

# U.S. Department of State

## Au Pair Exchange Program

Fostering daily cultural exchange in American homes for more than 25 years

### Key program elements

- Au pairs experience **direct involvement in the daily life of the American people** by living with host families, caring for their children, and engaging in cultural activities outside the home.
- Au pairs **gain valuable career skills**, while American children are **inspired at a young age to become global citizens**.
- Au pairs complete an **educational requirement** (at least 6 hours of academic credit), and get involved in their host communities through **community service** and other activities.
- Participants are between 18 and 26 years old and stay with their host families for 12 months, with an option to extend 6, 9, or 12 months.
- Participants come on privately funded programs, **at no cost to the taxpayer**.

### Fostering peace by creating “international families”

The Au Pair Program provides participants with broad exposure to American culture and society, and fosters greater knowledge and appreciation among Americans of the participants’ home countries. In accomplishing these goals, the program assists in the development of peaceful relations and strengthens cultural ties between the U.S. and other nations.

“Au pair” is the French term for “on par.” Indeed, the connection between au pairs and their host families typically transcends terms like “visitor” or “guest.” Rather, the au pair is “on par” with his or her hosts, becoming like a member of the American family. Host families share American culture with their au pairs, and au pairs in turn share their own traditions, customs, food, songs, and ways of life. Families help au pairs practice and improve their English, while au pairs are able to teach their native language to their hosts. Au pairs and host families often stay in touch after the completion of the program, and travel to visit one another, creating an international “second family” connection that lasts for years.

### Preparing Americans to succeed in a global economy—starting at a young age

American children are inspired by their au pairs to learn about other people, cultures, and countries. As a result of the international exposure their au pairs bring into their homes, these children develop aspirations to travel the world, learn new languages, and become global citizens. Fostering notions of international engagement, cultural learning, and language study at an early age helps prepare Americans to thrive in a globalized economy. Such preparation can make these individuals more successful in their future studies and careers, and ultimately help make the United States and its people more prosperous and secure.

## **Creating leaders and partners for the future**

Each au pair completes the program having developed new skills and qualities that will be valuable in a future career. Through a mandatory educational component, au pairs gain increased academic training and engage in service to their American host communities. They greatly improve their English language skills and gain American perspectives on responsibility, initiative, and problem solving. Au pairs acquire flexibility, patience, and compassion, and become global citizens. These skills and qualities—combined with their deepened understanding of American values and culture—make these young people, many of them from countries key to U.S. national security interests, strong partners for the U.S. as they move into careers in a variety of sectors.

## **Protecting the interests of au pairs and host families**

The Alliance and its members support strong program regulations that protect the interests of au pairs, as well as their American host families. Au pair sponsor organizations are designated by the Department of State, which regularly monitors and makes adjustments to the regulations governing the au pair program. These regulations require that:

- Au pair working hours are limited to 45 hours per week (no more than 10 hours in one day);
- Au pair household responsibilities are limited to those related to care of the children;
- Au pairs are granted 1.5 days off per week, at least 1 full weekend off each month, and 2 weeks of paid vacation per year;
- Au pairs receive at least \$500 from their host families toward the completion of their educational requirement;
- Each host family has an assigned local program coordinator who lives within a one-hour drive;
- Local program coordinators conduct an orientation with each host family and au pair within 14 days of an au pair's arrival;
- Local program coordinators maintain monthly personal contact with host families and host monthly check-in meetings for their au pairs;
- All au pair sponsor organizations must submit an annual independent audit to the Department of State, to ensure regulatory compliance.