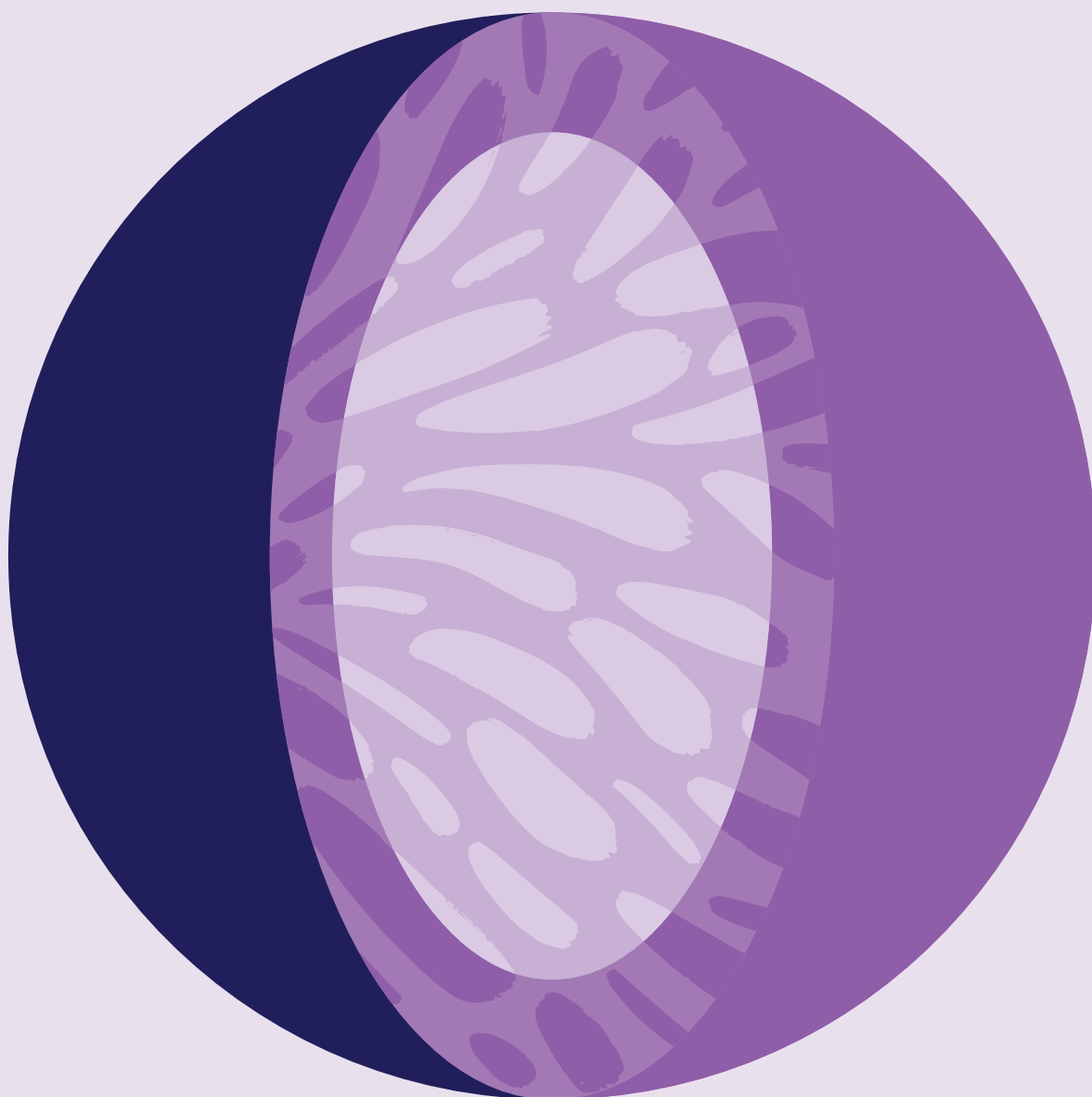


# Cultural Care Au Pair Communications Handbook



CULTURAL  
CARE  
AU PAIR



**CULTURAL  
CARE  
AU PAIR**

# **Cultural Care Au Pair Communications Handbook**

# Table of contents

## Key program information

### Cultural exchange

Why it matters	8
A program rooted in cultural exchange	9
The impact of cultural exchange	9

### Our au pairs

Why young people become au pairs	12
Au pair requirements	13
Steps to becoming an au pair	14
Program pricing	15
Largest au pair recruitment countries	15

### Our host families

Why host families welcome au pairs	18
Host family requirements	19
Steps to becoming a host family	20
Program pricing	21
Common misconceptions about hosting	21

### The “spirit of the program”

What it means for host families	24
What it means for au pairs	25

### The U.S. Department of State

Establishing au pair program regulations	28
Approving designated sponsors	28
Issuing J-1 visas	29
Cultural Care Au Pair regulations	29

### Our organization

Our connection to EF Education First	32
A global organization with a local presence	33
The people behind our program	33

### What sets us apart

Industry-leading impact	36
How we support success	36
Big in size & in heart	37
Accreditations & memberships	37

# Table of contents

## How we communicate

### Our tone, voice & style

How we talk	40
What we want people to hear, feel & remember	41

### Writing for a global audience

Inclusivity & cultural sensitivity	44
Considerations for translation	45

### Guidelines

How to use our company name	48
Formatting & punctuation	49
Language & messaging	52

### Glossary

Teams & roles	56
Programs & initiatives	57
Government & regulations	58
Matching terms	59
App terms	60

# Your all-in-one guide to Cultural Care Au Pair

**At Cultural Care Au Pair, every great communication starts with a clear understanding of our program and the people at its core: our host families, our au pairs, and the staff and Local Childcare Consultants (LCCs) who support them along the way.**

The language we use also plays a powerful role in our success. Because the au pair program is regulated by the U.S. government and often the subject of interest from advocacy groups and the media, our messaging must strike a careful balance. Moreover, our program can be unfamiliar to many, and our materials are often translated for a global audience. It's crucial to explain things in straightforward, accessible terms that resonate across cultures and contexts.

Let this handbook be your go-to resource for how we speak about Cultural Care Au Pair here in the U.S. and around the world— with clarity, consistency, compliance, and care.

This is a living resource. Our messaging will evolve as our program grows and our organization changes. Consider it a foundation we can all build on, together. It will change and evolve over time as we co-create the program as a team. Look at it as the beginning of a long conversation.

# How to use this handbook

## **Information**

Use this handbook to deepen your understanding of the Cultural Care Au Pair program—its structure, the role of the U.S. Department of State, the requirements and responsibilities of our host families and au pairs, and the support provided by our staff and LCCs. You'll find all the facts you need and the reasoning behind them.

## **Communication**

Creating a sales pitch? Giving a presentation? Writing a blog post? Start here. This handbook will guide your messaging across different audiences and contexts, with language that's clear, compelling, and aligned with our program rules and brand standards.

## **Translation**

When translating master text into other languages, share this handbook with your translator. It will help preserve intent and ensure key ideas stay intact.

## **Training**

Encourage new team members to read through this handbook when onboarding. It's a great way to learn how our program works and how we talk about it.

# Cultural exchange

**At Cultural Care Au Pair, we believe that cultural exchange makes the world a better place. It's not just a part of our mission—it's at the heart of everything we do.**

## **Why it matters**

In an increasingly interconnected and globally minded world, the need for cultural exchange is greater now than ever. Cultural Care Au Pair brings people from different backgrounds together to find common ground, build lasting relationships, and learn from one another. As these cross-cultural connections grow, so does our collective sense of openness, empathy, and understanding. Seeing the world through someone else's eyes doesn't just expand your worldview—it helps you understand yourself better, too.

## Key program information

# A program rooted in cultural exchange

Cultural exchange became a national priority in the U.S. after World War II, thanks in large part to the vision of Senator J. William Fulbright, who is widely recognized as the father of modern exchange programs. In 1986 the au pair program was established by Congress under the authority of the Fulbright-Hays Act, an initiative designed to strengthen international understanding through educational and cultural exchange. This program, which has been regulated by the U.S. Department of State since its inception, aimed to meet a growing demand for childcare in the U.S. while giving young people from around the world the opportunity to live with American families and experience American life firsthand.

## The impact of cultural exchange

### **Cross-cultural understanding**

Individuals broaden their view of the world beyond their own backyard—gaining insight into different cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs.

### **Global friendships & families**

They form meaningful relationships with people they would never have met otherwise, creating connections that span continents and lifetimes.

### **Empathy**

Living side by side with someone from a different part of the world deepens compassion and helps individuals understand what it means to walk in one another's shoes.

### **Open-mindedness**

Exposure to different cultures shifts perspectives. Individuals stop seeing things as right or wrong, good or bad. Instead, they embrace what makes each of us unique.

# Our au pairs





**For young people seeking international opportunities, Cultural Care Au Pair offers an experience that's as personally transformative as it is culturally immersive. With 35+ years of expertise, a dedicated support team, and innovative matching tools, we help au pairs grow their English skills and build a global network of family and friends—all while discovering newfound confidence and independence.**

## Why young people become au pairs

### International experience

Au pairs develop a range of valuable skills while living abroad and providing childcare support for their host families. This gives them a competitive advantage in the job market or when applying to schools back home.

### Personal growth

Living as an au pair in the U.S. builds cultural awareness, independence, and maturity. Au pairs return home with stronger self-confidence, self-awareness, adaptability, problem-solving skills, and leadership abilities.

### English fluency

Au pairs arrive to the U.S. with varying levels of English proficiency. By living with an American family and communicating daily in English, their skills grow quickly and dramatically.

### Cultural advocacy

Au pairs don't just learn about American culture, they also share their own. From language and cuisine to traditions and holidays, they act as ambassadors for their home countries.

### Academic opportunities

During their program term, au pairs are required to complete 6 academic credits or 72 classroom hours at an accredited U.S. institution, giving them the chance to experience the American education system firsthand.

