

ExCEL Abroad Parent Information

Studying abroad in high school is an exciting journey for both you and your child. We have compiled the information below to help answer some of the questions you may have about the ExCEL Abroad experience. For further information, please feel free to e-mail the [ExCEL Abroad Advisor](#) or call us at (202) 833-7522.

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Who will support my child's well-being while abroad?

ExCEL Abroad participants and their host families are supported in Lithuania by permanent staff of American Councils for International Education. Natural parents communicate with the American Councils staff members in Washington, D.C. who collaborate with the Lithuania office. While on the program, your child will have regular contact with the organization's Vilnius-based Regional Coordinator who will provide assistance and guidance. All ExCEL Abroad students are provided a local mobile phone for emergency use after arrival in-country.

Who will support my child's well-being while abroad?

One of the ways you can help ExCEL Abroad plan for your child's successful participation in the program is by providing all relevant information regarding your child's personal health and family history on the requested application forms. This information will not be evaluated as part of the selection process, but is considered in making school and host family assignments. Relevant information includes, but is not limited to, a diagnosis of or treatment for an illness, a physical disability, a learning disability, a behavioral or emotional disorder, a dietary restriction, or drastic changes in weight. Recent traumatic experiences or significant changes in the student's natural family, including serious illness, death, divorce, incarceration, or custodial changes, can also influence a student's experience. Living and studying abroad can be a stressful and challenging experience for people of any age. These stresses can be compounded by any existing physical or mental health issues or concerns at home that arise prior to the start of the program. In order to help ExCEL Abroad staff make appropriate decisions about your child's experience, please inform us of relevant situations as quickly as possible throughout the application process and program.

What is the involvement of the U.S. Department of State and Embassies abroad?

ExCEL Abroad is funded by the Kazickas Family Foundation but inspired by Exchanges for Culture, Education, and Leadership (ExCEL), which began as a U.S. Embassy, Vilnius initiative. Communities where ExCEL Abroad students will be hosted are selected in cooperation with the U.S. Embassy. The Department of State and American Councils continuously monitor current events in the region. All ExCEL Abroad students are registered with the Office of Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania and with STEP, the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program of the U.S. Department of State.

Where will my child be living?

All ExCEL Abroad students live with host families who have been carefully screened and selected. Host families receive formal orientation and training to introduce them to cultural differences and to prepare them for the hosting experience. These families may or may not speak English. American Councils' Regional Coordinator, who is a native English speaker, provides support to participants and host families throughout the program. Students attend a high school in their community alongside local peers.

What happens in the case of an emergency?

American Councils for International Education is prepared to respond to emergencies in the host countries. It provides 24-hour assistance in the event of an emergency and facilitates appropriate medical treatment, including evacuation, if necessary. ExCEL Abroad consults with the U.S. Department of State and external risk management organizations to monitor the safety of U.S. citizens in Lithuania.

Will my child have medical coverage while abroad?

ExCEL Abroad participants are provided with medical coverage to ensure that, in the case of an emergency, students will be treated as soon as possible within the host country.

What costs are covered?

The ExCEL Abroad scholarship covers costs related to round-trip airfare between the participant's home region and community abroad; in-country support, cultural activities; school tuition (where applicable); room and board with a host family and medical coverage; visa fees and a modest stipend.

What costs are not covered by the scholarship?

Some costs that you can expect to incur from your child's participation in the program include costs associated with obtaining a U.S. passport, required medical examinations and immunizations and extra pocket money while on program.

How will ExCEL Abroad help my child prepare to go abroad?

ExCEL Abroad provides a wide variety of support mechanisms for students preparing to go abroad. Preparation for the ExCEL Abroad experience begins shortly after the finalists are selected, with activities that may include online resources, handbooks, conference calls, and opportunities to speak with the young Lithuanian alumni of ExCEL. Participants are also encouraged to be proactive in engaging in their own research on Lithuania and its culture. Prior to departure, students will participate in pre-departure sessions over Skype that address how to stay healthy and safe while living in the host country.