



## Employer Handbook

Dear Employer:

Thank you for working with GeoVisions and our students on the Summer Work and Travel Program. You are an important part of this student exchange partnership. We hope you have a successful experience, and enjoy the exposure to young people from other parts of the world. If we can do anything to help you and your students, please feel free to contact us.

Please remind students to check-in with GeoVisions once they arrive at your location. Check-in is an important part of the arrival process and is crucial in order for students to maintain a favorable status in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System).

To help your managers and supervisors better understand and support the various cultures of your students, we refer you to for information on the countries we work with: [cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html](http://cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html)

As a sponsor designated by the US Department of State, our primary responsibility is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our participants, and to reinforce the cultural exchange aspects of the program. As an employer, you are an important part of this process. Providing your students information on local cultural events, and opportunities for contact with local people is a part of your role.

Once again, thank you for working with us, and good luck to you and the GeoVisions students in the coming months. We hope that your experience will meet all of your expectations and needs, and you can recommend our program to other employers who also can benefit from the Summer Work and Travel Program. The more that international ties are strengthened, the greater the understanding will be of the complex world in which we live.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K Morgan", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Kevin Morgan  
President

## **About GeoVisions**

On the Work/Travel Program, our goal is to provide educational and cultural exchange experiences to students, and employers. We work in countries all over the world. We are proud to make exchange opportunities available to students everywhere, and to providing you to have more cultural diversity in your workplace.

GeoVisions was founded in 2001. Our senior leaders are experienced in all phases of international education and exchange. Kevin Morgan has over 30 years of managing and marketing programs, and has lived in Hong Kong, Thailand, and Australia, while developing strategies and activities in the Asia/Pacific region. He has also worked in opening up South America and West Africa to work/travel, internship and high school exchanges with the USA.

Randy LeGrant is the Executive Director of GeoVisions. He is responsible for our programs abroad...teach abroad, volunteer abroad, Au Pair, and Internship. Since starting the Global Work and Service Program, Geovisions has participants in over 25 countries.

Ray Hartman, Director of External Relations, is based in Paris, France and is responsible for managing GeoVisions' network of agents in Europe and South America. In addition to recruiting and liaising with agents, he also deals with visa and embassy issues.

GeoVisions was founded on the belief that a small, personal organization can provide better services to employers, students, and their parents than many of the large, impersonal companies that dominate the field today. We get to know you, and establish true partnerships where we can help each other achieve our goals. We provide hands-on assistance in the recruitment, preparation and care of students on our programs. We engage all parties in the exchange experience so we can all understand the motivations of each other. We strive to help these parties grow in their understanding of other people's ways of life.

Both you and the students have invested a significant amount of time and money in this program. Your expectations for the experience are high. To ensure the success that we all want, open and honest communications must be established from the onset of the program. This will give students a clear understanding of situations, issues and the company. Good communication habits and flexibility

will help reduce tension and misunderstandings between you and your student. The result will be a positive, constructive relationship for you and your students.

### **Why Choose GeoVisions?**

We work closely with employers to fully understand your needs and expectations. Every year, GeoVisions staff travel overseas meeting with partner organizations to screen, interview, hire and orient our students. We also conduct SKYPE interviews and will facilitate SKYPE interviews for you. By being directly involved in screening, hiring, and orienting all students, we can better ensure that students will have the English-speaking skills, commitment and attitude that you need. Once you accept a student, GeoVisions and our overseas partners handle all paperwork and other details to facilitate a smooth entry into the U.S.

After students arrive, we continue to provide support to students and employers by phone, and internet. Many questions can be answered and issues resolved by E Mail to [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org), by phone, and by visiting our web site, [www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org) Support includes important information on practical matters such as taxes and social security, as well as experience in dealing with cultural differences and other issues that are unique to international participants.

### **GeoVisions Staff and Support**

- GeoVisions is pleased to have a devoted team that understands the value of cultural exchange. When you contact our offices you will be transferred to a team member depending on your question or need.
- One of our Employer Relations Managers is usually your initial contact if you are a new employer. They can answer your questions as well as give you information on current and future seasonal and temporary staffing needs. In addition, this person will assist you with your job announcement, including regulatory requirements, and will place your announcement with one of our Program Coordinators for student recruitment.
- A Program Coordinator is assigned to each of our employers to provide the best service possible. Program Coordinators are responsible for the day-to-day aspects of the program, including communication with overseas agents, paperwork for a student, arrival information, visa status and performance/disciplinary concerns.
- We maintain contact with students once a month by E Mail with updates, and information. We require students to check-in with us each month according to Department of State regulations. We ask you to remind your students about this. Students can go to [mygeovisions.org](http://mygeovisions.org)

- GeoVisions also sends newsletters to employers via E Mail on a regular basis. Newsletters include important updates, cultural information, and helpful tips.
- In an emergency situation, employers and students can contact our answering service via our toll free number 1-888-830-9455. They will contact the staff member on duty for immediate action.
- Information is also available 24/7/365 on our web site [www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org).

### **Understanding the J-1 Visa and Program**

The “Summer Work/Travel” Program, as it is officially referred to, is overseen by the US Department of State. GeoVisions is designated by the State Department to issue the Form DS-2019 to qualified students, who can then apply for the J-1 Visa at their US Embassy or Consulate.

It is important to understand the intent of the program, and to become familiar with the regulations governing the program. Please read the regulations in their entirety. A link to the regulations can be found on the “Useful Websites” Page of this Handbook.

