, help and assurance.

ASSE's primary goal is to provide exchange programs, which enable students to learn about other languages and cultures while participating in community life and helping to achieve international understanding.



## ASSE ASPIRE Training Program Description

ASSE ASPIRE's Training Program now offers you an opportunity to receive training in the USA hosted by companies or cultural organizations in positions related to your field of study or profession. All positions pay a stipend (approximately \$1300 per month) depending on qualifications.

Trainees come to the USA on a J-1 exchange visitor visa so there are no immigration worries. Maximum duration of a training program is 18 months, aside from a 12 month cap placed on Tourism and Hospitality placements. However, designation is based on approved training programs. Once you are placed with a company, you must stay at that company for the duration of the training plan.

### ***Program Purpose Per US Department of State Regulations:***

“The primary objectives of training are to enhance the exchange visitor's skills in his or her specialty or non-specialty occupation through participation in a structured training program and to improve the participant's knowledge of American techniques, methodologies, or expertise within the individual's field of endeavor. Such training programs are also designed to enable the exchange visitor trainees to understand better American culture and society and to enhance American knowledge of foreign cultures and skills by providing the opportunity for an open interexchange of ideas between the exchange visitor trainees and their American counterparts.”

#### **How Will You Benefit?**

- Develop professional skills in a field of endeavor
- Improve English proficiency
- Enhance resume for future job placement
- Immersion in American business culture
- Make valuable international business contacts

#### **What Is Included In The Program Price?**

- DS-2019 visa form
- Comprehensive health insurance
- Application, screening and pre-departure orientation
- Assistance in obtaining a Social Security Card
- Arrival orientation
- Ongoing support by local ASSE ASPIRE staff

#### **Not Included:**

- International airfare and domestic travel to the final destination
- Housing
- Meals
- Daily living expenses

## Program Rules & Regulations

1. I understand that the purpose of this program is to participate in a cultural exchange which ultimately fosters international understanding and cooperation. I understand that I must complete cultural activities throughout my program and periodically report these to my sponsor organization.
2. I am able to speak, read, and understand conversational English at a level that is sufficient to function on a day-to-day basis in the training environment.
3. I am in good health.
4. I have received information regarding my health insurance coverage. I am aware of the coverage and limitations thereof.
5. I will obey all USA federal, state and local laws and I will abide by all of the regulations of the J-1 Visa.
6. I will attend orientation sessions in my home country and in the USA.
7. Any illegal use of drugs or alcohol, abuse of harmful controlled substances or illegal possession of drugs, alcohol, or controlled substances will result in my immediate repatriation. Even though Marijuana use is legal in certain states, under state law, it is still ILLEGAL under federal law. You should not consider that you are safe from law enforcement, just because you are in Colorado, or any other state where Marijuana has been legalized, nor are you exempt from work place drug testing – which could cost you your job and program.
8. I understand that the program provides an overall understanding of American business practices. I understand that as a trainee, I will perform a variety of tasks appropriate to my on-the-job training.
9. I will comply with all Host Company rules and respect the dress code of the Host Company.
10. I will carry out the duties and responsibilities of the position, which ASSE ASPIRE has arranged. It is my responsibility to advise ASSE ASPIRE of any significant problems regarding my health, safety, welfare, adjustment to the training, culture, language, etc.

## Program Rules & Regulations

11. I understand that the assigned Host Company holds the right to dismiss me if my performance is not satisfactory. In that case, I will return home immediately.
12. I will be given the opportunity to train and observe in an American organization. I understand that if I lack practical experience, it may affect the specific tasks that I will be learning.
13. I will respect the privacy of information learned during my training program.
14. I agree to complete the mid-point evaluation and final evaluation along with my supervisor in compliance with the program regulations or my program is subject to termination.
15. I understand that the training program is temporary and the duration of the training program is stated on the DS-2019 form.
16. I understand that I have 30 days after my training program is completed to return to my home country.
17. I have agreed to participate for the entire period as stated on the Training Placement Plan. If I do not participate, then I am in a violation of the agreement with the Host Company and my visa may be cancelled.
18. I will not accept any form of assignment other than what is authorized by the training plan without prior written approval from ASSE ASPIRE.
19. I will not terminate my training assignment with the Host Company without consulting with the ASSE ASPIRE staff for assistance.
20. I understand that failure to comply with program rules or giving misleading information may result in program cancellation or termination.
21. I will pay for any property damages that I have caused. I will return home within 30 days of the program end date stated on my DS-2019 form or immediately if terminated from the program for violation of sponsor rules governing the program. I understand that I cannot train or receive training during the 30-day grace period.

