## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Simple Safety Tips for AFS Host Families</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The AFS Story</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Beginning</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Intercultural Exchange is Born</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFS-USA Today</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFS is a Volunteer-Driven Organization</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Proud Tradition of Host Family Home Stay</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Host Family Handbook: A Self-Directed Guide</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning with AFS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words of Advice</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Basics</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Does AFS Expect of Us As Hosts?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Can We Expect As Hosts?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aren’t All Hosting Experiences At Least Similar?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Terminology Clarifications</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusting to a New Culture</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easing the Adjustment: Orientations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Adjustment Cycle</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Fatigue</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Can Our Family Help Prevent Cultural Adjustment Difficulties?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Should We Do in Case of Adjustment Difficulties?</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules and Regulations</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three AFS Rules</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Drugs</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Driving</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Hitchhiking</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Use and Smoking</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Policy for Participants in the USA</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note about Facebook and other Social Media</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFS Support</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your AFS Liaison</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison Support and Monthly Contacts</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do We Make Effective Use of Our Liaison’s Assistance?</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain of Communication</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When Contacting Your Liaison is Required</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Do We Contact AFS in Case of Emergency?</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Issues</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Travel Situations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Return</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Return for Personal Reasons</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Travel Home</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Relationships</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Family</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Siblings</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Participant’s Family</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Changes</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Placements</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Learning</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalizations and Stereotypes</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism and Collectivism</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Styles</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resource: CultureGrams</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity and Social Structure</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity within the United States</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class and Status</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural, Racial, and Religious Diversity</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Teenage Life</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The First Days</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomas</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Life</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming Friendships</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Mores</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Related Expenses</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports and Other Activities</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parental Authorization Form</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Activity Waiver</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firearms</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Issues and Concerns</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please and Thank You</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Rules</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Family Contact: Standard Statements</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Use and Contact during the Exchange Period</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Communication and Internet Safety</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Mail, Online Chat and Social Media</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Communication and Participant Websites</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography and the Internet</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading Music and Media from the Internet</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending Money</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES Spending Guidelines</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening a Bank Account – YES Participants</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Expenses</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Tax Deduction for Host Families</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobs and Social Security Cards</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of State Contact Information</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Concerns</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorization for Medical Treatment</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Medical Plan</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the Doctor</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important Contact Information

Local Liaison

Name:___________________________________________________________
Phone:___________________________________________________________
Email:____________________________________________________________

Area Support Contact

Name:___________________________________________________________
Phone:___________________________________________________________
Email:____________________________________________________________

AFS-USA
120 Wall Street
4th Floor
New York, NY 10005

1-800-AFS-INFO
(800-237-4636)

For information on how to contact AFS in case of an emergency, please see page 29.

Mandatory Orientation Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five Simple Safety Tips for AFS Host Families

Inviting an international student into your home is an exciting experience that thousands of host families enjoy every year. It is a time to share your culture, learn about someone else’s, and develop strong bonds along the way. As you begin this challenging adventure, don’t forget that your newest family member comes from a very different background, making what you may consider “obvious,” unfamiliar and foreign to them. These Five Simple Safety Tips will help you create a happy and safe environment for your hosted participant both in your home and community.

1. Make certain that your hosted participant learns your address and telephone number as soon as possible. Remind your participant that this information should not be given out to anyone they don’t know well, especially over the internet. They should always check with you first.

2. Take your hosted participant on a walking tour of the neighborhood. Help him or her learn the surrounding streets and main roads by name and landmark. Determine some public places where your participant can go for assistance if he or she is ever lost or in trouble. When you get home, make a map with your participant of the routes to school, the store, and other commonly visited places.

3. Once your participant has made new friends at school or in the neighborhood, remind him or her to CHECK FIRST before going out with somebody new. This includes accepting rides or going into homes.

4. Place reasonable limits on your physical interaction. Remember that many exchange students come from cultures in which affection is not openly displayed. Respect your student’s wishes regarding physical contact, including his or her right to reject any display of affection that makes him or her uncomfortable.