### American adventure

In addition to exploring their host community and state throughout the year, many au pairs use their two-week vacation—and their extra month at the end of the year—to see even more of the U.S.

### A global network

Through their LCC network and host community, au pairs build lifelong friendships—with other au pairs from around the world and with other young people in the U.S.

### What being an au pair is:

- An exciting adventure in the USA
- A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel, learn, study, and grow
- An opportunity to provide childcare support as a member of an American host family

### What being an au pair is not:

- A labor program
- A study abroad program
- A vacation or a way to travel with no responsibilities

## Au pair requirements

### Age

18–26 years old upon arrival in the U.S

### English proficiency

Conversational English skills

### Education

High school diploma or equivalent

### Childcare experience

Minimum 200 hours of documented experience

### Background screening

Must pass a criminal background check

### Health

Certificate of good health from a physician

### Driving

Must have a valid International Driver's Permit

### Infant-care experience

Minimum 200 hours of documented experience caring for children under the age of 2 (only required for au pairs who will be caring for host children under the age 2)

## Steps to becoming an au pair

### Learn more at an Info Session

While not required, we highly recommend that all prospective au pairs start their journey by joining an Info Session in their home country. These sessions offer a full introduction to the program and are often led by a former au pair, who can share their real-life experiences.

### Complete an interview & English evaluation

During this informal interview, our office staff learns more about the prospective au pair's motivations, goals, and personality. This includes an English evaluation, with the results eventually added to the au pair's profile.

### Create a profile & undergo screening

Au pairs build a profile in the Cultural Care app by entering details about their childcare and driving experience, family life, skills and interests, and ideal arrival date. They add photos, a short introductory video, and take our NeuroColor Personality Test (see pg. 58). At this point they'll also submit references, a current health certificate, and complete a background check.

### Connect with host families to find a match

Once approved to move forward, the au pair's profile becomes visible to host families. Families can then initiate chats with au pairs who seem like a good fit. While au pairs can't proactively reach out to families, they can choose whether or not to engage in a chat or move forward with an interview, and whether to accept or decline a match offer.

### Secure a J-1 visa

After matching with their host family, au pairs schedule and attend a visa interview at the U.S. embassy in their home country. We include a detailed visa walkthrough in the Cultural Care app and offer virtual workshops to ensure that au pairs are prepared for their visa interview.

### Travel to the U.S.

Once all the steps above are complete, au pairs travel to the U.S. to begin their program term with their host family.

### Take part in trainings and workshops

Au pairs take part in a three-part training process before they head to the U.S. This includes:

#### – MyAuPairCourses

A series of self-paced online courses designed to prepare au pairs for their Training School curriculum

## Our au pairs

### – Au Pair Training School

A 32-hour, instructor-led online program that covers topics like child safety and development, age-appropriate activities, and communication; it also includes five hours of CPR and First Aid instruction from the American Heart Association

### – Get Ready Workshop

An online session focused on understanding American family life, communication styles, common expectations, and more

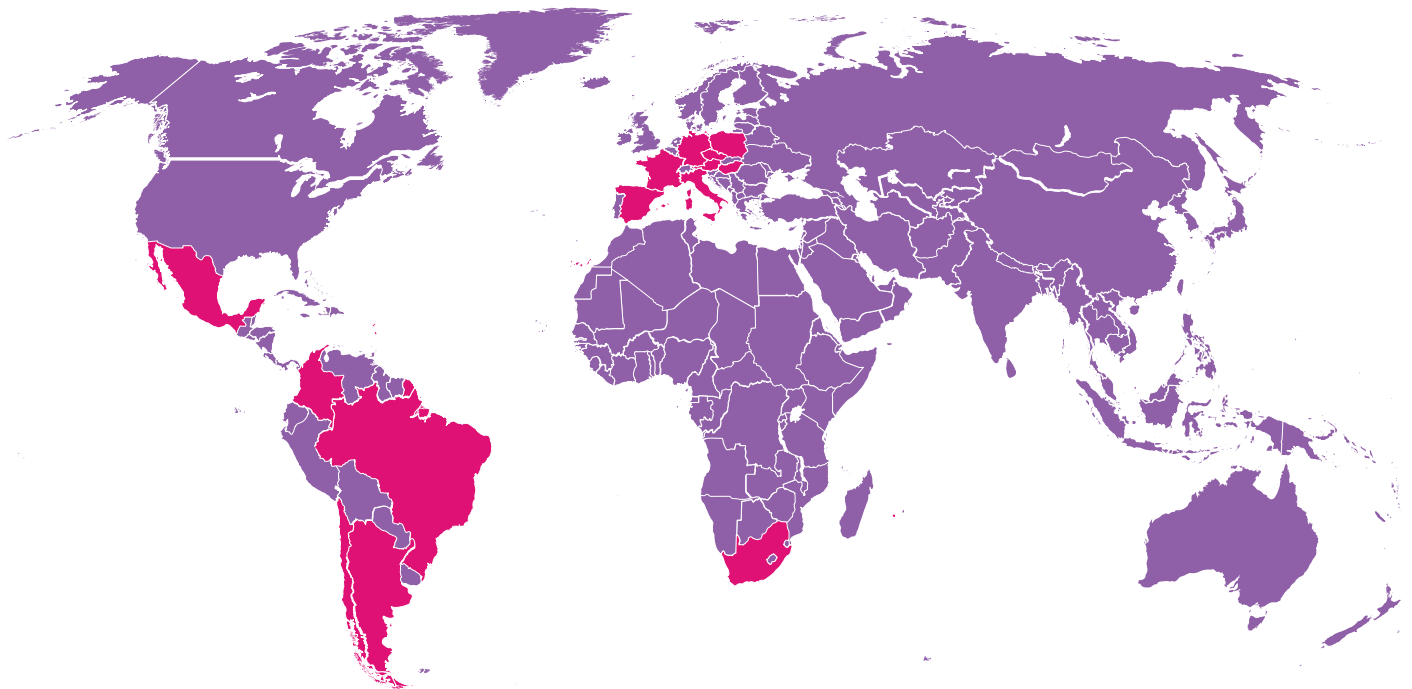
## Program pricing

Au pairs pay a program fee, but it's significantly lower than the fee paid by host families. The exact amount varies by recruitment country and is based on local market conditions.

The au pair program fee does not cover international airfare to the U.S. or domestic transportation once in the country. These costs are covered by the host family as part of their program fee.

## Au pair recruitment offices

Argentina · Austria · Brazil · Chile · Colombia · Czech Republic · Germany · Spain · France · Hungary · Italy · Mexico · Poland · Sweden · South Africa



# Our host families





## Our host families

For families seeking trusted, flexible, and enriching childcare, Cultural Care Au Pair offers a unique solution that meets everyday needs while bringing global perspectives into the home. Our program offers a true cultural exchange experience, backed by 35+ years of leadership, 24/7 support, and the largest community of pre-screened au pair candidates of any program sponsor.

## Why host families welcome au pairs

### Live-in childcare

Living together helps au pairs align with their host family's values, routines, and parenting style. This allows for more consistent care and builds trust and a deeper connection.

### Flexible scheduling

Host families receive up to 45 hours of childcare per week (no more than 10 hours per day) on a schedule they decide—whether they're looking for early mornings, 9-5 coverage, or even help on weekends.

### Affordable & predictable cost

Since costs do not increase with family size, hosting an au pair is often more affordable than daycare or a nanny for families with two or more kids.

### Help with child-related chores

Au pairs assist with tasks like preparing host kids' meals, doing their laundry, and tidying their play spaces and bedrooms. Note that these responsibilities must be specific to the children and cannot include general housework.

### An extra driver

Au pairs help with driving and drop-offs and transporting their host kids to school, camp, extracurriculars, appointments, and more.

### Homework support

Au pairs help their host kids stay on track with schoolwork, offering encouragement and keeping their assignments organized. Note that this cannot include providing homeschooling instruction.

### Culture, language & global perspectives

Au pairs share the traditions, holidays, and language of their home country with their host family, bringing cultural exchange and global perspectives into their everyday life.

### Screened & trained candidates

Au pairs complete a multi-step screening process, including a one-on-one interview, English assessment, and reference and background checks. They also attend a 32-hour online training program before arriving in the U.S.

### Cultural Care Au Pair is:

- ✓ A childcare program
- ✓ A flexible and affordable childcare solution
- ✓ A cultural exchange experience for host families

### Cultural Care Au Pair is not:

- × A cheap childcare alternative
- × Household help for the entire family
- × A replacement for a night nurse or specialized caregiver
- × A domestic worker or nanny service

## Host family requirements

### Citizenship

Host parent(s) must be U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents

### English

English must be the primary language spoken in the home

### Background checks

All adults in the household must pass a criminal background check

### Living arrangements

Families must provide a private bedroom, three meals per day, a phone and phone plan, and transportation to classes and activities

### Weekly stipend

Families must pay at least the minimum weekly stipend, even during the au pair's vacation or sick days

## Our host families

# Steps to becoming a host family

### **Build a profile in the Cultural Care app**

Host families start their journey by creating a profile in the Cultural Care app. This includes sharing information about their family setup, childcare needs, home, and community. They submit references, photos, and an optional video. Families are encouraged to use their profile to show au pairs what life in their household would really feel like.

### **Begin Host Family Preparation courses**

In the app, new host families complete the first two Host Family Preparation courses:

1. Welcome to Cultural Care Au Pair
2. Matching

### **Connect with au pair candidates to find a match**

Once a host family's profile is complete, they can begin browsing au pair profiles using filters like arrival date, gender, home country, driving competency, language, and more to find candidates who meet their preferences. They can initiate chats and video interviews with up to five au pairs at a time to find the right fit. When a host family and au pair mutually agree to match, they confirm it directly in the app.

### **Complete an in-home interview with your LCC**

Before their au pair arrives, host families complete an in-home interview with their Local Childcare Consultant. The LCC checks the au pair's living space, reviews program requirements, and answers any questions the host family may have.

