



YES FAQ for YFU Volunteers & Host Families Supporting YES Scholars

What is the YES program?

The Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program began in 2002 to strengthen relations between the US and countries with predominant Muslim populations in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Southeast Europe through youth exchange. Hosting a YFU YES scholar in this post 9/11 era parallels YFU's origins when US families welcomed the first German students to help repair relations damaged in WWII.

How many YES scholars participate each year?

The program has grown from 200 YES scholars to approximately 900 each year. YFU USA is hosting 43 scholars throughout the US in 2017-18.

What is YFU's role in the structure of the YES program?

YFU is a **placement organization** supporting the YES program under a **sub-grantee contract to American Councils**. Placement organizations place students with host families and schools, and support students and their host families. American Councils for International Education is the **prime grantee** and has overall responsibility for coordinating the YES program.

Recruitment/Alumni Organizations recruit and select scholars, conduct pre-departure orientations, and manage natural family communications while students are on-program, as well as alumni programming when students return.

Program Partners coordinate activities such as the leadership workshops for YES scholars (by competitive application process), provide support to students with disabilities, manage the YES program's website: yesprograms.org, and maintain an alumni database.



Are there YES-specific considerations for host family and school placement?

YFU places most US Department of State scholarship students according to the **community model**. This means 2-7 YES and/or FLEX scholars are placed within a 120-mile radius of each other to facilitate group activities and orientations. The community model is a support network of YES and FLEX families and volunteers. Other specific considerations include:

English Language:

English must be the primary language spoken at home by the host family.

Private Schools:

Placements at private schools (including faith-based, religious schools) require approval from the sending partner, Department of State/US Embassy, and natural parents.

Host Family Religion:

Religious tolerance is necessary on the part of the host family. YES scholars cannot be compelled to practice the religion of their host family. YES scholars are encouraged to actively participate in the lives of their host families and should consider faith-based activities as cultural learning opportunities.

Pets: Students may be unfamiliar with and apprehensive of household pets at first, especially concerning hair and saliva. Help students adjust by giving them time and support to get to know the pets and for Muslim students, keep the pet out of the student's room, especially if the room is used for prayers.

How is pre-departure orientation provided for students and host families?

Sending partners conduct pre-departure orientations for students and their natural parents and distribute the YFU USA *Passport to the USA* student handbook and YFU USA Welcome Letter.

What happens during the arrival orientation in Washington, DC?

Upon arrival in the US, YES scholars take part in a 2-day orientation organized by AFS or American Councils held in Washington, DC. The orientation covers the following topics from the *Introduction to the USA* YES workbook:

- Cross cultural training, US host family life and US school experience
- Budgeting allowance money
- YES program activities
- Leadership skills
- US politics and culture
- Practicing Islam in the US

Who arranges the students' international travel?

American Councils and AFS book international arrival and departure tickets between the home country and Washington, DC, and manage all costs associated with the international portion of the students' arrival and departure. YFU will communicate with students and host families regarding this travel.

Who arranges the students' domestic travel?

American Councils and AFS book domestic travel between Washington, DC and the host community, and provide YFU USA the travel details to share with the field staff and host families.

When do students arrive in the US and in their host communities?

Students arrive in six separate groups in Washington, DC throughout August, depending upon their country of origin. After two days of orientation, students travel from Washington, DC to their host communities on August 4, 10, 11, 18, 24, or 25.

When do the students depart their host communities at the end of the program?

May 2017 American Councils and AFS confirms return flight information for departures in one of 3 groups
Mid-to-late June 2017 Approximate date of travel from host community to Washington, DC for end of program workshop
Mid-to-late June 2017 Date of departure to home country from Washington, DC

Students must travel with their country group; independent student arrivals and departures are not permitted.

What allowances do YES scholars receive?

A. \$125 Monthly Stipend: This stipend is for the student's personal expenses, such as going out with friends, paying phone bills, taking school trips, and other items that are the student's responsibility (see *Host Family Handbook*). Host families can help their student set up a bank account to deposit stipend checks and help students budget their money. Some YES scholars may try to save the money to bring back home, or spend it too quickly. The money is meant to provide for a typical US teenage experience. The YFU Area Representative is available to advise host family and student on appropriate use of the stipend. YFU USA issues and mails five checks to students in the first week of the month on the following schedule. Students who open local bank accounts will also have an option for direct deposit.

August (upon arrival)	\$250
October	\$250
December	\$250
February	\$250
April	\$375 (April/May/June)

B. \$300 Incidental Allowance: This allowance is for mandatory public school fees (including sports or other activities fees/materials), school supplies, yearbook, and/or necessary seasonal clothing purchases. Students and their host families are reimbursed up to \$300 after submitting a YFU YES Incidental Expense Report with original receipts **by February 1**, to: YFU USA, attn.: Grant Programs Staff; 641 S Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20001

Will YFU pay for my YES student's transportation to school?

Grant funds are available to reimburse transportation to and from school if all students from the student's neighborhood incur such costs, and other transportation is unavailable and/or would cause hardship.

Will my student participate in any YES-specific activities?