Some key points in the regulations to understand include:

- This is an “exchange program”. It achieves the objectives of exchange by involving students in the daily life of their host country through seasonal or temporary employment which must include working side-by-side with U.S. citizens, and offering them opportunities to experience life in America and interact with Americans outside the workplace by participating in cultural activities.
- Participants must be bona fide students enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution accredited by the government. They must return to their home country following the program in time to begin the next semester’s classes. If they have recently graduated from the university, they must still adhere to similar dates as undergraduate students, even though they may not be returning to classes.
- The regulations mandate the types and levels of insurance that all participants must have.
- Participants must receive orientation from their in country agency, from GeoVisions and from you, the employer.
- Participants must be interviewed in person, which may be a webcam interview.
- Sponsors must not place participants:

- (1) In positions that could bring notoriety or disrepute to the Exchange Visitor Program;
- (2) In sales positions that require participants to purchase inventory that they must sell in order to support themselves;
- (3) In domestic help positions in private homes (e.g., child care, elder care, gardener, chauffeur);
- (4) As pedicab or rolling chair drivers or operators;
- (5) As operators or drivers of vehicles or vessels for which drivers' licenses are required regardless of whether they carry passengers or not;
- (6) In positions related to clinical care that involves patient contact;
- (7) In any position in the adult entertainment industry (including, but not limited to jobs with escort services, adult book/video stores, and strip clubs);
- (8) In positions requiring work hours that fall predominantly between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.;
- (9) In positions declared hazardous to youth by the Secretary of Labor at Subpart E of 29 CFR part 570;
- (10) In positions that require sustained physical contact with other people and/or adherence to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Universal Blood and Body Fluid Precautions guidelines (e.g., body piercing, tattooing, massage, manicure);
- (11) In positions that are substantially commission-based and thus do not guarantee that participants will be paid minimum wage in accordance with federal and state standards;
- (12) In positions involved in gaming and gambling that include direct participation in wagering and/or betting;
- (13) In positions in chemical pest control, warehousing, catalogue/online order distribution centers;
- (14) In positions with traveling fairs or itinerant concessionaires;
- (15) In positions for which there is another specific J category (e.g., camp counselor, intern, trainee); or
- (16) After November 1, 2012, in positions in the North American Industry Classification System's (NAICS) Goods-Producing Industries occupational categories industry sectors 11, 21, 23, 31-33 numbers (set forth at [http://www.bls.gov/iaq/tqs/iaq\\_index\\_naics.htm](http://www.bls.gov/iaq/tqs/iaq_index_naics.htm)).
- Sponsors must confirm with employers that the program will not displace U.S. workers, that the employer has not experienced layoffs in the past 120 days, and does not have workers on lockout or strike.
- The program is to take place during the student's summer vacation. While the maximum length of time students can work is four months, the average student can often only work for three months, sometimes even less, due to their university summer break duration. Extensions beyond the four months are not possible.
- Students have an additional 30 days after the end date on their DS 2019 to travel but they may not work during this period. Note: GeoVisions finds that students travel an average of 10 days during this period.

- Students must receive at least minimum wage and must be compensated at the same level American employees would receive..

### **Student Application Procedure**

All students are screened to ensure that they meet the following program requirements:

1. They are currently enrolled as a university student in their country.
2. They have a sufficient level of English to function in daily life in the U.S..
3. They are at least 18 years of age.

Applicants are also screened for maturity, motivation, a commitment to completing the program, and to returning home at the end of the program.

After it is determined that the applicant meets the above requirements, the application is completed with the following:

1. The GeoVisions Application Form personally signed by the student.
2. Proof of Student Status
3. A resume, preferably on a single page, and preferably submitted as a Word Document.
4. A copy of the face page of the passport.

### **Visa Process**

- Students come on J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa. The purpose of the visa is to give students the opportunity to learn about America while they work in temporary or seasonal jobs, and then take that information back to their home countries. J-1 students can work second jobs if they want to earn more than you can give them. GeoVisions is designated by the US Department of State to issue the Form DS-2019 to qualifying students. This allows them to apply for the J-1 Visa at a US Embassy.
- SEVIS (Student Exchange Visitor Information System) is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database that holds and monitors the records for J-1 Exchange Visitors, and is administered jointly with the Department of State. Your company's name and an estimated wage figure appear on each of your student's DS Forms. This indicates from where the student will have financial support. It informs SEVIS that the student will have financial support as an employee while in the US. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter please feel free to call us.

## **Visa Denials**

- The final decision on whether a student gets a visa is solely in the hands of the Visa Officer at the US Embassy or Consulate. With few exceptions, every student must have a personal interview.
- Outcomes are difficult to predict and are often based on individual personnel at embassies. Policies can change at an embassy or consulate when new staff are assigned there.
- Visa fraud in foreign countries is a big concern of embassies, and can result in setting stricter standards.
- Embassies require students to make a compelling case that they will return to their home country after program.
- Students who have been terminated in past years will not likely get visas.

## **Our Language “Rating” Process**

A member of the GeoVisions staff, or the agent will interview prospective applicants to assess language abilities. If students are unable to be interviewed by a member of the GeoVisions staff, partner agents determine the level of English ability according to the assessment we provide them.

This interview will result in a numeric code that is then used by GeoVisions to help place students with employers. The scale has a rating of 1 to 10. We rarely accept anyone under a 6, though personality, nervousness at time of interview, and perceived potential can impact positively

Following the language portion of the interview, we determine the dates the student is available, and their interest. Then students can then get an idea of what types of jobs may be available to them.