### **Finish Host Family Preparation courses**

In the app, new host families complete the last four Host Family Preparation courses:

1. Au Pair Program Basics
2. Au Pair Arrival
3. Cultural Exchange
4. Communication

### **Get ready to welcome their au pair**

About two months before the au pair's arrival, host families are prompted to book their au pair's flights in the app. This is also when we suggest they prepare the au pair's room with thoughtful touches like a framed family photo, a few snacks, toiletries, or local recommendations to help make their au pair feel at home.

### **Make arrival day special**

Host families often greet their au pair at the airport with as many family members as possible. We encourage a handmade welcome sign as a fun, personal touch.

## Our host families

## Program pricing

In our messaging, we always lead with the minimum upfront host family investment and break down additional costs when there's more room to explain (like a website or brochure). In brief formats—like a 15-second ad—we focus on top-line numbers, but our onboarding process ensures families receive a full and transparent financial picture.

Minimum cost\*:

One-time program fee of \$11,245<sup>1</sup>

Minimum weekly stipend of \$195.75<sup>2\*\*</sup> × 52 weeks = \$10,179

**Total of \$21,424/year or approximately \$1,785/month<sup>3</sup>**

Additional costs

– **Room, board & utilities**

Three meals a day and a suitable private bedroom

– **Transportation & insurance**

Access to a car and car insurance if needed for childcare duties, as well as a way for the au pair to get to classes and activities

– **Phone & phone plan**

A phone with a U.S. number for use during their program term together.

– **Education**

Up to \$500<sup>4</sup> to be put toward the au pair's education requirement (6 academic credits or 72 classroom hours at an accredited U.S. institution)

## Common misconceptions about hosting

- × Au pairs are only for wealthy families
- ✓ Hosting an au pair can be more affordable than daycare or a nanny, especially for larger families, since pricing is per family, not per child
  
- × Au pairs are cheap labor or live-in maids
- ✓ The au pair program is regulated by the U.S. Department of State, which limits on-duty hours, defines child-specific responsibilities, and sets a minimum weekly stipend
  
- × You'll lose your privacy
- ✓ Au pairs are young adults with full lives of their own; they typically spend their off-duty time exploring, socializing, and traveling
  
- × Au pairs only come to the U.S. to party and travel
- ✓ Our screening process ensures that all our au pairs understand the serious responsibilities involved in the program; local office staff assess motivation and readiness before approving a candidate

### Pricing details

<sup>1</sup> Au pairs pay a smaller program fee to the foreign office that screens them, but no portion of that fee is used to pay for the costs of their international airfare or domestic U.S. transportation. Au pairs may be charged additional fees in the event of special travel requests.

<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Department of State has determined that au pairs are required to receive from their host families at least \$195.75 per week. Host families and au pairs are free to discuss and agree to compensation higher than the required stipend minimum; however, this cannot be in exchange for the au pair exceeding the regulatory limits on working hours (10 hours per day; 45 hours per week) or performing duties beyond childcare-related tasks. The State Department formula is based on the federal minimum wage and applicable room and board credits. Any change in the federal minimum wage or the applicable credits will result in an increase in this minimum stipend amount. Please note, should a family extend beyond the first year, they would be responsible for the stipend for each week of the extension term.

<sup>3</sup> Monthly minimum average cost to host an au pair, regardless of the number of children the au pair cares for. This cost includes the agency fees and the minimum weekly stipend paid directly to the au pair for 52 weeks, including 2 weeks of paid vacation. Does not include incidental costs of hosting an au pair, such as meals, insurance, and other amenities.

<sup>4</sup> This contribution towards an au pair's education requirement is determined by the U.S. Department of State, and families agree to comply with any increase that is issued.

\* Pricing based on 2026 rates; subject to change.

\*\* In Massachusetts, additional regulations apply to the au pair minimum stipend.

# The “spirit of the program”





## The “spirit of the program”

This is a phrase we use often at Cultural Care. The “spirit of the program” is about building real relationships, navigating differences with empathy, and approaching the year with openness and respect. When host families and au pairs embrace it, they’re more likely to have a successful and enriching experience.

## What it means for host families

### **Live-in childcare**

Living together helps au pairs align with their host family’s values, routines, and parenting style. This allows for more consistent care and builds trust and a deeper connection.

### **Treat your au pair like extended family, not household help**

Include them in your day, respect their boundaries, and show that you value who they are.

### **Take an interest in their life beyond childcare**

Ask about their background, hobbies, and goals. Check in about how they’re enjoying their time in the U.S.

### **Invite them to celebrate American experiences & traditions**

Share holidays like Thanksgiving, the Fourth of July, or Halloween, and help them feel part of your family’s culture.

### **Honor their traditions and special moments**

Celebrate their holidays and make the effort to acknowledge their birthday and milestones that matter to them.

### **Offer grace and patience when things get lost in translation**

Adjusting to a new culture and role takes time. Misunderstandings will happen, but kindness and empathy go a long way.

## The “spirit of the program”

# What it means for au pairs

### **Get to know your host family beyond your childcare role**

Take an interest in their lives, values, and hobbies, not just your on-duty responsibilities.

### **Join in for family time**

Whether it’s dinner, a weekend outing, or an activity at home, participating helps build connection and trust.

### **Share your culture with pride**

Bring a part of your home country into your host family household through traditions, recipes, songs, and holidays.

### **Be flexible when plans shift**

Occasional schedule changes may happen. Flexibility shows maturity and teamwork.

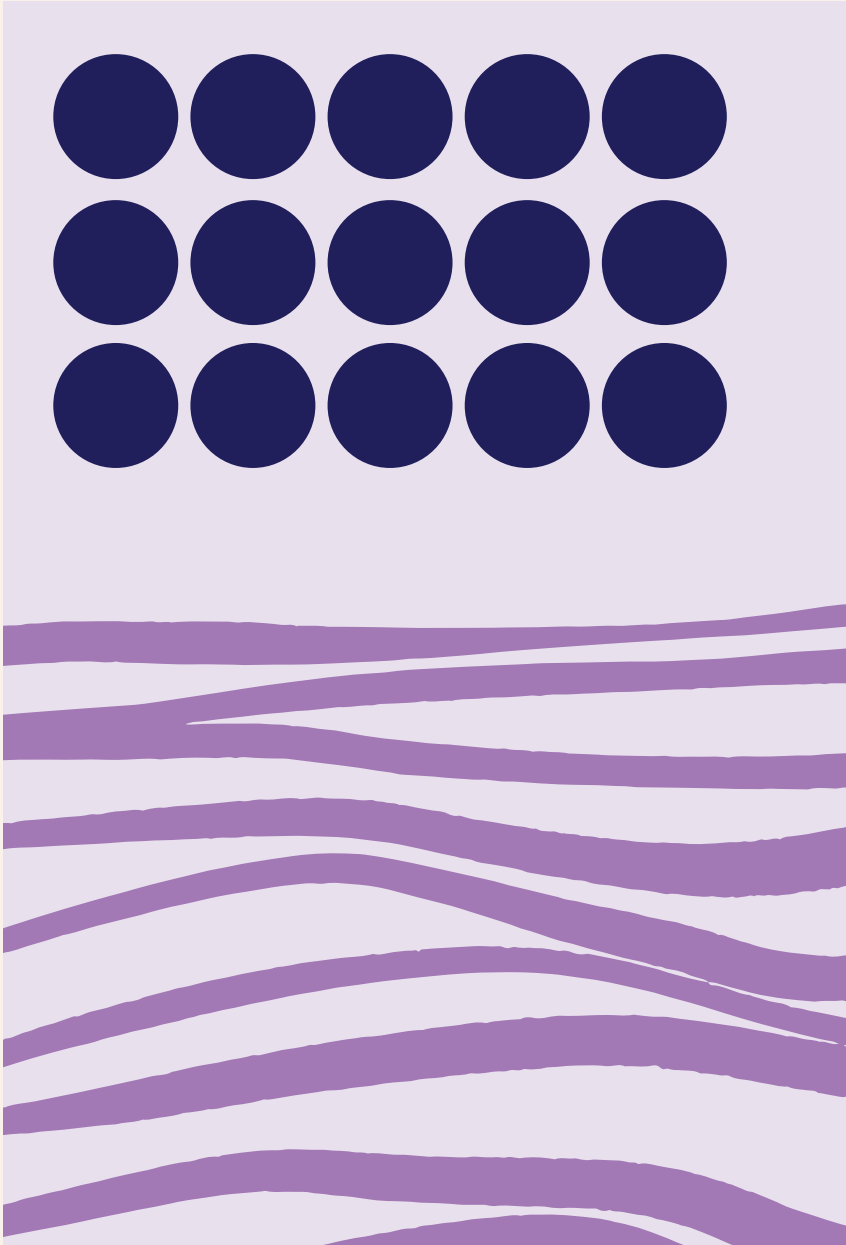
### **Respect the home and house rules**

Treat your host family’s space the way you would your own. Be mindful, clean, and considerate.

### **Practice gratitude for your unique experience**

Every host family is different. Focus on the positives rather than comparing your experience to others.

# The U.S. Department of State





**The U.S. Department of State oversees the au pair program as part of its broader mission to promote educational and cultural exchange, and everyone in the Cultural Care community benefits from a clear understanding of what that role entails. Because The State Department’s involvement is regulatory and legal, our language about them must always be accurate, specific, and compliant.**

## **Establishing au pair program regulations**

The State Department sets official regulations that ensure all au pair agencies function as cultural exchange programs, and not simply as childcare arrangements. These rules are designed to protect the safety and well-being of both au pairs and host families, and preserve the program’s cultural exchange mission. Key areas covered by these regulations include:

- Au pair screening, preparation, and training
- On-duty hours and time off
- Host family responsibilities including housing and meals
- Weekly au pair stipend requirements
- Educational credit requirements
- Program duration and extension options
- Ongoing local support for au pairs and host families

## **Approving designated sponsors**

Only State Department-designated organizations can sponsor au pairs in the U.S. Cultural Care Au Pair is one of 14 approved sponsors and the largest in the country. The State Department monitors our compliance through regular reporting and audits.

