



3/13/2020

Dear J-1 School Administrator,

Together, we are tasked to continue operating our vitally important intercultural programs in a backdrop of uncertainty, sometimes-irrational thinking, rumors and misinformation associated with COVID-19. Regrettably, for some, this panic can translate into xenophobia. CSIET's goal is to facilitate the exchange of ideas on how best to protect exchange students using processes that are systematic, data-driven and thoughtful.

J-1 School Administrators, you are in a unique position to combat such challenges and protect the long-standing and vulnerable institution of intercultural exchange. Your efforts sustain the life-changing and transformative experience of hosting an exchange student. CSIET's J-1 certified program stands in solidarity with you and offers its support.

As the number of COVID-19 cases rise in the U.S., CSIET and the exchange community are keeping abreast of the latest information provided by our colleagues at the US Department of State, the Centers for Disease Control, and the World Health Organization. Do all that you can to quickly implement appropriate protocol and policy relative to COVID-19. Increase confidence in your actions by taking decisive steps in the best interest of participants, their host families, and their school communities.

The 2020-2021 school year is likely to bring special challenges. CSIET has a strong history of cooperation and collaboration, one it intends to maintain and nurture through the next several months. To that end, CSIET certified programs stand ready to collaborate with you to ensure the safe and seamless integration of J-1 exchange visitors into your communities.

As a community of exchange providers, we are acutely aware of the unfortunate xenophobic effects of a viral outbreak that began in and continues to be associated with the country in which COVID-19 was first detected. Rippling effects are certainly touching exchange students from China; now we have reports of those effects on students from Iran and Italy among others. As advocates for global exchange, it is our duty to remind parents and administrators alike that health-related outbreaks see no color or national identity, and that we are taking all precautions to limit potential infection no matter where the student originates. If you have not already, we encourage you to review guidance from the CDC on combatting stigma associated with the outbreak: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/related-stigma.html>.

*Please know that J-1 program sponsors may contact you individually regarding our mutual path forward. If you have questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to them or me directly.*

Sincerely,

Chris Page, CSIET Executive Director

**Board of Directors**

*Chair,*

KERI DOOLEY,  
AFS-USA

*Chair-Elect,*

KERWIN URHAHN,  
National Federation of State High School  
Associations/Missouri State High School  
Activities Association

*Treasurer,*

ROBERT ZAYAS,  
New York State Public High School  
Athletic Association

*Secretary,*

VICKIE McCORMACK,  
Pan Atlantic Foundation

*Officer (At-Large),*

PAUL REAGAN,  
North American Youth Exchange  
Network

AMY BALLARD,  
YFU-USA

TAMMY BECKER  
Tower Bridge International Group

BOBBY COX,  
Indiana High School Athletic Association

STEVE GERDES  
NAYEN

RANDY MAHLERWEIN  
Mesa Public Schools, Arizona

PAUL McLAUGHLIN,  
Educatus North America

PETER SZECHENYI  
Cambridge Network

CHRISTOPHER B. PAGE,  
Executive Director