

rotary
youth
exchange



DISTRICT 5100 HOST FAMILY TRAINING

Updated August 2023

Objectives of the RYE Program & Host Family Manual

Rotary Youth Exchange is the premier exchange program in the world with over 8,000 exchanges taking place annually. Our goal is to further international goodwill and understanding by enabling students to study first hand the cultural differences of people in lands other than their own. Our program enables students to advance their education by studying for a year in an environment entirely different than their own and undertaking study of courses and subjects not typically available to them in secondary schools in the own country.

We encourage students to broaden their outlook by learning to live with and meet people of cultures, creeds, and colors different than their own. By having to cope with the everyday life difficulties in an environment completely unfamiliar from the one they have experienced in their home country our students mature and adapt to different viewpoints and cultures helping them form ideas meant to promote goodwill and harmony. They act as ambassadors for their own country by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their country and its culture to the people and groups they meet during their 11 months abroad. They study and observe all facets of life and culture in our country so that on their return to their native country they can pass on the knowledge they have gained thereby drawing the world together in greater harmony and understanding.

Purpose of this Manual

While we recognize that there are many different ways to parent a teenager, we have prepared this manual specifically to explain how our program operates. The suggestions that follow are not meant to be dictatorial, but to serve as guidelines to deal with situations created by different cultures, backgrounds, values, and expectations. In our attempt to provide consistency, we have thoroughly explained our positions on a wide variety of topics. Please feel free to contact any of the District committee personnel for additional assistance or clarification.

Getting Started

Hosting a Rotary Exchange Student begins with having the desire to be a loving parent, with the willingness to undertake the responsibility of nurturing and guiding a teenager from another land in exchange for the reward of adding a member to your family while learning about the student, their homeland and culture.

Each host family should expect to go through an interview process with the Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) from the local Rotary Club. Each student's experience is optimal when hosted by three or four families during the eleven months that they stay with the Club. A good host family has the interest, time, room, and energy to care for a young person.

Rotary prides itself on providing a safety network and high degree of care for each of our students. A full explanation of the program is available to every prospective host family from the club YEO. Special rules apply to students involved in this program and it is important that each host family understand them all.

An attempt to match a student of the appropriate gender for your family is also important for the success of the exchange. Initially, your time will be spent getting acquainted with your student, sounding out what they like and dislike, laying down boundaries and working out rules for living together. The repayment for your energies will be a life long friendship experience with the knowledge that you promoted world harmony and understanding.

CHAPTER 1 - PREPARING FOR THE STUDENT'S ARRIVAL

Pre-arrival Communication

Before your inbound exchange student arrives in District 5100, it is important to establish some type of communication between the student and the first host family. The District 5100 Inbound Coordinator will have received the application package and may also be in communication with your student. The Coordinator will have forwarded a complete application package to your club YEO who then can provide a copy to you and we encourage you to discuss the package with your YEO. Understanding the student's application will help to make the initial meeting more comfortable for both you and the student. This also helps your student feel more confident in YOUR interest in being their host parent. If you are the second or third Host Family, please discuss with your YEO what type of communication would be most beneficial before making contact with your student.

Shortly after your Rotary Club has assigned a student to you, call or write to introduce yourself. A call may be awkward if the student and their family speaks limited English, but the gesture will mean a great deal to the student. After your call, or If you decide not to call, sit down with your family and write the student a letter. Have each member of your family contribute something to the letter, or, if time allows, assign each member of your family a subject and have each write a separate paragraph or letter.

Communication from your own family is very important, especially if they are of a similar age as the student. Your student will want to know if their future host brothers and sisters share similar interests.

Here are some suggestions for things to include in the letter or email :

- Describe your family (number of children, their ages, family interests, what you do for a living, grandparents)
- Talk about any pets (what kind, their names, how many, do they live inside or out)
- Talk about your state or province (where we are in the S send a map showing major cities)
- Describe your community (i.e. country, city, or small town; how far are you from Portland), population; major features, downplay any
- Describe your home (how close is it to school/shopping/etc., special features such as a swimming pool, separate bedroom for the student,)
- What weather can be expected in each different season
- What types of activities your family
- Describe the school your student will attend (size, how far from home, how they will get there, sports and extra-curricular activities, and types of classes available, etc.)
- Send photos of your family, your home, and your community
- Send any brochures or tourist information you can obtain about your community (check with the Chamber of Commerce and your local tourism agency)

- Discuss any trips that you plan to include your student (winter or spring break?)

The significance of writing this letter is to reinforce that you and your family are genuinely looking forward to your student's arrival. The welcome letter will help to establish a foundation on which a strong relationship can be built.

The Student's Living Space

The issue of whether students need to have their own room is debatable. On one hand, if an extra bedroom is available, it will give the student a place where they can feel at home and where they can retreat to if the whirlwind of new experiences become too much to handle. On the other hand, sharing a room with a sibling can help the student to become a closer part of the host family more quickly. Sharing a room also prevents the student from withdrawing and shutting themselves off from the rest of the host family, which is a symptom of homesickness.

We recommend not providing a personal television or computer for your student in their room so you can monitor what they see or do and encourage them to share free time with the family instead of being alone. If your student does have their own room, and is showing signs of withdrawing, urge them to participate in as many activities as possible. Invite them along on errands, when you run down to the store, go to the mall, etc. In any case, the District does require that the student have their own bed, and should have adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, and as well as a desk or quiet area in which to study. If rooming with a sibling, the sibling must be of the same gender.

Phone / Computer

It is reasonable to expect that your student will want to make calls home to speak with their parents from time to time. They most likely brought a mobile phone from their home country. Your assistance in helping them to find an American data plan is appreciated. There are many options from adding them to your plan and asking them to reimburse you, as well as getting them e-sims for their time here. It is also reasonable to expect that your student will want to utilize the home computer if they did not bring one from home. They may need it for email and research purposes in school. It is a good idea to have the student use their computer in a common area of the home so they do not isolate themselves in their room.

Family Preparation

As a host family, you are about to accept a new member into your lives. However, this new member has had a completely different social upbringing. What you take for granted as socially polite or acceptable may not be so obvious to your student. Discuss the enclosed list of "First Night Questions". This list is frequently not provided to the outgoing exchange student by many sponsoring Rotary Clubs over-seas. We recommend that you use it as a guideline, along with the list of Rotary rules, to discuss family rules for the student. You can obtain a copy of the first night questions in their native language as well as in English through the NAYEN link on our website.

Have your family decide together stances on issues such as curfew, chores, television, mobile phone use, email, and bedtimes. Discuss what issues you believe may arise during the exchange, and think about the most effective way of handling those circumstances. Remember that the student is here to become an integrated member of your family, not as a guest. The topics discussed in this manual are relevant to each and every member of your family, and you should learn to rely on one another for support and assistance during this challenging experience. When everyone works together to strengthen and keep the lines of communication open, problem resolution will be much easier, and your hosting experience is sure to be rewarding.

Travel to the USA

Your new student should be asked to contact you as soon as they know their arrival arrangements. Make sure you have designated a time and place to meet, and that you know about any layovers or overnight stops during the student's route. Make sure the student has your mobile number so they can reach you. Be sure you have theirs as well.

Many countries teach English as a required course in school, but students from non-English speaking countries will feel very insecure in their mastery of English. Many new arrivals can read English much better than they can speak it.

CHAPTER 2...THE BIG DAY - ARRIVAL

Reconfirm the Arrival Time

Early arrivals, delays, or flight cancellations are not uncommon, especially where international travel is concerned. Flights in the summer are often overbooked, so it is very important that you confirm your student's flight. Use the online airline portals or flight status to verify flight and arrival time. Give the student your cell phone number, or the number for your YEO to call if a delay occurs after you have left for the airport. If there is a last minute delay on a short domestic flight, or some other problem, you need to have some way for the student to get word to you to help belay their feelings of panic.

Meeting Your Student's Flight

Your student is walking off the plane from a six to eight hour flight (or longer). Imagine that they can't understand but a few words of what people are saying, that they may be exhausted, confused, and possibly scared. Imagine how good it would feel to step past Customs wearing their RYE blazer to see a group of eager friendly people they recognize from some photographs, holding up a huge welcome sign with their name on it! A sign is very important since there will probably be a lot of people milling around the airport.

It helps start the experience on a positive note for your student, and helps them feel welcome in their new country. In addition to a sign, balloons or flowers help add an extra note of welcome (as well as making for great pictures!). It's important to have as much of the household at the airport as possible. Recognizing brothers and sisters will help your student's confidence, especially when they're smiling! It is also common for the District Country Officer, a Club YEO and other members of a club to be at the airport for your student's arrival.

What to Do if your Student Is Not on the Plane?

If your student is not on their scheduled flight, contact your Club YEO if they are not there with you. Next, one of you should call the students' designated emergency contact person immediately (found on the application). If no word has been received of a delay or problem, contact an airline representative immediately to see if the student missed a connecting flight somewhere enroute. The YEO should contact the student's family to see if a last-minute problem arose.

Claiming Luggage

Help your student claim their luggage and transport it to the car. If any luggage is lost, immediately contact the airport personnel to file a claim. Frequently baggage is left behind at the airport where customs were cleared. The student will need to give descriptive information such as color, size, shape, the flight route, and whether an address and name was affixed, etc. Do not leave the airport until the procedure for claiming lost luggage has been completed. The airline typically will deliver the bags to your home when they arrive, so you should not have to go back

to the airport to pick them up. To make it simpler to reclaim lost luggage, suggest to the student that they take photos of the luggage before leaving home and carry the pictures in their carry-on luggage. Also suggest that they make a list of what each bag contains in case they cannot be found and the airport has to estimate a value.

