



INSIDE
EXPAT
HEALTH



WELL-BEING

THE US



Welcome to the United States of America!

Everybody wants to make the most of their expat experience, but moving abroad can be challenging. That's why caring for your mental health and leading an active lifestyle are so important to stay healthy and happy in your new country.

This guide contains helpful tips about safeguarding your well-being in the US.

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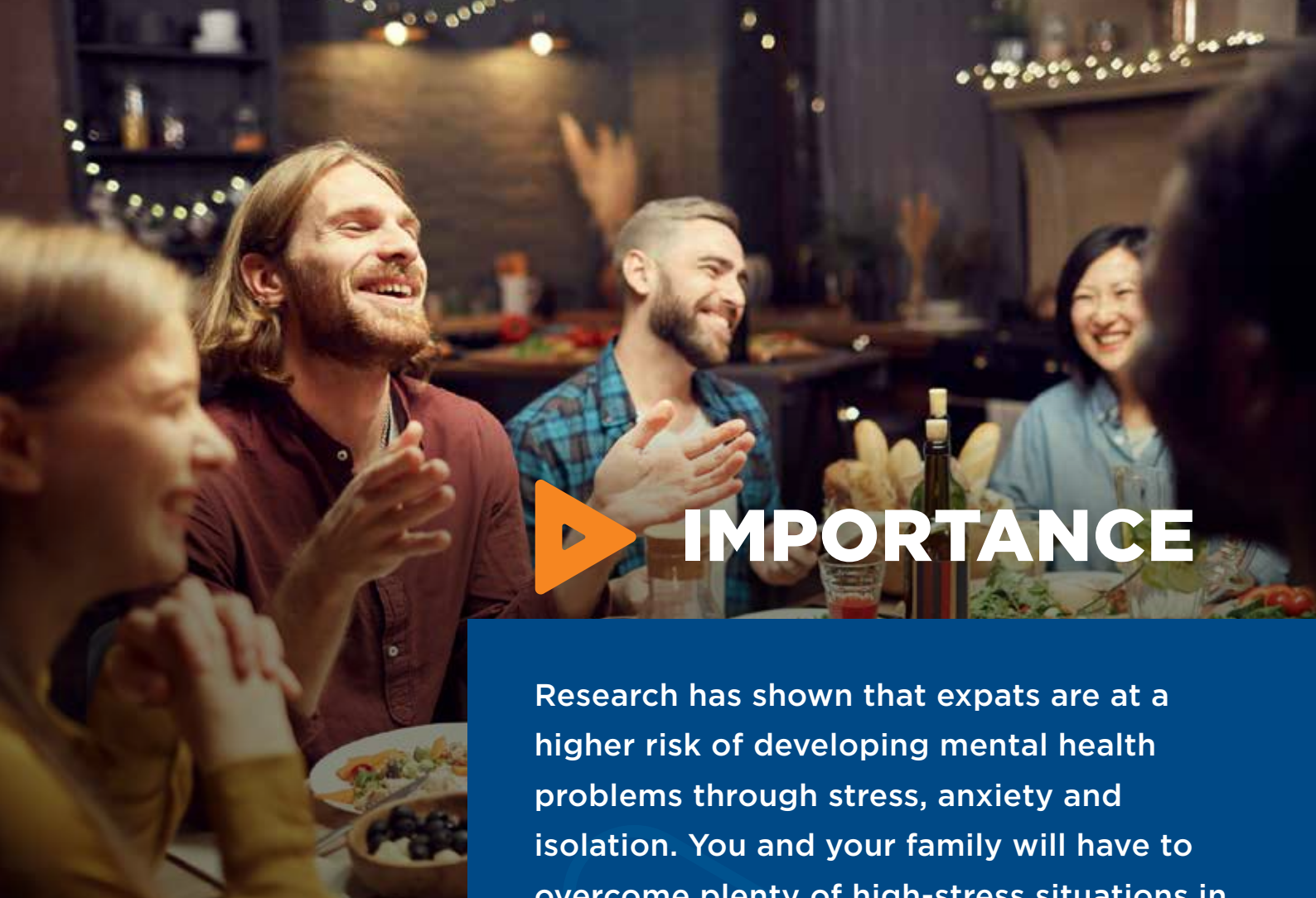
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MENTAL HEALTH



01



IMPORTANCE



Research has shown that expats are at a higher risk of developing mental health problems through stress, anxiety and isolation. You and your family will have to overcome plenty of high-stress situations in the move—from culture shock, to navigating language barriers, to uprooting yourselves from the support network you have back home. With that in mind, it is vitally important that you have reliable access to mental health support services in the US.