## Issuing J-1 visas

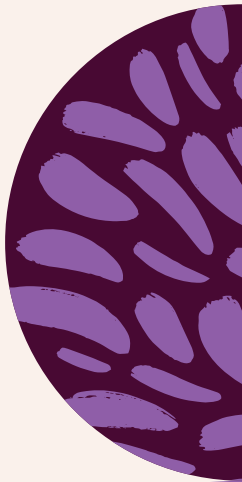
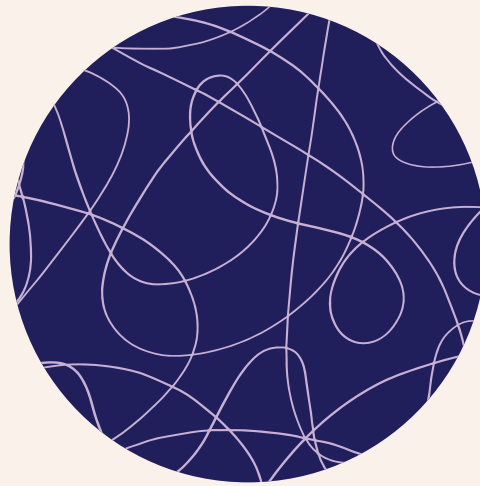
All au pairs must obtain a J-1 visa to participate in the program. These visas are issued by the U.S. Department of State. To receive one, au pairs must attend an in-person interview at a U.S. embassy in their home country. While most applications are approved, rejections can occur, and au pairs have the right to appeal depending on their circumstances.

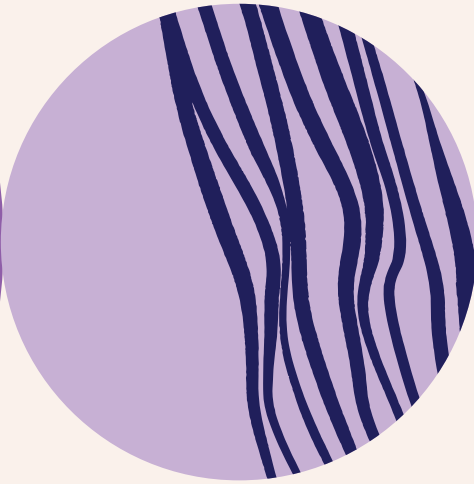
## Cultural Care Au Pair requirements

While the State Department provides a solid foundation, Cultural Care Au Pair has established additional requirements to further strengthen the experience for our participants. These include:

- Requiring that au pairs' 1.5 days off each week are provided consecutively
- Conducting criminal background checks on all adult members of the host family's household
- Completing our Host Family Preparation training before the au pair's arrival

# Our organization





## Our organization

**Cultural Care Au Pair is a global organization with a local presence. While we have offices all over the world, we operate as one unified team, dedicated to making the au pair and host family experience successful for every participant**

## Our connection to EF Education First

EF Education First has been the world leader in international education since 1965. Each year, more than a million people travel, learn a language, earn a degree, or participate in an exchange program through EF.

Cultural Care Au Pair is one of two EF-affiliated programs focused on cultural exchange (the other is EF High School Exchange Year). Our au pairs and host families—by living together and learning about each other—bring EF’s mission of fostering global empathy to life.

## A global organization with a local presence

Our core teams operate from the following locations:

- **Cambridge, Massachusetts**  
U.S. headquarters
- **Denver, Colorado**  
U.S. office
- **Zurich, Switzerland**  
Au pair recruitment headquarters
- **Au pair recruitment offices**  
15 global offices covering 30+ recruitment countries

Note that, legally, Cultural Care Au Pair operates as two separate entities. While these entities are distinct on paper, externally we present ourselves as one organization. Unless required by contracts or permissions, we simply refer to ourselves as Cultural Care Au Pair.

- **Cultural Care Inc.**  
Based in Massachusetts, handling all U.S. operations
- **International Care Ltd.**  
Based in Switzerland, overseeing all non-U.S. operations

### EF at a glance:

- 50+ countries
- 600+ offices and schools
- 52,000+ educators, staff, and tour directors

### How we talk about our EF connection

When referencing EF, we always say:

- Cultural Care Au Pair is affiliated with EF.
- Cultural Care Au Pair is part of the EF family of companies.

For specific legal language, consult with your manager or the EF legal team.

## Our organization

# The people behind our program

Cultural Care’s success is powered by a wide range of teams, from Sales and Marketing to Technology, Finance, Government Relations, Operations, Host Family Preparation, and beyond. While many departments contribute to our mission, host families and au pairs primarily interact with the following teams who support them directly throughout their journey. See **pg. 56** for more information.

### **Customer Support**

This U.S.-based Customer Support team provides day-to-day assistance with program inquiries, general questions and support for specific au pair and host family situations. Support is provided via phone, live chat or requests submitted directly from the au pair and host family app.

### **Customer Relations Specialists (CRSs)**

This U.S.-based team provides expert assistance to host families and au pairs navigating more complex challenges. They help to resolve issues that other Cultural Care staff or LCCs are unable to resolve alone, including the rematch experience.

### **Local Childcare Consultants (LCCs)**

LCCs are independent contractors—not Cultural Care employees—who live in the same communities as our host families and au pairs, and provide personal, ongoing support throughout the program term. An LCC’s role includes:

- Conducting an in-home interview with host families before their au pair’s arrival
- Contacting the host family and au pair within 48 hours of the au pair’s arrival
- Visiting the host family’s home within two weeks of the au pair’s arrival
- Facilitating monthly personal check-ins with both host families and au pairs throughout their program term
- Organizing at least two community events per year—known as Host Family Day Conferences—for both host families and au pairs
- Providing additional support when needed

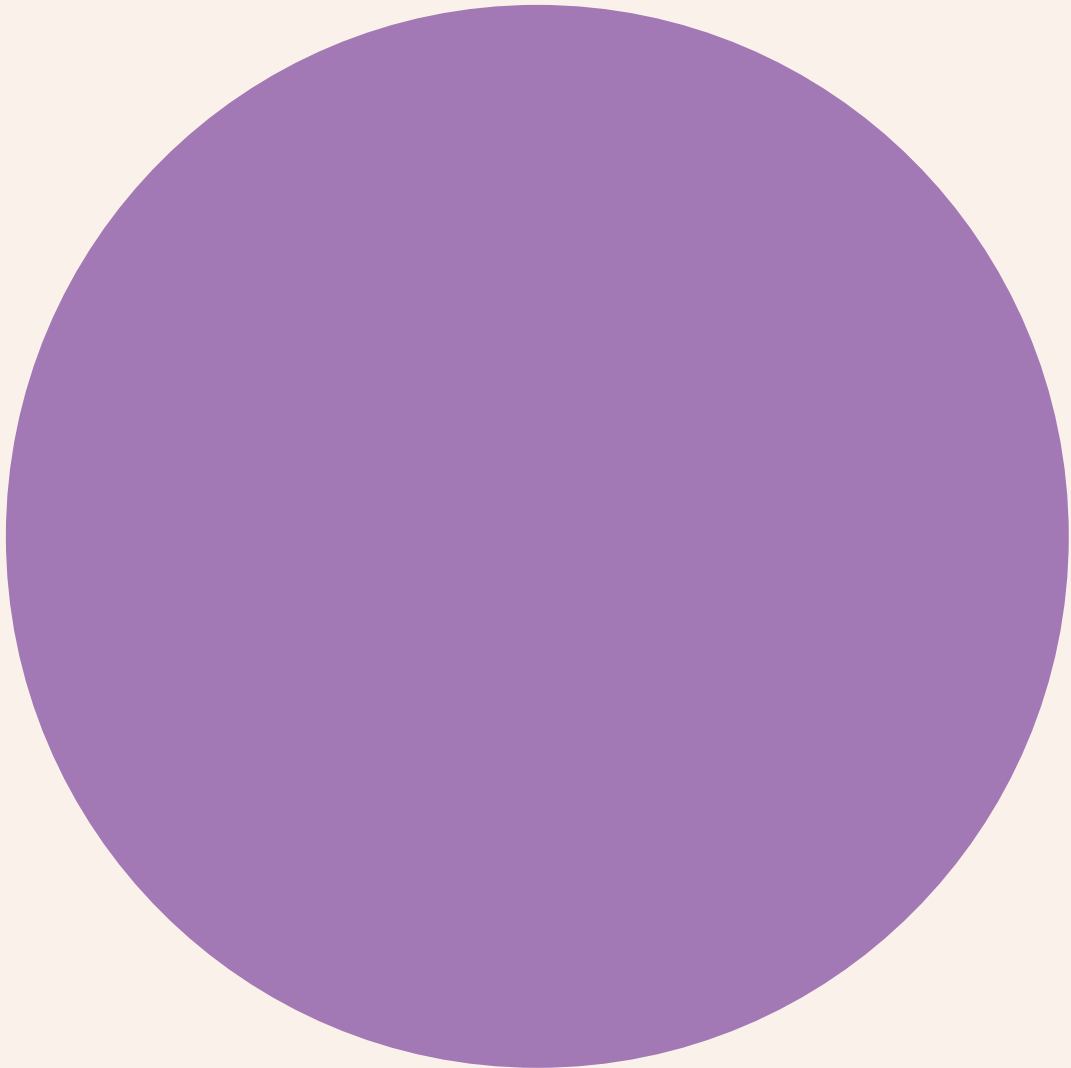
### **Placement team (Matching Specialists)**

This U.S.-based team helps our host families and au pairs find their ideal match through guidance and matching expertise.

### **Staff in recruitment country offices**

Au pairs engage with the team members of their local Cultural Care office as they apply, interview, match, and prepare to travel. Support from this home country office continues throughout their time in the U.S.

# What sets us apart





## What sets us apart

**We're the largest au pair agency in the U.S., but it's not just our size that sets us apart. It's how we use our scale, experience, and care to deliver the highest quality program for host families and au pairs alike.**

## Industry-leading impact

### Experience

With over 35 years of experience, we're global experts in every part of the au pair journey—from screening and training to matching and support. We've helped more than 175,000 au pairs join American families, and all our policies and procedures are tried, tested, and continually refined.