Arriving Home

The first thing your student will probably want to do, and you should encourage, is to call their biological parents to let them know of their safe arrival and that they are with you. It may be an emotional call as they may be tired, disoriented, and have just realized how far away they are from friends and family. Be prepared for this and offer appropriate empathy when they hang up the phone.

The Abbreviated House Tour

After arriving from the airport, show your student their bedroom and conduct a brief tour of your home. Show them where the bathroom is located, and where to come for breakfast in the morning. Do not try to orient them to everything in your home at this time as they may likely be exhausted and in need of sleep. Show them where the necessities are kept (shampoo, towels, water glasses, etc.), and let them know that these are as much theirs as anyone else in the family. Make sure they know how the toilet, sink and bath fixtures (hot and cold), showers, and hair dryer work. Don't try to discuss rules and jobs at this time because your student may be too disoriented to absorb much information.

Sleep

Do **NOT** schedule a welcome party for the first day your student is here. Wait 2 or 3 days, or until the first weekend and then have an introductory party for all the host families and the Rotarians to meet your new Inbound (minus jet lag). The main thing on your Inbound's mind when they arrive will probably be sleep. Waiting in huge airports surrounded by strange languages, carrying heavy luggage, crossing time zones, dealing with customs and passports, and sitting on the plane for half the day will have left your student exhausted. In addition, your student will be experiencing many different emotions that can be confusing and stressful.

However, it is recommended that if your student arrives early in the day, that they stay awake until at least 8:00 p.m. That way they will start to be adjusted to our time zone, and jet lag will be minimized. You could suggest that they unpack and store their clothes and luggage.

CHAPTER 3 ... THE FIRST WEEK

The Expanded House Tour

Take your student on an expanded house tour as a means of integrating your student and making them feel more a part of the family. Give them a detailed tour of your house the next day after their arrival. Schedule a time to discuss the questions in the First Night Questionnaire. (if you need to print these in the student's native language, go to NAYEN.org - YEO Resources - Host Family - First Night Questions - or use this link <http://fnq.yeoresources.org/> Be sure to show them how everything works, from running the dishwasher and laundry machines, to locking the front door at night. Discuss the different electric service that we have (with its different wall plugs) and discover if any appliances that they brought along may not work due to that factor. Explain how the microwave oven and the stove work. Explain to a female student how to dispose of sanitary products.

Take nothing for granted. It may be that your student feels embarrassed to ask how to operate certain items, or that they are too self-conscious about their language skills to ask questions. Putting sticky note signs on everything with the English and native language words for that object will be a big help in language assimilation for the student with weak English skills. Watching Sesame Street with a younger sibling will be a great boost in language and bonding. A little extra time spent orienting now can save embarrassing misunderstandings in the future.

Discuss empathy with your children and warn them not to laugh or make fun of language errors. What may seem funny to them can be extremely embarrassing to the student. However, it is not unusual for students to laugh at themselves when they make an error.

The Neighborhood Tour

Show your student around your immediate neighborhood and the community to familiarize them with their new surroundings. Feeling comfortable in their new town will happen gradually. Encourage them to ask questions. Introduce them to your neighbors and other members of your community. Orient them to the safety network in place to help them.

Show them where the school bus stop and market or corner store is located. Let them know if there are any dogs to be cautioned about. Orient them to several landmarks in case they become lost. Talk about the different traffic signs we use so that they don't make any mistakes. If you live in a larger town, warn them against talking to strangers, going into bars or nightclubs, trespassing on private property, how to deal with interactions with gangs, what sections of town to avoid, etc. Stress the need for safety. Again, take nothing for granted.

Registering for School

Each school system differs in registration requirements. Before your student arrives, ask your YEO and the counseling staff at the school about registration details. Decide if you or the YEO will sit with your student while they choose their classes and introduce them to the school

counselor. Please remember that this is also a cultural exchange program. There may be a Rotarian who works at the school, be sure they meet each other so there may be additional help to get the student oriented. Some countries have very specific requirements for the classes that your student must take to receive credit for the school year. Your YEO can check for such information from the student's home Rotary regarding any requirements.

Your Rotary Club is responsible for helping with fees for special classes, such as for a musical instrument or uniforms. The Club should always be responsible for academically related costs not waived by the school. Schooling is not the host family's financial responsibility. Remind the counselor and the student of our cultural awareness emphasis as some students feel they are obligated to assume an almost impossible academic load. It is not unknown for the exchange student to want to take such things as four or five laboratory classes as well as a full schedule of other subjects. On the other hand, some students will want to take as few courses as possible, hoping for a "vacation" year. Striking a reasonable balance, especially if the student's English is shaky, is important. Guidance, with the help of a high school counselor, is necessary in such matters, especially if the student has the goal of graduating from the high school. Work with the counselor to create a schedule that will allow your student to attend the weekly Rotary meeting without upsetting the school staff.

Most students receive no credit for this school year. It is also possible that your student has already graduated from high school but is bound by the rules of the exchange to continue to attend high school during their exchange year. If some of your friends have children attending the same school, introduce them ahead of time so they can be helpful during the first few days of school. Be sure to ask them to show the student where their classes are located and, if possible, to introduce them to the teachers. Let the teachers know that your student is a Rotary Exchange Student and offer to be a buffer when expectations on either side get a bit strained. If the school has a language class or club for the student's native language, get the student enrolled and suggest that a presentation be made to the class. This will help the student meet new people and help the other students in the school learn about them. Discourage your student from hanging around with only students who speak their native language as this will seriously deter them from experiencing all the student body has to offer.

If transportation arrangements can be made, strongly encourage your Inbound to become involved in as many extracurricular activities as possible. After school language clubs, drama, music groups, intramural and varsity sports will expand your students group of new friends rapidly. However, your student did not come to America to play soccer or tennis, they came to experience as much of our culture as we can expose to them. Their ability to make friends quickly will give them opportunities for experiences that otherwise may not come their way, such as choir or band trips, theater productions, or community projects. New friends take a lot of the burden of entertaining off your backs. However, don't let your family be ignored in favor of too many "friends".

Bank Account, Return Tickets, Passport

As part of the Rotary program, students are required to arrive with an emergency fund of \$500.00 to be taken and safeguarded by the YEO for the future use by your student in time of

crisis. This money is to be used only in case of an emergency, such as needing replacement of eyeglasses or emergency dental work. New clothes do not normally fall under the category of emergency needs.

We recommend that a checking account be set up in the student's name by the YEO soon after the student's arrival. Frequently there will be a local Rotarian banker who can help set up a non-interest-bearing checking account with an ATM card. The bank should accept the student's passport ID number in lieu of a social security/insurance number. It is recommended that the student's YEO, or other appropriate Rotarian, also be a signatory on the account in case of an emergency where the student is unable to authorize withdrawal of necessary funds. If the emergency fund is used, it must be replenished by the bio-parents as soon as possible. If it is not used during the year, the YEO (at their discretion) can release the funds to the student shortly before returning home.

When your student arrives, they should have in their possession an open ended, undated guaranteed return airline ticket, and their passport and visa. Copies of each document should be made and the originals tucked away for safekeeping. Check that the return ticket does not have a date of return prior to the middle of July. If this is the case, please have the YEO contact the District Inbound Coordinator. Keeping these documents safe during an entire year, especially during moves to subsequent host families, is a challenge that must be taken seriously. The student's passport acts as the student's official ID during the year, but a good copy will suffice. Only during travel to another country should the originals be carried.

Inbound students must contact the District Inbound Coordinator within a few days of their arrival so that the necessary SEVIS and Homeland Security paperwork can be completed registering the students as arrived.

Expenses and Allowances

Normal expenses during the student's stay should be covered by the monthly allowance provided by the host Rotary Club. Host parents are not expected to purchase clothing, souvenirs, postage, pay for the student's mobile service, cell phone or pocket spending money.

If the host parent chooses to provide an allowance as they do for their natural children, it is at their discretion. The student's natural parents may desire to wire transfer funds or send a check to the student to cover additional needs, or provide the student with a credit/debit card to purchase things like winter clothing or school supplies. The student must be tutored on the use of their new checking account and should be encouraged to plan ahead for expenses such as prom and homecoming as well as school-sponsored trips that will have a cost to attend.

Medical Insurance

Please make sure that the student has purchased the necessary medical insurance to pay for any medical expenses. The District Inbound Coordinator will contact the student shortly after arrival to make sure that appropriate medical insurance is in place. The student may have to pay for the expenses up front and then get reimbursed by their carrier. Host Families are not expected to pay

for the medical expenses for the student and then have to wait for reimbursement – the Emergency fund can be used to pay for these medical expenses. Our District requires all students to purchase CISI Bouldoc Insurance prior to arrival in the states. If you have need of using the insurance, the student should have in their possession a Medical Card. If no, please ask your YEO to print one for you. You will also need the portion of the application that grants you permission to be consulted for medical care. Refer to the youthexchange5100.org website for more information on insurance.

CHAPTER 4 ... LIVING WITHIN THE GUIDELINES

One of the most common mistakes a new host family makes is to treat their exchange student as a visitor, guest, or tourist instead of a family member. While you may be very enthusiastic about their arrival into your home, it is important to spread the enthusiasm throughout their stay.

