



YFU must have certain policies to be consistent, fair, and protective of all its participants. The following policies provide a framework for the Youth For Understanding (YFU) participant support system. This support system includes the host family and host community, the exchanging YFU Organizations and the natural family.

Alcohol

Policy: Students are required to observe all laws of their host country with regard to the minimum drinking age. Students are also expected to follow host family guidelines on the use of alcohol. YFU students should not use alcohol in a manner that is excessive, unsuitable or embarrassing to the host family or Youth For Understanding. A student will be considered for Early Return if he/she demonstrates an inability to control his/her use of alcohol.

Specific policy for YFU USA: The legal drinking age in the United States is 21. Therefore, no YFU student can legally drink while on program. Students who drink are breaking the law and will be considered for Early Return. Alcohol related medical treatment may not be covered by student medical insurance.

Confidentiality

Policy: Due to the realities of a program such as YFU, confidential information must often be shared to resolve difficulties or facilitate understanding. All YFU staff and volunteers, including professional counselors, should refrain from promises of confidentiality, advising participants of the limitations of confidentiality within our organization. However, all YFU participants have the right to expect that YFU will share confidential information conservatively.

Counseling Sessions: Information shared with a YFU counselor or in a comparable situation is shared only on a need-to-know basis. Resulting reports are written to assist YFU staff in problem identification and problem solving. These reports are not to be given to non-staff or anyone outside of the organization (without the consent of the writer of the report). Counseling reports are sent to the partner National Office, but are not given to natural parents. **Caution:** laws in the sending or in the

receiving country may require YFU to release such reports.

Student/Host Family's Personal Belongings: The student's right to privacy must be respected. YFU considers it unethical to examine and/or confiscate a student's personal belongings (e. g. mail, diary, etc.). No representative of YFU has the legal right to withhold from the student any legal personal possession such as a passport, visa form, or driver's license. However, in some situations, YFU does have the right to demand, as a condition for remaining on program, that a student agree to destroy or mail the item home.

Student/Host Family Address, Telephone Number, Status on Program: YFU prohibits any release of such information to non-YFU persons regarding a student or host family without the latter's permission (or that of the natural parent in the case of a student).

Specific policies for YFU USA: The student must respect the same rules regarding host family belongings.

YFU USA works on a need-to-know basis. Information is shared appropriately with others who need to know such information in order to help participants. This means that information that is shared by the student or the host family with the YFU volunteer may be communicated to YFU USA staff if it is directly related to the student's exchange experience.

Contact from Natural Family, Home Country Friends

Policy: Natural families and home country friends are strongly discouraged from visiting the exchange student during the program year, especially during the initial adjustment period. The interruption breaks the continuity of the relationship with the host family and may lessen the exchange

experience for the student and the host family. This break sometimes leads to adjustment difficulties so serious that YFU may consider Early Return of the student to his/her home country. Natural families who consider such visits must contact their YFU National or District Office before any arrangements are made. Host families must not be expected to accommodate visiting family members or friends with regard to room, meals or transportation.

Specific policy for YFU USA: It is very important that students maintain limited contact with natural families during their stay in the USA. Their families will understand much better what the experience as an exchange student means if they are informed of student activities at appropriate intervals. The host family is also encouraged to write to the natural family. In this way, the experience includes all family members. Encourage your student to send an e-mail, letter or postcard home to let the natural family know that the student has arrived safely. However, students should not spend so much time writing, sending e-mail, or telephoning home that they don't have enough time to do anything else. Too much contact may increase feelings of homesickness and make the adjustment to the host country much more difficult. Thus, contact with the home country should be limited to not more than one e-mail or phone call per week. If YFU believes that a student is contacting his or her natural parents too often, both the student and the parents may be asked to limit such contact. If excessive contact continues, this can be grounds for Early Return.