### Quality

Our scale and success allow us to reinvest in and improve the tools, training, and support we provide every participant. We implement our own quality and safety standards—often going above and beyond what's required—and we continuously innovate to make the program as meaningful and rewarding as possible.

### Selection

With the largest selection of pre-screened au pairs and host families, we offer unmatched opportunities to find the right match faster, easier, and with more confidence.

### Designation

We are a designated sponsor of the au pair program, approved by the U.S. Department of State and fully compliant with all federal program regulations and requirements.

### Community

The more we grow, the more global families we create—helping make the world a more connected and more compassionate place. We're proud to have the largest au pair alumni ambassador group in the world.

## How we support success

### Advice from day one

Our staff helps every participant—au pairs and host families alike—understand the program and determine if it's the right fit for them. From there, we support our au pairs and host families through each step of their journey.

### Selective screening

Our multi-step screening process is specifically designed to accept participants that are motivated, well-suited for the program, and likely to thrive.

## **What sets us apart**

### **Expert matching**

Our team of Matching Specialists guides families and au pairs through the placement process, supporting meaningful and successful matches.

### **Thorough preparation**

We set program participants up for success through an extensive onboarding, which includes orientations, mentoring, pre-departure resources, and even free online language courses.

### **Ongoing support**

From application to program end, we offer proactive, personalized support through our staff in our recruitment countries, our local representatives, and our office staff in the U.S.

## **Big in size & in heart**

Cultural Care Kids First Foundation, our 501(c)(3) charitable foundation, is dedicated to enriching the lives of children in need, with a special focus on the countries where our au pairs come from. Kids First gives back by funding nutrition, education, culture, and recreation programs around the world. Everyone in the Cultural Care community is invited to get involved by donating, volunteering, hosting fundraisers, and more.

- Only nonprofit of its kind run by a U.S.-based au pair agency
- Cultural Care matches every donation dollar-for-dollar
- 100% of proceeds go directly to children's organizations
- To date, we've supported 164 organizations in 22 countries

## **Accreditations & memberships**

### **U.S. Department of State**

Designated by the Department of State as a sponsor of the federal au pair program.

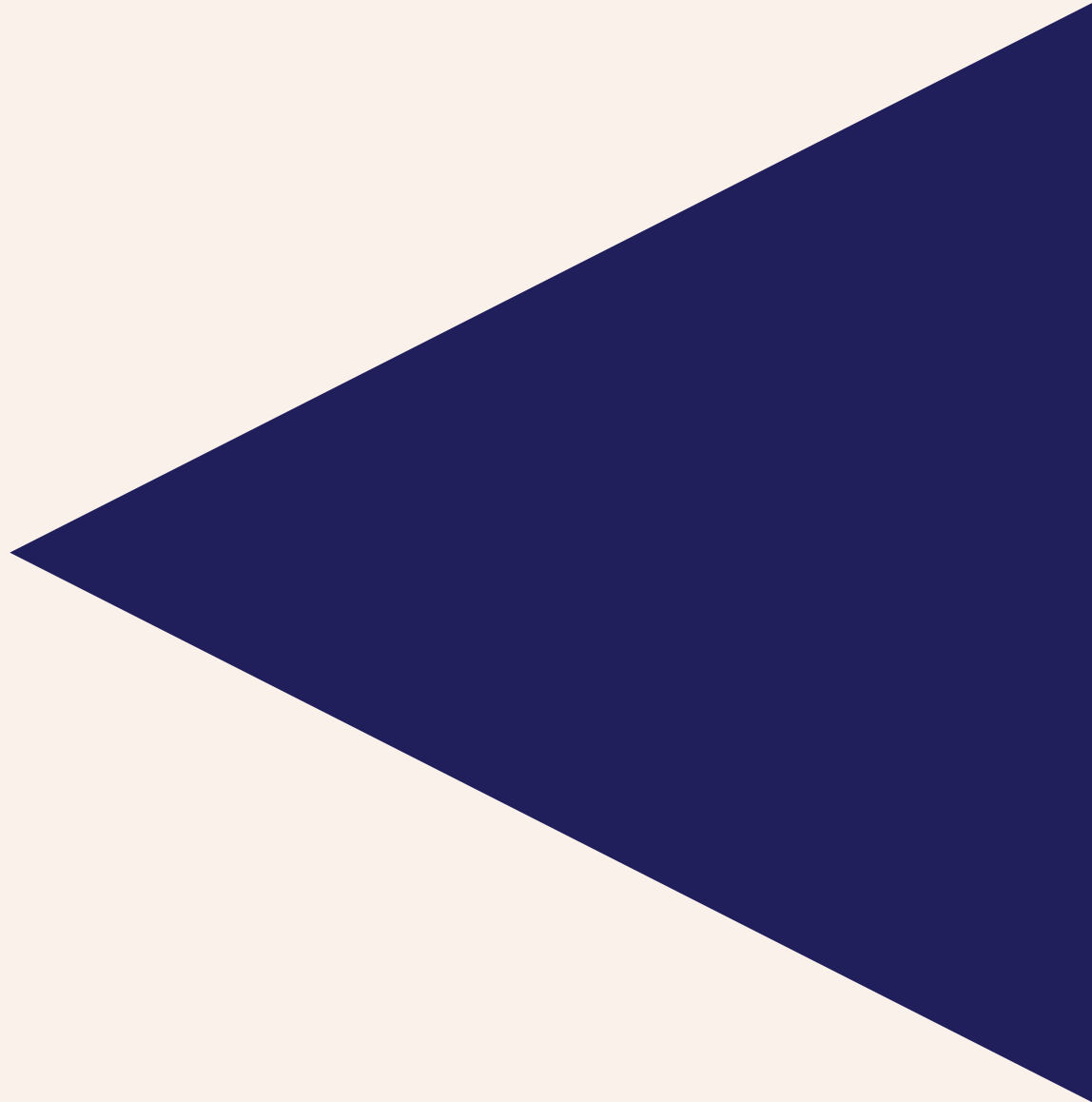
### **Alliance for International Exchange**

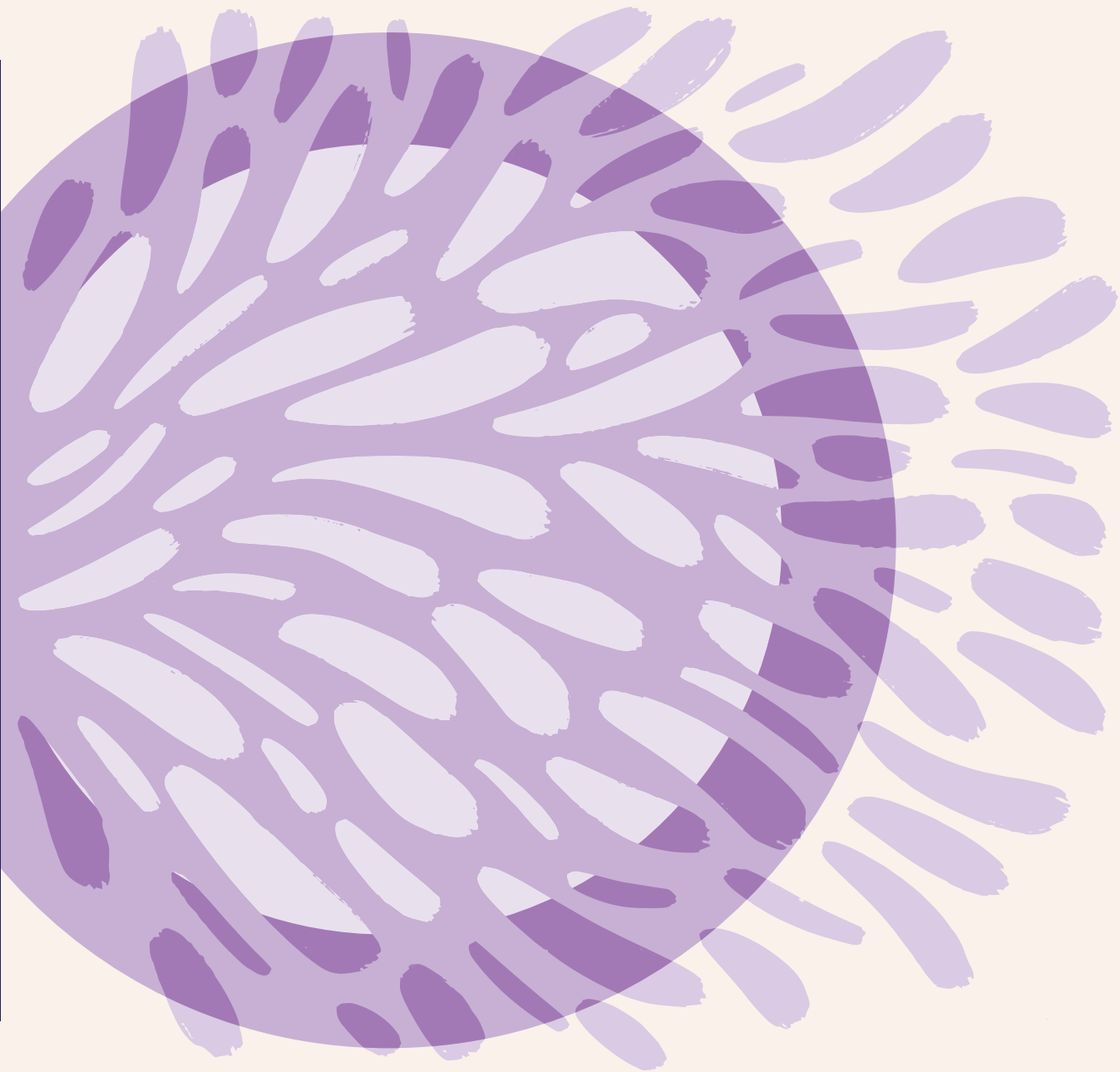
Organization whose mission is to promote the growth and impact of exchange programs.