5. Reassure your hosted participant that there is a strong network of support in place, including you, the local AFS Liaison, Volunteer Area Team Support Coordinator, and National Support staff.

Adapted from National Center for Missing and Exploited Children by Youth for Understanding USA, Inc. used with permission by AFS Intercultural Programs USA.
Welcome to AFS!

Welcome to the AFS family, a family of global friendship that includes people from all walks of life and virtually every corner of the earth!

The AFS Story
The Beginning

AFS Intercultural Programs began as the American Field Service (AFS), which was formed in 1914. Shortly after the outbreak of World War I, young Americans living in Paris volunteered as ambulance drivers at the American Ambulance Hospital of Paris. The AFS Drivers participated in every major French battle, and carried munitions, supplies, and more than 500,000 wounded soldiers from both sides of the war. By the end of the war, 2,500 men had served in the American Field Service with the French Armies.

At the end of World War I, the organization remained active through the American Field Service Fellowships for French Universities. This program eventually funded 222 American and French students at the graduate level to travel to and from France for advanced study until the program was discontinued in 1952.

During World War II, the American Field Service’s all-civilian volunteer force was stationed in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, India, and Burma. AFS Drivers served near the front lines alongside Allied soldiers. Approximately 2,200 AFS Drivers had served by the end of the war, and they carried over 700,000 casualties.

High School Intercultural Exchange is Born

Having witnessed the devastation of war, Stephen Galatti, an AFS volunteer, challenged his comrades to focus their post-war efforts on peace-building. Galatti believed that promoting exchanges of high school students between the U.S. and other countries would foster a culture of cooperation and understanding among peoples and nations. His vision was to create a generation of world leaders.

Inspired by Galatti’s vision, 250 American Field Service Drivers assembled in New York City to discuss the future of the organization. In 1947, they launched the secondary school student exchange program that is now referred to as AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. Later that year, 50 students from 10 countries that had been involved in WWII arrived in the U.S. from Estonia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Syria.

Throughout the 1950s, the number of participating countries rose steadily, especially in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Syria, a participant in the first two years of AFS International Scholarships, resumed participation in the late 50s, along with Iran, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Uganda.
In the 1960s, many African nations emerged onto the world scene. The continent became increasingly well represented in AFS with programs established in Algeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, the Malagasy Republic, Morocco, and Tunisia.

In 1971, the AFS Multinational Program was started, which allowed students to travel to and from countries other than the U.S.

In the 1980s, teacher exchanges with China began; AFS enrolled its 50,000th student on a year-long program to the U.S.; and AFS embarked on a process of reorganization. The volunteer AFS organizations in each country assumed their own legal status and assumed full responsibility for the operations and finances for AFS Programs in that country. This decentralization — called “Partnership” — put the leadership of the AFS organization into the hands of volunteers in each country. The “Articles of Partnership” were officially approved by the Board in 1990.

In the 1990s, the AFS Network expanded to include the former Soviet republics and satellite republics, and reintegrated Ghana, South Africa, and Ireland. AFS instituted semester-long community service programs for those aged 18 and older. AFS expanded programs with China and became the first organization allowed to place Chinese students with host families in other countries and the first U.S. organization to send students to live with host families in China. U.S. teachers also began to participate in summer programs in China.

AFS Today
50+ partners
500+ staff
13,000 participants each year
44,000 volunteers
424,000 returnees

AFS-USA Today
Today, AFS-USA is the largest member of the AFS Intercultural Programs worldwide partner network. This unique partnership of volunteer-based non-profit organizations fosters intercultural engagement through student exchanges among more than 50 countries.

AFS is a Volunteer-Driven Organization
One of the things that sets AFS apart from many other exchange programs is that we are a not-for-profit organization with a long tradition of volunteerism dating back to the American Field Service, the volunteer ambulance corps. AFS recognizes that volunteers are and have always been the key to the organization’s continued success. AFS is supported by about 40,000 volunteers worldwide, making it one of the largest volunteer-driven organizations in the world. Most AFS volunteers are people whose lives have been touched by an AFS experience in some way already and have great passion for the organization.