## Program Rules & Regulations

22. I understand that termination of my program in SEVIS means that I am no longer eligible to train within the USA, my health insurance will be cancelled, I must leave the country immediately, and any future attempts to obtain a US visa or any kind may be hindered for the next 10 years.
23. I acknowledge that I have spoken with a representative of ASSE ASPIRE, and that I understand the rules of this program.
24. I understand that ASSE ASPIRE sponsorship authorizes me to participate in the program at the Host Company cited on my DS-2019 form. I understand that I may not seek, or carry out, any other training, internship or employment while participating in the program.
25. I declare having no intention of remaining more than 30 days in the USA after my DS-2019 forms expires. I also declare that I have no intention of seeking employment during the program and will not seek to change my visa status or apply/petition for temporary or permanent work visas (i.e. H-1B).
26. In order to activate my visa, I must check-in with ASSE ASPIRE within 3 days upon arrival to the USA, complete monthly check-ins (every 30 days) thereafter, and report any change of address within 10 days.
27. I understand that I cannot remain in the USA for more than 30 days without training.
28. ASSE ASPIRE, in its sole and absolute discretion, reserves the right to terminate my sponsorship, and I understand that I will return home immediately at my own expense.

## Check-In

USA Immigration Law requires that you report to **ASSE ASPIRE** when you:

- Arrive in the USA (within 3 days).**
- Once a month (every 30 days) while training in the USA.**
- Report any change of address within 10 days.**

**Please log on to <http://aspireww.com/> to complete the “Arrival Check-In”, “Monthly Check-In”, or “US Address Change” form.**

**FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR VISA AND INSURANCE COVERAGE AND MAY AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO REMAIN OR RETURN TO THE US.**



The screenshot shows the ASPIRE website homepage. At the top, the ASPIRE logo is visible. Below it, a banner image of the Golden Gate Bridge is displayed with the text "ASSE Aspire Worldwide" and "A world of opportunity for students and employers alike". The main content area is titled "INFORMATION FOR OUR PARTICIPANTS" and features three blue buttons: "What's New?", "Monthly Check-In", and "US Address Change". Below these buttons, there are two columns of text. The left column is titled "SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PROGRAM" and the right column is titled "TRANSFERSHIP PROGRAM". Both columns contain detailed information about the respective programs, including eligibility requirements and application procedures.

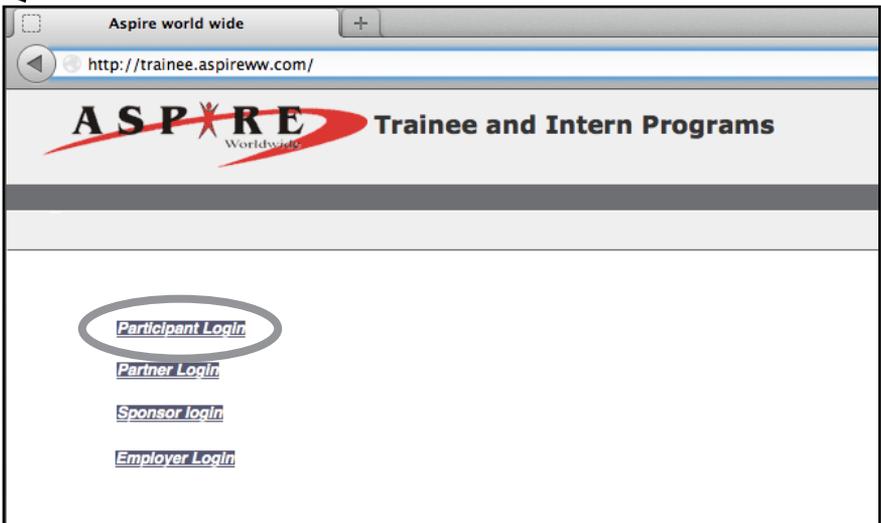
**“Once your check-in is approved, you will receive a confirmation email from ASPIRE”**

US Department of State Rules and Regulations requires that you complete two evaluations during the duration of your program:

- Mid-point evaluation
- Final evaluation

Please go to <http://trainee.aspireww.com/>, select participant log-in, and use the username and password you were provided to log-in to ASSE ASPIRE Database and complete your evaluation in a timely manner.

**FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR YOUR VISA AND MAY AFFECT YOUR ABILITY TO REMAIN OR RETURN TO THE US.**



## Luggage Allowance & Packing

Check with your airline to find out your baggage allowance. You may want to limit your luggage weight because not only do you have to carry the luggage, but many places may not have elevators. Also, you may want to bring back more than you took. Why not try limiting the luggage to 15 kilos?

- Pack according to the destination.
- If you plan to travel while in the USA, a backpack will be much easier to manage than a suitcase.
- Do not bring valuables. It may be difficult finding a secure place for them.

## Money Matters

- You should receive a minimum stipend of \$1300 per month.
- You should not carry large amounts of cash. However, you should arrive with at least \$1500 in US currency for emergencies and unexpected costs upon arrival.
- Bring enough money to cover those expenses that will not be met by the training stipend. Having additional money sent from home can take a long time. You should consider the types of expenses that you may have upon arrival including travel expenses, housing and deposit, food, emergencies, etc. until receipt of the first paycheck. You should arrive with at least \$1500 to cover the above, if necessary.
- It is highly recommended that you open a checking account in a local bank. You will want to be given an Automatic Teller Card (ATM or Debit card) to avoid carrying large sums of money. ATM cards can be used at 24-hour automated teller machines. A “PIN” or Personal Identification Number is provided for your Debit card. This number should be a secret that only you know. If someone else has your Debit card and PIN number they can take money from your account. If you lose this card notify your bank immediately. Most ATM cards can be used extensively throughout the USA. Keep track of all banking records so you don't forget how much money you have spent.
- If you need money from home in a hurry, contact Western Union (1.800.325.6000, [www.westernunion.com](http://www.westernunion.com)). This service makes it possible to transfer money from your home country to anywhere in the USA within 15 minutes, on any day of the week. There is a handling charge, which will vary according to the amount of money sent.

## Social Security Card

You must complete your arrival check-in at the ASSE ASPIRE website [www.aspireww.com](http://www.aspireww.com) before applying for a Social Security Card. You must obtain a Social Security Card (SS card) upon arrival in the USA.

*You can download the application form from [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)*

The number on the card serves as the taxpayer identification number and will be used for the Host Company's payroll. Your Host Company should not withhold payment while you are in the application process of procuring your SS Card. It is however required for legal tax purposes. This number is also needed to open a bank account or obtain a state driver's license. It is your responsibility to obtain this card.



### **The following items will need to be with you upon application for the Social Security Card:**

- DS-2019 form
- Passport
- J-1 Visa in your passport
- I-94 — The I-94 record is available at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> (you must have a copy of your I-94 to apply for your Social Security Card).
- Sponsor letter

## Social Security Card

**Read all instructions *BEFORE* you fill out the application. A few tips include:**

1. Use your Host Company's address as your mailing address. Address it to the attention of the Human Resources Office.
2. For question #5 (Citizenship), check the box labeled "Legal Alien Allowed To Work"
3. For question #9 (Mother's Maiden Name), write your Mother's family name before she was married.
4. You can leave #9B and #10B blank.

If you lose your Social Security Card, you should be fine, as long as you still have your Social Security number (and a photocopy of the card) in a safe place.

The application could take up to 20 working days. Request a temporary certificate (Form SSA-5028) upon application. This temporary certificate doesn't have a number, but it is proof that you have applied for the card. The Host Company should be able to use a provisional number until the Social Security card arrives. To check on the status of your Social Security Card, you may call the US Social Security Administration without charge 1.800.772.1213 or visit their website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

## W-4 Form

When you begin your training program, the Host Company will ask you to complete a W-4 form (Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate) to ensure that you are not overtaxed. Your Host Company will use the information on this form to determine how much tax should be withheld from your paycheck.

If you do not fill out your W-4 form properly, you may have to pay more taxes in the future. The instructions on filling out your W-4 form can be found on the Internet at <http://www.irs.gov> under the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Publication 515 (rev. 12/97) "Withholding of Tax on Non-resident Aliens and Foreign Corporations".

- Check/tick only "single" marital status (even if you are married or divorced).
- Do not claim "Exempt" withholding status.

All trainees pay State, Federal and Local taxes. However, you have the chance to complete documentation obtained from the Internal Revenue Service at the end of the stay so that you can get most of the taxes reimbursed.