### **International Au Pair Association (IAPA)**

The leading global trade association representing organizations active in all aspects of au pair and cultural exchange programs.

# How we communicate





# Our tone, voice & style

At Cultural Care, we use the same tone, voice, and style intentionally and consistently, so au pairs and host families understand who we are, what we offer, and what to expect from the very beginning.

## How we talk

<b>Tone</b>	Confident, warm, clear
<b>Voice</b>	Human, honest, joyful
<b>Style</b>	Simple, helpful, conversational
<b>Never</b>	Exaggerated, formal, salesy

### Our tone is confident, warm & clear

We communicate with confidence, not pushiness. We aim to sound approachable and friendly across every touchpoint, never stiff or robotic. And we always prioritize clarity, ensuring our message lands regardless of the reader’s background, language, or familiarity with the program.

× Cultural Care is regarded as one of the world’s top-tier travel opportunities—being an au pair will knock your socks off!

√ *Looking for an international travel experience that’s rewarding and full of growth and adventure? Becoming an au pair could be for you.*

### Our voice is human, honest & joyful

We write like real people talking to real people. We’re transparent about what our program is and isn’t, so people have the guidance to understand if it’s the right fit for them. There’s pride in what we do, and our voice reflects that. It’s encouraging and uplifting, but never performative or forced.

× Our program connects you with an au pair who will support you and your children full-time while introducing transformative cultural enrichment into your household.

√ *Your au pair becomes part of the family—sharing in the highs, helping with the everyday, and bringing their own culture and traditions into your home.*

## How we communicate

### **Our style is simple, conversational & helpful**

The au pair program can be complicated—our job is to make it easier to understand. We write in plain language and straightforward sentences. We communicate in a way that sounds conversational, but not overly casual. We focus on what the reader needs to know in the moment and we avoid jargon, even when covering complex topics like compliance or cost.

- × Our program equips families with customizable childcare whose responsibilities are defined by U.S. Department of State compliance standards.
- √ *Au pairs live with your family and help care for your children, up to 10 hours a day and 45 hours a week. Their schedule is flexible, so you decide what hours work best for your needs.*

### **We are never exaggerated, formal, or salesy**

We don't use dramatic language, inflated claims, or over-the-top excitement. We steer clear of corporate wording and overly formal phrasing, and we don't rely on hard-sell tactics. Our program speaks for itself through real stories and meaningful impact.

- × Act now to kick off your au pair year and find a lifelong second family in the USA—spots are going fast!
- √ *With over 35 years of experience and thousands of successful matches, we're here to help you find the right host family for your au pair program term.*

### **What we want people to hear, feel & remember**

Messaging that is clear, consistent, and rooted in the values of cultural exchange.

A program that offers meaningful benefits, but that also comes with real responsibilities.

That embracing the spirit of the program isn't just encouraged—it's essential to a successful experience.

That there is joy, growth, and connection in discovering a new culture, a new language, and a new way of life.

# Writing for a global audience





**Because our content reaches people across the U.S. and around the world—in different communities and cultures, and with different lifestyles and value systems—it’s important to write in a way that’s respectful and accessible to everyone who reads it.**

## **Inclusivity & cultural sensitivity**

We aim to make everyone feel seen, respected, and welcome. That starts with the words we use. Inclusive, culturally sensitive messaging reflects the diversity of our community and helps to avoid alienating prospective and current program participants.

### **Avoid assumptions about:**

#### **Income or class**

While U.S. Department of State regulations require host families to provide certain things, like a private bedroom, don’t assume every family has unlimited means or lives in a large home. Likewise, don’t assume every au pair has access to the same resources. For many au pairs, this is their first time traveling outside their community and away from their family.

#### **Family structure**

Say “host parents” instead of “host mom and dad,” and remember that nuclear families can come in all shapes and sizes.

#### **Stereotypes**

While we often highlight how an au pair’s culture may shape their lifestyle or values, avoid reducing individuals to oversimplified generalizations like “South Americans are passionate” or “Germans are always on time.”

#### **Holidays and traditions**

Not everyone celebrates the same holidays, and that’s a good thing. When highlighting specific celebrations—like a host family’s Christmas tradition—feel free to name them. But when speaking more broadly, choose inclusive terms like “holiday season.”

#### **Disability and identity**

Use people-first language that centers the individual, not the condition. For example, say “children with special needs” rather than “special needs children.”

## Considerations for translation

Much of our au pair-facing content is translated into different languages, which means that the original English copy is only part of the final message. Writing with translation in mind helps ensure all our au pair communications remain clear and effective.

### **Best practices for writing for translation:**

#### **Avoid idioms and slang**

Phrases like “on the same page” or “it’s a no-brainer” don’t translate well and can confuse readers.

#### **Keep sentences short and clear**

Aim for one idea per sentence. Use simple sentence structures.

#### **Choose clarity over cleverness**

Wordplay, puns, and overly stylized headlines are hard to translate and easy to misinterpret.

#### **Consider space in design**

Languages like German and Dutch often use longer words, so leave enough room for expanded text when writing for buttons, headers, and formatted visuals.

# Guidelines





## Guidelines

**Here's your go-to reference for getting all the small details right: how we phrase, format, and punctuate messaging to maintain quality and consistency across of our communications.**

### How to use our company name

#### **Cultural Care Au Pair**

Use our full company name—Cultural Care Au Pair—on first mention. After that, you can shorten it to Cultural Care for simplicity and flow. This is especially important when our logo isn't visible or when we're communicating outside of our own branded materials and platforms.

When modifying a noun, stick with the shortened "Cultural Care."

*Cultural Care host families*

*Cultural Care au pairs*

*Cultural Care team*

#### **Cultural Care Kids First Foundation**

When referencing Cultural Care Kids First Foundation, use the full name on first mention. Then refer to it as Kids First in subsequent mentions.

## Guidelines

# Formatting & punctuation

### Acronyms

Spell out acronyms on first mention, followed by the acronym in parentheses. Use the acronym alone on subsequent mentions.

*The Local Childcare Consultant (LCC) in Denver planned a coffee meet-up. The LCC also hosted a hike later in the week.*

### Ampersands

Use ampersands in headlines. In subheads, ampersands can be used when needed for design reasons, such as to trim character count or to avoid single lines of text being visually separated from the rest of its paragraph. Avoid ampersands in body copy unless part of a proper noun.

**Headline example:** *Au pairs & host families: Best tips for communication*

**Body copy example:** *The au pairs and host families met at Barnes & Noble for coffee.*

### Bullets

Use a period only if the bullet is a complete sentence. Do not use a period for phrases or fragments.

### Capitalization

Capitalize all proper nouns (see pg. 48).

*Au Pair Life Event  
Matching Specialist  
Ambassador Program*

Keep “au pair” and “host family” lowercase unless part of our company name.

*The Bright family is hosting their fourth au pair.  
The host family lives in California.  
All Cultural Care au pairs receive First Aid and CPR training.  
Cultural Care Au Pair is regulated by the U.S. Department of State.*

Use sentence case for headlines and subheads, capitalizing only the first letter of the first word and any proper nouns.

*Introducing Au Pairs Unpacked: Cultural Care’s new podcast*

## Guidelines

*for families*

### Commas

Use the Oxford (serial) comma in all lists.

*Au pairs can help with the morning routine, school pick-ups, and meal prep.*

### Dates

Because numeric dates vary globally—and many countries use [Day/Month/Year] instead of [Month/Day/Year]—avoid this format all together.

Instead, always write out as [Month] [Day], [Year].

*Host Family Webinar | September 5, 2025*

If not using the day, write out as [Month] [Year].

*The au pair is scheduled to arrive September 2025.*

### Exclamation points

Use sparingly.

### Numbers

Spell out numbers one through nine. Use numerals for 10 and above except when a sentence begins with a number, in which case it should always be spelled out.

*The Smith family has three children.  
We hosted 10 events in 2025.  
Ten au pairs joined us for the training.*

### Periods

Don't use a period at the end of headlines. Do use a period at the end of subheads.

***We provide support from day one***  
*Staff in our Boston, Denver, and Austin offices are ready to help.*

### Pronouns

Use they/them for au pairs unless gender is specified.

*After your au pair arrives, it's a good idea to help them open a bank account.*

## Guidelines

### Quotes

Always include:

- Em dash for attribution
- The role of the speaker  
    Au pair, host parent, etc.
- The speaker's location  
    Au pairs should be identified by country  
    Host families should be identified by U.S. state  
    (spelled out, not abbreviated)
- The speaker's location  
    Au pairs should be identified by country  
    Host families should be identified by U.S. state  
    (spelled out, not abbreviated)
- Punctuation inside the quotation mark

*“The au pair program has been more than we could have expected and hoped for.”*

— Ashley, host mom in Colorado

*“My host family made me feel welcome as soon as I arrived.”*

— Daniella, au pair from Spain

### Time

Use cardinal numbers and “am/pm” (lowercase, no space).

*On Fridays, the au pair is on duty between 8am and 3:30pm.*

When referencing events or communications across time zones, include the time zone (capitalized, with a space).

*Join us at 2pm ET for the Host Family Welcome Session.  
The event will run from 6pm–7:30pm PT.*

### For anything not covered here, defer to AP style

We follow Associated Press (AP) guidelines for grammar, punctuation, and usage when not otherwise specified in this guide.

## Guidelines

### Language & messaging

#### **Say “on-duty,” not “work”**

In host family communications, we never describe an au pair’s childcare responsibilities as “work.” Instead, we say they are “on-duty.” This language is essential for compliance and helps position our program correctly.

The term “work” should also be avoided in au pair communications. It can, however, be used in certain contexts like when distinguishing Cultural Care from traditional “work and travel” programs.

#### **Say “host,” not “hire”**

Host families don’t “hire” au pairs—they “host” them. While parents may search for terms like “hire a nanny,” we deliberately avoid this language, even for SEO purposes. The term “host” supports the cultural exchange framing and helps maintain legal clarity.