Although your student will want to see as much of the area as possible during their stay, they also expect and should share in your family life. If you have children of your own, the easiest way to prevent future problems is to remember to treat your student the same way you would treat your own children of the same age.

If your student learns early on in the exchange year that they will be treated no differently than anyone else in the home, they will have a much better understanding of the reality of being an exchange student. At first the student may seem to need nurturing and mothering as much as a small child might because they feel insecure, vulnerable, and need to learn so much before they can be comfortable in the new setting. The typical sixteen to eighteen year-old looks (and tries to act) like an adult, but most are struggling with the fear of embarrassment and homesickness. A little tact and empathy, combined with a willingness to keep the lines of communication open, even if it gets a little uncomfortable, will go a long way towards family harmony and ensuring a rich and fulfilling exchange experience for both the student and the host family.

Please remember that cultural differences may come into play early on during their stay at your home. A Brazilian who is used to getting ready for a party at midnight and then staying up until 5 A.M. will have a difficult time dealing with our curfews and going to bed at 10P.M. That same student may have 2 servants back home and doesn't have the foggiest notion of cleaning, cooking, or chores. Communicate carefully but quickly!

Rotary Rules & The Six D's

These are the rules, signed by all Rotary students and their parents, which **MUST** take precedent over family rules. The basic hard and fast rules that every student must abide by are the famous four D's: No **D**rinking, no **D**riving, no **D**ating, no **D**isfigurement, no **D**isrespect, and no **D**rugs.

Sometimes a student is returned home prior to the scheduled conclusion of their stay. In most cases, early program termination is the result of one or more serious violations of the Rotary Rules. The following rules are those that apply to all Rotary students:

- The student is forbidden specifically from:
 - **Drugs** -using controlled substances of any kind except those prescribed by a physician for valid medical reasons
 - **Drinking** - from consuming alcoholic beverages of any kind, although in many cultures alcohol is a normal part of life
 - **Disfigurement** – Students may not get piercings or tattoos while here.
 - **Disrespect** – Students should always treat their host families, other students, club and district personnel with respect.

- **Driving** -from driving or controlling any motorized vehicle during the exchange year (including motorcycles, off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, boats, go-carts, tractors,)
- Romantic attachments **Dating** must be
 - Stress group activities and
 - Do encourage attending cultural events such as Prom and
 - Boy or girlfriends from back home should be Do not ever encourage them to come for a visit to your home.

The District has developed travel guidelines over many years of experience with the safety and well being of the students in our program. We must honor our pledge to the biological parents to safeguard their students. The following rule #8 is stated on the form signed by each Inbound student and their biological parents before they enter our Program, and is part of their application to be hosted by our District:

- “Travel is permitted with host parents or for Rotary club or district functions authorized by the hosting Rotary club or district **with proper adult chaperones**. Other travel must be approved by the host district officer, host club, host family and student’s own parents /legal guardians in writing exempting Rotary of responsibility and liability. **Students may not travel alone or accompanied only by other students.**
- The student is required to attend several orientation meetings and may also attend optional activities under the Rotary program provided by the District. Student attendance will also be required at Club level sponsored events. **Mandatory means that any Inbound student who misses one of these required District meetings without prior Rotary District Committee permission may be required to return early to their native country.**
- Costs related to an early return home, for whatever reason, are the sole responsibility of the student and their parents, as are any other costs not stated earlier as being the responsibility of the host family. Additionally, the student must return home at the end of their exchange year, prior to their visa expiring.
- **Additional written permission from the natural parents is required if the student is leaving the host family for any school trips, or with another host family or friends family. Permission for travel may be denied if Rotary or the host parents decide that the proposed adult supervision will not be adequate or that the situation will not be completely safe.**
- All costs of transportation to and from the host country are the responsibility of the parent/guardians.
- Students must be provided room and board, schooling, a minimum \$80 monthly allowance, and receive counsel by the hosting Rotary Club.
- While in our country, supervision of the student is the responsibility of District 5100 Youth Exchange, Rotary District 5100, the host Rotary Club, and the host family.
- The student will become an integral part of the host family, assuming duties and responsibilities usual for a family member of that age, respecting the wishes of the host family, and accepting such guidance and restrictions as the host family.
- The student must attend school full-time during the year of their exchange. **Regular attendance at school is a must.** It is recommended that the student avoid an

exceptionally demanding course schedule, as they will be challenged to adjust to our culture without the additional stress of a heavy course load.

- The student is not allowed to secure work. Your student is here to experience our culture, not to work.
- Laws of the host country are to be observed at all times, and it is understood that in case of a violation, the student can not expect assistance to come from the student's home. Stealing is absolutely not acceptable. The student will be returned home as soon as the authorities release them
- Smoking is discouraged and can be forbidden if the student is under the age of 18, and always may be restricted by the host family. This may be a significant problem because in many cultures, smoking is very common, even among children. If your student stated in their application that they are a non-smoker, they will be held to that statement throughout their exchange.

District Travel Guidelines

Our District has adopted strict guidelines that are oriented to provide the safest environment for our students and helping host families determine what travel activities should be avoided. The District Youth Exchange Chairman or District Inbound Coordinator, and the Club Youth Exchange Officer must approve all overnight, out-of- district travel. Any co-ed sleepover will be denied approval.

Religious Observances

Religious observances may be very important in both your own family and in the culture from which your student came. This may be one of the most important issues in your relationship. Many areas of the world practice religions other than the Catholic/Christian faiths. Some may have strict dietary guidelines, or customs with which you may not be familiar. It is important that you be sensitive and open on this subject. You definitely should invite your student to attend worship with you, but do not insist that they come or participate in your faith.

Encourage them to explore the various ways that our people worship in this country by attending different services with other families. Respect your student's beliefs, and whenever possible, aid them in making arrangements for the religious observances of their family. If the student is of the same religion as your family, participation must still be their choice to decide. Although differences of this nature can be a source of tension, they can also provide richness to the exchange experience by sharing some of your student's culture and observances.

Although it might be a goal of one's religious faith to convert others, attempting to convert an exchange student who is subject to your control is the height of breach of the student's family's trust and could cause the student great internal turmoil and conflict. No such attempt should be made. Flexibility and tolerance are the watchwords. You may find that you can learn from your student and vice versa.

Religious events should be happy occasions, not sources of pressure, upset, or frustration.

CHAPTER 5 ... LIVING WITH YOUR STUDENT

Family Rules and Routines

It is very important to discuss the rules and expectations with your student soon after they arrive. By familiarizing your new family member with your rules and routines, you can avoid many misunderstandings.

Before they arrive, have a family meeting to discuss the family and Rotary rules (both spoken and unspoken). Spoken rules will be fairly easy to identify, i.e. weekday and weekend curfews, everyone eats dinner together, no television until after homework is finished, etc. Unspoken rules, such as Don't talk with your mouth full, Don't slam the door, Ask to be excused from the table, Always put the toilet seat down afterwards, etc., may present a greater challenge. Family routines such as- what is the order for using the bathrooms in the morning, and how long does each person get? How long can showers last? Does the family regularly eat out Friday nights? When does the family get up on weekends? How late can friends call me?, may be the most difficult to identify, because they may be second nature to you. Clear-cut mutual agreements will help avoid misunderstandings that can make both parties uncomfortable during the exchange.

Be understanding about mistakes (i.e. swearing without knowing what the word really means, putting their feet on the coffee table and their elbows on the table, etc.) But, in the enforcement of the rules, be up-front and consistent about the consequences. Let your student know how you will treat your own children in the same situations, and if it happens again, enforce the consequences. This will make for a much smoother and more positive experience for you and your student, as well as avoiding jealousy and negative feelings from your own children. We suggest implementing the theory of "tough love" to enforce your rules fairly and evenly.

Remember that the hosted teenager is not unlike an American teenager, and all adolescents are difficult to cope with at times. Your student may be enthralled with rock music, needs limits set as to where they can go and what hours to keep, reminders to clean up after themselves, and may seek discussions on the "why's" of the house rules. The situation is complicated by the fact that, no matter how good the student's preparation was for their exchange, they remain a stranger in a strange land.

Appreciation for the beauty of the English language, as well as its inconsistencies, is gained from constant communication between the host family and your student. Both the family and the student will come face to face with each other's prejudices, which may be an uncomfortable experience since most of us are sure that we don't have any prejudices!

The vast majority of problems that arise between the host family and the student are due to communication misunderstandings. This is no place for subtlety. If something that is happening bothers you, don't assume the student is being inconsiderate or selfish; discuss the issue as soon as possible rather than letting it fester. If you approach the issue as a communication problem, saying that when the student does whatever it is that bothers you makes you feel uncomfortable, or angry, or worried, and suggest a better way for the student to act; the

discussion can be less confrontational. Even if the discussion does become a little heated, that is better than trying to bury your feelings and hoping it will get better.

Reach out to your YEO as your resource who can put you in touch with more experienced host parents and District Committee members to help work out any problems. Frequently, it may be assumed that if they hear nothing from you, that all is well.