Mental health care is one of the ten essential benefits insurance policies legally have to cover under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), so it should be included in your personal or group insurance. If the existing coverage offered by your company's group insurance is insufficient for the treatment you seek, you may want to consider topping up or looking for a more comprehensive plan.

ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

If you are in need of a therapist or medication, your first port of call is your primary care doctor. They will be able to assess your needs and refer you to the right mental professional.



The alternative is to go to the official website of the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) for more resources. You can use their [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#) or text your zip code to **435748** to find treatment facilities near you. All searches and information disseminated will be kept anonymous and confidential.





ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

If you or your loved ones are in distress, please call **911** or use any of these resources:

- **SUICIDE AND CRISIS HELPLINE**

Call or text: **988**

Teletypewriter (TTY): **1-800-799-4889**

Live online chat: suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat

Website: suicidepreventionlifeline.org

- **SAMHSA'S NATIONAL HELPLINE**

Call (available in English and Spanish): **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**

TTY: **1-800-487-4889**

Website: samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

- **SAMHSA'S DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE**

Call (available in English and Spanish), text or video call (ASL for the deaf or hard of hearing): **1-800-985-5990**

Website: samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline

- **CRISIS TEXT LINE**

Text: text **"HOME"** to **741741**

Website: crisistextline.org

- **NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE**

Call: **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**

TTY: **1-800-787-3224**

Text: text **"START"** to **88788**

Website: thehotline.org



MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

When it comes to mental health, prevention is often better than cure. These are some tips to help you manage your mental well-being as an expat in the US.

- **Bring a piece of home with you**
- **Use telecommunication tools to stay connected to your loved ones**
- **Limit your social media usage**
- **Integrate with the community you are staying in**
- **Connect with fellow expats**
- **Avoid unhealthy eating, drinking and socialisation habits**
- **Work out a recreation and exercise routine**
- **Reflect and manage your expectations**
- **Be honest about your mental health**
- **Seek professional help if you need it**





OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES, SPORTS AND EXERCISE



OUTDOOR LEISURE OPTIONS

Nearly 82% of all residents in the US believe that parks and recreation are essential in their lives and nearly 77% take high-quality recreation options into consideration when they choose where they want to live. It should be no surprise that the US is flush with plenty of outdoor activities and opportunities for exercise.



One of the most popular places for recreation are public lands that are managed by government agencies. They each have an online directory to help you locate the parks and forests they manage.

- **NATIONAL PARKS**
Managed by the [National Park Service](#)
- **NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**
Managed by the [US Fish and Wildlife Service](#)
- **NATIONAL FORESTS**
Managed by the [US Forest Service](#)
- **STATE AND LOCAL PARKS**
Managed by the state's administration



OUTDOOR LEISURE OPTIONS



Recreational activities you are permitted to engage in vary wherever you choose to go, but these are some popular options to consider:

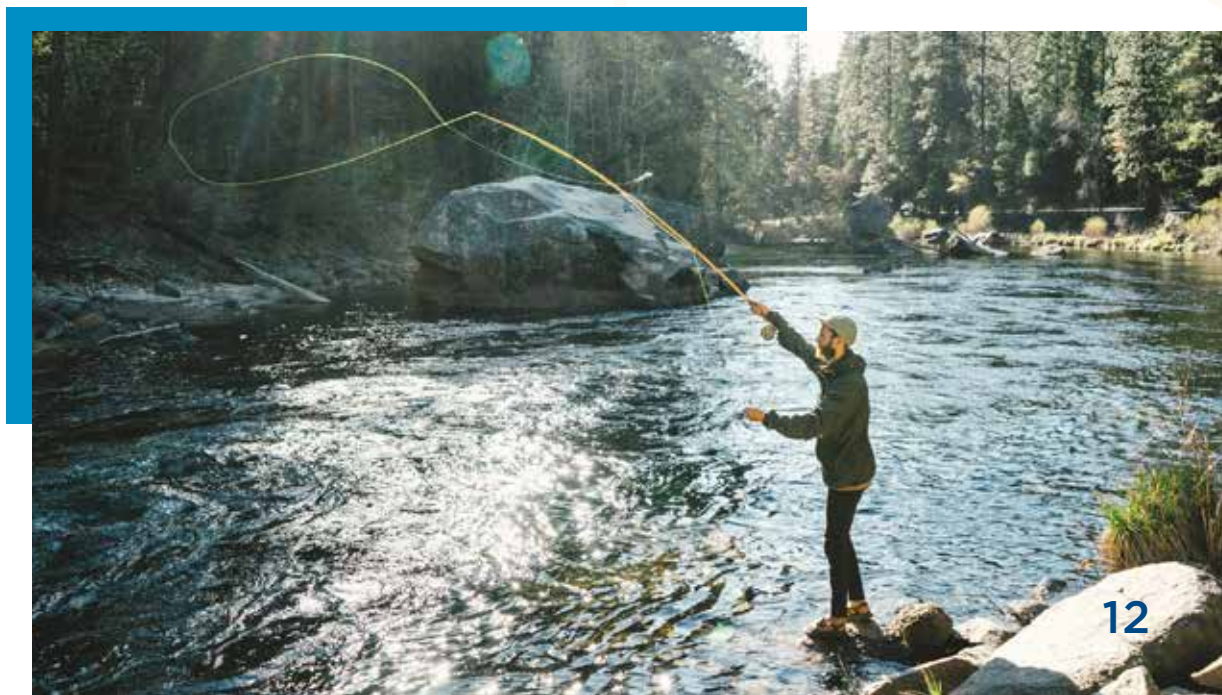
- **Hiking and camping**
- **Hunting and fishing**
- **Paddle sports like canoeing, kayaking and rafting**
- **Sailing and motorboating**
- **Cycling**
- **Rock climbing**
- **Horseback riding**
- **Skiing**
- **Birding**
- **Nature-watching**
- **Skateboarding**
- **Joining volunteer restoration and conservation efforts**





