



OFFICE LOCATION

Vitendo 4 Africa
7220 N Lindbergh Blvd. Suite 270
Hazelwood, MO 63042
Tel: 314-252-0488

**WELCOME! KARIBU! UKWEMUKELA! MURAKAZA NEZA! SOO
DHAWEYN! BIENVENUE! WILUJEUNG SUMPING!**

WELCOME PACK

IMMIGRANTS INFORMATION GUIDE

WELCOME TO THE UNITED STATES!

(This document is intended to help new immigrants arriving in the United States settle with ease and learn the basics of US culture, people, and expectations. It is not an official document in any way. Those who have contributed to make this document have used their experiences here in USA, basic research, and wisdom to help new arrivals settle with ease in the United States. Therefore the document is not an official document from either the US government or any other governments. However it is a useful documents with an excellent overview that new immigrants need to settle in United States.)

When people move to the United States, they are confronted by new way of life, new opportunities and new challenges. It is therefore necessary to adjust to new environment. The duration of time to settle in US and to adjust to the new environment depends on a number of factors including personality, willingness to adapt, personal background, hosting family, circle of friends, availability of jobs, etc.

Issues to consider as you settle in America.

1. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

In the United States, every person is required to have some documents to facilitate work and movements. You will need your **birth certificate and passport** to acquire any **US Id or Social Security Number (SSN)**

a) SOCIAL SECURITY CARD.

One of the most important document that you will require is **Social security Card**. This card will be required when you are ready to apply for jobs, apply for driver license, etc. The card has a number called **Social Security Number (SSN)**.

You might hear someone ask “UKO NA Sosio/soshio/socio” (pronounced differently by different people)

You need SSN to apply for work, driver license, get apartment, open bank account, etc.

2. EMPLOYMENT

As you will learn, America economy is based on consumption. You will need to buy food, pay for electricity, cooking gas, car gas, trash, etc.

Looking for a job may be easy or a little challenging. Your hosts, friends, church members, will help you identify places you could go and fill job applications. Some jobs may require you to sit for a formal interviews, take a **drug test**, and a **background check** while other jobs may require just a basic application after which you are trained on the worksite.

After being hired, the company administrator/supervisor or account may require you to fill in more forms in compliance with the tax code. You will be asked to complete Tax forms (W-4) for the Income tax, deducted from your wages (paycheck). The IRS (Internal Revenue Service) collects income tax on behalf of the government.

Some employers provide benefits such as medical insurance, dental, life insurance, and Retirement plan (401k). If such benefits are provided at your place of work, please take advantage of the benefits.

New arrivals are advised to **save money** after they start working, buy a car and move to your house. **This should be the priority.**

3. HOUSING

a) Renting a house:

Shelter is a basic need everywhere in the world. In USA, most new immigrants are housed or hosted by relatives, friends or well-wishers for a few months before they can move to their own house. Host families have silent expectation and those hosted have expectations as well. It might be a good idea if the two parties can have some basic understanding of what is expected in that duration of time when they live together. For example, if you are hosted, you are expected to help with household chores, such as cleaning utensils, cooking, and making rooms tidy.

Mostly, host families assume that person or people hosted will assume responsibilities without necessary being told. This is however not always the case.

When you get a job and a car, the next item is to move to your own house. **Apartments** are the most common places that new immigrants are likely to rent. Your choice depends on your earning. For starters, look for an apartment you can afford to avoid straining financially. You can move up the ladder at your own pace. Do not compare yourself with those who have been in US for many years.

When you get an apartment or a house, you will be required in most cases to sign a **lease agreement** for a specific duration of time with the landlord or the agency leasing the apartments or house. The lease agreement will include details monthly rent amount, payment due date, charges for lateness, duration of notice to leave the apartment, what utilities you need to pay for yourself, etc. Ensure you read the lease agreement well and ask questions to clarify any grey areas.

b) Buying a house

Owning a home is one of the American dreams. Buying a house has benefits as well as responsibilities. The process can be long and one must be prepared for it. You might be required to have worked for at least two years before you can buy a house. It is advisable to talk to people who have bought homes, and more importantly talk to house agents. You can do simple searches online before you eventually start the process. It is advisable to know that some people buy expensive homes and regret later due to the financial burden that they put themselves into. You may need to get an agent who will guide you through the process. Remember you are not just buying a house. For example, your children will be required to attend the school in that locality. Make all considerations.

