

International Leadership of Texas Information for J-1 Exchange Visitors



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www.iltexas.org/j1-home

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Responsible Agency:

Administration and regulation of the Exchange Visitor Program is through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs under the United States Department of State. The Immigration and Naturalization Service ensures compliance of both sponsors and participants in the Exchange Visitor Program through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which is described below. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Academic and Government Programs Division is located at 2200 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20522-0582. Their website address is <http://j1visa.state.gov/>

Welcome to the International Leadership of Texas!

This J-1 program handbook contains important and useful information pertaining to the J-1 program. This information is intended to help you maintain your immigration status as well as acclimate to life in Texas. ILTexas is here to assist you both before and during your stay in the United States. Please read this handbook carefully as many of your questions will be answered in this guide. You can also view the official **EVP Welcome Brochure** [HERE](#).

J-1 Program at International Leadership of Texas

International Leadership of Texas provides qualified foreign Spanish and Chinese teachers the opportunity to teach at an ILTexas K-8 or high school campus. ILTexas is designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor Exchange Visitor Teachers.

The mission of ILTexas is to prepare students for exceptional leadership roles in the international community by emphasizing servant leadership, mastering the English, Spanish, and Chinese languages, and strengthening the body, mind, and character. The Exchange Visitor Teacher Program promotes foreign language and cross cultural awareness among the children of Texas, and it encourages the language and cultural development of exchange visitors

Exchange Visitor Teachers are required to teach full-time (minimum of 32 hours per week) during the school year. Teachers will be placed at an ILTexas primary school or secondary school based upon their experience as a teacher and the needs of the organization. A competitive salary based on experience will be offered for the duration of the Exchange Visitor Teacher's employment. Teachers are permitted to teach in the United States for up to three years. An extension of one or two years may be available. Note, this is a temporary exchange program, and at the completion of the program, the Exchange Visitor Teacher will return back to his or her home country.

Objectives of the J-1 Program

The Exchange Visitor Program's purpose under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. § 2451 et seq.) is to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world; to promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is controlled by the U.S. Department of State that provides opportunities for foreign candidates looking to travel and gain experience in the United States. Exchange Visitors are able to come to the United States to pursue a program in one of fifteen categories. The Exchange Visitor's program may have a duration ranging from a few weeks to several years. ILTexas is only authorized to sponsor J-1 Exchange Visitors from the "Teacher" category.

All Exchange Visitors are expected to return to their home country upon completion of their program in order to share their exchange experiences.

Important Definitions Regarding the J-1 Program

Exchange Visitor Program (EVP)- Program administered by the U.S. Department of State for the purpose of teaching, instructing or lecturing, studying, observing, conducting research, consulting, demonstrating special skills, receiving training, or to receive graduate medical education or training.

Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)- Database used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Department of State to monitor exchange visitors in the United States.

Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (E-CFR)- An editorial compilation of CFR material and *Federal Register* amendments produced by the National Archives and Records Administration's Office of the Federal Register (OFR) and the Government Publishing Office. Exchange Visitor Programs have to follow the statutes listed in the E-CFR.

Responsible Officer (RO) and Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO)- ILTexas employees authorized to issue DS-2019's and maintain exchange visitor information in SEVIS. The RO and ARO must ensure that the ILTexas J-1 program is in constant compliance with the exchange visitor program regulations.

DS-2019- Basic document used in the administration of the exchange visitor program. The DS-2019 allows a prospective exchange visitor to pursue an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate in order to obtain a J visa to enter the United States. This form also identifies the exchange visitor and their designated sponsor.

I-94- Form used by U.S. Customs and Border Protection intended to keep track of the arrival and departure to/from the United States of people who are not United States citizens or lawful permanent residents.

