

GUIDELINES FOR HOST FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

Acting as a host to an overseas student can be a tremendously rewarding experience for a family. However, it does also entail some important obligations. Here are some of the ground rules:

1. It is not essential that the Host be a Rotarian.
2. The Host Family must undertake to supervise the school and leisure hour activities of the student as if he or she were their own son or daughter.
3. They shall provide room and board and should include the student in all family activities.
4. It is desirable for the student to have his/her own room or, alternatively, to share with someone of their own age group.
5. It is not essential that the family have children of similar age and sex to the student being hosted. Many very successful hosting arrangements have taken place where there are only very young children-or none at all-in the family.

COUNSELOR

The Host Rotary Club will appoint a Counselor who will act as a confidant to the student during their stay in America. The student is expected to consult the Counselor on any problems that may arise. The Counselor is also available to help the Host Families with any problems that they may encounter in hosting the student. Do not hesitate to consult the Counselor if problems of any kind arise.

STUDENT - NOT A GUEST

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the student should not be treated as a special or honored guest by the family. The value of this Program centers on the acceptance by both students and hosts that the student will be "one of the family," not receiving any special favors or treatment and undertaking all the normal family chores. For this reason it is desirable that the student address the Host Parents as "Mom" and "Dad" or some other informal title. They should never call you "Mr." or "Mrs."

HOUSEHOLD CHORES

The student should most certainly make their own bed and keep their room tidy-very difficult for some-and assist with general household chores, such as setting and clearing away the table and doing dishes. Boys might reasonably be expected to help with gardening and similar tasks. Some complaints have been received from students that they are being used as unpaid help or as constant baby sitters. Others again have found that they are not allowed to join in with the normal household chores. The object is to strike the right balance and a guiding principle in these cases is to ask what would be expected from the host family's own children.

DISCIPLINE

The student is expected to adapt to the supervision and discipline of the Host Family. Remember, the Host Family does not have to adapt to the student; rather the student must learn to adapt to the family. Any sign of reluctance or unwillingness on the student's part to accept this point of view should be brought to the attention of the Counselor, who should then clarify this point with the student. It is better that such a ruling come from a third party such as the Counselor, rather than from the Host Parents. Problems can arise unless the student clearly understands the fact that he or she is expected to conform to Host Country conditions. At the same time, Host Families should be aware of the problems of adaptation and should be prepared to be flexible.

RELIGION

Somewhat surprisingly this seldom poses serious problems. Most students are very flexible on attitudes and usually accompany the Host Family to their church even where religions differ. Host Families should not force the issue and if the student wishes to follow his/her own religion, every effort should be made to assist them in this respect.

ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

No drinking of alcoholic beverages is allowed!!

The 5 D's – NO DRIVING, DRINKING, DATING, DRUGS or DISFIGUREMENT

1. **Driving** -The rules of the Youth Exchange Program prohibit an exchange student from driving a motorized vehicle of any description during the period of the exchange. This includes cars, motorcycles, tractors, motorboats, aircraft, skidoos or any similar vehicle. The reason for this regulation is that there are many legal and/or insurance complications which can arise should a student be involved in an accident. For the same reasons students are also barred from activities such as hitchhiking, riding on a motorcycle or hang-gliding. This rule will be strictly enforced and any violation could result in the student being sent home immediately.
2. **Drinking – Alcoholic Beverages** -No consumption of alcohol is allowed in District 7390. It is illegal for individuals to drink alcoholic beverages under the age of 21 in the United States.
3. **Dating – Romantic Attachments** - Students should not form any romantic attachments or "go steady" while on exchange. Basically this is a good rule because if you "go steady" it can result in all your attention being centered on one person instead of meeting, and learning from, a wide group of people. You are encouraged to mix with as many groups of students at school as you can. Sometimes students also seek out the company of other exchange students as often as they can. For the same reason this is to be discouraged as it can diminish the benefits which you can derive from the Program. In addition, overt display of intimate physical behavior/affection of a sexual nature is not acceptable during their year of exchange in any public or private setting (host family, party). This can result in termination of your exchange. This behavior is also expressly prohibited as well for **Outbounds in Training** as it can result in termination of your candidacy for an exchange.
4. **Drugs** - You are not permitted to use drugs, except for valid medical reasons as prescribed by a physician. Violation of this rule will result in at least the immediate termination of your exchange.
5. **Disfigurement** - You are not permitted to get a tattoo or a body piercing during your exchange year this includes (but is not limited to) piercing of the nose, eyebrow(s), tongue, lip(s), and cheeks. Another example of disfigurement is the extreme dyeing of the hair (purple, orange) as some cultures will not allow it in their schools.

FINANCE

The Host Rotary Club will provide the student with a monthly allowance to cover the immediate incidentals. Generally the student will have some additional funds of their own as well as a specified emergency fund under the control of the Counselor. The Host Family is not obliged to provide the student with spending money nor to finance clothing, school uniforms, travel or other expenses (including telephone calls). However, if the student does not take a lunch to school then the host parents should provide them with lunch money-just as they would do for their own children.