Escaping to the great outdoors can help you get away from the cities, support the local economy, and develop greater appreciation for the environment. You can find outdoor places to explore with these resources:

- **Find an adventure on Recreation.gov.**
- **Find a park on the National Park Service website.**
- **Find a wildlife refuge on the US Fish and Wildlife Service website.**
- **Find a forest on the US Forest Service website.**
- **Or look up your county or state's government website for more information about local parks.**



INDOOR FITNESS OPTIONS

Most major cities in the US have a range of sports, health and fitness centres suitable for every age group and fitness level. As most of them are privately-run, there is no central database that catalogues all options available for you. You may have to look them up in your city, or ask your local colleagues and neighbours what is available or popular in your neighbourhood.

At-home fitness classes, online personal trainers, fitness coaches and live-streamed workout subscriptions have proliferated in the last few years, so there are plenty of options to choose from if you prefer the convenience of using your own equipment at home. Your insurance provider may even have an allowance set aside for you to purchase new equipment.

Studies have shown that workplaces that offer gym membership discounts and reimbursements lower health care expenditure in employees by 18.4%. It is always a good idea to check with your HR or insurance provider if they have wellness programmes or discount agreements with gyms near your residence.



EXTREME SPORTS

Adrenaline-charged extreme sports are making a comeback in recent years. If you are looking for a dopamine rush, the US is brimming with options like:

- **Rock-climbing / bouldering**
- **Ziplining**
- **Hot air ballooning**
- **Skydiving**
- **Bungee jumping**
- **Parasailing**
- **Off-roading**
- **Horseback riding**
- **Race car driving**
- **Hang gliding**



