

Helpful Hints for Recruiting, Hiring and Retaining International Staff at Camp ACA Staffing Summit 2021

Recruiting/Interviewing (September - Camp Opening)

- Remember these are cultural exchange programs not guest worker programs
 - Make sure to interview each and every single participant
 - Make sure to go over the placement offer details during the interview
 - Make sure that they accept your offer before confirming them
 - Be in touch with your sponsor agency if participants are not responding to your interview request
- Work with participants from countries new to your camp
 - Cast a wide net - diversity is key
 - Make expectations clear as to what you'll need from them in terms of English level (they will need a certain English level to be accepted to the program)
 - Make sure everyone has a buddy - at least one other person from their country and/or assign them a domestic staff member or returning international staff member to be their buddy
- Communicate with them consistently throughout the year
- Consider placing earlier than you normally do to give your agency and applicant more time to secure embassy appointments.
 - Range of skill levels is broad! If the person is a good fit personality-wise for your staff culture, put in the time to train them
 - There is no perfect time to start but better not to wait this season.
 - Push returners to commit earlier as visa flow/process might be different this season
- During the interview process, make sure participants are aware of the cultural exchange opportunities they will have at your camp

Pre-Arrival (January - Camp Opening)

- Communicate clear and realistic expectations to your placements about what camp experience will be like during the pandemic. Explain during the interview process what: testing for COVID, free time, and maintaining a bubble (if applicable) will look like at camp.
- Prepare your counselors for COVID reality at camp and set expectations but also adjust to help counselors have a balanced and enjoyable experience at camp.
- Carry successful changes from the 2021 season into next summer. Do what you say you are going to do.
 - Check in with returning participants to make sure they understand what's different this season compared to previous years. (bubble/no bubble/rules, etc).
 - if you're re-implementing any rules, make sure all the staff know prior to arrival
 - Keep your sponsor agency up to date on your COVID protocols so participants have the most accurate/up to date information
- Regularly communicate with all staff, double that for international participants.
 - Delegate! Assign a liaison to work with your international participants during the off season if the fulltime staff is too busy
 - Include your international participants in any social media groups that you have set up
- Onward Travel/Arrival

- Make sure participants are aware of expectations around travel, and their arrival to the US
- Make sure sponsor agency is aware of your travel expectations for participants
- Make sure your sponsoring agency has all your up-to-date business documentation on file (business license and worker's comp)

Summer (During your season, from arrival of staff onwards)

- Staff Orientation
 - if you have a bonus structure please ensure all of your international participants are aware of the bonus scheme and how to earn a bonus if applicable
 - Provide time and assistance if necessary for participants to fill out their required tax paperwork
 - Take your participants to social security 7-10 days after arrival and registering for SEVIS
 - Check in with the international participants regularly as their adjustment to camp may take longer than a domestic staff member. Make sure they are able to connect with their family back home especially when they first arrive
 - if someone has to depart early, assist them with their return home
- Use your returning staff to create a welcoming environment and address questions/concerns.
- Successful placements require extra support and preparation for participants. Plan and communicate that support. (e.g. mental health, staff engagement, time off)
- Sponsor support is vital to success
 - Make sure participants know how to reach their visa sponsor
 - Give participants an opportunity to speak with their visa sponsor if they are struggling
 - Allow participants time to sort/arrange their post camp travel period
- Make sure international participants are complying with check-ins required by the Department of State
 - Provide access to technology for the to complete their check-ins as required
- Make sure support staff members are included in all cultural exchange opportunities and staff engagement programs/activities
 - Include support staff members in staff honors/celebrations
 - if there are COVID protocols, help all participants experience cultural exchange activities within the constraints of health and safety guidelines

Always

- Stay in constant and regular contact with your partner agency and visa sponsor