



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

*Connecting People, Creating Understanding*

# **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**North American Youth Exchange Network  
Cancun, Mexico**

**March 6, 2014**



# Importance of HS Exchanges

- Post WWII
  - U.S. Information & Educational Exchange Act (1948)
    - 22 CFR Part 62 – July 22, 1949
    - Fulbright-Hays Act – 1961
      - Hundreds of programs
    - Around 900,000 participants – High School
- Cold War and Public Diplomacy and Onward
  - Human relations make the best diplomacy
  - High school program is key...
- You make the program....

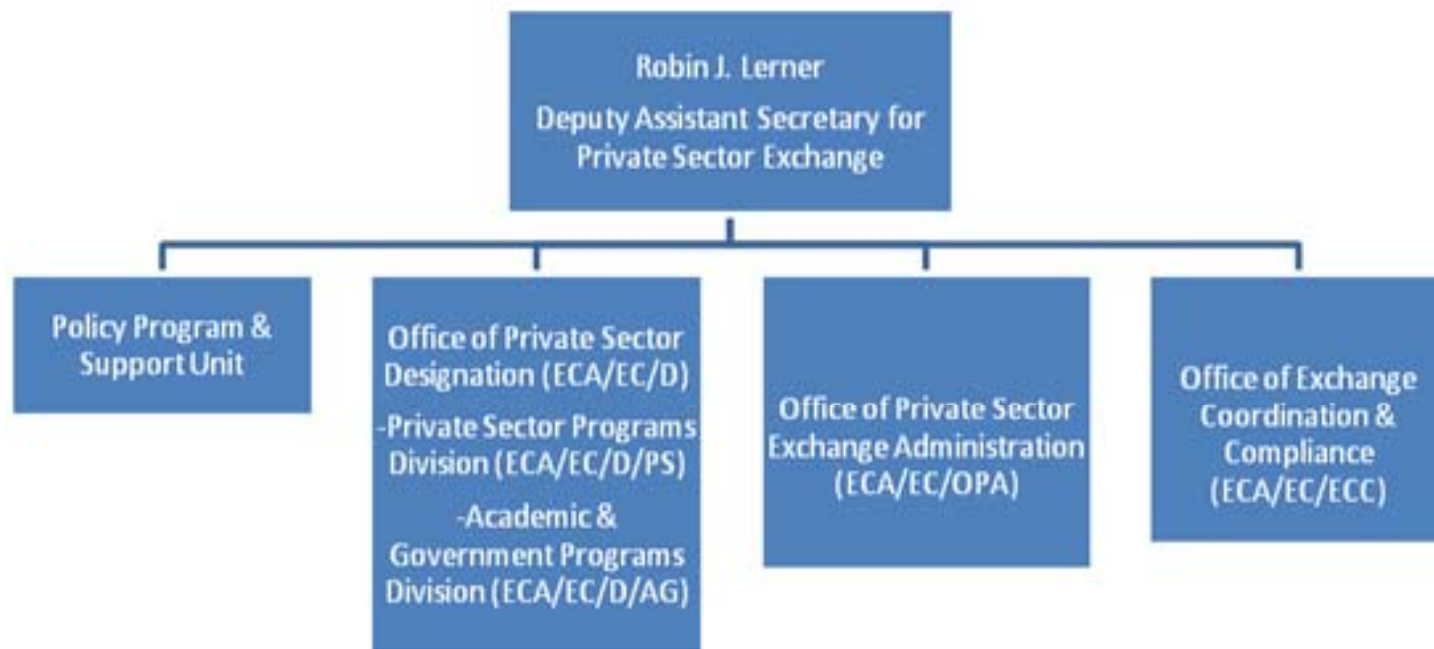


# Private Sector Exchanges 2014: Reorganization....

- ❑ Front Office – Policy Unit
- ❑ Compliance
- ❑ Designation
- ❑ OPA



# Recent Changes



New Office, New Location, New Staff



## Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs

The Office of Designation focuses on the regular processes of managing the program. Functions include:

- Designations and Re-designations
- Stakeholder Outreach -Training
- Allotment/Expansion Requests
- Collecting and Analyzing Reports
  - Annual Report
  - Placement Report
  - Change of Placement Report
  - Financial Year End Reviews
- Updating SEVIS
  - Adding Officials
  - Reinstatements
  - Data Fixes
- “Good news” stories, best practices
- Explaining the regulations – contact Designation with any questions





# Goals

## Eliminate the Backlog

- Reduce designation and redesignation backlog
- Once backlog is eliminated, the goal is for all applications to be completed within 120 days

