

AYA Host Family Handbook



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Local Coordinator (LC) Name: _____

LC Home Phone: _____ LC Work Phone: _____

LC Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Regional Director Name: _____

Regional Director Phone: _____ Email: _____

Student Name: _____ ID# _____



Executive Director, Melanie French with husband Dan and AYA son Marvin, from Germany

Dear Friends, Welcome to AYA

We are very pleased that you have chosen to host an exchange student this year with Academic Year in American (AYA), a program of the American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation.

You are about to begin a wonderful adventure in international exchange. As you come to know and love your new son or daughter, your family will share a very special intercultural experience that they will treasure always. At the same time, you will play a part in shaping the life of a young person from abroad, providing a rich opportunity that will be forever remembered.

AYA has developed this Host Family Guide for families who are hosting for the first time or as a refresher for those who have already experienced this joy. We hope this guide helps you to know what to expect and to make the adjustment for your family and your student as smooth as possible.

AYA staff members, host families, Local Coordinators, and students, who share years of collective experience in student exchange, have all contributed suggestions to this guide. Please take the time to read through it, and keep it within reach as a handy reference for times when you have specific questions.

We hope the year ahead will be filled with fun and learning for your entire family. Thank you for supporting our students and our program!

Sincerely,

Melanie French
Executive Director
AIFS Foundation

The AIFS Foundation

The Academic Year in America (AYA) program has been in operation since 1981 and is conducted under the auspices of the American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation.

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational organization founded in 1967 with the assistance of the late Robert F. Kennedy. Its mission is to promote worldwide understanding through cross-cultural exchange.

In addition to sponsoring the AYA program, the AIFS Foundation awards grants to high schools for projects that encourage

intercultural awareness. A board of trustees that includes prominent educators and international business leaders governs the Foundation. The board meets regularly to review the effectiveness and quality of the Foundation's AYA program to ensure adherence to standards of excellence.

The Foundation has been designated by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) as an Exchange Visitor Program authorized to issue the Form DS-2019, which enables qualified participants to apply for a J-1 exchange visitor visa from the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy.

Our Mission

AYA's mission is to encourage and inspire young people to become considerate, forward-thinking citizens of the world by creating dynamic educational opportunities to share beliefs, ideologies, and values across cultures. We are committed to providing these experiences with an unrivaled commitment to the safety of our students.

The AYA Program

The AYA program has been developed for high school students ages 15 to 18, from all parts of the world, who wish to spend a semester or full academic year studying in the United States while living with an American family. AYA chooses carefully screened teenagers who have a demonstrated ability in the English language, a solid academic record, and positive attitude to participate on our program. While participating on the AYA program, students will improve their English and share a rewarding cross-cultural exchange experience with their host families, schools, and communities.

AYA students arrive in August for the 10-month full academic year or for the 5-month fall semester program, or in January for the 5-month spring semester program.

The Goals of the AYA Program are to:

- Increase understanding of the United States and its people, culture, and history among young people all over the world
- Encourage Americans to learn more about foreign countries, cultures, and languages
- Create opportunities for cross-cultural friendships
- Provide a solid educational experience for all participants in the program
- Make participants better citizens of their countries through exchange of ideas

- Continue to offer programs that are superior from both experiential and administrative perspectives

Key Players

AYA has several key players that make our program successful.

Students from around the world apply to participate in the AYA program. AYA students:

- Are between the ages of 15 and 18 and have a minimum of three years of English language study, a grade point average of C+ or better, and a passing score on an English language test
- Have different reasons for joining the program, but all have a desire to improve their English, curiosity about U.S. culture and customs, and the dream to be a student at an American school



- Agree to adhere to the program rules
- Are fully insured and have their own spending money

Host families are people of all ages, economic strata, and ethnic backgrounds. Host families have the following responsibilities:

- Provide the student with a safe and suitable home for the academic year or semester
- Welcome the student as a member of their family and encourage him/her to participate in all aspects of family life
- Provide the student with his/her own bed and place to study, either in a room he/she shares with a family member of his/her own sex and age range or in his/her own room
- Provide the student with all meals
- Assist the student with school registration
- Encourage the exchange of ideas through involvement with the AYA student and providing for the student's exposure to the cultural and social environment of the home and community
- Provide the love and understanding a young person needs to enjoy a successful academic year in America

High schools, both private and public, accept our students.

- U.S. high schools embrace AYA students as members of their student bodies.
- AYA students attend the local public high school serving the district in which their host family lives or a private school in the area.
- Students enroll in full course loads and can participate in most activities such as band, sports, etc.
- School administrators determine a grade placement.
- Students must maintain a C+ GPA in all classes.

Local Coordinators are the community representatives of the AYA program. They are volunteers who share a belief in the value of cross-cultural exchange. Local Coordinators are responsible for:

- Screening, interviewing, and selecting safe and suitable host families
- Enrolling students in local public or private high schools
- Providing host families with a pre-arrival orientation
- Supervising and counseling families and students during the year
- Contacting students and host families monthly
- Making sure students are safe throughout the program
- Informing the National Office of any concerns
- Providing monthly student reports to AYA
- Answering questions and providing emergency assistance
- Relocating students locally to other homes if necessary



- Taking a student into his or her own home in the event of an emergency

Second Visitors are independent Local Coordinators or designated AYA Sponsor Representatives who are responsible for:

- Performing the required second visit to the home to verify that the home remains suitable.
- Visiting the host family home to check on the quality of the home within 30–45 days of a student's arrival.

Regional Directors work full time in our National Office. They are responsible for:

- Administering the program in their specific states and overseeing the placement process within their territory of states
- Supervising Local Coordinators and communicating with overseas partners
- Supporting Local Coordinators with student disciplinary issues

Student Support Staff are designated AYA employees who work full time in the National Office. Their purpose is to:

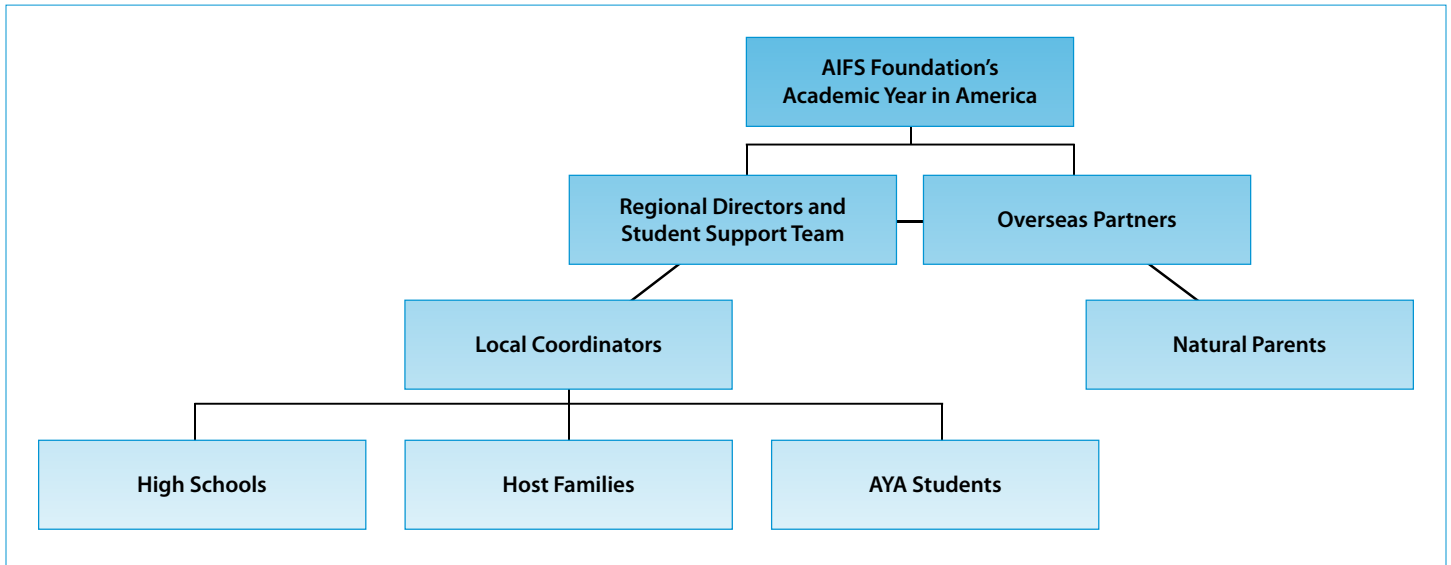
- Provide outreach to our students and provide an additional outlet for students who need extra attention or need assistance in any way
- Reach out to students via quarterly student surveys and review the supervision reports submitted by each student's Local Coordinator
- If there are any concerns about a student's placement or behavior, reach out directly to the student to promptly address any issue

Overseas Partners are responsible for the initial selection and screening of our students, who come from over 35 countries from all around the world. The role of Overseas Partners is to:

- Conduct personal interviews, administer English placement exams, and submit AYA applications
- Provide a pre-departure orientation and serve as liaisons to each student's natural parents during the program year

AYA Organizational Chart

Our key players are shown on the AYA organizational chart below. We encourage the lines of communication to flow in this order. Please remember that host families are supported locally by the Local Coordinators and on a national level by the Regional Directors.



Frequently Asked Questions

Is AYA a non-profit organization?

AYA is a non-profit organization. This means that we are a 501(c)(3) organization, recognized by the Internal Revenue Service.

What kind of visa do the students receive?

The students receive a J-1 exchange visitor visa. AYA issues a DS-2019 that secures a J-1 exchange student visa.

What are my primary responsibilities as a host family?

- Providing your host student with a safe, supportive, and loving home for the academic year or semester
- Welcoming your host student as a member of the family and encouraging students to participate in all aspects of family life

- Providing your host student with his/her own bed and a place to study, either in a room shared with a family member of the same sex and age range, or in his/her own room
- Providing your host student with all meals
- Providing transportation to and from school (usually by school bus)
- Encouraging the exchange of ideas and providing students with exposure to the cultural and social environment of the home and neighborhood
- Providing the love and understanding a young person needs to enjoy a successful academic year in America

Does the student have insurance?

Yes, students have medical and accident insurance through AYA or their sponsoring agency. Students and host families will receive an insurance card and a brochure detailing the policy coverage when they arrive in the U.S.

Will my student come with his/her own spending money?

Yes, students are expected to have their own spending money for personal expenses (school lunches, toiletries, school activities, clothes, entertainment). Grant students (YES and FLEX) will receive special funding for personal expenses.

Are students allowed to drive?

Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, ATVs, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it. AYA does not guarantee any student that he or she will have the opportunity to get a driver's license. Host families

may not permit their students to drive their car for any reason; if a student is taking a driving course, he or she must drive in the school's designated vehicle with a certified instructor. Students may need to purchase additional insurance depending on the course.

Note: It is becoming increasingly difficult in most states for foreign students to obtain a driver's license. Check with the Department of Motor Vehicles in your state for the official regulations. Students will incur all cost.

How will my student get to and from school?

Your student may take the school bus or be driven to school by a family member or a friend with a driver's license. Students who live close to school may walk or ride a bike.

When can I expect my student to arrive?

Students arrive in August for fall placements and in January for spring placements. Many students will first attend an AYA-sponsored orientation and then fly from the orientation site to their host community. Host families and Local Coordinators will receive detailed flight information as soon as it is available, usually in the month of July.

When does my student have to leave?

Students have open-ended return tickets. They book their own flights home with guidance from their home country organization, the AYA National Office, and/or their Local Coordinator. The program ends on the last day of school, and with permission from their host family, students may stay up to a maximum of two weeks past the last day of school. AYA encourages host families and students to discuss return flights well in advance of the end of school to ensure that everyone feels comfortable with the selected departure date. Student visas expire on June 30.

Will I, as the host family, be in contact with my Local Coordinator throughout the year?

Yes, your Local Coordinator is required by AYA to be in monthly contact with you and your student. Your Local Coordinator is also required to submit monthly reports on each student s/he is supervising. Local Coordinators are required to visit with your student(s) in person the first month and continue to contact the student on a monthly basis, visiting him/her every other month in person at a minimum. Your Local Coordinator is also required to contact you on a monthly basis and visit your home at least once per semester after your student has arrived. Your Local Coordinator will help support you with any questions or adjustment issues that you may have throughout the year. Many Local Coordinators also set up student and host family events throughout the year in order to stay in touch. AYA encourages you to reach out to your Local Coordinator between monthly contacts if you have any issues, big or small. Local Coordinators are trained to help host families and students resolve issues and enjoy a rewarding experience!





What is the role of my second visitor?

A second visitor is an AYA representative, other than your Local Coordinator, who will schedule a time to visit your home within 30–45 days of your student's arrival and ensure that the home environment remains the same as described in the host family interview that was conducted by your Local Coordinator before your student arrived. Second visits are mandated by the U.S. Department of State, and are intended to serve as a secondary layer of support for both the student and your family.

What if I can't reach my Local Coordinator?

If for any reason you cannot reach your Local Coordinator or don't feel comfortable discussing a particular concern with him or her, you can always call the AYA National Office. The AYA office has a comprehensive support team in place, including a Regional Director specifically assigned to your family and a student support team, who are available at any time to assist you with any concerns or questions you may have. AYA also has a 24/7 emergency hotline that host families may call after business hours.

What happens if the placement doesn't work out?

Your Local Coordinator will work with you and your student to resolve any adjustment issues that your family or student may be experiencing. Our experience shows that most "problems" are a result of miscommunications, unrealistic expectations, or cultural misunderstandings. The majority of the time, misunderstandings can be resolved through mediation and open communication.

Your Local Coordinator will conduct mediation and counseling with your family and your student as soon as an issue arises. If, after mediation and counseling, it is determined that the issues cannot be resolved, your Local Coordinator will place the student with another host family (within the same school district whenever possible). A student may not change families without approval from the National Office, as any new host family must be fully screened and vetted in compliance with AYA program and federal regulations.

What happens if my student has behavioral or academic problems during his/her stay in my house?

Students are required to sign an agreement to abide by the AYA program rules and student code of conduct before they arrive. If any problem should arise, the Local Coordinator will step in and work with the student and family to determine what action is necessary. If a student is not following rules or struggling academically, your Local Coordinator will address the issue with the student and may schedule a mediation/communication session to discuss the behavior and identify concrete ways to remedy the issue. When appropriate, the Local Coordinator will contact his or her Regional Director at the AYA National Office to issue further disciplinary action, including a warning, probation, or more serious consequences. Students are well informed of AYA's disciplinary procedures and are expected to abide by the program rules at all times.

Welcoming Your Student

Once you have completed the screening process and selected your student, you will receive an email from the AYA compliance team letting you know that your placement has been confirmed and that you may begin contacting your student within 48 hours. Whether you have selected your student months or just a few weeks before his/her arrival, it's never too soon to begin your relationship. Early communication can be instrumental in starting the bonding process and help ease any jitters about this exciting new experience!

Once you have received notification that you may contact your student, you may want to send him/her an email, call him/her or schedule a chat or Skype session. Your student is undoubtedly very excited to hear from you, and this first contact is much anticipated! Early communication can include the following:

- A warm welcome to your student
- A brief introduction about your family to the student's natural parents
- Additional information about your family that was not covered in the host family application
- Local photos, postcards, brochures, newspapers, etc.

Some host families like to call their students prior to their arrival. If your family chooses to call your student, be conscientious of the time difference. Be prepared to ask for your student by his or her native name, as a non-English-speaker may answer the phone. Remember that your student may be nervous and not expecting your call. His or her English may be weak. Do not let this discourage your family.

Preparing for Your Student's Arrival

After communicating with your student and while awaiting his or her arrival, it is a good time to prepare a welcome package. Welcome packages can be an inexpensive but very thoughtful way to welcome your student to the family. Here are some suggestions to include:

- House keys, town map
- Welcome card
- Family photos, new photo album or scrapbook
- Address book with important addresses and numbers of family and friends
- Local Emergency information
- Stationery, cards, stamps

- Small gift set of American toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, soaps, lotions, etc.)

Another step of pre-arrival preparation is the student's room. Here are things you should do to prepare the space:

- Make the student's bed with fresh linens
- Make space for the student's belongings in the closet and drawers
- Clear out boxes and stored items
- Frame photos of the student's natural family and your family to place in the room
- Place welcome package in room

Preparing Your Family

Hosting a student from a culture different from your own can be an exciting growth experience for your family. In order to maximize your experience, it is important to understand the ways in which cultural differences will actually have an impact on your family's life. The following exercises have been designed to assist your whole family in preparing for the hosting experience.

1. Share Goals for the Experience

Individually and as a family, you'll get a lot more out of the exciting adventure you are embarking on if everyone's expectations are clear. Families sometimes focus so hard on trying to help their exchange student have a wonderful experience that they forget to consider their own interests and wishes.

It's a good idea to think about your own values and expectations. Clarify them and share these thoughts as a family before your student arrives. Have each member of the family come up with two reasons why they want to host a student.

As a family, discuss how realistic you think these goals are and how you will feel if they are not met.

2. Plan for a Great Year

What do you want to do or learn through this exchange? How do you want to grow personally and as a family? Get your family together as a group and share with each other, as specifically as you can, what you think would make this a great year for you.

Write the items down on index cards. Being able to see the goals and reflect back on them throughout this experience can help you and your family and the student, focus on the important aspects of the experience, especially during times of potential conflicts. You have only 5 or 10 months to reach these goals.

Brainstorm together to come up with some specific things you can do to accomplish these goals. Choose some of these ideas and agree to try them. Decide how and when you will do this. In making your choices, try to ensure that each person will have at least one goal met.

Each family member probably has a fairly clear idea of how s/he sees the student fitting into your family life. Clarify each member's idea about how the following areas of family life will probably be affected:

- » Personal space and privacy
- » Communication within the family
- » Family or household schedule
- » Activities outside the home (Little League, clubs, etc.)
- » Family "style" (how you like to do things—eat meals, relax, maintain cleanliness, share chores, etc.)

3. Learn about Your Student's Home Country

As with any new experience, there will be differences. The more you know about the country and culture your student comes from, the better prepared you'll be to appreciate the differences in attitudes and behavior you encounter.

While many of our host families often conclude that "teenagers are teenagers" and "people are people all over the world," it's also true that differences in language and environment reflect and promote differences in attitudes and behavior. Chances are your student's perspective and behavior will differ from yours in many ways because all people have been molded by different cultural influences. You must be open to understanding and respecting the differences you encounter. The amount your family will grow and gain will depend in part on how much effort you put into the discovery.

Your student will be trying to cope with many unfamiliar American customs and may find it hard to let you know when and/or what he or she does not understand. If you ask questions about your student's country and culture, you'll make it easier for your student to ask you questions. It's

good to express your interest in learning something about your exchange student's native land. Start this pattern of interaction within the first several days.

It isn't always easy to think of what to ask. Here is an exercise you can do now—individually or as a family—that will help you get a head start on the process.

Focus your thoughts on the country your student is coming from. Take one minute to write down the words or phrases that come to mind. Jot down as many as you can. Look over your list. Pick two or three things about which you are curious. Come up with as many questions as you can about them to ask your student. For example: If you are expecting a Chinese student, chopsticks might be on your list. Some questions the idea of chopsticks might trigger are:

- » Do Chinese people ever use knives and forks—what if they go to an American- or European-style restaurant?
- » Do you have ethnic restaurants in China? If so, what kind?
- » How often does your family eat in restaurants?
- » Do Chinese people always use chopsticks, or do they use their fingers for some foods as Americans do?
- » Is the Chinese meal schedule like ours?