You will rely on AFS volunteers before, during, and after your AFS hosting experience. All host families are assigned a local support Liaison, a volunteer who will help support you through your experience hosting with AFS. Many volunteers are experienced host families or former participants themselves, and thus have experience with other cultures and with the emotional cycles of participants in programs abroad. Volunteers also undergo AFS training so that they are well equipped to support the organization. AFS volunteers run most parts of the AFS Program including local orientations, which they customize for their local area. For more about your AFS volunteer resources, see page 26.
A Proud Tradition of Host Family Home Stay

As a host family, you provide much more than meals and a bed. We know that families in every society are the primary “culture carriers.” This is why the AFS experience is founded on the host family home stay. By participating in family life—daily routines, holidays, and chores—AFS participants gain a true understanding of the elements that make up American culture. AFS is more than simply an exchange program; the ingredients of the AFS experience turn contact between cultures into rare and lasting bonds between people and families.

While we hope this handbook will be a valuable tool for you and your family, the most important thing to remember is that you are never alone as an AFS Family. The hallmark of AFS Programs is that we stand behind our participants and host families. Whether by way of local AFS volunteers or our staff at AFS National headquarters, we provide a “safety net” to ensure that your AFS experience is a valuable one. This safety net has been put into place because we at AFS understand that we are working with unique individuals, all with distinct personalities. There is no single formula for success. We accept that every placement we make may or may not be the right match. While the majority of our placements are successful, one of the strengths of AFS is its ability to recognize that sometimes a placement simply does not work. Without assessing blame or guilt, right or wrong, AFS volunteers will act quickly to ensure that your family and the AFS Participant leave the experience feeling satisfied with each other’s efforts and supported by AFS.

We wish you well as your family embarks on this challenging, stimulating, and meaningful adventure. We hope it will be an experience in international kinship and understanding for your family as it has been for so many others. Call on AFS at any time because we are here for you. Thank you, good luck, and our very best wishes to you.
The AFS Host Family Handbook has been written to guide you and your family through the AFS hosting experience. We have listened to thousands of families who have come before you, and we have learned from their experiences as host families. We have learned what makes the AFS experience challenging and have identified some things that will make the experience even more rewarding. This handbook is designed to familiarize your family with the key elements of an AFS exchange and to enable you to understand and prepare for unfamiliar situations. In doing so, AFS hopes the quality of your hosting experience will be enhanced rather than diminished by surprises or misunderstandings.

**By referring this handbook throughout your hosting experience, you and your family will be better able to:**

- Develop realistic expectations about hosting an AFS participant
- Integrate the AFS participant into your family so that he or she becomes a fully functioning member of the family
- Help the AFS participant adjust to your culture and learn your language
- Deal most effectively with the challenges that will arise during the year
- Support the AFS participant as he or she learns and grows throughout the experience
- Support AFS in upholding our standards, policies, and procedures

The handbook provides you and your family with practical information on how to help your AFS participant adjust as well as information on rules and procedures related to participant travel, medical concerns, school registration, and miscellaneous expenses. It will also give you suggestions on how to cope with the cultural differences that may arise between your family and your AFS son or daughter.

This handbook is a companion piece to the *Arrival Orientation Handbook*, which your AFS son or daughter will receive at his or her arrival orientation in the United States. After your participant arrives, please take the time to read through the *Arrival Orientation Handbook*.

In addition to reading this guide, all AFS host families are required to take our online Host Family Orientation. A link to this orientation was sent to you in the welcome email upon your acceptance as an AFS host family.
Learning with AFS
For more than 25 years, AFS has described its core learning objectives in four levels of development that are increasingly broad in scope, from personal to global objectives. These objectives are part of our mission and goals for the entire organization. Originally defined in the early 1980s, these objectives have been reviewed several times. Though we have modified our way of teaching them, the core concepts are still seen as valid and our aspirations for our participants remain the same. Some of these goals are attained by the participants during or by the end of the AFS experience; others involve a lifetime of reflection and building upon what has been learned through AFS. We encourage you to review the AFS Learning Objectives found on page 76 in the Resources section of this Handbook.