#### **Say “extended family member,” not “employee”**

Au pairs are not employees, and host families are not employers. Instead, we refer to au pairs as extended family members, a sentiment often echoed by host parents who describe their au pair as feeling like a niece, nephew, or older sibling.

#### **Say “stipend,” not “salary”**

Au pairs receive a weekly stipend, not a salary. This distinction is important for both compliance and clarity. “Stipend” reinforces the cultural exchange framework and makes clear that au pairs are not employees. Host families pay this stipend directly to their au pair each week, following the minimum amount set by the U.S. Department of State.

#### **Say “multi-step,” not “rigorous” or “comprehensive”**

When describing our screening and training processes, stick to factual adjectives like “multi-step.” Avoid qualifying words like “careful,” “rigorous,” or “comprehensive,” which may introduce unintended legal liability. This applies to both au pair and host family materials.

## Guidelines

### **Say “developed with au pairs in mind,” not “comprehensive”**

The above also applies to our travel insurance language. Rather than calling it “comprehensive,” we say our travel insurance was “developed with au pairs in mind.” This phrasing centers the audience, while avoiding legal qualifiers.

### **Say “program term,” not “program year”**

Because au pairs can extend their stay by 6, 9, or 12 months, we use “program term” to reflect the fact the experience isn’t limited to a single year.

### **Say “program participants,” not “customers”**

When referencing both host families and au pairs, we say “program participants” as it reinforces our mission-driven experience. While “customers” can be used internally or in certain operational contexts, avoid it in brand or marketing copy.

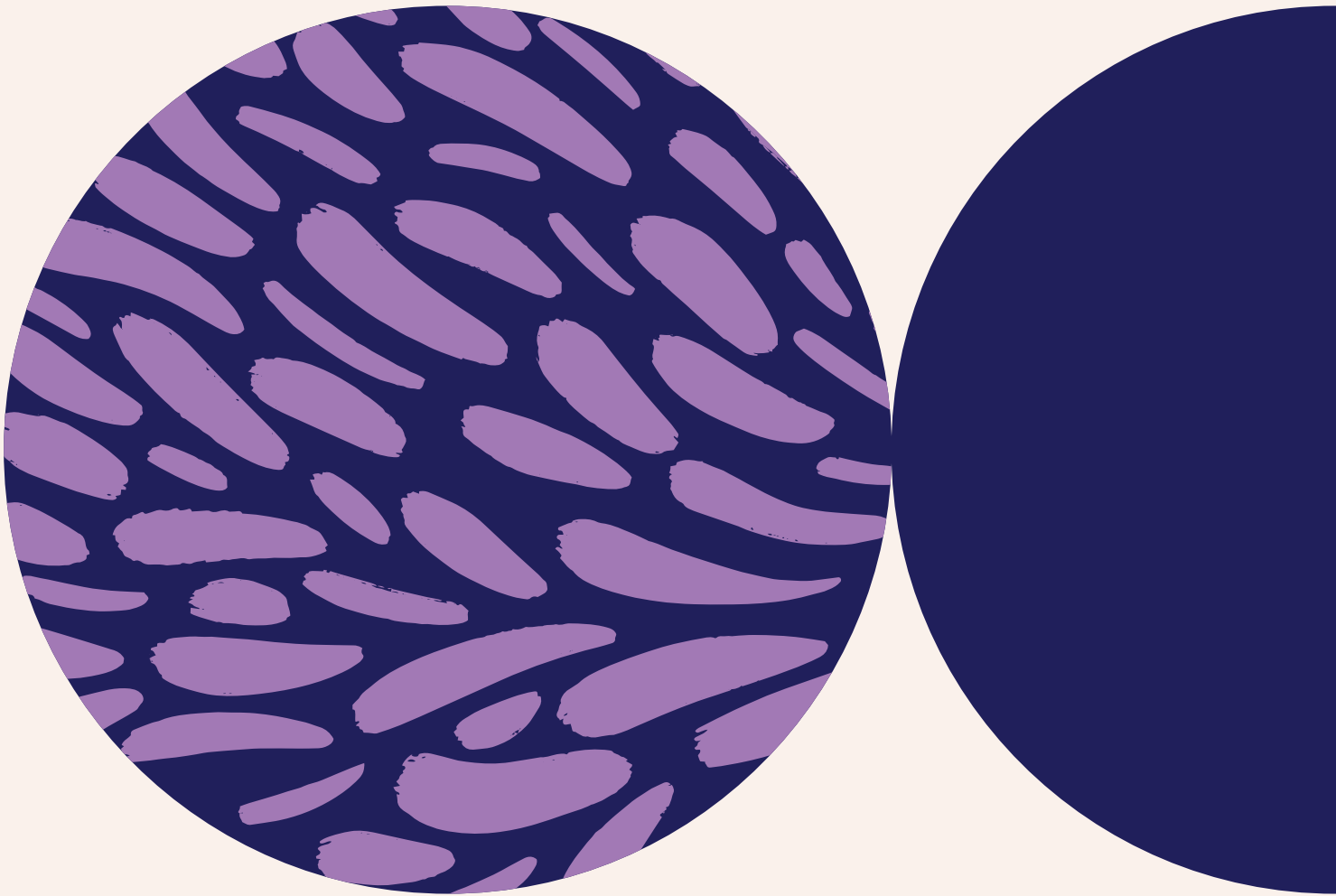
### **Say “rules” or “regulations,” not “guidelines”**

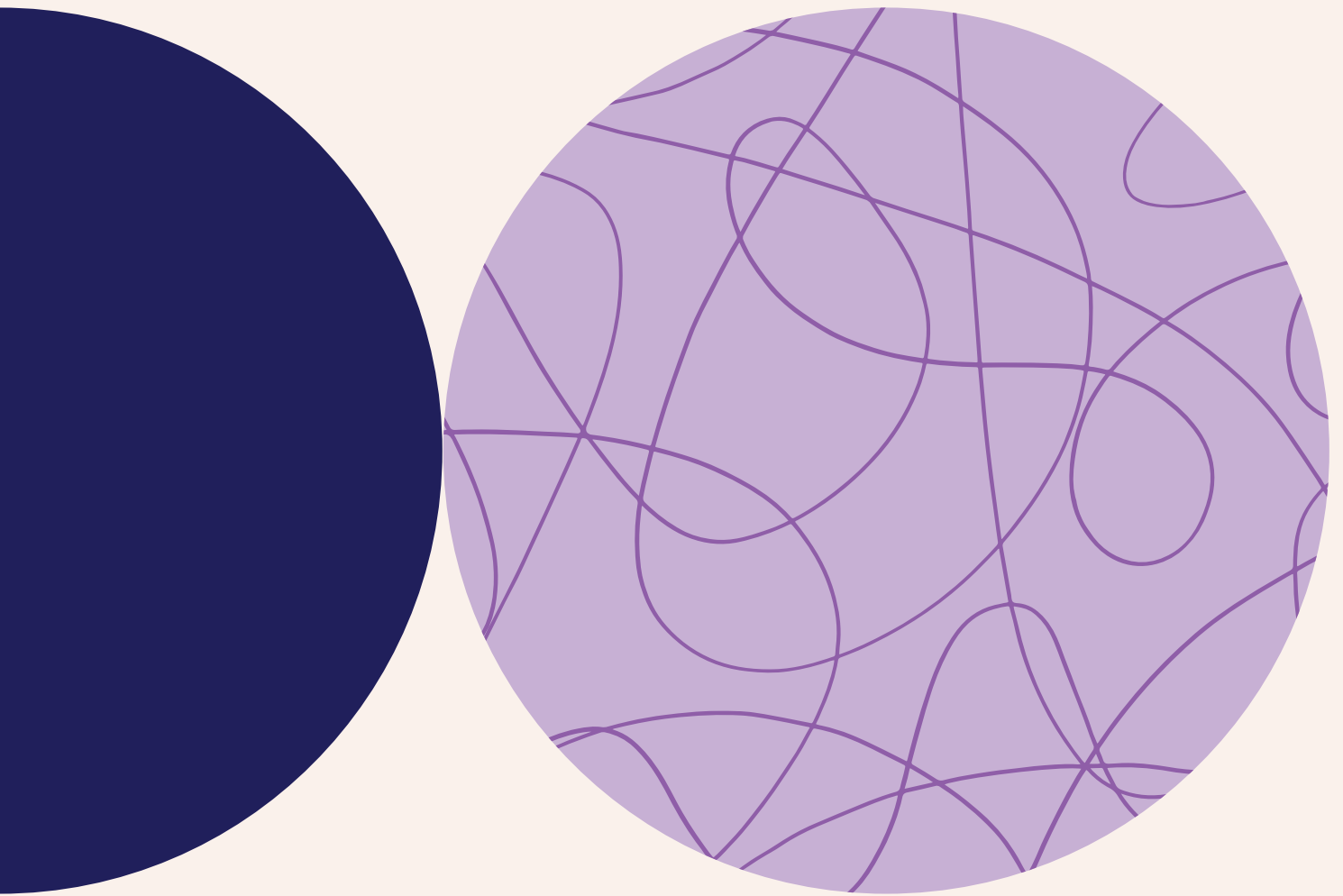
The au pair program is governed by rules, not suggestions. Always use “rules” or “regulations” to emphasize that compliance is required by the U.S. Department of State.

### **Say “USA” for au pairs and “U.S.” for host families**

For au pairs we use “USA” as it’s the most familiar term internationally. For host families, we use “U.S.” (always styled with two periods). We generally avoid using “America” as a standalone term, although it’s okay as an adjective (as in “American families” or “American culture”).

# Glossary





**Here's your go-to reference for the terminology we use most often in our messaging. This is what we say, and what we mean, when we talk about our program.**

## Teams & roles

### Customer Support team

The Customer Support team answers questions from host families and au pairs about the program, ranging from general questions to specific questions including host family payments and invoices. They provide quick, knowledgeable support on day-to-day needs.