4. Think about Cultural Differences

Dealing with cultural differences is part of the challenge of the exchange program. Understanding them is the reward. Pick one important cultural difference. Put yourselves in your student's place. Imagine what you would find strange about life in your new home or school because of that single difference. Can your family come up with some specific ways to help your student adjust to the many cultural differences s/he will encounter?

For example: What if your student tells you prior to his/her arrival that is used to being late for social engagements. Use the scenario that there is an upcoming event that is important to you, and determine, with your family, the best ways to discuss the difference in the "time" concept and make very clear the actual time you want your student to be ready. It's important to remember that situations like the above may occur more often than just once. You may need to remind him or her an hour or so before you are ready to leave to make sure there is no misunderstanding.

Host Family Orientation

Participating in a host family orientation is an excellent opportunity to learn about the program, ask questions, and prepare for your student's arrival. Your Local Coordinator is responsible for providing you with a host family orientation in your community before your student arrives. You will also receive a link to AYA's online host family orientation when you receive your host family confirmation email. The AYA host family orientation is also posted in your AYA host family portal for your convenience. Viewing AYA's host family orientation along with attending your local orientation with your Local Coordinator will ensure that you are prepared for your upcoming adventure as an AYA host family!

The AYA host family orientation will cover the following information:

- Overview of AYA and AYA students
- Responsibilities of an AYA host family

- Responsibilities of an AYA student
- Responsibilities of an AYA Local Coordinator
- Keeping your student safe and AYA's student safety video
- Student orientation
- High school and your student
- The AYA student disciplinary process
- End of year

Note: Whether this is your first time hosting or you are an experienced repeat host family, you must participate in a host family orientation annually. This is a federal requirement and very important, as program regulations may change and information is refreshed each season.

Helpful Hints for Host Families

- Your student may be extremely nervous and overwhelmed. Give him or her a few days to adjust, settle in, and recoup from jet lag.
- Do not assume that your student is unhappy or uninterested if he or she seems quiet, tired, or introverted. Most need time to rest, sleep, and be alone after first arriving.
- Students may speak English well but are not accustomed to hearing the local brand spoken. Speak slowly and clearly, and try to avoid idioms.
- Students from Asian countries may need more time to adjust to speaking the English language. It is important to remember that different education systems teach the English language in different ways. In Asia, English is taught predominantly as a written language; therefore, some Asian students need a few extra weeks to adjust to hearing and speaking the language before becoming proficient.
- Writing things down can be helpful in the first few weeks. It is important to give advance warning for upcoming events such as mealtimes, time to leave, etc.
- Students may arrive with a large sum of money. You may need to assist them with opening a personal bank account soon. This should never be a joint account between the family and student.
- It is important for you to show a real interest in the natural family. Get to know the names of your student's brothers and sisters and parents. Display their family pictures along with your own. Family letters to the natural family are helpful.
- School may be difficult at first. Ask each evening if your student needs help. Another student in class may be able to help. If a class is getting too challenging, give your Local Coordinator a call so that he or she can help.
- The happiest families are flexible enough to realize that 17 or 18 years of cultural learning and personal habits will not be changed quickly. Remember that many things are not right or wrong, but different. Give your student time to learn your house rules, and be patient if s/he makes a few mistakes here and there.
- On a monthly basis, think over problems or potential problems. Be honest. If there are small problems, address them before they get bigger. Open communication is very important.
- Resist the temptation to overlook minor problems or resolve them without the assistance of your Local Coordinator. It is very important to make sure that your Local Coordinator is aware of any issues big or small as soon as they occur. Your Local Coordinator is trained to help support you and your student. Your Local Coordinator is also responsible for documenting any issues in case they escalate or require intervention from the National Office.



Helpful Hints for Host Families (Continued)

- Remember that a new relationship is bound to have a stress point or two at some time during the year.
- On the subject of chores and helping around the house, your student will feel more a part of the family if he or she is assigned regular chores or is asked from the beginning to participate in the work of the family. It may be helpful to keep chores clearly posted in a central location.
- Students will often experience homesickness and withdrawal. Engaging the student in a healthy distraction, such as going out for ice cream, helping to peel potatoes, going to the grocery store, or any activity with another person helps to heal this problem. Keeping the student busy is a great way to deter homesickness. Too many phone calls from or to home can intensify homesickness.
- If you do run into an issue, don't panic! Most issues are a result of a miscommunication, cultural differences, or unrealistic expectations on either the part of the student or host family. Be open to participating in a mediation and communication session with your Local Coordinator to determine the root of the issue. It's important to remain open-minded, as mediation/communication sessions successfully resolve the majority of host family/student conflicts.
- Students should use a pre-paid phone card for any long distance calls.

Tips for a Successful Start —Do's and Don'ts

Don't plan a big party to welcome your student immediately after arrival. Students are tired, timid, and overwhelmed. It's hard to speak English all the time at first. A family party or get-together with neighbors is much more successful later on during your student's stay.

Do plan a relaxed, casual day together. Give your student a tour of your neighborhood, your town, and the high school. Explain where things are in your house and how everything works. Visit the post office, the library, the drugstore, and other places of importance. It may be best to spread these activities out over the course of a few days to avoid overwhelming your student upon his/her arrival.

Do treat your student like one of your own family members, even on the first day. If clothes have been left where they shouldn't, explain your rules. If you prefer the radio played softer, explain this. Reminders of forgotten chores and patient interpretations build future trust and honest, open communication. Consistency is important, and bestowing the same responsibilities on your student as you would on members of your family will help with the adjustment process for you and your student.

Do remember that everything you say may be in a language your student never uses or hears outside of a classroom. Repeat things slowly and often. Louder voices are not any more understandable than lower voices. Both the language and the information are new, so speak slowly and use simple words.

Do remember that your student's mental picture of America probably comes from American TV shows and Hollywood movies. No matter what has been told at orientation, there are expectations that can never be fulfilled. It will be a while before there is understanding and appreciation of the real America, your America!

Do remember that you have your own expectations of your student or the hosting experience that may not be met. It's important to review and readjust expectations after meeting and getting to know your student. No experience will ever meet preconceived expectations, but successful host families can often exceed their own expectations by being flexible and refining those expectations as they go!

Don't treat your student like a guest. Don't accustom your student to special treatment by preparing special foods, planning elaborate outings, or giving your student leeway you would not give your own family members at the beginning of your student's stay. Special arrangements at the beginning of his/her stay can confuse expectations.

Don't assume your student understands because you are receiving smiles and nods in response. Smiling and nodding in agreement are non-verbal ways of pleasing you, but they do not automatically imply that you have been understood.

Don't expect your student to think that everything you have, all that you are most proud of, is wonderful. Don't expect your student to rave about everything you share with or show him/her.

Student Arrival

Student Orientation

All AYA students receive a pre-departure orientation in their home country from the AYA partner abroad. AYA provides a comprehensive Pre-Departure Guide. This information advises program participants about culture shock and about their responsibilities as exchange student ambassadors from their home countries. It also encourages them to adopt realistic expectations about their year in the U.S. and to set personal goals for this unique learning opportunity.

Arrival orientation is conducted either at a group welcome program provided by AYA or at a local orientation conducted by your supervising Local Coordinator within two weeks of the student's arrival to the host community.

Information covered in arrival orientations includes AYA rules, problem solving, lines of communication, the role of the Local Coordinator, the American family, and the American high school. The Student Handbook also explains all of these topics.

Arrival Day

Your student's travel, both the international flight and the domestic flight, is arranged by an AYA partner organization abroad. Every effort is made to notify families of arrival times well in advance of the date. Plans cannot be finalized until a student's placement is confirmed. AYA understands that host families are eager for arrival information and tries to accommodate as quickly as possible.

Students are generally flown to the nearest major airport. Occasionally, a host family may be asked to drive as far as 150 miles to pick up their student. This is because the expense, confusion, and delay of getting students and all of their luggage onto small connecting flights to a closer airport is often too difficult. A host family with a long drive to pick up a student should know that AYA appreciates this kindness—and that they are making this trip for a very special reason.

Your Local Coordinator will be at the airport if possible. However, host families are responsible for meeting their students at the airport.

Travel Delays

Whether your student is flying directly to your community from their home country or from AYA's national orientation, he or she has been given travel instructions on how to proceed if s/he misses a connecting flight, or if a flight is delayed or cancelled for any reason. Students are given clear instructions on how to rebook

a flight and are told to call AYA's emergency travel number to let AYA know that their itinerary has changed. An AYA agent will do whatever s/he can to assist the student through the rebooking process. Students are also encouraged to call their host family or Local Coordinator to let them know about the delay. AYA will contact you and/or your Local Coordinator as soon as we know that the flight has been delayed and update you as new flight information becomes available. On rare occasions, a student with a late flight may be required to spend the night at an airport hotel or at the airport. While this is not ideal, it can happen, and all students and natural parents are made aware of this possibility. Many airports have special rooms just for minors where they can sleep and spend the night.

Greeting Your Student at the Airport

Both your family and your student will be excited and maybe nervous. Your student may feel overwhelmed. Here are some suggestions on how to make the first day go smoothly:

- Prepare a large welcome sign with the student's name on it
- Take flowers, balloons, or a small American flag for your student
- Greet your student with a smile
- Take cues from him or her on whether to shake hands, hug, or simply say welcome
- Take photos of the special day to reflect on later
- Retrieve the student's luggage
- Take the time to sit for a moment to discuss what everyone wants to be called

Discuss how your student is feeling and what he or she may need, such as a restroom, water, or a snack; students may be embarrassed or unsure of how to ask about these basic needs and will count on you for direction and guidance.

Tell your student that you understand how tired s/he must feel and that you encourage him/her to take it easy the first couple of days and to rest up for any family activities you may have planned.

Arrival Notification to Parents

Your student's natural parents will be eager to know that the student has arrived safely in your home. Make sure that your student calls home or sends an email within the first 24 hours to assure his/her parents s/he has arrived.



The First Few Days

Imagine yourself in your student's place: arriving in a foreign country after a long trip, tired and apprehensive, expected to speak a language you've never spoken outside the classroom. Keep these things in mind as you plan your welcome.

Just be yourselves. Keep your hospitality simple and spontaneous. Don't plan anything too ambitious for the first few days. You might even give your student several days of leisure to rest from the trip and settle into your home.

Your student may appear quiet and withdrawn at first due to feelings of homesickness and being overwhelmed by everything new. The ever-present need to speak English is tiring, if not frightening, in the beginning.

Be patient. Just do what you can to make the student feel like a member of your family. Make time in the first few days for quiet conversations where you can begin to get to know one another. Explain things in simple terms. Be explicit. Show by demonstrating, and check to see if your student really does understand.

It's important to remember that when language serves as a minor barrier in communication, body language and tone can take precedence during a conversation. Do not be alarmed if your student's body language is not what you are accustomed to. At first, students may not exhibit the appropriate body language during a particular conversation or situation due to cultural differences. This is learned through time, communication, and experience. Likewise, your body language, tone, or even direct eye contact may be off-putting to your student and send the wrong message. It is important to be clear about your intent, and communicate with words, written or spoken, about your intent.

Things You Should Know

Culture Shock

Culture shock is the reaction of the mind and the body to overwhelming change. It is never through one event or happening, but through a continuous succession of events, where definite patterns of behavior are disrupted and the individual feels a loss of control of the known and the familiar. The symptoms vary greatly, but usually include:

- Apparent (and often real) exhaustion
- Either insomnia or too much sleep
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger (particularly at everything foreign)
- Withdrawal
- Homesickness
- Idealization of everything at home; critical of all things foreign
- Change in eating patterns; either weight loss or gain

By anticipating some of these symptoms and expecting these reactions, you can help your student realize that they are normal and usually temporary. Deal quickly with these symptoms before they fester and become unsolvable. Culture shock can set in at any time and often appears after the “newness” has worn off and around holidays, when the student is feeling far away from the familiar customs and traditions of home.

The Ups and Downs

It is important to understand the symptoms that culture shock may present and also be aware that while many of our students experience similar patterns of culture shock, it can set in at any time during the program year.

Some students may experience more intense culture shock, lasting longer than others, but in general, expect the year to go like this:

Initially, students are the center of attention, and everything is new. Excitement runs high. There aren’t enough hours in the day to explore things. Once the thrill is over, routine sets in. During the second to fourth months, your student may feel like another member of the family. S/he is adjusting better and more quickly to family life in the United States, and you may find that s/he is communicating more openly and frequently with you. With this wonderful level of comfort may also arise challenges. You may notice that your student is testing the boundaries, rules,

and expectations that have already been set in place. This is not uncommon for all teenagers to do—yet it is important to continue to remind the student of the expectations that you have all discussed and that it is important to continue to adhere by these expectations. S/he must really do what is necessary to adjust to the new situation.

Around mid-stay (the time the holidays arrive for 10-month students), there is a general malaise, homesickness, and sometimes depression, which signifies that the student is a bit worn out by it all. Students may begin to ask themselves how they were ever tough enough to leave home, where they were accustomed to a specific routine, while here, they must try hard at each new thing. These feelings can be exacerbated by the holidays. While the holidays are an exciting and new experience, it can also prove to be a stressful period for our AYA students and host families. Some of our students begin to miss their families back home, especially when you may have so many of your family members around during holiday times.

Spring reverses most of this. Students realize their time here is limited; they want to make the most of it. Most students have now adapted, and they make friends more easily and get involved in more activities and relationships.

As the program nears its end, the student usually feels comfortable. Adjustment has made the strange now seem familiar, and open communication through the low points earlier in the year will help you and your student through to the end of the year. At the end of the year, some students may become more inclined to break rules, as they know that they will be returning home soon. It is important to review expectations and house rules as well as Program Rules with your student to ensure a smooth transition into the final couple of months of the program.

The same holds true for semester students, except time is condensed to five months. Remember, open communication and patience are key to a successful cultural exchange.

Attitude

There may be times when you feel your student has the wrong attitude. Stereotypically, teenagers are naturally critical and may question something many times. An exchange student may be particularly critical or angry, especially when feeling homesick or experiencing culture shock. “It’s better at home” and “Americans are so hard to understand” are common refrains and part of cultural adjustment.

Remind your student that the purpose of this exchange is to experience another culture and that you will do your best to help.

By keeping an open mind, your student can expect to adapt to new ways and recognize the value of the exchange experience. Give your student the space to make mistakes and do things incorrectly. It will take time to adjust to the American way of life. Be patient!

Food

Your responsibility as host parents is to provide an adequate, balanced diet. Keep that in mind, and perhaps the preparation of snacks can be shared with your student. Explain when meals are usually served. It is the host family's responsibility to provide all meals for the student. If a student wishes to purchase hot lunch at school, he or she is responsible for paying for it, otherwise the student will bring a packed lunch from the food you have provided at home. If you go out to eat as a family, you are expected to pay for the student, as you would any other member of your family. If the student is out socially with friends, the student is responsible for purchasing meals during that time. Your student may be accustomed to different food at home, which means s/he may take some time to adjust to your family's diet and American food altogether. S/he may grow to love some foods that first intimidated him/her, while other foods, s/he may never like. Find out in the first few days if there are foods that your student cannot eat due to specific dietary restrictions, allergies, or religious reasons. Beyond this, however, you should just prepare your usual meals. Be patient with your student and encourage him or her to try new things.

Host families, especially those in which there are no teenagers, are sometimes amazed by the quantity of food exchange students consume. It's important to remember that growing teens of any culture require a lot of nourishment and sustenance to maintain their energy levels. Ensure that your student has had enough to eat, and be sure to discuss the protocol for asking for more food, snacking between meals, and eating after dinner.

It's also important to be aware that eating habits can change or fluctuate as a result of culture shock or homesickness; students may eat more or less than usual during these times. If you suspect this is the case, talk about it with your student; talking is a great way to address adjustment issues and open a dialogue about healthy eating habits. Some students may be concerned that they are going to gain weight in the U.S., which may influence some of their dietary choices. It's important to remind your student that maintaining a balance of a healthy diet and exercise is the best way to stay healthy, while still enjoying food and trying new things. If you feel that your student's eating habits are affecting his/her overall health, it is important that you contact your Local Coordinator right away so that he or she can work with you and the National Office to ensure that your student remains healthy on the program.

High School

Successful participation at an American high school is every bit as important as being part of an American family. Your student will find that the high school experience is an exciting part of the exchange year as well.

Our students and their natural parents are made aware that AYA does not guarantee grade assignment, a receipt of a diploma or participation in graduation ceremonies, or participation in sports to any of its students. Students or host families should not pressure a school to place an AYA student in a particular grade or to allow them to graduate. Students can be issued a warning or be placed on probation if they continually ask school personnel to allow them to graduate.

It is important to encourage your student to take school seriously. This year may not count for academic credit at home, but the benefits will be far greater if there is an effort made to do well at school. AYA insists that each student achieve at least a "C+" average in every class (we allow the first quarter for settling in) and demonstrate a positive attitude in school.

Going to a new school is difficult for any teenager. Attending a new school in a foreign country, communicating all day in a foreign language, and experiencing a dozen different ways of doing things can be overwhelming. Spend a few hours with your student visiting school before it opens, if possible. Introduce your student to the principal and to the appointed guidance counselor. Explain the role of the guidance counselor, since this may be a support person not known in a school abroad. Ask the counselor if he or she could assign a student in the school to your student for a couple of days if you do not have any teens in your family.

Every student has a different learning curve, and some students may take more time than others to get adjusted to their new school. Remember, your student will now have the unique and challenging experience of having all of their classes taught in English without a lifeline to their native language. Depending on what type of English language instruction they have received, some students may adjust more quickly than others. For example, German students who have spent a lot of time speaking and hearing the English language may be more comfortable in the first weeks of school. On the other hand, students from China or Thailand, who have been studying English as a written language, may struggle with hearing it instead of reading it for the first few weeks. It typically takes 8-12 weeks for a student to start to feel comfortable. Students who continue to struggle after the adjustment period will be counseled appropriately; AYA may suggest private tutoring for those who need it. Students are responsible for all costs associated with private tutoring. If an AYA student is not taking advantage of academic outlets intended to help him/her improve, the appropriate guidance measures will be taken to emphasize the importance of academics while on this program and the potential disciplinary consequences of consistent poor academic performance, effort, and attitude.

If a student is expelled from school, s/he will be disqualified from the AYA program. If s/he receives a suspension, AYA will evaluate the situation and take appropriate disciplinary action. Please contact your Local Coordinator if your student is experiencing any problems at school.

After-School Activities & Sports

AYA encourages all students to become an active member of the student body, either through sports, clubs, or extracurricular activities. AYA does not guarantee that all students will be eligible

to play sports at their local high school; eligibility is based on each high school's individual policy on foreign exchange students and athletic participation. Some districts prohibit exchange students from participating in sports, and some schools require physicals performed by a doctor in America to be conducted prior to agreeing to allow students to participate in sports. Students are responsible for covering the cost of any required physicals. For students who cannot play sports, AYA encourages them to find other local athletic intramural teams or join other clubs and activities. School activities are an excellent way for students to make friends with American peers who share common interests. It is important that host families encourage students to become involved, as it will help them grow, socialize, and round out their experience in the U.S.