First Night Questions

First Night Questions will be provided to your student prior to their arrival in your home. We strongly encourage the use of these questions by each family who provides housing for your student. The list of questions is very helpful with the process of formulating and discussing household rules with your student. You can also access a copy of the first night questions on youthexchange5100.org website and on NAYEN.org

Explaining Chores

Along with the discussion of family rules comes the distribution of household chores. You should expect your student to contribute their equal share to the running of the household, as do your own children. To expect anything less would not only prevent the student from making the transition from guest to family, but it will also risk jealousy and resentment from your own children.

Many of the families of exchange students from other countries, such as those from South America, are wealthy and have servants do the manual housework. These students may need a little extra encouragement, as well as basic instructions on things such as how to run a vacuum cleaner, how to dust, and how to wash their own clothes. Be patient but firm, and don't mistake lack of experience for laziness. It often helps to create a list that includes each family member's responsibilities and how frequently you expect the chores to be accomplished. Post this list in a place where the whole family will see it. It would be helpful if this were an established custom when your exchange student arrives, so others in the family are used to checking the list to make sure chores are done and can guide your student in doing the same.

Discussing Transportation Options

Transportation issues can sometimes be a source of tension between students and their host parents. At times Host Parents may feel that their student is being too demanding and expecting them to take them wherever and whenever they wish to go. Conversely, students sometimes feel frustrated by the fact that Rotary International does not allow them to drive during their exchange year. Additionally, many students come from cities where they grew up relying on a well-developed system of public transportation and find it difficult adjusting to placement in areas not serviced by public transportation. Host parents, being sensitive to this background and these limitations, need to discuss and arrange school, after school, and weekend transportation with the student.

Certain guidelines regarding transportation should be set to prevent misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. One possible option is for the host family to help the student secure a bicycle for use during their exchange if safe use can be assured.

The following points will help clarify some transportation issues:

- School related transportation is the responsibility of the host family.
- Arranging transportation to District RYE conferences and meeting is the responsibility of the Club YEO.
- If your student is invited to visit another student within the district, the host parent of that student should arrange transportation, or at least split the driving between the two families.
- Car pools are a great idea to the optional District Training and other events.
- Some host clubs will arrange for your student to be picked up for the event.
- The host family must approve of all drivers providing transportation for the Student. If you would not allow your own child to ride with the driver, please don't allow your student to either.
- Realize that if you are in a more remote area, you may need to provide occasional transportation to your Student so they can social and engage with their peers, especially if you will not allow them to ride with other American students driving.

Rotary Orientation Meetings

The Rotary Club will provide an orientation session(s) for you as host parents. Please attend these sessions whenever possible, participate, and take notes. If you have questions, ask any of the Rotary District committee members. The entire Rotary support system is ready to help you through any problems. If you are an experienced Host Family, please come and share ideas with new families and check for any new guidelines that Rotary may need to have you enforce.

CHAPTER 6... CHALLENGES YOU MAY FACE

Conflict of Expectations Versus Reality

Our exchange student will undoubtedly experience a great deal of excitement and anticipation prior to their arrival in the United States. This enthusiasm has probably been growing ever since the moment of their acceptance into the program. On arrival, they will find their new environment positive and interesting, and will most likely be eager to see and do everything they can in the shortest amount of time. However, as the novelty wears off, your student may begin to feel confused as they confront new lifestyles, value systems, behaviors, and beliefs. It is important for host families to realize this as a normal reaction.

The transition phase of an exchange is a critical, yet often confusing, period for the international student. Offering your support and understanding will be the most effective way to help them deal with the conflicting emotions they will be experiencing. Eventually, your student will adapt and reach a level of understanding and respect for their new host culture. Only then will their mind be able to accommodate both the positive and negative aspects of the culture and allow them to function effectively within it. Frustrations that occur after this transitional period will be handled much more easily by your Inbound. You, too, may experience a conflict between your expectations and reality. Finding out that your student is different than what you expected can be disappointing too. This is particularly challenging for host parents who have had a more positive hosting experience in the past. Each student is very much an individual, just as are your own children. Try to evaluate your expectations and make sure that they are realistic and compassionate.

Culture Shock

This phenomenon will occur and is related to being confronted by differences in language, surroundings, food and customs, and education. Parents may notice the development of some hostility, irritation, or aggression leading to uneven school performance, and confrontation with those differences. Parents may also notice your student exhibiting withdrawal, excessive sleeping, fits of crying and lost concentration, and tension with others. Some of these traits also reflect homesickness.

The term “culture shock” is used to describe the feelings of disorientation experienced by people when living in a culture different from their own. It results from the awareness that one’s basic assumptions about life and one’s familiar ways of behaving are no longer appropriate or functional. When international students experience culture shock, they may exhibit one or more of the following behaviors:

- Criticize the American educational system
- Avoid attending classes because they feel that their peers are not friendly enough
- Exhibit irritability over minor events
- Withdraw and spend extended periods of time alone
- Text, facetime or call home excessively
- Express feelings of being misunderstood

- Increase food consumption
- Exhibit complete loss of appetite
- Complain of insomnia
- Sleeping excessively

This list is, by no means, complete. And, as you can see, behavioral patterns at either end of the spectrum can be indicative of culture shock. The best assessment of whether or not your student is experiencing culture shock is to ask yourself if they seem to be exhibiting any unusual behavior that you consider extreme or out of the ordinary.

When experiencing culture shock, your student may feel as though there is something wrong with them and the way they are handling their adjustment. Your student needs to be reassured that these feelings are normal and should not be viewed as a weakness on their part. Explain and discuss the cultural differences with your student. Remind them that they are a necessary part of their learning experience. No one is trying to change the student (program them into being American) but one of the benefits of the exchange program is the opportunity to experience these differences. Be able to listen and explain what America is all about and where our sense of nationalism is derived.

The key to solving culture shock is helping them adapt to new ideas and changing their old habits. Challenge them to point out all the differences and then discuss which ones merit a closer look. Host families need to be prepared to offer emotional support to their student during this difficult time. The more active your student is, the quicker they will adjust to the new culture. If they have too much time to think about how different everything is the recovery process will take much longer.

When your student has access to people who speak their native language, they may spend excessive amounts of time with these people conversing in that language and avoid learning English. This activity should be strongly discouraged. Avoiding practicing English, even though speaking in English may be very stressful to the student, will significantly prolong the student's adjustment period. The more quickly the student masters English, becoming familiar with colloquial phrases and slang, the faster they will be able to make more friends and open the door to many positive experiences during their exchange year.

Your student may also experience reverse culture shock when they reenter their native culture upon returning home. Discussions on this issue, advice and preparation before they leave for home will help them handle this situation better.

Homesickness

Another aspect of culture shock and the adjustment process is homesickness. Most students experience this challenge at some point during their exchanges. This is a normal reaction to the separation from family, friends, and familiar surroundings and the student should not be made to feel guilty about having these feelings. Symptoms of homesickness may include crying or moping around the house, wanting to be alone, wishing to go home, doesn't like school, can't make new friends, loss of appetite, and won't communicate.

Recommended solutions include keeping the student busy and involved while limiting contact with back home. Discuss their feelings in an empathetic manner and allow some time for the student to work out the problem by themselves. Provide some distractions for the student to help get their mind off home. Restricting your student from spending much time on the phone with their boy/girl friend or natural family even though this is a normal reaction to homesickness. However, allowing it can actually deepen the feelings of sadness and separation. It isn't the words as much as just the sound of loved one's voices that trigger the feelings of isolation. As a general rule, RYE recommends that students speak to their natural families no more than once or twice a month. Instead, encourage your student to write letters (not email) and send pictures to share their experiences. This helps them feel in touch with their natural families while helping them dwell on the positive experiences they are having (and taking pictures of), rather than how much they miss their home.

We also recommend restricted use texting, facetime and phone calls to their folks or friends at home. An instant message on how miserable they are today will upset their parents long after the student has already moved beyond the immediate crisis. An hour a week is more than adequate to chat with friends and family. Also, please be aware of what websites your student visits to monitor appropriate behavior. Tough love dictates an evenhanded approach to limiting the use of both communication systems. To minimize homesickness, encourage your student to become involved in activities with your family and those sponsored by their school, park district, and your church. Not only will this help to facilitate the formation of friendships, it will foster an atmosphere of acceptance. This will help them to feel like a member of a group and take their mind off their friends and family back home. The more active and involved your student becomes, the less time they have to think about the things they miss.

Some host families may interpret their student's homesick behaviors as a negative reflection on their efforts. This may lead them to the conclusion that the student misses their natural parents as a result of unhappiness with their new American family. Most often this is not the case. However, this kind of misunderstanding can cause tension between host family members and the student.

Host families must remember that working with the student toward decreasing their feelings of homesickness and providing them with a warm and supportive environment will do much to alleviate this situation.

Comparisons of Your Home to Their Native Country

Your exchange student will naturally compare different aspects of American life with their life at home. This is a normal reaction of students during their adjustment process. These comparisons can be healthy observations when phrased in a positive, non-judgmental manner (i.e., "In my country, families buy the groceries they need on a daily basis while I've noticed that here, families only shop once a week").

However, they can negatively impact the host family and others when phrased in a judgmental manner (i.e., "If you shopped for the groceries you needed every day, like we do back home,

then we would always have fresh food in the house”). This may be difficult for you and your family to tolerate.

A productive way to deal with this situation is to communicate to your student how it makes you feel when they offer their comparisons between their country and yours in a critical manner. Once your student becomes more conscious of this behavior and sensitive to your feelings, hopefully subsequent comparisons will be expressed in more non-judgmental terms. Keep in mind, though, that you are dealing with young people who sometimes speak first, and think later, especially when they are feeling frustrated. Be empathetic and patient, while continuing to suggest ways your student can share aspects of their home life in positive ways.

