Mission Statement
Youth For Understanding (YFU) advances intercultural understanding, mutual respect, and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families, and communities.

Acknowledgments
The present edition of this handbook is based on work previously done by Judith Blohm. We greatly appreciate the revisions and additions contributed by YFU staff and volunteers. Many thanks to all the professional and amateur photographers who have provided pictures for publication in this and previous editions. Numerous YFU staff, alumni, and volunteers contributed their time, energy, and expertise to making this handbook possible.

Important Contact Information
YFU USA Travel Emergencies: 1.800.705.9510
Travel Twitter: @yfu_travel
YFU After Hours Emergency Support: 1.800.424.3691
U.S. Department of State Student Helpline: 1.866.283.9090

When you meet your Area Representative in the US, please take a moment to write down his/her contact information below:

Area Representative’s Name: __________________________________________________________

Telephone Number: ________________________________________________________________

Email Address: ________________________________________________________________

YFU USA, consistent with its commitment to international understanding, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin in employment or in making its selections and placements.
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Using This Handbook

This handbook is a guide to your YFU exchange year – read it carefully! We hope that it will be a helpful resource for you as you prepare for your US cultural and academic exchange experience, so you can feel more relaxed. Additionally, this handbook provides information about YFU policies and procedures in the United States. If you have read the materials from your YFU National Office, or attended an orientation meeting, then you may already know some of this information. This handbook should answer questions you may have and direct you to the right sources of information for the questions it does not answer. Make sure to bring this book with you to the US – you will need it.

Safe travels and we look forward to meeting you in the US!

If the English in the book is difficult to understand, ask a YFU volunteer or your host family to help you. They will be happy to explain the parts that you do not understand.
Dear YFU Student,

Congratulations on your decision to spend time abroad in the United States as a YFU exchange student. Starting today, you are embarking upon a unique, life-changing experience that has the potential to not only expand your view of the world, but also inspire the course of your life for years to come.

I remember my exchange experience vividly. As a young person, I set off for Germany to learn the language, experience its rich customs, and absorb the culture as best I could in my short time there. Today, innovation and technology have shrunk the world, and "global" is the adjective of the 21st century. We are more interdependent; we speak of one economy, one climate, and are aware that all humankind’s actions are connected. We also have come to accept that the challenges we face are bigger than any individual country can solve alone.

But: we can be part of the solutions, and at YFU, we truly believe that peace and understanding begin with you. You are a leader among peers, a cultural ambassador specially selected to spend time learning about another culture, while bringing your culture to new family, friends, and communities.

While here, I invite you to:

- Live with curiosity and an eagerness to learn;
- Strive to keep an open mind in the face of differences and newness;
- Remember your resilience in times of challenge; and
- Enjoy the experience to its fullest—because it will fly by!

If you keep these things in mind, you are sure to return with the same affinity and fulfillment as I feel these many years later.

On behalf of host families, volunteers, and staff of Youth For Understanding USA, welcome to the United States. We’re so glad you’re here.

Sincerely,

Scott J. Messing
President & Chief Executive Officer
I. Welcome to YFU

In this chapter, we welcome you to the YFU family, while introducing you to YFU’s history and mission. You will also learn about some of the goals and responsibilities of being an exchange student.

INTRODUCTION TO YFU

Welcome to Youth For Understanding USA (YFU USA)! We are so excited for you as you begin your experience as an exchange student. You are joining an international family that has facilitated exchange for more than 260,000 students all over the globe! This handbook will provide you with YFU policies, guidelines, and recommendations so you can have a successful, enriching experience in the United States.

OUR FOUNDER, DR. RACHEL ANDRESEN

YFU’s mission stems from the work of Dr. Rachel Andresen, who along with a group of volunteers in Michigan, became responsible for the first placement of German students in 1951. The following year, this council of volunteers became the official agency for the exchange program, which they named Youth For Understanding. Dr. Andresen went on to earn a Nobel Peace Prize nomination in 1973 for her work in the field of international youth exchange.

YFU HISTORY

YFU’s history dates back to 1951, when 75 teenagers from Germany and Austria were welcomed to the United States in an effort to heal the wounds of World War II. The hardships prevalent in Germany during this time had devastating effects on the country’s people. The hope was that by showing young people a functioning democracy, they would be motivated to go back to Germany and help rebuild their country.

Building on the inspiring intercultural learning experiences of the German youth, YFU grew to include Scandinavia, and later expanded to western and central Europe in the mid-1950s. In 1955, YFU implemented programs to allow American students to study abroad, and in 1958, YFU bridged the Pacific and began programs in Japan. The Pacific program now also includes South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, Thailand, Vietnam, and China. YFU was introduced to Latin America in 1958, beginning with Mexico; South American countries opened their doors to YFU in 1959.

YFU MISSION & VISION

Youth For Understanding advances intercultural understanding, mutual respect and social responsibility through educational exchanges for youth, families and communities. YFU envisions a peaceful world with responsible and active global citizens.

The organization’s mission and values resonate through all YFU programs, and through our dedicated host families, volunteers, and staff. As a YFU exchange student you are encouraged to live out this mission.

RESPONSIBILITY, COMMITMENT & TWO-WAY LEARNING

The opportunity to live in another country with a host family comes with important goals and responsibilities. Your
life as an exchange student will be both interesting and educational—often very fun and sometimes challenging. You will:

- be dependent on your American host family for the year (or semester);
- act and live independently from your natural family;
- learn about a new community in the US and become a member of that community;
- be immersed in an English speaking environment;
- live in and learn about another culture.

The YFU exchange is a two-way learning experience. You will learn about the US while your host family learns about your country. Students report that exchange helped them grow, mature and develop a greater awareness and understanding of the world. By challenging yourself through exchange, you will learn resiliency as you adjust and get along in a foreign country with a family very different from your own. You will also develop greater independence as you are taking care of yourself, meeting new friends, and developing new ways to express yourself. And you will have a rich understanding of diversity and acceptance as you learn about other kinds of people and other ways of living.

In addition, you will become an ambassador for your home country by sharing yourself and your country with people who may never have known someone of your nationality. Make a commitment to yourself to represent your country in a respectful way. Be ready to answer questions about your country’s traditions, customs, food, and even politics.

Before you leave home, read newspapers and learn what others may be hearing about your country. You may wish to bring a recent edition of your newspaper or a weekly news magazine to share with your host family and friends. Bring photos, books, maps, and other items along to share your country with your family, school, and community. By teaching others about your part of the world, you are facilitating exchange for others and fulfilling the YFU mission as an active global citizen.

It will be helpful to come to the US with a basic understanding of the size and geography of the US. If possible learn more about the state where you will be living and some of the unique attributes of that location and culture. The US is large and regional culture varies. Find out about local highlights such as: national parks, sports teams, universities, food, traditions, and landmarks. This will also give you something to talk about with your family when you first arrive. It is also good to know what your own newspaper and media are saying about the US. Americans will ask you what the people in your country know and think of the US.

While you are in the US, you will have many opportunities to learn about this country. Not only will you learn from your family and friends, but you will also see documentaries, watch television and read the news. You will be a student of American culture at the same time you are a teacher of your own culture. You were chosen as an exchange student because YFU has confidence that you can both teach and learn.

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REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

The biggest challenge many exchange students face is coping with the difference between what they expected and what living in the US is really like. Often YFU hears students say, “it’s not what I expected,” “I want to live in a big city,” “I want to travel and see the US,” “I want to change families,” or “I thought I’d make American friends immediately.” These students did not understand the YFU program, or they did not have realistic expectations.

Sometimes, host families also need to change what they expect. YFU often hears these comments from host families: “Our student is not like what we read in the student’s introduction,” “We thought she would be our child’s best friend,” “We expected our student to speak perfect English,” or “We were sure the student would fit into our family right away.”

The hardest time for both students and families is the first few months together. Why? Because both students and host families “expected” something different from what actually happened. After some time together, both families and students start to understand each other and what living together and sharing ideas will be like. Then the family living experience begins to become more comfortable for everyone. So be patient, initiate conversations with your host family, and be positive. Be realistic about your expectations of the US, your host family, and the exchange experience.

Remember, as a student you are responsible for:

- making new friends and participating in new activities;
- changing your habits if necessary to live successfully with your host family;
- following the customs of the US and your host family;
- adjusting your lifestyle based partly on your host family’s economic level and the region and town of the US in which you are placed;
- following the laws of the US, the policies and procedures of YFU, the rules of your host family, and the rules of your high school;
- studying and working hard for good grades; and
- learning a lot, having fun, and experiencing changes in yourself through your exchange experience.

The letter from Paola, an exchange student, on the following page expresses these ideas well and explains what not to expect during your exchange.

**PAOLA’S LETTER**

Dear New Exchange Student,

Before you begin to form opinions about what I’m going to say, I want to tell you that I’m not sorry that I was an exchange student. I think I made a good decision when I sent my application to Youth For Understanding.

What I regret about going to another country is not being prepared. Sure, I read all about the weather and the geography and the food. I had all the right clothes and things. But these things were not as important as the ideas I had in my head. I think it is very important to be thinking correctly about your experience in the US before you go. Maybe some of my ideas will help you.

1. **Be realistic.** The US may seem like a dream to you. It may be rich people, big cities, beaches, and nightclubs, just like in the movies. Don’t forget that you are going to another country to live with another family. It is not a dream world. You will have to make new friends and find out how to be a member of a family that does things differently from your family. You will not be a guest with nothing to do but sit back and relax. You will have to be an active family member. It’s not easy!

2. **Think about all the possibilities.** This is hard to do because you are so excited, but you should try. Most Americans don’t live in big cities. Chances are that you will live in a small rural town or in a suburban area. There may not be a lot of city things for you to do. But you will find out that there are other things—other types of social gatherings, recreation, and shopping. Your family will probably not be rich. Most American host families are middle class economically. They may not do much traveling or have expensive hobbies. But you will learn to enjoy what the family does. Try to be prepared to accept the style of living you find and learn all you can about that way of life!

3. **Don’t have a wild imagination about how it’s going to be.** Sure you have ideas from TV and other exchange students, but the US is a huge country with great regional differences. There are truly a million possible family situations you may be in. Try not to expect one special situation. If your mind is open, you will find it easier to adjust to your family when you get to the US. And remember, YFU is not a travel program. It is a family living program. You’ll be lucky to travel in your own region, but it is very unusual for YFU students to see much of this huge country. Don’t expect to travel.

   Also don’t expect that you can change families to try to get a “better” one. Students are placed in all different geographical areas, sizes of cities, and family sizes and types. You will have a chance to live in just one of many possibilities. In selecting your host family, YFU has placed you in a family that is appropriate for hosting you. Both you and your family will learn to get along with each other, but it’s up to you to fit into the family. They are not going to change their lifestyle for you.

4. **Be ready to be active.** You will need to do things with your family and in your community. Your host family will help you find ways to make friends, but you will have to do the work. You will enjoy your stay in the US much more if you join clubs at school or other organizations. It is an American custom to be active, so don’t sit and wait!

   These are some ideas that will help you expect what you will really find in the US. Don’t be discouraged! Go with an open mind and see!

I hope you have a wonderful stay, just like I did.

Sincerely,

Paola
II. YFU Support

In this chapter, you will learn about the YFU support network, which includes the Area Representatives, the Support Team, Field Directors, other YFU staff, and international partners. This team works together to ensure the well-being of each student and host family.

24-HOUR EMERGENCY SUPPORT LINE: 1.800.424.3691
YFU USA NATIONAL OFFICE: 1.800.TEENAGE

WHO WILL HELP YOU

It is normal that coming to the US and living in a new culture will have some challenges. If you need help while on exchange, simply ask for it. Many people are here to assist you.

SUPPORT FROM YFU VOLUNTEERS & STAFF

In addition to your host family, you have a whole team of people to support you! YFU USA relies on committed volunteers to act as YFU Representatives in local communities across the US. YFU volunteers are of all ages and backgrounds, and many are alumni, host families, and even YFU staff. Thus, they understand the joys and the challenges associated with exchange and living in a new culture.

Area Representatives. You and your host family will be assigned a volunteer Area Representative (Area Rep or AR) who will provide you with support during your exchange. Many Area Representatives have traveled as exchange students or lived and worked in a foreign country. They bring skills, knowledge, and experience to help you navigate questions and misunderstandings that can occur. You will receive Area Rep contact information prior to leaving your home country and this information is also listed on the YFU ID card that is mailed to you when you arrive in the US.

Area Reps contact the host family and student separately each month to check in on everyone’s adjustment. In addition, the AR can act as a neutral third party and assist in addressing a specific challenge that your or your host family may encounter. Your Area Rep is your YFU “go to person” for help with any concerns, such as cultural misunderstandings or adjustment challenges. YFU encourages students and families to communicate openly and try to work through any challenges however, never hesitate to contact your Area Rep.

YOUR HOST FAMILY

YFU you encourages you and your host family to support one another and solve problems together. You are a member of the family, and just like in your home country, the family is your main source of support. Trust your host parents, talk to them, and confide in them if you have problems. They cannot help you if they do not know that something is wrong. Your family is willing to make adjustments to help you feel more comfortable. But, you must also adjust and try to live as they do while you are in the US.

“We can’t imagine what we would have missed out on had we not taken this leap with YFU.”
- YFU Host Family from Michigan
to discuss solutions and gain an additional perspective. Your Area Rep and YFU want to help you find solutions; YFU does not look for fault or blame when challenges arise. In fact, points of conflict are often the times that both students and families realize the most personal growth as they learn to communicate and understand one another.

We also encourage you to call your Area Rep to share good news. Sharing good news as well as difficulties allow you to develop a deep relationship with your Area Rep, which in turn makes you feel more comfortable in reaching out to your Area Rep when problems arise. If you do not hear from your Area Representative for a while, please initiate contact with them. If you still don’t hear from them, call YFU to let them know you are not receiving regular contact, and to update them on how the exchange is progressing.

**Support Service Managers (SSMs) and the Support Services Department.** The YFU Support Services Department works with Area Representatives (volunteers), Field Directors (YFU staff), host families, and students to help resolve any questions or concerns that occur during the exchange year. In addition to the Area Rep, you will also be assigned a Support Services Manager (SSM) who is trained in counseling and managing international exchange student support issues. The SSMs also operate the YFU after-hours emergency support phone line, which you can use to report and receive help with any emergencies. The SSM’s goal is to work with students and families to resolve issues and ensure safety, security, and emotional well-being for both the student and the host family. As needed, SSMs issue letters of warning if a student does not follow YFU policies.