Transportation to and from Activities

Keeping up with a busy teenager can be challenging! AYA understands that each host family has its own busy schedule and since AYA students are not allowed to drive in the U.S., adding another person to the transportation schedule may be challenging. It is important that you set expectations about transportation and how rides will be provided as soon as your student arrives. Let your student know what your schedule is and what your availability is to provide transportation. You may need to work with your student to identify a carpool or other sources of transportation. Make sure that you let your student know how far in advance you need to be notified of the need for a ride; it may help to create a weekly or monthly family schedule so that there are no surprises! It is not your responsibility to provide rides to all of your student's social activities; talk with your Local Coordinator if you need assistance with planning alternative arrangements.

Computer Usage and Social Media

Email, texting, and social networking sites are very common means of communication for teenagers (and adults!) these days. It's important for you to understand that this type of communication is a universal part of teen culture and work with your student on how to achieve a happy balance of internet use and family time.

While video chatting, instant messaging, and emailing are excellent ways for your student to keep in touch with family and friends back home, communications abroad should be limited to a reasonable amount. A student gains most by interacting with his/her host family and local friends. Experience has shown that limited contact with the student's home country will minimize homesickness and maximize his/her exchange experience. You should set rules about how much time is allotted, what sites are acceptable to view, when or if the student is allowed to download online content, and any other specific computer guidelines you wish your student to follow.

While it is up to your family to determine guidelines for computer or phone usage, it is important to also pay attention to your student and how s/he is adjusting when setting these boundaries; you may choose to readjust them. If a student is able to communicate frequently with family and friends back home while still maintaining healthy relationships with your host family, doing well in school, and being active and engaged in his

or her experience, there is no reason to limit his/her computer usage. Conversely, if you notice that your student's frequent communication with friends and family back home is hindering their adjustment and causing him/her to become more withdrawn or homesick, it may be time to set firm boundaries and limits on communication to help him/her with adjustment. Call your Local Coordinator, or AYA Regional Director if you need guidance or suggestions on how to proceed with setting guidelines for communication.

Remember, all students must have reasonable access at all times to phone and/or internet to get in touch with their natural parents, their Local Coordinator, or the AYA office.

Friends

Making friends is an important part of this experience for many students. However, it can be intimidating to enter a new school and community with the expectation that they will become best friends with everyone. Adjusting expectations for friendships while on this program is a great start to helping with any feelings of nervousness or anxiety. Explain to your student that s/he may not form friendships like the ones s/he has in his/her home country—but s/he will still be able to learn from one another through group activities and outings. Remind your student that it is important for him/her to take the first step. Encourage your student to join school clubs or sports teams, which are great ways to meet different groups of people.

Your student also needs to be reminded that some American high school students might not be very informed about what's going on in other parts of the world. At first, some students may show little or no interest in different cultures due to lack of exposure. Because of this, exchange students may be shocked by some of the questions their new friends ask. Remember, one of the reasons U.S. high schools enroll exchange students is to enhance their own student body by exposing American students to other views, languages, and cultures. Remind your student that part of his/her role here is to be an ambassador of his/her country – to help teach others about his/her culture just as much as s/he is here to learn about yours.

When your student starts to form friendships, be sure s/he understands your family's rules about inviting friends over, visiting friends' homes, and riding in cars with friends. You want your student to follow your family guidelines but still be able to enjoy time with friends.

Social Life

Students are encouraged to participate in all aspect of American life, including social activities. AYA encourages students to make new friends, attend community and school events, and act responsibly and according to host family rules at all times when socializing. AYA students are expected to abide by all U.S. laws and program rules when out with friends and are expected to communicate their whereabouts and ask permission before going out with friends.

Dates

Students are expected to follow all host family rules regarding dating. AYA highly discourages our students from entering into a relationship or having a “boyfriend” or “girlfriend” while on-program. Dating is not the primary purpose of this exchange and has the potential to derail an otherwise positive experience by narrowing the student’s focus and preventing him/her from experiencing a wide range of social activities with other friends and their host family. AYA encourages you to set expectations about dating shortly after your student arrives. Many students choose to go out in groups or participate in casual, activity based dating (going to prom, homecoming, etc.).

Sex

Engaging in sexual activity is highly discouraged and sexual intercourse is prohibited while students are on the AYA program.

Curfew

AYA students are expected to follow the host family’s curfew at all times. Keep in mind, curfew is a new principle for many exchange students, and they may need to be reminded about the specific time they need to return home before they leave the house.

Loss of Independence

You may find that your student is confused or frustrated by some of your household rules related to curfew, dating, or socializing with friends. Many teens from other countries come from cultures where adolescents have far more independence than American teens. In many European or Latin American countries, teens are allowed to go to clubs, drink alcohol, and stay out without restrictions.

AYA has prepared all of our students for the vast difference in the way that many American teenagers are parented and the loss of independence that they may experience. Despite being prepared for this, when first given new rules, some exchange students might equate curfew or other restrictions with a lack of trust, which can be more difficult to accept than the actual rules themselves. It is important to explain that you do trust them, and remind them that they are in a new country and your rules are intended to keep them safe!

The other way in which students may suffer a loss of independence is their newfound dependence on rides for transportation. Many students are used to getting around their home towns on public transportation or a bicycle without having to rely on anyone else. Getting used to asking for rides and permission to go places can be a difficult adjustment. Keep this in mind when your student starts making friends and scheduling activities, and help him/her create a schedule with transportation well in advance.

Religious Beliefs

As church is often an important part of family life in the U.S., students are encouraged to partake in church activities with their

host family, but they must not be required to attend. You should discuss this with your student upon arrival to find out if s/he wishes to attend your church and how often, in the event you attend more than one service a week. AYA emphasizes the value of sharing the social aspect of religion with your student and reminds all host families that students should not be asked to share the same beliefs or ideologies as their host family. Students who wish to attend religious services different from your own must be provided with transportation to and from services, if necessary.

Student Travel

Traveling During the Program

The primary purpose of the AYA program is for students to learn about American culture through a home stay and high school experience while sharing their own culture with others. Students will be expected to attend classes regularly and become a part of their family. AYA encourages host families to introduce students to local attractions and take them to community events, but does not expect you to plan organized trips or travel adventures for them.

Traveling is not allowed while school is in session. When the opportunity to travel does arise, AYA allows students to travel with their host family or Local Coordinator without any special restrictions other than informing the AYA office of their whereabouts. However, if a student is planning a trip with someone other than his/her host parents or LC, AYA will require written permission from your family as well as the student’s natural family. Written requests to travel independently must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the planned trip. A school-sponsored overnight trip will also require an independent travel form. Please note that under no circumstances will the AYA office permit trips taken without any adult supervision (someone who is 21 years or older). Final approval for all independent travel is granted by AYA.

Traveling Abroad

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. with your student during the program year, the student will need to submit an Independent Travel Form signed by his or her natural parents at least 4 weeks prior to your trip. With guidance from his/her host family or Local Coordinator, it’s the student’s responsibility to obtain the necessary information and documents before traveling. A minimum of 6 weeks to complete these requirements should be allotted. If the appropriate paperwork is not obtained in time, there is a possibility that the student may not be allowed leave or re-enter the U.S.

Here are the initial steps to complete:

- Check the student’s J-1 Visa inside his/her passport for an “M” stamped in the “Entries” block. If an “M” is stamped there, this indicates that it is a multiple entry visa, which will allow the student to successfully re-enter the United States.
- Contact the nearest consulate of the country to which you are traveling to find out if additional documents (i.e. visa) are

required for travel.

- Submit the student's **original** DS-2019 form via certified or traceable mail to the AYA office for validation at least 4 weeks prior to the intended travel date.
- Make sure that your student has his or her validated DS-2019 form and passport on the day of travel. Without these documents your student will not be allowed to travel outside of the U.S.
- Make copies of all documents before turning them over to a consulate or mailing them to AYA.

Please be aware that these steps are only the basic requirements for traveling abroad. Traveling parties are responsible for determining all requirements and cost for travel. There may be times when your student is denied access to another country. This decision is solely at the discretion of each country's consulate. **It should be noted that most cruise line itineraries will take you into other countries; in these cases all of the above applies, just as with any other form of travel.**

Important: If your student has extended his or her visa from a semester to a full year, he or she CANNOT travel outside the U.S. for any reason during the second semester. The student will NOT be allowed back in the U.S., even if he or she possesses a new "extended" DS-2019.

Contact with Friends and Family from Home

Communication

Students are encouraged to limit contact with natural family and friends back home to a reasonable amount. Reasonable will be defined by you and your student depending on how he or she is adjusting to your family and the exchange experience. Some students are able to speak with their parents or friends a few times a week while engaging actively in the exchange experience and bonding with their host family. For these students, it is not necessary to restrict communication. Some students, however, may struggle with adjustment, and you may find that frequent communication with family and friends back home is hindering your student's ability to engage in the program and bond with your family. In these cases, it may be prudent to limit contact to once a week until the student becomes more engaged.

Visits from friends and family

Natural family and friends are not permitted to visit the student until near to the end of the program year. The reason is simple: Our experience has shown us that visits from home can be very disruptive to a student's year in America and can lead to difficulties with adjusting, which can result in extreme homesickness. "Near to the end" of the program is defined as on or after December 1st for one semester students, and on or after April 15th for full year students. AYA advises students and natural families to discuss any potential visits with your family well in advance of booking travel to ensure that you are comfortable with the visit, and that the timing does not conflict with any scheduled plans your family may already

have. Visitors are advised to secure accommodations at a nearby hotel, unless explicitly invited by the host family to do otherwise.

Money and Banking

Some students arrive with spending money for the year, while others receive monthly or periodic allowances. Before the student arrives, check with your local banks to determine which bank can receive international cable transfers of money from overseas banks, and the standard procedure for clearing international checks or money orders. Not all banks are equipped to provide these services, and procedures vary from bank to bank. Also confirm bank regulations for minors opening a checking account in their name only.

Soon after your student arrives, assist him/her in opening an account, making sure that your student understands the danger of carrying large sums of cash. The student's money should never be placed in the host family's account. Student and host family finances should be kept separate at all times. Help your student stay safe by reminding him/her that him/her must be the only one with access to his/her cash and/or checking account during his/her stay in America. Students should not give their P.I.N. numbers for any credit cards or money cards to anyone.

Students are not allowed to give or lend their host family money for any reason. Likewise, if you find that your student is running low on funds or not budgeting properly, you should avoid lending your student money. Instead, contact your Local Coordinator, who will work with the National Office to ensure that the student's parents are providing the student with adequate funds to cover his/her personal expenses.

Help your student create a financial plan for the year and a monthly budget; your Local Coordinator can assist with this as well. Clearly discuss with your student what you expect him/her to be responsible for regarding trips and weekly entertainment. You should not pay for anything in the beginning of the year that you do not intend to continue to pay for throughout the year, as this may confuse expectations and create unnecessary tension later in the year.

Illness, Medical Emergencies, and Insurance

If your student becomes ill with more than a simple cold, contact your Local Coordinator and arrange for him or her to have medical care immediately. All AYA students are covered by insurance and will be able to receive urgent care in many hospitals and urgent care facilities. If necessary, you and/or your Local Coordinator will be able to sign off any urgent care that your student may need. This authorization has been granted by the student's parents, who signed a medical authorization release form allowing authorized representatives of AYA to make emergent medical decisions on a student's behalf.

In the event of a serious accident or illness, AYA will intervene and work with the student's insurance and emergency assistance company to ensure that he or she is able to receive the support and care needed to safely recover. In rare cases, students may need

to return home to receive follow-up care or surgery in their home countries and in the care of their natural parents.

Insurance

All AYA students are covered by insurance. The majority of AYA students are covered by CareMed Insurance. The few students who are not insured through CareMed are covered by a private insurer in their home country; these students will arrive with their private policy information, which has been provided to them by their home country organization. The CareMed policy provides unlimited medical benefits for covered injuries or illnesses with no per occurrence or annual deductible. Some services carry sub-limits, and there is a \$250 Non-Emergent Emergency Room illness deductible.

The insurance policy covers: required treatment by a physician or surgeon, confinement in an infirmary or hospital, services of a registered nurse, x-rays, ambulance service, or any other services and supplies or medicines prescribed by a physician.

Policy Sub-Limits Include:

- Dental Treatment for relief of Pain is covered up to \$500
- Dental Treatment in Case of an Accident is covered up to \$1,500
- Mental/Nervous Disorders are covered up to \$500
- Physical Therapy is covered up to \$750
- X-Ray and Lab Services are covered up to \$1,000
- CAT Scans and MRIs are covered up to \$1,000
- The policy does not cover the following:
 - Pre-existing Conditions
 - Routine Physicals
 - Immunizations
 - Sports Examinations
 - Extreme Sports

The following are some examples of activities that are not covered: Boxing, combat sports, aerial, sports, rock climbing, hang gliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, horseracing, scuba diving, white water rafting, jet skiing, water skiing, heli-skiing.

If you or your student is in doubt about whether an activity is covered by insurance, contact AYA during business hours or contact the student's insurance provider directly for clarification.

Your student's AYA ID card will have the policy number and contact number on the back. In case of medical emergency, you may also call the AYA emergency number. If the card is lost, contact your Local Coordinator or AYA directly for a replacement card to be emailed to you.

Insurance can be confusing for students; AYA suggests sitting with your student and reviewing his/her insurance plan, including co-pay and claims procedures in order to ensure that s/he is making sound decisions about medical care. AYA advises that you contact your student's insurance provider to identify in-network physicians and urgent care centers in your area whenever possible. Emergency room visits should be reserved for true emergencies only. If your student goes to a doctor or urgent care network that is not in his or her insurance network, he or she may have to pay additional charges.

Host parents are not financially responsible for medical treatment. In order to keep things streamlined, please ensure that your student provides his/her natural family's name and contact information on all claims forms for collection.

Submitting Claims

To receive reimbursement for medical expenses incurred because of illness or an accident, your student must complete and sign the Medical Claim Form attached to the insurance brochure and indicate whether the doctor/hospital has been paid. Itemized bills or receipts for all amounts being claimed should also be attached to the form. If reimbursement is approved, it will be made to the provider of the service unless the receipt or bill is noted as having been paid.

If payment is to be made to the service provider, the provider's name, address, zip code, telephone number, and taxpayer identification number must be included on the bill or receipt.

The form and all attachments should be submitted via mail or email to:

CareMed Claims
CISI Claim Department
1 High Ridge Park
Stamford, CT 06905
Email: claimhelp@culturalinsurance.com

After your student submits his/her first claim, subsequent claims can be made by mailing medical bills to the Claims Department of CISI/CareMed in Stamford, Connecticut. When your student submits medical claims, his/her name, ID number and host family address should be clearly written on all correspondence and bills sent to the Claims Department.

If doctors and medical facilities will not wait for payment for services from the insurance company, your student will have to pay these bills directly. S/he must send the bills and proof of payment to the Claims Department of CISI/CareMed in Stamford, Connecticut, for payment, indicating that payment should be made directly to him/her. Again, your student's name, ID number and host family address should be clearly written on all correspondence and bills sent to the Claims Department. Questions can be directed to CareMed at (800) 303-8120.

Students who are not covered by CareMed Insurance will have received information regarding their policy and details of their coverage from the Overseas Partner prior to departing from their home country.

Mental Health

Your student may experience feelings of sadness, loneliness or anxiety during the program year. This is typical of any teenager, especially a teen who is experiencing high school in a foreign country! Learning and adapting to a new culture and language far away from the comforts of home, is a stressful experience that requires patience, maturity and adequate coping skills. Depending on the student, culture shock can set in at different times throughout the year. Certain holidays or events may trigger homesickness. Navigating through these feelings can be difficult and we encourage students, host families and local coordinators to speak candidly about any sad or negative feelings they are experiencing so that they can effectively process them and move on. It is important to know your student, develop a rapport and bring any concerns to the attention of your Local Coordinator, and/or AYA support staff so that you and your student receive maximum support during these times. As with any adjustment issue, open communication is the cornerstone of overcoming obstacles.

While experiencing some feelings of sadness and anxiety is normal, if you notice or suspect that your student is experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety that are persistent, alarming, or beyond the scope of typical cultural or teenage challenges, it is important for you to report your concerns to your Local Coordinator or to an AYA student support staff member immediately. If a student is demonstrating symptoms of depression, anxiety or other potential mental/nervous disorder, AYA work with your family, your Local Coordinator and the student to ensure that the student receives the appropriate support and care that he or she needs to feel better and be healthy. Support plans for suspected mental health concerns are established with the AYA support team and the input of appropriate health care professionals and resources. AYA values the safety, health and wellbeing of our students, above all, and will make recommendations accordingly. In some cases, AYA may recommend that a student return home early to receive care and support under the supervision of his or her natural family.

Signs and Symptoms:

It is important for you to get to know your student well. Fostering open communication is key, and can take effort on your part. In the beginning, it will be easier for your family to invite and open a dialogue with the student, rather than the student taking these steps independently. They need your support as a family unit to begin to develop a close rapport. Knowing your student will help you identify any key changes to his or her behavior that might indicate a more serious issue:

Possible Symptoms of Depression:

- Irritability, expressing anger over seemingly minor issues
- Feelings of worthlessness, excessive self-blame/criticism
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Lack of interest in going to school; increased absences or declining academic performance
- Excessive sleeping; frequently tired and unable to participate in family activities

- Anxiety or agitation; restlessness
- Altered physical appearance; a radical change in style, lack of grooming or hygiene
- Noticeable weight loss/gain
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Intentionally disruptive behavior
- Engaging in risky behaviors
- Feelings of sadness; hopelessness
- Expressing a grim outlook on life; thoughts or talk of suicide or death

Self – Harm

For some teens, the feelings of stress, anxiety or depression may become over whelming to a point where they attempt, or rely on self-injury as a coping mechanism. For teens who engage in self-harming behaviors regularly, they may find immediate relief from the sensation of hurting themselves. Self-harming behaviors include cutting, biting, hair pulling, or other unhealthy physical manifestations.

Symptoms may include:

- Fresh cuts, wounds
- Linear cuts or scars on the arms, legs, torso (these are the most common areas where self-injury occurs, as they can be easily hidden by clothing, however any area of the body can be affected)
- Wearing long sleeves, long pants, even when it's unseasonable
- Blood or blood-stained objects/tissue in the trash or toilet
- Claims of frequent accidents to explain scarring or bruising

If at any time during the program year, you believe that your student is not able to cope with his or her feelings in a healthy way, and is considering or has already attempted to harm him/herself contact AYA immediately. AYA encourages you to use our emergency answering service anytime you are concerned about your student's safety or well being.

If you feel that your student is in immediate danger of hurting him/herself or someone else, call 911 immediately and make sure that someone stays with the student until the appropriate help arrives. Contact AYA immediately and/or as soon as the student's safety has been secured.

It is unlikely that your student will experience any serious issues while on-program, however, we want you to be aware of possible signs so that you can report any concerning or unusual behavior or symptoms right away. While the above instances may be concerning, any one symptom or combination of symptoms could be related to other issues. Your Local Coordinator and the AYA student support team is in place to support you, and will be able to distinguish the cause of certain symptoms, and help your student receive the care and support necessary to stay safe and healthy.

General Expectations

Most of us make assumptions based on what we've heard or read about people from another country. This is natural; however, while some of those stereotypes may be correct, many probably won't be. One thing is certain: your student and your experience will be different from what you imagine! Keep your expectations flexible, and keep your sense of humor. Don't let preconceived notions about what you thought your experience was going to be like keep you from enjoying the real person and the real experience. Culture is only one layer of an individual. Don't be surprised if you learn a lot about your own culture and family dynamic through this experience.