Words of Advice
Each year, host families are asked to contribute to this handbook by sharing pieces of advice from their hosting experiences. Throughout the handbook you will find these helpful words of advice and guidance. Each piece of advice is from a U.S. host family of an AFS Exchange Student from the country listed. At the end of the year, we hope you will share your own advice with future host families!

Please see page 79 in the Resources section of this handbook for additional advice from experienced AFS host families.

“The meeting that we attended before our student came really opened our eyes as to what we might expect.”
- Austria
The Basics
What Does AFS Expect of Us As Hosts?

AFS expects that you provide a safe supportive environment for the participant, and that you integrate him or her as a member of your family. As such, it is expected that you will provide the participant with his or her own bed, cover basic, everyday expenses incurred by having the participant in your home, arrange for transportation to and from school, and provide all meals, including either a sack lunch for school days or an allowance to purchase lunch in the cafeteria. When your family goes out for a meal, it is expected that you cover the cost of your participant’s meal, as well.

In addition, we expect that you will utilize the services available to you through your local AFS volunteers and national staff as outlined in this handbook. This includes (but is not limited to) participating in orientations and seeking advice from your AFS Liaison (see page 26) to ensure that both your participant and your family have the most enriching and enjoyable experience possible.

We also expect you to follow all other guidelines provided in this handbook and help to ensure that your participant does the same. We encourage you to discuss any questions or concerns regarding the content of this handbook with your local AFS volunteer or AFS staff member, as needed.

“The Host Family Handbook is an excellent resource. Having experienced host families at Pre-Arrival Orientation is very helpful for first-time families.”

- Argentina
What Can We Expect As Hosts?

Each family’s experience is unique, therefore it is impossible to describe precisely what you can expect as hosts. However, there are ways in which you can obtain general information about what to expect in the coming year. Some guidelines are listed here.

- Open the lines of communication with your participant and his or her natural parents before arrival day. Send photos and emails and ask them to do the same. If you cannot communicate in a common language, exchange as many photos as possible.

- Consult with others who have hosted before you. If you do not know any previous host families, ask your local AFS volunteers to give you the names and contact information of families in your community that would be willing to talk about their hosting experiences. Former host families are a valuable resource and, although no two hosting experiences are the same, they can supply useful advice on what to expect while hosting. They will also offer tips on how to deal with different situations.

- Most families find it helpful to read about their participant’s culture, history, and geography ahead of time. For an additional resource, please see CultureGrams on page 38.

Aren’t All Hosting Experiences At Least Similar?

Research shows that hosting involves a range of emotions and that most hosting experiences have low periods as well as high periods. During the year, the members of your family are likely to feel negative emotions (anger, disappointment, frustration, sadness) as well as positive ones (pride, satisfaction, happiness, love). Your AFS participant will also have these feelings, though not necessarily at the same time as you. Other than that, it is almost impossible to say what the typical emotional cycle of any host family will look like.

Some Terminology Clarifications

Throughout this handbook, you will see many references to “volunteers.” AFS-USA uses the term “volunteer” to describe those people who have volunteered to work for the AFS Program in their local communities doing work such as recruitment, orientation, support, logistics, etc. These AFS volunteers are registered by AFS and belong to specific local AFS units normally called “Chapters” or “Area Teams” and as such act as “agents” of our organization. Host families, who also volunteer their time, are referred to separately as “host families,” as they are not registered as volunteers by AFS and do not act as “agents” of our organization. Therefore, references made to “volunteers” in this handbook, as well as in any other AFS publication, manual, or correspondence, refer specifically to those people registered by AFS to work in local communities on behalf of AFS and do not refer to host families.