**YFU Field Director.** YFU Field Directors (FD) oversee activities and are the professional representatives for YFU in a specific geographic community. The FD will typically connect with you through your volunteer Area Representative. However, when there are specific challenges, the Area Rep often reaches out to the FD, in addition to the SSM. In some cases, an FD, SSM, and an Area Rep will all talk together with you to resolve a challenge.

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**DEPARTMENT OF STATE STUDENT RESOURCES AND YOUR EMBASSY OR CONSULATE**

US host families, YFU international exchange students, and the public may report circumstances impacting students’ health, safety, and well-being during their exchange program to the Department of State. If you are on the J-1 program, call 1.866.283.9090 or email jvisas@state.gov. Refer to Appendix III, IV, and V for more information about US State Department information.

Your home country’s embassy or consulate can assist you with passport replacement, contact with relatives or friends in an emergency, access to names of attorneys and physicians, and in some cases access to national health insurance from your home country. If you think you need help from your embassy, contact your Area Representative first. There are many things your embassy cannot do, including cashing a check, arranging for free medical or legal assistance, or making travel arrangements.
In this chapter will, you will learn about culture, personal culture, and the cultural adjustment cycle. You will also be provided with some tips for your exchange. Understanding these ideas will prepare you for cross-cultural learning and adapting to life in the US.

WE ARE ALL PRODUCTS OF OUR OWN CULTURE

Your understanding of yourself and your culture, together with your curiosity, and your willingness to accept what is different will help you on your exchange more than anything you can bring in your suitcase. Having a deep understanding of your country’s culture, as well as your own personal culture will help you better understand and appreciate the differences and the similarities with American culture.

YFU defines culture as the values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas that a group of people hold in common. Culture is not cathedrals in France, tulips in the Netherlands, Aztec ruins in Mexico, or temples in Japan. Rather, these are reflections of the values of the people. One way to understand culture is through the iceberg analogy developed by Edward T. Hall. Through this analogy, we see that the visible elements of culture - the 10% of the iceberg that is above water - can be observed and easily understood. These are things such as food, dress and behaviors like shaking hands, or how we eat. As with the iceberg, below the surface are aspects of culture that cannot be observed, such as beliefs, attitudes, and values. These are the things that drive people’s behaviors. Examples are a group's notion of fairness or modesty, approaches to problem solving or gender roles. Just like the iceberg, where 90% of its mass cannot be seen. You can only see these elements of culture as they are expressed in behavior.

Your personal culture. Personal culture includes ethnicity, race, family traditions, and language, as well as societal and community norms that often guide behavior. Yet, personal culture is so much more: individual thoughts, feelings, and perspectives make up personal culture. Talents, preferences, and dislikes are all part of one’s personal culture, too; even friends and family influence our personal culture.

It is important to understand the idea of personal culture in order to prevent one from making assumptions or allowing stereotypes to influence one’s judgments about an individual from another culture. YFU challenges you to think about your own personal culture. Recognize that, for example, your personal culture is different than your friends and neighbors, even though you are part of the same community, and perhaps you attend the same school. You share many commonalities, yet you are different. Apply this thinking to preparations for living with your host family. Be aware of stereotypes and get to know people without making judgements.

Acceptance. Recognize that there is much more to your host family than what you will first see. Getting to know the individuals within your household and understanding each person’s personal culture will result in a rich exchange experience for you and your host family. You will be living with people whose values may differ greatly from your own. When you live with people with different attitudes and beliefs, it is important to appreciate and accept the fact that
everyone has his or her own way of looking at the world. It is also important to be able to see differences without judging, saying one view is right, and one is wrong. Observe and enjoy the life around you; be curious when people’s behavior surprises you, and try to learn and think critically when an experience contrasts with your own values and attitudes.

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT & THE ADJUSTMENT CYCLE

Living in a new culture brings excitement; however there are also challenges as everything is new and unfamiliar. Even the simplest things require thought before you are sure how to do them. For example, perhaps in your culture you bow to greet people or embrace and kiss people on the cheek. In the US, you may shake hands, but mostly you will just say “hello.” There are hundreds and hundreds of little things, such as greeting people, how people show appreciation and respect, interactions between the young and the old which vary by culture. When you first live in a new culture, it is fun to see the differences and to learn new ways of doing things.

Adjusting to a new culture is exhilarating, frustrating, challenging, and rewarding. The Adjustment Cycle shows the process of adjusting to a new culture by looking at a person’s feelings and emotions (vertical axis) over time (horizontal axis). The adjustment process follows a fairly predictable cycle, yet people may encounter stages of the cycle for different amounts of time and at different times during the exchange. In fact, you may only experience some of these stages. Each stage of this cycle is normal and healthy and while each individual’s adjustment is unique, don’t be surprised as you find yourself in and out of these different stages. The five different stages are described below.

Stage 1: Isn’t that interesting? Shortly after your arrival, you will find many things exciting since they are new and different from what you are used to.

Stage 2: The thrill is gone. At this stage, routine begins to set in, you become accustomed to your environment; and everything is not so fascinating anymore.

Stage 3: Culture Shock; How can they live like that? At this stage, several weeks or months have gone by, and you may be experiencing homesickness. If a holiday that you are unfamiliar with is approaching, you may feel like an outsider.

Maybe you reject the American culture and believe that the way things are done in your country is better. As a result you isolate yourself from the host culture, look for friends who have the same nationality as you, and have the “I’m tired of trying” mentality. This is normal and okay, it means you are experiencing "culture shock" and culture fatigue. The next section will provide more information about culture shock and how to handle this normal, but difficult part of adjustment.

Stage 4: Let’s get on with it! You have decided that there are only a few months left and will make the best out of the time left. You develop a new understanding and become more accommodating. Your home culture’s values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas are no longer threatened by the new culture.

Stage 5: I feel at home. The final stage is achieved when you can completely function in the US as you would in your home country. This means you begin to act and react like an American would. You even learn to behave in the same way that you found distracting or disturbing in Stage 3. You may not reach the final stage, and this stage is not always a 100 percent positive stage, since some people have been known to try too hard to adapt, and uncomfortable situations occurred as a result.

CULTURE SHOCK

Exchange students and others who have lived abroad often talk about their experiences with culture shock. This is a difficult, but normal stage of adjustment. Culture shock can be described as being tired of having to analyze and understand all the new things you see and do. If you get very tired, your mind stops trying to understand all these new behaviors, and you may withdraw. Instead of trying to adjust to the new society, you may become quiet and prefer to focus on your home country, where you felt more comfortable. You may even feel confused or angry or wonder if you can get along in such a strange place. Some people experience a period of rejecting the new country and deciding that it is not as good as their own country. This reaction can make people very negative about living in the new culture. One common reaction is to feel that everyone is making life difficult for you. But this is false; the people around you want to help you adjust to the new culture. Things feel difficult, because living in a new culture can be difficult.

If you experience culture shock, do not think that you have failed and cannot make it through your exchange experience. Culture shock is common and a natural part of adjusting. Here is a list of some of the common indicators that one is experiencing culture shock:
A feeling of helplessness and a desire to depend on other people of your own nationality;

- Anger and frustration over minor things (such as not understanding the public transportation system and missing the bus);
- Not wanting to learn more of the language of the country;
- Excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured;
- Fear of going to new places and doing new things;
- Homesickness—wanting to be back home; and
- Physical symptoms such as too much or too little sleep, irregular bowel movements, stomachaches, headaches, frequent crying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE CULTURE SHOCK?

Talk with others about how you are feeling. Your host family and Area Representative know about culture shock and may be able to help you understand your feelings. Some students write in a journal; others even blog about the experiences. One way to handle culture shock is to better understand it and be prepared for it. Also, as you improve your English and begin to get around by yourself, you will feel more comfortable in your new home, school, and community. You are likely to be more interested in the people of your host country and will even be able to laugh at the little things that once bothered you. Here are some tips when you are in culture shock:

- Remember that most foreign visitors have these feelings. Do not worry that you are “the only one” who feels this way.
- Try to decide what particular things are bothering you, no matter how small or unimportant.
- Analyze the differences between your values and ideas and those with which you are living in the US. Which ones seem in conflict?
- Develop the attitude that you can learn to live with these differences. You do not have to worry that you will lose your own culture; it is a part of you. But you can try living in the new culture, and you can do it successfully.
- Plan small tasks each day that will help you meet people and accomplish something—like buying something in a different store, talking to someone new, accepting an invitation to go somewhere. And do each task!
- Relax, take a deep breath, and be glad you have the opportunity to live in a country different from your own. Learn to accept the new ideas and ways of life without forgetting your own.

Lastly, remember that most exchange students go through difficult periods. Adjustment is a step-by-step process. Try not to send your natural parents unhappy emails. You may find that what is bothering you one day may be gone by the next day or two. But your family will worry and feel they need to call you or call YFU to ask about you. Try not to overreact to small difficulties. They will usually pass quickly.

DEALING WITH ADVERSITY

Generally, Americans are an open, friendly, and accepting people. But as with any country, there are some people who may not understand you or your culture. A part of being prepared for your exchange experience involves preparation in dealing with adversity.

Some people may have misconceptions about you due to a lack of exposure to other cultures. You might even meet people who have never left their home state or local town. These misconceptions are based on limited (or no) experiences with other cultures or ways of life. In extreme cases, these individuals may harbor negative thoughts or feelings about people from other countries. While this could be discouraging if you encounter it, recognize that their behavior/sentiments toward you is a result of their lack of global experience. See this as an opportunity to share about yourself and teach them about your country and its people.

However, there are instances when some students encounter a bully. A bully is someone who is mean, abusing people through their words and actions. If you feel that you are being bullied, do not confront the bully on your own. Instead, talk to someone in the YFU support system. Members of the YFU support system include your host family and your Area Representative. You might even talk to a teacher if you are feeling bullied.

Of course not everybody who knows little about your home culture will be negative. Americans are generally enthusiastic about learning about cultures different from their own. Don’t be surprised if an American has lots of questions about your country. Be patient and remember to be an ambassador. Share what you love about your country, but also what you have learned about the US that you will take back to your country.
IV. Getting Settled in the US

In this chapter, you will learn about some simple tips for getting settled with your host family and into your community. This chapter also has important information about American culture and how you will need to adapt your behavior.

YOUR HOST FAMILY

The most important part of getting settled in the US is becoming a member of your host family. YFU host families are made up of caring people who want to share their lives with you. Each family is also unique. YFU values families of all compositions, religions, and ethnic backgrounds. Host families can be couples with young children, teenagers, adult children, or no children at all. Some families are single parents, same-sex couples, or a single person. YFU host families live in urban, suburban, or rural locations and represent varying economic levels. YFU is proud that host families represent the rich diversity of the United States, and YFU is thankful that international students have the opportunity to discover American culture by being a part of a host family. Host families have invited you to be a part of their family, not be “a guest.” That means you need to learn how they work and live together so that you can fit in. Be ready to adapt and change some behaviors so you can be part of the family. Here are some topics to think about and talk over with your host family.

Mom and Dad? Calling others by name acknowledges a connection and a relationship and helps make you part of the family. You may not know what to call your host parents. Ask them what they would like to be called, and let them know what is comfortable for you. Some students call their host parents “Mom” or “Dad.” Others use their host parents’ first names or even “Mom Jane” or “Dad John.”

Share yourself. Your host family has invited you to live with them because they want to get to know you and learn about your country. They want to share their home, community, and culture and help you understand the US. Spend time with each member of your family. If your host parents are home when you return from school, let them know about your day and ask about theirs. Talk to them about things you do not understand. At dinner time, join in the family conversation, so you can become better acquainted. Find out about your host parents’ work and what family members do for fun. Perhaps you may even enjoy some hobbies or outings together, like playing chess, doing yoga, or going to a football game.

Make a special effort to spend time with the children in the family. It is especially important to show interest in host brothers and sisters your own age and those who are younger than you are. It is easy for them to become jealous of the attention you receive. Try to teach them about your own customs while asking and learning from them about theirs. Respect their private times with their own friends. You will not necessarily be best friends with your host brothers and sisters, but you should be friendly with them.

Show appreciation. Showing appreciation is an important cultural value in the US. Very few things are more valued in your new home than thanking your host family for what they do for you. It is not customary in the US to give expensive gifts or big parties to thank someone. Small things that will make your family feel good include: a smile, saying “Thanks, Mom,” willingly helping with chores, writing a thank you note, or cooking a special dish. It may be done very differently in your own country, but adapting American ways
of showing thanks will be greatly appreciated by your host family.

**Household schedules.** Every family has developed a routine for how they live. Each family’s routine or schedule is different. It is important to watch and learn what your family does and at what times. Ask your family if there are set meal times and if everyone is expected to eat together. Learn the rules for when to bathe or shower, what to do with dirty clothes, when it is okay for you to be in your room by yourself, etc.

"Ask your host family right away what they expect you to do, because Americans won’t ask you but rather expect you to offer your aid. ‘May I help you?’ This concept of help has a tremendous importance in the American mentality."  
- YFU student from France

**Personal hygiene.** Customs of how one bathes (or showers), and how often, vary from culture to culture. Some people think that Americans are too concerned about cleanliness and body odor. But it is customary in the US to shower or bathe daily and change into clean underclothes. Americans generally consider body odor offensive. Both men and women use underarm deodorants, and women often shave their underarms and legs. Some people from other countries consider these daily rituals unnecessary or luxurious, especially daily showers. But many of these hygiene practices are important in America and your host family hopes that you will follow the same practices they follow. Please plan on developing these habits from the beginning of your stay in the US. Talk with your family if you have questions about hygiene practices and if something they do is uncomfortable for you.

**Personal space.** You may have your own bedroom or you may share one. Remember that even though you have some “personal space,” your room is still a part of your host family’s house. You will be expected to keep your room, including your closet, clean and neat.

**Privacy.** Everyone needs to be alone sometimes. You will need it and other family members will too. Try to find out the times your host family is expected to be together and when it is all right for you to be alone. This is important: if you spend too much time alone in your room, your family will worry that you are unhappy, you don’t like them, or you are sick. You will also miss opportunities to share time with your family. **Try to spend the “family times” with your family.** Family times may be dinner, immediately after dinner, on Sunday, etc. Spending time together can range from sharing a meal, just talking, playing games, and watching TV, to going out together.