## **The Role of Overseas Agents**

The overseas agent is critical to help ensure the overall quality of the participating student sent to the U.S. Specifically, the overseas agent agrees to the following when working with GeoVisions:

- Provide GeoVisions with all requested information to fulfill the requirements of the Foreign Entity Form we submit to the U.S. Department of State.
- Become knowledgeable about GeoVisions’ eligibility requirements, conditions and administrative procedures, and follow the terms and conditions of our Letter of Agreement.
- Provide accurate information to interested students, recruit program participants, and carefully check eligibility requirements (including student

status and the ability to speak conversational English as needed at the exchange program site, and in daily life in the U.S.).

- Provide pre-departure information and orientation according to instructions provided by GeoVisions.
- Personally interview each program participant.
- Help participants to obtain the J-1 visa from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. Assist GeoVisions in establishing good relationships with the Embassy or Consulate staff.
- Arrange travel to the U.S. and verify that all participants are in possession of round-trip airline tickets.
- Provide an emergency contact that Geo Visions can reach 24 hours a day in case of emergency.
- At our request, verify that students have returned to their home country.

### **Job Announcements**

- We provide potential students with detailed Job Announcements created from information provided by the employer.
- We need to offer students specific jobs. Students (and parents) need as much detail as possible.
- Employers can request to hire international student exchange visitors on our web site by giving us some information on the Request to hire International student exchange visitors page. Somebody from the Employer Relations team will contact you to follow up.
- Details should include information on: what is included in housing costs (utilities, deposits, etc), access to basic facilities such as supermarkets, and public transit. Special attention should be paid to the safety of the housing location and the route used to get to work.

### **Job Fairs**

- Employers with adequate numbers can travel overseas to directly interview students.
- GeoVisions organizes interviews with groups of students specifically interested in the property.
- We have conducted fairs in Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Jamaica
- Fairs are held at different times of the year according to marketing cycles in various countries. Some fairs are held well in advance of job start dates, while, in some countries, students make their plans much later.

### **Students Traveling with Friends**

- Students often want to travel with one or two of their friends.
- In many countries, parents will insist that the student go with a friend. They see this as a security issue.

- We try to limit the group size to three, but occasionally there may be larger groups.

### **Date Changes**

Students are interviewed and offered jobs many months before their start dates. In most countries they don't know exam schedules when they select start and end dates. In some countries, calendars for the following semester or year have not yet been published. Thus, it is not unusual for students to sometimes need to change their start and end dates. Usually this is just by a few days. We encourage students to inform us as early as possible if they will need to adjust dates.

### **Arrival Information**

GeoVisions asks employers to provide local arrival information for students. This information is then provided to all students prior to departure to the U.S. Students are responsible for arriving at their job sites in time to begin working on the date agreed upon with their employer. The GeoVisions Program Fee does not include transportation to or from the job site. However, for a smooth transition, any assistance that you can give students in getting to your work place will be much appreciated. If you cannot pick up the student at the airport or bus station, students will need specific instructions on how to use public transportation to get to the meeting point.

Our goal, and hopefully yours, is to get the program off to a positive start. First impressions are important. Thus, anything you can do to make the travel to your work place as smooth and stress free as possible will greatly facilitate the student's entry into your work place.

### **Health Insurance**

- GeoVisions provides medical insurance to program participants during the time they are working in the U.S. This is defined as the period from the Start Date to the End Date on their DS2019 Form. This information is provided by the dates that the student and employer agree to on the Job Offer. The period following the work portion of the program, when the student may travel throughout the U.S. is not covered by GeoVisions, although students, or agents on behalf of students, can purchase additional coverage for this period. Students who, for any reason, are

terminated from the GeoVisions program, immediately lose their insurance coverage.

Please help students find a doctor or medical help if they need it. Students should have received a booklet describing their insurance coverage, including a claim form which is also available on the Geovisions web site. It is important that students do not use a hospital's Emergency Room for routine care. If they do they are subject to a higher deductible.

### Claims Procedures

Claims Forms are available on the GeoVisions website. Additionally, claims information will be printed on the Student ID Card. Certain procedures (Usually those that are non-emergency procedures) MUST be pre-authorized by the insurance company. For pre- authorization, questions on coverage, and recommendations about physicians and medical facilities, students can call the Toll Free number provided to them.

### Exclusions, Deductibles and Re-Imbursement for Expenses

In the Insurance Policy booklet, students will find a list of exclusions . Generally, pre-existing conditions and many high-risk activities are not covered under this policy.

In some cases, the student may need to pay for medical services and then request reimbursement from the insurance company. In those cases, students should retain all records and receipts, and send them to the insurance company following the procedures listed in the Insurance policy booklet.

## **Hiring Options for Employers**

- *SKYPE Interviews.* This is the preferred option for many employers. At your request, GeoVisions will schedule interviews by one of our experienced staff to assess language level, motivation, and interest. Personality, and experience are key factors as well.
- *We can also schedule a SKYPE interview with students for your staff*
- *Many smaller employers give GeoVisions parameters for hiring, and let GeoVisions interview on their behalf.* Our staff has experience in matching students to employers' needs. It is important that students receive your job offer immediately (within 5 days) after they are interviewed. Students who have to wait longer to receive an offer, often go to another organization, and will take a job with another employer.
- *Larger Employers can recruit in person* at an overseas job fair (requires a minimum number of hires per season). In those cases, GeoVisions pays for economy class airfare and accommodations, as well as many meals.