ILTexas J-1 Program Eligibility

In order for a foreign national to be considered for the ILTexas J-1 program, teachers must meet the following guidelines as noted in CFR §62.24 (Teachers)

Foreign nationals are eligible to participate in exchange visitor programs as full-time teachers if, at the time of initial application to the sponsor, an individual making such application demonstrates to the satisfaction of the sponsor that he or she:

1. Either:

(a) Meets the qualifications for teaching at the primary, including pre-kindergarten, or secondary levels in schools in his or her home country; is working as a teacher in his or her home country at the time of application; and has at least two years of full-time teaching experience;

OR

(b) Is not working as a teacher in his or her home country at the time of application, but otherwise meets the qualifications for teaching at the primary (including pre-kindergarten) or secondary levels in schools in the home country; has had at least two years of full-time teaching experience within the past eight years; and, within 12 months of his or her application submission date for the program, has or will have completed an advanced degree (beyond a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree) in education or in an academic subject matter that he or she intends to teach or that is directly related to his or her teaching subject field;

2. Possesses, at a minimum, a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree in either education or the academic subject field in which he or she intends to teach;

3. Satisfies the teaching eligibility standards in Texas;

4. Official government-issued documents verifying candidate is of good reputation and character;

5. Agrees to come to the United States temporarily as a full-time teacher of record in an accredited primary or secondary school;

6. Supply at least three (3) reference letters from colleagues, supervisors and/or principals attesting to that teacher's good reputation, character and teaching skills. One of these letters MUST be from the teacher's current principal or school headmaster;

7. Demonstrate proficiency of the English language. A free English proficiency test will be required of all candidates.;

8. Submit a letter from the teacher's home country head of a school, which states that school's willingness to work with the exchange teacher on the cross-cultural activity component. The foreign school with which the exchange teacher plans to work must be at the same academic level as the foreign teacher's proposed host school. The letter submitted as part of the foreign teacher's application package must be signed by the head of the school or another individual in an appropriate position of authority to speak for the school within the foreign country's school system; the official signing the letter must list both email and telephone contact information. The letter may be submitted in English or in the original language of the home country with an English translation; the name, title/organization and contact information of the translator must be noted on the translation.

9. Confirm financial ability and sufficient funds to cover relocation expenses to the United States and living expenses for at least 2 months after arrival.

Basic Guidelines for Maintaining your J-1 status

Below is a summary of what ILTexas J-1 teachers must do to appropriately maintain their visa status.

- *J-1's must have a valid passport at all times*
- *J-1 dependents must maintain health insurance that meets the U.S. Department of State requirements*
- *J-1's must report any changes to their U.S. residential address, email, phone number or primary site of activity within 10 days of the change*
- *J-1's must pursue the objective of the J-1 teacher program. J-1 Exchange Visitor teachers are employed and paid by International Leadership of Texas. Employees are not allowed to accept employment from any other company, institution, or individual. Acceptance of any other form of employment is a violation of program status and the exchange visitor is subject to termination as a participant in the Exchange Visitor Program.*
- *J-1's must have the appropriate re-entry documents to re-enter the U.S. if traveling*

212 (e) Two- Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement

When a J-1 Exchange Visitor agrees to participate in an Exchange Visitor Program and their program falls under the conditions explained below, they will be subject to the two-year home-country physical presence (foreign residence) requirement. The exchange visitor will be required to return to their home country for two years at the end of their exchange visitor program. This requirement under immigration law is based on Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

An exchange visitor is subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement under the following conditions:

- The exchange visitor J-1 Visa program is funded in whole or in part directly or indirectly by the U.S. government or the government of their nationality or last residence.
- Exchange Visitor is a national or permanent resident of a country which has deemed their field of specialized knowledge or skill necessary to the development of the country.

Whether the exchange visitor is subject to this rule will be determined by the consular officer at the visa interview and will be indicated on the J Visa. If the J-1 brings a J-2 dependent, they are also subject to the 212(e) requirement.

Maximum Length of Stay

The category shown in item 4 of your DS-2019 determines your maximum period of stay under your J-1 program. See the second page of the DS-2019, 1(c) "Limitations of Stay." After you have successfully completed your program, you are permitted to remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days. During this 30-day period, it is often referred to as the "Grace Period". You may travel inside the United States during this time, but you are not eligible to travel to another country as you will not be permitted re-entry to the United States because of the expired J-1 visa.