**Household chores.** Very few families in the US have hired help for cleaning or cooking. This means that all members of the family usually share the duties and jobs around the house. From a young age, most children learn to take care of their own rooms and help with little jobs (“chores”) like emptying wastebaskets, washing dishes, or taking care of the family pet. Teenagers frequently have regular duties, such as cutting the grass, washing the car, vacuuming, or helping to wash and iron clothes. You will need to do your share when you live in a family that does all of their own housework.

It is a very good idea for you to talk to your family about
10 Passport to the USA
what chores you can start helping to do. Also, before you begin, ask how to do the chore—for example, how to use the vacuum cleaner or washing machine. Your host family may not think about explaining how to use certain cleaning equipment. It is better to ask before you try something than to learn later that it was wrong or to break a piece of equipment. Take special note of recycling and in some cases, composting. In the US, most households separate different items between trash and items that can be recycled, such as glass and plastic. And some households “compost” meaning they store degradable food scraps, such as fruit peels and vegetables (no meat), to supplement soil for family gardens. Ask your family to explain and show you recycling and composting practices as they do these in their home.

Curfew. A curfew is a set time by which all children must be home. Most American families have a curfew for their children. Some cities or suburbs have a community curfew for all people under the age of 18 years old. Exchange students and natural children should always respect the established curfew.

Obey the rules. Many exchange students who come to the US believe they will have great independence. In fact, all families have rules. You will probably be expected to follow the same rules as other teenagers in your family. If there are no teenagers in your home, your host family will set rules similar to families with teenagers. Regardless of what you are accustomed to with your natural family, you are expected to follow the rules of your host family. If you feel that your host family rules are unreasonable, it is okay to talk with your Area Representative about them.

Discipline. When a household rule has been broken, there is generally a consequence. Consequences range from limiting computer and TV time to prohibiting participation in a specific social event. Some families use physical punishments on their own children, such as spanking. This may be shocking to you, especially if it is uncommon in your home culture, but it is legal and the practice still exists within some families. With that said, it is NEVER OK for a host family member to use any type of physical punishment on an exchange student.

Look for the positive. You probably won’t like everything about your new family. That is normal, but we encourage you to be positive. Learn to ignore the things that bother you and concentrate on what you enjoy. If you have difficulties, talk to your host family and try to work them out. If you are uncomfortable bringing up a topic with your host family, ask your Area Representative to help you.

Stay healthy. Staying in good health will help you enjoy your exchange experience. Try to eat food that is good for you, and avoid foods with too much fat, sugar, or caffeine. The American diet is different from many countries; fast-food and processed (foods from a can, box, or frozen foods) typically have high fat and sugar. Sometimes exchange students become concerned about gaining weight. It is normal to gain a little weight while on exchange; don’t worry too much about this. Talk to your host family or your Area Representative if you are extremely worried about weight gain.

Exercise will help you stay healthy. Many Americans walk or jog in their neighborhoods for exercise. Others join school or community sports teams or do aerobic exercises and other physical activities with groups in the community. Sleeping regularly is important to good health. You may need more sleep than you did at home, because you get tired from concentrating on so many new things during the day. If you feel sick, tell your host family and they will help you decide whether or not to see a doctor. If you have regular medication that is prescribed, make sure you are taking it as directed by your doctor. Pay attention to the supply and talk with your family about plans to replenish the medication supply as needed.

Respect and Safety. Be aware of situations that make you uncomfortable. There will likely be times that people want you to try new food, or participate in a custom that is unfamiliar to you. These things may make you feel uncomfortable, but in a good way because you will feel safe and excited to challenge yourself. YFU wants you to be cautious in other situations that make you uncomfortable, such as situations where you feel disrespected, manipulated, or that your safety is at risk. In these cases, recognize that you are uncomfortable and do something about it. You have the right to reject unwanted and inappropriate attention, such as teasing or touching. If anyone treats or speaks to you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable or disrespected, tell that person to stop. You have the right to feel safe and no one should touch you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. If this happens, tell someone and get help. You can call the National Office: 1.800.TEENAGE, or after hours, you can call the 24-hour Emergency Support Line: 1.800.424.3691.
YOUR FRIENDS

Making Friends in the US. You may find that the concept of friendship in the US is different from your home country. Americans call lots of people their “friends” - acquaintances, neighbors, classmates, casual friends, and close, intimate friends are all thought of as “friends” in the US. Some exchange students are surprised by this, as they only refer to close, relationships as friendships. You may need to think about friendship in a new way, the American way, so that you are more open to connecting with peers and building relationships.

It is likely that your host family will take you places and help you meet people. They may introduce you to peers at school and in the neighborhood. People join community groups or clubs to make friends. You, too, will have to look for groups of people you relate to in order to find new friends. At school, you will see how America students make friends by joining after school clubs and activities, – sports clubs, hobby groups, drama, and singing groups, etc. They also make friends through youth groups in the community and at religious institutions.

Meet lots of people and make lots of friends. By meetings lots of different kinds of people, you will appreciate the diversity of the US. It might be easy to have just one friend, especially a girlfriend or boyfriend. This is not a good idea for you as an exchange student because it limits your opportunities to meet and get to know other people. You may be strongly tempted to spend a lot of time with other exchange students or other “foreigners.” YFU advises against this, and encourages you to meet and make American friends so you can learn more about the US. Staying in touch with your new American friends will most likely involve checking social networking sites like Facebook. It is a good idea to change the language setting on your social network site to English. This will allow your new friends to find and interact with you. Also, navigating your accounts in English gives some extra practice with your new English vocabulary.

Posting is Never Private. Keep in mind that all of your online comments are public (anyone can see them). Don’t assume that if your settings are private, your posts are hidden. If you post something negative about a friend, teacher, or member of your host family, it will cause conflict. Think about how you would feel if someone were to write negative statements about you for all to see. If you are not getting along with someone, talk with the person about it. Americans tend to be very direct, so you are encouraged to communicate openly and honestly when you face conflict. Also remember that your first points of support are your host family and YFU Area Representative.

YOUR SCHOOL

At school, you will also have the chance to study new subjects, possibly in a very different way from the learning environment you know from home. You are expected to work hard in school and to be a model student.

Types of courses in the US. High schools in the US offer many different courses for students. In addition to math, science, social studies, and English, you may find college-preparatory courses, business classes, computer science and coding courses, as well as classes to learn hands-on skills such as mechanics or cooking. Many students attend classes called “electives,” which they can choose in addition to the required courses. "Electives" include subjects like music, drama, visual arts, sports, school government, and journalism. As an exchange student, you will likely be required by your US high school to take some academic classes; you will also likely be able to choose some elective courses. You may find academic classes very difficult, especially if you struggle with English; however, taking only electives is not typical of the US high school experience. As your English improves, you will find academic classes

"My host family made me feel like their daughter and sister from the first day. I’m grateful for all the support and love they gave me.”
- YFU student from Germany
easier and you will be able to participate more in class discussions. YFU recommends that you take an English course, regardless of your fluency in English. American Literature, or courses in composition and writing will not only help you improve your English, but you will also pick up new academic skills in writing essays and analyzing text.

US schools have rules that might restrict the grade level to which you can be assigned. The school officials who agree to take exchange students make the final decision about your grade placement. Some US schools have regulations that all exchange students be registered as juniors (11th graders) or sophomores (10th graders). Your grade status will usually not prevent you from registering for classes appropriate for your academic level.

**Homework.** Your teachers will assign work and projects, which will need to be completed outside of school. It is important to keep track of and to complete all homework as it counts towards your grade.

**Differences.** You may find school in the US very different, because there are so many types of classes and you will probably be allowed to choose some of your own classes. You may also feel that the school is less formal than your home country school because of different teaching styles and class schedules. However, just because school is different does not mean it is “easier.” As an exchange student, you are expected to study hard and represent your country in the best light. If you are not following school rules, or not securing at least a C grade average, YFU will be concerned about your school work and will take action.

**College Plans.** Your time in the United States should foster your understanding of the American family and high school life. For some YFU students, there is a desire to attend an American college, however, this should not be the primary focus of your exchange year. The purpose of YFU exchange is to experience high school life and have a social and cultural experience, and host families should not be expected to help students with such goals. If you hope to return to the USA with an F-1 student visa, YFU USA has programs to assist you with this goal. Contact the Education Select High School program at [educationselect@yfu.org](mailto:educationselect@yfu.org) to get more information.

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**LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVE**

What can you do to feel at home in the US as quickly as possible? Focus on your English speaking skills. When you can speak with people, you can get to know them. You can ask why they do things. You can explain how you do things differently. You can express your happiness and your frustrations. You can ask for help.

You may be surprised that when you arrive in the US, to discover that your English is not as good as you thought it was. You may find it very easy to read and understand this book, however, you might find that following conversations and speaking with others is difficult. There are several reasons why this can happen. It is easier to learn to read, answer questions in a textbook, or memorize a dialogue than it is to talk with someone who speaks quickly and uses new vocabulary. It is probably easier for you to understand people from your country who speak English as a second language rather than native speakers. Being in an English language class is very different from using English every day and relying on English to get around and accomplish your goals.

Don't worry. **Americans are more interested in learning about you than they are in whether you speak perfect English.** No one expects you to speak English perfectly. Conversations are the best way to get to know others, and the more you speak English, the sooner you will become more comfortable and confident. It is natural to feel shy or nervous about speaking English, but YFU knows that the more students speak, the better their English will become!

You may also be hearing “American English” for the first time. If you studied “British English,” you may find that some expressions, pronunciations, and sentence patterns are different in the US. Will learning American English ruin your British English? You will probably develop a different accent and change some of your expressions. But if you become fluent in American English, you can change the few expressions necessary to get along in your English classes when you return home.

You may find that you get very tired of listening to English
all the time. This is normal. It happens because you have to
listen very carefully in order to understand. You cannot relax
while listening, which you can do in your own language. It is
difficult and tiring. Don’t be discouraged if you sometimes
need a break. But know that the best way to improve your
English is to keep speaking and listening to others.

Here are some points to keep in mind as you are working on
your English:

- **Don’t be afraid** or embarrassed to make mistakes.
  It’s normal to make mistakes when learning a new
  language. When you learned your native language, you
  made mistakes, but you learned to correct them by
  listening to your parents and others.

- **Listen** to everything around you. Listen to radio, TV
  news, and talk programs. Listen especially carefully
  when someone is speaking to you.

- **Speak up** even if you are unsure how to say something
  - the only way to learn is to practice. The best pieces
  of advice YFU can give to you is to sign-up for after
  school activities and get involved as much as possible
  in your community.

- **Ask** people to “speak slower” or “repeat” what
  they have said if you do not understand. You will
  be surprised how fast you begin to recognize whole
  sentences and questions.

- **List** the expressions and words that are new and
  useful. Try to use them.

- **Carry** a pocket dictionary with you to use when you
  cannot remember a word or do not know one. (Try to
  buy a two-language dictionary before you leave your
  country.)

- **Limit** your use of electronic pocket translators only
  for specific words. Do not rely on this tool to translate
  sentences. If you become dependent on it, it will take
  you even longer to learn English.

- **Record** yourself while you talk with a host family
  member or friend. Later, listen to it to hear how you
  might improve.

- **Watch** TV programs that teach young people English,
  such as “Sesame Street”. If you have young siblings,
  they will love watching these shows with you and
  helping you improve your English.

- **Read** out loud to younger host siblings or even your
  host parents to improve your pronunciation and help
  grow your vocabulary.

- **Relax**, enjoy, and do not take yourself too seriously.

Laugh at yourself and help people laugh with you
when you make mistakes. Some of your embarrassing
moments with English will be your funniest stories
when you return home!

You will find that many people around you will help you.
If you ask them to do so, your host family and friends will
correct your English and help you say what you want to say.
You may want to choose one special person—a “language
helper”—who will help you regularly with your English. It
could be a member of your host family, a friend, or one of
your teachers. Choose a person you like and respect. It must
be someone who will correct you when you make an error
and who will practice with you.

Talk with your **Language Helper** about what you want to
work on, or the areas that you need specific assistance, for
example: pronunciation, reading and understanding novels
assigned at school, writing literary responses, or other
writing assignments. Set up a specific time to meet and
make sure you always come prepared with any materials
from school.

If you are focusing on improving your spoken English,
remember that the more often you practice listening and
answering, the sooner you will speak comfortably and
fluently. You will also hear many expressions and “slang”
words that you do not know. Ask your friends or language
helper what they mean and when and where you can say
them.

Make time to practice your English every day. Visit ESLGold.
com for online language resources and activities. If your
language helper is willing to help you every day, that would
be wonderful. Maybe in exchange you can teach your helper
your own language! If your language development needs
further help, instead of a tutor, YFU might assign lessons in
an online language program. This option requires computer
access with speakers and a microphone.
VI. Student and Family Policies and Procedures

In this chapter you will learn about the important YFU policies and procedures that are in place to keep you safe. Please read this section carefully. All the YFU policies are listed at the end of the handbook in Appendix VI.

**STUDENT AND FAMILY POLICIES**

All YFU students are expected to follow the rules and polices set by their host family, school, YFU USA and YFU international partners. The YFU policies are designed to protect the safety and well-being of participants and to help everyone have a successful exchange experience. You can find all the YFU and YFU USA specific policies in Appendix VI. Below are some key policies which cover areas of student safety, legal issues, and behaviors that can interfere with your adjustment to life in the US. Please review these policies and all the policies so you are familiar with YFU expectations for students and families.

**Dangerous activities:** YFU takes safety and security of students and families very seriously, and wants to minimize risks for student accidents. For this reason there are important policies and stipulations concerning your participation in activities that are considered dangerous. Many activities require training from a professional; the use of safety equipment; and additional insurance to cover any injuries. In addition, some activities require a Dangerous Activities Permission Form to be completed. See Appendix VIII for the complete list of activities and the details about this policy, as well as the permission form.

**Driving is prohibited:** This includes cars, trucks, jeeps, ATV, motorcycles, boats etc. Students will be sent home for breaking this policy. Student can operate riding lawn mowers if mowing the lawn is a family chore.