***Taxes you will not have to pay for:***

1. Social Security Tax
2. Medicare Tax
3. Federal Unemployment Tax

When you receive your first paycheck, check to make sure that the 3 above taxes have not been taken out of your paycheck. If you do see any deductions under the word “FICA” or “FUTA”, then the Host Company has made a mistake. Please speak with your Host Company and have him/her contact the ASSE ASPIRE office for clarification.

All individuals who earn income in the USA are required to file a tax return after the end of the calendar year. Your tax return will reflect your actual earnings for the previous year, the amount of taxes you paid and the total amount of taxes owed or refunded. To file your taxes you will need your W-2 form and 1040NR-EZ tax form.

At the beginning of the year following your training program, the Host Company will send you a W-2 form (required by law to mail it to you by February 15). Before the end of your program, provide the Host Company with a self-addressed envelope so that they can mail you your W-2 form. This form summarizes your earnings and amount of taxes withheld from you the previous calendar year. A W-2 form is usually composed of four copies: Federal copy, State copy, Local/City copy and Employee copy.

Upon receiving your W-2 form, you will fill out a 1040NR-EZ (Non-Resident Alien with no Dependents) tax form. You can obtain this form (with instructions – don’t forget those) at the United States Embassy in your home country or on the Internet at <http://www.irs.gov>.

***Once you have completed the form, mail it to:***

United States Internal Revenue Service Center  
Department of the Treasury  
Austin, TX 73301-0215 USA

## Taxes / Tax Refunds

If you overpaid the government, they will issue you a check. However, if you did not pay enough taxes, you must pay the government the balance. ***You must file your tax return no later than April 15.***

If you have difficulties filing your 1040NR-EZ tax form, you can contact [taxback.com](http://taxback.com). [taxback.com](http://taxback.com) is a multi-national corporation specializing in tax returns with assistance in 22 languages.

If a tax refund is due to you, [taxback.com](http://taxback.com) will take a percentage of your refund for processing your taxes. [Taxback.com](http://taxback.com) can be reached at:

**taxback.com**

333 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 2415  
Chicago, IL 60601

[www.taxback.com](http://www.taxback.com)

To speak with a TAXBACK representative simply call:

1.888.203.8900 (free in the United States) or

1 353 1 887 1999 (outside the US)

## Sales Taxes

When making purchases, please keep in mind that what you see on the price tag is not always what you will pay at the register. States (and some counties and cities) will have sales taxes that are added onto the price of the purchases. Sales taxes will differ from state to state. The items that are taxed will also differ from state to state. For example, some states place a tax on clothes while others do not. The USA does not refund sales taxes.

## Health Care & Insurance Information

ASSE ASPIRE provides you with healthcare coverage through an Insurance Company throughout your stay in the USA as part of your program fee. You will receive your coverage information, insurance card, and any additional information prior to your departure to the USA. Also further information may be found on our website [www.aspireww.com](http://www.aspireww.com). Please be informed that ASSE ASPIRE arranges your healthcare coverage through a provider, and can assist you with healthcare related questions, but we are not your healthcare provider. When seeking medical treatment remember to bring your healthcare documents with you to give to the medical professionals. Avoid going to the Emergency Room unless you have a true emergency as there are high costs linked to ER visits.

## ASSE ASPIRE Support Network in the USA

Our office is open from 9 am to 5:30 pm Pacific time. For emergency coverage when the office is closed (including weekends and holidays) we do have a 24-hour answering service:

**1-888-327-7473**

### **What is an emergency?**

- Death
- Medical Mental Health emergency
- Victim of a crime
- An arrest

## Host Company Expectations Regarding Dress Code & Grooming

As a representative of your place of training, appearance will matter. You will have ongoing contact with the public and companies tend to be conservative about the image of their employees. The Host Company's image is so important, you should be prepared to accept advice about how to meet the Host Company's standards that will vary from company to company.

## Early Program Completion

You must do your best to complete the program. Should you be unable or unwilling to complete the program you will be out of status for your visa. ASSE ASPIRE will assist trainees to coordinate their return home. Should you not return home, ASSE ASPIRE is required to report to the Department of Homeland Security that you are out of status, and that ASSE ASPIRE believes you are not returning home. Such actions may result in your inability to re-enter the USA in the future and a possible arrest upon leaving the country.