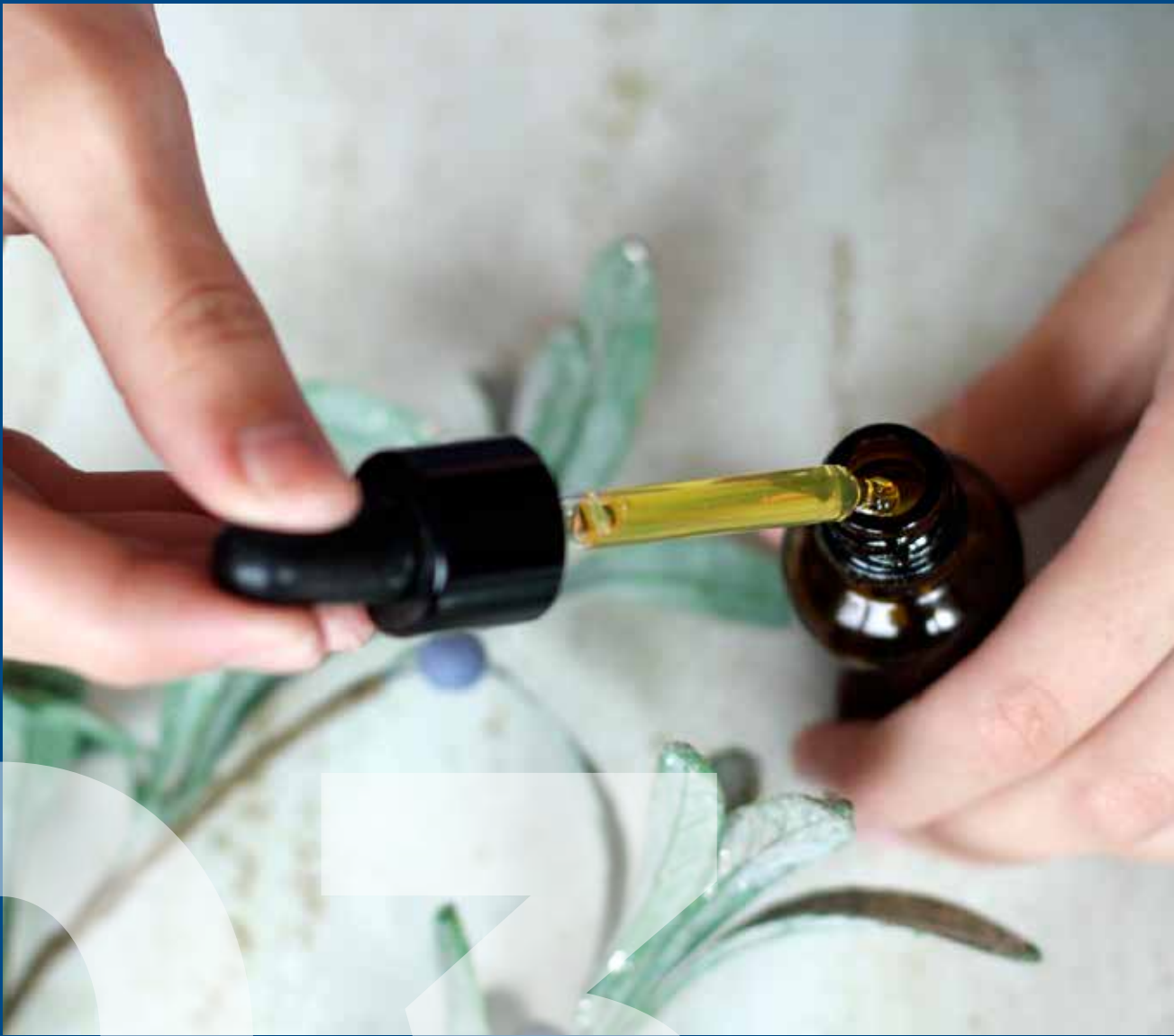
- **Base jumping**
- **Scuba diving**
- **Inline skating**
- **Paintball shooting**
- **Snowboarding**
- **BMX cycling**
- **Boardsailing / windsurfing**
- **Trail Running**
- **Wakeboarding**
- **Mountain climbing**
- **Skateboarding**



Do be aware that many extreme sports are classified as hazardous activities that your insurance company may not provide coverage for. If extreme sports is or will be a frequent hobby for you, you may become ineligible for life or disability claims, and you may be subject to higher premiums. Be truthful when you are making insurance arrangements and remember to check the fine print of your insurance plans.



HOLISTIC THERAPY





FORMS OF HOLISTIC THERAPIES

Holistic therapy is commonly referred to as complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). They are employed to improve wellness in a patient alongside conventional forms of medicine practised in clinics and hospitals.



Complementing the US' status as a cultural melting pot, the country has countless forms of CAM treatments from cultures around the world. They can be sorted into six major categories:

1. **TRADITIONAL ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE**
Acupuncture, ayurveda, homoeopathy, naturopathy, traditional Chinese medicine
2. **BODY TECHNIQUES**
Chiropractic and osteopathic therapy, massage, *tai chi*, yoga
3. **DIET AND HERBS**
Dietary supplements, herbal medicine, nutrition and dieting
4. **EXTERNAL ENERGY**
Electromagnetic therapy, *reiki*, *qigong*
5. **MIND**
Meditation, biofeedback, hypnosis
6. **SENSES**
Art, dance and music, visualisation and guided imagery

Some of these therapies can help with:

- **Anxiety disorders**
- **Stress-related issues**
- **Substance-use disorders**
- **Abuse and other trauma**
- **Depressive disorders**
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder**



FINDING A PRACTITIONER

The process is similar to finding, meeting and confirming a primary care doctor.



You can get recommendations from colleagues, friends, family or credible health organisations.



Find out as much as you can about the clinic or doctor's specialism, training and professional affiliations.



Arrange an appointment to meet them face to face. If they are not the right fit for your needs, repeat the process until you find a suitable CAM practitioner for your needs.



AVERAGE COST OF SERVICES

Some CAM specialisations like aromatherapy and nutrition are practised by licensed therapists. Those may be covered by your personal or group insurance. Other CAM treatments like massage, *tai chi*, yoga and acupuncture are rarely covered by health insurance providers.