- *Another method is to have GeoVisions present candidates for your approval. If they don't get an offer within 5 days, they usually opt for other opportunities. The exchange program is very competitive in all countries. Students will enroll with more than one sponsor, and often go with the first offer they receive.*

### **Program Dates and Seasons**

The U.S. Department of State says, in part, that, the purpose of this program is as follows: to provide foreign college and university students with opportunities to interact with U.S. citizens, experience U.S. culture while sharing their own culture with Americans they meet, travel in the United States, and work in seasonal or temporary jobs that require minimal training.

Students are allowed to participate on the Work/Travel program only within the dates as determined by the U.S Department of State. They notify us on an annual basis as to these dates for each country, and we post those dates on our website. Please refer to the Useful Web Sites Page of this handbook for current information as of the date of publication.

All decisions on suitability of an applicant during a particular time period are made by the local embassy or consulate according to directives issued by the Department of State.

### **Our Partners Abroad, and Where we Work**

We work with experienced, committed international organizations in countries around the world, and we are continually adding new countries. Our student selection teams recruit in Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, Western Africa, the Middle East and South America. Many countries have school vacations during the spring or winter months, in addition to those with traditional summer vacations.

We vet foreign entities according to U.S. Department of State criteria, and submit our files to the appropriate authority.

## **Program Types**

### **Basic Program**

- Under this program a student comes to the USA to work in a temporary or seasonal job that has been arranged by GeoVisions and agreed to by the employer and the student. These employers have been screened and vetted by GeoVisions and agree to perform as described on the Job Offer Form.

### **Self-Placed Program**

- Under this program a student comes to work in a temporary or seasonal job that the student has arranged by him/herself. GeoVisions will verify that the Job Offer is valid.

### **Independent Program**

- Under this program, a student from a Visa Waiver country comes to the U.S. to work in a seasonal or temporary job and can enter the U.S. without a confirmed job. The individual must inform GeoVisions of employment prior to beginning work.

## **The Recruitment and Hiring Process**

- Our partner organizations make presentations on university campuses or other venues using job announcements employers like you provide.
- Often there are follow-up presentations about specific employers.
- Agents and/or schools first screen the students. This varies by country but the screening can be very complex and may include medical, psychological and supplementary language evaluations.
- GeoVisions staff sometimes travel to countries to conduct interviews. We also interview by SKYPE.
- We may take employers who hire a larger number of students with us, or hire directly for employers, based on information they have given us.
- We vet employers according to regulations. We collect EIN and Worker's Compensation data, Vetting procedures vary by state and include verifying registration with the State Secretary of State's office, a copy of a business license, a Certificate of Authority, Articles of Incorporation, and/or a Certificate of Existence. The documents required may change from time to time as regulations change. We use the Internet and other sources in the vetting process.
- The employer makes a job offer, and the student accepts the position.

## **Process After Job Offer Is Made**

- GeoVisions updates records to reflect that you have accepted the student.
- An individual Job Offer is created for the student to review, sign and return to GeoVisions.
- The record is again updated to reflect acceptance

- The student then needs to submit all other application materials, if they have not already done so.
- The DS-2019 Form is created, SEVIS Fee paid, and all materials are sent overseas to the student via our partner in that country.
- Students take the appropriate forms to the Embassy or Consulate and have their interview to get a J-1 visa.
- Once they are issued a visa, they then book their flights to the U.S., based on arrival information that you have provided.
- You need to communicate and confirm in a timely way to avoid students canceling and going to another organization or to an employer who responds more quickly.
- When you communicate with student or agent by E Mail, it's IMPORTANT to copy GeoVisions.

### **Pre-Departure Orientation**

Partners overseas must provide a pre-departure orientation for each student. Sponsors arrange this as a condition of the program as directed by the State Department. Each of the following items must be covered in orientation:

- The purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program and program regulations.
- A description of the GeoVisions Summer Work and Travel Program.
- Entry into the United States and travel to their pre-arranged employment site.
- A review of the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) program, reporting requirements and regulations pertaining to Exchange Visitors in the U.S.
- The name, location and contact information of the employer.
- Information on wages, working hours, and any benefits available such as a meal plan.
- Information on housing and the cost of housing, commuting distance to their place of employment, and transportation available
- IRS and Social Security forms, and other government documents
- Check in on arrival, and then monthly thereafter
- Reporting any job or residence change
- Need for advance approval before changing a primary job, beginning a second (or 3<sup>rd</sup>) job, or changing residential address.
- Health and accident insurance
- Reporting to work
- U.S. culture and the workplace, opportunities for experiencing American culture outside the workplace through interaction with Americans, local events and activities.
- Travel during and after the program

- Returning home
- Frequently asked questions

Other Topics covered, via internet, electronic presentations or in person, include:

- The Student Handbook
- State Department Role
- Contact Information
- Insurance Information
- Legal Documents and Taxes
- Program Rules
- SEVIS Regulations
- Life in the U.S. and Culture Shock
- Local Information
- Safety
- Important forms to safeguard—Ds 2019, passport, return airline ticket, banking records, etc.

### **Employer Orientation**

It is important to educate your American staff about the program and cultures the students come from. Students should be trained exactly as you would train U.S. employees. Your orientation should also familiarize them with your community, assist them in obtaining social security cards, review local laws, discuss housing issues and any rules you have regarding housing, local transportation, etc.

**It is very important that you provide students with information about the various cultural activities available to them in your community. This is a vital part of this cultural exchange program. Some activities you may want to consider include, church related youth activities, national or state parks, local historical sites and museums, national holiday celebrations, or anything else that helps and encourages a young person to learn about America and Americans.**

You should encourage them to come to you if they have problems.

### **After the Student Arrives**

Students will need time to adjust to a new culture, job and environment. Patience and understanding are needed by employers. Don't evaluate their language skills right away. They may be nervous and tired from their long flights. For many it is the first time away from home. *Students will need your support.*

Please note the following areas to focus on:

- **Need for Student to Check-In** - The U.S. Government requires us to keep up-to-date information on where each of our students live and work. Students are required to check-in with us within **3 days of their arrival** and give us their mailing and physical addresses, U.S. telephone number and e-mail address, employer name and contact information, arrival date into the U.S., and their GeoVisions ID number.
- **Employers also need to advise GeoVisions when a student arrives, changes work location or if a student leaves earlier than planned.**
- **Government regulations are very strict regarding check-in**, and keeping their records up to date in the Homeland Security database SEVIS. Information on how to contact GeoVisions is found on the “How to Contact Us” page of this Handbook.
- If any of the contact information changes, students **must** notify us immediately. Students who do not check in will not be able to get a Social Security number. Regulations require us to terminate their participation, which negatively affects their ability to continue working for you.
- **Social Security** – Since this is an unfamiliar process, you need to assist students in getting their Social Security cards. When a student has applied for a Social Security card, Form SSA-5030 will be evidence that it has been applied for.
- We have distributed information to the student on documents required for application which includes the student’s Form I- 94. Information is available online at

<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>

- Other documents required include:
  1. DS-2019 Form to prove that they are allowed to work in the U.S.
  2. Passport
  3. A Government-issued Photo Identity Card (a driver’s license, a voter’s card, university ID card)

The Social Security Administration attempts to verify the status of students within 10 business days. Cards are sent centrally from Baltimore, not the office where the student applies.

**Employers can begin paying students prior to receiving the actual Social Security card. Please refer to the Useful Web Sites Page of this Handbook for more information.**

## **About Our Students**

- Fees Paid

It is important to note that all students pay a fee to join this program. Most students will need to have about \$2000-2500 depending on airfare including the recommended \$500 in spending money we ask them to bring. Many students borrow the program fees from family members or friends in their home country to participate in the program. Most students will want to 1) recoup the cost of the program; 2) earn some travel money and money to experience cultural visits to learn about the USA; 3) bring some money home.

## **Expectations**

- Expectations are sometimes affected by past participation with other sponsors.
- Employers need to temper their expectations, too, realizing that students, when they arrive are nervous, sometimes in a foreign country for the first time, and they may experience culture shock. The first couple weeks of the program will require patience and understanding on the part of the employer.

## **Your Role and Responsibilities**

You are an important partner in making your students' exchange program a success. Some important responsibilities you have include:

- Treat students fairly.
- Pay them the same as their American counterparts.
- Take out proper taxes.
- Follow the GeoVisions housing guidelines and policy. Some employers arrange or provide housing. Students will pay, but it must be fair and in compliance with our guidelines. Students have the right to change to different housing.
- Provide students with the ability to experience American culture outside the workplace. This is an important part of every job placement. Please make every effort to organize opportunities, and encourage students to learn about America outside the workplace.
- Place students where they work side-by-side with Americans to maximize interaction.
- Inform GeoVisions when students arrive, if they are fired, or if elements of their job change.

- Provide GeoVisions with your EIN, proof of business registration, any required licenses, and evidence of worker's comp coverage for the student.
- Jobs must be temporary or seasonal, and may not replace American workers
- Driving on the job is not allowed
- Disclose any layoffs you have had in the past 3 months

### **Housing Standards**

GeoVisions believes that every student is entitled to safe, clean, convenient and fairly priced housing with transportation available to work, shopping and local cultural activities. Housing costs should not be so high as to leave students with inadequate net pay to cover living expenses. We have thus created the following standards that all employers must adhere to:

1. Each student will have his / her own bed, unless sharing is specifically agreed upon in advance and documented as such, by each of the students. Bed sharing or rotation is not permitted.
2. Upon arrival, accommodations should be free of debris and belongings of former occupants. Students are responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of their accommodations.
3. Bedrooms and bathrooms must have a door that can be shut and locked. Students must be given keys to their accommodations
4. Students may be assigned to share an apartment with persons of the opposite gender, but bedrooms should be same gender.
5. Entrances and exits must be lit and secure.
6. There should be fully functioning toilets, sinks and showers in the living facility.
7. Occupancy levels must meet city government codes.
8. In consideration of student safety and security, students should exercise caution when inviting others into your accommodation. You should communicate to students additional rules and curfews that may exist.
9. Advise students not to let anyone in living areas they do not personally know.
10. Students are responsible for their own deposits, housing fees and transportation.
11. Students are responsible for any phone charges and should not use employer's or housing phones without using a phone card or previous approval.
12. Smoking and drinking at your accommodations should only occur with individuals of legal age and not in violation of employer or housing manager or landlord rules.
13. It is important that students know, in advance, all housing related costs—utilities, amount and conditions of deposits— and what furnishings and services are included. For any services or costs that are not included, students should be aware of the approximate additional cost of those services.