MONEY PROBLEMS

Some young people are better at handling money than others; some students are hopeless at budgeting and need some guidance if they are to live within their monthly allowance. Under the Youth Exchange Program rules, each student is required to establish an emergency fund which must be replenished, as required, during the year by the student's natural parents. The amount of this emergency fund will be specified by the District Committee from time to time and should not be expended on day-to-day items; it is there mainly for healthcare expenditures.

It has been found that some supervision of these emergency funds is desirable. The best method has proved to be the establishment of a special bank account under the direction of the Rotary Counselor before a withdrawal can be made. This is an issue which should be discussed with the Counselor at the beginning of an exchange. Students should be discouraged from borrowing money and purchasing on Host Parents' accounts.

TRAVEL

The Host Family is under no obligation to take the student on holiday or trips, but it will add enormously to the intrinsic value of the program if they are able to do so without financial embarrassment to themselves. Where they are not able to take students away during school holidays, they should make this clear to the Rotary Counselor, who should make alternative arrangements for the student.

No special permission is required where a student accompanies a Host Family on a trip or holiday, unless outside the USA, but the Rotary Counselor must be advised. If the student makes a journey away from the Host Town, both the Host Parents and the Counselor must ensure that satisfactory permission to travel and hosting arrangements have been

made. Traveling during school terms is discouraged and should be undertaken only under specific conditions which will be established by the Counselor and the Head of the school.

SCHOOLING

The Youth Exchange Program rules require attendance at a high school. Usually the Counselor will take care of the enrollment details and will arrange, together with the student, the optimum subject package and educational materials. The Host Family's role is to supervise the day-to-day attendance of the student at school and to encourage them to participate fully in both the academic and extracurricular activities of the school. It is important to the success of the exchange that any problems which might arise from language difficulties be dealt with promptly. The Host Parents should always ensure that the student is provided with a note for the principal/teacher to excuse them from any classes which they need to miss for any reason. It is very important that the school is kept fully informed regarding the student's program of activities.

HOMESICKNESS

Every student experiences homesickness to some degree and the extent of this problem will depend largely on the student's own background and personality. Host Families should be appreciative of this fact and should expect the student to have some adjustment problems. Many students say that they feel there are times when they want privacy to cope with feelings of homesickness. If your student spends some time alone in his/her room, do not be alarmed-this is fairly normal. But if the student spends a lot of time alone, this could be a danger signal that all is not well. The student who is actively involved in the community will be less likely to suffer from adjustment problems and homesickness than the non-participant; therefore, do all you can to encourage your student to accept the opportunities available to become involved in the community.

CHANGE OF HOST FAMILIES

Host Families should keep in touch with the Hosting Rotary Club through the Counselor regarding hosting arrangements, so that all parties concerned are aware of and know well in advance exactly when each change of home is to take place. It would not be out of place for the current Host Family to meet with the next Host Family to discuss some of the student's habits, likes and dislikes. It can help bring about a smoother transition from one family to the next.

As soon as a student is settled in, it is advisable for the new Host Parents to have a detailed discussion with the student and to lay down the house rules so that the student will know what is expected of him/her. Such a discussion can save some frustrations and resentments at a later date.

STUDENT EMERGENCY CARD

An emergency card is to be carried on each exchange student's person during their exchange year. District 7390 will provide each student with three emergency cards (one for each host family). The information is to be kept current with each host family move. In addition to the student's and current host family's contact information, it includes contact information for the student's counselor, Club president, District chair, ESSEX Student Protection Officer and the US Department of State. The card and contact information is a requirement of Rotary International Youth Exchange rules and regulations.

TELEPHONE CALLS

The abuse of the telephone by students is an area which causes many problems during the students stay with their Host Families. As soon as they move to a new Host Family, international calls should be on a "collect basis," the student must establish with that family the exact procedure to adopt with regard to the use and payment for all phone calls.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE

One of the main purposes of the Youth Exchange Program is the exchange of knowledge on an international level. Your student is an ambassador for their country, so show an interest in that country and learn as much as possible about your student's home environment. In turn you are also an ambassador for your country by imparting knowledge about the USA's way of life to your student, so that he/she will be able to take back to their home country a picture of the USA that is as accurate as possible. This two-way exchange of ideas and information can be a very stimulating and rewarding adventure in international goodwill and understanding. By acting as a Host to an overseas student you are doing far more than providing

bed and board for someone; you are taking that first very essential step toward world peace, by helping to break down fears, prejudices and misunderstandings which are based on ignorance.

CONCLUSION

Finally, as Host Parents, you must accept the responsibility of being parents to your student in the same way as to your own child. The exchange is a two-way process and you are the adults in this deal. You should be willing to go more than half way-you should try to give an adult lead to the young person who cannot be expected to know your rules and wishes without being told. You should expect the student to conform to your rules and wishes in the same way as you do your own children, but to no greater extent. It is essential to establish and maintain effective two-way communications between yourselves and your student right from the beginning. The majority of problems with and for Exchange Students can be resolved by effective, firm, sympathetic understanding and loving control from the Host Parents. You have the responsibility for success and your reward is great-you add a son or daughter to your family!