

The child safety training, provided by qualified organizations, includes topics such as stress management, shaken baby syndrome, and CPR. Au pairs responsible for children under 2 years of age must have at least 200 hours of documented infant child care experience. **Au pairs may not be placed with a family having a child less than three months of age unless a parent or other responsible adult is present in the home.**

Au pairs will **NOT** have specialized training in nursing. They are **NOT** to provide child care services relating to the care and protection of infants and children performed by such trained personnel as registered or practical nurses.

What costs are involved?

The average annual cost to an American host family is about \$13,000. This includes fees to the sponsoring organization, a weekly payment tied to the minimum wage (currently \$139.05), an educational allowance of \$500, and room/board. The weekly wage for the EduCare participant is \$104.29 with an educational allowance of \$1,000.

ONCE THE AU PAIR IS WITH THE HOST FAMILY

What are au pairs entitled to?

Au pairs are entitled to a private bedroom, meals, a weekly wage that will increase if the minimum wage increases, one and one-half days off each week, a full weekend off each month, two weeks of paid vacation, and the first \$500 (\$1,000 for EduCare participants) toward the costs of required academic coursework.

What are host families entitled to?

Host families are entitled to a maximum of 10 hours a day/45 hours a week (10 hours a day/30 hours a week for EduCare participants) of child care, and they have the benefit of someone from another culture living in their home.

What responsibilities do both parties have?

Either a parent or responsible adult must be present in the home for the first three days that the au pair is with the host family, may include a weekend. The host family and au pair must attend at least one of their sponsoring organization's family day events during the au pair's stay.

There must be a signed written agreement between the host family and the au pair outlining the obligations of both parties. In addition, the sponsoring organizations generally require the host family and the au pair to sign

written agreements that outline the obligations of each party to the organization.

How long may an au pair stay with a family, and may the arrangement be extended?

Au pairs may stay with their host families in the U.S. for one year. After that time they are expected to return to their home country. The au pair arrangement cannot be extended.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

What if I have questions after the initial selection and match have been made, or what if a problem arises?

The sponsoring organizations have local and regional representatives who are available to help and counsel one or both parties of an Au Pair Program match. You can contact them or the sponsoring organization through which you entered the program.

The Department's Exchange Visitor Program staff is available to answer questions at (202) 401-9810. In addition, a listing of designated sponsors and related information can be obtained from the Department's web site: <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/>

What are my options if I am not happy with the arrangement?

Both the host family and the au pair have options if they are not happy with the au pair arrangement. Since the terms of these options may vary from one sponsoring organization to another, it is suggested that you check your contract with the sponsoring organization for specific information on cancellation conditions or talk with your sponsoring organization directly.

PLEASE READ YOUR CONTRACT FOR TIME LIMITS AND CONDITIONS

Please Note: No guarantee of performance or competency is made by the designation of sponsor organizations.



Department of State
Annex 44

301 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547

July 2002

THE AU PAIR EXCHANGE PROGRAM

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Thousands of American families and foreign nationals have participated in the Au Pair Program. Most have found it to be a rewarding experience, but it is important to fully understand the program before deciding to participate. This brochure explains the program and answers some frequently asked questions.

The Au Pair Program was established in 1986 as an educational and cultural exchange with a strong child care component. Program participants enter the United States for up to 12 months to care for the children of the American family in whose home they will live. At the same time, the au pairs are required to complete an educational component of six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent. At the end of one year, au pairs return to their home country.

"Au pair" is French for "on par," reminding host families that, although an employee, their international visitor is to be treated as a member of the family. The rules are clear: au pairs are provided a private bedroom, meals, remuneration tied to the minimum wage, one and one-half days off weekly plus a full weekend off each month, two weeks' paid vacation, and the first \$500 toward the costs of required coursework to be completed at an accredited institution of higher educa-

tion in order to satisfy the requirements of the educational component of the program. Au pairs are not to work more than 10 hours a day/45 hours a week. They are not to serve as general housekeepers or assume responsibility for household management.

In August 2001 the regulations governing the Au Pair Program were amended to create a subcategory called EduCare. This component is specifically designed for families with school-aged children requiring limited child care assistance. Au pairs participating in the EduCare component may not be placed with families having pre-school aged children unless alternative arrangements are in place for these children.