**Travel:** Traveling on a school trip, or with your host family is encouraged, however, for legal and safety reasons there are some travel stipulations and approvals required for certain kinds of trips. These include travel without the host family; or travel outside the USA (including Mexico and Canada); or if the host family is asking you to contribute more than $300 towards the trip; or if the travel requires you to miss more than five days of school. See Appendix VII for the full travel policy and the Permission to Travel Form.

**School attendance and behavior:** You are required to attend school on a regular basis, work hard in your classes, and maintain a good standing in school. Poor grades (due to lack of effort), disrespectful behavior, or behaviors that break school polices are not tolerated. The Area Representative monitors school performance and YFU expects all students to carry a “C” minimum.

**Student adjustment:** Other policies focus on behaviors that can interfere with your adjustment and having a successful exchange experience. These include the overuse or abuse of electronics or social media. Excessive communication with friends and family in your home country will prevent you from successfully adapting to life in the US. In addition, you are responsible for the content you post online and inappropriate social media posting can result in an early return to one’s home country.

**US, state, and local community laws:** Additionally, you are expected to follow all US, state, and local community laws. YFU policies follow US laws regarding alcohol and drug use. Students and families also need to respect local laws concerning curfews and riding as a passenger with new drivers. If you are 18 years old or older, you are considered to be an adult. It is important to understand that legally, those of age are judged by the law quite differently than minors (those under the age of 18).

**Policy Violation:** Any violation of YFU policies can be grounds for consideration for an early return to one’s home country. Students and host families are responsible for educating themselves with and following all YFU policies and procedures, along with completing any necessary forms, as required. A complete list of all YFU policies and procedures can be found in Appendix V.
VII. Preparing for Your Departure to the US

In this chapter, you will be provided with resources and tips to help you prepare for your exchange. You will also learn about what to pack and other things to consider prior to your departure.

SCHOOL CREDIT ARRANGEMENT

Credit in the US. School “credit” is recognition by a school that you have successfully taken classes and met academic requirements. You must work with both your school in your home country and in the US to obtain the proper documentation. It is important to know that not all schools give school “credit.”

Many schools do not allow exchange students to enroll as a senior (12th grade student) and YFU USA cannot guarantee that 12th grade (the final grade in high school) students will receive a US high school “diploma.” In fact, the majority of exchange students do not receive such a diploma. Instead, many schools give an honorary diploma or a “Certificate of Attendance” to exchange students. Each school has the authority to decide which type of certificate is awarded to exchange students. **YFU USA cannot influence the school’s decision.** It will be based on individual school, state, or local policy. YFU USA will not change a school assignment for class year placement or to fulfill a desire to graduate.

Credit in your home country. It is your responsibility to work with your school in your home country to arrange credit for attending school in the US. As soon as possible, talk with your YFU National Office and your principal or school director in your home country about what requirements you may have to meet. Your school at home may require a description of courses offered in the US. If so, you will need to make arrangements to send your course schedule to your home country secondary school after you have arrived and are enrolled in your US school. It is very difficult to get school documents once you have left a US school, so please be sure you have the necessary papers in hand when you leave.

MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS

YFU National Offices provide students with illness and injury insurance. You will receive information on what your insurance covers before you depart for the US. You will also receive basic insurance information, claims filing procedures (how to get money back from the insurance company), claim forms, and an insurance card either before you leave your home country or at your host family’s home in the US.

Your insurance will not cover pre-existing conditions, medications not prescribed by physicians, routine examinations, alcoholism, drug abuse or misuse of medication, non-emergency dental treatment, replacement of glasses or contact lenses, or immunizations in your home or host country. If you do not have extra personal insurance for the above situations, you will have to pay such costs yourself. **Remember,** any medical condition that you have before going on the YFU program will not be covered by your YFU insurance. Therefore, you must pay the costs of doctor visits or medicine related to a pre-existing condition.

**Note that your family should continue your own health insurance in addition to that provided by YFU.** This will avoid complications if an illness were to develop while on program and is classified as pre-existing upon the initiation of a new policy upon your return home. Since medical expenses are rather high in the US, we strongly suggest that before you leave you contact the insurance company of your natural parents to see if you can have extra insurance protection as part of your family’s insurance while you are in the US.

Medical and dental examinations. All students are required to have a medical and a dental examination before coming to the US. YFU will give you a health form that must
be completed and signed by your family physician and dentist. You should have these health examinations done as soon as possible so YFU can send your health form to the US with your student file. Make sure that the medical history on your health form is complete and accurate, especially regarding serious allergies.

**Immunizations.** US school authorities require specific immunizations for any student entering a school for the first time. The requirements vary from place to place within the US. Since students are required by law to have the required immunizations before entering school, it is better for you to get them before leaving your country. If you cannot, you will not be allowed to start school until the immunizations are administered in the US. You must pay for them yourself.

On your health form, there is a list of immunizations that most schools require. Remember to bring proof, such as a doctor’s signed certificate, that you have received these immunizations. Some schools will require additional immunizations that are not on the health form. Some or all required immunizations may not be covered by the health insurance policy through YFU; they must be acquired at the student’s expense.

**Potentially restrictive health conditions.** A “potentially restrictive health condition” is one that could possibly limit or affect your participation in normal activities. YFU accepts students on program if they have a potentially restrictive health condition (such as a serious allergy) and the student provides a physician’s statement that the condition will not interfere with normal activities or be a problem for your host family. The physician’s statement about the condition must be sent to your YFU National Office. It is extremely important that the information you give YFU is complete and truthful. The more accurate the information, the better YFU can place and assist the student if they need help during the exchange.

**Medication.** If you take any medication regularly, bring enough of the medicine for the period of time you will be away from home. Have an extra copy of your physician’s prescription as well as a full explanation—in English—of the dosage and use of any medicine you bring. Customs officials may want to see this when you enter the US. You will also need a copy of the prescription if you need to buy more of the medication while in the US. If the medication is expensive, you could take it on the plane, but make sure to check with the airline first to ensure that the medication is allowable in your carry-on luggage. When you arrive in the US, talk with your host family about all medications you take, including homeopathic herbs.

**Eyeglasses or contact lenses.** If you wear glasses or contact lenses, bring your prescription with you. Also bring an extra pair of glasses if you have them. The cost of replacing lost or broken glasses or lenses is not covered by YFU insurance.

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**FINANCES**

**How to get money from home.** Most students bring a credit card with them to the US. Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs), which are located throughout most cities and towns, are one of the best options for getting money from your home country. Your parents can fund the account at a bank in your home country with your home currency, and then you can withdraw American dollars from an ATM with either a credit card or debit card issued by a major bank in your home country. Make sure your ATM and credit cards are part of the PLUS Network (Visa) or the Cirrus Network (MasterCard), or they may not work in the US. In order to deposit or withdraw money, you will need to have the Personal Identification Number (PIN) that was assigned to you when you received your card. There may be a $2–$5 fee for using an ATM machine. Using an ATM or credit card from your home country will allow your parents to keep track of your spending and will also likely provide you with the best exchange rate.

Because many American host families live in small communities, there is a good chance that you will not have access to a bank that does international wiring. If you do, the fee to wire money will be expensive. Using Western Union to wire and receive money is a more cost-effective option. Money can be sent online, by phone, or at an agent location (in grocery stores, convenience stores, etc.). YFU USA recommends that your family look into Western Union for more details. You can access Western Union on the Web at: corporate.westernunion.com.

**Bank accounts.** You may wish to open a bank account in the US. This can be difficult to do without an adult co-signer and it is not recommended unless there are extenuating circumstances. Check with your Area Representative to see what bank in your host town might allow you to open your own account. If you do choose to open an account, you should NEVER open a joint account with your host family, or give any member of your host family access to your

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"Try everything! Have courage! Speak a lot, speak with everyone in your family, try to get involved in many things. Be open-minded and don’t judge, but accept!"

*YFU student from the Netherlands*
account or ATM card. Be very careful with your Personal Identification Number (PIN); do not give this number to anybody. If the bank requires a Social Security number, call the YFU USA District Office to discuss your options. Keep track of what you spend and keep your bank statements as a record. Remember to close your account before you go home. If you have any problems with money or your bank account, notify YFU USA immediately.

**Your expenses.** Remember that YFU does not pay your host family. Along with accepting you as a family member, your host family pays the largest portion of your living costs by giving you a home to live in and three meals daily. You will, however, need your own “spending money” for all other expenses. These could include school supplies, bus fares, snacks, gifts, cell phone plan, movies, sports events, and more. You must buy your own personal items, such as shampoo and deodorant. If you come from a warm climate and will be living where winters are cold, a few basic articles of winter clothing could cost you as much as $300. You may have school-related expenses such as school supplies, sports equipment, dances, science labs, and, in some schools, books or uniforms. Host families and YFU are not required to pay fees related to additional academic exams such as Advanced Placement tests, or university admissions tests, such as at the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). You will need to pay for your medical expenses until the insurance company sends you reimbursement. You may also have to pay for medical expenses not covered by insurance, such as a sports physical examination or immunizations. If you travel with your school class or your family, you will probably have to help pay for the trip. Some YFU staff also arrange trips for their students. These can be quite expensive. Find out about the cost of such trips early, so you can save your money for them. Be prepared and make arrangements with your family so you will have the spending money that you need. Here are some typical costs:

- School football/basketball game: $8.00–$12.00
- Movies: $10.50 per person
- Ice skating: $8.00–$15.00
- Lunch out with friends: $7.00–$12.00
- Visit to the doctor: $130.00

At the end of the school year many students wish to buy yearbooks (which cost approximately $80) and class rings (which can cost from $100–$300). Some important school dances, such as the Homecoming Dance, may cost $15–$45 per person. End-of-year formal dances for the senior and junior classes (also known as “proms”) may cost $100 a couple or more, not including the cost of the fancy dresses and suits students often purchase to wear to them.

**Amount of money you need during your exchange.** The amount of money you will spend during the year will depend on several factors, including: how many social events you attend; how you handle having a cell phone and data plan, and how many texts you send; clothes, music, and gifts you buy. Plan a budget with your parents before you leave. It will help you decide how much money you will need. Budget the spending of your money carefully. It is easy to spend money very quickly when you first arrive; this is not a good idea. Take your time to look and decide what you really want. You will have a lot of time to shop. A part of your exchange experience should be making a budget for your six months or year and following it!

If you have the time and opportunity while in the US, you may be able to add to the money your parents send you by doing informal part-time jobs for neighbors, such as mowing the lawn or baby-sitting. You will find that many American teenagers earn some of their own money this way. These small jobs do not pay a lot, but they help, and may allow you to do more things than you thought you could afford. (Note: see Employment, page 37, for the YFU policy on students working.)

YFU recommends that you budget at least $200 for each month you are in the US. However, there are regional differences and some localities are much more expensive than others. Depending on your host family’s location, you may need additional monthly spending money. If you do not have an Automatic Teller Machine (ATM) card where you can make withdrawals as needed, bring at least $400 in cash for the first two months. Otherwise, bring $50–$100 in cash and plan to withdraw money in your new home city with your ATM card.

**Carrying money while traveling.** Automated Teller Machine cards will allow you easy access to cash. Be sure to check with your bank or your home country YFU office on recommended practices for bringing funds into the US. Carry about $50 in cash while traveling for any snacks or other necessities. Never put cash or credit cards in your carry-on or checked luggage. Carry it near your body in a pouch under your clothing, if possible, or in a protected pocket or purse.

**Handling money issues.** Standards of living and costs of living vary around the world, even within the US. Sometimes there is a difference between the amount of money you can spend and the amount of your host family or friends can spend. This may tempt you to borrow money from your host family or to lend your host family or friends some money. You should not borrow or lend money, even with your host family. Borrowing money can make the relationship between you and your host family difficult, even if you get along very well overall. It may also be difficult for you or for them to repay debts.
If your host family lends you money in an emergency situation, create a written agreement including: the date, the amount you owe them, when you will pay them back, and both of your signatures. If you lend money to someone in an emergency situation, also create a written and signed agreement (even if the loan is to someone in your host family) including: the date, the amount they owe you, when they will pay you back, and both of your signatures. It is also advised that you notify your natural parents via email and attach their consent to your agreement. YFU USA is not responsible for students’ debts or loans.

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**PLANNING WHAT TO TAKE TO THE US**

**Pack lightly.** Airlines allow you to take only one or two pieces of checked luggage and one bag that you can carry on the plane (but which must be able to fit underneath the airplane seat). Also, airlines have luggage weight and size limits. If your bags exceed those limits, you will be asked to pay for the excess luggage or the airline may simply refuse to take all the luggage you have. It is best to check with the airline on their specific guidelines regarding luggage limits. You will be responsible for all of your own luggage. You may have to carry it often. Do not bring more than you can carry alone.

**Clothing.** YFU students are placed throughout the country. The US is so large and the weather so varied that it is difficult to recommend exactly what to take. For appropriate clothing for the state in which you will live, do some online research to better understand what kind of clothing you will need. You might also want to buy some clothes while in the US, especially if you come from a very different climate.

**Gifts.** Think carefully about the gifts you will take to your host family. The cost is not important; it is your thoughtfulness in bringing something from your country that is important. You may want to include a few extra gifts for other people you meet. When choosing gifts, consider their size and weight. They must be packed in your luggage. If the total value of your gifts is more than $100, you will have to pay an import tax (“duty”) to US Customs when you enter the country. Some gifts that you could bring include:

- CDs of your country’s music.
- Photo books of your country or region showing geography, historical places, views of rural and city life, etc.
- Special foods or beverages of your region or country, such as fruit preserves, candy, etc. (US law prohibits bringing fresh meat, fruit, plants, or other living things into the US.)
- Handicrafts of your country or region.

**Some things from home.** Do not forget to bring along a few things that you enjoy and can share with others. These are not to help you escape from living in the US; they are to help you share some important parts of your life with your new host family and friends. Here are some ideas:

- A framed photo and/or photo album of family, home, friends, school, and country.
- Sports equipment for your favorite sports.
- Hobby materials—for sketching, painting, collecting, reading, or whatever you like to do when you have free time. If you are serious about music, you may want to bring your musical instrument.
- A few books you would like to read in your native language.
- A book about your country, your school yearbook, or recent magazines to share with your new family and friends.