YES scholars complete several YES-specific program requirements intended to enhance their exchange experience. The *YFU YES Scholar Required Activity Booklet* explains these in detail. Brief descriptions follow:

1. Community Service

- YFU YES students complete a minimum of 20 community service hours to experience and learn about volunteerism and give back to their host communities.
- Students record their hours on the **Required Activities Log**. YFU recognizes students who complete at least 20 hours with a certificate.
- Students who complete 100 or more hours earn a US Department of State certificate.

2. Leadership Skills Activities

YES scholars participate in diverse activities in school and the local community to help build leadership skills. YFU encourages YES students to get involved as leaders in one or more of these activities. Students record leadership skills development activities on the **Required Activities Log**. Examples include:

- Serving in student government
- Joining school clubs such as Key Club or Model UN
- Leading or starting a school club
- Communicating with and/or meeting legislative representatives for their host community

3. International Education Week (November) & Global Youth Service Day (April)

- YES scholars participate in International Education Week (<http://iew.state.gov>) and Global Youth Service Day (<http://www.gysd.org/>).
- Country presentations are an excellent way to participate.
- Students may complete activities with their YFU Cluster, independently, or join another group.
- Visit the websites for ideas and opportunities to join initiatives in your area.

4. Quarterly Enhancement Activities:

YES students participate in enhancement activities organized by volunteers, field directors, and/or host families in their cluster area. The activities promote leadership skills development, citizenship and civic education, and learning about democracy, the free market economy, and diversity. Enhancement activities also provide opportunities to teach and give back to host communities and schools. Examples include:

- Volunteering at a food bank
- Discussions with local businesses about their role in the local economy
- Observing legislative sessions and school board meetings
- Observing the election process (exchange students may not support a candidate's campaign)
- Visits to local cultural and historic sites to learn about the community's development/issues

5. Better Understanding for a Better World (April in Baltimore, MD)

- YFU offers a scholarship by competitive application process for up to 30% of YFU YES scholars to participate in the Better Understanding for a Better World conference in Baltimore, MD.
- YFU host families and volunteers may apply to chaperone.

6. Other Activities:

Students will receive information about national leadership workshop opportunities that are open to all YES students. Students are encouraged to participate in other local academic contests and other local opportunities. Be sure to inform YFU about participation in special opportunities so YFU can recognize your student's accomplishments!

As well, YFU YES students provide feedback about their experience via brief, online monthly surveys sent by YFU USA.

May YES scholars travel outside the host community?

Individual student travel is not permitted. **With prior approval from YFU USA**, YES scholars may travel:

- with their host family or on organized group trips, or
- with local YFU groups, according to the YFU Permission to Travel procedures.

For any travel outside the US, YES scholars must submit their DS2019, along with Permission to Travel form, to YFU to obtain Department

of State signature validation. This process requires a 4 week lead time.

After January 1, YFU USA may permit an individual travel exception for students in good standing who complete the YFU Permission to Travel and comply with the following:

- Obtain host family and YFU USA approval;
- Prove that an adult is meeting them at their final destination; and
- Provide pertinent travel information prior to departure (dates of travel, address, contact person, plans) to YFU USA and host family.

What is the medical insurance for YES scholars?

All YFU YES scholars are covered by ASPE, the Department of State-sponsored insurance program for the 2017-18 program year. This policy is managed by Seven Corners and is in effect from the date of arrival through the student's return home. YFU mails ID cards, claim forms, and a program summary to students and host families upon the student's arrival. All information, including the handbook, is also available at <http://usdos.sevencorners.com/>. This plan covers most vaccinations.

Who are the support resources for my YES student?

All host families and Area Representatives supporting YFU YES scholars receive YES orientation content to help them support their students. Additionally, YFU YES scholars and their host families have several sources of support:

- YFU Area Representative
- YFU Field Director and FLEX/YES Community Leader (for scholars placed in a cluster)
- YFU Support Services Manager (SSM)

YFU USA hosts monthly conference calls for staff and volunteers supporting YES scholars to discuss program requirements and share questions and ideas across the YFU YES community.

What is the purpose of the bimonthly "VIP calls" to my student?

Staff members from American Councils conduct "VIP calls" starting in November or December. This is a call every other month to the student and to the host family to ask about your program experience with YFU and the YES program. Calls to host parents and to students may happen in separate calls, but within the same month. If the conversation prompts a follow-up, American Councils will refer it back to YFU for a response.

Is there a resource for cross-cultural questions relating to Islam?

Imam Arafat advises on Muslim practices in the US and is available to help students with cultural adjustment. If a student is having difficulty adapting or for other cross-cultural questions related to Islam, students and host families are invited to call YFU USA at 1.866.493.8872 and ask the Support Services Manager for contact information to reach the Imam.

YFU Quality Assurance staff will be in regular touch via emails with students, host families, Area Representatives, and Community Leaders to provide program information and updates. As well, the host family "My Resources" page in the host family account includes a link under Orientation Materials to all YFU YES materials for host families and scholars. Alternatively, access the resources via this direct link: <http://yfuusa.org/international-students/yes.php>