Counseling

Specific policy for YFU USA: YFU USA offers counseling services to students and host families, if needed. These services include help from Area Representatives and/or District Office staff, and consultation,

evaluation, and counseling by professional counselors arranged for by the YFU Support Services Manager(SSM). YFU USA does not provide on-going, therapeutic counseling. Recommendations from a counselor for such on-going treatment for the student will be grounds for an Early Return recommendation.

Host families and students should always try to talk first with each other if there is a problem or misunderstanding.

If this does not resolve the situation, contact your Area Representative. If you are unable to reach a YFU volunteer, you should call the District Office at 1.866.4YFU. USA.

Dangerous Activities

Policy: Youth For Understanding may withhold authorization for any activity if it is considered hazardous or unacceptable for the student to participate. **The following activities are strictly prohibited: hang- gliding, parachute jumping, piloting a private plane, bungee jumping, parasailing, driving a car or motorcycle.**

National or District Directors may permit or prohibit some activities judged to involve an element of danger or a range of danger. Written permission will be required from both natural parents and host parents to authorize the student to participate. This permission must satisfy the YFU National Organization in the hosting country and must release Youth For Understanding and the host family from all responsibility during the time the student is involved in that activity. Further, it will be the responsibility of the student and natural parents alone to obtain additional insurance if necessary.

Specific Policy for YFU USA: YFU USA has very specific guidelines regarding activities that are not permitted for exchange students and are not covered by the insurance students receive. There is an explanation of Dangerous Activities and a Dangerous Activities Permission Form included in the host family packet and available in the Host Family Lounge on my.yfu.org.

The YFU USA Dangerous Activities Permission Form (with all required

signatures) must be on file at the District Office before any such activity begins. If the student is unable to get the form to his or her natural parents for their signatures, the natural parents can write a letter which states that they “release Youth For Understanding USA and the host family from all responsibility during the time our son/daughter is engaged in that activity.” Permission to engage in a dangerous activity does not imply that the approved activity is covered by the insurance policy of the student. Host parents and students are responsible for reviewing the student insurance policy before engaging in any approved dangerous activities.

Students are not permitted to drive all-terrain vehicles (ATV’s), automobiles, snowmobiles, trucks or motorized trail bikes, even on private property. Additionally, permission will not be granted under any circumstances for students to operate the following vehicles: go-carts, personal watercrafts, mopeds or motorcycles. Students are permitted to ride as passengers on the above vehicles provided they follow all the local laws and practice reasonable safety precautions. Lastly, permission will not be granted for students to participate in the following activities: bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachute jumping, parasailing, or piloting a private plane.

Students are expected to take adequate safety precautions and must follow all local laws when participating in any kind of physical activity (i.e., helmets may be required when riding a standard bicycle; life jackets are required when boating or white- water rafting, etc.)

If a student engages in a dangerous activity after permission is denied, that student will be considered for Early Return. If a student engages in a dangerous activity without ever having requested permission, the severity of the infraction and the amount of danger involved will determine the consequences.

Driving

Policy: Exchange students are not permitted to drive cars or motorcycles. This policy applies even if the student has an International Driver’s License or the host family thinks that the student is a

responsible and careful driver. Violators of this policy will be considered for Early Return.

Permission to use farm equipment, trail bikes and mopeds is different in each country, and the decision is left to the hosting National Office. If the hosting National Office allows the student to use one of the above vehicles, the student is expected to take safety precautions and obey the laws.

Specific policy for YFU USA: YFU USA does not allow students to take driver’s education classes or obtain a driver’s license. Students who drive or engage in driver’s education classes will be considered for Early Return.

Drugs

Policy: Youth For Understanding students may not buy, sell, possess, or use drugs that are illegal in their home or host country. Violators of this policy will be considered for Early Return. A verified violation normally includes physical evidence, student admission of usage or reliable witnesses who have seen the student with or using drugs.

Specific policy for YFU USA: In cases of suspected drug use or abuse by a student, YFU USA reserves the right to request a drug test at the student’s own expense.

