

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Schools

In the U.S., all children between approximately 5 years to 18 years are eligible for free education provided by the local public school district. (Check with local school district for exact age requirement for beginning kindergarten.) Most schools are open daily from early morning to mid-afternoon and are closed from mid-June until September for summer vacation. School and grade placement is determined by district policies. It is not unusual for children with limited or little English to enroll in local public school. For more information, contact the appropriate public school office for your city of residence:

Albany Unified Schools 904 Talbot Avenue, Albany 510/558-3750 www.albany.k12.ca.us	West Contra Costa Unified Schools (cities of El Cerrito and Richmond) 1108 Bissell Avenue, Richmond 510/620-2000 www.wccusd.k12.ca.us
Berkeley Unified Schools 1835 Allston Way, Berkeley 510/644-6315 www.berkeley.k12.ca.us	Oakland Unified Schools 1025 2 nd Avenue, Oakland 510/879-8111 www.ousd.k12.ca.us

If you are interested in private schools, contact information is listed in the telephone book yellow pages and in Parents' Press.

Legal Issues

Listed below are some of the laws related to children and families in the U.S. Violation of some laws may result in the payment of a fine, other may result in arrest.

Car Safety Seats: California law requires that anyone riding in a moving car must be wearing a seat belt; infants who weigh 20 pounds or less must be secured in a rear-facing car seat, children who weigh 40 lbs. or less and/or who are less than four years of age must be in a child car seat. Children who weigh 60 pounds or less must ride in booster car seats.

Unattended Children: There are strict laws about leaving very young children alone, either in cars, in public, or at home. The law states that it is a crime to leave in a car anyone who is incapable of getting out without help. These laws stem from cases where young children have died from being left in cars with closed windows in warm weather. In addition, it is considered "child neglect" to leave very young children unattended (such as outside of a restaurant) or home alone.

Child and Domestic Abuse: Child and domestic abuse is a very serious crime in the U.S. Teachers and care-givers are required by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse. There are many services in the community to help victims of abuse and/or their abusers.

Accepting Public Assistance: Non-immigrants are not eligible for public (government) assistance programs in the U.S. such as MediCal, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Stamps. In some cases when someone needs medical treatment, hospital

staff or doctors may suggest that an international student or scholar take advantage of public assistance if they are not covered by health insurance. However, if you use public assistance, leave the U.S. and want to return, you may be stopped at the U.S. border and denied entry until the amount of public assistance you received has been repaid. If you are having severe financial problems, speak to the Community Life Office.

Having a Baby in the U.S.

If your baby will be born in the U.S., he or she will be considered a U.S. citizen. U.S. laws do not require that your baby give up citizenship from your home country (if they are considered as such by the laws of your country), but your home country may not accept the dual citizenship status. Contact your home country embassy in the U.S. to register the birth; they can answer questions about citizenship. Parents of a U.S. citizen child are eligible to apply for U.S. permanent resident status when the child is 21 years old.

To travel and re-enter the U.S., your U.S. born child will need a U.S. passport. You can obtain the application from the Berkeley Post Office, 2000 Allston Way, Berkeley or download the forms from the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov .

