



Update on COVID-19 impact on exchange programs

Dear J1 Coalition Member:

Please see the email below, sent out to Alliance members with updates from the U.S. Department of State regarding COVID-19.

We want to make sure that you are aware of the 60-day pause placed on international exchange programs. While the guidance for privately-funded exchanges is voluntary, the expectation is that sponsors will follow that guidance. Consequently, that is our recommendation to our members.

We will be moving up the J-1 coalition call to this week (it is currently scheduled for 3/26). Please stay tuned for more information.

Email to Alliance Members re 60-day Pause

We want to bring to your attention two communications from the U.S. Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs – one for [federally-funded exchange programs](#) and another for [privately-funding exchange programs](#) – regarding a temporary pause of international exchange programs.

On March 12, the DOS announced that:

“The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) will temporarily pause all ECA-funded programs that involve travel to and from countries with heightened U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Alert Level 2 (Practice Enhanced Precautions) and Warning Level 3 (Avoid Nonessential Travel) **or** heightened State Department COVID-19 related Travel Advisory Levels 3 (Reconsider Travel) and 4 (Do Not Travel)....In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, ECA will pause programs for 60 days and review this decision every 30 days thereafter.”

State/ECA issued a further update to privately-funded program sponsors:

“Although private sector programs are not specifically governed by this suspension, ECA asks all private-sector Exchange Visitor Program sponsors to follow this guidance as they make decisions regarding exchange visitors who have not yet entered the United States. ECA also encourages sponsors to continue to follow guidance for ECA-funded programs

as the situation evolves, particularly with respect to future exchange visitor recruitment (e.g., for summer or fall programs).”

Given that the DOS issued a [Global Level 3 travel advisory](#), our understanding is that for the next 60 days, travel to the United States from any foreign country by a person on a federally-funded program is suspended, as is travel from the United States to other countries. While DOS did not require privately-funded programs to abide by the above guidance, the Alliance suggests that all of its members follow DOS with respect to the 60 days travel suspension. Please note that the suspension went into effect on March 11, 2020.

At this point, DOS has not issued guidance regarding current exchange participants who are already in the United States. We encourage sponsors to be aware of host country travel policies and to consider whether participants who are in the United States are able to fulfill the program requirements.

We recognize that study abroad and other academic programs are being impacted by the recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance](#) suggesting institutes of higher education consider postponing or canceling student international travel programs. State/ECA refers sponsors to the CDC guidance in the updated message to program sponsors.

We understand that Congress is considering potential legislative action given the personal and economic impacts of COVID-19 developments. The Alliance is monitoring the federal response as it impacts our community. The U.S. Small Business Administration recently [announced](#) guidance for its economic injury disaster loan program to assist small businesses and non-profits severely impacted by COVID-19.

In effort to keep our members informed on the recent COVID-19-related developments, there is a new section under [Member Corner](#) of the Alliance website devoted to the issue. As developments arise, the section will be updated. The Alliance is continuing to gather more information and will keep you posted.

Thank you for your support. We appreciate all of us working together as a community through these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Ilir Zherka
Executive Director



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Our mailing address is:

1828 L Street NW Suite 1150 Washington, DC 20036

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