Appointments with CAM practitioners can cost you US\$100–200 per session. You may wish to work with your insurance provider to tailor an insurance package that works for your and your family's needs.





FAMILY & CHILDREN



If you are moving to the US with a partner and/or children, they must be similarly insured by a comprehensive insurance plan. This can be done as an extension of your own private insurance, with additional plans drawn up for every member of the household, or through your company-provided health care coverage.

PREGNANCY COVERAGE

Before 2014, pregnancies were considered a pre-existing condition and insurance companies were free to turn down applications of pregnant individuals. Since the Affordable Care Act (ACA) went into effect, insurance companies are now legally obligated to provide coverage for pregnant individuals. This coverage is guaranteed as part of the ACA's ten essential health benefits, and usually includes pre- and post-natal hospital services, prescription drugs, pregnancy care and childbirth.



CHILD CARE

Most childcare centres in the US are licensed by the state. They are regularly inspected with thorough background checks to ensure they are providing a safe and healthy environment for the growth and nourishment of children under their care.

School-operated childcare, small-scale programmes and centres that are religiously affiliated may operate without a licence.

Licensed childcare centres usually have their accreditation posted somewhere visible. You can find more information about specific childcare centres by contacting the local licensing offices, or by visiting [ChildCare Aware of America](#) for their many state-specific [child care resources](#).





PAEDIATRICIANS

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is one of the largest paediatrics organisations in the world, with over 67,000 members and more than 17,000 students, residents and fellowship trainees. They are dedicated to providing, educating and improving the health, safety and well-being of children and young adults across the US, Canada, Mexico and many other countries.



Each member of the AAP is certified by the American Board of Pediatrics to become a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics (FAAP). To ensure your child gets the highest quality of care in the US, look for paediatricians with the “FAAP” initials in their titles. For example, “Lora Miller, MD, FAAP”.

You can begin your search for a suitable paediatrician near you using the [AAP search tool](#) on [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org), their official online paediatric resource for parents.





SCHOOLING

In most states in the US, schooling is compulsory for children between ages five and 16. Some states require teenagers to be schooled until the end of high school, when they are around 17–18 years old.

A child goes through three levels of the education system:

1. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kindergarten (4–5 years old) to grade 5 (10–11 years old)

2. MIDDLE SCHOOL

Grade 6 (11–12 years old) to grade 8 (13–14 years old)

3. HIGH SCHOOL

Grade 9 (14–15 years old) to grade 12 (17–18 years old)

It is common for parents to send their children to privately-run preschools from the ages of three to four.





SCHOOLING

There are a few major types of schools in the US for you to choose from:

- **Public schools**

These schools are free to attend and are funded by property taxes around the campus. Therefore, the quality of education can vary dramatically depending on the suburb the school is located in. They are located nearer to homes and will allow your child to interact with local students living in the neighbourhood. You will need to pay for school books, uniforms and other learning-related equipment.

- **Charter schools**

These schools are public schools that your child can attend for free, but they are funded by the local school district based on its performance. Their curriculum is more individualised and admissions often have long waiting lists. Entry into these schools is sometimes decided via lottery.

- **Magnet schools**

These are public schools with a curriculum focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths), performing arts, international studies or world languages. Their subject focuses are designed to cultivate specific interests and talents. Your child may attend these schools for free.

- **Private schools**

These schools have a comparatively higher quality of education with more extra-curricular activities and flexible curriculums customised to suit their educators' teaching styles. Placement in private schools is not determined by the location of your residence. Many schools even have boarding facilities to help cut down students' commute time and costs. Some private schools are religious institutions and may have comparatively lower schooling fees.



SCHOOLING

- **International schools**

These schools can be found in larger cities like New York, Los Angeles, Boston and Washington DC. They are immensely popular among expats in the US as they follow the curriculum of their home country, which helps children smoothly transition in and out of the States. Schooling fees are relatively high and waiting lists are long, so your child's application must be submitted ahead of your move.

- **Homeschooling**

Homeschooling lends a flexible and natural environment for a child to study and play. This mode of schooling can be conducted by the child's parents or by private tutors. Each state has its own regulations and recommended curriculum for homeschooling educators to follow.

- **Special-needs education**

Most public and private institutes have programmes and equipment to accommodate students with learning difficulties or other special needs. If the child's disability is too severe for mainstream schooling, there are special education facilities and educators that can tailor education programmes for their needs.

- **Tutoring**

Private tutors are available for hire in most cities in the US. You can find one through established tutoring companies based in your city, through the recommendation of other parents in your neighbourhood, or through a referral from your child's school. Private tuitions are often very flexible. They may offer subject-specific tuition, one-on-one sessions, or small group lessons.



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