Extending your J-1 program

Exchange Visitor Teachers in their 3rd year are eligible to apply for an extension of one or two years, but not by a semester or by other fractions of academic years. A teacher should inform ILTexas of the desire for an extension, and the program sponsor will apply for an extension on behalf of the teacher. Applications for extensions should be made no later than three months prior to the beginning of the desired extension period. Extensions must be approved by the Department of State. Please reach out to ILTexas Responsible Officer for more information.

Incident Reporting

22 CFR 62.13(d) Serious problem or controversy. Sponsors must inform the Department of State on or before the next business day by telephone (confirmed promptly in writing by facsimile or email) of any investigations of an exchange visitor's site of activity or serious problem or controversy that could be expected to bring the Department of State, the Exchange Visitor Program, or the sponsor's exchange visitor program into notoriety or disrepute, including any potential litigation related to a sponsor's exchange visitor program, in which the sponsor or an exchange visitor may be a named party.

The Department of State requires ILTexas to monitor the health, safety and welfare of their J-1 teachers and their J-2 dependents. The J-1 or J-2 dependent must notify ILTexas immediately by email or phone so that our office can provide assistance and report the incident if needed pertaining to any of the examples below:

- ❖ *Exchange Visitor Death*
- ❖ *Exchange Visitor Missing*
- ❖ *Exchange Visitor Serious Illness or Injury (e.g., brain injury, severe burn, major surgery, communicable disease, serious mental health incidents, any condition requiring hospitalization of 48 hours or more, etc.)*
- ❖ *Litigation (related to a sponsor's exchange visitor program, in which sponsor or an exchange visitor may be a named party)*
- ❖ *Incident Involving the Criminal Justice System (e.g., arrest, charges, law enforcement, etc.)*
- ❖ *Sexually-Related Incidents or Abuse (an incident or allegation involving sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse)*
- ❖ *Negative Press involving a sponsor's exchange visitor program*
- ❖ *Foreign Government Involvement (including embassy officials)*
- ❖ *Other Situations Impacting Exchange Visitor Safety (e.g., natural disasters, civil unrest, outbreaks of violence)*

Cross Cultural Component Requirement

A cross cultural activity is defined as an activity designed to promote exposure and interchange between Exchange Visitors and Americans so as to increase their mutual understanding of each other's society, culture, and institutions.

During each academic year, the Exchange Visitor Teacher is required to complete two cross-cultural activities, one from each of the following categories:

- An activity for the teacher's classroom, larger host school or host school district population, or the community at large designed to give an overview of the history, traditions, heritage, culture, economy, educational system and/or other attributes of his or her home country. Sponsors of exchange teachers placed at international schools must require their exchange teachers to conduct at least one cross-cultural activity per academic year outside the host school in nearby schools or communities where international opportunities may be more limited than those found in their host school.
- An activity that involves U.S. student dialogue with schools or students in another country, preferably in the exchange teacher's home school, through virtual exchange or other means, in order to supplement the goals of the in-person exchange.

Teachers will be required to submit annual reports describing the cross-cultural activities performed to the Responsible Officer. Support staff at each ILTexas school will assist Exchange Visitor Teachers in fulfilling the cross-cultural component.

Health Insurance

ILTexas will provide health insurance for Exchange Visitor Teachers that meets at least the minimum standard for the Exchange Visitor program. All Exchange Visitor Teachers will receive at least the following health insurance at no cost:

Medical Benefits per accident or illness	\$100,000
Medical Evacuation	\$50,000
Repatriation of Remains	\$25,000
Deductible per accident or illness	\$500

J-1 Teachers at ILTexas are not eligible to enroll in TRS ActiveCare Health Insurance but are welcome to purchase additional insurance that ILTexas offers to their employees such as Vision and Dental.

J-2 Dependents

What is the J-2 Visa?

The J-2 Visa is a non-immigrant visa issued by a consular official at a U.S. embassy or consulate for spouses and dependents (unmarried children under the age of 21) of J-1 exchange visitors who accompany or later join the J-1 holder in the United States. Please visit the official BridgeUSA [website](#) for additional information.

Who is eligible?

Eligibility for a J-2 Visa depends on the specific exchange program being offered to the J-1 non-immigrant by a sponsor organization. The exchange categories of au pair, camp counselor, secondary school student and summer work travel do not permit J-2 Visas. In addition, although some categories allow for spouses and/or dependents to accompany a J-1 Visa holder, there are specific programs that do not.

Reporting Requirements

J-1 teachers must inform their visa sponsor when the dependent will arrive no later than two weeks before the arrival. The J-1 teacher must report the J-2's phone number and email address. Any changes in contact information must be provided to the RO within 10 calendar days.

Employment

J-2 dependents are eligible to apply for employment authorization through USCIS. J-2s must receive an employment authorization document (EAD Card) from USCIS prior to beginning employment. For information on how to obtain work authorization, please contact your Responsible Officer at j1teachers@iltexas.org.

Study

J-2 dependents can study in the U.S. as long as it is not their primary reason of entry to the U.S. Adults are eligible to enroll in a full-time degree-seeking program, and children can study full-time at a primary or secondary school.

Insurance

J-2 dependents are required to have insurance coverage during the duration of their stay in the United States. J-1 teachers are responsible for paying for the insurance. A copy of the insurance for dependents must be provided to your Responsible Officer before the J-2 dependent arrives in the United States.

Insurance must meet the following coverage requirements:

Medical Benefits per accident or illness	\$100,000
Medical Evacuation	\$50,000
Repatriation of Remains	\$25,000
Deductible per accident or illness	\$500

J-2 Departure or Change of Status

If the J-2 dependent changes status or decides to permanently return back to his or her country, you must inform the RO within 10 calendar days so that their SEVIS record can be closed.

Preparing for your arrival to ILTexas

Please take time to review this section, as this will help you with your next steps in preparing you to come to the United States to teach at ILTexas. Please review the checklist to help you prepare for your arrival.



Review Your Visa Documents

-Upon receiving your DS-2019, please review your form and make sure all information is accurate and correct



Pay I-901 SEVIS Fee

-Unless otherwise exempt, J-1's must pay a SEVIS I-901 fee to the U.S Department of Homeland Security. To pay the I-901 fee, please visit: <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>. You MUST keep your receipt because you will need to show proof of payment when you apply for your visa.



Obtain Your Visa

-Once you pay the SEVIS I-901 fee, you can make your visa appointment. Please contact your closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to receive instructions on the non-immigrant visa application.



Arrive in the United States

-J-1's cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to the start date listed on your DS-2019. Upon entering the U.S., you must be able to present a valid passport, your original DS-2019, valid J visa and proof of your SEVIS fee payment.

Pre- Arrival Checklist

- Verify that all the information on your DS-2019 is correct.
- Pay the SEVIS I-901 FEE online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>
- Locate your local U.S. consulate; schedule an appointment for a visa interview: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>
- Apply for a J-1 Visa at the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to your home residence.
- Collect and organize immigration documents needed for your visa interview.
- Secure health insurance for any J-2 dependents (if applicable) and send the information to: j1teachers@iltexas.org
- Arrange travel to United States and relay that information to: j1teachers@iltexas.org

Pre Departure and Arrival

Packing: Below is a list of items that may be beneficial to bring with you. Remember to keep important documents with you in your carry on, as you will need them upon arrival.

- Your driver's license or international driver's license.
- A supply of medications for existing medical conditions. Prescriptions from abroad cannot be filled in the United States. It is a good idea to have your physician provide you with a description of the prescription medicine(s) you take. You can then consult a physician in the U.S. for a prescription that can be filled here.
- An extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- Medical records, dental records, and academic records of any dependents that will be enrolling in school in the United States.
- Birth certificates or other proof of age for children who will be entering school for the first time in the U.S.
- Credit cards (Exchange Visitors sometimes have a long wait after applying for credit cards in the United States). Let them know you will be using it in the US.
- Proof of safe driving record in your home country for the past one to three years, if you might be purchasing automobile insurance in the U.S.
- Your Social Security Number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number if you were issued one on a previous trip to the United States.
- Slides, photographs, magazines, CDs, music and maps of your home country, which can be used in informal presentations you may be invited to give.