Student Expectations

Upon arriving to the U.S., some students may have exaggerated or unrealistic expectations about what the U.S. or your family is going to be like. Students may expect their host family to come straight off the set of an American movie; they may expect life to be a version of their favorite TV shows or movies. They may expect unrestricted freedom and opportunity in this storybook country they've heard so much about. Instead, they may find working moms and dads stretching to make ends meet, host brothers and sisters with after-school jobs, or families that take pleasure in a pizza on Friday night and a church supper on Sunday. They discover that raking leaves, taking out the trash and doing their own laundry are a regular part of American life, and that the quiet times at home with their host family are the most meaningful moments they will experience in the U.S. They come to love it, but it's often not what they expected.



Host Family Expectations

Host families will also have certain expectations about how their student will behave, how he or she will fit into their family, and how the year will be overall. They may expect a student to cook exotic dishes from his or her homeland; to help them become fluent in the student's native tongue; and to be endlessly fascinating, exciting, and slightly romantic. Instead, they may receive a student whose bedroom is a mess, who leaves dishes in the sink, and whose feet end up on the coffee table. Just like teenagers all over the world, your student talks on the phone and internet, sleeps late and misses the bus, feels homesick one day and overconfident the next. It's important to remember that these students, though from other countries, are still teenagers and will exhibit behaviors and attitudes common to most individuals of this age group. Host families come to love this teenager as their own, but the whole experience is not exactly what they expected.

Setting and Adjusting Expectations

The success of the exchange experience depends on how quickly and how readily both student and family can adjust expectations to accept and enjoy reality. When dealing with cultural differences, remember: it's not right, it's not wrong, it's just different.

Many of the issues you may encounter will be a result of unmet expectations. AYA reminds all of our students and host families that open communication and problem-solving are the best ways to address and overcome any issues, big or small. Successful placements are not always the ones that are problem-free. The deep connection and goodwill that develop through adaptation, negotiation, and respect of cultural differences will strengthen your relationship with your student and help you to grow as an individual and as a family.

Unmet expectations for both you and your student can create frustration, which over time can create long-standing issues. By setting up clear expectations, boundaries, and guidelines and listening to each other, you and your student can reconcile these differences, if not prevent them altogether!

With this in mind, AYA has developed a comprehensive Expectations Worksheet for you to fill out with your student when he or she arrives. We encourage you to sit down together as a family, with your Local Coordinator (if possible), within 72 hours of your student's arrival. Completing this worksheet together will give all parties the opportunity to clarify expectations and ask questions, and it may reveal some cultural differences early on that can be addressed immediately.



After completing the worksheet it is important that you thoroughly review it with your student and allow him or her the opportunity to process the information and ask questions. AYA suggests that you make copies of this worksheet and post it in central locations so that both you and your student can be reminded of the guidelines that you established together.

Keep in mind that when you first complete this worksheet, your student will be just arriving. He or she may still need time to process the information. It is a good idea to check in with your student a few weeks after arrival and ensure that expectations are still understood and in line with your household rules.

AYA has found that families who complete this exercise early on have fewer miscommunications and are more likely to resolve issues more quickly than those who choose not to complete this exercise.

Remember, adjusting expectations is the key to success. Don't be afraid to add or amend expectations as you go—just be certain that everyone is aware of the changes! You may find it beneficial to review expectations during key points in the program year—for example, during the holidays, mid-way through, or during times of the year when events such as graduation parties and prom are a fixture. Your student may need to be reminded of household rules and what is expected of him/her as a family member when external activities become a larger part of their experience.



Keys to Successful Adjustment

Friction within the Family

Incorporating a new family member into your existing dynamic is not always easy. There may be some bumps along your road to a successful placement. Successful placements and problem-free placements are not mutually exclusive; some of the strongest relationships are born through the problem-solving process, where communication, trust, and new ideas are forged and nurtured.

As discussed in the expectations section of this guide, the key to minimizing common issues is setting clear expectations. If you are experiencing difficulties with certain behaviors, those may be easily reconciled through a family meeting to review your Family Expectations Worksheet and ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them.

Some issues, however, cannot be addressed through expectations; for example, a minor sibling rivalry or a teenager who is “pushing boundaries.” While both situations are typical in any home where siblings or teenagers live, they can often be resolved through an open mediation and communication session. While you may be tempted to resolve the issue privately, AYA strongly urges you to involve your Local Coordinator for even the most seemingly minor issues; your Local Coordinator is there to help both you and your student navigate through adjustment issues and to serve as a neutral mediator, as well as to help you and your student identify key issues from an objective perspective. Having your Local Coordinator involved also helps to document any issues that may be pervasive or require additional intervention from the AYA National Office.

AYA has found that mediation has an 85% success rate of resolving most issues. The keys to adjusting to your new host family dynamic are patience, communication, and a sense of humor!

Communication

The only way to solve problems is to talk about them. Open communication is crucial, and your willingness to let your Local Coordinator and/or the AYA National Office help you is critical to successful resolution. It is often difficult for visiting students to tell their host family that something is bothering them. They may be afraid they will hurt your feelings or assume that you will become angry and ask them to leave. Likewise, you may be hesitant to voice

your concerns with a student as well; you may not want to hurt your student’s feelings, or perhaps you feel that the problem can’t be solved, so what’s the point in bringing it up?

However, think of how much worse you and your student will feel if these little problems, unaddressed, grow and finally escalate to the point where either you or your student feel like you cannot continue the placement any longer. The bottom line is that if you don’t talk about a problem, no one knows it’s there, and if no one knows it’s there, you can’t solve it!

The AYA Process

AYA cannot stress enough the importance of reporting any issues big or small to your Local Coordinator. Many host families make the common mistake of trying to resolve small issues privately, the thought process being, “I don’t need anyone’s help managing my private affairs normally, so I can definitely handle these issues as I would with my own family.” The big difference here is that this student is part of a program, and it is important that your Local Coordinator and AYA know what’s going on with the student in terms of adjustment or possible behavioral or adaptation concerns. AYA has a lot of valuable experience in dealing with minor and major exchange student issues and can help you and your student address these issues before frustration reaches its peak. More importantly, in order to effectively counsel a student and identify a successful action plan or disciplinary process, AYA must be aware of the situation from the beginning. Documenting a student’s behavior and progress is a key part of our problem-solving process. Students can react negatively for a number of reasons, and at times it may have to do with situations that are not in your control or related to the placement. In these cases, reaching out to your Local Coordinator or AYA staff member may shed a different light on an otherwise potentially frustrating situation.

As soon as you report an issue to your Local Coordinator, whether it is big, small, or simply an item that requires clarification, AYA will suggest that all parties sit together for a “conversation”. AYA refers to all documented meetings as “Mediation,” but in some cases, it may just be a conversation among all members of your family, including your student, with your Local Coordinator present to document and guide the conversation to its desired outcome.

During your mediation/communication session, the following will likely occur:

1. **Choose a location:** After you have scheduled a convenient time to meet, preferably as soon after the issue comes up, you will arrange a neutral location to have your conversation. Mediation will usually take place in your home, and your Local Coordinator will help you find an ideal location to have this meeting; AYA recommends choosing a round table or living room area where all parties can sit in a circle as equals, rather than across a table from each other like adversaries.
2. **The conversation:** Your Local Coordinator will ask each member of the host family (if applicable) and your student to discuss the issue at hand in their own words. When one person is talking, the others will be asked to listen and wait for the appropriate time to respond.
3. **Create the action plan:** After all parties have stated and discussed their concerns, your family members and your student will be asked to brainstorm possible action items and solutions that might help address the concerns discussed. Your Local Coordinator will encourage you to come up with as many ideas as possible. You will each present your solutions
4. **Schedule a follow-up meeting:** Once you have identified a few concrete solutions, you will need to set an appropriate timeframe to allow for each party to implement the action plan. The average follow-up time is 2-4 weeks, depending on the issues. The sooner you report the issue, the more likely an expeditious resolution will be achieved.
 - It is important that you consider the actions that will be required for each party to be successful and allow enough time for progress to be seen. *For example, if you are meeting with a student who is having trouble meeting his or her minimum grade requirements, you will need to consider how long it will reasonably take your student to bring up his/her grades.*
 - Likewise, you need to give everyone enough time to establish a pattern.
 - *For example, if a student is being asked to remember to shut the lights off when leaving a room, he or she will probably fail if the student is only given one or two days to achieve this. Creating a new habit takes time; give everyone a chance to get used to the new expectation.*

Tips for successful mediation and communication sessions:

- The most important tip for a successful mediation is to be open to it and assume that all parties have good intentions. The quickest way to sabotage mediation is to enter it with the assumption that it isn't going to do any good. **You will be surprised by how effective a simple conversation can be when all parties participate in good faith.**
- Listen carefully! Depending on the issue, it may be frustrating to hear your student complain about your family or make excuses about a behavior that they are not happy with. Do not assume a defensive position; listen to what he or she is saying and try to understand that most frustrations are a result of unmet human needs, including the need to belong, the need to be respected, and the need for independence.
- Positive body language during a mediation and communication session is important to maintaining an environment in which all parties feel comfortable discussing issues or concerns.
- Remember that your student is further out of his or her comfort zone than you are! No matter what the situation is, your student is in a foreign country, thousands of miles from his or her natural family, in your home having this conversation. This is a very intimidating situation for a young person to be in and may result in the student becoming withdrawn, defensive, or frustrated to the point of tears or rudeness.
- Consider the language barrier; no matter how proficient your student is in English, it is very difficult for anyone to clearly communicate his or her own feelings about a potentially sensitive topic in a language other than their own native tongue. Your student may say something that you feel is rude or inappropriate, and simply have chosen the wrong words or expressions.
- In order to clearly understand your student's intentions, you may need to restate the student's concerns in your own words and ask him or her if you understood what he or she meant. In doing this, you may find that you have misinterpreted his or her words. Your Local Coordinator can help you with this.
- Expect to make some adjustments as well; depending on the situation, you may need to adjust your expectations. Many host families feel that it is the student's responsibility to change his or her behavior; however, in some cases, you may find that by adapting your own expectations and making small changes, you can effectively change the existing dynamic to a harmonious one quickly.

For example, if a student is on his or her computer for several hours a day and you feel that he or she is not spending enough time with your family, instead of demanding that the student stops using the computer altogether, ask your student to spend a minimum of two hours of family time a day with you and your family. Reframing the issue in a more positive way is a simple way for you to achieve a desired outcome without creating a tense or punitive environment.
- Give yourself and your student time to process the situation. Do not expect change to happen overnight; work together to find clear action items that you will be satisfied with, and be patient in implementing them.

Common Adjustment Issues and Possible Solutions

Below are some of the most typical adjustment issues that our students and host families sometimes face and steps you might take to resolve these concerns.

- Homesickness, a frequent reaction to culture shock, is one of the most common adjustment issues that the majority of students will face—a frequent reaction to culture shock. Their first instinct is to excessively communicate with family and friends from home, which can hinder their experience and frustrate your family:
 - » Assure your student that feelings of missing home, family, and friends are natural and that they will pass.
 - » Remind him/her about how important it is to be open-minded about this experience, friendly with others, and willing to try new things.
 - » Reminding him/her about his/her reasons for coming on the program and his/her goals for the exchange year is especially important at times when your student is feeling down.
 - » Your student's emotional response to his/her culture shock and homesickness may come and go throughout the year. Providing him/her with open channels of communication is important for him/her to be able to come to you with his/her feelings, which will be confusing to him/her at times.
 - » Plan fun activities with your student and encourage him/her to participate in school activities as well.
 - » Work on increasing the communication with your student. If s/he feels that s/he can come to you with his/her feelings and thoughts, it may decrease their desire to communicate with friends and family back home.
- Although your student arrives on the program with the ability to speak and understand English, s/he may still struggle with expressing him/herself and comprehending common American phrases and expressions. For some students academics may be more difficult than they had anticipated:
 - » Make sure that you refrain from using idioms—they may not translate appropriately, especially when your student is still adjusting to speaking and listening to English in and outside of a classroom.
 - » Use examples to ensure that your student understands what you are saying. If you are explaining to him/her the importance of being on time, give a scenario where s/he would need to be on time and see if s/he would act accordingly to ensure his/her punctuality.
 - » Although frustrating at times, repetition may be necessary at first. Once your student starts associating an explanation with an action on their end and a reaction on yours, s/he will begin to not only understand the meaning of what you are saying, but also to pick up on your body language.
- Write things down if it is easier for your student to read and comprehend at first than it is for him/her to listen.
- Encourage your student to speak English, even though s/he may be apprehensive to because of his/her accent or fear of making a mistake. Many of our students rate their English skills anywhere from an 8-10 on a proficiency scale at the end of their program year. They attribute this to being encouraged to speak English consistently—and asking for help when they don't understand or do not know what word or phrase to use.
- Your family may have more, or different, rules than your student is accustomed to. For example, many American families expect their own children to participate in household chores and abide by a curfew. This can be difficult for some students to comprehend and follow, given the amount of independence they are familiar with in their home countries. Effective ways to deal with this adjustment include:
 - » Remind your student that as a member of your family, they will be treated as such. This includes the responsibility to participate in chores, as well as following family rules. Explain to your student that these rules are not just for him/her to follow, but also apply to other members of the household (if others are present).
 - » Encourage your student to share his/her opinion—give them the opportunity to help in creating a rotating chore schedule. This is a good way for your student to feel involved in the decision making process.
 - » Explain to your student that host family rules such as curfews or asking for permission before going out are essentially cultural differences that will most likely not be negotiated and are easy to follow so long as your student asks, tells, and stays on time. Emphasize that his/her safety is a top priority for your family and AYA. Abiding by these rules is a way that we can all ensure his/her safety while on the program.
- Your student seems withdrawn and uninterested in the activities in which your family participates. At times the student will choose not to participate in them. Your family may see this as the student isolating him/herself and be disappointed or hurt by his/her actions. Effective ways to prevent this from happening include:
 - » Remind your student that s/he is already open-minded because s/he is an exchange student. This should also be reflected in s/he is attitude toward, and decisions to participate in family activities that may not initially interest him/her.
 - » Explain to your student that a large part of building a relationship with him/her (one of the main goals of an exchange student and host family) is for everyone to be as involved as they can in each other's daily lives. Ask your student to suggest some activities that s/he does with his/her family back at home—this experience is about the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and culture!

- » Encourage your student to suggest activities that s/he and his/her natural family normally do at home. Remind him/her that this is an exchange program and your family is expecting to learn about his/her culture and family traditions as well!
- Your student mentions that his/her diet back home is different than your family's (your student may be a vegetarian or allergic to certain foods or ingredients). Your student may find it difficult to find foods in your home that s/he likes to, and is able to eat. Effective ways to handle this adjustment include:
 - » Communicate with your student about what his/her diet normally consists of back home and work with him/her to find compromises and ways to include his/her meals of choice into your daily diet.
 - » If your student is accustomed to eating certain snacks, remind his/her that it is his/her responsibility to purchase these snacks. If you purchase these snacks for your family already, explain to the student that s/he is free to eat these snacks as well—sometimes students may be too shy to “help themselves.” This also brings up the opportunity to explain to your student that these snacks and other food in the home that you purchase are for everyone's use and to be mindful of others when eating these foods or using these ingredients.
 - » Ask your student to cook once a week, month, or semester for your family, or provide your family with some recipes that s/he enjoys back home. This is a great way to expose your family to an aspect of your student's culture, while also bringing a taste of home to your student's American experience.

AYA National Office Support

A dedicated, professional staff in Stamford, Connecticut, supports you, your student, and your Local Coordinator. The AYA office is comprised of a caring team of professionals who will ensure that you receive the support you need and that you have access to AYA 24 hours each day. If you are experiencing a problem or conflict with your exchange student and cannot get in touch with or do not feel comfortable contacting your Local Coordinator for any reason, call the AYA office at 800.322.4678 and ask for the supervising Regional Director assigned to your state. Your supervising Regional Director can:

- Talk with you, your exchange student, and your Local Coordinator
- Communicate with the office in the student's home country
- Get information to natural parents
- Help you in finding a solution

Please do not wait until you have a severe problem before calling your Local Coordinator or the AYA office. AYA encourages you to call your Regional Director with any concerns, including but not limited to:

- Behavioral issues with your student
- Questions about program rules
- Concerns about your Local Coordinator

The AYA student support team will also be sending you quarterly online surveys throughout the year to see how you are doing and give you the opportunity to provide direct feedback to our office. We encourage you to respond to each survey so that we can effectively support you.

Our toll-free phone number is 800.322.4678. If you have an emergency outside of business hours (9 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST), listen to the directions on the recording, or simply stay on the line. After the recording has finished, an operator will come on and page an on-call staff member to assist you. You may also contact the AYA Emergency Line directly at 800.926.2506



AYA Student Code of Conduct

AYA's goal is to ensure that all of our participants have a safe and rewarding experience while maintaining a nurturing community wherein the rights and dignity of all individuals are valued and respected. The student code of conduct is the foundation of the AYA disciplinary process and serves to support the program rules.

As a host family, it is important that you understand, that while we do expect our students to adhere to the code of conduct and the principles and rules set forth in their handbook, there will be times, when like any other teenager, your student may push boundaries and make mistakes. This is normal, and your LC and AYA support team will work with your student to correct minor behavioral issues and reach a positive outcome; generally we expect students to demonstrate a pattern of overall positive behavior. Above all, we expect that students will, at all times, conduct themselves in a manner that positively reflects the goals and values of the AYA program, their home country and themselves.

Objective of Student Code of Conduct

The purpose of the student code of conduct is to establish a consistent set of expectations for student behavior on the AYA program.

Standards of Personal Integrity and Honesty

The following behaviors violate AYA's standards of personal integrity and honesty:

1. **Misrepresenting personal circumstances or deliberately issuing false statements**, in order to change host families or obtain any outcome that is favorable to the student is considered a serious infraction of the student code of conduct. Student safety is paramount to AYA and the program encourages students to report any and all circumstances that have the potential to compromise a student's health, safety or overall well being. AYA takes any allegations of impropriety, misconduct or unsuitable housing arrangements seriously and will take swift and appropriate action to ensure that the student is safe and investigate the claims accordingly. AYA values the safety, health and dignity of all of our participants, representatives and volunteers and students must be aware that issuing false claims or statements about any person or circumstance associated with the placement has the potential to permanently damage the reputation of an individual, family or community and is considered a serious breach of ethics. If a student is found to have deliberately issued any false statements or deliberately misrepresented their circumstances for any reason, he or she will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification.
2. **Intentionally furnishing, misrepresenting or omitting information on the student application.** AYA student applications must be completed accurately and honestly in order for AYA program staff to make an informed decision about a student's eligibility to participate on the program.
3. **Academic Dishonesty.** Any academic act of deception that is intentionally done to gain an unfair advantage for the student or another individual. This includes, but is not limited to giving or receiving assistance in an academic assignment/exam; plagiarizing or paraphrasing without appropriate citation and intentionally taking credit for the work of others.

