



AYA Students

Student Application Process and Requirements

The Academic Year in America (AYA) program is open to teenagers around the world. Boys and girls between the ages of 15 to 18 are eligible to apply for the AYA program through our Overseas Partners.

Requirements for Admission to AYA

To be admitted to the AYA program, students must:

- Have demonstrated English language ability (at least three years) to study effectively in U.S. high schools; students must have studied English at least three years and earned a “C+” average or higher.
- Have maintained an overall grade point average of “C+” or better in academic courses (math, history, science) for the past three years.
- Be at least 15 years of age before, but not more than 18 years of age, as of the program start date.
- Must pass screening measures by both Overseas Partners and the AYA National Office.

Overseas Partners Screen Students

Applicants are recruited, interviewed, screened and provided with a pre-departure orientation by educational and foreign study organizations in their countries that cooperate on a partnership basis with AYA and the AIFS Foundation. These partners promote the program, handle inquiries, interview applicants, review their applications and provide orientations for participants prior to their departure. Students interested in participating in the AYA program submit complete applications, written in English, including:

- Personal essay written by student
- Personal essay written by student’s natural parents
- Teachers’ recommendations
- English Language Assessment
- School transcripts for the past three years on AYA translated forms
- Passport photographs and personal photograph albums
- Health records based on examinations by a physician within 12 months of departure for the U.S., with examination dates and complete immunization histories.

Overseas Partners send the student applications to AYA, then AYA staff reviews each application to determine a student’s eligibility for an academic exchange experience. Students are evaluated based on their maturity, English skills, academic aptitude and expectation for the exchange experience.

Our Overseas Partners also serve as liaisons between AYA and students’ natural parents during the program year. AYA’s Placement Specialists and Student Support Specialists are responsible for



communications with AYA's Overseas Partners. Local Coordinators cannot have contact with students prior to final approval by the Compliance team and cannot have contact with the student's natural parents.

AYA's Obligation to Students

The AIFS Foundation agrees to provide all students enrolled in the AYA program with the following:

- An arrival orientation which can be either the optional 4-day group orientation conducted by AYA staff in the New York City area, or an arrival orientation conducted by the Local Coordinator for students traveling directly to their host community. *(Note: not every student attends the AYA-led orientation. If they do not, you will be notified, and will be required to run an orientation for them upon their arrival.)*
- Lodging with a safe and suitable American host family able to provide a student with his/her own bed, a place to study, all meals except school lunches, and a loving, supportive environment that welcomes the student as a son or daughter (All meals are required for grant students.)
- Enrollment in the local high school.
- Transportation to and from school (usually provided by a school bus).
- Support from an AYA Local Coordinator who lives near (within a 120 mile radius) the student and his/her host family.
- Support from the AYA program, including the AYA Emergency Hotline which is available and staffed 24/7.
- A DS-2019 form, enabling the student to secure a J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa to come to the U.S.
- A guarantee of medical insurance covering illness and injury.

Students' Responsibilities

The student is responsible for:

- Spending money for personal expenses (independent travel, school lunches, supplies, books, uniforms, laboratory fees, entertainment, proms, etc.). AYA students must be financially self-sufficient and medically insured. AYA ensures that all students are fully insured. Host families must never have access to the student's personal funds.
- Money to pay for personal telephone calls and/or his/her own cellular phone and/or plan.
- Adequate clothing for a 5-month or 10-month stay in his/her host community climate.
- All participating students are expected to carry full course loads and participate in school as would any American student.



U.S Dept. of State Sponsored Students (Grant Students)

AYA is pleased to be a placing organization for two U.S. Department of State grant programs, the FLEX and YES programs:

The Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)

The Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX) is a program funded by Congress under the FREEDOM Support Act and administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The program's goal is to provide an opportunity for high school students from Eurasia (the 12 New Independent States of the former Soviet Union) to experience life in a democratic society in order to promote democratic values upon their return. Students live with host families, attend school, and participate in enrichment activities to learn about American society and values and also to help educate Americans about their countries and cultures. The program places special emphasis on leadership skills and seeks ways for participants to develop these skills during the school year. On their return home, students will apply their leadership skills and become involved in a well-established FLEX alumni network.



Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES)

The Partnerships for Learning Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES) is an innovative high school exchange program funded by Congress through the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The YES Program evolved in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. This program brings youth from predominantly Muslim countries to live with host families and attend high school. One of the goals of the program is to increase public diplomacy through student exchange.



The AIFS Foundation is proud to have been involved with the YES program since its inception. This program also focuses on leadership skills for the participants. We are proud to see these young people mature and learn during their year, and to see American families and communities gain an understanding of Islamic culture.

These grant programs offer special components to the YES and FLEX students and are administered by specially trained AYA Local Coordinators. If you are interested in working with these programs, please contact your Placement Specialist for more information.