## Eliminate Paper

- Send everything electronically
- Case Management System



## Communication

- Answer your questions, especially in regards to the regulations
- More outreach – Whats, whys, whens
- Collecting best practices and to share amongst all sponsors

## Learn from You

- Sponsors are the experts
- Tell us what works
- Tell us what does not work



# Designation Deadlines

## DesignationSSSP@state.gov

- ❑ **Annual Report:** July 31
- ❑ **Placement Reports:** August 31 (Fall Semester) and January 15 (Spring Semester)
- ❑ **Change of Placement Report:** July 31
  
- ❑ **Deputy Assistant Secretary:** Failure to submit reports could have a negative impact on re-designation and allotment expansion requests, and in some cases lead to program sanctions



# Getting it in...and on time!

## A Rotary Dilemma

- Allotments – Have you received 2014/15 Forms?
  - Must request, turn in annual report
  
- Placement Report – **Follow the template**
  
- Any questions? Contact Lale and team
  - Regulatory and procedural questions
  - Face-to-face training





Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs  
Secondary School Student Program Analysts

Lale Kuyumcu  
Program Analyst

Victoria Cwyk  
Junior Analyst

- Reach us at [DesignationSSSP@state.gov](mailto:DesignationSSSP@state.gov).
- Call or email with any questions.
- Send your documents electronically.



## Secondary School Student Program Office of Program Administration (OPA)

- James Alexander – Lead Program Analyst
- Brandi Duffy – Program Analyst
- Joele Theagene – Program Analyst



# Role of OPA

- Investigate incidents and complaints
  - Work with Sponsors to resolve
  - Request documents from Sponsors (host family application, CBC, references, monthly contact reports, student application, police report)
  - Issue Letters of Concern if necessary
- Analyze the amount and types of incidents and complaints
- Conduct on site reviews and visits
  - Travel to sponsor locations
  - Investigate incidents on site
- Attend Conferences/Meetings
- Oversee Local Coordinator Certification



# Key OPA Interests

- Health, Safety, Welfare
  - #1 Concern
  
- Potential public reputation of Department
  - Notoriety and Disrepute
  
- Presentation based on these interests
  - Incident Reporting
  - Current Projects
  - Program Cycle



## HSW - Report Incidents Quickly

- ❑ Sponsors **must immediately report** to DOS any incident involving the actual or alleged:
  - sexual nature
  - other allegations of abuse or neglect
- ❑ Sponsors must report allegations to the authorities as required by local/state law.
- ❑ Failure to report to DOS and as required to local law enforcement can lead to suspension and revocation of the sponsor's designation



# Reporting – Time Requirements

- Incident Reports
  - Sexual abuse
  - Unsafe housing conditions
  - Student Acting Out Dangerously
  - Tell us quickly, even w/o all details
    - Within 24 hours
- Asking for Documents, etc.
  - Help us to help you
    - Provide Documents in a timely fashion
    - Answer Questions in a timely fashion
- Improving Our System
  - Templates, SOPs, etc.
  - More people more tools



# Key Issue of Note: Mental Health

- Mental Health Issues – Coming Guidance (Brandi)
  - Depression
  - Eating Disorders
  - Cutting
  - History of mental health issues disclosed at time of incident
  - Student's program ends
  
- Student's Application
  - Previous mental health issues not disclosed
  - Only one question required regarding mental health
  - Parents are not forthcoming or partners mislead
  - Cultural



# Current Projects

- Reporting Rubric (Brandi)
  - A general guideline for reporting incidents to the Department of State
- Reporting to the Authorities: Sexual Incidents (Joele)
  - Guidance Directive
- Case Management System (CMS)
  - Web-based system
  - Sponsor interface
  - Data Analysis and Reporting Functions
- Sponsor Outreach – Incidents & Complaints (Brandi)
- Criminal Background Checks (James & Brandi)





# Criminal Background Check (CBC)

- Over the past few years, external parties have expressed a lack of confidence in the host family vetting process found in the J-1 Secondary School Student Program.
  - Hits on CBCs are sometimes dismissed by Sponsors
  - State definitions of criminal offenses vary
  - Inconsistent reviews of CBCs by Sponsors
  
- Working with Partners - Alliance and CSIET – Draft proposal to raise the coverage and depth of CBCs, create a consistent standard to assess CBC “hits” on potential host parents across the industry.
  - Instant CBC v. County-level search