Standards of Safety and Dignity

The following behaviors undermine AYA's objective to respect and protect the safety, health and dignity of all individuals:

1. **Intentionally or recklessly endangering the student's own health, safety or welfare or that of any individual.** This includes but is not limited to the following:
 - a) Possession of any object classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, firearms, bludgeon weapons, brass knuckles, explosives, etc.).
 - b) Operating a motor vehicle without a license or outside of AYA program rules.
 - c) Driving with a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - d) Driving with a person who is showing irresponsible behavior (i.e. cell phone use, texting, speeding, racing, etc.).
 - e) Consuming and/or sharing drugs or alcohol, including abuse of over the counter drugs/supplements and drugs that are prescribed but being used for recreational purposes.
2. **Disorderly Conduct:** Any behavior that is intended to be disruptive, threatening, lewd or indecent. This includes the intentional or reckless destruction or damage of personal property (i.e. vandalism, tire slashing, damaging pranks).
3. **Demonstrating a lack of sound judgment and maturity by engaging in behavior that could compromise the student's own safety and wellbeing.** For example:
 - a) Getting into a car with a stranger;
 - b) Leaving the home or school without permission and/or knowledge of your surroundings



- c) Knowingly going to places where illegal activity could be present (i.e., parties or a friend's house; concerts, after-prom parties, etc.)

4. Irresponsible use of social media/communication outlets:

- a) Engaging in sexually explicit conversations via social media or other digital communications.
- b) Sharing sexually explicit or violent images or videos.
- c) Posting or sharing photos that may be sexually suggestive
- d) Posting or sharing content that disparages or demeans any individual, race, religion or sexual orientation.
- e) Putting up content that could compromise the trust, privacy or character of the student's host family or any other member of the community.

5. Harassment: AYA defines harassment as any instance or repeated instances of conduct which annoys, threatens or causes an individual to fear for his or her safety. AYA will not tolerate any behavior that is intended to threaten, disparage or offend an individual. Examples of harassing behavior include but are not limited to:

- a) Uninvited comments about any individual's appearance.
- b) Unwanted touching, gestures or comments of a sexual nature including, verbal, non-verbal and written communication.
- c) Derogatory comments intended to disparage or demean an individual based on sex, religion, race, ethnicity, physical or mental challenges, or sexual orientation.
- d) Physical assault of any kind.

AYA Program Rules

AYA students are expected to know and abide by the AYA program rules. Students will have already read and signed the program rules prior to being accepted to the program. The rules and guidelines are reviewed with students at their home country pre-departure orientation, and again at their national/local orientation upon arrival to the United States.

Rules in bold are considered zero tolerance rules, and any infraction will result in immediate disqualification from the program.

1. **Students must abide by all U.S. laws.**
2. **It is against the law in the United States for high school students to buy or drink alcohol. This law applies to all AYA students as well. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.**
3. **The use and possession of drugs and/or drug paraphernalia for non-medical reasons by AYA students under any circumstances is strictly prohibited. Examples of nonmedical (illegal) drugs are cocaine, LSD, medications taken with or without a prescription or for recreational use, and marijuana.**
4. **Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, and cars) except during the course of an accredited driver education class. Students may enroll in a school-sponsored driver education class if their host and natural parents permit it and it is permissible in the host state.**
5. Along with maintaining a minimum average students must be in good behavior standing with their high school at all time. This includes attending classes daily and on time. **If a student is expelled from school for any reason, it is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.**
6. AYA students are not permitted to hitchhike.
7. AYA students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms or any items classified as a weapon under any circumstances.
8. AYA students are not permitted to hold part-time jobs; the J-1 visa does not allow it. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation. If students would like to earn spending money during their stay, they are permitted to hold small jobs (no more than 10 hours per week) such as baby-sitting and grass-cutting.
9. Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes while on the AYA program.
10. The AYA program is an academic program. Students must maintain a minimum C+ average in all courses. Students must also enroll in an appropriate English language or literature course and an American Studies course.
11. Students must attend school daily unless sick and under a doctor's care or with special permission from host parents. Students must complete all homework and assignments.
12. Students are not permitted to visit such places as pornographic shops, adult theaters, drinking establishments, or any websites related to pornography.
13. Students must respect and abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and voluntarily help with household chores. Students must show respect for their Local Coordinators and follow all program guidelines.
14. Students must conduct themselves, at all times, in a manner that positively represents AYA, their home country and themselves. Any behavior that does not support the goals or has the potential to negatively impact the reputation of the AYA program may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification.
15. Harassment of any kind is strictly prohibited. This includes but is not limited to physical assault, verbal harassment or sexual harassment. Students who engage or are complicit in the harassment of another individual will be subject to a disciplinary hearing that may result in disqualification.
16. Except in cases where a student's safety is in question, students must follow the appropriate chain of communication and contact their Local Coordinator or an AYA support staff member if there is an issue or concern with their host family. Students may not discuss their host family's private affairs or family life with people outside of the home or the AYA program.
17. Students cannot change families and schools without mediation or due process. With the exception of emergencies, host family changes will not be considered during the first 30 days of arrival to the host family. Students cannot move from the host family home without permission from their Local Coordinator and approval from the AYA National Office.
18. Students are allowed to travel only if accompanied by a responsible adult (21 years of age or older), if: a.) their AYA Regional Director has received an Independent Travel Form signed by their natural parents; b.) their host family approves; and c.) the trip does not involve missing any school. The exception is a school-sponsored trip. Students must notify their Local Coordinator of all proposed travel plans at least two weeks prior to the trip. Students may not return to their homeland for holidays or for any reason other than an extreme emergency.

19. Students must not engage in any sexual contact or sexual activity that is culturally inappropriate in the U.S., including (but not limited to) contact with minors or with any members of the Host Family household.
20. Sexual intercourse on-program is prohibited.
21. Athletic eligibility or participation is not guaranteed. It is dependent on local and national rules and school policies. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to play sports.
22. High school graduation diplomas are not guaranteed. They are dependent on local and national rules and individual school policies. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to obtain a diploma.
23. Parents and friends may not visit the student during the program and may not disturb the host family life. If relatives and friends would like to visit, they must wait until the end of the program, which is deemed no earlier than December 1st for one semester students and April 15th for full year students. Visits must be pre-arranged with the host family prior to booking travel.
24. No student may enter into any contractual agreement, be it business, marital, or religious, while on the program.
25. Students are expected to be honest and ethical at all time. Misrepresenting personal circumstances in order to change host families or obtain a desired result, is considered very serious. AYA takes the safety of each student very seriously. If a student is found to have intentionally falsified or misrepresented his or her circumstances within the host family or the community, he or she will be reviewed by the disciplinary committee.
26. Students are expected to respect and adhere to the AYA Student Code of Conduct, the AYA program rules and program guidelines as noted in the AYA student handbook.
27. Students must return home within a few days of the last day of school. Students may stay up to a maximum of two weeks after the end of school if they are explicitly invited to do so by their host family. When the program ends, students may only sign off the program to be placed in the care of their immediate natural family.

the program and make all necessary efforts to integrate with their host family and make American friends.

On special occasions (holidays, birthdays, etc.), the student's priority must be to spend this time with the host family.

Students should limit international phone calls, emails, and digital communication to parents or friends and respect their host families' rules regarding internet and phone usage. All students should be aware that if it is determined that excessive communication with friends back home is contributing to adjustment issues, a counseling plan may be implemented to limit contact until the student has demonstrated improved adjustment.

AYA expects students to return to their home country in the same physical condition that they arrived; this means students may not get pierced, tattooed, or drastically alter their appearance in any way.

Additional AYA Program Guidelines:

In addition to following the above-listed program rules, AYA students will be expected to adhere to the following guidelines at all times.

Students must always be aware of their responsibilities as an exchange student and make a determined effort to be successful in their school, host family, and host community.

Students should limit contact with other exchange students during

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures:

AYA students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that positively reflects on themselves, their home country, and the goals of the AYA program. Students are expected to follow all U.S. laws and AYA, host family, and high school rules and guidelines. Students are required to sign a copy of the AYA rules prior to their arrival in the U.S. Disciplinary decisions are made at the discretion of the AYA Disciplinary Committee based on information provided by the LC, the host family, the student, and the high school (when applicable). It is strongly recommended that students carefully review the program rules with their natural parents prior to departing from their home country.

Mediation and Communication Sessions

Mediation is generally the first step in resolving most issues. A mediation is a formal or informal meeting with your host family and Local Coordinator where you and your host family will have the opportunity to openly discuss any concerns or problems in a safe setting. Your Local Coordinator will conduct the mediation and act as a neutral mediator who will help you and your host family work through any issues big or small.

- Mediation has proven to be very successful in opening a dialogue between host families and students as well as clarifying cultural and/or language miscommunications.
- 85% of all problems can be resolved through mediation and communication sessions
- Mediation is a critical step in the disciplinary process and will be done prior to any consideration for a host family change.
- Students and host families are expected to attend mediation with an open mind.

Warning

A warning letter is issued by the AYA Regional Director after a breach of conduct or program guidelines has been reported. Warning letters are usually issued after mediation has occurred and the student has been formally advised of the program or host family guidelines that have been compromised. In cases where the breach of guidelines is indisputable, for example, if a student is not meeting minimum grade requirements, a warning letter will be issued without prior mediation. A copy of the warning letter is sent to the student, Local Coordinator, overseas partner, host family, and high school (when applicable). Overseas partners also forward a copy of the warning letter to the student's natural parents for review.

The intent of the warning letter is:

- To formally advise the student, the natural family, and the overseas partners of the unacceptable behavior or program violation.
- To inform the student that there should be no further infractions.
- To advise the student that the National Office is aware of this behavior.

- To advise what specific steps must be taken by the student to avoid further disciplinary action.
- To formally define a time frame for reviewing the student's performance.

Guidance Notice

Over the course of the year, students may receive a guidance notice; this is a guidance directive that serves to:

- Document a particular concern or behavior.
- Implement guidelines on how to make the necessary adjustments to be successful on the program.

A guidance notice may be issued with a warning or in lieu of a warning letter.

Guidance notices may be used to document a pattern of behavior during the disciplinary review process.

Probation

Being placed on probation is considered very serious. Students will be subject to probation for the following reasons:

- A major breach of program rules or host family guidelines.
- Not abiding by the terms of a previously issued warning letter.
- Conduct unbecoming to an exchange student that may jeopardize the reputation of the student, host family, or the AYA program.

Prior to being placed on probation, the student will be contacted by his or her Regional Director to discuss the disciplinary concerns. The Regional Director will also speak with all other parties – host family, Local Coordinator, and high school (if applicable). The Regional Director will then discuss the case with the AYA Disciplinary Committee, which will determine if probation is warranted. All probation letters are issued by the Student Support Team, and a copy is sent to the student, Local Coordinator, host parents and overseas partner. The intent of the probation letter is to clarify the issues and outline actions for improvement. The overseas partner then forwards the probation letter to a student's natural parents for review. Probation is considered a student's final opportunity to abide by all program rules and expectations prior to disqualification. If a student continues to demonstrate poor judgment or behavioral or academic concerns while on probation, the student will be disqualified from the program.

Disqualification

This occurs when an offense is deemed serious enough to merit termination. Any student who fails to comply with the AYA rules, the host family rules, or local and federal laws may be terminated from the AYA program. Students with on-going failing grades and/or who have been expelled from school will be terminated from the program. Sending a student home is usually considered a last resort, and this decision is made at the sole discretion of the AYA Disciplinary Committee. This step is usually taken after other corrective measures have failed or if the infraction has violated a major program rule or a federal or state law.

In some cases, a student's actions may result in disqualification from the program without prior disciplinary action such as warning and/or probation. For example, consumption of alcohol or drugs, expulsion from school, driving, any type of sexual or physical harassment, sexual activity, or violation of U.S. law will result in immediate disqualification from the program.

Disqualification is determined after careful review and deliberation by the Disciplinary Committee. Notice of disqualification is sent by the student support team to all parties concerned, and arrangements for the student's return flight home are then made. Once a student has been disqualified, his or her visa will be cancelled, and the student will not be entitled to a refund. Students are responsible for any cost or expense incurred as a result of disqualification.

Medical Disqualification

In the unfortunate situation that a student falls ill or requires medical treatment beyond the scope of what an AYA host family can provide, a student may be terminated from the program. This decision is made with the interest and well-being of the student in mind, and in the context of what the AYA program can safely offer a student.

Reasons for medical disqualification include, but are not limited to:

- Discovery of preexisting medical conditions not disclosed on a student's application, particularly nervous disorders or conditions that require close monitoring by a physician
- Injuries requiring surgery and/or ongoing physical therapy
- Serious medical conditions that require extensive medical care and follow-up care
- Eating disorders
- Emotional or psychological concerns



Student Safety

There will be times when your student may be confused about behavior and what is and is not culturally acceptable. One of our main goals is to make sure that students remain safe during their experience. We have provided a list of behaviors and actions that will help your student understand what types of interactions are socially acceptable and what type are not regarding personal safety. We have also created a safety video that all students and host families view during their respective orientations. To watch the video again, you may log on to your host family portal.

Positive/Appropriate Displays of Affection could include:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder and back
- A handshake
- High-fives/slapping hands
- Verbal praise
- Brief touch on hands, face, shoulder, arms
- Arm around shoulder
- Holding hands during family prayer
- Brief kiss on the cheek

Negative/Inappropriate Displays of Affection could include:

- Inappropriate/lengthy hugs and embraces
- Intentional brushing against a person's body, patting, or pinching
- Adult holding hands with student
- Kisses on the mouth
- Student sitting on adult's lap
- Touching bottoms, chest, or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas like a bathroom or bedroom
- Lying on the same bed
- Touching of the knees or legs
- Wrestling and tickling
- Any type of massage

- Written or spoken compliments referring to body or body development
- Giving excessive or personal gifts or money
- Private meals in intimate places
- Any unwanted attention

Modesty Guidelines:

- No nudity by student or host family
- No contact between student and adult in underwear
- Wear robes over your pajamas
- No suggestive or revealing clothing
- Wearing only a towel is not acceptable

Behavior Guidelines:

- No requests for meeting with students privately
- No telephoned, mailed, or emailed messages of a sexual or intimate nature
- Avoid emoticons and text abbreviations whenever possible. Try to limit texting communication for 'need-to-know' information only
- No flirting
- No jokes with sexual connotation
- No lewd remarks, whistles
- No sharing or display of photos or materials of a sexual nature

It is important to note that what might be culturally appropriate for Americans may make an individual student feel uncomfortable (i.e. a family who hugs a lot). Be aware of any verbal or non-verbal cues that may indicate that your student is uncomfortable with a particular interaction. For example, avoiding or evading certain interactions, shying away from a particular individual, showing appearance of being uncomfortable, shaking head or saying no. Likewise, if your particular student demonstrates affection in a way that makes any member of your household uncomfortable, it is appropriate to explain to the student that your family prefers to show affection in alternate ways. Comfort levels may change as your relationship builds, however, it is important for all parties to respect each other's personal preferences.

Create Appropriate Boundaries:

Creating appropriate boundaries is an important part of establishing a comfortable living environment for both you and your student. Cultural and family norms may differ vastly between your student and your family members, and it is important to recognize and respect those differences. Regardless, there are certain boundaries that should be adhered to and established early on to minimize any misunderstandings or potential for discomfort, and maximize a positive experience.

Do not engage in intimate conversations of a personal nature; it is not appropriate for adults to discuss marital, financial or relationship issues with students in any capacity

Avoid spending time alone behind closed doors together; whenever possible interactions should always be observable and interruptible

Clearly establish what areas of the home are not appropriate for the student to enter without express permission (i.e. host parents' bedroom). Discuss and ensure that everyone understands and respects etiquette for knocking before entering bed/bathrooms, or other private areas of the home.

Social Media/Texting:

If your student is linked to your social media account, be aware of the content you or your adult friends are posting. Posts that are suggestive, sexual, satirical or express extreme political, social or religious views have the potential to be misunderstood and could make a student uncomfortable. While it is within your right to post whatever content you choose on your social media outlets, we encourage you to limit your student's access to certain content to avoid any uncomfortable situations. Likewise, refrain from engaging with your student and/or his or her friends on social media in any capacity. It is tempting to quickly respond, however, a quick typo or unknown colloquialism could create an awkward misunderstanding.

Tone and intention are difficult to interpret in any sort of text, and we encourage direct communication whenever possible to minimize cultural or semantic misunderstandings. This includes communications via text and email.

Safety Precautions

AYA encourages our students to be open-minded and meet new people while they are in the U.S. However, in doing so we also encourage them to exercise caution and be aware of interactions that could make them feel uncomfortable or lead to a potentially dangerous situation. As a host parent, it is important that you are aware of whom your student is spending time with and where they are going. Be sure to monitor any suspicious relationships closely and report them to your Local Coordinator and the AYA National Office right away.

Below we have identified a few "red flags" that should be closely monitored and/or reported. While they are not each, in themselves, always indicators of a potentially dangerous relationship or situation, they should serve as reminders to be aware of what may or may not be appropriate. While making new friends is an important part of the exchange experience, we need to make sure that our students are forming relationships with appropriate peers that are healthy and positive.

- Be aware of any adult or individual who seeks to spend a lot of one-on-one "alone" time with your student outside of an appropriate context. For example, a neighbor who wants to take your student to the movies alone or an older "friend" s/he made at the gym who invites him/her to one-on-one activities without any other family or friends.
- Texting & Social Media – Students should always be reminded about the importance of knowing whom they are texting and interacting with on social media websites. If you find that an adult or peer is contacting your student excessively, or making comments to or about them that make you or your student feel uncomfortable, contact AYA right away.
- Any adult who gives your student lavish gifts, secret gifts, or gifts that are contingent upon an action from the student (e.g. a neighbor or friend's parent tells your student that if s/he gets good grades, s/he will receive a special gift).
- Any adult who asks your student to keep secrets or treats him/her like a confidant. It is not appropriate for adults to confide in teenagers as equals, nor is it appropriate for an adult to expect a teenager to keep a secret of any kind.
- Flirtations and sexually explicit jokes are never acceptable between an adult and a minor.
- Be aware of any adult who encourages your student to break rules or engage in illegal or inappropriate behavior of any kind.

As a host family, you have the best vantage point in terms of knowing about your student's relationships as well as observe any behavior changes in your student. If at any time you are concerned that your student may be in an unsafe relationship with an adult (or a peer), or you have any concerns about their behavior, we encourage you to contact your LC of the AYA office immediately.

It is never appropriate, under any circumstances, for any adult or household member to solicit, approach or touch a student in a sexual or suggestive manner. Likewise it is inappropriate for any student to initiate sexual contact with an adult or any member of his or her household. If you learn or suspect that your student has been the subject of any type of actual or alleged sexual abuse or exploitation, please contact your Local Coordinator and/or the AYA office immediately. Such contact may constitute a criminal offense, and AYA will cooperate fully with the authorities in the investigation and prosecution of any such illegal activities.

Additional Safety Tips:

- Talk to your student about your community before s/he goes anywhere new or unfamiliar to ensure that it is a safe place/area.
- Let your student know if there are any parts of town to avoid when walking around during the day or night.
- When going out, encourage your student to be with two or more people and avoid situations where they will be alone.
- Make sure that if your student goes out, he or she is carrying or has access to a working cell phone. Ask your student for the names and numbers of his/her friends and friends' parents before they go out.
- Remind your student to keep his/her home phone number, Local Coordinator's number, and AYA's office and emergency numbers with his/her at all times.
- Write down emergency service numbers for your student if his/her is going to be staying home alone for any length of time.
- Remind your student that if s/he is ever in a situation with friends or an adult that makes him/her feel uncomfortable for any reason, s/he should leave immediately and/or call you, your Local Coordinator, or a trusted adult right away.

- Always trust your instincts and encourage your student to always trust his/her—if something doesn't feel right, let someone know!

Emergency

If you experience an emergency of any kind outside of business hours (9 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST), AYA has a 24-hour toll free emergency answering service available to assist you 7 days a week, year round. Our toll free phone number is 800.322.4678. Follow the prompts from the operator or stay on the line to be connected with the answering service.