## Housing & Transportation in the USA

Trainees must arrange their own housing. However, ASSE ASPIRE will provide you with a list of economical options for temporary housing while you secure something more permanent. Housing costs can vary considerably based on what you can pay. Sharing accommodations with other exchange visitors may help keep your housing expenses lower.

In the event you decide to purchase a car, ASSE ASPIRE insurance does not cover driving a car while in the USA. It is up to you to coordinate proper licensing and insurance. We recommend using public transportation, if possible.

## Tipping

Americans generally tip the server in the restaurant 15-20% of the restaurant bill (unless it's already included on your bill or the service is poor). The same practice applies to other service providers such as taxi drivers, bartenders and hair stylists. Tipping charts are often available in drug stores or card shops to assist you in knowing what is appropriate. In many cases, people make most of their income from tips, so please respect this practice.

## Safety & Health Reminders

- **Bike Safety.** If using a bicycle, remember to learn the laws of the area, respect all road users, and always wear a HELMET. For more information on bike safety please refer to <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving-Safety/Bicycle>.
- Never carry large amounts of money.
- Make sure that you learn which areas to avoid at night.
- Always lock the doors in the housing that has been arranged.
- Do not leave valuables around.
- The drinking age in the USA is 21. The laws in America are very strict concerning the drinking age. Most bars require that you show identification (ID) before you can enter. You will need to carry some form of photo ID. It is also illegal to drink alcohol on the street, whether you are 21 or not.
- There are many regulations prohibiting smoking in public places. Smoking is banned on all air flights, most office buildings, restaurants and public transportation. In recent years, it has become customary to avoid smoking at home or when visiting someone's home.
- Do not use drugs or associate with people who use drugs. It is illegal, and trainees

## Safety & Health Reminders

will be arrested when caught. Stay away from any and all illegal use of drugs or alcohol. It is the cause for immediate dismissal from the program.

- Even though Marijuana use is legal in certain states, under state law, it is still **ILLEGAL** under federal law. You should not consider that you are safe from law enforcement, just because you are in Colorado, or any other state where Marijuana has been legalized, nor are you exempt from work place drug testing – which could cost you your job.
- Always keep emergency numbers for the police, fire department, hospital, ASSE ASPIRE, etc. next to the phone and in your purse or wallet.
- Avoid risky situations.
- Do not get into a car with somebody you do not know or trust.
- Avoid areas where there is a feeling of unease.
- Avoid confrontation – do everything possible to defuse a potentially violent situation.

## Travel & Excursion Possibilities

You may travel and explore other areas of the USA during your vacation time from the Host Company and/or weekends and holidays. Trainees must have a valid driver's license and you should consider getting an American driver's license. It is a law in the US that you must have automobile insurance if you are driving an automobile. To rent a car, most companies require that you be at least 21 years of age (many require you to be 25) and have at least one major credit card.

## Life & Customs

The USA is a large country with people from many different economic, social, ethnic, racial, religious and cultural backgrounds. Since the founding of the USA, over 60 million immigrants have arrived. Thus, stereotypes for Americans are difficult because there will always be segments of the population that do not fit the stereotype. However, there are a few characteristics that seem fairly common for most Americans:

- Time conscious – High value on “being on time.” Being late is not viewed as positive. Come to train on time.
- Assertive – Those who take initiative are respected. Take the initiative to meet people.
- Respectful – A strong respect for personal property and the expectation that one will be asked before using another’s personal belongings.
- Informality – Social status does not impact how people are treated.
- Roles – Men and women have the same basic jobs. There is less of a separation based upon gender than in some other countries.

It is important to know that culture in the USA varies according to region, and how rural an area is. We recommend traveling to another part of the country to experience the difference in regional culture. The top 5 topics for American conversation are: 1) hobbies; 2) movies and TV; 3) weather; 4) food; and 5) sports. These are good conversation openers.

## Adjusting to Life & Customs

Like all special experiences, you will have times that are easy and times that are difficult. All exchange visitors have ups and downs. These come from the excitement and the confusion of living in a new culture. Both obvious and subtle differences confront participants, creating what is referred to as “culture shock.”

The term, culture shock, was introduced for the first time in 1958 to describe the anxiety produced when a person moves to a completely new environment. This term expresses the lack of direction, the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few weeks of coming to a new place.