## **Meals**

It is important to specify which meals are covered and if there is a cost. If you do not provide meals, you should insure that students' housing includes proper cooking facilities, and housing should be located in an area where it is easy for students to buy food and other essential supplies, and to have access to local activities that American of the same age would usually enjoy.

## **Distance and Travel to Work**

Housing should be in an area where it is convenient and safe to get to work. If students need to take public transportation, this should be specified in the job offer, and the daily cost of transportation should be disclosed. If you provide transportation, your policy must be clearly stated, and followed.

Many students use bikes to get to work. Please stress bike safety including the use of helmets, and lights.

## **Dress code**

You should specify dress and grooming guidelines on the job offer or in separate communication with students so they arrive prepared. Please be sure to advise students of any fee associated with the purchase of a uniform.

## **Drug Testing**

You should disclose in advance what the process is and for whom and when

## **Computer Access for Students**

Students rely on computer access to stay in touch with friends and family. We rely on them having access, as this is our way of keeping in touch with them. We encourage them to check email at least once a week to see if there are any messages. If you cannot provide direct access for them at their housing, you should give them a chance to use computers at work, or give them information on where they can get internet access (internet café, library, etc.) in the immediate area.

## **Hours**

- Remember that students have paid about \$2000- \$3000 to come on this program (most of it being airfare). They will be concerned about recouping their costs and making additional money if they are not getting sufficient hours.

- They are particularly sensitive about this at the beginning of the program, so, if you cannot give them many hours in the first two weeks because they are training, or have arrived in the middle of a scheduling cycle, assure them that hours will improve.
- While no one can guarantee hours, they are counting on getting at least the number of hours indicated on their job offers.
- Most students will appreciate overtime, but must not feel pressured to work overtime or to report to work with short notice.
- If you need to send workers home early on shifts because you do not have enough work, be careful not to discriminate against these students.
- If you are having trouble providing the stated number of hours on their job offer, please contact us to discuss the situation.

### **Night Shifts**

- While we tell students they may work evening shifts, be aware that females, in particular, may be uneasy about this. Most often it will be their parents who will object when they learn of it.
- As per Department of State regulations, students may not be placed in jobs that fall predominantly between 10:00 pm and 6:00am.
- Be particularly aware of safety issues with evening shift workers, including assuring safe transportation to work.

### **Overtime**

- Make the policy clear in your job offer, and follow local, state, and federal labor laws
- Most students will eagerly accept it.
- Overtime compensation laws differ in each state and need to be communicated to students so they know what they can expect. We ask that you provide GeoVisions with a clear indication of the schedule for students so that we can present accurate information to students prior to their arrival.

### **Additional Jobs**

The J-1 visa allows participants to work at more than one job. However, students are always told that their primary commitment is to the employer on their DS-2019. Please be cooperative in setting up schedules that can accommodate students who want to work at extra jobs to earn additional money. Please note that GeoVisions must vet and approve second jobs before the student can begin work.

## **Problems and Handling Them Successfully**

From time to time students will have problems while they are employed by you. Most often the problems are the result of personality conflicts with supervisors or fellow workers. Other common problems may include hours, different pay than Americans (Exchange visitors must be compensated the same as similar level American employees, but occasionally there is an employee that has been with a business for years, and may make a higher wage), or feeling of being discriminated against. We encourage students to first speak with their supervisors to try to resolve any problems. We also have trained staff available to talk with students who are having problems. We tend to follow our rules very strictly, but we do realize there are times when there are “chemistry” problems or true misunderstandings. Do not hesitate to contact us if you need our help with any student problems.

Students need to contact GeoVisions and/or appropriate local authorities if they should encounter any of the following circumstances:

1. Unwanted sexual advances or gender bias
2. Unfair wage or tax reporting practices
3. Demands to work an excessive number of hours against his/her will
4. Physical threats at the workplace, especially if resulting in injury
5. Verbal threats, and in particular, threats of deportation
6. Housing conditions that threaten their health or safety
7. **IMPORTANT:** Employers may not, under any circumstances, threaten students with visa termination or deportation.

## **Changing Jobs**

GeoVisions’ goal is always to keep the student and employer placement intact. We take great care in placing students with employers to avoid problems in the placement. However, we recognize that sometimes issues do arise that may require the student to change jobs. To make sure that we have assisted the student as much as possible to resolve issues that may arise, we have the following process:

Once we are contacted, we may contact you and discuss the issue, but may not disclose the student’s name. If we do, we may conduct a conference call with the student, you and a GeoVisions representative. We may travel to the job site to speak with the student and you in person. The goal of these discussions, whether they are over the phone or in person, is to answer questions, or solve problems without having to remove a student from the workplace.

If the problem cannot be resolved, and the student is enrolled on a GeoVisions Basic Program, GeoVisions may move the student to another designated GeoVisions employer. This new employer may or may not be located in the same

area of the USA. Students are responsible for their own transportation costs for moves. GeoVisions will provide students with information on available plane, bus or train routes. We them to contact GeoVisions every week and let us know how they are doing and confirm that they are still at the new employer, and are doing well.

If GeoVisions cannot find another employer, a student will be permitted to find his/her own job within a reasonable period of time, and provide us with a completed GeoVisions Job Offer for this new employer. If they find their own employer, they will find their own accommodation. Once we have the completed Job Offer for the new employer, GeoVisions will vet that that employer to verify the position and job terms.