**What not to bring.** Do not bring electrical equipment unless it has a current of exactly 120V/60Hz or you have an adapter. Battery-powered equipment is not a problem, but should not be packed in checked luggage. Different countries also use different television video systems. The US uses the NTSC video system; your country may use PAL or SECAM. If your system is not NTSC, do not bring DVDs or videotapes, since non-NTSC tapes will not play on NTSC machines. There are some exceptions, but nearly all DVD players in the US will only play DVDs purchased in the US and Canada, so leave your DVDs at home.
Parents’ Permission to Travel Outside the US. While in the US, some students get the chance to travel with their host families or schools to Mexico, Canada or the Caribbean. If you already know that you will be traveling to any other country while in the US, it is a good idea to bring a letter with you stating your parent’s permission. Written permission from your natural parents is required as part of your permission to travel request to YFU USA before you will be allowed to travel outside the US. The letter should be typed—not handwritten—and it must give your name, both of your parents’ names, state that you are a Youth For Understanding student, and it must say that you have permission to enter Mexico, Canada or a country of the Caribbean. All legal guardians must sign it.

Special Note: The Mexican Consular section requires students traveling to Mexico to have the above letter from legal guardians notarized; subject to change per Mexican visa requirements. Most recently the Canadian Border Patrol asks for notarized natural parent permission as well. These are measures to prevent human trafficking.

If you travel outside of the US while you are a YFU student, you must get YFU permission first (see Permission to Travel Policy Appendix). This is in addition to your parents’ permission. Take all your travel documents (DS-2019 and passport) with you.

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Students and host families must follow all Department of State requirements regarding international travel and proper documentation. If a student leaves the US without proper documentation, including the DS2019, the student’s visa could be terminated in the Homeland Security Student & Exchange Visitor Information System database, SEVIS, and the student would be refused entry to the US. See Appendix II for an example of what the DS2019 looks like. Make sure you do not lose this important Department of State document.

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ON THE AIRPLANE & AT THE AIRPORT

US Customs Declaration. On the airplane you will receive a “Customs Declaration” form. You must complete this form and have it ready to give the customs official in the airport. Study the form so that you understand it. The customs official may ask you to show the gifts you are bringing to the US. Be sure you do not have any fresh meat, plant products, or other living things.
The US Border Patrol Officer at the airport will ask to see your: Passport, Visa, and DS-2019 Form. Keep the DS-2019 Form in your passport at all times. **Have them all ready!**

**Customs and Border Protection Stamp (CBP).** The Customs Officer will give you a CBP admission stamp in your passport. This stamp indicates your date of arrival in the US, your J-1 class of admission, and your admitted date. You are permitted to stay in the US until this admitted date. You may obtain a copy of your electronic arrival/departure record at [i94.cbpagedhs.gov](http://i94.cbpagedhs.gov).

**Be sure all your documents are returned to you** – you will need them in the US. If you lose any of them, contact your Area Representative immediately! Because of increased security in the US, you may be asked additional questions or be fingerprinted and have your photograph taken. Please cooperate with all requests made by the Border Patrol Officer.

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**TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

**Tickets.** Most students on the YFU program will travel to the US on flights arranged by YFU USA. Otherwise, a student’s home country arranges the travel. Students whose travel was arranged by YFU USA will travel as a group on regularly scheduled commercial flights. Most students will be issued electronic tickets and will receive a print-out of their itinerary to use for check-in at the airport. Some students will receive paper tickets. Be very careful with your paper tickets, as they may include a ticket for flying back home at the end of your time in the US.

**Luggage.** Airlines have very restrictive and changing luggage policies. Students should check individual airlines for their rules and fees for carry-on and checked luggage. Be prepared to pay extra fees for your luggage.

YFU USA will send you the luggage regulations that apply to your flight. Follow these instructions. Note that what is permitted in your checked and carry-on luggage frequently changes due to security concerns in the US. Check [tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips](http://tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips) for up-to-date information. If you have too much luggage, or it is too heavy, the airline may charge you for the extra luggage. Or, they may simply refuse to take it, even if you are willing to pay. YFU USA is not responsible for any fees or expenses that you may be charged due to overweight or extra luggage. Remember, you will have to carry your own luggage while you are traveling. **Do not bring more than you can carry at one time!** (See also “Planning What to Take to the US,” page 19.)

Your YFU National Office may give you special YFU luggage tags. If not, we recommend you get your own tags. **On the tags, write your name and your host family’s address in the US.** Be sure that you put the tags on each of your suitcases. It is also a good idea to put your name and host family address somewhere inside your luggage in case the outside tag is lost.

Never leave luggage unattended while traveling. Not only is this required for security reasons (you will be asked this question at the airline counter), but you also don’t want to lose your luggage! So keep it with you at all times - even if this means taking it in the bathroom. This is a very important security matter.

**Travel to the US.** Your YFU National Office will give you your travel information, including your international flight schedule and flight schedule in the US. The YFU USA Travel Office will tell your host parents the date and time of your arrival. Either your host family or your Area Representative will meet you at your final destination. There may be YFU travel staff assisting you to your final destination. **YFU travel staff wear t-shirts with the YFU logo on the front and TRAVEL STAFF written in white on the back.**

Upon your arrival in the US, you will have to pass through Customs and Immigration. For security reasons, YFU Travel Staff will not be allowed to enter the Customs and Immigration area. This means that you will go through this process on your own or with other YFU students. After you have exited Customs and Immigration, you are to proceed directly to the gate for your connecting flight or to baggage claim if you are at your final destination. There are many students traveling and the staff cannot meet everyone. **If you wait for the travel staff to find you, you may miss your connecting flight.** If you have problems in the airport and are not with the airport staff, YFU Travel can always be contacted at **1.800.705.9510.**
Sometimes a student cannot make the trip to his or her host family all in one day, or flights in the US are delayed or cancelled because of weather or mechanical problems. This may mean a student must travel the next day and stay overnight in an airport hotel. In these cases, YFU Travel will make arrangements for you to stay in a hotel. The YFU airport staff will help you get your hotel room and meals and will also stay overnight in the same hotel. The YFU airport staff will also help you get back to the airport the next day for your flight. YFU Travel will notify your host family of any itinerary changes.

If your travel was not arranged by YFU USA, or if you are traveling off of group travel, there will not be staff in the airports, but YFU Travel is always available at 1.800.705.9510 if you have a problem while traveling. If your flight is cancelled, contact YFU Travel immediately for instructions about how to schedule a different flight. When you get a new itinerary, call 1.800.705.9510 again so that YFU Travel can notify your host family of the changes. If your new flight is the next day, and you need to stay overnight, YFU Travel can get a hotel room for you near the airport.

All students can contact YFU Travel at 1.800.705.9510 if they have problems in the airport. It is free to call from any public telephone. If you are unable to find a public telephone, ask your airline if you can call a toll free number from their phone. It is very important to call this number first, so that YFU Travel can help you. Calling your natural parents first will only delay you further, because they cannot help you with travel arrangements.
You have many things to think about as you get ready for your exchange experience. To help you remember the important things, you'll need to complete the checklist below. Everything on it is essential, so be sure you do everything! Check off each task as you complete it so you know it is done.

☐ Apply and get your passport.
☐ Have a physical examination.
☐ Have a dental examination.
☐ Complete the YFU health form and send to your YFU National Office.
☐ Get any immunizations required for school, if possible.
☐ Get a letter from your physician about any restrictive condition. Send this to your YFU National Office.
☐ Get copies of prescriptions (medications, eyeglasses) to carry to the US.
☐ Get extra medication you will need while in the US.
☐ Talk to your home school about its requirements for accepting credit from your US high school. Get any forms you may need to have signed by your school in the US.
☐ Complete the DS-2019 Form and take it with your passport to the US Embassy or Consulate to get a J-1 visa for the US.
☐ Get a two-language dictionary for English and your native language. You may not be able to find one in the US.
☐ Buy or prepare clothing you need
☐ Choose some small gifts to bring for your host family.
☐ Choose the “things from home” you would like to take with you while on exchange.
☐ Get an ATM card, as well as US dollars to take with you.
☐ Plan with your natural family how and when they will send you money.
☐ Attend all orientation meetings or programs provided by YFU.
☐ Pack your luggage so its size and weight are acceptable to the airline. Be sure you can carry your luggage by yourself. Don’t forget your YFU luggage tag(s).
☐ Put a YFU tag on each piece of your luggage. Write your name and address of your host family in the US on each tag. Also put a tag with your name and US address inside each piece of luggage.
☐ Pack health insurance information provided by your YFU National Office.
☐ Prepare a packet to carry with you on the plane that includes the following: airline ticket/e-ticket itinerary, passport, DS-2019 Form, the emergency travel number (1.800.705.9510), special medical information from your physician (if needed), and your host family’s contact information.
☐ Review your application and the parent/student agreement.
☐ Your host family has been selected based on what you wrote on your application. If anything has changed (smoking, health, other important information), write to your YFU National Office or US District Office and explain.
☐ Pack this handbook. You will need it!
APPENDIX I: YFU CONTACT INFORMATION

In addition to the local numbers listed, a toll-free number, 1.866.4.YFU.USA (1.866.493.8872), will automatically connect you with the Regional Office covering your state.

YFU USA NATIONAL OFFICE
6856 Eastern Ave NW # 310
Washington, DC 20012 USA
Phone: 202.774.5200
Fax: 202.588.7571
yfuusa.org

SAGINAW SATELLITE OFFICE
3995 Fashion Square Blvd,
Suite 2 Saginaw, MI 48603
USA Phone: 989.777.4420
Fax: 989.777.3270
Toll Free: 1.866.4.YFU.USA (1.866.493.8872)
yfuusa.org

GREAT LAKES
States covered: Illinois (IL), Michigan (MI), Wisconsin (WI)

WESTERN
States covered: Alaska (AK), Arizona (AZ), Arkansas (AR), California (CA), Colorado (CO), Hawaii (HI), Idaho (ID), Iowa (IA), Kansas (KS), Louisiana (LA), Minnesota (MN), Mississippi (MS), Missouri (MO), Montana (MT), Nebraska (NE), Nevada (NV), New Mexico (NM), North Dakota (ND), Oklahoma (OK), Oregon (OR), South Dakota (SD), Texas (TX), Utah (UT), Washington (WA), Wyoming (WY)

EASTERN
States covered: Alabama (AL), Connecticut (CT), Delaware (DE), District of Columbia (DC), Florida (FL), Georgia (GA), Indiana (IN), Kentucky (KY), Maine (ME), Maryland (MD), Massachusetts (MA), New Hampshire (NH), New Jersey (NJ), North Carolina (NC), New York (NY), Ohio (OH), Pennsylvania (PA), Rhode Island (RI), South Carolina (SC), Tennessee (TN), Virginia (VA), Vermont (VT), West Virginia (WV)
1. **Family Name:**
   - First Name:
   - Middle Name:
   - Gender: J-1

   **Date of Birth:**
   - **City of Birth:**
   - **Country of Birth:**
   - **Citizenship Country Code:**
   - **Citizenship Country:**

   **Legal Permanent Residence Country Code:**
   - **Legal Permanent Residence Country:**
   - **Position Code:**
   - **Position:**

   **Primary Site of Activity:**

2. **Program Sponsor:** Youth For Understanding USA, Inc.
   - **Program Number:**

   **Participating Program Official Description:**

3. **Form Covers Period:**
   - **From (mm/dd/yyyy):**
   - **To (mm/dd/yyyy):**

   **Subject/Field Code:**
   - **Subject/Field Code Remarks:**

4. **Exchange Visitor Category:**

5. **During the period covered by this form, the total estimated financial support (in U.S. $) is to be provided by:**

6. **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE/DS USE OR CERTIFICATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER OR ALTERNATE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER THAT A NOTIFICATION COPY OF THIS FORM HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (INCLUDE A/F2).**

7. **Name of Official Preparing Form:**
   - **Title:**

   **641 S Street, NW**
   - **Suite 200**
   - **Washington, DC 20529**

   **Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer**
   - **Telephone Number:**

   **Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer**
   - **Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**

8. **Statement of Responsible Officer for Releasing Sponsor (FOR TRANSFER OF PROGRAM):**
   - **Effective Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**
   - **Transfer of the exchange visitor from program number**
   - **sponsored by**
   - **to the program specified in item 2 is necessary or highly desirable and is in conformity with the objectives of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended.**

   **Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer**
   - **Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**

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**PRELIMINARY ENDORSEMENT OF CONSULAR OR IMMIGRATION OFFICER REGARDING SECTION 212(h) OF THE IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY ACT AND 8 U.S.C. 1184, AS AMENDED**

- **The Exchange Visitor in the above program:**
  - **Not subject to the two-year residence requirement:**
  - **Subject to two-year residence requirement based on:**
    - A. **Government financing and/or**
    - B. **The Exchange Visitor Skills List and/or**
    - C. **PL 98-364 as amended**

- **(ALL USARDS PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE NOT ALIGNED WITH THE TWO-YEAR RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT)**

**TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER**
- **(Maximum validation period is 1 year)**
- **EXCEPT:**
  - **Minimum duration period is up to 6 months for high school students and 3 months for Camp Counselor and Summer Work/Travel.
  - **(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time:**
  - **Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**

**Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer**
- **Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**

**THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE RESERVES THE RIGHT TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION REGARDING 212(h):**

**EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION:** I have read and agree with the statement in item 2 on page 2 of this document.

**Signature of Applicant**
- **Place**
- **Date (mm/dd/yyyy):**

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**OMB APPROVAL NO.**
02/13/2014
**ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min**

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**Page 1 of 2**

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**Passport to the USA** 25
NOTE ON DEPARTMENT OF STATE REGULATIONS

YFU USA operates in accordance with the US Department of State regulations governing Exchange Visitor Programs. These regulations specify the criteria and sponsor obligations of teenage exchange programs. They are designed to protect the interests and welfare of the students, host families, and schools participating in such programs. The regulations cover a range of areas including participant age, language requirements, insurance, financial responsibility, and more.

Please find below a copy of these regulations, as required by the US Department of State. For more information please visit the US Department of State online at: ecf.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=1bc531bf257789e45b3049bffe8b50d64&r=PART&n=22y1.0.1.7.35

J-1 VISA REGULATIONS

PART 62—EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

§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:

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

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:

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

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

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:

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.

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.

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);

Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;

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;

Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;

Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and e-mail;

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

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

Refrain, without exception, from acting as:

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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:

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;

Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and

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.

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:

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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:

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;

A copy of the Department’s welcome letter to exchange students;

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

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;

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

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 extra-curricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is:

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

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.

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.

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:

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

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.