### Symptoms:

- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy
- Crying easily
- Preoccupation with health
- Aches, pains, and allergies
- Insomnia, desire to sleep too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Changes in temperament, depression, feeling vulnerable, feeling powerless
- Anger, irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others
- Identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country
- Loss of identity
- Trying too hard to absorb everything in the new culture or country
- Unable to solve simple problems
- Lack of confidence
- Developing obsessions such as over-cleanliness
- Longing for family
- Feelings of being lost, overlooked, exploited or abused

Culture shock has many stages. The following stages can be ongoing or appear only at certain times. These stages are present at different times, and each person has his/her own way of reacting in the stages of culture shock. As a consequence, some stages will be longer and more difficult than others. Many factors contribute to the duration and effects of culture shock. Included: individual's state of mental health, type of personality, previous experiences, socio-economic conditions, familiarity with the language, family and/or social support systems, and level of education.

***Stage 1: Everything is new and fascinating.*** In the first stage, the new arrival may feel euphoric and be pleased by all of the new things encountered. This time is called the “honeymoon” stage, as everything encountered is new and exciting.

***Stage 2: This is hard work.*** It is not so exciting anymore. A person may encounter some difficult times and crises in daily life. For example, communication difficulties may occur such as not being understood. In this stage, there may be feelings of discontent, impatience, anger, sadness, and incompetence. This happens when a person is trying to adapt to a new culture that is very different from the culture of origin. Transition between the old methods and those of the new country is a difficult process and takes time to complete. During the transition, there can be strong feelings of dissatisfaction.

## Adjusting to Life & Customs

**Stage 3: Adapting is easier.** This is characterized by gaining some understanding of the new culture. A new feeling of pleasure and sense of humor may be experienced. One may start to feel a certain psychological balance. The new arrival may not feel as lost and starts to have a feeling of direction. The individual is more familiar with the environment and wants to belong. This initiates an evaluation of the ways versus those of the new.

**Stage 4: A sense of belonging.** The person realizes that the new culture has good and bad things to offer. This stage can be one of double integration or triple integration depending on the number of cultures that the person has to process. This integration is accompanied by a more solid feeling of belonging. This person starts to define him/herself and establish goals for living.

**Stage 5: Mixed feelings about going home.** Called the “re-entry shock.” This occurs when a return to the country of origin is made. One may find that things are no longer the same. For example, some of the newly acquired customs are not in use in the old culture.

Remember, the above feelings are natural and if you recognize that you are experiencing culture shock, you’ve already won half the battle. For more information on “Culture Shock” visit the following websites:

<http://www.esl-lab.com/shock1/shock1.htm>

<http://sistergoldenhair.com/uponarival/shock.html>

## Tips for Adjusting

- Respect the Host Company’s rules.
- Don’t expect special treatment, you are expected to train just as hard as your American counterparts.
- Treat customers with respect and a “smile.”
- Train quickly and efficiently. Workers are expected to have a strong work ethic.
- Be aware of the local, state and national laws.
- Ask lots of questions to reduce unpredictability.
- Get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet.
- Take care of your personal hygiene and dress neatly.
- Keep your expectations reasonable.
- Learn to laugh at mistakes, which is a positive way to approach the adjustment process.

## Tips for Adjusting

- Keep busy and join in as many activities as possible to make friends and take advantage of the surroundings.
- Be willing to try new things: foods, sights and activities.
- Remember to say “thank you.” It is a phrase used frequently in the American culture.
- Practice English as much as possible. It is the best way to improve proficiency and the comfort level of being in a foreign country.
- Communicate. No one can help a trainee with a problem or question if he/she doesn’t speak up.
- Write down your feelings.
- Talk with the ASSE ASPIRE office.
- Try to maintain a positive attitude about the experience and opportunity of living and working in a foreign country
- Be patient. While you may feel a bit overwhelmed at first, it will all get easier in time.
- Remember, it is not better, it is not worse, it is just different!

## Electricity

The USA electrical system uses 110 volt, 60 hertz (cycles). If your appliances from home use 220 volts, you will need to purchase a transformer and plug adapter that can accommodate the wattage of your appliances.

## Units of Measure

### Temperature

In the USA, the temperature is given in Fahrenheit. An easy way to convert Fahrenheit to Celsius is to subtract thirty from the Fahrenheit number and divide by two, While it’s not totally accurate, it’s close.