4 . OWNING A CAR AND AQUIRING A DRIVER LICENSE.

Transportation is an essential part of American culture. In some states, **public transportation** is very elaborate and a car is not as essential compared to other states. In Missouri for example, public transportation is not elaborate and therefore owning a car is essential to help in your movements especially to and from work. While you may rely on friends and relatives in the first few weeks or months, your friends' busy schedules will hinder your smooth movements. You therefore need to plan to buy a car, register and buy insurance the car to be compliant with US regulations. Similarly, in order to drive, you will be required to take and pass a written test and pass a practical road test. It is important to read the Missouri Department of Revenue **DRIVER GUIDE (attached)** to understand not only how to drive but rules that are required to be followed. These include how to behave if a police officer stops you on the road.

5. EDUCATION

a) Basic Education

All children are required to go to school up to grade 12. They can attend free public school or private schools.

Grades 1 to 12 are categorized into three.

1. Elementary (grades 1 to 5)
2. Middle school (grades 6-8)
3. High school (grades 9-12).

Public schools require students to attend schools within their districts (your community where you pay taxes). Schools will generally ask for proof of residence. Public schools have buses, which are free to transport students if they live far from the schools. Some students are eligible for free lunch depending with parents' income while others buy food at the cafeteria.

b) College Education

Colleges and universities: There are public community colleges and Universities and private colleges and Universities. Public community colleges offer 2 year Associate Degree at a reasonably low cost. Universities offer 4 year degrees in most cases. Students in the undergraduate can apply for scholarships and financial aid. Bridging courses (Computer, GED, ESL and more) are also offered at our location. **See attached.**

Vitendo F4KIDZ program strives to promote mentorship for immigrant students to help them overcome social, emotional, and academic challenges as they pursue their life dreams. Through V4A F4KIDZ program, we inspire and help kids to discover their potential as we invest in their dreams.

6. WORSHIP COMMUNITY

There are many houses of worship within the community where people attend during services to nourish their faith. New immigrants are encouraged to attend several churches and interact with members and leaders before they can make final decision on membership of a church. Where you eventually attend church should be a personal decision and not that of your host or

friends.

7. HOME MANAGEMENT AND DOMESTIC ISSUES

The United States is very firm on human rights. Parents are asked to adhere to the laws governing the states on how they can discipline their children. No one is allowed to lay his hands or her hands on another person. Choices have consequences, "A choice to beat a spouse has negative consequences" with long term effects.

Children are not supposed to be left home on their own. Please ensure you have an adult in your house or take children to a daycare or to a "cucu".

8. EMERGENCIES

In case of any emergency like fire, sickness, intruder or suspicious activities, **CALL 911** and the operator will enquire where you are calling from and send help

9. IMMIGRATION

Our community resource centre offers free information about citizenship and immigration services, accurate information about green card application and adjustment of status.

10. PARTNERS

Health Protection & Education Services

TEL: (314) 448-7373

info@hpes-stl.org

www.hpes-stl.org

St. Louis Mosaic Project

TEL: 314-615-8107

www.stlmosaicproject.org

120 S Central Ave Ste 1200, Saint Louis, MO 63105

(HPES) Beyond Housing

TEL: (314)533-0600

www.beyondhousing.org

International Institute

TEL: 314-773-9090

www.iistl.org

3401 Arsenal St, Saint Louis, MO 63118

11. USEFUL LINKS

Free Mammogram For Women

St Louis University Cancer Center

3655 Vista Ave

West Pavilion, 3rd Floor

St Louis, MO 63110

U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Robert A. Young Federal Bldg. 1222

1222 Spruce Street. Room 2.205

St Louis, MO 63103

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri - Immigration Law Project

314-256-8756

lsem.org

kgallen@lsem.org

4232 Forest Park Ave. St Louis, MO 63108

Trucking Business

Jesii Kimani

314-656-1390

7220 N Lindbergh Blvd

Hazelwood, MO 63042

World Trade Center St Louis

www.stlmosaicproject.org

120 S Central Ave Ste 1200, Saint Louis, MO 63105

Driver Examination Testing Center

7250 N Lindbergh Blvd

Hazelwood, MO 63042

Driver License Examinations

3101 Chouteau Ave

St Louis, MO 63103

Social Security Administrative Office

11753 W Florissant Ave

Florissant, MO 63033 [\(800\) 772-1213](tel:8007721213)

Social Security Administrative Office

717 N 16th St. St Louis MO 63103

800-772-1213