### **Labor Law Issues**

- Follow local, state, and federal (FLSA) labor laws.
- If disciplinary action is necessary, you must contact GeoVisions.
- Please document any disciplinary action.
- Do not threaten students with loss of their visa, deportation, or being reported to immigration.
- Do not threaten students with retaliation, including loss of working hours, if they contact GeoVisions regarding a problem at the workplace or with housing, we will respond with the student's best interest in mind.

### **Arrested Employees**

- Shoplifting is the most common offense. We try to stress to students that most stores will prosecute this offence and it will result in arrest, and a fine or time in jail.
- Make students aware of local laws at your own orientations.
- Stress drinking age if you have students under 21, as this law probably doesn't apply in their home country.
- If a student is arrested, please contact GeoVisions immediately. As a Sponsor, we are required to notify the State Department promptly, and visit the student if allowed to do so by law enforcement authorities.
- Try to get as much information as possible, including the name of an official we can contact, where the student is being held, and any information you have on how we can contact an arrested student's friend(s).

## **Firing Students**

Students need to be treated like any other employee. You can terminate them if warranted. However, please notify GeoVisions immediately. Due to State Department regulations requiring that the sponsor (GeoVisions) knows where the students are at all times, we tell students that they must contact us before leaving their housing and start looking for another job. Students may not change employers without advance permission from GeoVisions. As a sponsor, we are required to fully vet a change of employer prior to the time a student begins working. Remember, an employer cannot use the threat of deportation, or visa cancellation at any time when dealing with students.

GeoVisions program regulations are in addition to the general regulations issued by the Department of State, but do not supersede them..

As advocates for our students, we look out for their health, safety, and welfare. However, students can be terminated from the program if they do not follow the program rules, but only after the student has been warned in advance.

Termination is a serious action, and we communicate that with students, and give them ample time to bring themselves within guidelines before we take any action. Communication may be given in telephone conversations, or in person, and in writing to the email address we have on file. We may ask for your help in contacting the student.

The most frequent cause for termination is when students do not check-in, do not report to their employer, or if they leave employers and take another job without prior permission from GeoVisions. Our experience is that the most common mistake students make is following the erroneous advice of their traveling companions who convince them that program rules are not important, or won't be seriously enforced.

## **Accidents**

You are responsible for providing a safe working environment for all Work/Travel students. If a student does experience an accident, please contact us immediately. All students are covered with medical insurance. It is your responsibility to follow prevailing state and federal (FLSA) laws regarding worker's compensation, and to provide that information to GeoVisions. In all emergency situations, contact GeoVisions immediately.

## **Information on Withholding Taxes and Social Security**

**Only deduct income taxes from students' paychecks. Do NOT deduct Social Security, Medicare or Federal unemployment taxes.** Please assist your student(s) in applying for a Social Security number. They do NOT actually need the social security number before they can begin to work. As long as they have applied, or intend to apply, they can work for you. Most payroll services will allow a "dummy" number to be entered into their system until the student gets his

or her number. It may take a long time for the Social Security number to be issued, due to delays in the Social Security system.

### **How to Complete the W-2 Form**

Per Government regulations, at the end of the calendar year, you will send the student a W-2 form detailing his total wages and the amount of each tax that was withheld. Please make sure that you have the student's accurate home address where the W-2 should be sent. Employers can also send W-2s to GeoVisions. We will forward them. Employers should use the IRS publication 515 for Non-Resident Aliens. This will avoid having them over-taxed or paying the U.S. Government tax in the future.

### **Income Tax Filing for Student**

Students know that they will need to complete a tax return form from their home country once they receive their W-2 form from you. All forms are available from U.S. embassies overseas or on the Internet at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). They will need to get the state and city forms from you. Students will usually complete tax for 1040NR-EZ, which is specifically for nonresident aliens. If desired, there are services that are designed to help foreign students file their taxes.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES**

**Cultural Information** - It is important to be sensitive to the cultural differences that exist between our US culture and those of the visiting students.

### **Culture Shock and Adjustment Issues**

Living and working in a new culture and environment requires a tremendous amount of energy and patience. The adjustment process or “culture shock” that students experience may be difficult at times as they are confronted with unfamiliar surroundings – communication, food, climate, people and lifestyle. Confusion, frustration and stress often accompany the process of adjustment that students may encounter at the beginning. Most students experience culture shock in varying degrees and go through various stages of adjustment that include the following:

1. Euphoria – At the beginning, the host culture is new and exciting.
2. Anxiety – The excitement fades when a routine is established in the new environment. Feelings/physical symptoms of helplessness, withdrawal, irritability, and insomnia may result.
3. Rejection of the new culture – Everything in the new culture is wrong and the home culture is secure; homesickness develops.
4. Acceptance – Recognizing and respecting some of the perceived shortcomings in the host culture and feeling comfortable with it.

To help minimize the effect of culture shock, emphasize:

1. Open communication – Talking about challenges and feelings will help reduce the stress. Regular meetings will keep the verbal communication open up.
2. Open mind – Having a positive attitude goes a long way toward adjustment. Sometimes students need reminded of this.
3. Staying active – Getting involved with the American culture outside of work is important. Encourage the students to do this.
4. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle – Eating a balanced diet, exercising and getting sufficient rest will help students feel much better.

## **Frequently Asked Questions by Employers**

### **What is a J-1 student?**

The purpose of a J-1 program is to provide overseas university students with opportunities to participate in educational and cultural programs in the United States and return home to share their experiences, and to encourage Americans to participate in similar programs in foreign countries. Educational and cultural exchanges can take many forms. On some programs, students come to the U.S. to study English, pursue a degree, or have a homestay experience living with an American family while attending high school.