Early Return Definitions

Voluntary Early Return: When a student wants to return home early, and the natural parents agree with this decision.

Involuntary Early Return: When the host YFU country decides, based on stated guidelines, including consultation, that a student should be removed from the YFU program and returned home to his/her home country.

Specific policy for YFU USA: Early Return usually happens because the student cannot adjust to the USA, does not meet basic program selection requirements, has personal problems, breaks a major YFU policy, violates US law, or has problems at home with the natural family. All Early Returns must be approved by Youth For Understanding.

Employment

Policy: Laws regarding exchange students' employment are different in each country. Many countries limit employment as a condition for giving visas to visitors. Participants in the YFU program are not permitted to work full-time during their stay. Students should refer to the laws in their host country regarding other kinds of employment (e. g., part-time, casual).

Specific policy for YFU USA: Students hosted in the United States are not allowed to engage in full-time employment during their stay. Students are, however, allowed to work for up to 10 hours per week in accordance with the regulations of their visa, which permits them to study and live in the US. This work must consist of informal jobs, such as babysitting, grass cutting, snow shoveling, yard clean-up, etc., and must not interfere with school and host family activities. Students cannot work in any job that requires a social security number (such as working in a restaurant, retail store, etc.)

Host families should not expect their student to take on more chores and responsibilities than any other family member.

Extension of Stay

Policy: YFU will not grant extension of stay, unless there is demonstrated evidence of medical or special emergency requiring such an extension. YFU responsibility ends with the return flight to which the student has been assigned. If a student extends his/her stay, he/she will be considered Off Program.

Income Tax

Specific policy for YFU USA: Some of the expenses incurred for maintaining an exchange student in the host family's household are deductible as charitable contributions. This includes amounts paid for books, food, clothing, transportation, medical and dental care, and recreation. Expenditures must be substantiated by receipts, invoices, or cancelled checks. The present maximum deduction per month is \$50.00*. Specific instructions and information will be mailed to the host family from YFU District Offices soon after the selection of a student. **At the time of publication, the US Congress is considering*

legislation that would increase this amount to \$200 a month.

Legal Status

Specific policy for YFU USA: While an exchange student in the US, he/she is subject to all US national and local laws. If a student needs legal assistance in the US, YFU can assist in retaining a lawyer. The student and natural parents are responsible for all costs related to legal representation. Home country embassies or consulates cannot arrange free legal advice, provide bail, or get a student released from jail.

Marriage

Policy: Married students are not permitted on the Youth For Understanding program. Students who are discovered to be married or to have married on program will be immediately dismissed from the program.

Medical Treatment of a Student (including emergencies)

Policy: All YFU students must have insurance coverage for illness, medical emergencies, and hospitalization which is acceptable to the hosting YFU organization. Youth For Understanding, its representatives and its host families are not responsible for any student medical bills regardless of who signs a hospital admission form. Students must have funds available for medical expenses until reimbursement is processed, and are responsible for following-up on all medical bills. YFU, its representatives and its host families are not responsible for any negative results of emergency and/or other medical treatment.

Natural Disasters

Specific policy for YFU USA: In the event of any natural disaster emergency, the host family should assist their host son or daughter in calling his or her natural parents as soon as possible to relieve concerns about safety or notify the parents of any arrangements that are being made to provide emergency service to the host family. YFU also asks that the host family contact their Area Representative, Field Director, or the District Office (1-866- 4YFU-USA) as soon as possible to report their status.

Off Program

Policy: If a student is absent without permission from the host family or other place to which YFU has assigned him or her, YFU may determine that this student has removed him or herself from the YFU program. In this case, YFU is released from all obligations, legal or otherwise, to the student and his or her parents or guardians for his or her current or further well-being. In most countries, the validity of the student's visa is linked to being on program. Therefore the visa is no longer valid if the student chooses to go Off Program.

