



FACT SHEET

J-1 Visa Camp Counselor Summer Work Travel (SWT) programs

J-1 Visa camp participants are placed in all 50 states in the U.S. There are more than 23,000 international college students who participate in the J-1 Visa Camp Counselor program. Another 5,000 international students participate in the J-1 Visa Summer Work Travel (SWT) program at summer camps.

Reduction in these J-1 programs could result in the loss of thousands of American jobs. Without these J-1 staff, camps would be forced to close or downsize, thereby affecting all full and seasonal employees, on average over 90% of whom are American. This threat is very real, as the downsizing or elimination of these programs would have ripple effects, ultimately threatening the jobs of hundreds of thousands of American colleges and high school students who work at camps every summer.

Reduction in camp operation and services – an \$18 billion industry nationally – would have tremendously negative impacts on many local economies, particularly in rural areas. An economic impact study of the U.S. northeast region alone showed over 6,000 state licensed camps have a direct economic contribution of nearly \$3.2 billion on local economies and pay more than \$1.1 billion in local, state and federal income taxes. These numbers represent the northeast region alone.

There are not enough American students and workers to fill positions in camp. There is a shortage of available seasonal workers. Camps must compete with local businesses, internships, school commitments, and summer educational programs in order to find staff willing to work during the short camp season often in remote and rural areas. This year, 65% of camps report facing increased challenges recruiting and retaining high quality staff compared to previous years. Despite year-long efforts to recruit staff through different channels, camps simply cannot fill all of their available positions.

J-1 Visa camp participants are placed in all types of camps reflecting a cross section of America. International participants are placed in diverse settings in camps run by major youth organizations such as Jewish organizations, religiously affiliated camps of many other denominations, YMCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Camp Fire, 4H, not-for-private and municipal camps, and private independent camps. These camps serve youth and vulnerable adults from all socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, including those with medical, emotional and developmental challenges.

Camps provide critical educational and developmental opportunities for America's youth, helping them to build essential skills that prepare them for college and careers, such as critical thinking and decision-making, teamwork and collaboration, effective communication, creative thinking, and leadership. These skills are essential for America's youth, and are often in short supply in today's workforce. Camps fill a crucial role in the development of these skills for the 14 million children that attend camp each summer. We need to encourage more availability of these programs not less, and the threat to the Camp Counselor and Summer Work Travel programs will pose an existential challenge to many of our nation's summer camps.

J-1 Camp Counselors and camp SWT participants are key to our cultural exchange efforts, and to American's diplomacy outreach to the rest of the world. International participants live and work daily with American staff and campers sharing culture and language, exploring ideas, and discovering both similarities and differences about each other in a positive setting. These steps in developing cultural competency are a vital addition to the youth development process of our American youth, as well as to the exchange visitors traveling back to their home countries.