On our Summer Work and Travel Program, students come to the U.S. not to study in a classroom or live with a family, but to work and live among Americans so they can learn about our country from first-hand experience. They also have the opportunity to travel in the U.S. after the work period of the program is over.

### **Do I need to pay for your services?**

No! Employers do not pay a fee. Students pay a fee to participate in this program. The fee covers services such as placement opportunities, application processing, J-1 visa sponsorship, orientation sessions, health and accident insurance, and ongoing support from GeoVisions during the program.

### **Since students pay a fee, what do they expect?**

Students expect to have the job they accepted, the housing (if offered), and the number of hours of work promised. Many students use the money earned to pay back loans they received from family and friends for their program fees. They are allowed thirty days after their work to travel. Many use the wages they earn. If they do not earn what they were told, they will feel dissatisfied. Students also expect to have opportunities to meet and talk with Americans (and working alongside English-speaking Americans is a requirement of the program). They want to improve their English and learn about American culture outside the workplace. International students are good workers, but they want to have fun, too. Having access to the same places where American students of the same age congregate is an important part of their expectations.

### **What are my responsibilities?**

You must provide housing or information on housing, job related orientation and training, and opportunities to meet Americans, and learn about American culture. Worker' Compensation coverage must be provided by you, as well. You will need to help the students get to the nearest Social Security office when they arrive to obtain their Social Security Card. It usually takes 7 to 10 working days for a student to receive their card itself by mail. It is legal for you to pay the student before they get a Social Security Card and/or number.

In addition, you must make sure that all students have opportunities to work alongside U.S. citizens in front line positions, and interact regularly with U.S. citizens. You also need to make sure that students have opportunities to experience American culture outside of work by being involved in or exposed to events or other activities that allow them to learn about American culture and the everyday activities of Americans. Sponsors are required to keep track of cultural events or activities that students take part in, and to report this to the US Department of State.

**How do students get oriented?**

We make orientation available on our web site, and by internet presentation. We may also conduct orientation in the students' home countries prior to departure for the U.S. This cuts down on costs for the students and allows for more flexibility in available dates.

**Can a student take a second job?**

Students can take a second job if it does not interfere with fulfilling their obligation with the employer listed on their DS-2019. However, second jobs must be vetted. Students are not allowed to begin work at a second job until the employer is fully vetted.

**Who provides insurance?**

GeoVisions provides health and accident insurance according to U.S. State Department regulations. In some cases, insurance is provided by country agents, but this must be approved by GeoVisions. Please refer to the student ID card for information on how to contact the insurance company.

**Do the students need to have taxes deducted?**

Students pay Federal Income Tax, State Income Tax and, if any, City Income Tax. Students DO NOT pay Social Security Tax, Medicare, or Federal Unemployment Tax.

**How much do I need to pay the students?**

According to U.S. State Department regulations, state, and federal law, students must be paid the same as the American counterparts in the same position. You need to pay students at least minimum wage.

**What rules and laws apply to GeoVisions participants?**

International participants are subject to the same laws and regulations as their U.S. counterparts.

**Where should I call about Social Security questions?**

Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213

**What if the student loses his passport?**

The student should contact his country's Embassy.

**When do I need to contact GeoVisions?**

You must contact GeoVisions immediately in the event of an emergency or any situation that threatens the safety, health, or welfare of a student. You must also contact us if a student does not arrive as expected, the work site changes, the student leaves earlier than planned, or in case conditions in housing you have arranged change before the student arrives.

## Contact Information

### By Mail

GeoVisions  
P.O. Box 167  
Chesterfield NH  
03443- 0167  
USA

### By E Mail

[visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org)

### By Phone

1.603.363.4187  
1.888.830.9455 (24 hours a day – emergencies only after business hours)

### By Fax

1.603.363.8446

It is our goal to provide you with the best customer service. If you have questions regarding the status of applications, placements, payments, or other documents, please send an E Mail to [visions@geovisions.org](mailto:visions@geovisions.org).

### By Website

[www.geovisions.org](http://www.geovisions.org)

We understand how busy employers are, so we have developed a website for your ease and use. We encourage you and other staff to use it as much as possible.

On our website you will find the following:

- Program information and frequently asked questions
- Online form for requesting exchange visitors
- Online form to contact GeoVisions about current students and needs you may have
- Online job offer form
- Problem solving information
- Visa, insurance, tax and social security information
- Initial and Monthly Check-In for students
- Information on our programs for Americans

## Useful Websites and Other Information

- 1) [Information for students about J-1 Programs, but is helpful for employers too](#)
- 2) [Information on Official Program Dates Country-by-Country](#)
- 3) [Department of State Program Regulations](#)
- 4) [Information on translating from English to another language and vice versa](#)
- 5) [Some Information and ideas on Cultural Activities](#)

Students participate on the Summer Work and Travel program for a variety of reasons: to experience life in the US first-hand, to improve their English, and to visit places that help them learn about features of U.S. culture and history outside the workplace. Many students have enjoyed visiting national and state parks, historic sites, landmarks and scenic areas. Students have also told us they learn a lot about American life through organized activities with local community members such as lectures, films, nature outings, sporting events, church youth activities, or having meals or picnics with Americans. Exposure to American political or governmental institutions, such as city council meetings or state legislatures, can also be educational, and will probably be different from their home countries.

These are just a few ideas on what students have enjoyed in the past. There are many more examples. We encourage you to organize activities, and arrange events that help international students learn more about America.