YFU will, if possible, work with the student to again accept YFU supervision. However, if this cannot be done, the separation from the YFU program is final. The student will then lose YFU support and his/her ticket to the home country where applicable.

Specific policy for YFU USA: In the US, if a student goes Off Program, the student's US high school will be notified that he or she is no longer a YFU student, and the US Department of State will be notified of the termination of the student's YFU program participation.

Passport and Visa

Specific policy for YFU USA: Students will have their passports and visas with them when they arrive at their host families' homes. Talk to the student about making a record of his or her passport number and putting it in a safe place separate from their passport. For identification purposes, students should carry their YFU ID card with them at all times. They only need to carry their passports when traveling. If a student loses his or her passport while in the US, the student should call the home country's consulate or embassy in the US. In such a case, the student might have to travel to the nearest consulate for an in-person application process. All related expenses are the student's responsibility.

If a student loses the DS-2019 or I-94 form, he or she should contact the District Office. The student will be financially responsible for securing replacements. A sample copy of the DS-2019 form can be found in the Host Family Handbook. This is not for use, but simply to serve as a visual example of the form.

The student must keep the following documents and forms together at all times: his or her passport, the DS-2019 form, the I-797 receipt or SEVIS I-901 fee confirmation, and the I-94, also known as the Arrival-Departure Record. Each of these forms is useless without the others. The student may not travel outside the USA without securing Travel Permission from the YFU USA National Office. Should the student temporarily leave the US at any time during the stay, these forms must be taken with him or her. The DS-2019 form acts as a re-entry permit during the period of the program indicated.

Political Expression

Specific policy for YFU USA:

Views. The political views students express are their own. Students are in no way official representatives of their countries' governments. Students should tell this to people they meet who may think the students represent their countries officially.

Representation - On the other hand, for many Americans, a student may be the first or the only person from his or her home country they have met. This means that a student's behavior will give people their first impressions of what the student's compatriots are like. YFU hopes that all exchange students are friendly and active, and that they will share some of their culture with their host communities.

Involvement. Since YFU is a non-political organization, students should not become involved in the political activities of the United States, no matter how strongly they feel about an issue or a candidate. A student's involvement may be misunderstood, resented, or disliked.

Pregnancy

Policy: For medical reasons, placement and personal consideration, female students found to be pregnant while on the Youth For Understanding program will normally be returned home immediately after notification of the natural parents. Individual circumstances may justify exceptions to this policy; however, all students will be considered for Early Return.

Male YFU students who cause pregnancies while on program will be subject to the same policy as females.

Specific policy for YFU USA: YFU encourages any pregnant student to inform her natural parents directly of the pregnancy.

Religion

Specific policy for YFU USA: Exchange students and their host families frequently have very different ideas about religion. YFU encourages students to join their host families in all their activities, including religious services, unless the students' beliefs make it impossible. It is the student's choice, however, to attend or not to attend services.

YFU hopes that even if a student's religious beliefs make it impossible to attend services with the host family, the student will take advantage of the many other social activities offered by most US churches, synagogues, and temples. Students may find much better opportunities for friendships and social activities than expected. A student may wish to ask the host family to help find a church of the student's denomination if it is different from that of the host family and the student wishes to attend those services.

Replacement

Specific policy for YFU USA: In the process of becoming acquainted, both host families and students may find they need to modify expectations and behavior. YFU Area Representatives can assist the student and host family in working towards a resolution of any difficulties.

Sometimes, students must change host families. This usually happens because of very strong personality differences. Students are not allowed to change families just because they are having trouble adjusting to the USA, want to move to a different size community or state, or come from a different socio-economic level. Nor are host family changes permitted because the host school does not offer enough classes, does not grant a diploma or the school or community has an ethnically diverse population. Replacements will not be permitted based

on the host family being of a different ethnic group than the student expected.

In the majority of replacements, students will remain in the same area and school. Students will not be moved to a different state.