# Timeless Issues in the Program Cycle

- ❑ Advertising and Promotion
- ❑ Screening
- ❑ Documentation
- ❑ Student Contact & Reporting
- ❑ Training
- ❑ Letter of Concern



# Out of the Blue: The Audit

- CSIET Giving up Audit Function effective July 1
- Department of State to Oversee New Audit
  - Working with OMB on taking over function
  - Still Designing function
- Implementation Date: TBD



## Advertising & Promotion: Host Family Recruitment

Sponsors must:

- (1) Utilize only materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor's purposes and activities
- (2) Publicizing the need for host families via public media:
  - Must be sufficiently in advance of the exchange student's arrival
  - Must not appeal to public pity or guilt if a host family is not found
  - Must not show photos of individual exchange students
- (3) Not compromise the privacy, safety or security of participants, families, or schools. Sponsors shall not
  - include personal student data
  - provide contact information
  - show photographs of prospective students
- (4) Access to exchange student photos and PII:
  - Only for fully vetted potential host families.
  - Password protect online information



## Pre-Screening I: Promotion Limits

- No...
  - Personally Identifiable Information (PII)
  - Pictures of prospective students
  - Full Name
  - Identification #s (passport, etc.)
  - Combination of information
    - Full name
    - Country
    - Home town
    - Parents' names
    - Parents' professions



## Pre-Screening II: Ease of Regulation

- ❑ Best practices suggest no hand written student essays, but can use if redacted
- ❑ No pictures of anybody in promotion w/o clearly visible statement that not actual prospective students
- ❑ No revealing descriptions of students w/o a clearly visible disclaimer: Not actual prospective students
- ❑ Guidance Directive 2012-04 (May 17, 2012)
  - <http://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/>



## Host Family Screening

- Quality of the household
  - Substandard homes
    - Assessments of LC pictures of host home
  - Low incomes
    - Understand varying costs of living
  - Food/housing subsidies
  - Placing two EVs, where one should be maximum
- Think: Would you want your own child there?
  - Would you advertise home on your website?



# Host Family Screening

- ❑ Assessing the CBC – What are the Standards?
- ❑ Recently Reported Sexually-related Incidents and Questions re: CBCs of Host Fathers
  - Exhibitionism – 12 years ago, 1 charge, acquitted
  - Domestic battery – 20 years ago, 3 misdemeanors, acquitted and dismissed
  - Child neglect – 15 years ago, two charges, dismissed
  - Solicitation of a prostitute, 10 years ago, dismissed
- ❑ Judgment call? Vision is 20/20 in hindsight?







# Student Contact & Reporting

- Monthly Contact
  - Ongoing contact keeps students safe
  
- Monthly Progress reports
  - Central Office Sees Big Picture, asks questions
  - Greater Depth
  
- When Incidents do occur...
  - Trail of information in monthly reports
  - Shows DOS level of sponsor effort and compliance



# Deadlines: Problem for Sponsors

- Placement Reports
  - Rotary....
- Annual Reports
  - Holds up allotment
- Enrollment Documents
- Orientations
- White Out?



# DOS and Sponsor Training

- In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all LCs complete the DOS training module prior to their appointment as a LC or assumption of duties. DOS training will include:
  - Instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program
  - Secondary School Student category regulations.
  - Public diplomacy objectives
  
- DOS Sponsors must demonstrate the local coordinator's successful completion of training requirements and that annual refresher training is successfully completed.



## Training Module

- LCs are the critical link to a successful exchange program
  - Serve as representatives of the sponsors
  - Have responsibility for obtaining school enrollment
  - Locating and recruiting host families
  - Responsible for monitoring the student and host family
- DOS ensuring representatives know regulation requirements
  - The certification program was proposed to ensure that this aspect of training was uniform
  - All Sponsor officials, local/regional coordinators received the training
- Rotary Standing: **Varies**



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## Letter of Concern

- Intended as a timely expression of the Department's concern regarding a sponsor's performance
  - Identify a problem(s), communicate quickly w/ sponsors
  - Signed by Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS)
- Faster than a sanction
  - Could presage sanction, but not always
- Goal to keep in compliance
  - way to avoid sanction
- Does not appear on website like sanction



# Future of the Secondary School Program

- ❑ Firm Commitment to the Program
- ❑ Expanding staff : OPA – 2 to 3 to 5....
- ❑ Sponsor visits
- ❑ Conferences/Meeting
- ❑ **Spring Sponsor Meeting – April/May???**
  - ❑ Washington, DC





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**THANK YOU**

**Any (More) Questions?**

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