There are sure to be differences between your family’s lifestyle and the way other host families live, or how other Rotary Clubs treat their students. Your exchange student may verbalize their observations regarding these differences to you. It is easy to hold your discomfort inside because you do not want to offend your student or compare your lifestyle with others (the “keep up with the Jones’s” syndrome). Don’t avoid the issue. Doing so only increases, not alleviates, tensions between you and your student. Again, the most effective way to handle this situation is to talk with your student and make them aware of your feelings. Be sure to listen to what they have to say before just dismissing any request.

Sometimes compromise is also effective. One significant issue that may occur springs from the fact that many exchange students come from large, urban cities. Some of our Rotary host parents live in rural settings. When they are interviewed for the program, students are told that they must be prepared to accept a placement in any one of a number of different environments (i.e., city, suburb, small town, or rural), and that some students will go to a rural setting. Often, they are surprised when they arrive at their new home and discover it is in a much more remote location than they had envisioned. One example is a student from downtown Tokyo being placed in a small farming community where their first host family lives on a farm a ¼ mile from the nearest paved road.

Imagine the adaptation required and culture shock experienced on the student’s part. Host families need to prepare themselves for any negative reaction and not feel offended by it. In an effort to help your student adjust, point out to them the activities that are unique to your area that they may not have had the opportunity to participate in at home. Accentuate the positive aspects of living in a smaller community. Explain to your student that there are many fun things to do in your area, they just may be different than the things they considered fun in their country. Try to make an extra effort to accommodate your student in participating in extracurricular activities at school to increase their circle of friends. If you become defensive and hostile, the opportunity for your student to have a genuinely different experience will be significantly impacted.

Bonding With Your Student

The close relationship that can form between you and your student is one that may last a lifetime. For this reason, Rotarians as well as most host families, believe that this is the most important byproduct of the hosting experience. It is quite common for an exchange student to build a closer relationship with one host parent than with the other. In some instances, your student will form a

close bond with one of your children. However, it is also possible that no bond is ever formed. Please realize that this can happen. Try not to be disappointed if this happens to you. Focus on the many other positive aspects of the experience, such as the chance to learn about their culture, perhaps the good example the exchange student set academically for your own children, etc.

Helping “Guest to Family Member” Transition

After your student has arrived, you should begin to help them make the transition from guest to family member right away. To do this, host families should start treating their exchange student in the same manner as they do their own children.

As mentioned previously, an important aspect of this is assigning your exchange student their share of the household chores. In doing so, you are communicating to your student that he is an important part of your family, one who shares equally in the responsibility of maintaining the home. Furthermore, by making it clear to your student that they are to abide by the same rules as other members of the family, their place within your family structure is again reinforced.

We encourage you to provide a bedroom area free of a television, telephone, and computer. The absence of these time consumers will draw your student out into the family environment to enjoy interaction and inclusion with the family. You are not doing them a favor by allowing them to be isolated away from the rest of your family. As a parent, you must be careful to not fall into the habit of making exceptions for your student when they break the rules. To do so will cause tensions to develop and will put a strain on all the relationships within the home.

Encourage Sharing

Because each student comes from a different background, it is possible that your student may not be accustomed to sharing certain things. It may be a difficult transition for an only child to now share a room, the bathroom, household items, and even your attention, with their new host sibling(s). Being aware of this can help you identify and address conflicts before they become serious problems.

Sibling Jealousy

If there are other children in your family, there is the possibility for sibling jealousy to surface. Typically, when your exchange student first arrives in America, they will receive a great deal of attention from their host parents, the community, and the faculty and students at school. Unfortunately, this special treatment may cause their host sibling(s) to experience feelings of neglect and abandonment. As a result, jealousy may develop toward the exchange student and a rivalry may emerge between them. Host parents should be aware of these potential problems and monitor their own behavior, and well as the behavior of the natural children. As a host parent, be careful not to contribute to the development of jealousy by comparing your children to your student. Additionally, avoid showing any unfair favoritism to the student.

Keeping the lines of communication open and encouraging discussions of any negative emotions early in the transition process can greatly decrease the possibility of conflict. By addressing this challenge and removing this barrier, the avenues are open to facilitate the development of a good relationship between your children and the student. Don't assume that the kids will be best buds or that one will take care of the other. Let nature take its own course.

Unwillingness to Recognize Authority

The roles of authority within the American family structure may be very unfamiliar to your international student. In many cultures, the idea of a woman taking charge in the home, much less at work, is unheard of. Therefore, some students may feel they do not have to listen to or obey the requests of their host mothers. It may be necessary for the host father to strongly explain this aspect of American culture so that the host mother's authority is not questioned.

If needed, involve the District Inbound Coordinator in this discussion as we take it seriously and have had students returned home because of this type of conflict. It is not that unusual to have strong chauvinistic behaviors exhibited by boys from wealthy southern hemisphere families. Take quick action to educate your student about what behavior will be acceptable in your home.

Curfews and Whereabouts

You may find that your exchange student was allowed a greater amount of freedom by their natural parents than you feel comfortable permitting while they are living with you. This is not unusual. In many cultures children are accorded a greater degree of responsibility, and as a by-product, more freedom and independence, than their American counterparts of similar age.

Do not feel pressured by this fact to alter your rules. As host parents, you are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after this student as you would your own children. Much of our restrictions are based upon safety issues. Emphasize that fact when discussing this with your student. We suggest a meeting of the host Moms occur to agree on what curfews will be established so that conflict will be minimal on this issue. Be clear with the student from the beginning what your requirements are regarding curfews and whereabouts. By communicating these restrictions to your student, you are confirming to them that you believe they are responsible enough to follow your rules. Let them know what time you expect them in on school nights and on weekends. Let them know that you would like them to call if they are going to be late, and let them know if there are any places or areas that are off-limits. Clearly set the acceptable parameters for them and require a respect for them.

Hygiene and Bathroom Etiquette

This is an issue that many host families do not realize can become a problem. In some cultures, people do not bathe as often as most Americans. This can cause problems for the student with their host family and their peers. One useful intervention is to purchase certain toiletries for all family members, including your exchange student. You can pass these items out, explaining to your children that you bought these for each of them to use daily. By directing these comments to the entire family, and not just your exchange student, you will avoid making them feel as

though they were being singled out and criticized. Alternatively, explain in privacy with your student the American customs and toiletries. It typically is best if the host parent of the same sex as the student handle this discussion.

This would also be an appropriate time to discuss feminine hygiene products with a female exchange student. Be sensitive to embarrassing your student, but don't avoid the issues because it will only make things more difficult later on. Avoiding a discussion about deodorant use may simply make a poor situation worse for both you and your student. Also, discuss your expectations for shaving and haircuts.

Use of the Bathroom

In most households across the country, mornings are a hectic and rushed time of the day. Furthermore, because sharing a bathroom is typical in most homes, it is necessary for the host family to discuss with their exchange student what the best time would be for them to use the bathroom in the morning. Frequently, students can be persuaded to shower before bed at night to help avoid bathroom crush in the morning.

Be sure there is a mirror in their bedroom for primping that might otherwise monopolize the bathroom. It is also a good idea to set a limit on how long they can stay in the bathroom and how long your hot water will last in the shower since others will probably be waiting to take their turns. Be sure to let them know in what condition they should leave the bathroom when they are finished.

Cleaning Up

This issue should be discussed when explaining the household rules to your exchange student. Make sure your student knows what it means to "pick up" or "clean up". Use specific examples: clothes thrown on the floor are to be picked up before leaving and put in the proper place, dishes are to be put in the sink or the dishwasher, homework is to be cleared from the kitchen table before dinner, etc. The more precise and clear you are when establishing these rules, and the more consistently you enforce them, the better your student will perform and respect your guidelines.

Household Responsibilities

The importance of assigning chores has been mentioned several times. However, you may find that your student has never had to help out at home before. Therefore, it may be necessary for you to demonstrate and explain how to perform certain tasks. Your student should be quite willing to help, but if they are unsure of what you want them to do or how to do it, a misunderstanding may occur. Be sure to clearly explain what you expect them to do, and maybe walk through the tasks the first time or two with them. If they question the reason for doing chores, let them know that everyone in the family carries an equal share of the burden. To be a family member, they need to do their share.

Drinking

It is not at all unusual for our students to be quite experienced with drinking alcoholic beverages. Each student and their parents have acknowledged in the written application that the RYE rules prohibit them from drinking during their exchange year. Host parents are the first line of defense with this problematic area.

- Reject the idea that it's ok to drink if nobody sees them.
- Limit access to beer and wine in your home during their stay with you.
- Allow only the most trustworthy student to attend a party that they know or suspect will have alcohol. Apply the tough love rule again. If they do attend the outing, provide transportation and a bail out phrase that the student may use to call you at any time to signal that you need to come and pick them up when they are in danger or an uncomfortable situation.
- If it is customary for the host family to offer a glass of wine with a special meal, then the same offer may be made to the student. Limit it to one glass. If you would offer a beer to your son on your own patio after mowing the lawn, it is reasonable to make that same offer to your RYE son. However, that does not take away the responsibility for breaking the law for underage drinking. Your student must not be allowed to leave the home afterward so the host parent can ensure their complete safety. It is always better to just say no and leave it at that. If your family attends a party of friends where alcohol is available, the answer is a resounding no to any drinking.