The decision to change families is made by YFU only after there has been discussion among the Area Representative, student, and host family. YFU strongly believes that it is important to discuss with all participants any problems that may or may not lead to a replacement.

There are times when the procedures may not be followed due to circumstances unique to the student and host family. However, if a student moves him or herself without the assistance of a YFU representative or without our knowledge, it will put the student out of visa status and Off-Program.

School

Policies: Attendance - All Youth For Understanding students on the year or semester program are expected to regularly attend a secondary school, and each host country is encouraged to see that a normal course of schoolwork is maintained. Repeated absence will result in consideration for Early Return.

Performance - Allowing for an initial period of linguistic and/or academic adjustment, a student is expected to achieve an adequate school academic record. Within a reasonable period of time, poor motivation, underachievement (e. g. failing grades) or inappropriate behavior, in combination with poor adjustment in general, will be cause for Early Return consideration.

Formal Expulsion - If a student is expelled from school, the student will be considered for Early Return.

Specific policy for YFU USA: Before the student arrives, school enrollment procedures should be discussed with the YFU Area Representative. Some schools require pre-registration while others require a personal interview between the student and school guidance counselor before enrollment.

The student will be enrolled in the local high school where arrangements have been made by a YFU representative. Students may attend parochial or private schools if tuition is waived or prior arrangements are made with the natural parents. Schools vary in granting free tuition, books, activities, and lunch programs.

Each student will be placed in an appropriate grade level based on his or her previous course work, English language ability, age and school policies. It is expected that YFU students maintain an overall "C" average or better in academic classes. **No student hosted in the US should expect, nor can YFU personnel guarantee, the award of a US high school diploma.** This is the decision of the individual school, and YFU will support a school's policy in this matter.

Some schools provide, at their discretion, an honorary diploma or Certificate of Attendance. YFU will not make decisions for replacement on the basis of a student's desire to receive a diploma nor will YFU move a student specifically for this reason. Students are responsible for the work and expense of obtaining documents needed for home country school credit requirements. School fees are also the responsibility of the student.

Students asked by the school principal to leave a school based on poor grades or poor behavior will be dismissed from the YFU program. Most US schools will not provide a formal expulsion notice for legal reasons.

Smoking

Specific policy for YFU USA: Sometimes students do not say on their applications that they smoke because they fear it may be difficult to find a host family that will allow smoking. Or, they begin smoking after applying for the YFU program. Students who do smoke are encouraged to discuss this issue and guidelines with host families before smoking in the homes. In the US, it is illegal for minors to purchase, possess and/or use cigarettes or smoking materials. If a student's smoking becomes a problem in the host family or school, it could result in a warning and probation, and a request from YFU USA to quit smoking.

Student Expenses

Policy: Students are responsible for such expenses as school laboratory fees*, transportation, and books; trips or expenses during trips; telephone calls or other personal expenses. They are also responsible for any property damage they cause. Students are not responsible for meals and lodging.

* In a few countries, some school expenses are included in the program fee.

Specific policy for YFU USA: Host families are expected to provide the student with three meals a day. This will include either a bag lunch or lunch money so that the student can purchase lunch at school. Whether a lunch or lunch money is provided is up to the host family. Students may elect to buy their own lunch.

Students and host families should not borrow from or lend money to one another. If money is lent in an emergency, students and/or host families should get a written, dated, and signed receipt in order to make sure that there are no misunderstandings about repayment. YFU is not responsible for students' or host families' debts or loans.

Some students will want to open a bank account while in the US. By using a W-8 BEN form (obtainable at a bank, online at www.irs.gov or from the YFU District Office) a student can open an individual account as a non-US citizen/resident in most areas without providing a social security number. The W-8 BEN form exempts foreign individuals from bank interest withholding rules. Students should not open a joint account with any host family member if the local bank accepts a W-8 BEN form. Should there be any question, the student or host family should contact the Area Representative.