EduCare participants are not to work more than 10 hours a day/30 hours a week. They must complete a minimum of 12 semester hours of academic credit, or its equivalent, during their program. Host families provide the first \$1000 to the au pair toward the cost of the educational component. All au pair participants are paid in accordance with the provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. As a matter of administrative convenience for both the Department-designated sponsors and participating host families, EduCare participants receive 75 percent of the pre-determined weekly wage that is required for au pair participants.

If these rules cause you any concern, you may wish to reconsider participating in the Au Pair Program. There are other considerations as well. Are you willing to communicate your expectations at the beginning of your program? When occasional problems arise, one mistake that host families and au pairs make is to hope that conditions will improve and problems will correct themselves. As you consider whether the Au Pair Program is right for you, host families should think about how they will adjust to having an international visitor in their home. Au pairs should think about how they will adjust to living with a new family in a different country. For each, the values and cultural perspectives of the other may be vastly different. The following questions and answers might help you to make that decision.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is the Au Pair Program?

The Au Pair Program is an educational and cultural exchange program with a child care component. Au pairs come to the United States for one year to provide up to 45 hours of child care per week for their host family while pursuing educational credits. The EduCare participant provides up to 30 hours of child care a week.

Sponsoring organizations in the U.S. have the responsibility for administering the program, within the regulations set by the Department of State (DOS).

Although the Department authorizes these sponsoring organizations to conduct au pair programs, the responsibility for choosing the right organization rests solely with the host family and the au pair.

What do the sponsoring organizations do?

Sponsoring organizations carry out the day-to-day operation of the Au Pair Program. They identify, screen, select, and match au pairs and host families. They ensure that background investigations, including criminal history checks, are performed on au pairs, and that host parents have adequate financial resources to participate in the program.

The sponsoring organizations interview au pairs for spoken English proficiency and suitability to participate in the program. They also interview host parents to ensure spoken English fluency and suitability to deal with an international visitor.

The sponsoring organizations provide au pairs with a detailed profile of the host family and community into which they will be placed, as well as the educational institutions available in the community. They ensure that au pairs have all the training required by the Department and must monitor the au pair/host family relationship throughout the year. These organizations must maintain monthly contact, through local and regional counselors, with au pairs and host families to ensure compliance with the program.

What do local and regional counselors do?

Local and regional counselors maintain ongoing contact with, and support, au pairs and host families. They are required to report to the sponsoring organization any unusual or serious situations or incidents involving au pairs or host families. Any incidents involving or alleging a crime of moral turpitude or violence are immediately to be relayed by the sponsoring organization to the Department. Moral turpitude is defined to include, but is not limited to, acts of theft, sexual misconduct, and child abuse.

Are there any checks on the sponsoring organizations?

Yes. Sponsoring organizations must annually submit to the Department copies of their advertisement and recruitment materials. They must submit summaries of the annual survey they conduct of host families and au pairs, all complaints received and their resolutions, and all situations that result in the placement of an au pair

with more than one host family. Sponsoring organizations are audited annually to ensure compliance with the procedures and reporting requirements set forth in the Department's regulations.

What is the educational component of the Au Pair Program?

Au pairs are required to enroll in an accredited post-secondary institution for not less than six semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent. Its equivalent would include the generally accepted number of tri-semester or quarter hours. The EduCare participant is required to enroll in an accredited post-secondary institution for not less than twelve semester hours of academic credit or its equivalent. Two-year community colleges are eligible institutions.

What are the responsibilities of the American host family in assisting the au pair with the mandatory educational component?

As a condition for American families to host an exchange visitor under the Au Pair Program they must agree to (1) facilitate the enrollment and attendance in an American post-secondary educational institution; (2) ensure that the au pair has adequate transportation to attend; and (3) pay the first \$500 (\$1,000 for EduCare participants) toward the costs of required academic coursework. Any additional costs associated with acquiring the six academic credits (twelve for the EduCare participant) are to be absorbed by the au pair.

THE SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

Where do au pairs come from?

Because the Au Pair Program is worldwide, au pairs can be from any foreign country except those with which the U.S. does not have diplomatic relations.

What kind of training and experience is required to be an au pair?

Au pairs must be proficient in spoken English and have a high school diploma or the equivalent. **Host parents are to interview prospective au pairs by telephone, before they leave their home, prior to accepting candidates as au pairs.**

Before being placed with a host family, au pairs must receive at least 8 hours of child safety and 24 hours of child development training. At least 4 hours of the child safety training will be infant related and at least 4 hours of the child development training will be devoted to the care of children under 2 years of age.