### Metric Conversion

1 mile = 1.6 kilometers

1 yard = 91.4 centimeters

1 foot = 30.5 centimeters

1 inch = 2.54 centimeters

1 liquid quart = 0.95 liter

1 gallon = 3.8 liters

## Time Zones

The continental USA (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) is divided into four time zones – Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific. When it is 12:00 noon Eastern Time, it is 11:00 am Central, 10:00 am Mountain, and 9:00 am Pacific. The ASSE ASPIRE office is open from 9:00 am – 5:30 pm Pacific time. This means that if you are on the East Coast, you should call our office from 12:00 noon – 8:30 pm Eastern time. The USA keeps Daylight Savings Time by turning the clocks forward one hour or backward one hour at different times of the year.

## Telephones

In most areas, to dial a local number, only the last seven numbers of the phone number are dialed. If a long-distance number is dialed, the number “1” is dialed followed by the local area code and 7 digit number. Long-distance calls (outside of your “area code”) in the US can be costly so you should investigate which types of phone card options are available where you are residing. These can generally be purchased at grocery stores and post offices. The card is a pre paid telephone card that enables you to make telephone calls at a cheaper rate than is normally charged. To use the card, dial the toll-free access number on the back of the card and then enter the account number. This will allow you to make calls anywhere in the world from any US telephone land line as long as the account is in good standing. A card costs generally \$10 or \$20 and can be recharged when the account gets low. The option for keeping costs low is to make calls after 5:00 pm on weekdays and on weekends.

Besides the local and long distance numbers, there are also free toll-free numbers, which will start with 1.800, 1.866, 1.888 or 1.877, plus the 7-digit number.

In making international calls, there are a couple of primary options:

### *You pay for the phone call*

1. Dial “011” from a land line. Dial “00” from a cell phone.
2. Dial the Country Code
3. Dial the City Code (if the city code begins with “0”, leave the “0” out except if you are calling the Ukraine, Russia and Italy)
4. Dial the phone number

Access to e-mail will need to be explored in each community. Generally, public libraries have e-mail access for students. Many companies have internet options for their employees. Internet cafes are also easy to locate in most locations.

If the Host Company provides e-mail and internet access, please respect their rules and hours regarding usage.

Do not download items onto their computers or surf websites with objectionable content, this will only lead to problems for the Host Company's internet server, causing your usage to be terminated.

## Who to Contact in Case of Problems

You should always speak with your Host Company supervisor first to solve problems that may arise. If this fails, and if the matter is urgent you may contact the ASSE ASPIRE Office at 1.888.327.7473.

**24 HOURS / 7 DAYS A WEEK EMERGENCY HELP!!** If you feel that your personal safety, welfare or health, or that of another, are in any danger and/or you are the recipient of any unwanted and inappropriate advances from anyone, please immediately call our "24 Hour Toll Free Help Line" and ask for "Leslie". We will offer help to you immediately.

### What is NOT an emergency?

- General information about the program and housing
- Social Security and tax problems
- Trainee/host concerns
- Loss of DS-2019 form or obtaining I-94 number
- Loss of passport
- Basic legal information
- Change of flight – contact airline directly
- Homesickness
- Disliking training assignment

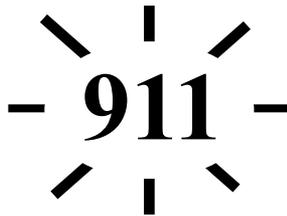
### What is an emergency?

- Death
- Medical emergency
- Victim of a crime
- An arrest

## What to do in an Emergency

Call **911** for the police, fire department or an ambulance. Make sure you answer all questions clearly and carefully. Do not be afraid to approach the police at any time. If you are lost and see a policeman nearby, ask for directions. They will more than likely be able to assist you.

When dealing with law authorities, ASSE ASPIRE will provide verification of your status to law enforcement officials, but you will be expected to pay any fines or face any charges you have incurred. To avoid problems, take the time to learn the state and local laws for the city in which you are residing, e.g., minimum drinking age, traffic regulation, and drug enforcement policies. If you are accused of having committed a crime, the best advice in most circumstances is to talk to ASSE ASPIRE or a lawyer before you answer any questions.



## Going Home

Before you return home, please remember to complete your mid-point and final evaluations as required by the US Department of State. These forms are the only way for ASSE ASPIRE to evaluate how good our Host Companies are. Your feedback will help us make our program even better in the future.

Remember to give your Host Company the self-addressed stamped envelope for your W-2 form and to collect your friends' numbers and addresses!