Student Travel

Policy: YFU has a responsibility to:

- Assure student safety to the greatest extent possible
- Have knowledge of a student's location
- Ensure that students participate in host family activities and school programs.

Any travel which might have an impact on any of these factors requires a special

authorization form. Each National Office will have specific travel approval procedures, and has the final say in approving travel.

Unauthorized travel may be cause for Early Return.

Specific policy for YFU USA: Students hosted in the US are not permitted to participate in trips sponsored by another exchange program, travel agent, community member, etc. The only trips that are permitted are YFU sponsored trips, trips with host parents or an authorized adult, school trips (which the school has officially approved), and/or trips sponsored by a religious or youth organization (if there is adult supervision). School attendance should not be interrupted for travel unless prior permission is given by the school.

All travel where the student will be without the host family, will be gone for more than 2 days, will miss school, or will leave the US requires YFU USA approval prior to finalizing plans. Failure to obtain approval from YFU USA may result in forfeiting any monies paid if permission to travel is denied. Your District Director has the final authority to grant or deny permission for travel. Unauthorized travel may result in a YFU determination that the student has taken him or herself Off Program. The YFU USA travel policy and permission to travel form are located in the appendices.

A copy of the Permission to Travel Form can be found in the Host Family Handbook and also in the Host Family Lounge on my.yfu.org.

Phone and Computer Use

Specific policy for YFU USA: Students must follow host family stated rules when using the host family's telephone and/or computer. Phone calls should not be long, and the student should not use the phone or computer excessively.

Excessive telephone, e-mail or internet use, the visiting of inappropriate internet sites or the creation of such sites that appear to pose danger to the student or host family will result in warning or probation and if the behavior is not corrected, consideration of Early Return. Refer to the *Cell Phone Guidelines for*

Students and Host Families and Computer Use and Internet Safety Guidelines for Students and Host Families for more detailed guidelines.

Long-Distance and International Calls: Students should make arrangements with their host families before making long- distance and international calls. The family should know whom the student is calling and how the call will be paid for. If a student is using a phone card, he or she needs to be sure that there is enough value on the card to cover the cost of the call. If the student has the host family's permission to charge the call to their telephone bill, the student should find out how much the call will cost and watch the clock when calling. The student must pay the host family back immediately.

Budgeting and paying for calls: YFU USA recommends the use of a pre-paid phone calling card for any long-distance or international calls. Such cards are available for purchase at most convenience stores, drug stores and supermarkets. Another lower cost option is Voice over Internet Protocol services such as Skype™. If phone calls are charged to the host family's bill, the student is expected to pay all of the telephone bills on time and before leaving the US. Neither the host family nor YFU will pay bills for a student. If a student would like to use a cell phone, he or she should purchase a prepaid phone with a prepaid plan. Under no circumstances should a host family enter into a cell phone contract with or on behalf of a student.

Violations of the Law

Policy: The nature and seriousness of the offense will determine procedure and possible outcome. Criminal prosecution for theft/shoplifting may be cause for an Early Return.

Specific policy for YFU USA: When an arrest is made or a court appearance is scheduled, YFU USA recommends the student retain a lawyer. The student and the natural parents are responsible for all costs related to legal representation.

YFU reserves the right to make a decision regarding the student's program status regardless of any legal decision.

If a student is convicted of an offense requiring him or her to stay in the US, or the court date is after the regularly scheduled departure, the student will be considered Off Program as of flight time. The student and natural parents will be responsible for any and all necessary arrangements.

YFU Identification Card

Specific policy for YFU USA: Students will have a YFU identification card that they should carry at all times. Students may need the card to receive student discounts for entry to museums, movie theatres, or other places. The card also has important YFU phone numbers and addresses for use in emergencies.

Special Note: All letters will be sent to the host family's permanent address as listed with YFU. If the host family will be at an address other than the permanent one, they should notify their Area Representative or YFU District Office so that all information can be sent to the appropriate address. Federal regulations require YFU to keep the government informed of the current residence address of students.