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

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.

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;

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;

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);
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

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:

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;

Provide all selected host families with a copy of the Department’s letter of appreciation to host families;

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

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

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.

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:

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

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.

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.

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:

Utilize only promotional materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor’s purposes, activities, and sponsorship;

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;

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

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:

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;

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

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-019 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.

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

Basic Family Information:

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

Date of Birth (DOB) of all family members

Street Address

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

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

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

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)

Has any member of your household ever been charged with any crime?

Household Pets:

Number of Pets

Type of Pets

Financial Resources:

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”

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

Identify those personal expenses expected to be covered by the student

Diet:

Does anyone in the family follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N)

If yes, describe:

Do you expect the student to follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N)

If yes, describe:

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

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

High School Information:

Name and address of school (private or public school)

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

Approximate size of the school student body

Approximate distance between the school and your home

Approximate start date of the school year

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

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

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

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

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:

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

Population of community

Nearest Major City (Distance and population)

Nearest Airport (Distance)

City or town website

Briefly describe your neighborhood and community

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

Areas in or near neighborhood to be avoided?
Home Description:
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.

Describe Primary Rooms and Bedrooms

Number of Bathrooms

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

Describe the student’s bedroom

Describe amenities to which the student has access

Utilities

Family Activities:

Language spoken in home

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)

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:

[75 FR 65984, May 9, 2011]
**WELCOME BROCHURE**

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the United States Department of State

The Department of State welcomes you to the United States. We are pleased to receive you as an exchange visitor. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will acquire an experience in the United States, and as an ambassador of your country you will help educate the American people about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, provide you with information on contacting the Department of State, and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

**THE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM**

The U.S. Department Of State administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

**Sponsors.** The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer exchange visitor programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide exchange visitors pre-arrival information, an orientation, and monitor activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.

**Responsible Officers.** Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Your sponsor’s role is to help you manage your program. If problems arise or you have questions, your sponsor is there to help you. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is your sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor you should contact the person whose name and telephone number can be found on your Form DS-2019.

**Exchange Visitor.** An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange visitor program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Spouse and dependents - Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried children, under 21 years of age, to accompany an exchange visitor to the United States. These individuals may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

**USA REGULATIONS AND RULES**

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your sponsor will help you keep current with any change which may affect your J-1 visa status. Some requirements of the Federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

**Register with your Sponsor.** Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This System is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor’s program during their stay in the United States.

When you arrive in the United States, you must contact your sponsor to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States.
Activities and Program Provisions. You entered the United States in a specific program category, and are required to engage in that category and the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your exchange category.

Insurance. You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1), your spouse and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their exchange visitors. Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance carriers. Consult with your responsible officer before the start of your program.

(a) Minimum Insurance Coverage – Insurance shall cover: (1) medical benefits of at least $100,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000; and (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of $50,000.

(b) Additional Terms – A policy secured to fulfill the insurance requirements shall not have a deductible that exceeds $500 per accident or illness, and must meet other standards specified in the regulations.

(c) Maintenance of Insurance – Willful failure on your part to maintain the required insurance throughout your stay in the United States will result in the termination of your exchange program.

Maintenance of Valid Program Status – You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor’s program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor’s rules governing their particular program.

Required Notifications to Sponsors – You must immediately inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence) or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program status.

Current Regulations. The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62) and can be found at the J-1 Visa website: jvisas.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance.

Contacting the Department of State. The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional requirements that may apply to you are set forth in the Exchange Visitor Program Regulations. Review a copy of the current regulations and consult with your responsible officer.

Secondary School Student Helpline
1.866.283.9090

Street Address:
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
State Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20522-0505

Fax: 202.632.2701

Email: jvisas@state.gov
Dear American Host Family:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, I welcome your decision to host a secondary school student. The secondary school student program is one of many ways foreign nationals participate in people-to-people exchange programs in the United States. People-to-people exchanges are a valuable tool of foreign policy. The secondary school student program offers a unique opportunity for you to experience firsthand the richness and diversity of a culture different from your own, and for you to exemplify American values and culture to a foreign visitor. Through this program, you will join thousands of American families who serve as citizen ambassadors of the United States. Many families have found the secondary school student program to be a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

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.

The regulations governing the secondary school student program are found at eCFR — Exchange Visitor Program regulations (22 CFR 62 - Exchange Visitor Program). These regulations address the most frequently asked questions about the program and provide the rules under which the program operates. It is extremely important that you notify your sponsoring organization if you have any concerns or if the student’s personal health, safety or well-being is threatened in any way. If the sponsoring organization is not responsive to your concerns, you should contact the Department of State directly through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline (1-866-283-9090), which is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov.

The secondary school student program offers you, your family, your exchange student, your local school and community the opportunity to create a strong lifelong relationship. I hope this will be a positive and rewarding experience for all of you. The Department of State is deeply appreciative of your part in ensuring the program reaches its maximum potential as a quality educational and cultural exchange experience.

Sincerely,

G.K. Saba
Director, Policy & Program Support for Private Sector Exchange
United States Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Washington, DC 20522

January 8, 2019

Dear Secondary School Student:

Congratulations on your participation in the Exchange Visitor Program! On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, I want you to know that your decision to come to the United States is important to us. We want your stay to be a positive and memorable experience for you.

As a secondary school student, you are part of a U.S. Department of State cultural exchange program in which you, like thousands of other students from around the world, will have the opportunity to share your language, culture and customs with your American host family, your American school and also the broader local community. Your participation in this program fosters a greater understanding between our countries.

You are a valued guest in the United States, and we want you to succeed in this program. Your goal should be to learn as much as you can about American customs, values and culture and to build strong relationships with your host family, new classmates, and new friends. You will be living with a host family and attending a new school, both of which may have different rules and ways of life from what you are used to, so keeping an open mind will be very important to your success.

You and your host family have agreed to follow the program rules that govern the secondary school student exchange program. We hope you have taken the time to review the program rules carefully and that you understand your rights and responsibilities. If you have any questions and/or do not understand your rights and responsibilities, please contact your U.S. sponsor.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Your sponsor is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, if you need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right to you, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is your sponsor’s responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Your U.S. sponsor should have given you an emergency telephone contact number in your program orientation materials. This telephone number should be available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa Emergency Helpline (1-866-283-9090), which is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov.

We are pleased that you made the decision to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program and I hope you enjoy your stay in the United States.

Sincerely,

G.K. Saba
Director, Policy & Program Support for Private Sector Exchange
United States Department of State  
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs  
Washington, DC 20522

February 1, 2017

Dear School Administrator:

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, I want to thank you for accepting the enrollment of a secondary school student participating in the Exchange Visitor Program. The Secondary School Student Program is one of many ways foreign nationals participate in people-to-people exchange programs in the United States. People-to-people exchanges are a valuable tool of foreign policy. This program offers a unique opportunity for your school to experience firsthand the richness and diversity of a culture different from your own, and for you to exemplify American values and culture to a foreign visitor. Through this program, you will join thousands of American educational institutions and professionals who serve as citizen ambassadors of the United States. Many schools have found the secondary school student program to be a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Secondary 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 annually in the Exchange Visitor Program. This program is not only a great opportunity for international students to experience the culture and diversity of the United States, but it allows U.S. students to expand their horizons as well. The goodwill of American high schools in opening their campuses to these young international visitors is vital to this program’s success.

Each sponsoring organization has a local representative who will oversee each student’s year in your school. They are also available to serve as a point of contact for you, your teachers, and the students’ host families. The health, safety, and well-being of the students who participate in this program are our highest priority.

I hope this will be a rewarding experience for you, your school, and the exchange visitor student. It is critical that you notify the student’s program sponsor if you have any concerns or if the student’s personal health, safety, and/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 our 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 that lists the student’s host family 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). Your exchange visitor students should keep this card with them at all times and contact us if they have any concerns about their health, safety, and/or well-being.

The Secondary School Student Program offers you, your staff, your exchange visitor student, and your local community the opportunity to create a strong lifelong relationship. I hope this will be a positive and rewarding experience for all of you. The Department of State is deeply appreciative of your part in ensuring this program reaches its maximum potential as a quality educational and cultural exchange experience.

Sincerely,

G.K. Saba  
Director, Policy & Program Support  
for Private Sector Exchange
APPENDIX VI: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

YFU maintains policies to ensure fairness to the students and families, consistency of standards, and program integrity. The following policies provide a framework for the YFU participant support system. This support system includes the host family and host community, the involved YFU organizations, and the natural family. These policies are standardized for all YFU students, and we ask host families to help ensure that they are adhered to.

Students have been informed of YFU policies, which are also found in their Handbook, before arrival in the US. When your student arrives, you should review the contents of the Passport handbook together. This process will help you come to a mutual understanding of program requirements and help establish open communication between you and your student.

In the past, some well-meaning host parents have allowed their exchange students to disregard some of these policies. Please do not allow your family to become one of the few host families to have their students returned to their home countries prematurely for violation of a policy. This cautionary note is particularly important with regard to the driving policy.

This appendix contains the international student policies of YFU, as well as specific procedures that relate to YFU programs in the US. If you need additional clarification of any item, please contact your Area Representative.

ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

Policy: Students are required to observe all laws of their host country regarding the legal age for alcohol and tobacco consumption. Students are also expected to follow host family guidelines on the use of alcohol and tobacco, including e-cigarettes. YFU students should not use alcohol in a manner that is excessive, unsuitable or embarrassing to the host family or YFU. 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 in the US. Students who decide to drink are breaking the law and will be considered for Early Return. Alcohol related medical treatment may not be covered by student medical insurance.

It is illegal for minors (those under the age of 18) to purchase, possess and/or use cigarettes, tobacco products or vapes. Many Americans recognize the health risks of smoking and some Americans have strong feelings about the dangers of smoking. YFU USA advises students who smoke to reduce or eliminate their smoking habit before coming to the US.

BREAKING THE LAW

Policy: The nature and severity of the offense will determine the procedure and possible outcome. Criminal prosecution, theft, or shoplifting may be cause for an Early Return. The student, not YFU or the host family, will be responsible for any expense incurred as a result of the consequence.

Specific policy for YFU USA: When an arrest is made or a court appearance is scheduled, YFU USA recommends the student acquire a lawyer. The student and the natural parents, not the host family, 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 the prescheduled return flight time. The student and natural parents, not the host family, will be responsible for any and all necessary arrangements.

A student aged 18 or older who engages in sexual activity with a minor below the age of consent (generally 16-18) is guilty of gross sexual imposition and will be tried as an adult, regardless of the presence of force or threat associated with the sexual act. By law, any such sexual activity between an adult over 18 and a person below the age of consent is assumed to be coercive and nonconsensual. Gross sexual imposition is a serious offense for which offenders can receive lengthy prison sentences. Laws about gross sexual imposition vary widely among states.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Policy: Because of the issues that can arise in YFU exchange programs, confidential information must often be shared to resolve difficulties or help students and host families understand issues. Therefore, YFU students and parents should not expect that all YFU staff and volunteers, including professional counselors, will make promises of
confidentiality.
All those participating in YFU programs should expect that YFU will share confidential information with discretion and in accordance with applicable data protection laws. Due to the nature of exchange programs, students will have information relating to their host family’s personal life. Students should treat such information with the respect and confidentiality that can be reasonably expected from an exchange student. Students should not publish any sensitive information about their host family and the relationship between them on the internet.

The student’s right to privacy must also be respected. YFU considers it wrong to examine and/or confiscate a student’s personal belongings, including passports or other identity documents. The student must respect the same rules regarding host family belongings. If it is found that the student’s use of personal belongings such as computers, cell phones or tablets makes it hard to fully engage with their host family, YFU may require the student to change or stop using these personal belongings in order to maintain the right to remain on program.

Student/Host Family Address, Telephone Number, Status on Program: YFU does not allow the release of this information about a student or a host family to people not involved with YFU without the permission of the host family (or the natural parent/legal guardian(s) in the case of a student, unless the sending organization confirms that this is not necessary).

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.

COUNSELING
Specific policy for YFU USA: YFU USA offers counseling services to students, if needed. These services include help from Area Representatives and/or 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 National Office at 1.866.4.YFU.USA.

COMMUNICATION WITH NATURAL FAMILY AND HOME COUNTRY FRIENDS
Policy: Communication with the natural family and home country or other friends by phone or online (including all forms of social media) has an impact on an exchange student’s intercultural learning experience. Therefore, YFU requires students to use such communication tools in ways that help students, natural parent/legal guardian(s), host families and other people in the host community to develop positive relationships which benefit all those participating in the exchange program.

DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES
Policy: YFU may withhold authorization for any activity if it is considered hazardous and unacceptable for the student to participate. The following activities are strictly not permitted: hang-gliding, parachute jumping, piloting a private plane, bungee jumping, and para-sailing. Students should be aware that the list of dangerous activities varies from country to country, and that they will receive a list of any additional unacceptable activities in their host country.

The YFU Receiving Organization may permit some activities considered dangerous only if permission is given by the natural parent/legal guardian(s) in writing (unless the sending organization confirms that this is not necessary).
and that the host parents allow the student to participate. This permission must satisfy the YFU Receiving Organization and must release YFU and the host family from all responsibility during the time the student is involved in that activity. The student and natural parent/legal guardian(s) alone are responsible for obtaining 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 Appendix VII.

The YFU Dangerous Activities Permission Form (with all required signatures) must be on file with the SSM 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.”

Students are not permitted to drive any motorized vehicles including: all-terrain vehicles (ATV's), automobiles, snowmobiles, trucks and 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, jet skis, mopeds or motorcycles. Students are permitted to ride as passengers on the aforementioned vehicles provided they follow all the local laws and practice reasonable safety precautions. Lastly, permission will not be granted to students to participate in the following activities: bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachute jumping, parasailing, piloting a private plane, or wave-running.

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

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**DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

YFU follows a disciplinary procedure to bring concerns to students’ attention, provide encouragement for improvement and to document and review student behavioral issues.

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** All students are responsible for following host family, school, and YFU rules and regulations, as well as all federal, state, and local laws. If a student violates host family, school or YFU rules and regulations, a warning letter will be issued for the first offense. Repeated disregard for host family, school or YFU rules will result in the student being placed on probation. Additionally, offenses that are deemed more serious in nature may result in immediate probation for the student, without receiving a warning first. **Probationary status means that the student will be considered for involuntary early return** if his or her behavior does not improve or if he or she is reprimanded again for disregarding or breaking a host family, school or YFU rule.