### About Visas Issues, Restrictions and Return Home Requirements

#### *What type of visa do I receive?*

You are a participant in an educational exchange program approved by the US Department of State and you will receive a J-1 visa. Under the terms of the J-1 visa, you are allowed to train for up to 18 months, 12 months in the Hospitality and Tourism industries, at a company approved by ASSE ASPIRE and the State Department. In Nov. 1986, the US Congress passed an Immigration Law requiring employers to verify that all employees, both US citizens and non-resident aliens are eligible to train/work. The company supervisor will ask to see your passport, and a copy of the Exchange Visitor Visa form called DS-2019 form. This was the form that served to obtain the visa. It should remain there at all times. We encourage you to make photocopies of your passport, and the DS-2019 form and keep them in a safe place. These are the documents that prove your eligibility and identity. You will also be asked to sign a form (I-9) that the Host Company keeps in its files. The form proves that the company has verified on-the-job training eligibility.

#### *Can I leave the USA and re-enter on my J-1 visa?*

You may leave and re-enter the USA without obtaining a new visa, provided the visa and DS-2019 form have not yet expired; you hold a multiple-entry visa; the passport is still valid, and you have your original DS-2019 form in your possession. You might need a visa to visit certain countries.

Before you leave the USA, however, ASSE ASPIRE must validate your travel with a signature on your DS-2019. In order to have your travel validated please send the following to:

ASPIRE Worldwide, 228 N Coast Hwy, Laguna Beach, CA 92651

- Original DS-2019 form
- Letter of travel authorization from your supervisor
- Travel itinerary
- Return shipment payment

Please go to the following link and complete our credit card payment form for your return envelope: <https://payment.asse.com/process/aspire/>  
Domestic Fee: \$22 • International Fee: \$40

All travel requests must be received 15 days prior to your departure date to allow ample time for processing and shipping. Travel periods outside of the USA may not exceed a 2 week period. You are advised to contact ASSE ASPIRE sponsor for more detailed instructions when looking to validate your travel plans.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***Can I leave the USA early?***

You will sign an agreement that commits you to a certain company and time frame. If you don't fulfill the commitment, that will be very disappointing to the company. Thus, there can be no refund of any kind once you are in the country. If you have to leave due to an emergency, our program will do everything possible to ensure a smooth departure and transition.

### ***Can I choose to extend my visa once I arrive in the USA?***

We find that extensions are not only extremely difficult to obtain, but also expensive due to new non-refundable fees required by the United States Government. We will not submit any extension request to the Department of State that arrives in our office less than 60 days prior to the expiration date on the DS-2019 form. Therefore, it is extremely important that applicants apply for the maximum amount of time they are able to train in order to avoid the need to submit an extension application.

### ***What if I lose the DS-2019 form?***

You must have your original DS-2019 form for the visa to be valid. If this is lost, ASSE ASPIRE will replace the form for a \$50 fee. A good safeguard is to always keep the original DS-2019 form in the passport and have copies put elsewhere in a safe place.

If you lose your passport, please contact your nearest Embassy or Consulate as soon as possible so that they can assist you in obtaining new documentation.

### ***Can I change trainee positions once in the USA?***

No. You may not change Host Companies or leave earlier than what was committed. If you leave the assigned company before your training plan ends, you will be in breach of the ASSE ASPIRE agreement and J-1 visa conditions and will be reported off the program and repatriated.

### ***What is meant by the Home-Country Physical Presence requirement?***

Home-country physical presence requirement means that an exchange visitor who is within the purview of section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act must reside and be physically present in the country of nationality or last legal permanent residence for an aggregate of at least two years following departure from the United States before the exchange visitor is eligible to apply for an immigrant visa or permanent residence, a nonimmigrant H visa as a temporary worker or trainee, or a nonimmigrant L visa as an intracompany transferee, or a nonimmigrant H or L visa as the spouse or minor child of a person who is a temporary worker or trainee or an intracompany transferee. This is applied to your visa or waived at the discretion of the consulate. It is independent from the US Department of State regulation that requires a two-year period before participating in solely an additional J-1 visa program.









228 N Coast Hwy, Laguna Beach, CA 92651 USA

Tel: 1.888.327.7473 • Fax: 1.949.494.4280

E-mail: [info@aspireww.com](mailto:info@aspireww.com) • Web Site: [www.aspireww.com](http://www.aspireww.com)