Drug Use

All illegal drugs must be avoided completely. Host parents are requested to monitor the use of prescription drugs for any potential abuse. A student with a medical problem should arrive with enough of their prescription drugs to last the year. During medical crises a new prescription may be ordered. Most schools will not allow such drugs to be brought on campus, so a call to the school nurse is appropriate. With the ease of obtaining drugs such as ecstasy and pot, parents must be extra vigilant, and always know whom the student is with and where they will be going. Not only will there be the possibility of court entanglements, but any student found breaking this rule will be sent home **immediately**.

Rotary cannot interfere with the court system and will not intercede with a drug offence. It has been suggested that drug use stems from boredom and also high stress. Girls typically seem more likely to be stressed by social pressures. Talking to your teen and keeping them involved in activities will help avoid both of these pitfalls. Please take the time to know their friends and keep up on what they are doing.

Dating

It is fairly safe to assume that the issue of dating will arise at some point during your student's exchange. You should handle this matter with your student in the same way you would handle it with your own children. Our policy may be stricter than what you have for your own children regarding dating. Rotary prohibits developing a strong romantic attachment by the student, i.e.

going steady (or the current word for exclusiveness) or becoming engaged. This is not only to protect the exchange student from emotional hardship when they must return to their home country, but also has significant legal ramifications. Our stance is that if your student concentrates on one individual, they will avoid other contacts and cultural events that could help make their experience as an exchange student more rich and complete. Contrary to what the student may think romantic attachments don't just happen. The student, with help from the host parents and YEO, can avoid these entanglements.

- Remind the student that at the end of the exchange year they are going to return home even if they are “in love”.
- Encourage group outings. This way the student will develop many “boy” and “girl” friends, but no steady relationship with one person. If asked to go to the movies or other activity, suggest the inclusion in a larger group. If one person persists to seek a relationship, insert parental influence to cool things off to “friendship” level. Always know who is out with your student and avoid the less desirable influences.
- One way to meet and learn about your student’s friends is to open up the house to them. As soon as they start to talk about a few friends at school, have your student invite them over. Have a few pizza parties (let them pop frozen pizzas in the oven and have plenty of pop in the fridge and paper plates), a Halloween party, their birthday party, or just to watch videos. That way, when they want to go to the mall with so- and-so, you know they who are talking about and approve the ride based upon what you know. You may also want to invite some of the names you hear discussed from the opposite sex so you know them as well. Going out as a group thing then became much easier thus taking the dating pressure off.
- We want and expect that our students will attend Prom and other social functions that typically require a date. We urge the host family to help identify friends and groups to join so the experience will be fun and not romantically charged. Encourage your student to find an American date and not depend on their friends from the RYE program. The experience will be diminished if there is not an American involved to help the student participate and understand our traditions and customs.
- Explain that a steady boy/girl friend will interfere with their ability to fully participate in the benefits of the program and will interfere with their responsibilities to the program. Experience has shown that when a steady relationship occurs the student wants to spend all of their free time with that person and neglects their host families, Rotarians, school, and the responsibilities of the RYE program.
- If your student does accept a date, spend time with them emphasizing that Rotary expects our definition of no sex to apply in their case. Too many young students have made the mistake of thinking that they can ignore this rule and have found out the hard way that we will send them home for violating this rule.

Sex

Sex is a delicate issue regardless of your country of origin. The program prohibits sex of any kind. You may choose to address this topic soon after your student arrives- simply apply your best judgment. In talking with your student, try to establish an atmosphere where they feel comfortable approaching you with future questions.

Helping them understand the current social mores of American teenagers will be important. Impress upon them the need to say no and resist their own hormonal challenges.

If a difficult situation arises that you do not feel comfortable handling, call your Rotary Club Counselor for advice. You may want to set up an emergency code for your student to use to have you retrieve them when they find themselves in a difficult or threatening situation. Also, be sure to watch for any inappropriate physical attachment to a host sibling, or vice versa.

Time Awareness

Among the countries of the world, the concept of time varies widely. Most Americans are very time-conscious and expect others to be as well. Yet, for the international student, arriving thirty minutes late for an appointment may be completely acceptable in their culture. The concept of being prompt is frequently unknown or ignored. It is important for you to recognize this difference and to work with your student as they attempt to overcome a lifetime of learned habits. This process can become significantly easier if the student knows their host family is aware of these cultural differences, and that they will support them in making the appropriate adjustments.

Diet, Meals, and Weight Gain

As host parents, you may find yourselves concerned with what and how often your exchange student eats. Some international students are overwhelmed by the variety and quantity of food available to Americans. It is not uncommon for exchange students to average between a 10 to 20 pound weight gain during their stay. Overeating can also be the student's way of dealing with the stress of new surroundings.

Regardless of the reasons, the host family can help regulate their student's diet by designating specific times when meals with the family will be eaten. Make sure your exchange student understands that they are expected to be present for these meals. In addition, it is helpful to encourage your student to engage in regular physical activity as a means of controlling their weight. Regulating snacks and soda pop may help as well. Please help your student buy larger clothing if they start to look really bad with their extra weight.

Student Illness

If your student falls ill it is your responsibility to excuse them from school attendance and then seek appropriate medical attention. If a serious problem develops, please inform the YEO immediately who should then inform the Inbound Coordinator.

Watch your student--they may be unwilling to tell you they're ill--and treat them as necessary either by keeping them out of school and activities (despite storms of protest), by taking them to the doctor (again, despite fear or protest), or both.

Realize that in some countries going to the doctor is frightening since it is reserved for severe illnesses--reassure them that here such visits are routine and often preventative.

The application package contains a statement from the bio-parents releasing their guardianship and establishing guardianship with the current host parents to make all decisions such as schooling, medical treatment, and social activities. This form should be taken along on any trip the family and student take together so emergency decisions may be made by the host parents and be accepted by the authorities.

Language Skills

It is likely that your exchange student will arrive with a limited grasp of English, and in some cases virtually no ability to converse. Even students with many years of instruction in English may have difficulty in understanding and speaking American English initially.

Shortly after meeting your student at the airport make it a point to emphasize that they should never shake their head in a 'yes' nod motion when they really have not understood what you have asked them. During the first few weeks, much of this difficulty can be attributed to the speed at which most Americans speak, and the tremendous amount of slang we use. Also, no matter how good the student's language skills are, if English is a second language, the student must mentally translate every word into their native language before responding. Therefore, in addition to having a little extra patience when dealing with the student, try to make an effort to speak clearly, and avoid using slang, as these unfamiliar expressions will confuse your student. Continue to tell them to avoid the head nod when they may misunderstand. Another habit that is common among Americans is the use of acronyms. Instead of stating "I would like you to set the table now," you might be inclined to say, "Can you get that table set ASAP?" For someone who is still learning how to speak English fluently, abbreviations and acronyms can often prove to be meaningless and ambiguous.

Host families should be careful to articulate their speech clearly and speak slightly slower to their international student in the beginning. You should not raise your voice, nor should you speak in broken English the way your student may do, as this will only confuse the student further and undoubtedly make them more self-conscious about communicating. As your student's proficiency increases, begin helping them improve their English by correcting their word usage if he requests help in this area. An old trick, but one that has proved highly effective, is to use cards or sticky notes with both their word and the English translation taped on common household objects ("chair", "bathroom", "refrigerator", etc.) to aid your student to progress more quickly in their English. You can even make a game of it with the family – you learn the name of the object in your student's language, and the student learns the name in English!

On occasion it may be necessary to seek help from someone fluent in the student's native language to discuss issues that the student's English is just not up to handling. This can be a teacher, a returned exchange student from that country (probably the best source of help!), a family friend, or someone from Rotary. Do not hesitate to do this – it will be the best way to help the student deal with the frustration of knowing that a problem exists, but not being able to communicate with the host family about it or (rarely, but sometimes occurs) trying to avoid dealing with the problem by “pretending” to not understand. On the other hand, if you speak their language, refrain from using it frequently and promote their use of English instead.

Tutors

Most American schools generously enroll exchange students without tuition because of the benefit to other students in interacting with the international students. However, if the student's lack of prowess in English is impacting faculty members because of the student's need for special attention, special tutoring may be required. Use of an English tutor is an excellent way to conquer our language. It is better to arrange for a tutor early on rather than after problems surface that may be language based. Contact your YEO or school counselor for help in this area to improve the student's academic experience. If there is any cost associated with tutoring your student, the Club should handle the expense.

High School

While academic success is important for all students, it is even a greater challenge for an exchange student who has to learn English as well. Often, a student who earned high marks in their native country will perform poorly at the beginning of their exchange. The host family needs to work closely with their student and encourage the option of seeking additional help in their studies if such help is warranted. Provide support for the student and speak with their teachers and school counselor when necessary.

Assist your YEO to register your student at the high school. They should take appropriate classes giving great consideration to their language abilities. Arrange classes to not be too difficult, where they will meet the most people, have the greatest opportunity to experience our culture, and have fun. Remember to arrange the schedule to let your student attend your weekly Club meetings without upsetting any teachers. This exchange is culturally based rather than one with an academic emphasis. A heavy course load need not be designed so they can graduate from your school. The students move to three families over the year to gain maximum cultural exposure. Most students get little or no credit for their courses taken here.