You may also contact the service directly at 800.926.2506; an agent will take your message, and your call will be promptly returned by an AYA support staff member.

Our goal is to ensure that you and your student enjoy a safe and rewarding year together; we encourage you to reach out if you have any concerns. We are here to help you!

If your student has been the victim of any kind of assault, or is involved in an accident or incident where his or her safety is in jeopardy, we encourage you and/or your student to contact 911 Emergency to receive immediate assistance.

The Host Family Commitment

AYA's goal is to ensure that our students and host families all enjoy a safe and mutually rewarding experience within a culture of mutual understanding and respect for others. We ask that all participants and volunteers adhere to a code of conduct that ensures that all individuals involved feel safe, respected, and enriched by the experience.

Host Family Expectations

Hosting is an altruistic endeavor intended to foster mutual understanding, cultural enrichment and global friendships. As an AYA host family, you have volunteered to participate in the AYA program and may not receive any monetary compensation for your services. Prohibition of compensation is a federal mandate intended to honor the spirit in which exchange programs were created, which is to encourage "true exchanges" and further public diplomacy efforts. With this in mind, host families agree to positively reflect the goals of the AYA program, American culture and the spirit of the American family. Host families are expected to treat their student with respect and consideration at all times. It is important for all members of the host family to be enthusiastic about the hosting experience and seek to involve the student in

the family's day-to-day experiences. Above all, host families are required to offer and maintain a safe and nurturing environment, wherein the student and all members of the host family respect each other and feel comfortable. Successful host families will create an environment that encourages an open dialogue and fosters understanding among all members of the host family.

Hosting Requirements:

Housing and Transportation Requirements:

1. A safe and sanitary home environment that includes:
 - a. a bedroom for the student (may be shared with no more than one other sibling of the same sex and age range)

- b. a proper bed (futons, air mattresses and pull-out sofas are prohibited by federal regulations)
 - c. a quiet place to study
 - d. three quality meals a day
 - e. reasonable access to phone/internet so that the student may contact his/her natural parents, Local Coordinator and other support outlets
2. Transportation to and from school (bus, carpool, etc.).
 3. Transportation to and from religious services, should the student wish to attend.

Communication Requirements:

1. Students are required to meet/speak with their Local Coordinator on a monthly basis. The Local Coordinator must meet with your student **in person, every other month at a minimum** (students living in a single person placement will be visited in person every month).. Host families may not impede access to meetings with the Local Coordinator, and must help the student make time in his or her schedule to ensure that the student is available to meet with the Local Coordinator for monthly check-ins.
2. Local Coordinators are required to check-in with your family, separately, at least once per month. Local Coordinators are also required to visit you in your home, at least once per semester. AYA encourages you to contact the AYA office directly if your family or student has any questions about the support you are receiving.
3. Host families are responsible for reporting any material changes within the family to their Local Coordinator, included but not limited to:
 - a. A new person moving into the home longer than a few days (all adults 18 years and older must agree to a Criminal Background Check)
 - b. A household member moving out of the home
 - c. Separation or Divorce
 - d. Job loss of one or both host parents
 - e. Significant illness of any household member
 - f. Any other major changes to the home dynamic that could impact your hosting experience
4. Host families are required to report any breaches of AYA program rules or student conduct to their Local Coordinator or the AYA National Office. While it is tempting to resolve issues independently, it is important to remember that your student is on an organized program, and we must be aware of and document any major or minor issues.
5. There may be a rare occasion where you are no longer willing or able to continue hosting the student. Host families are asked to provide advanced notice to their Local Coordinator and/or the AYA National Office when requesting a host family

change, or asking a student to leave the home. For non-emergent host family changes your Local Coordinator will work with you to determine a mutually satisfactory timeline for the transition, with the best interest of your family and your student in mind.

Safety Requirements:

1. Report any safety concerns immediately to Local Coordinator and/or the AYA National Office immediately. This includes any actual or alleged allegations of abuse or exploitation, self-harming behavior or major accidents or illnesses. The AYA emergency answering service is available 24/7 for assistance and support.
2. Provide appropriate supervision to your student at all times. AYA students are not permitted to spend weekends or vacations at home alone or without adult supervision; if you are planning on being away from the home for more than a day, please contact your Local Coordinator to coordinate alternate housing arrangements for your student.

Prohibitions

1. Students should not be expected to baby-sit or assume a disproportionate amount of household responsibility on a regular basis. Students are expected to actively engage and participate in the family unit. This includes contributing to household chores, including assistance with tidying up, vacuuming, etc. Chores should be reasonable, age-appropriate and equitable among household members, particularly if there other children or teens living in the home.
2. Students are not permitted to work. Students may earn pocket money by doing small jobs for no more than 10 hours a week (i.e. paid baby-sitting, yard work, etc.)
3. Students may not be charged for food, gas, household utilities, or any expense related to food or housing. Students should pay for their own entertainment and personal items, including their own cell phone plan.
4. Host families may not lend money to or borrow money from a student for any reason.
5. Pursuant to federal regulations, student must be in possession of their own passports and DS-2019 forms at all times. No person, including a host family member or Local Coordinators, may withhold a student's personal identification or travel documents for any reason, including for safe-keeping.

End-of-Year Preparations

End of Stay

Students should arrange to return home a few days after the last day of school. With your permission, students may stay up to 2 weeks after the last day of school if your family is able to continue hosting for that time.

Extensions

If an August semester student would like to extend for another semester, please contact your Local Coordinator. Only August semester students are allowed to extend. Your Local Coordinator will provide you with the appropriate forms for signature. All parties—the host family, Local Coordinator, school, student, natural parents, and National Office—must agree to the extension.

January semester students and students on probation or with disciplinary behavioral concerns are not allowed to extend. If your student has received a warning letter, his or her request to extend will be reviewed on an individual basis. December 1st is the deadline for extension paperwork to be submitted to the AYA office. AYA reserves the right to accept or deny any extensions. Students may purchase additional insurance. Students on extension cannot travel outside of the U.S. due to visa restrictions.

Flight Plans

AYA students are required to hold valid return airline tickets. These tickets are purchased either by the student or through AYA partner agencies. These tickets can be either “open return” tickets or changeable tickets that are booked with a specific return date. AYA does not directly purchase international tickets for students. On occasion, AYA does purchase domestic tickets for students.



Students are responsible for making their own flight reservations for their return home at the end of the program. They should call the airlines directly to make domestic and international reservations on the date of their choice. Students should make their international reservations first, and then make their domestic reservations to ensure they know the time their international flight departs. Also, please be advised that some students may hold youth fare tickets that carry certain restrictions, or may require minimal additional fees to be paid when booking returns, especially if a student changes the date or flights from those listed on his/her original ticket(s).

A reminder letter to make return flight plans is sent to students and host families in October (for semester students returning home in January) and in March (for 10-month or January students returning home in June). Again, students are responsible for making their own flight arrangements and should call in advance to confirm a reservation on their date of choice. In January and June, international flights fill up quickly. If students wait too long before making return reservations, they face the possibility of not returning home on their date of choice and even being “wait-listed” for flights. AYA will be unable to guarantee a reservation for any student.

Also, some students may be required to spend the night at the airport if their domestic flights do not allow them to arrive in time to meet their international flight. AYA can provide assistance in obtaining hotel accommodations for such students; however, the student is responsible for the cost of any extra nights’ stay.

If students have difficulties with their return reservations, they should call their Local Coordinator or their AYA Regional Director for assistance.

Year-End Release Form

The official end of the AYA program is the last day of school. Students should return home shortly after school ends and no more than two weeks with express permission from the host family. Students who wish to travel with natural family at the end of the AYA program must sign a Program Year-End Release Form. The J-1 visa expires on January 30th for August semester students and June 30th for full year or extended students. Regardless of the visa end date, students are expected to return home shortly after the last day of school as the Academic Year in America program ends when school is over.

Final Reminders

You and your student will find it hard to believe that the semester or year has come to an end. Here is a reminder checklist to go over with your students at least 2 weeks prior to departure:

- Confirm return flight date and time
- Gather all necessary travel documents

- Pay any outstanding bills
- *Convalidate grades if necessary
- Write thank you letters to teachers, Local Coordinators, and other significant people

Pack and weigh luggage to ensure it is within airline weight limits (contact airlines for more details). If luggage is over airline weight limits, students should plan to incur an extra cost or make other plans for shipping.

*Convalidation

Students from Brazil, Ecuador, Italy, and Spain must take specific courses while in the U.S. and must obtain certain paperwork before they leave in order to earn credit in their home country for their time in the U.S. Each country has its own specifications. All students are given this information before they leave home and should know what they need to do in order to convalidate. It is each student's responsibility to obtain the necessary paperwork from his/her schools and respective consulates and should allow enough time to make these arrangements before s/he leaves the U.S.

Returning Home

A great amount of information has been written on culture shock, home sickness, and creating a bond with the host family. The adjustment that will need to be made after the student returns to his/her home country is just as crucial to prepare for. Also known as re-entry shock, Reverse Culture Shock (RCS) is used to describe the disorientation and adaptation that occur when one is trying to readjust to his or her own culture after spending an extended period of time in a different culture.

Almost all students and host families experience RCS to some degree. For some it is minor, and for others, it is a significant part of their return experience. Here is some information that will help answer your questions about the end experience. How does it feel? Why does it happen? How can it be managed? AYA recommends that you share and discuss this information with your student.

Reverse Culture Shock (RCS)

- RCS is often overlooked or dismissed; only a few people/students expect problems readjusting to home.
- RCS is characterized by stages similar to those of culture shock.
- For many, RCS can be much more difficult than initial culture shock.
- RCS is different for everyone; the more intense the overseas experience, the more difficult RCS can be.
- RCS cannot be avoided, but it can be managed.
- RCS affects both the student and the host family before and after the student departs.



Why does RCS occur?

- People and places have changed.
- The student has changed and sees things with new eyes.
- There is a gap in information; life did not stand still, waiting for the student to return.
- People may not be as interested in hearing about the student's experiences as he/she is in sharing them.
- Few expect to have trouble adjusting to home and therefore do not prepare.

An awareness of the feelings and behaviors most commonly associated with RCS can help you and your student prepare for your own experience. Knowing what to expect and knowing that certain feelings are normal can make the experience less stressful and more manageable.

Typical student feelings and behaviors as a result of RCS before and after departure:

- Excited to be going home
- Sad that host family is making plans beyond his/her stay
- Tendency to withdraw from the host family; it may seem easier to say goodbye if the student does not feel as close to his/her host family
- Confused that the host family may be pulling away from him/her
- Honeymoon period initially when returning home; it is so great to be back and see everyone
- Tendency to compare everything to the U.S.; others are not interested in these comparisons
- "Homesick" for the U.S.
- Come to terms with being at home

- Take the best of American culture and develop lifelong relationship with host family
- Typical host family feelings and behaviors as a result of RCS before and after departure:
- Sad that the student is making plans for after s/he gets home
- Looking forward to some privacy
- Tendency to withdraw from the student; it may seem easier to say goodbye if you do not feel as close to the student
- Frustrated that the student may be withdrawing from you
- Sense of relief once the student is gone
- Dealing with withdrawal; sense of grief at the loss of the student
- Develop lifelong relationship with the student

Now that your family and your student are aware of some of the typical feelings and behaviors to expect, you can work together to make RCS as painless as possible. Separation and letting go are never easy. However, with every ending comes a new beginning, and we hope that your family and your students feel enriched as a result of this experience.

Here are some suggested coping strategies for your family and your student to utilize before and after departure. If you put some of these practices in place, you will be more prepared to face the challenges that RCS presents.

Coping strategies for students and host families while the students are still in the U.S.:

- Recognize RCS; be aware of the typical stages.
- Prepare yourself by thinking about how you dealt with culture shock.
- Communicate. Students and host families should talk about it and discuss the inevitability of the departure. When making future plans beyond the program, acknowledge that it may be difficult for the other party to hear about it.
- Understand that the way the other is behaving may be a subconscious result of RCS.
- Students should keep in touch with family and friends back home (within reason).
- Students and host families should be aware of news, changes, and trends within the students' home community, city, and country.
- Take some time for introspection; consider how you have learned, changed, and grown from the experience.
- Compare both cultures. Students, consider what aspects of American culture you would like to take home with you. Host families, consider what aspects of the student's culture you would like to incorporate into your home.
- Bring closure to your experience; say "goodbye" and "thank you," make a scrapbook together, and make plans for continuing your relationship.
- Discuss expectations for the student's return home and whether or not they are realistic.

Coping strategies for students and host families once the students have returned home:

- Be patient with yourself; adjustment takes time.
- Students: Realize that most people will not be as interested in your experiences as you are; be sure to express interest in others' lives as well.
- Students: Connect with other study abroad students and host families who might be going through a similar adjustment.
- Students: Share your perspectives and expertise with community and school groups interested in learning about the U.S., American culture, or the English language.
- Host families: Share your perspectives with others about your student's country, culture, and/or language.
- Students: Be a mentor to others who are planning to study abroad or are currently abroad.
- Host families: Be a mentor for other host families.
- Find a way to incorporate your experience into your daily life.
- Students: Encourage your family to host another exchange student.
- Host families: You may want to host again, encourage others to host, or think about having your children study abroad.
- Get involved in the international community in your locale; help an exchange student or host family in your community, using the experience you gained as an exchange student or host family yourself.
- Reflect; keep a journal or make a scrapbook.
- Write letters or send emails to continue the lifelong relationship you have been building with one another.

Your Hosting Guide: Month by Month



August:

Expect your student to experience jet lag and feel overwhelmed, as s/he has had many long days of travel, and many have experienced an extensive AYA Orientation. (If your student did not attend this orientation, your Local Coordinator will provide him/her with an orientation upon his/her arrival.) Your family should have had a Host Family Orientation with your Local Coordinator prior to your student arriving, and you should have also received the link to AYA's Online Host Family Orientation in your placement notification email. If you would like to review the presentation at any time, you can access the AYA Host Family Orientation by logging into your host family portal at www.academicyear.org.

In the meantime, you may find the following topics helpful in the month of August as you and your student adjust to life together and your student starts school:

- **Registering for High School:** Either you or your student's Local Coordinator can accompany him/her to registration. Your student's high school has already received your student's full application, which includes his/her immunization/vaccination records as well as high school transcript. However, on registration day, make sure your student also brings this information with him/her. If your student needs additional immunizations, his/her insurance does not cover this, and all costs are to be incurred by the student.
- **First Day of School:** Feel free to ask a guidance counselor to assign your student a buddy for the day to show him/her around school or to sit with him/her at lunch (some schools do this regardless). Encourage your student to get involved in activities early on in order to make friends and adjust more quickly. When choosing classes, make sure students are taking an English and American History course and maintain a full academic course load. Encourage your student to use school resources (guidance counselor, school website) to find a list of activities in which he or she would like to participate.
- **Establish House Rules and Expectations:** Establish rules and expectations with your exchange student early on (fill out the Expectations Worksheet together and display it in the home) and review AYA rules and program policies in the AYA Handbook. Your Local Coordinator can be present during this as well so that s/he can review his/her own expectations with you and your student.
- **Adjustment:** Many students go through feelings of homesickness when they arrive and experience highs and lows in their first few weeks or months. *It is important to note that students can experience homesickness at different times and rates throughout the year, especially at the start of the year and the holidays.* The signs of homesickness vary on a case-by-case basis, but the most common signs are the student spending too much time alone in his/her room, on the phone with his/her natural family or friends from home, or on the computer. Your student's attitude may change as well – some may isolate themselves, while others may appear to become aggressive and defensive. It is important to distinguish whether this mood change is in fact due to homesickness or another issue that is concerning and affecting the student.
- **Getting to Know Each Other:** Do not place pressure on your family or your student to form an immediate connection. These first few weeks are an adjustment for all, and some students may take longer to bond with than others. Give yourselves time, space, and the opportunity to get to know each other at a comfortable pace. The bond will form, and when it does, you will not remember life with your student any other way!
- **AYA Insurance Info:** All students arrive with medical insurance. Please go over all insurance information with your student when s/he arrives so that you are prepared in case of emergency. AYA encourages you to identify a list of providers in your community early on that will accept your student's medical insurance. Using in-network providers will be less of an expense for your student. Being prepared will avoid last minute scrambles to find an in-network physician and additional costs.
- **AYA Support:** Your Local Coordinator is your first point of contact if you or your student has any questions or issues during the exchange program. You also have a Regional Director at the AYA main office in Stamford, Connecticut, who is available to resolve issues or answer questions. Please call us anytime at 1-800-322-4648. You will also receive your Regional Director's direct contact information in your placement notification email.



September

September is a key month for you and your student—school has started, activities begin, and your student will begin settling into your home life! There will still be some adjustments occurring as s/he begins to make friends and has to adhere to your house rules. You may find that September is filled with excitement and anxiety as your student begins to make friends, but may still miss the interaction with his/her friends and family back home. Remember that it will take some time for your student and your family to get into a routine. Here are some important topics for September to get off to a great start!

Set Guidelines and Expectations Early On with Your Exchange

Student: Please review the Expectations Worksheet about your household rules with your student throughout the month of September. Refer back to this worksheet and the Student Handbook if any questions or concerns arise. The Expectations Worksheet is a great way to set your family up for success and open communication channels for the rest of the program year.

Getting Involved: Focus on helping your student get involved in after-school activities in order to meet people with common interests and make friends. Check to see if the host high school allows exchange students to participate in sports teams. Please remind your student that s/he is not guaranteed the ability to participate in sports; this is dependent on school/district rules and regulations. Encourage your student to reach out to his/her guidance counselor to review the options of clubs at the school, to pick one that interests him/her, and to go to the first meeting. Joining activities will help him/her meet new people, stay busy and overcome homesickness. AYA has launched a new initiative to get students more involved in their communities—is an AYA-sponsored club that encourages our students to volunteer and participate in community service. Students who join SAGA will also help promote the program and relay the message of the importance of cultural exchange and impact that hosting an exchange student can make on bridging gaps throughout the world.

Academics: You and your Local Coordinator can check in with the teachers and guidance counselors to ensure that your student is doing well in school and is improving his/her English skills. Academics are a vital part of the program, and your student should take homework assignments and school participation seriously. Please contact your Local Coordinator or Regional Director if you feel that your student may require tutoring. Some schools offer free afterschool tutoring. Your Regional Director and Local Coordinator can also assist with setting up a paid tutor for your student (paid for by the student) if free tutoring is not made available by the high school. It is important that your student gets off to a good start and has a positive attitude when it comes to academics.

Cultural Adjustment: Your student will likely experience culture shock. Culture shock can be expressed through a variety of different emotions, depending on the individual. Some students may feel excited to start something new and happy about this new experience when they first arrive, but after a few weeks of living in the U.S. and attending an American high school, they may start to feel anxious, shy, lonely, or hesitant to get involved. You and your Local Coordinator can work together to assure your student

that those feelings are natural and that they will pass. Remind him/her about how important it is to be open-minded about this experience, to be friendly with others, and willing to try new things. Reminding him/her about his/her reasons for coming on the program and his/her goals for the exchange year is important, especially at times when your student is feeling down. Your student's emotional response to his/her culture shock may come and go throughout the year. Providing him/her with open channels of communication is important for him/her to be able to come to you with him/her feelings, which will be confusing to him/her at times.