A student who breaks any federal, state, or local law will be considered for immediate Early Return. This decision will be made by YFU USA in consultation with the student’s home country YFU office and law enforcement authorities, and will be based upon the nature of the offense.

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**DRIVING**

**Policy:** Exchange students are not permitted to drive cars, motorcycles or other motorized vehicles. This policy applies even if the student has an international driving license or the host family thinks that the student is a responsible and careful driver. Students who break this policy will be considered for Early Return to their home country.

This restriction may be waived for those participating in post-secondary education programs, provided the student has the permission of his/her legal guardian (if required by the sending organization), the permission of his/her host family, a valid driver’s license, and proper insurance. Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Permission to use farm equipment, other off-road vehicles, trail bikes and mopeds is different in each country, and the decision about their use by students is left to the YFU Receiving Organization. If the YFU Receiving Organization allows the student to use one of the vehicles listed above, the natural parent/legal guardian(s) and/or the student should sign consent and accept liability, and the student is expected to take safety precautions, have sufficient insurance coverage, and obey the laws of their host country.

**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:** YFU students may not buy, sell, possess, or use drugs that are illegal in their home or host country. If they do, they will be considered for Early Return. Evidence of a student breaking this policy normally includes physical evidence, student admission of use or a reliable witness who has seen the student with or using illegal 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. Students found using drugs will be considered for Early Return.

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**EARLY RETURN DEFINITIONS**

**Voluntary Early Return (VER):** A VER occurs when a student wants to return home from their host country earlier than planned. If required by the sending organization and if the natural parent/legal guardian(s) agree with this decision, then the natural parent/legal guardian(s) should provide their agreement in writing to the YFU Sending Organization prior to the return of the student.

**Involuntary Early Return (IER):** An IER occurs when the YFU Receiving Organization decides, after discussion with the student, host family and YFU Sending Organization, based on stated guidelines, that a student should be removed from the YFU program and returned to their home country. If the student has broken the law of the receiving country or has seriously failed to follow the YFU Policies (e.g., is expelled from school), a student can be considered for an IER immediately. However, prior to this decision, YFU will make an effort to provide the student with support to recognize the nature of their behavior and to work on improving that behavior. Generally, a student will receive a warning letter which advises him/her of the specific issues in their poor behavior. It explains the specific expectations for improving their behavior and the support YFU can provide to help the student achieve those expectations. If the behavior persists, the student will receive a probation letter which again explains issues in the student’s behavior as well as expectations for improvement in behavior. The letter will advise the student that if the expectations for improvement in behavior are not achieved, then an IER is the next step.

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** Early Return usually happens because the student cannot adjust to the host country, 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.

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**ELECTRONICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** The consequences of irresponsible “digital” behavior can be more public, more severe, and longer lasting than mistakes people make “offline.” Students must follow all host family rules in regards to electronic media use, or they will be placed on disciplinary procedure. Please refer to Appendix IX for detailed Cell Phone Guidelines for Students and Families, Computer Use and Internet Safety Guidelines and Social Networking Guidelines.

**Sexting:** Depending on the circumstances, law enforcement may also become involved and criminal charges may be filed. Read more in Appendix IX.

**Harassing or Threatening Texts and Social Media Posts.** Students should be aware that such actions could result in criminal actions. Students should report to their YFU Area Representative or host parents if they are the target of harassing or threatening texts or phone calls. Read more in Appendix IX.

Remember, anything you digitally share is not necessarily private. Even when using apps like Snapchat, someone can take a screenshot or capture the image with another camera. Be thoughtful in what you share, and be sure not to partake in illegal activities or in re-sharing content that does not belong to you.

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**EMPLOYMENT**

**Policy:** Students in the YFU program are not permitted to work a full-time job during their stay. They should refer to the laws in their host country regarding other kinds of employment (e.g., part-time, casual or voluntary work).

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** Students hosted in the United States are not allowed to engage in full-time employment during their stay. Students, 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, or to work in a family business.
EXTENSION OF STAY

**Policy:** Generally YFU does not grant extensions of stay unless there is demonstrated evidence of a medical or special emergency requiring such an extension.

When a YFU Sending Organization requests an extension of stay in any circumstance other than a medical or special emergency, such an extension of stay must be agreed to by the YFU Receiving Organization. That agreement will take into account a student’s prior behavior during the program. The student must agree to continue to uphold the basic guidelines and aims of the YFU program during the period of extension. The student will, however, have no claim on YFU support during that period. The natural parent/legal guardian(s) are responsible for making all the necessary arrangements including, but not limited to, visa arrangements, extension of insurance and reservations for a return flight. In the case of Voluntary (VER) or Involuntary Early Returns (IER), an extension of stay is not permitted.

An exception to this policy may be made for those participating in post-secondary education programs who request to extend their stay in the host country. In this event, a student will not be considered “off program” until after the originally established departure deadline.

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INTERNET

**Policy:** YFU students are not allowed to download or upload copyrighted media files (music, video, images, and software) from or to non-official online stores that require a payment, or official websites that allow downloading even with approval of the copyright holder. This act is known as pirating, and can result in legal consequences. YFU students must not provide their media files online for other users to download. The student, not YFU, its representatives or its host families, is responsible for any payment that may result from a student having broken any law in this way.

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LEGAL STATUS

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** Exchange students in the US are subject to all US national and local laws. If a student needs legal assistance in the US, YFU can assist in identifying 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. Students who are 18 years old or who turn 18 while on program are considered adults under US law.

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MARRIAGE

**Policy:** Married students are not permitted on the YFU program. If a student marries while participating in a YFU program or is discovered to have married prior to going on a YFU program, the student will be considered for Early Return. This policy also applies to students who are living together with a partner in a committed relationship.

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MEDICAL TREATMENT OF A STUDENT (INCLUDING EMERGENCIES)

**Policy:** All YFU students must have insurance coverage for illness, medical emergencies, and hospitalization, and it must be acceptable to the YFU Receiving Organization. The student (not YFU, its representatives nor its host families) is responsible for any student medical bills regardless of who signs a hospital admission form. The student and natural parent/legal guardian(s) must recognize that YFU, its representatives and its host families are also not responsible for any negative results of emergency and/or other medical treatment.

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NATURAL DISASTER

**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 National Office (1.866.4.YFU.USA) as soon as possible to report their status.

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OFF PROGRAM

**Policy:** If a student is absent without permission from the host family or other place to which YFU has assigned him/her, YFU may determine that this student has left the YFU program. The student and natural parent/legal guardian(s) must recognize that, in such case, YFU is released from all obligations, legal or otherwise, to the student and their natural parent/legal guardian(s) for their current or further well-being. In most countries, the validity of the student’s visa is linked to being on program, which means that the visa would no longer be valid if the student is off program. YFU will, if possible, work with the student to again accept YFU supervision without delay. However, if this cannot be done, dismissal from the YFU program is final. The student
will then lose YFU support and their ticket to their home country will be issued for the earliest possible flight date.

**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. Airline tickets purchased by YFU must be used within 30 days of program termination or return airfare is forfeited by the student.

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**ORIENTATIONS**

**Policy:** YFU requires students to attend all orientations throughout their exchange. These are not only opportunities to meet other YFU students, but most importantly, they offer students the chance to share feelings, expectations and concerns with YFU volunteers and staff. Orientations are designed to help students in their adaptation process. Attending orientations should be a priority for students and their host families.

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**PASSPORT OR VISIA**

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** Students will have their passports and visas with them when they arrive at their host families’ homes. Students should make a record of their passport number and a copy of all the below documents, putting them 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 he or she should contact their SSM immediately. The student will be financially responsible for securing a replacement. A sample copy of the DS-2019 form can be found in Appendix II. 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; and
- the I-797 receipt or SEVIS I-901 fee confirmation.

Each of these forms is useless without the others. The student may not travel outside the USA without securing

Travel Permission from the YFU 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 once it has been signed by a designated YFU National Office staff member (a process outlined in the Permission to Travel form).

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**PERSONAL GROOMING**

**Policy:** Besides the personal hygiene customs of the host family and culture, students should meet hygiene expectations in all areas: use of bathroom, bathing, grooming, and washing of clothes; and respect the dress codes of the host country, school and family.

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**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 YFU 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, and can result in conflicts or misunderstandings.

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**PREGNANCY**

**Policy:** For medical, placement, and personal reasons, female students found to be pregnant while on the YFU program will be returned home immediately after notification of the natural parent/legal guardian(s). Individual circumstances may justify exceptions to this policy; however, all students in this circumstance will be considered for Early Return to their home country.

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.

REPUBLIC

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 prohibit them from doing so. 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 congregation of the student’s faith 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 community or state, or want to live with a family from a different socioeconomic 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.

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.

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

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

Attendance: All YFU students on high school or post-secondary education programs are expected to regularly attend secondary school or post-secondary education, and each host country is encouraged to see that a normal course of schoolwork is maintained. Repeated non-attendance, which in some countries is against visa conditions, will result in possible Early Return to the student’s home country.

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, may be cause for Early Return consideration.

Formal Expulsion: If a student is expelled from school, the student will be considered for Early Return to their home country.

Specific policy for YFU USA: 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 each of their 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.

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: Students who smoke are encouraged to discuss house 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 tobacco products & vapes. If a student’s smoking habits become 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 not responsible for meals and accommodation. Students are responsible for such expenses as school uniforms, testing fees, school laboratory fees, transportation, books, trips or expenses during trips, telephone calls or other personal expenses. They are also responsible for any property damage they cause.

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 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.

Most students will want to open a bank account. By using a W-8 BEN form (obtainable at a bank, online at irs.gov or from the YFU Regional 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. Should there be any question, the student or host family should contact the Area Representative.

Any travel which might have an impact on any of these factors requires written approval from YFU.

Each YFU organization will have specific travel approval procedures. The YFU National Organization in the host country 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 those sponsored by YFU, 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.

Any travel where the student will miss school, will need to contribute $300 or more to the cost of the trip, will leave the US, or will be without the host family requires YFU USA approval prior to finalizing plans. Travel where the student will be gone for more than 3 nights requires submittal of the Permission to Travel Form, and may require YFU USA approval as well. Failure to obtain approval from YFU USA may result in forfeiting any payments made if permission to travel is denied. YFU USA 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 Permission to Travel policy can be found in Appendix VI.

TELEPHONE AND COMPUTER USE

Specific policy for YFU USA: Excessive phone or internet use, the posting of inappropriate comments/pictures on social networking sites, or visiting inappropriate sites, will result in warning or probation. If the behavior is not corrected, the student will be considered for Early Return. Refer to Appendix VIII.

Long-Distance and International Calls: Students should make arrangements with their host families before making long-distance and international calls, especially regarding the duration and price of the call.

VISITS FROM NATURAL FAMILY AND HOME COUNTRY FRIENDS

Policy: Natural families and home country friends are strongly discouraged from visiting the exchange student during their exchange program, especially during the
initial adjustment period. The visit interrupts continuity of the relationship with the host family and may lessen the exchange experience for the student and the host family. This interruption 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 the YFU organization in the sending country before any arrangements are made. Host families must not be expected to accommodate a student’s visiting family members or friends with regard to room, meals or transport.

**Specific policy for YFU USA:** Natural family visits and visits from friends must be approved in advance by YFU USA and typically will only be approved if scheduled toward the end of your exchange. **Host families are not authorized to give permission for natural family visits. Students must ask their Support Services Manager for approval.**

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**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 on record, they should notify their Area Representative or the National Office so that all information can be sent to the appropriate address. Federal regulations require YFU USA keep the government informed of the current residence of every student.
APPENDIX VII: PERMISSION TO TRAVEL POLICY

YFU USA has a responsibility to assure student safety to the greatest extent possible, have knowledge of a student’s location, and ensure that students participate in host family activities and school programs. Any travel that might have an impact on any of these factors requires advance approval from YFU. The YFU USA National Office has final authority to grant or deny permission to travel. Unauthorized travel will have the student considered as Off Program and may result in dismissal of student and termination of visa status.

Permitted Travel:
- travel with the host family
- travel accompanied by another adult over 25 years authorized by YFU
- independent travel to visit an appropriate adult or host authorized by YFU
- trips sponsored by the high school, or religious, community or youth organizations if YFU determines there is appropriate adult supervision & the cost is appropriate;
- YFU sponsored trips (local and national)
- travel with the natural family at the end of the program year

Travel NOT Allowed:
- independent travel by the student alone or with other students
- trips sponsored by another exchange program, travel agent, or community member
- missing more days of school than school policy allows
- travel with the natural parents without YFU approval or if student will miss school

No Permission to Travel Form Required for
- a trip that meets all of these requirements
  - travel with the host family
  - within the USA
  - when carrying a cell phone known to YFU
  - cost to be paid by the student amount to under $300
  - YFU sponsored trips (they each have their own forms)

Host families and students are encouraged to tell their area representative of any travel plans regardless if a Permission to Travel Form is required.

Permission to Travel Form Required For
Natural Parent Permission is need to be attached/ uploaded for approval. A trip itinerary is necessary for trips with more than one destination.
- travel without the host family, area representative, or school for more than 3 nights
- travel outside of the US
- travel with the Natural Parents
- if student is paying $300 or more for the trip
- travel with school, or community organization, or religious organization
- local YFU trip
- planned by a YFU staff or volunteer (excludes national trips e.g. Belo)
- if the student misses more than 5 days of school

46 Passport to the USA
Do not purchase any airline, bus, or train tickets prior to receiving YFU approval, as many tickets are non-refundable. YFU USA will not reimburse, nor accept any responsibility for financial loss incurred by purchasing tickets or paying deposits prior to obtaining approval from the YFU Support Team for such activities.

Special note: Travel as a passenger or otherwise in any private plane or device for aerial navigation is not covered by YFU USA medical insurance. Such travel requires separate approval and insurance - review the Dangerous Activity Form and contact your Support Services Manager.

PERMISSION TO TRAVEL PROCEDURES

1) Complete all applicable sections of the Permission to Travel Form. Forms can be filled out in your Host Family Account.

2) Gather any additional paperwork required (invitations, natural parent permission).

3) Get required signatures (school principal, host parents, YFU responsible officer).

4) Upload all documents to the Travel Form on the Host Family Interface.

5) YFU will contact you to let you know if your trip is approved.