Classes designed for heavy homework should be avoided so the student has more time to interact with their new family and friends. However, stress that **full attendance and effort in school is absolutely required, or your student may get sent home.** A host of small problems can be worked out because you make time to ask how school was different than at home and what would they like some help with. Sometimes, you have to ask--they may be embarrassed to tell you they are having problems coping!

Encourage the student to work with their peers in study sessions or doing homework together. This will also help the student increase their circle of friends. Due to budget or class size considerations, your school may not make ESL- (English as a Second Language) classes available. Enrolling your student in language appropriate classes will be very important to the well being of your student. Costs for academically related fees are the responsibility of the Rotary Club.

Attendance

Attendance in school is required every day the school is in session unless a scheduled Rotary function falls on a school day. Parents will be responsible for calling the school when the student is ill or needs to be involved in an activity that will be culturally educational and beneficial for the student. If you would excuse your own child for the day or part of the day in question, it is then also appropriate for you to take your student out of school. Consult your YEO when in doubt. Under no circumstances should you take the student from school to go traveling with their biological parents should they come for a visit.

Establishing Friendships

Exchange students may or may not have a difficult time establishing friendships after the newness of their presence in the school wears off. They soon discover that American teenagers typically form small social groups, or “cliques,” and are often not very accepting of new people. International students need to be assured that this is quite common in the United States, and that it is no reflection on them as individuals.

Encourage your student to take the first step by approaching new people and trying new activities. Make sure they know you are supporting them in their efforts. Often, this can be the most intimidating part of their exchange, particularly if the student is somewhat shy. They may take refuge in associating primarily with other international students, but they must be encouraged to cultivate new American friends. Becoming a part of school clubs or theater groups, or participating in band or choir, and sports teams will help provide an instant bond with some of the students due to shared experiences, and will help the student to make friends.

Money

The host parents are not required to provide pocket money for the exchange student. If they normally provide an allowance for their natural children, and wish to do so for the student, it is at the host family’s discretion. Because the student is not allowed to work at a regular paying job while in America/, Rotary provides at least a \$80 monthly allowance stipend to provide for the student’s needs. The student should be encouraged to develop and stick to a budget to get the most benefit from the stipend. The student’s natural parents may also provide additional funds and/or a credit card for the student’s use. Each student is required to have a \$500 cash emergency fund.

This cash should be safeguarded along with their passport/visa documents. This money may be used for any emergency such as medical, dental, replacement eyeglasses, but must be replaced immediately by the bio-parents so that it is available for the next emergency.

If the host parents are concerned that their student is making inappropriate use of the charge card or not appropriately managing money, they should discuss their concerns with the student, and if necessary, communicate their concern with the Rotary Inbound Coordinator or Club Youth Exchange Officer. Trips, gifts, and special events can be costly and you will need to be the primary counselor for your student.

Remember, they likely won't know what a nickel is until you help them learn about our monetary system. Your YEO should assist your student set up a checking account at a local bank and instruct them on how to use checks and the danger of being overdrawn. This account may then be a tool for monies to be transferred to the student by their bio-parents as well as a place to deposit their monthly allowance checks. An ATM card may be advisable for the teen on the go. If the bio-parents provided a credit card for their use, help them understand its use in our stores.

Encourage your student to refrain from borrowing money from friends, siblings, or host parents to avoid conflicts from arising. Additionally, encourage them to stay away from lending their money even if they want to be generous. They may not understand if they don't get it paid back.

Working

Although children of the host family may be allowed to work, exchange students are not allowed to hold a job when participating in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program. This means that your student may not go to work at McDonald's or any job where they would receive payment. Cash payments for the odd babysitting job with the next-door neighbor is acceptable provided that it is not a consistent use of their time. If they run out of money, they must contact their natural parents and have them send extra funds.

Telephone Plan and Usage

It is important for each host family to establish telephone usage guidelines for the student at the beginning of their stay. As a general rule, RYE recommends that students call their natural families no more than once or twice each month. Try to limit calls to the girl or boyfriend left behind even further. Be sure to discuss such things as "800" numbers, "900" numbers, "411" "988" and "911".

Visits from Biological Parents

Although visits by parents, friends, or siblings are strongly discouraged, we find that the bioparents frequently want to come and visit their child during the exchange year. This visit can either be her a wonderful experience or a significant pain and disruption.

The District requires that prior approval be sought from the Inbound Coordinator, Host Families, and Clubs. If the student has not been a stellar performer, doing poorly in school, etc. that

request for a visit may be denied. This denial may also be made at the request of the Club or host parents. An approved visit may only take place during the last quarter of the year or during a school break.

Visits are discouraged to prevent waves of homesickness, conflicts of authority, and interference with the host family's developing relationship with the student. This is especially true during the start of the student's stay and during holiday seasons.

Remember that even in country relatives have no authority over the student while in the RYE program.

Do not schedule a visit during the holiday season, as it will conflict with family and community activities. The student will not be allowed to miss school to go traveling with their parents for more than a day. **No host parent is required to provide housing or meals for a visiting bioparent.** However, meeting with the parents of your student can be a truly rewarding experience too. Do not allow your student to travel out of the District with their parents without discussing it with the Inbound Coordinator first.

If the student wishes to travel at the conclusion of the exchange year, the District requires the natural parents provide a written release from the Program stating an understanding that all insurance benefits are canceled and that Rotary is released from liability for their child. We will need to know the date and location of eventual departure to report to the State Department for US Inbound students.

Priorities

Your student may find that many opportunities will be available for them to explore. It is important for the host family to understand how to help the student prioritize these obligations and invitations. Here are several guidelines to apply:

- First priority is the RYE program followed by the local Club
- The current host family has second priority followed by former host parents, other Rotarians, then their new
- Consideration must be given to special dates while the student is being hosted, such as Christmas, family birthdays, special family trips, spring break, and
- Their bio-parents should be consulted on long-term issues, but the RYE Program has the end say in what should happen.
- The YEO should establish the dates on which the student will move from one family to the These dates should be established shortly after the student arrives in the country.

Review the District calendar of events as families are encouraged not to schedule activities that will conflict with the District dates if at all possible. **The mandatory District events have a greater priority than activities such as Homecoming, a football game, and even Prom.** With proper advance notice to the District Inbound Coordinator, arrangements and compromises can be made so a student who is participating in a special school event can possibly attend both events.

Moving to a New Host Family

It is common in the Rotary Youth Exchange program for the exchange student to stay with two to four families over the course of their eleven-month stay. That means that the student who has become accustomed to your family's ways of doing things, must start over with a new family several times. The first transition to a new family usually occurs around Thanksgiving or Christmas. The holiday season is often very traumatic to the exchange student, with a great deal of homesickness. By leaving the student with the first host family through the holiday, they have a feeling of continuity among people they know and trust, thereby minimizing loneliness and homesickness. A more gregarious, confident, outgoing student may be ready to move to a new host family before Christmas, with the move normally occurring in this case on US Thanksgiving weekend. This timing lets the student have a day or two to settle into their new host family before returning to school. Don't let your student leave any belonging behind at your house, make them be responsible for their 'stuff'.

The current host family can do a great deal to ease the transition to a new host family. It is important for the student to meet and get to know the new host family in advance of the move. Invite them over for dinner or have the new host family invite the student for dinner. Let the student see the room they will stay in and meet their sibling(s). Discuss the exchange student's food likes and dislikes and share the more positive aspects of their presence in your family with the new host parents.

Minimize the negative events as much as possible, because your "horror stories" may cause the new host family to form a negative preconception of what their experience will be like. However, advice on what worked well for you in resolving difficulties will make the new host family feel more comfortable.

Plan the move early—meet the date set by the YEO and prepare the student: talk about the move a few weeks before it occurs and start getting the student packed and ready. The student may have some fears about leaving, but you must let go and help them go. Explain that you cannot interfere with their developing relationship with the new family and although you can see them once in a while, they are to try to work with the new family. Initially, don't encourage them to call you unless the new family does; limit your calls to them. Comparisons are inevitable and should be handled by noting that each family's rules and lifestyles are different and that adjustment to them is part of the Rotary purpose.

Your YEO should provide the new host family with a copy of your student's Rotary application and any other relevant paperwork. Ask if they have received a copy of this manual, and request that the YEO send them one if they don't have a copy.

The YEO or you should make sure to inform the District Inbound Coordinator, the school, and the student's natural family of the new host family's address and phone number before the move. Discuss the new host family with your exchange student, accenting the positive aspects of learning a new viewpoint of American/Canadian culture. Your student may be reluctant to move because they have become comfortable with your family and unwilling to go through the frustration of learning new ways of doing things. It is not unusual for the student to become quite

attached to the first host family. That is why the greater exposure to the new host family ahead of time, the easier the transition will be.

If you become aware that there is really a major problem with another host family and that the student is having serious problems, such as being victim of verbal abuse or having problems communicating with the new family which cause great unhappiness over some time, you should encourage the student to talk, not with you, but with the YEO or Counselor. Often the student is reluctant to do so (what will the new family think if I tattle on them; will the YEO think I'm a wimp for not handling it myself, etc.). Insist that they bring the YEO in, and if you see that they haven't talk to the YEO about your concerns and then you speak directly to the YEO and let them handle it.

CHAPTER 7... DEALING WITH CHALLENGES

Steps Toward Resolution

The most important tool in resolving conflicts and misunderstandings is to be adaptable and stress communication. If there is a problem with something your student is doing or saying we urge you to discuss this with them directly and immediately. Failure to do so will result in an even greater problem later.