Another term you may encounter is “AFS participant.” While host families are also technically participants in the AFS experience, the term “participant” traditionally refers to the person you are hosting from another country.
**Adjusting to a New Culture**

Stresses and strains are inherent to most living situations and the cross-cultural living experience is no exception. Our past experience, substantiated by Peace Corps studies, has shown that a general cycle of emotional stages tends to occur when an individual embarks upon living in a new and different culture. These stages are known as the “cultural adjustment cycle” or “cultural adjustment curve.” While there are individual variations of these cycles, general observations are useful in understanding a newcomer’s reaction to an unfamiliar environment. The chart on the following page depicts the general adjustment cycle that your AFS Participant may experience. It includes, in italics, some adjustments that your family may also experience.

It is important to remember that this diagram merely provides a general outline and not specific boundaries. Some participants may experience the cycle as shown. Others may find one stage is more pronounced than another and some stages slip by so quickly that they are not noticed at all. However, it is widely agreed that AFS Participants go through cyclical periods of feeling very good and very bad after entering the new, and often very different, environment of their host community.

**Easing the Adjustment: Orientations**

AFS orientations are usually scheduled at five critical junctures in the cultural adjustment cycle to provide guidance and support to both participants and their families throughout the year. Although the schedule and format of orientations vary slightly throughout the country, the sequence is as follows:

- Arrival (upon arrival of the participant in the United States)
- Post-Arrival (three to six weeks after arrival)
- Mid-Stay (halfway through your participant’s stay)
- Pre-Return (six to eight weeks prior to the participant’s return home)
- End-Of-Stay (immediately prior to departure)

Make sure to check with your local AFS volunteer for the specifics regarding these orientations in your community.

It is required that your participant attend all orientations offered by the AFS Organization in your area. Please do all that you can to facilitate your participant’s attendance at these events. If this is not possible, we ask that you please notify your local volunteer so that alternative arrangements can be made. Host families are often invited to certain orientation events along with the participants, and we encourage you to attend whenever possible.

“Listening to stories of families who had hosted in the past was helpful. They made thoughtful comments of dos and don’ts they had learned in their experience.”

- Chile
The participant experiences anxiety over selection changes and elation when notified of acceptance and placement. The participant and family anticipate cultural differences but have only a superficial awareness of adjustment difficulties.

Upon arrival in another culture, the participant experiences discomfort because of many obvious and subtle differences. The host family is affected by the participant's cultural fatigue and experiences difficulties of their own in relating to someone from a different culture. The participant feels more at ease with school, language, customs, and friends and has a tentative sense of belonging.

Mental Isolation:
Boredom, frustration, and a pervasive sense of isolation occur, the participant complains of a lack of deep friendships, and feels the need to renew and reinforce relationships. Deeper differences between the participant and others become apparent and the participant feels the need to accomplish something important.

Resolution:
The participant and host family question their old cultural assumptions and ways of life. The host family feels a sense of relief that the participant has been able to adjust and adapt. The transformation involves a shift in perspective and begins resolution. The participant feels closer to family and friends and more at ease with school, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.

Return Jitters:
Gradually a new long-distance relationship develops, one that is often nourished by occasional visits and correspondence. The participant feels closer to family and friends and more at ease with school, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.

Cultural Fatigue:
Boredom, frustration, and a pervasive sense of isolation occur, the participant complains of a lack of deep friendships, and feels the need to renew and reinforce relationships. Deeper differences between the participant and others become apparent and the participant feels the need to accomplish something important.

Selection/Arrival:
Happy participant and host family experience cultural adjustment and seems more controlled and seems a sense of relief. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.

Surface Adjustment:
Happy participant and host family experience cultural adjustment and seems more controlled and seems a sense of relief. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.

Acculturation:
Happy participant and host family experience cultural adjustment and seems more controlled and seems a sense of relief. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant. The participant feels more at ease with school, friends, and that time for new experiences, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.

Resolution:
The participant and host family question their old cultural assumptions and ways of life. The host family feels a sense of relief that the participant has been able to adjust and adapt. The transformation involves a shift in perspective and begins resolution. The participant feels closer to family and friends and more at ease with school, and the host family feels more at ease with the participant.
Cultural Fatigue

Cultural fatigue is brought on by the amount of effort an individual must exert while attempting to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language, as well as by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar cues of social interaction. These cues include the thousands of ways we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life, such as knowing when to shake hands, what to say when meeting people, when and how to give tips (or if they should be given at all), when to accept and refuse invitations, and when to take statements seriously and when not to. Social cues, which come in the form of words, gestures, facial expressions, and customs or norms, are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up. They are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we hold. Most of us are not consciously aware of the hundreds of “hints” we depend on every day to function normally.