Flights to Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW)

ILTexas's International Teacher Orientation is located at our Garland High School campus. It is preferred that you to to Dallas- Fort Worth International Airport. We suggest that teachers who are assigned to Houston and College Station campuses also fly into DFW International Airport as customs delays may interfere with you arriving to Dallas on time for orientation. Love Field Airport is also in Dallas, but it does not offer many international flights.

Customs

At the Airport (or Port of Entry) you will be asked to show your documents in the first city in which you arrive in the United States to be given permission to enter the country. Please carry with you (in your carry-on bag, NOT in your checked baggage):

- Your Passport with J-1 visa stamp
- DS-2019 Form
- Any supporting documentation that was shown to the United States Embassy/ Consulate to obtain the visa.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CPB) officer should return all documents to you. When arriving at a U.S. airport from outside the U.S., the airline will give all non-United States citizens a form to complete while still en route to the United States, either Form I-94 (white), Arrival/Departure Record, or Form I-94W (green), Nonimmigrant Visa Waiver Arrival/Departure Form. The forms ask for basic identification information and the address where you will stay in the United States. Upon arrival, the airline personnel will show you to the inspection area. You will line up in an inspection line and then speak with an Immigration inspector. If you are not a U.S. citizen, you should use the lanes marked for non-citizens. The Immigration inspector must determine why you are coming to the United States, what documents you may require, if you have those documents, and how long you should be allowed to initially stay in the United States. If you are

allowed to proceed, the inspector will stamp your passport. A completed form will show what immigration classification you were given and how long you are allowed to stay. This I-94 Form, not your visa, indicates how long you may stay in the U.S. You will then be permitted to proceed to Customs. You will be able to access your I-94 online, as the U.S. no longer issues paper I-94s at international airports. Make sure you have your passport, visa, and DS-2019 ready to show the officer at the port of entry.

Exchange Visitor Costs and Fees

Upon arrival in the U.S. and while in the U.S. you will be responsible for the following costs and expenses:

- SEVIS I-901 Fee
- Consular/visa application fees
- Travel expenses to and from the United States
- Personal expense money for the initial costs upon arriving in the United States prior to receipt of the first paycheck
- Certification or licensure costs
- Fees for translation of documents into English
- Costs and fees associated with J-2 dependents including insurance premiums
- Insurance (other than medical that is provided by ILTexas)
- Typical expenses such as housing, bills, transportation, food, and all other expenses in the United States

We have also included a chart to visualize the costs associated to living in the U.S. These amounts are not exact and what you spend each month varies person to person.

1-Time fees for teacher only				
Visiting International Teacher (VIT) certification fee		\$78.00		
Texas background check / fingerprinting fee		\$50.00		
Insurance	Teacher only	Teacher + spouse	Teacher + kid(s)	Teacher + family
Medical	ILTexas paid	\$120	\$100	\$150
Dental	\$20	\$40	\$42	\$64
Vision	\$8	\$13	\$14	\$20
Expense	Teacher only	Teacher + spouse	Teacher + kid(s)	Teacher + family
Housing	\$650 - \$1000		\$800 - \$1200	\$1100 - \$1600
Car payment	Monthly - \$500			
Auto insurance/gas	Monthly - \$300 (insurance & gas)			
Auto registration	Yearly cost - \$80			
Renter insurance	Monthly - \$25			
Food	\$100 - \$250	\$150 - \$350	\$250 - \$400	\$350 - \$500
Clothing	\$100+		\$200+	\$300+
Entertainment	\$100 - \$200		\$150 - \$300	\$200 - \$400
Mobile phone	Monthly - \$50/line			
Internet	Monthly - \$65			

Expected Work-Related Deductions

Exchange Visitor Teachers may have the following deductions made from their paychecks:

- Federal Withholding*
- Medicare - 1.45%
- TRS Retirement - 7.7% (mandatory retirement contribution)
- TRS Care - .65% (mandatory contribution to retiree health care)
- Other voluntary benefits

*Some teachers are exempt from federal withholdings due to a tax treaty between the United States and their country of citizenship. For more information, please visit the [IRS U.S. Tax Treaties Publication 901 website](#).