### Customer Relations

Customer Relations Specialists step in when situations require more support than a Customer Support team member or Local Childcare Consultant can provide. They often help families and au pairs navigate complex challenges, including the rematch process.

### Local Childcare Consultant (LCC)

Local Childcare Consultants are independent contractors who provide local, on-the-ground support to host families and au pairs during the program. Their responsibilities include:

- Conducting a home interview with host families to review program rules and inspect the au pair's bedroom
- Conducting the 48-Hour Call and Two-Week Orientation (**see Glossary pg. 58**)
- Checking in with families and au pairs monthly
- Planning two Host Family Day Conferences per year (**see Glossary pg. 58**)
- Offering ongoing support and answering questions as needed

### Matching Specialists

Matching Specialists help host families connect and match with an au pair who fits their needs, lifestyle, and personality. They:

- Educate families about our pool of au pair candidates
- Provide insights into cultural differences among au pair countries
- Suggest potential matches
- Answer questions about the matching process
- Provide additional support as needed

### Program Counselor

Program Counselors are independent contractors who provide additional support to au pairs facing personal or emotional challenges such as homesickness, depression, culture shock, or difficulties with their host family. They are trained mental health professionals, often with backgrounds in counseling, therapy, or social work.

### Program Manager (Massachusetts)

Program Managers are full-time Cultural Care staff who support host families and au pairs across Massachusetts. They serve in place of LCCs, as Massachusetts has different regulations around independent contractor classifications. Unlike LCCs, Program Managers handle both sales and ongoing support. They guide families through the enrollment process and provide compliance oversight and year-long service to both host families and au pairs. Like LCCs, their responsibilities include:

- Conducting the 48-Hour Call and Two-Week Orientation (**see Glossary pg. 58**)
- Checking in with families and au pairs monthly
- Planning two Host Family Day Conferences per year (**see Glossary pg. 58**)
- Offering ongoing support and answering questions as needed

### Recruitment offices

Recruitment staff work in Cultural Care's global offices to recruit, screen, and prepare au pairs for their program term. They help candidates understand program rules, host family expectations, and the benefits of participating—ensuring au pairs are ready for a successful and rewarding experience in the USA.

# Programs & initiatives

### Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program engages au pairs who are passionate about sharing their au pair experience. It offers opportunities to inspire others, build global connections, and champion cultural exchange. Ambassadors can contribute as community builders, mentors, influencers, or advocates.

### Au Pair Referral Program

The Au Pair Referral Program encourages au pairs to refer friends or family to join Cultural Care. Managed by our Recruitment offices, it rewards participants with raffles and prizes for spreading the word about the program.

### Au Pair Training School

The Au Pair Training School is an online program run by Cultural Care Au Pair and required by the U.S. Department of State that helps prepare au pairs for their time in the U.S. Training is led by live instructors and covers topics such as:

- Health & safety in the home
- Food & nutrition
- Age-appropriate activities
- Building self-esteem in children
- Behavior management
- Communication
- CPR and First Aid training from the American Heart Association

### Extension Program

The Extension Program allows au pairs in good standing, who have completed their education requirement, to extend their stay in the U.S. for 6, 9, or 12 months—either with their current host family or with a new one.

### Get Ready Workshop

The Get Ready Workshop is a follow-up session taken by au pairs who have finished Au Pair Training School. It provides practical advice on living in the U.S., strategies for handling homesickness and culture shock, communication tools, and inspiring stories from former au pairs.

### Host Family Preparation Courses

Host Family Preparation Courses are online webinars that help new host families get ready to welcome an au pair. Topics include:

- Welcome to Cultural Care Au Pair
- Matching
- Au Pair program basics
- Au pair arrival
- Cultural exchange
- Communication

### Host Family Referral Program

The Host Family Referral Program encourages families to refer friends, relatives, colleagues, or neighbors to Cultural Care Au Pair. Each host family has a unique referral link, and when a referral results in a match, both families receive a \$250 referral bonus (terms apply). Referrals are one of the strongest sources of new families for Cultural Care.

### Cultural Care Kids First Foundation (Kids First)

Kids First is Cultural Care's 501(c)(3) charitable foundation with a mission to enrich the lives of children in need. It funds opportunities for nutrition, education, culture, and recreation, drawing strength from Cultural Care's global community to create a brighter future for children around the world.

### MyAuPairCourses

MyAuPairCourses is a series of self-paced online modules au pairs complete before Au Pair Training School. These courses prepare them with foundational knowledge for the program.

# Government & regulations

### 48-Hour Call

The 48-Hour Call is a phone check-in that Local Childcare Consultants (LCCs) make with host families within 48 hours of their au pair's arrival. This U.S. Department of State requirement helps confirm that the au pair has arrived safely and that the first few days of the cultural exchange experience are off to a positive start.

### Education Requirement

All au pairs must complete an educational component as part of their program term. First-year au pairs are required to complete 6 credits (or 72 classroom hours) at a U.S.-based, post-secondary accredited institution. Host families contribute up to \$500 toward this requirement. Extension au pairs must also complete coursework: 6 credits for 9- and 12-month extensions, and 3 credits for 6-month extensions. Au pairs must complete their coursework to remain in good standing, and first-year au pairs must do so in order to extend.

### Host Family Day Conference

Local Childcare Consultants (LCCs) are required by the U.S. Department of State to organize at least two events per year for their community of host families and au pairs. These gatherings create a welcoming environment where program participants can connect with one another.

### J-1 visa / J-1 cultural exchange visa

A J-1 visa is required to legally participate in the au pair program. It is issued by the U.S. Department of State to applicants who apply through a designated program sponsor such as Cultural Care Au Pair.

### Two-Week Orientation

The Two-Week Orientation is an in-home meeting led by the Local Childcare Consultants (LCC) within two weeks of an au pair's arrival. During this visit, the LCC introduces themselves in person, reviews important program rules, answers questions, and ensures the au pair is settling in successfully. This meeting is required by the U.S. Department of State.

### U.S. Department of State

The U.S. Department of State is the federal agency that manages foreign policy and oversees the au pair program. It sets program regulations, establishes rules for participation, and designates sponsors like Cultural Care Au Pair.

### Weekly stipend

The weekly stipend is the minimum amount host families must pay their au pair (\$195.75 per week). This amount is determined by the U.S. Department of State and based on the federal minimum wage and applicable room and board credits. Host families may choose to pay more, but never in exchange for exceeding the program's limits on hours (10 hours per day, 45 hours per week) or performing duties beyond childcare-related tasks.

### Matching terms

#### Good program standing

“Good program standing” describes an au pair or host family who is meeting all program requirements and embracing the “spirit of the program” (pg. 24). For host families, this includes staying up to date on invoices and for au pairs, this includes completing the Education Requirement.

#### Host family renewal

When a host family chooses to welcome another au pair after their current au pair’s program term ends.

#### House Rules

House Rules help set expectations and create a smooth experience. Host families outline guidelines for their household, family members, and vehicles. A template is available in their account to make it easier to create a clear and comprehensive list.

#### Infant-qualified

An infant-qualified au pair has at least 200 hours of documented experience caring for children under the age of two. This qualification allows them to provide childcare for host children aged three months to two years old.

#### International Driver’s Permit

An International Driver’s Permit (IDP) translates a valid domestic driver’s license into multiple languages. It is not a license on its own, but serves as a translation to help authorities in the U.S. verify driving credentials. Cultural Care requires all au pairs to have an IDP, since most host families need their au pair to drive while on duty. State licensing requirements vary, so families and au pairs should discuss what’s needed locally.

#### NeuroColor Personality Test

The NeuroColor Personality Test is a science-based assessment used exclusively by Cultural Care Au Pair and is a required part of the au pair application. Results appear in participant profiles and can be used throughout the program to strengthen communication and understanding.

#### Program fee

Both host families and au pairs pay a program fee. Host families pay a larger, fixed fee, while au pairs pay a program fee that varies by country.

#### The spirit of the program

The “spirit of the program” (pg. 24) is a phrase we use with participants to describe the shared mindset that makes our program successful. It means practicing empathy, openness, and genuine curiosity about each other’s culture. Embracing this spirit helps au pairs and host families form deeper connections, enjoy a more rewarding year, and gain meaningful insights into another culture.

#### Welcome Box

Cultural Care Au Pair sends a Welcome Box to every new host family when their au pair arrives. It includes resources to help start the year off smoothly, such as:

- Host Family Handbook with tips and guidance
- Communication Journal for schedules and stipend tracking
- Activity Poster featuring cultural activities and a U.S. map
- Au Pair Journal with prompts for reflection and documentation
- Letters to the Au Pair—a set of six encouraging notes to open when extra support is needed

### App terms

**Arrival week/date**

The preferred date an au pair is scheduled to arrive in the U.S. to begin their program term.

**Au pair candidates**

Au pairs currently available to match with host families.

**Chat**

The in-app messaging feature that allows host families and au pairs to communicate.

**Domestic transportation**

A flight within the U.S., often used for au pair arrival or return travel.

**End chat**

Closing or terminating a conversation with an au pair candidate in the app.

**Favorites**

A list of au pair candidates a host family has liked and saved for consideration.

**Flight modification**

A change made to an au pair's flight itinerary.

**Home-bound flights**

Flights that return an au pair to their home country after their program term.

**Host-bound flights**

Flights that bring an au pair to the U.S. to begin their program term with their host family.

**Hosting requirements**

The eligibility criteria host families must meet in order to participate in the au pair program.

**Match**

When a host family and an au pair mutually agree to live together for the program term.

**Matching experience**

The process host families and au pairs go through in the app as they search for and decide on the right fit.

**Rematch**

When a host family and an au pair decide to end their placement early and look for a better fit.

**Renewal**

When a host family chooses to welcome another au pair after their current au pair's program term ends.

**Screening and Enrollment Call**

A mandatory call between a Cultural Care staff member and a prospective host family to review program details and assess eligibility.

**Start a chat**

When a host family initiates contact with an au pair candidate through the app.