When an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar prompts are removed. He or she feels like a “fish out of water.” No matter how broad-minded or well-intended a participant may be, a series of props has been taken away. This causes feelings of frustration, anxiety, exhaustion, and may even lower resistance to illness. As a family member, you have graciously volunteered to play the key, supporting role during the life change your hosted son or daughter will undergo. No matter how hard you work to accommodate your participant in your home, chances are that he or she will have to work even harder to make that mutual accommodation satisfactory. You will need to advise and assist your participant as he or she faces this special challenge.

How Can Our Family Help Prevent Cultural Adjustment Difficulties?

You have already taken one useful step by reading this guide and learning about the cross-cultural adjustment curve and cultural fatigue. By now, you are aware that mental confusion, emotional mood swings, physical fatigue, and susceptibility to illness are all normal and more or less temporary consequences of the intense effort AFS Participants must put forth in order to understand and adapt to unfamiliar values, habits, and patterns of behavior that they suddenly encounter in your home, community, and culture. Some specific steps you can take to help your participant avoid the more serious impacts of cultural fatigue follow.

Explain the Patterns of Your Daily Life

Take time with your participant right from the beginning to thoroughly explain life in your home. Tour the house, go over rules, curfews, standards of dress, participation in daily family life, and expectations regarding special family events and holidays. Show your participant how to use appliances, the television, the stereo, etc.

To assist you in this important task, we have developed The Participant and Host Family Questionnaire. A copy is included on page 87 in the Resources section of this handbook. It is a requirement of the U.S. Department of State that some of the information contained in this questionnaire is relayed to the participant within two weeks of the participant’s arrival. We therefore ask you to review the questionnaire with

“My daughters’ biggest frustrations were all of the questions that our student asked them continuously. But they had to understand that she was new to our country and everything was weird and different. In time, the questions slowed, and she was always appreciative of their never-ending answers.”

- Germany
your participant within a few days of arrival and again a month or so later to ensure that your participant fully understands. Explaining your daily life and some of your most important expectations will lessen your participant’s anxiety and help simplify the adjustment process.

Repeat Your Explanations
Explanations will probably need to be given several times. Our culture is complex; one discussion is not likely to be sufficient for full understanding. When you need to be absolutely certain that a participant has understood an explanation or directions, politely ask him or her to repeat back to you what he or she has understood. This will give you a good idea of whether or not the participant has gotten your message.

Encourage Your AFS Participant to Get Rest
Physical and mental fatigue is normal and can occur as a result of requiring one’s body and mind to cope with an unfamiliar environment for a long period of time. A person becomes mentally and physically exhausted from the intense and unrelenting effort of adaptation. However, the more serious physiological and psychological consequences of cultural fatigue can be avoided by getting extra sleep and rest. Do not make the mistake of over scheduling your participant’s time in the first few weeks that he or she is here.

Speak Clearly and Slowly
At first, your AFS Participant may appear continually tired, seem disinterested, or remain unusually quiet. Keep in mind that the struggle of learning or mastering a language in an unfamiliar environment is exhausting. Tremendous concentration and effort are needed of a person with limited English ability to grasp even simple conversations. Inability to convey basic needs, feelings, or ideas is frustrating and tiring. Participants with limited English ability sometimes gravitate to younger people because of the limited vocabulary required in conversations.

Even if your participant’s English proficiency is fairly good, our use of slang and the speed at which we speak our language can make comprehension more difficult. Sometimes a complete misunderstanding arises from the use of a single word.

Regardless of your participant’s level of English, he or she will appreciate you speaking slowly, remaining patient, and checking back for a shared understanding. Many participants may understand less than you think they do, especially upon arrival. To avoid misunderstandings, repeat and simplify a sentence when necessary, and have your participant tell you, in his or her own words, what you have just said. Contact your local AFS Chapter if your participant seems to be having unusual language difficulties.