Social Security Card Information

A Social Security Number (SSN) is a tax identification number that will be needed by your employer for payroll and taxation purposes. To work in the U.S., you must have an SSN. In order to be eligible for a Social Security Number (SSN), you will need to present evidence of work authorization to an official at a local Social Security Administration (SSA) office. Please note that it is NOT possible to apply for an SSN online or via an agency. You must have a personal interview with a Social Security Administration representative in a local Social Security office.

When to Apply?

You can apply for a social security number after you have been present in the United States for 10 days on a J-1 visa. This waiting period assures that your record will have been updated in the government's database. In addition, you cannot apply before the start date of your Form DS-2019. ILTexas will assist you in going to a Social Security Administration Office during the International Teacher Orientation in July. If you arrive late and need to go to the SSA office after Orientation, please communicate with your principal to find a good time to go. It is very important that you apply for this card as soon as possible so that your salary payments are not delayed. If you need help with transportation to the social security office, please have your international coordinator help you find someone at the campus to take you to the office.

As soon as you receive the number or a copy of the card, please send it to your HR staffing specialist or to hr@iltexas.org.

If you DO NOT have a permanent address at the time of applying, please use:

1651 N. Glenville Dr. Suite 216, Richardson, TX 75081 (Care of Carrie Hutchinson)

We will then mail you the unopened envelope or send it to your campus with a courier, and you will then need to sign and submit a scan of the card to HR as above.

Obtaining a Driver License or State ID

Teachers are eligible to apply for a Driver License or Texas State ID Card after living in Texas for 30 days. People in Texas can only have a Driver License or a Texas State ID Card. Texas does not allow people to have both cards. If you have a valid driver license from another US state, you need to get a Texas driver license.

The site below lists the nationalities allowed to drive in in Texas for ONE YEAR upon arrival as long as they have had their country license translated to English. You do not need an International Driver's License.

<http://www.dps.texas.gov/DriverLicense/reciprocity.htm>

People from mainland China (and any other countries not listed on the site above) are NOT allowed to drive in the US with only their country's driver's license even if they have the International Driver's Permit. We suggest you use a transportation service until getting your Texas license. HOWEVER- many rental car companies and car dealers do not know these rules and will still allow you to rent or buy a car using only your passport and country license.

International Driver's Permit (IDP). The IDP is a document secured in one's home country of origin and serves only as a valid translation of a home country driver's license. It may not be used by itself, as the official home country driver's license must accompany it to be considered a valid driving document. Please check with your home country government office on how to obtain an IDP in your home country. You will not be able to get an IDP once you are already in the U.S.

*Please note that an IDP is **not** an International Driver's License - the internet has a lot of false information regarding an invalid document called an "International Driver's License". Please do not purchase one of these false documents, as it is not an acceptable legal document to drive in the US.*

To apply for a driver license in Texas, you need to go to the Department of Public Safety. To find the office closest to you, please visit www.dps.texas.gov. Some offices allow you to make an appointment online.

To obtain a driver's license, you need to take the following items to prove you are here legally:

- Valid Passport
- DS-2019
- I-94
- Employment Contract or Letter of Agreement
- Social Security Card
- Proof of Residency (two items, see below)

Proof of Residency: Teachers must provide a proof of residency document verifying that they have lived in Texas for at least 30 days. You must provide any two of the following to prove that you live in Texas. These documents must have your name on them, not your roommate's name.

- Current deed, mortgage, monthly mortgage statement, mortgage payment booklet or a residential rental/lease agreement
- Utility statement (including electric, water, natural gas, satellite TV, cable TV or non-cellular phone bill) dated within 90 days of the date of application
- Current automobile insurance policy or an automobile insurance statement
- Current homeowner's or renter's insurance policy or homeowner's or renter's insurance statement
- Mail from financial institutions; including checking, savings, investment account and credit card statements dated within 90 days of the date of application
- Mail from a federal, state, county or city government agency dated within 90 days of the date of application
- Pre-printed paycheck or payment stub from ILTexas dated within 90 days of the date of application
- Current Form DS2019, I-20 or a document issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Individuals who are unable to provide two acceptable documents may be eligible to complete a [Texas Residency Affidavit](#).

