



## **Protections for Domestic Workers: Spotlight on Au Pairs**

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### **Background:**

- Approximately 13,000 au pairs come to the United States from around the world each year.
- Au pairs are between the ages of 18-26 and are mainly women. They provide flexible, in-home childcare for up to 45 hours per week or 10 hours a day.
- Though Department of State regulations articulate that au pairs are protected by federal and state minimum wage and overtime protections, it is common practice for au pairs to receive a stipend of \$195.75 per week, or what amounts to \$4.35 per hour. These wages are far below federal and state standards.

### **J1 Visas:**

- Au pairs come to the United States through the J1 visa program, a cultural exchange visitor program under the oversight of the U.S. Department of State.
- Au pairs are classified for immigration purposes as exchange visitors, but when they are working to provide essential childcare services to host families they are employees.
- Au pairs often pay recruitment fees and other visa-related expenses to come to the U.S. Pressures to pay these large debts make it harder to leave abusive or exploitative working conditions.

### **Role of Au Pair Sponsoring Agencies:**

- Au pairs are sponsored by agencies in the U.S. Au pairs can only change host families with the consent of these sponsoring agencies.
- Au pair agencies often take no action when au pairs complain about their working conditions.
- Sponsoring agencies can re-designate the status of au pairs in ways that affect their immigration status.
- The State Department provides almost no oversight of au pair agencies.
- Au pair agencies make millions of dollars of profits from the au pair program through programmatic fees paid by au pairs and host families.
- Au pair sponsoring agencies have repeatedly lobbied in federal and state venues to deny au pairs and other workers basic labor protections.

**Au pairs perform the essential caregiving work that makes all other work possible.**

**Au pairs, in accordance with the law, must be paid according to federal and state minimum wage and overtime protections and should be covered under state Domestic Worker Bill of Rights legislation.**

The National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) works for the respect, recognition and inclusion in labor protections for domestic workers. For further information contact Sameera Hafiz, Advocacy Director at [sameera@domesticworkers.org](mailto:sameera@domesticworkers.org).

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