“The Participant and Host Family Questionnaire brought up a lot of different things to go over the first week that I probably wouldn’t have even thought about.”
- Germany
Tend to all Minor Illnesses

It is common for AFS Participants to become ill a few days or weeks after entering their host culture. These illnesses are very likely related to the body’s lowered resistance to disease, a result of the reduced number of white blood cells due to extended periods of stress. A simple illness, such as a sore throat, can linger on far longer than usual. Insist that your participant get proper rest and have him or her see your family physician if things begin to look serious. (Refer to the Medical Concerns section on page 54 for more details regarding medical coverage.)

Discuss this Information with the Participant and Other Members of Your Family

Throughout the adjustment period, some participants begin to think they have been singled out because of special problems and feel highly unsuccessful. Let them know that the problems and challenges facing them are normal and within the expected range of cultural adjustment. Reassure your participant that you are aware of the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture and that you will not make harsh judgments about the participant’s performance. Make it clear to the participant that you will be there, to the best of your ability, to listen, empathize, sympathize, and explain.

Treat The Participant as a Member of Your Family From Day One

Aside from the aforementioned accomodations, it is crucial that you treat your participant as a member of your family from the onset of the experience. By this, we mean that the same rules and expectations with regard to chores, curfews, mealtimes, etc., apply to your AFS participant as to other family members. This will lessen the likelihood of sibling rivalry and will help ensure that the joys and frustrations of hosting are shared equally among family members. It is much harder to tighten and impose new rules and expectations than to loosen those originally put in place. As trust builds between family members, there will be more room for negotiation.

While it is crucial that your participant is treated as a member of your family, particularly with regard to household responsibilities and routine, it is also important to recognize that certain signs of affection or physical contact that may be typical for your family might make a participant from another country and culture uncomfortable, as physical boundaries and “normal” signs of affection differ from culture to culture. For example, it is common for a participant from France to greet someone with a kiss on each cheek. In contrast, a participant from Japan, who may typically greet someone with a slight bow, may be uncomfortable with or misinterpret such physical contact. It is important to keep these cultural differences, and your own participant’s comfort level, in mind while integrating him or her into your family.

“When the student first arrives it is difficult to communicate freely. You might need to write things down and help them translate through their books. Even though their application says they have studied 6 or more years in the language you speak, it by no means should be interpreted to mean they can speak and understand.”

- Italy
What Should We Do in Case of Adjustment Difficulties?

Each of us behaves and makes decisions according to a set of beliefs we have lived by for our entire lives. This is also true for your participant. As you and your AFS son or daughter encounter differences, discuss them openly. Small issues left unaddressed can fester and become bigger problems. Adjustments will need to be made, some of which will come more easily than others. Although your participant may have learned about some cultural differences during his or her orientation, many nuances are not truly understood until they are experienced firsthand.

As you discuss differences, review them in light of appropriate behavior in your family and what is truly important for acceptance in the community. You and your participant will become increasingly culturally aware, learning to view situations in terms of cultural appropriateness rather than in terms of what is “right” or “good.”

It is natural for your AFS participant, like family and community members here, to have strong feelings about his or her country. Living in a new community, he or she may compare the U.S. unfavorably with his or her home country. A certain amount of this is to be expected, as feeling critical of one’s new and unfamiliar environment is actually considered to be a phase of cultural adjustment. Be prepared for this kind of reaction. Encourage your participant to speak freely about his or her feelings and show an interest in your participant’s observations and native country.

*We encourage you to contact your AFS Liaison should you feel that your participant is experiencing unusual or severe adjustment difficulties.*
Rules and Regulations

The Three AFS Rules
The following rules apply to every AFS Participant hosted in the United States at all times:

**No Drugs**
**No Driving**
**No Hitchhiking**

All AFS Participants and their natural parents have been made aware of these rules and are responsible for knowing them. Related text can be found in the Participation Agreement, a legal document signed by all participants and their parents/guardians. The agreement is an international document used by all AFS Partner countries. A sample copy can be found on page 123 in the Resources section of this handbook.