This Travel Form is an interactive guide to ensure that the pertinent information is noted while irrelevant sections will be skipped.

The YFU USA National Office has final authority to grant or deny permission to travel. Unauthorized travel will have the student considered as Off Program and may result in dismissal of student and termination of visa status.

Please review the following definitions and policies prior to completing the Permission to Travel Form.

School Attendance. YFU USA does not allow travel to interfere with school attendance. Students may not travel during school days unless they have the permission of the school principal (or someone authorized to give this permission) and the permission from YFU. The National Office has final authority, and may deny permission even if the school grants permission to be absent. YFU USA will not consider requests to miss school when the travel is to accompany visiting natural parents or friends from the native country or if the travel is independent travel.

Travel Outside the US. Travel to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean with the host family will usually be allowed. Other travel outside the United States is normally not allowed. Exceptions for travel with the host family to another foreign country may be made on a case-by-case basis. All such travel must be approved by the National Office in advance of arrangements being made.

Most countries have additional visa requirements for entry and many of our students do not meet these requirements without completing an application for a visa. To check these requirements, visit the website of the country’s consulate. The Mexican Embassy recommends all minors traveling without both Natural parents carry a notarized consent letter at all times in the event airline or Mexican immigration officials request one. This is a measure to prevent human trafficking.

A student must have a multiple entry visa to re-enter the US, and must have the “Certificate of Eligibility, Form DS-2019” signed by the YFU responsible officer prior to any travel outside the US or the student will be denied re-entry at the border. This is a Department of State requirement. Travel validation, once secured, is valid for up to one year.

To secure the required responsible officer signature, send the original “Certificate of Eligibility, Form DS-2019”, which should be located with the student’s passport, by a traceable method to: Support Services, Youth For Understanding USA 3995 Fashion Square Blvd Suite 2, Saginaw, MI 48603. Do not send your passport, just the certificate. Please include a check or money order payable to YFU USA for $25.00 to cover return of the documents by traceable express service. This process must be initiated no later than two weeks prior to the departure from the USA to ensure documents are received on time. In exceptional cases where the document is needed in a short time frame, you may request rush processing where the document is returned as overnight delivery. The cost for this sending method is $75.00.
DANGEROUS ACTIVITY DESCRIPTIONS

A. DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES REQUIRING PERMISSION FORM AND GUIDELINES

Climbing and Rappelling Walls in Controlled Settings
Students must complete appropriate training, use prescribed safety gear, and be supervised by a host parent or responsible adult.

Driving Farm Tractors
Students are permitted to drive standard farm tractors on private property. Instruction and supervision by a host parent or responsible adult are required. Driving tractors or other farm equipment must be in the context of helping out with chores and not a recreational activity. For students covered under the YFU USA insurance plan, driving a tractor is an exception to the motor vehicle exclusion in the medical portion of the policy and it is ultimately up to the insurance company to decide what constitutes a “standard farm tractor” should a claim arise.

Driving Ride-on Lawn Mowers
Students are permitted to drive standard ride-on mowers on private property. Instruction and supervision by a responsible adult are required. Use of ride-on mowers must be in the context of helping out with chores and not a recreational activity. For students covered under the YFU USA insurance plan, driving a ride-on mower is an exception to the motor vehicle exclusion in the medical portion of the policy and it is ultimately up to the insurance company to decide what constitutes a “standard ride-on mower” should a claim arise.

Horse Jumping
Students must be trained and supervised by a qualified instructor. Students must follow safety guidelines and utilize prescribed protective gear. Any injuries sustained during horse racing are excluded from the YFU provided insurance policy.

Hunting and Other Use of Firearms
Students must complete a certified training course in the use of firearms or other weapons used. Students must be properly licensed for both the type of game (animals) sought and the weapon used (including air/spring powered guns and bows and arrows). Students must follow safety guidelines, utilize prescribed protective gear, and follow all local laws. The hunting activity must be supervised by host parent(s) or a responsible adult.

Paint Ball and Archery
Students must complete appropriate training, follow safety guidelines, use prescribed safety gear, and be supervised by a host parent/responsible adult.

Scuba Diving
Students must complete PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) or NAUI (National Association of Underwater Instructors) certified training course and be accompanied by a certified guide. (If student has already completed training course, he/she must provide proof of current certification and be accompanied by a responsible adult.) Students must follow safety guidelines and utilize prescribed protective gear.

Skiing/Snowboarding Outside Ski Resort Maintained Trails/Slopes
Students must complete appropriate training, use prescribed safety gear, follow advisory precautions on local conditions, and be supervised by host parent or a responsible adult.
B. DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES REQUIRING SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL INSURANCE, PERMISSION FORM, AND GUIDELINES

Rappelling and Rock Climbing on Natural Formations
For all rappelling, rock climbing, and technical climbing, students must complete a training course and be accompanied by a certified instructor (if student has already completed a training course, he or she must provide proof of current certification and must be accompanied by a responsible adult). Students must follow safety guidelines and utilize prescribed protective gear.

Spelunking
Students must be trained and accompanied by a certified guide, follow safety guidelines, and utilize prescribed protective gear.

White Water Rafting
Students must be trained and accompanied by a certified guide, follow safety guidelines, and wear prescribed protective gear, including a life jacket.

Riding in a Private Plane/Vehicle/Device for Aerial Navigation
The pilot must be properly licensed, local laws followed, and all prescribed safety measures in place. Natural parents must provide proof of medical insurance coverage.

C. PROHIBITED DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bungee jumping</th>
<th>Parasailing</th>
<th>Mountaineering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hang gliding</td>
<td>Water skiing</td>
<td>Racing by horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parachute jumping</td>
<td>Piloting a private plane</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Driving
PROHIBITED (even on private property): operation of vehicles including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), automobiles, snowmobiles, trucks, motorized trail bikes, go-carts, personal watercrafts, mopeds, motorcycles or snowmobiles.

Students are permitted to ride as passengers on the above vehicles provided they follow all local laws and safety precautions and are the vehicle is not racing but under no circumstances are they permitted to drive. Students are not covered for injuries/death to themselves or others for accidents when they are driving a vehicle.
DANGEROUS ACTIVITY PERMISSION

Prior to participating in any of the dangerous activities, students must provide this form signed by the student, natural parent(s) and host parent(s). In many cases students must be licensed or certified in the activity and/or provide proof of supplemental medical insurance to cover accidental injuries or death in the pursuit of the high risk or dangerous activity. Student and natural parents must provide proof of other medical insurance coverage as a condition to YFU approving participation in an activity not indemnified through YFU USA group insurance or YFU partner insurance.

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.). Violating YFU rules governing dangerous activities (e.g., driving) will nullify a student’s medical/liability coverage through YFU.

If you are unsure if an activity is or should be considered dangerous, please contact your Support Services Manager.

YFU USA provided insurance does not provide liability coverage for damage caused by a student in pursuit of Dangerous Activities; the student and the natural family are responsible for finding out whether their private insurance coverage applies. For more information on insurance coverage refer to the YFU website at yfuusa.org.

DANGEROUS ACTIVITY AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

YFU Student Name

YFU Student Home Country

YFU Student Date of Birth

DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES REQUIRING PERMISSION FORM AND GUIDELINES

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.

☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ For this time period only.
☐ For this time period only.

50 Passport to the USA
DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES REQUIRING SUPPLEMENTAL MEDICAL INSURANCE, PERMISSION FORM, AND GUIDELINES

- Rappelling and Rock Climbing on Natural Formations
  - Yes □  No □  For this time period only ________________

- Spelunking
  - Yes □  No □  For this time period only ________________

- White Water Rafting
  - Yes □  No □  For this time period only ________________

- Riding in a noncommercial Plane/Vehicle/ Device for Aerial Navigation
  - Yes □  No □  For this time period only ________________

MEDICAL INSURANCE CONFIRMATION

To participate in any activity requiring Supplemental Medical Insurance, please provide that insurance information here:

Insurer’s Name

Policy Number

Policy Effective Dates

PROHIBITED DANGEROUS ACTIVITIES

- Driving
- Bungee jumping
- Parachute jumping
- Parasailing
- Water Skiing
- Piloting a private plane
- Mountaineering
- Racing by Horse

SIGNATURES FOR APPROVAL

I read the Dangerous Activity Permission Policy and request approval to participate.

Student Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Natural Parent Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Host Parent Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Your Support Services Manager will grant or deny approval via email. Should you have questions, please contact your Support Services Manager.
APPENDIX IX: SOCIAL NETWORKING SAFETY TIPS

Having a Facebook or other social networking site profile (Tumblr, Twitter, etc.) is a good way to make plans with American friends and to keep in touch after going back to your home country. By following a few simple safety tips, you can very easily avoid creating problems for yourself and others.

- **Facebook is public.** The way you present yourself and your friends on Facebook can be seen by hundreds of people that you know and care about. Every time that you post something, decide whether you are representing yourself, your home country, family, YFU and host family well. Every year a few students lose their host family because of what they have posted on Facebook. Don’t let this happen!!

- **“Friend” your host parents, host siblings and Area Rep;** it’s a great way to help everyone communicate better. Many YFU fields have closed group pages on Facebook. Be sure to join your group to share your experience with others and stay informed about what is happening in your area.

- **Limit Facebook activity with your home country.** While you are on exchange, Facebook should be used in English to communicate with your local American friends. Excessive communication with friends and family at home makes it harder to settle into the USA. If this becomes a problem for you, YFU and your host family will ask you to limit your time on Facebook.

- **Post pictures from your American life.** It’s fun for others to see what you are doing and you will have a nice photo album to look back on when you’re exchange year is over.

- **Keep your profile private -** viewable only by people you know! You do not want to share your phone number, address or email with everyone who has internet access! You can set these limitations in your privacy settings.

- **Delete inappropriate comments from friends.** It’s OK to delete things you are embarrassed about or that you would not be proud of later in life. If a friend tags you, you can delete tags or yourself in any pictures that you don’t want others to see. Even if your profile is private, your photos can be accessed publicly if you have been “tagged”. Again, every year a few students lose their host family because of an inappropriate photo or post from their friends. Don’t let this happen!!

- **Don’t harass or threaten others.** Passing along rumors or unkind jokes or stories, or even false stories about someone on social networking sites is called cyber-bullying. Don’t complain about your host school, friends, or host family members on Facebook. Be sure to tell a host parent, teacher or YFU representative if you become the target of cyber-bullying.

- **Join YFU groups and other groups associated with your interests.** This will help you learn about American culture. But don’t join groups that might offend or embarrass yourself, your host family or your own parents.

- **Universities and employers are looking at Facebook pages more and more.** Keep in mind that all information and pictures that you post of yourself and your friends can become part of a school or job application later in life, and are part of your YFU application now!

- **YFU staff and volunteers will be viewing your Facebook page.** Any information contained in your Facebook page or posted about you by others that involves a violation of your host family’s trust or YFU rules may result in disciplinary action up to and including being sent home.

- **Don’t friend anyone you don’t know personally.** It’s not rude to ignore friend requests from strangers. Have fun and stay safe!
APPENDIX X: CELL PHONE GUIDELINES

YFU knows that the key to every student’s successful adjustment is frequent personal communication and interaction with host family and new friends in the host country. Peer communication among teens primarily occurs via cell phone and text message, and use of this technology is a key way for the YFU student to network with new American friends.

YFU acknowledges that most students will bring with them or purchase a cell phone while on program. We must caution that cell phones, if used to maintain daily contact with friends and family in the home country, can affect a student’s ability to adapt to the host environment and may jeopardize success on program. Any student who does have a cell phone must be aware of and follow YFU policies regarding contact with home country family and friends as outlined in the student handbook. Specifically, contact with the home country, to include phone calls and/or text messaging, should be limited to once per week. If it is determined that cell phone use is interfering with cultural adjustment, YFU will support the host family enforcing restrictions on use. YFU may also issue a warning or probation letter to the student regarding this issue.

Needing a cell phone. Many families are shifting, if they have not already, from landlines to cellular phones. Therefore, the actual need for a cell phone will depend on whether or not your host family has a landline. If your family does not have a landline, then you will need a cell phone in case you need to be able to make an emergency call.

Bringing your own cell phone. The only absolute way to make sure that your cell phone will work in the US is to check with your phone provider. If you have a GSM standard phone, make sure that you have the phone unlocked so that it can be used overseas and then make sure to purchase a SIM card in the US after settling down. If you own a CDMA device you have to check to see whether or not it is non-global ready or global ready. Again, the only way to make sure your device will work while you are abroad is to check with your cell phone provider.

Buying a cell phone in the US. Your host family should be able to help you get a pre-paid phone if your own phone will not work in the US. Some stores where you can find a pre-paid phone include: Walmart, Target, BestBuy, Kmart, or even a cell phone provider store like Verizon Wireless or T-Mobile. Wherever you decide to buy your pre-paid cell phone, keep in mind that you should never enter a contract for a cell phone with your host-family.

Student is Responsible for Costs of Cell Phones and Service. YFU recommends that host families not provide cell phones to their exchange students. If a host family chooses to provide a cell phone for a student who does not bring one or purchase one on their own, YFU advises that the host family not enter into a cell phone contract for or with the student, but rather advise the student to purchase a prepaid phone. YFU will not assist in the resolution of a cell phone contract entered into on behalf of the student. The host family will be responsible for all unresolved contract charges or related costs incurred.

Cell Phones at School. YFU students must familiarize themselves with their US high schools’ policies regarding cell phone use on campus. Many US schools prohibit cell phone use on school property and will permanently dismiss any student found to be in violation of this rule. A YFU student who is dismissed from school will be considered for early return to the home country.

Sexting. Sexting is a term referring to sending sexually explicit text messages, pictures or videos via cell phones or through the internet. The consequences of irresponsible "digital" behavior can be more public, more severe and longer lasting than mistakes people make "offline." Sending and/or receiving sexually explicit content to or from another person can lead to immediate disciplinary actions at school and within YFU. Depending on the circumstances, law enforcement may also become involved and criminal charges may be filed. In order to protect yourself, your friends, your host family and natural parents from such embarrassing and serious situations, you should never send or open a sexually explicit message.

Harassing or Threatening Texts. Students should report to a host parent, teacher or YFU representative if they are the target of harassing or threatening texts or phone calls. Students should never use the cell phone to harass or threaten others. Students should be aware that such actions could result in criminal actions.