To Apply for a Driver License:

- Complete the application. (This form is available online or at any driver license office.)
- Bring the required documents and fees (usually \$25).
- Pass the Vision Exam at the driver license office.
- Pass the knowledge and driving tests, unless exempt. The written test is available in English and Spanish.
- You may have to take a driving test, please contact the Texas Department of Public Safety for more information.

Banking

During orientation ILTexas will help you set up a bank account at a local bank. Not all banks are the same, even when it comes to basic personal accounts. It can be very wise to contact the banks in your local area to discuss what exactly you'd get if you opened an account.

Opening an account in person is usually the best option for first-time account holders. One big advantage of opening an account in person is that you can ask the teller all of your questions and get immediate answers (as opposed to the waiting you'll have to do online or on the phone). Also, because you can sign the forms and receive your confirmation documents on the spot, the process of opening an account is also usually speedier in person. If you plan to close your account when you leave the country, you may want to ask your bank about account closing procedures. Also, ask your bank about using your bank card when traveling internationally.

Checking accounts allow you to have easy, day-to-day access to the money you deposit into them. With a checking account, you'll get a checkbook and a debit card that you can use to pay for things with the money in your account. You will also have the option to set up a direct deposit. Money in a checking account doesn't change over time. There are usually no minimum account balances required you just have to keep enough money in your account to cover your purchases. It is important to avoid overdrawing your account. Overdrawing your account means that you've spent more than you have in the checking account, and your bank pays the full amount of your purchase. When you overdraw your account, you almost always have to pay fees.

Direct deposit is the easy, worry-free way to have electronic deposits – like paychecks– deposited automatically into your U.S. Bank checking or savings account. Deposits are made electronically, so you never have to worry about losing a paycheck or going to the bank. Moreover, it's much faster than paper deposits. To sign up: Get your employer's direct deposit signup form, provide your bank routing and account information, give the form back to your employer.

Savings accounts allow you to earn interest on the money you deposit. But as the name suggests, these accounts are meant for saving money. So there is a restriction on the number of certain types of withdrawals or transfers you can make in a month and usually a daily minimum balance requirement. Keep in mind, though, that the interest your account earns is considered income and is therefore taxable.

Credit allows us to borrow money with the promise we'll pay it back at the end of the month or pay a fee in the form of interest. When applying for credit cards, it's important to shop around. We suggest you go through your bank. There are several credit cards with various features, but there is no one single best card. When you're trying to find the credit card that best suits your needs, consider The annual fee, APR, rewards, grace period, terms, etc.

Debit pulls electronic cash straight from your checking account.

Cash starts and ends the transaction in plain sight at the register when we hand over paper and coins

A **loan** is an arrangement in which a lender gives money or property to a borrower, and the borrower agrees to return the property or repay the money, usually along with interest, at some future point(s) in time. Usually, there is a predetermined time for repaying a loan. You may need to get a auto loan but we highly suggest that you contact a banker to get more information and work through a bank.

Sales taxes in the United States are taxes placed on the sale of goods and services in the United States. In the United States, sales tax is governed at the state level and no national general sales tax exists. The Texas Sales tax is 8.25% on top of the price of an item.

Tipping Customs

There are a number of circumstances in the United States when tipping is expected and, in fact, where tips make up a substantial portion of the wage of the person involved. Most people tip as follows:

- To porters at airports and train or bus stations, \$1 per piece of luggage (unless a set fee is posted in the terminal);
- To bellboys who show you to your room and carry your baggage in hotels, a minimum of \$1;
- To waiters or waitresses in restaurants, 15-20 percent of the bill (for large groups, a service charge may already be included in the bill);
- To taxi drivers, 10-15 percent of the fare;
- To barbers or hairdressers, 10–20 percent of the bill.

Frequently Asked Questions

I received my visa. When can I arrive in the United States?

Exchange Visitors are permitted entry into the United States no more than 30 days before the start date on form DS-2019.

Will ILTexas buy my plane ticket to the United States?

No. Exchange Visitor Teachers are responsible for all travel to and from the United States.

