



## **Host Family Expectations: At a Glance**

5 tips for *Cultural Awareness*

1. Some students are more fluent in the language than others. Regardless of their English level, all of them go through a transition period where their hearing skill is improved and they stop translating into their native language. It also takes time for students to adjust to your family's tone, accent, speed, and slang. This adaptation process takes place during the first few weeks, which is why it will be easier if your family talks a little slower, changes any words that they don't understand or simply give them time to adjust to their immersion in a language which they are not used to.
2. It is important to mention that mealtimes might be scheduled and measured differently in the United States. For example, in many countries, breakfast is a full, prepared meal rather than a grab-and-go style often used in the US (eggs, bread, beans, rice, and fruit as opposed to a granola bar). It may take a while for the student to adjust to your family's type or quantity of food. This would be the first days only, afterwards they will adapt to the household's routine. Please check in with the student if they need more food or have any questions.
3. Students are here to be immersed and be active in their surroundings, minimizing contact with the home country. With the help of the placement company, students have specific methods of communication to maintain contact with their family, whether this be an international calling plan or purchasing a phone/card when they arrive.
4. Many students will want to buy souvenirs for family/friends back home. Students may ask to be taken to local stores or malls to explore. Please also encourage a photo journal and take pictures of your student when visiting new places.
5. An exchange student's biggest stress may come from the academic challenge as school systems and schedules vary widely among countries. Contact the international coordinator as well as the principal or student's teachers if the student seems very overwhelmed, and the school and counselors will help aid the student in the transition. The student will have an ambassador to help explain all school expectations and assist with schoolwork. Additionally, please encourage your student to try out different clubs and activities, as many countries often only focus on academics and have less options for extracurriculars.

## **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

- 1) Please ask the student for a photocopy of Passport and Visa and keep them with you at all times.
  
- 2) Medical Needs- The participants have health, dental and travel insurance. This insurance provides assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and allows for emergency services. Provided by the company, you have a legal document that allows you (with legal authority of parents) to provide medical and dental care if necessary. In case of any emergency, you must always call the emergency phone number so they indicate an approved provider. Please keep a photocopy of this information with you.
  
- 3) Ensure a method of communication for daily needs and emergencies. You may need to verify that your phone is compatible with the student's phone (there may be extra costs if the student has an international number).

## **Tips to be Successful as a Host Parent**

- Greet student at airport with as many members of your family as possible and with their name on a decorated sign. Give them some basic rules, introductions of family members, and a tour of your home upon arrival (Please consider if they need to rest immediately after their travels).
  
- Set house/rules and expectations just like for your own children and review them as needed with the student to ensure understanding. Please enforce rules equally among students and children as to avoid confusion. Be sure to set realistic expectations of life with a teenager and offer an emotionally supportive environment through their transition to living in the US.
  
- Please talk to the student about their responsibilities in the home such as chores. In many cultures, students may not have experience with chores as these are often maintained by parents or hired assistance.
  
- Going out alone or with friends is permitted if it does not interfere with the schedules at home. Dating is generally not permitted according to the exchange companies. (Please check with the student's written agreement or coordinator.)
  
- Encourage school/community participation and help the student understand the service hour requirement set by the Theology Department. The student may not have any experience with the concept of volunteering services.
  
- Set a budget of both money and time to spend with the exchange student (excursions, extra US cultural activities). If there are any family events or if assistance is needed, please contact

the international coordinator and a second-tier family may help with secondary housing or events.

\*\*The student will have their own money for shopping excursions or additional activities. Please check with the coordinator before providing spending money for the student.

--Provide space for students to share their lives and culture in the family home. Please ask them questions and encourage cultural comparison. The student may also want to cook a traditional dish or share souvenirs.

--Keep open contact with program coordinator and school teachers/administrators to ensure the success of the student in all environments. Please report any misbehavior, inappropriate conduct, or uncomfortable situations to both the school and company coordinators.