Support Staff Contact with Students and Host Families: All students and host families are assigned a Regional Director from the AYA National Office in Stamford, Connecticut. Please go to our website to find your student's Regional Director's contact information by state. AYA's student support team will also be reaching out to students and host families via quarterly online surveys. The surveys are a direct line to the National Office and are intended to check in on your progress and ensure that you and your student are enjoying a rewarding experience. The first survey will be distributed via email in September. AYA encourages you and your student to complete all surveys! Your Local Coordinator is your host family's first point of contact but you can also contact, the Regional Director or Student Support Administrator if you have any questions or concerns throughout the program year.



October

Fall is here, and you and your student are enjoying the changing seasons and building a long-lasting bond! However, for some students the month of October may cause homesickness to reemerge because of the holidays approaching. However, open communication will make this a smooth transition so that you and your student can continue to enjoy the experience and upcoming American holiday traditions!

- **Overcoming Your Student's Culture Shock:** With the holidays approaching and the initial excitement of the "new" fading, your student may start experiencing homesickness. Remind your student that AYA recommends communicating with family and friends back home once a week. Explain to them that constant communication will only hinder their ability to move past the homesickness and that their energy should be spent engaging with, and adapting to, their host family and new friends. Encouraging your student to participate in family and school activities and events will also help ease his/her homesickness and increase his/her interaction with others. Your Local Coordinator is a great resource to tap into to also speak with and encourage the student.
- **School Events:** During this time of the exchange year, encourage your student to participate and get involved in homecoming activities. Pep rallies, sporting events, and dances are great ways for your student to become involved and experience American high school spirit.
- **Working Through Your Family's Adjustment:** It is natural for host families to have difficult points in their year as well. It

can be confusing and difficult to adjust to some challenges a student may be experiencing that can affect your relationship and his/her behavior. Making sure that the channels of communication remain open, especially during these moments, is vital to maintaining the expectations that you discussed upon your student's arrival. Your Local Coordinator and Regional Director will also provide you with a great support system and help guide you through issues that may arise.

- **Tutoring:** Students arrive on the program with a basic understanding of English and the necessary skills to improve their communication. If you find that your student is having difficulty with his/her English skills, whether academically or communicating with your family, you can suggest to your Local Coordinator or Regional Director that the student pursue tutoring. Your Local Coordinator or Regional Director will reach out to the high school first, as schools usually provide free tutoring or extra after-school help. If this is not provided, paid tutoring (paid for by the student) is also an option.
- **Budgeting Money:** It is easy for students to have difficulty being able to budget their money while on the program. You and your Local Coordinator can work with your student to develop a monthly budget. Remind your student that s/he is required to purchase things for him/herself, and any activities that s/he wants to participate in are his/her financial responsibility as well. In order for him/her to be able to do all of the activities s/he wants, s/he needs to make sure to distinguish between what s/he needs and what s/he wants. Also, please refrain from lending your student money or borrowing money from your student. The student and his/her natural parents are responsible for making sure he or she has enough personal spending money throughout the entire program.



November

This can be an exciting, new, yet stressful period for our AYA students and host families! Many of our students have had their first Halloween and are looking forward to a great American tradition – Thanksgiving. However, some of our students will miss their families, especially when you may have so many of your family members around during these holiday times. It's important to keep your student busy by encouraging him or her to participate in family activities and share some of his/her favorite activities s/he enjoys doing with his/her natural family. Thanksgiving will be a first for many of our students—so feel free to share in their excitement!

- **The Honeymoon Is Over:** Come November, your student may feel like another member of the family. S/he is adjusting better to family life in the United States, and you may find that s/he is communicating more openly and frequently with you. With this wonderful level of comfort may also arise challenges. You may notice that your student is testing the boundaries, rules, and expectations that have already been set in place. This is not uncommon for all teenagers to do—yet it is important to continue to remind the student of the expectations that you have all discussed and that it is important to continue to adhere by these expectations. It is sometimes easy to allow

more leniency with your exchange student than you would with other members of your family, but it is important to not only interact with him/her as a member of the family, but also establish the same rules and expectations that you would for any other family member and hold the student to those same standards. If s/he are going to enjoy events and activities with you as a family, s/he should also be prepared to help around the house and follow household rules, just like any other member of the family. If you are concerned that your student has not adjusted well to your family, please be sure to communicate your concerns to your Local Coordinator or contact your Regional Director for further support and guidance. Our Local Coordinators and AYA staff are prepared and understand that the holiday season can show an increase in homesickness, behavioral concerns, and attitude changes. They are well prepared to help support you and our students.

- **Semester Students:** If your student is departing, it is important that you make sure that your student has confirmed his or her flight information. AYA strongly recommends that you and your student work with your Local Coordinator to ensure that any outstanding bills and insurance claims have been resolved.
- **Program Extensions:** If your student would like to extend his/her stay from a semester to a full year, AYA will email a form that the student needs to fill out and return by December 1st. *(Please note that a student can only extend his/her stay if his/her original host family is able to continue to host him/her for the remaining 5 months and there are no behavioral and/or academic concerns. If your student extends from August semester to a full year, s/he cannot travel outside of the U.S. S/he will not be allowed to re-enter the country if s/he does so.*
- **2nd Quarterly Survey:** You and your student will be receiving the 2nd quarterly survey of the year via email. Please complete this survey, as it helps us better support you and your student throughout his/her exchange year.



December

December is the highlight of the holiday season for many of our host families and students! We hope that you enjoy this time of the year with your student and that you experience the sharing of family traditions – your family's traditions and some of your student's traditions as well. Students may miss their natural families more over the holidays, so remember to be extra supportive and to use encouragement and activities planned around family time to keep them busy!

- **Share Holiday Traditions!** This is a great time to introduce your student to your family's traditions and ask him/her to participate, whether it is gift traditions, preparing meals, or other activities that you and your family are accustomed to doing during this time. Encourage your student to share his/her family's traditions and meals as well. It will help the student to deal with homesickness if s/he is able to share a piece of his/her life from home with his/her American family. Your Local Coordinator may also have holiday activities

planned for you and your student. Feel free to reach out to your Local Coordinator and ask if s/he has anything specific planned for the students.

- **Holiday Homesickness:** While students may feel the need to reach out to their family and friends more frequently during this time, we encourage students to limit communication with natural family and friends to prevent them from sliding down the homesickness slope. Communicating often with home will often make the feelings of homesickness worse for your student. *If you notice a significant change in your student's behavior, mood, and attitude, please contact your Local Coordinator or Regional Director for further support and guidance. Keeping busy is one of the best tools to combat homesickness.*
- **Semester students:** If you and your student have requested a program extension, it will be reviewed in the first week of December. Status of approval will be shared by the month's end, and new visas for approved students will be issued in early January.
- **Departing Students:** Semester students are preparing to leave this month. Depending on the last day of the school semester students begin departing in late December through the end of January (see January for more details).
- **Convalidation tips for departing semester students:** Exchange students from certain countries, (i.e. Spain, Brazil, Italy, and Korea) are typically required to convalidate for their American grades. Convalidation is when an exchange student translates the grades and credit that s/he has received during the exchange at the host high school for credit from his/her home high school. Students seeking convalidation are generally required to submit official, signed, and sealed school transcripts to certain identified agencies (consulates of his/her home country) in order to receive a seal of validation, certifying his/her grades as authentic. *It is the students' responsibility to take care of his/her own convalidation process prior to their departure. If s/he has questions about this process, please encourage him/her to ask your Local Coordinator or Regional Director for guidance.*



January

AYA wishes you, your loved ones, and your student a very HAPPY NEW YEAR! Some of our students may begin to feel that they have hit a wall in their experience. They are unsure about what to do with their next 5 months—this is a great time to work with your student to plan fun activities for his/her remaining time on the program. Starting a project, like gathering photos for a scrapbook, is a great way for your family and student to look back at the past few months and look forward to the rest of the journey! Below are some tips to help you as a host family encourage and support your student!

- **Halfway Done – Now What?** Students have just experienced a very exciting time with you and your family, and they are unsure what their next steps are for the remaining 5 months.

This is a good time to encourage your student to try new activities and clubs or possibly sports to keep him/her active and involved. Remind your student that exciting events are coming up and that the next few months will go by quickly!

- **Claiming Your Tax Deduction:** We thank you for volunteering to host an exchange student with AYA, and the U.S. Government also appreciates your commitment to promoting international exchange and understanding. You are entitled to a \$50 per month tax deduction as an American host family for the coming tax year. You will receive information on how to claim your charitable deduction in the mail.
- **Fall Semester Students Returning Home – Airport Information:** Please make sure to bring your student to the airport for his/her return flight and be reminded that for international flights, TSA asks that passengers arrive at check-in at least 3 hours prior to their flight departure to ensure timely check-in and boarding. Ensure that your student has his/her flight information handy as well as his/her passport and other travel documentation prior to leaving for the airport. Remind your student that s/he is responsible for paying for any additional luggage or overweight baggage at the airport! Also remind your student that s/he can contact the AYA Emergency line at 1-800-926-2506 if s/he has any flight issues or cancellations during the return trip home.
- Incoming Semester Student? If your student is just arriving for the spring semester, please review the above topics, as it applies to your incoming student as well!



February

February is a settling in month for our year students. They are looking forward to spring weather and activities, and many are very busy as they have adapted to home and school life.

- **Return Flights for Your Fall Semester Exchange Student:** Students are responsible for arranging their end-of-year flights and adjusting any dates for their return home. You and the Local Coordinator should remind the student that the AYA program ends within two weeks after the last day of school. Students should arrange their return flights to take place during this two-week period. If you would like your student to travel with you after school ends, please notify your Local Coordinator or Regional Director for approval. The student's home organization should be in contact with your student soon to inquire about his/her return flight date preferences. Please note that AYA does not purchase airline tickets for our students. Tickets are purchased by the Overseas Partners; however, we will do all we can to assist with any issues that may arise. If your student has any questions on how to arrange his/her return date, contact your Local Coordinator or Regional Director, who can provide further assistance.



March

This month begins "Spring Fever." Students will begin to think about their return trip, and you will all begin to realize that they are almost at the end of the exchange experience. Spring break is also a time when students may want to travel with friends and their families, etc. Please read the following information to help you this month.

- **Spring Break Travel Information:** If you are planning any travel this spring with your student, please make sure s/he contacts his/her Local Coordinator to ask if any travel forms need to be completed. If your student has received permission from you, AYA, and his/her natural parents to travel with a friend's family, please be reminded that students cannot travel with friends without a responsible adult of at least 21 years or older being present. A background check must be completed on members of that family over the age of 18, and all contact information and an itinerary must be submitted to AYA and relayed to the natural parents. Students cannot travel alone while on the program. It is encouraged that our students plan trips with their host families that will not require them to miss school days. If your student will be missing any school days because of a planned trip, please make sure that your Local Coordinator, AYA, and the high school are given the proper notification and approval.
- **3rd Quarterly Survey:** You and your student will be receiving the 3rd quarterly survey of the year via email. Please complete this survey to help us better support you throughout your exchange year.



April

This is a very exciting time when many of our students will be experiencing a lot of end-of-year school and family activities. Some of our students will also be returning home next month. A small number of students may become more inclined to break rules, as they know that they will be returning home soon. It is important to review expectations and house rules as well as program rules with your student to ensure a smooth transition into the final couple of months of the program.

- **Final Months:** April is a great time to reflect with your student on the past year and inquire about what end-of-year activities they may want to do before the end of the program. Stay involved in your student's end-of-year plans as best as you can. This can include possibly planning a visit to your student's home country! Some students' natural parents may want to visit at the end of the program. Please communicate with your student and his/her natural family if this is the case. Natural families are informed that they are to stay at nearby hotels or make proper boarding arrangements unless otherwise instructed by your family.
- **Preparing for End-of-Year Activities:** Remind your student to budget his/her money effectively in order to pay for end-of-year activities, school trips, and prom! If your student is allowed to participate in his/her school's graduation (this is at your high school's discretion), make sure s/he has enough

money to purchase a cap and gown for the ceremony. This time of the year also often involves your student being invited to end-of-year parties and prom. It is important for you and your Local Coordinator to sit down with your student and remind him/her about U.S. Laws and AYA rules and guidelines in regards to alcohol and drug use. Also speak to him/her about "what if" scenarios so that s/he can respond responsibly and with good judgment if ever presented with a situation where drugs and/or alcohol are present. Make sure that your student provides you with the names and phone numbers of the people who will be hosting the get-togethers and confirm that there will be parental supervision. If your student gets to the party and notices that there are no adults present, encourage him/her to contact you or the Local Coordinator immediately in order to leave the party and avoid a potentially dangerous situation.

- **School Work:** While this time of the year is filled with activities, it is important that your student not put his/her academics on the back burner. Our students are expected to maintain a C+ average in every class, regardless of the time of the year, and complete the program on good academic and behavioral standing.



May/June

The end of the program is here! A close bond has been built throughout these 10 months, and it will be important to reflect on the positive and life-changing experience that it has been for everyone. Saying goodbye will be difficult – but the memories you have made and shared will last long after your student leaves!

AYA would like to thank your family for opening up your home, hearts, and life to our students. We know that this year has been full of highs and lows, and we appreciate your efforts to make this year memorable for everyone involved. We hope that this experience has impacted your lives positively and that you have grown and learned from it—we know our students have! The relationships that you have built with your student also trickle back to the exchange experience that you have given to your community and high school, which will last long after your student returns home!

If you are interested in hosting again in coming years with AYA, or if you know a family in your area who is interested in hosting, please contact your Local Coordinator or Regional Director to begin the process, or go to our website to fill out an updated host family application.

It is common for students to experience reverse culture shock during this time, when they start to miss their family and friends in America. It is important to continue to support your student and remind him/her of what s/he is waiting for him/her back at home and that they can continue to contact you and maintain this relationship via email, social media and even visits!

- **Transcript Collection for Students from Brazil, Italy, Ecuador, and Spain:** If your student is convalidating his or her grades, please remind him/her to collect his/her official high school transcript before leaving the U.S.

- **Staying Safe:** We know that many of our students are busy with spring activities like prom and/or graduation. AYA will reach out to your student, but it would be beneficial for you to as well regarding to maintaining sound judgment as s/he attends both school-sponsored events and events they are invited to by friends. They may find themselves presented with situations that can be potentially risky and dangerous. These situations include, but are not limited to, underage drinking, drug use, getting into a car with a drunk driver, etc. We want to encourage you and your Local Coordinator to sit down and discuss U.S. laws and AYA rules and guidelines in regards to alcohol and drug use with your student—both of which are prohibited and will result in immediate disqualification from the program. We also encourage you to speak to your student about “what if” scenarios so that they are able to react responsibly and with good judgment if ever presented with a situation like the ones mentioned above. Make sure that your student provides you with the names and numbers of the people who will be hosting the get-togethers and confirm that there will be parental supervision. Instruct your student that if s/he arrives to the party and notices that there are no adults present, s/he should contact you or the Local Coordinator immediately in order to leave the party and avoid a potentially dangerous and risky situation.
- **Preparing for Their Return Home – Reverse Culture Shock:** In preparation for going home, many of our students will begin to increase the amount of time they spend talking to their natural family and friends. If you notice that your exchange student is spending more time talking to natural family and friends and seems to be isolating him/herself from your family, remind him/her to focus on his/her time left here and to continue to enjoy it as much as possible. Some students may resort to disengaging from their family because they are saddened by their return home—speak openly with your student about his/her return home and express your family’s feelings about his/her leaving as well so that s/he does not feel like the only one experiencing these emotions.
- **Resolving Outstanding Issues (e.g. Phone Bills, Borrowed Items):** Before your student leaves, please make it a priority to go over and resolve any issues regarding unpaid phone bills, insurance and medical bills, or any items that your student may have borrowed. Our students are expected to return any items that they have borrowed.
- **Students Returning Home – Airport Information:** Please make sure to bring your student to the airport for his/her return flight and be reminded that for international flights, TSA asks that passengers arrive at check-in at least 3 hours prior to their flight departure to ensure timely check-in and boarding. Ensure that your student has his/her flight information handy passport, and other travel documentation handy prior to leaving for the airport. Remind your student that s/he is responsible for paying for any additional luggage or overweight baggage at the airport! Remind your student that s/he can contact the AYA Emergency line at 1-800-926-2506 if s/he has any flight issues or cancelations during the return trip home.
- **4th Quarterly Survey:** You and your student will be receiving the 4th quarterly survey for the year via email. Please complete this survey, as it contains questions asking you to evaluate your overall experience and the support that you and your student have received throughout the year.

AYA Blog and News Letters

Connections Newsletter: Academic Year in America creates an elaborate full-colored newsletter with photos entitled “Connections.” This newsletter includes letters, articles, and pictures from AYA students, host families, and Local Coordinators. It is published and mailed to students annually. We invite you to share your experiences with other host families around the nation.

AYA Blog: Just Add Culture: AYA’s blog is an exciting collection of host family and student experiences and reflections. We encourage you to submit photos and stories of your hosting experience.

Submit all stories and photos to ayablog@aifs.org or mail to:

AYA Connections
1 High Ridge Park
Stamford, CT 06905

Setting up for Success!

Host Family and Student Expectations Worksheet

Setting clear expectations is the key to a successful home-stay experience for both a student and a host family. AYA strongly encourages host families and students to take the time to complete this worksheet together, within 72 hours of the student's arrival. Take this opportunity to discuss personal and cultural differences and establish common goals, clear expectations, and a strong foundation for success!

Make sure that everyone understands what is expected of them, and that notes are written clearly and in language that everyone can understand. Choose a central location and post the completed worksheet in a visible location so that the student is reminded of expectations on a daily basis!

Meals

	Time	Eaten Together /Eaten Individually	Comments
Breakfast	_____	_____	_____
Lunch	_____	_____	_____
Dinner	_____	_____	_____
Snacks	_____	_____	_____

School Lunch

Does student take a lunch from home or buy it themselves at school? _____

Who makes lunch if taken from house? _____

Where can food be eaten? _____

Are there any rooms in which food cannot be eaten in? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which rooms? _____

Does the student or family have any food allergies or dietary restrictions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are they? _____

Can the student request special snacks
(something the host family would not normally purchase)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who should he/she inform, and who should pay? _____

Laundry

Where should dirty clothes be placed? _____

Are there set days when laundry is to be done? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what days? _____

Who is responsible for sorting, washing, drying, folding, ironing, hand washing? _____

Telephone

Is there a time limit on phone calls? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are they? _____

What are the appropriate times for phone calls? _____

What are the inappropriate times for phone calls? _____

Who can give permission to make long distance calls? _____

Will the student have a cell phone? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can the cell phone be taken to school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who will be paying for the cell phone plan/how? _____

Are there restrictions on cell phone usage, including texting, social media, etc.? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are the rules? _____

Computer

Is there a time limit on the computer? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is the limit? _____

Is there a specific place where the computer should be used for socializing/homework? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where should it be used? _____

What are the appropriate times for computer usage? _____

What are the inappropriate times for computer usage? _____

Are there restrictions regarding websites, downloading, and emailing? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are the restrictions? _____

What should the student know about internet safety and protecting the privacy of the student and family? _____

AYA recommends that communication with friends and family back home should be limited to a reasonable amount to help avoid hindering adjustment and increasing homesickness.

Student Room

Can the student put pictures on the wall? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ With nails?

☐ With tape?

☐ Other?