Does ILTexas offer J-1 visa sponsorship for categories other than teacher?

ILTexas has been designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor teachers. We are not authorized to sponsor any other J-1 visa category.

Does ILTexas offer any other type of work sponsorship for foreign nationals?

ILTexas only sponsors foreign nationals to work as teachers on J-1 visas. We are unable to sponsor foreign nationals with any other type of visa.

Will ILTexas help me change my status in the United States?

ILTexas cannot help applicants change their status. It is recommended that applicants who are in the United States and are eligible to change their status to J-1 contact an immigration attorney to inquire about a change of status.

What salary and benefits will I receive from ILTexas?

ILTexas Exchange Visitor Teachers are compensated for their work consistent with the pay schedule of local teachers with similar education and experience. ILTexas provides Exchange Visitor Teachers with health insurance at no cost. Exchange Visitor Teachers are eligible to enroll in and pay for other benefits such as dental insurance, vision insurance, and life insurance.

Can an Exchange Visitor Teacher work a second job?

Exchange Visitor Teachers are only authorized to perform the work described on their Form DS-2019. Teachers are ineligible to perform any other work for pay and cannot legally earn a wage at any other organization.

Where will I live?

Exchange Visitor Teachers are assigned an International Coordinator to assist with locating housing near the school. Teachers are responsible for housing costs for the duration of their time in the United States.

Do I have to pay taxes?

Exchange Visitor Teachers are paid a salary and are subject to federal taxes. Teachers from certain countries may be exempt from federal taxes due to a tax treaty between the United States and their country of citizenship. If no tax treaty exists, ILTexas will automatically deduct federal income taxes. Exchange Visitor Teachers may be exempt from Social Security and Medicare taxes. Teachers are expected to file a federal tax return each year for the income earned in the United States. If a teacher needs assistance in completing a tax return, he or she should contact a tax professional.

Can I get a driver's license?

Yes. International Coordinators and the International Department assist Exchange Visitor Teachers in finding a car and obtaining a driver's license.

How long can I stay in the United States once my program has finished?

After you have successfully completed your program, you are permitted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days. During this 30-day period, which is often referred to as the "Grace Period," you are under the jurisdiction of the USCIS and are no longer entitled to teach at ILTexas. USCIS grants this period to allow time to prepare for your return to your home country. You may travel inside the United States during this time, but you are not eligible to travel to another country as you will not be permitted re-entry to the United States because of the expired J-1 visa.

Am I eligible to repeat an Exchange Visitor Teaching program once my program is finished?

Teachers must reside outside of the United States for at least two years and must continue to meet the teacher eligibility requirements in order to be able to apply for repeat participation.

Who is considered an eligible dependent?

A dependent must be a spouse or child of the Exchange Visitor Teacher. The age limit for children dependents is 21. Applicants wishing to bring a dependent will be required to submit an English translation of a marriage license or birth certificate.

Does my dependent have to accompany me when I initially come to the United States?

No, Exchange Visitor Teachers can come to the United States to begin their program without dependents. Dependents are able to arrive in the United States at a later date.

Can I add a dependent after I am already in the United States?

Yes. If you would like to add a dependent after arriving in the United States, please email j1teachers@iltexas.org.

Will my dependent have health insurance?

Any accompanying spouse or child is required to have health insurance. The Exchange Visitor Teacher is responsible for paying for the dependent's health insurance.

Can the dependents of an Exchange Visitor Teacher work?

Yes. J-2 visa holders are eligible to apply for employment authorization through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) upon arrival in the United States.

J-2 visa holders cannot work until they receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

The wait time for an EAD application to be approved is typically three to four months. Once approved, J-2 visa holders can obtain a social security card. The EAD will have an expiration date. In order to continue working, dependents must renew their EAD card before this date.

Can J-2 visa holders study?

Yes. J-2 visa holders are eligible to attend school in the United States.

How long can a J-2 visa holder stay in the United States?

J-2 visa holders remain in legal status in the United States as long as the Exchange Visitor Teacher has valid status. Once the teacher's program ends, the J-2 dependent no longer has legal status in the United States.