Approach your student in a non-threatening manner so that they do not instinctively become defensive. Work toward finding a mutually agreeable resolution to the problem. No purpose will be served by tiptoeing around a developing problem because someone's feelings will be hurt--if either you or the student is uncomfortable, bring up the subject and address it frankly.

Allow the student to state their point of view and the rationale behind it. You may be able to reach a compromise, which should be strictly followed by both. You may also hear things that distress the student that you did not realize would be a problem and can adjust accordingly. Be sure to listen carefully and encourage your student to express how they are feeling during this process. Remember, if the problem is one reported to you by a sibling or someone at school, the truth is probably somewhere between the complaint and the exchange student's version of what happened.

However, the final determination is yours--what makes you and your family comfortable--not the student's.

If you do not feel comfortable talking with your student about a particular issue, or if you are unable to achieve an equitable resolution with your student, contact your YEO or the Inbound Coordinator. Frequently Rotary may locate a counselor who can mediate or provide an independent viewpoint. If a serious problem is encountered, it is important to get the District involved as soon as possible before the situation gets out of hand. The student's lack of command of the English language often complicates resolution of a problem. This is where bringing in someone who speaks the student's language fluently can be a big help.

When the Only Resolution is Changing Families

At times, certain issues arise between students and their host families that cannot be resolved. Although this can create a very difficult situation, it is not unheard of for a student to change host families ahead of schedule. As this is a very serious step to take, changes will not take place until all avenues of resolution have been explored and no other options exist.

Here are several reasons where changing host families is acceptable:

- A death or serious illness occurs in the host family;
- A change in the financial circumstances within the host family;
- Damage to the home due to a natural disaster or fire;
- The host family is relocating out of the school district due to work;

- The host family is requesting that a student be moved;
- Irreconcilable differences between a student and the host

There are also many issues that are considered to **not** be significant enough to warrant changing host families although it is always within the power of the Club YEO to direct a change whenever they deem it warranted. Here are some of those possibilities:

- The student complains that the placement is too rural;
- The student refuses to adjust and adapt to the host family;
- The student is too attached to a previous host family;
- The student is unwilling to share a bedroom;
- The student desires to be in another school, city, or state;
- The student desires to be closer geographically to a friend or relative;
- The student is dissatisfied with the school they are attending;
- No public transportation is available;
- The student is unhappy with the presence or absence of host

If the student does not appear to be making the effort to adjust to what they believe is a difficult situation, get the Youth Exchange Officer or the District Youth Exchange Country Officer involved. Often a discussion with the District Country Officer, if they feel it is necessary, with the student's natural parents, will create an incentive for the student to make more effort to adapt. If the situation becomes totally unglued, it may be deemed by the District that the student should be sent home, but that is the last thing we ever want to happen with any exchange student.

Confidentiality

When problems arise between you and your exchange student, it is important to remember not to discuss the circumstances with other members of your community. Very often, these kinds of situations can be exaggerated when they are passed along by a number of different people. We realize the need to discuss personal concerns with close friends or family, but at the same time, please be aware of the potential consequences of talking to people outside of your immediate family.

Misunderstandings can occur easily, and there exists an even greater likelihood that rumors may develop. While your feelings are important in these kinds of situations, please also consider the feelings of your exchange student and how they may be affected by you not keeping certain concerns private.

It is particularly important for you to be careful how you discuss your exchange student with future host families. Preconceptions based on misunderstandings can spoil an experience for the new host family when an open mind may have resulted in a more positive experience. Consider carefully what information you pass on to the next host family: be liberal with your positive comments, and very stingy with your complaints. However, share your methods you found successful in resolving any difficulties. This will enable the new host family to feel more confident in welcoming the exchange student into their family. Do not let the student play one

family against another, or the YEO. We suggest making collective plans so everyone is on the same page.

Abuse Policy

There is the possibility that your student may be the victim or assault or abuse. As the safety of our students is very important to us, it is critical that the information on such an assault be made known to the District committee immediately.

Your student should be made aware that if they are physically or sexually assaulted or abused they should follow this procedure:

- Report the situation and circumstances to the YEO immediately.
- If they cannot reach the YEO, or prefer that the YEO not be informed, they should report the situation to the District Inbound Coordinator or their Country Officer.
- It is important that there be no delay in reporting any form of abuse.
- The District Committee will take charge of overseeing the student's safety and an investigation into the facts of the situation.
- No Inbound student will be sent home, nor any Outbound student brought home for reporting such a situation unless the student's personal safety requires it and the District Chairman has approved their return.

Constant communication between the YEO and the student will instill confidence that any abuse complaint will be treated confidentially, promptly, and seriously. Helping your student understand that they are not guilty of bringing any abuse upon themselves will go a long ways to resolving any abuse situation.

CHAPTER 8 ... RETURNING HOME

Return Tickets

Your student arrived in this country with an open ticket, one with no return date. That return date should be determined near the end of the exchange year by your student and our Inbound Coordinator.

We encourage vacation trips with the Host families, as they usually are wonderful for the students. We are not in a hurry to have them leave. With that in mind discuss their return with an eye to a possible final weekend at the beach or cabin with your family.

When a return ticket has been finalized, the flight information needs to be provided to the Inbound Coordinator for US Inbounds students so the State Dept. can be notified that the student has departed to their native country.

The student's visa only allows the student to be in the country for one year less a day, so students must return home before the visa expires. The student is allowed to stay for 30 days after their visa expires, but no longer.

Last-Minute Shopping

Preparing for departure will be a very hectic time for your student. They will probably want to purchase last-minute gifts for friends and family before they return home, so make sure some time is set aside for this. Leaving it to the last minute will only add to the existing pressures of completing everything that your student needs to do before leaving. Their emergency cash (at your discretion) can be made available to them at this point. However, please counsel them to save some cash for emergencies that might occur during their trip home.

School Transcripts

Please be sure that your student obtains a certified copy of their transcripts prior to their departure. If their grades are not ready by the departure date, and they are necessary for enrollment in their home country, please ask them to prepay an express mail package prior to their departure. When the transcripts arrive, make a copy of them, place the originals in the package, and forward them to your student in their home country.

Airline Baggage Restrictions

It is necessary for you or your student to contact the airline they are flying internationally to verify what restrictions they have concerning the amount of baggage each passenger may bring with them. Usually, international flights limit the student to two suitcases of 50 pounds each, plus one carry-on bag. The maximum proportions of the carry-on bag differ from carrier to

carrier, so confirm the size requirements during your planning. If the carry-on bag is too large to fit under the seat, your student may have to check that bag as well.

Take these warnings seriously as excess baggage charges are typically very expensive, so confirm the limits ahead of time. Make sure that last-minute souvenirs and gifts are planned to be in the available luggage space.

Shipping Excess Baggage

Whenever possible, encourage your student to ship home any excess baggage prior to their departure. Generally, the least expensive way to ship excess baggage by surface mail (boat). This method may take several months to reach its destination, but the savings are significant. With a little pre-planning, this can be accomplished, and the excess baggage can be waiting for the student when they return home. Help your student organize what they want to carry in their luggage, and what can be sent to their home several months before their departure, such as seasonal clothing no longer needed. In some cases, seasonal clothing can be donated to the Club for the next student or to charity because it is not usable in the student's home country, such as heavy winter clothing when the student is from Brazil. A shipment home is appropriate after moving to their 3rd family. Don't let the student make you responsible for their extra "stuff".

Reconfirming Reservations

As departure times and flights frequently change and as airlines will drop passengers who have not reconfirmed their reservations during the summer season, you should plan to call the airline with which your student has a reservation three days before their scheduled departure date. If the departure time has changed, this will allow you to reach the airport in sufficient time (minimum 2 hours before the flight time). With the current security procedures 2 hours may not be sufficient. Remind your student to pack away in checked baggage any items that could be confiscated by the security staff.

Missing or Cancelled Flight

If your student misses their flight or their flight is canceled, contact the airline immediately. Ask them to reschedule your student's flight and then notify the District Inbound Coordinator of the student's new arrangements. Have the student call home to inform their parents of the new arrival time.

Saying Goodbye

Goodbyes are never easy. We encourage a small party to allow the Club, families, and friends to come to say farewell. Everyone reacts to these difficult situations in different ways. For example, you may become very emotional while your student is quiet and withdrawn. Do not interpret these behaviors as reflections on you or your student's experience. It is important to remember all the enjoyable times you spent with your student. Often, it is helpful to prepare yourself beforehand for your student's eventual departure. Plan who will go to the airport and who will say goodbye at your home.

With increased security, it may be difficult for your student's peers and other exchange students to go to the airport to see them off.

Make plans to keep in touch with your student and possibly even visit one another sometime in the future. Remember the relationship you have built with your student and what you have learned through your hosting experience. Do not think of this goodbye as negative, but simply as another chapter in your life. Also, remember that this experience may influence your own children to want to become an exchange student. This program has the ability to positively affect a number of lives and promote the ideals of Rotary.

Realize all the valuable insights you have gained through interactions with your exchange student. Look back on your hosting experience and consider what a unique opportunity it has been to see another culture from the inside. Appreciate how it has allowed your student to experience the American/Canadian culture and your family's distinctive way of life. So instead of saying "Goodbye," you can simply say "So long for now!"