Can the furniture arrangement be changed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who cleans? _____

How often? _____

Bathroom

Where does the student's towel go? _____

Where should the student's toiletries be placed? _____

Are toiletries to be shared? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is there a limit on showers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how many per day? _____

If yes, what is the time limit? _____

Is there a scheduled morning/evening bathroom time for the student? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what is it _____

How should the bathroom be left? (i.e., door open, bath mat on rack) _____

Household Chores

Who sets the table, clears the table, does dishes, cooks meals? _____

Who cleans up after snacks? _____

Who tidies up the bathroom? _____ How often? _____

What other chores will the student be expected to share in? _____

Household Rules

How should student proceed when scheduling outside activities? _____

Should student get host parent permission? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there days or times when outside activities are not allowed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what days? _____

How far in advance does the student need to notify you of plans outside the home? _____

How far in advance should the student request a ride/transportation to and from an activity or event? _____

Is student allowed to ride in cars driven by teenage drivers? ☐ Yes ☐ No

With permission? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Without permission? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does student need permission to stay after school? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can the student invite friends over? ☐ Yes ☐ No

With permission? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Without permission? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How much notice? _____

Can the student go out with friends during the week? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when? _____

Can the student go out with friends on weekends? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when? _____

What is the student's curfew on weekdays? _____ Weekends? _____

Does the student need to contact host parents if plans change? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does host family need to know where student is at all times? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How will student be required to notify host parents of whereabouts/change of plans?

☐ Phone call

☐ Cell

☐ Home

☐ Text message

Are there certain family activities the student will be expected to participate in? ☐ Yes ☐ No

(For example, sporting events, community events, game night)

If yes, what events? _____

Dating Rules?

What are the rules regarding dating? _____

What are the rules regarding spending time with a potential date inside and outside of the home? _____

Are there any dating restrictions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are the restrictions? _____

Religious Services

Do family members participate in weekly services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what time? _____

Do family members participate in other regular religious services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when? _____

Do family members participate in youth group activities? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, when? _____

Does the student wish to attend with family ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, how often? _____

Does the student wish to attend a different religious service? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Who will provide transportation? _____

Do all parties understand that the student and family
do not necessarily share the same faith or belief systems?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do all parties understand that despite differing beliefs,
all should be respectful and open to learning and observing different faiths?

☐ Yes ☐ No

How will you handle differences in faith? (Discussion, taking turns going to services, compromise) _____

Who Pays

When the family goes out to dinner? _____

When the family goes to the movies, bowling, sight-seeing, etc.? _____

For long distance phone calls made by the student? _____

For school activities and sports, when there is a fee? _____

For school supplies? _____

Personal toiletries? (shampoo, soap, shaving cream, sanitary items) _____

For school yearbook, graduation cap, and gown rental? _____

Remember, AYA students are not expected to pay for food (except for school lunches and personal specialty snacks), gas, tolls, or utilities.

Travel & Holidays

Is the host family planning on traveling during the year?

☐ Yes ☐ No

What are the host family's plans for holidays, and will the student be expected to participate? _____

Does the host family observe certain traditions during holidays?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what are they? _____

Student Safety

Is there anything the student should know about the safe or less safe areas of this part of town? _____

Are there any areas to avoid walking in or going to during the day and/or night?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what areas? _____

How should an emergency or fire be handled? _____

What are the phone numbers of related emergency services? _____

Emergencies: 911

Police Department: _____

Fire Department: _____

Hospital: _____

How does the host family secure the home?

- ☐ Locking all doors and windows
- ☐ Alarm system

Are there any special safety precautions that the student needs to take related to closing/locking certain doors, house keys, etc.?

If home alone, how should the student handle phone calls or someone at the door? _____

What should the student know about traffic and pedestrian safety? _____

What should the student do if he or she gets lost or doesn't have a key and nobody's home? _____

Are there any activities, people, or places the student should avoid? _____

What should the student do if he or she is out with friends and finds him/herself in an unsafe situation?
(underaged drinking, drugs, risky behaviors)

Are all parties aware that drinking alcohol is strictly prohibited according to U.S. law and AYA program rules and is not permitted under any circumstance, in or outside of the home? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are all parties aware that AYA is a non-smoking program and that students are prohibited from possessing or smoking cigarettes while on-program? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have all parties been made aware of safety precautions related to sexual abuse and exploitation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What should the student do if he or she is ever the subject of any type of misconduct, physical, sexual, or otherwise, including lewd or inappropriate solicitations via phone, text, email, or social media communication?

Other Household Guidelines



United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, DC 20547

Dear American Host Family,

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, thank you for volunteering to host a Secondary School Student Program exchange visitor. This is a unique opportunity for you to experience the richness and diversity of a culture different from your own. Through this program, you are among thousands of American families who volunteer to serve as citizen ambassadors of the United States.

High School programs have been a part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts since 1949. Approximately 25,000 high school students from around the world participate in this program each year. The good will of American host families in opening their homes to these young international visitors is vital to this program's success.

The health, safety, and well-being of the young people who participate in this program are our highest priority. A host family has many responsibilities, the most important of which is properly caring for an international student during the course of his/her program. The student is a guest in your home and in our country and you may be the first "real Americans" this young person meets. How you relate with this student will create a lasting image of our country and its people.

I hope this will be a rewarding experience for you and the exchange student. It is extremely important that you notify your program sponsor if you have any concerns or if the student's personal health, safety, or well-being is threatened in any way. If the sponsor is not responsive to your concerns, please contact the Department of State directly at the 24 hour toll free number (1-866-283-9090) that has been established for this purpose. In addition, the program sponsor provides each student with an identification card, which lists your address and telephone numbers, separate telephone numbers for immediate contact with the sponsor organization and the sponsor's local representative, and the Department of State's toll free phone number and email address (jvisas@state.gov). The student should keep this card with him/her at all times and contact us if s/he has any concerns about his/her health, safety, or well-being.

The Department of State is deeply appreciative of your kindness and generosity in making this educational and cultural experience possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robin J. Lerner".

Robin J. Lerner
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange

Reprint from the Code of Federal Regulations

Washington, D.C. 20547
Criteria for Exchange Teenager
Program sec. 22 CFR 62.25 Secondary
school students

PART 62—EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

■ 1. The Authority citation for part 62 is revised to read as follows:

Authority: 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(J), 1182, 1184, 1258; 22 U.S.C. 1431–1442, 2451 et seq.; Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, Pub. L. 105–277, Div. G, 112 Stat. 2681 et seq.; Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp. p. 200; E.O. 12048 of March 27, 1978; 3 CFR, 1978 Comp. p. 168; the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, Pub. L. 104–208, Div. C, 110 Stat. 3009–546, as amended; Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT ACT) (Pub. L. 107–56), Section 416, 115 Stat. 354; and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107–173; 116 Stat. 543.

■ 2. Section 62.25 is revised to read as follows:

§ 62.25 Secondary school students.

(a) *Purpose.* This section governs Department of State designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign secondary school students are afforded the opportunity to study in the United States at accredited public or private secondary schools for an academic semester or an academic year, while living with American host families or residing at accredited U.S. boarding schools.

(b) *Program sponsor eligibility.* Eligibility for designation as a secondary school student exchange visitor program sponsor is limited to organizations:

(1) With tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and

(2) Which are United States citizens as such term is defined in § 62.2.

(c) *Program eligibility.* Secondary school student exchange visitor programs designated by the Department of State must:

(1) Require all exchange students to be enrolled and participating in a full course of study at an accredited academic institution;

(2) Allow entry of exchange students for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) and not more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and

(3) Ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled. In all cases, sponsors must notify both the host family and school prior to the exchange student's arrival in the United States whether the placement is for an academic semester, an academic year, or a calendar year.

(d) *Program administration.* Sponsors must ensure that all organizational officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf:

(1) Are adequately trained. Sponsors must administer training for local coordinators that specifically includes, at a minimum, instruction in: Conflict resolution; procedures for handling

and reporting emergency situations; awareness or knowledge of child safety standards; information on sexual conduct codes; procedures for handling and reporting allegations of sexual misconduct or any other allegations of abuse or neglect; and the criteria to be used to screen potential host families and exercise good judgment when identifying what constitutes suitable host family placements. In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all local coordinators complete the Department of State mandated training module prior to their appointment as a local coordinator or assumption of duties. The Department of State training module will include instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program; its public diplomacy objectives; and the Secondary School Student category rules and regulations. Sponsors must demonstrate the individual's successful completion of all initial training requirements and that annual refresher training is also successfully completed.

(2) Are adequately supervised. Sponsors must create and implement organization-specific standard operating procedures for the supervision of local coordinators designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/agents/volunteers. They must also have sufficient internal controls to ensure that such employees/agents/volunteers comply with such standard operating procedures.

(3) Have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(4) Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;

(5) Make no exchange student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of the local coordinator authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from that exchange student's participation in the Exchange Visitor Program;

(6) Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;

(7) Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and email;

(8) Make certain that the exchange student's government issued documents (i.e., passports, Forms DS–2019) are not removed from his/her possession;

(9) Conduct the host family orientation after the host family has been fully vetted and accepted;

(10) Refrain, without exception, from acting as:

(i) Both a host family and a local coordinator or area supervisor for an exchange student;

(ii) A host family for one sponsor and a local coordinator for another sponsor; or

(iii) A local coordinator for any exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student's teacher or principal. This requirement is not applicable to a boarding school placement.

(11) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the exchange student. The first monthly contact between the local coordinator and the exchange student must be in person. All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(12) That a sponsor representative other than the local coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family visit the exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student's placement in the home.

(13) Maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the host family. At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester, (i.e., twice during the academic year) the contact by the local coordinator with the host family must be in person. All

other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring the issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(14) That host schools are provided contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department's Office of Designation; and

(15) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.

(e) *Student selection.* In addition to satisfying the requirements of § 62.10(a), sponsors must ensure that all participants in a designated secondary school student exchange visitor program:

(1) Are secondary school students in their home countries who have not completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary study, exclusive of kindergarten; or are at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years and six months of age as of the program start date;

(2) Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and

(3) Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States in either F–1 or J–1 visa status.

(f) *Student enrollment.* (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:

(i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student will attend; and

(ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.

(2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.

(3) Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS–2019.

(4) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances for a minimum of three years and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.

(5) Sponsors must provide the school with a translated “written English language summary” of the exchange student's complete academic course work prior to commencement of school, in addition to any additional documents the school may require. Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.

(6) Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students from the sponsor.

(7) Upon issuance of a Form DS–2019 to a prospective participant, the sponsor accepts full responsibility for securing a school and host family placement for the student, except in cases of voluntary student withdrawal or visa denial.

(g) *Student orientation.* In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at § 62.10, all sponsors must provide exchange students, prior to their departure from their home countries, with the following information:

(1) A summary of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations governing student participation in the exchange visitor program along with a detailed summary of travel arrangements;

(2) A copy of the Department's welcome letter to exchange students;

(3) Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation;

(4) A detailed profile of the host family with whom the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary arrival family;

(5) A detailed profile of the school and community in which the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the student will pay tuition; and

(6) An identification card, that lists the exchange student's name, United States host family placement address and telephone numbers (landline and cellular), sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers, name and telephone numbers (landline and cellular) of the local coordinator and area representative, the telephone number of Department's Office of Designation, and the Secondary School Student program toll free emergency telephone number. The identification card must also contain the name of the health insurance provider and policy number. Such cards must be corrected, reprinted, and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student's placement.

(h) *Student extra-curricular activities.* Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is:

(1) Authorized by the local school district in which the student is enrolled; and

(2) Authorized by the state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility, if applicable. Sponsors shall not knowingly be party to a placement (inclusive of direct placements) based on athletic abilities, whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party.

(3) Any placement in which either the student or the sending organization in the foreign country is party to an arrangement with any other party, including receiving school personnel, whereby the student will attend a particular school or live with a particular host family must be reported to the particular school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

(i) *Student employment.* Exchange students may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

(j) *Host family application and selection.* Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

(1) Provide potential host families with a detailed summary of the Exchange Visitor Program and of their requirements, obligations and commitment to host;

(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, “Information to be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications”. The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.” Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

(3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home where the student will be living;

(4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary; that the exchange student's bedroom contains a separate bed for the student that is

neither convertible nor inflatable in nature; and that the student has adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency. An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same sex.

(5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (i.e., field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;

(6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing;

(7) Verify that each member of the host family household 18 years of age and older, as well as any new adult member added to the household, or any member of the host family household who will turn eighteen years of age during the exchange student's stay in that household, has undergone a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(8) Maintain a record of all documentation on a student's exchange program, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years following program completion; and

(9) Ensure that a potential single adult host parent without a child in the home undergoes a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant. Such secondary review should include demonstrated evidence of the individual's friends or family who can provide an additional support network for the exchange student and evidence of the individual's ties to his/her community. Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student's placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

(k) *Host family orientation.* In addition to the orientation requirements set forth in § 62.10, sponsors must:

(1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange visitor program, including examples of "best practices" developed by the exchange community;

(2) Provide all selected host families with a copy of the Department's letter of appreciation to host families;

(3) Provide all selected host families with a copy of Department of State promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations;

(4) Advise all selected host families of strategies for cross-cultural interaction and conduct workshops to familiarize host families with cultural differences and practices; and

(5) Advise host families of their responsibility to inform the sponsor of any and all material changes in the status of the host family or student, including, but not limited to, changes in address, finances, employment and criminal arrests.

(l) *Host family placement.* (1) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:

(i) Facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a host family placement has not been secured;

(ii) Place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the host family, the natural parents, and the students being placed. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with a host family, or in the home of a local coordinator, regional coordinator, or volunteer.

Sponsors may not place students from the same countries or with the same native languages in a single home.

(2) Prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or arrival placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances that necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor must document the reason(s) necessitating such change and provide the Department of State with an annual statistical summary reflecting the number and reason(s) for such change in host family placement in the program's annual report.

(m) *Advertising and Marketing for the recruitment of host families.* In addition to the requirements set forth in § 62.9 in advertising and promoting for host family recruiting, sponsors must:

(1) Utilize only promotional materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor's purposes, activities, and sponsorship;

(2) Not publicize the need for host families via any public media with announcements, notices, advertisements, etc. that are not sufficiently in advance of the exchange student's arrival, appeal to public pity or guilt, imply in any way that an exchange student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately, or identify photos of individual exchange students and include an appeal for an immediate family;

(3) Not promote or recruit for their programs in any way that compromises the privacy, safety or security of participants, families, or schools. Specifically, sponsors shall not include personal student data or contact information (including addresses, phone numbers or email addresses) or photographs of the student on Web sites or in other promotional materials; and

(4) Ensure that access to exchange student photographs and personally identifying information, either online or in print form, is only made available to potential host families who have been fully vetted and selected for program participation. Such information, if available online, must also be password protected.

(n) *Reporting requirements.* Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at § 62.15, sponsors must file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) Sponsors must immediately report to the Department any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or any other allegations of abuse or neglect of an exchange student. Sponsors must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation. Failure to report such incidents to the Department and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the suspension and revocation of the sponsor's Exchange Visitor Program designation;

(2) A report of all final academic year and semester program participant placements by August 31 for the upcoming academic year or January 15 for the Spring semester and calendar year. The report must be in the format directed by the Department and must include at a minimum, the exchange student's full name, Form DS-2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placement (current U.S. address), school (site of activity) address, the local coordinator's name and zip code, and other information the Department may request; and

(3) A report of all situations which resulted in the placement of an exchange student with more than one host family or in more than one school. The report must be in a format directed by the Department and include, at a minimum, the exchange student's full name, Form DS-2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placements (current U.S. address), schools (site of activity address), the reason for the change in placement, and the date

of the move. This report is due by July 31 for the previous academic school year.

A new Appendix F is added to Part 62, as follows:

Appendix F to Part 62—Information To Be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications

Basic Family Information:

a. Host Family Member—Full name and relationship (children and adults) either living full-time or part-time in the home or who frequently stay at the home)

b. Date of Birth (DOB) of all family members

c. Street Address

d. Contact information (telephone; e-mail address) of host parents

e. Employment—employer name, job title, and point of contact for each working resident of the home

f. Is the residence the site of a functioning business? (e.g., daycare, farm)

g. Description of each household member (e.g., level of education, profession, interests, community involvement, and relevant behavioral or other characteristics of such household members that could affect the successful integration of the exchange visitor into the household)

h. Has any member of your household ever been charged with any crime? Household Pets:

a. Number of Pets

b. Type of Pets

Financial Resources:

a. Average Annual Income Range: Less than \$25,000; \$25,000–\$35,000; \$35,000–\$45,000; \$45,000–\$55,000; \$55,000–\$65,000; \$65,000–\$75,000; and \$75,000 and above. Note: The form must include a statement stating that: "The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of ensuring that the basic needs of the exchange students can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities"

b. Describe if anyone residing in the home receives any kind of public assistance (financial needs-based government subsidies for food or housing)

c. Identify those personal expenses expected to be covered by the student Diet:

a. Does anyone in the family follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe:

b. Do you expect the student to follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe:

c. Would you feel comfortable hosting a student who follows a particular dietary restriction (ex. Vegetarian, Vegan, etc.)? (Y/N)

d. Would the family provide three (3) square meals daily?

High School Information:

a. Name and address of school (private or public school)

b. Name, address, e-mail and telephone number of school official

c. Approximate size of the school student body

d. Approximate distance between the school and your home

e. Approximate start date of the school year

f. How will the exchange student get to the school (e.g. bus, carpool, walk)?

g. Would the family provide special transportation for extracurricular activities after school or in the evenings, if required?

h. Which, if any, of your family's children, presently attend the school in which the exchange visitor is enrolled?

If applicable list sports/clubs/activities, if any, your child(ren) participate(s) in at the school

i. Does any member of your household work for the high school in a coaching/teaching/or administrative capacity?

j. Has any member of your household had contact with a coach regarding the hosting of an exchange student with particular athletic ability? If yes, please describe the contact and sport.

Community Information:

a. In what type of community do you live (e.g.: Urban, Suburban, Rural, Farm)

b. Population of community

c. Nearest Major City (Distance and population)

d. Nearest Airport (Distance)

e. City or town website

f. Briefly describe your neighborhood and community

g. What points of interest are near your area (parks, museums, historical sites)?

h. Areas in or near neighborhood to be avoided?

Home Description:

a. Describe your type of home (e.g. single family home, condominium, duplex, apartment, mobile home) and include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, student's bathroom, and family and living areas.

b. Describe Primary Rooms and Bedrooms

c. Number of Bathrooms

d. Will the exchange student share a bedroom? (Y/N) If yes, with which household resident?

e. Describe the student's bedroom

f. Describe amenities to which the student has access

g. Utilities

Family Activities:

a. Language spoken in home

b. Please describe activities and/or sports each family member participates in: (e.g., camping, hiking, dance, crafts, debate, drama, art, music, reading, soccer, baseball, horseback riding)

c. Describe your expectations regarding the responsibilities and behavior of the student while in your home (e.g., homework, household chores, curfew (school night and weekend), access to refrigerator and food, drinking of alcoholic beverages, driving, smoking, computer/Internet/E-Mail)

Would you be willing voluntarily to inform the exchange visitor in advance of any religious affiliations of household members? (Y/N)

Would any member of the household have difficulty hosting a student whose religious beliefs were different from their own? (Y/N)

Note: A host family may want the exchange visitor to attend one or more religious services or programs with the family. The exchange visitor cannot be required to do so, but may decide to experience this facet of U.S. culture at his or her discretion.

How did you learn about being a host family?

References:

Dated: October 21, 2010

Sally J. Lawrence,
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