Always notify the AFS Liaison (or, in the event that the Liaison is not available, AFS staff or another volunteer) in a timely manner in the event that your participant breaks any of these rules. Violation of any one of these rules is cause for an early return home and an end to your hosted participant’s participation on the program. The decision to send a participant home is made by AFS staff in the National Office in consultation with the local AFS volunteers.

**No Drugs**
Possession and use of drugs is not allowed by AFS unless medically prescribed. Furthermore, participants are not allowed in the company of individuals using drugs or drug equipment or involved in the transport or distribution of drugs. Both illegal drug use and association with those involved with illegal drugs are cause for program termination.

The AFS Participation Agreement, signed by the participant and, in the case of a minor, their natural parents or guardians, states the following:

*Laws on drug use in most countries are severe and may carry lengthy imprisonment or death penalties. We understand and agree that AFS Participants are subject to the laws of their hosting country and community; that neither AFS nor the national government of the participant’s citizenship has the ability to protect the individual from arrest or punishment with respect to involvement with illegal substances or any other illegal activities. We understand that in the event of legal proceedings related to such offenses or other legal matters, we are responsible for any legal fees and costs.*
Further defined under causes for Termination of Program in Progress:

AFS also reserves the right to cancel an individual’s participation and to return the individual home early if he or she violates the provisions of these Terms and Conditions or if it shall be discovered that the participant or his or her natural parents(s)/legal guardian(s) have made material misrepresentation or non-disclosure to AFS or the participant develops personal behavior or pursues actions which in the sole judgment of AFS would not be in the best interest of the participant or of AFS. Example: a participant’s driving a car is cause for an early return to the home country; a participant’s abuse of alcoholic beverages, or use or involvement with drugs for non-medicinal purposes are cause for an early return to the home country.

We know there are different views about non-medicinal drug usage from country to country or even within the same country. Because this is an issue that could have serious consequences for the safety of participants, AFS maintains a universal policy on how to manage situations involving participant non-medicinal drug usage.

**When confronted with non-medicinal drug usage or involvement, these questions are most commonly raised:**

**Why does AFS terminate program participation for individuals who use or are involved with non-medicinal drugs?**

AFS maintains this universal policy for the protection of participants. Our policies are for the benefit of participants’ health and safety, not as punishment for rule breaking. Immediate removal of participants from situations that can hold possible criminal consequences or personal risk reflects AFS’s responsibility to protect the participant’s safety as much as possible.

**What about countries where there are few legal consequences for drug usage? Does this policy apply?**

This is a policy of AFS worldwide. It is not subject to individual Partner interpretation to reflect local or national views or laws on the topic. At the center of this policy is the importance of participant safety. Consistency in application of policies is an important factor in AFS’s approach towards risk management and the protection of participants. The universal application of the policy provides a reliable framework so that AFS support structures in all countries can manage, in a timely and appropriate manner, any drug related situations that could potentially result in personal risk and serious safety concern for the participant.

“We found enforcing a curfew unpopular but necessary since kids in Germany are used to staying out much later and drinking. It was very helpful to have iron-clad AFS rules about drinking.” - Germany

AFS Host Family Handbook 20 AFS-USA @July 2018
What about incidents involving marijuana in states where it has been legalized?

Laws related to marijuana vary from state to state. In some states, it is legal for individuals 21 years of age and older to use marijuana for medicinal and/or recreational purposes. However, federal law prohibits the possession/use/sale of marijuana, and all participants coming to the U.S. are expected to abstain from having, using, or selling marijuana while on program.

Participants are informed that using marijuana under any circumstances is cause for dismissal from the program and immediate return to their home country. AFS advises participants that should anyone offer them marijuana, even in a state where it has been legalized, they should not accept it and should tell their host parents and/or Liaison immediately.

What if the participant is not actually using drugs? Isn’t it unfair to send him or her home?

Program participation can be cancelled if an AFS participant is in the company of individuals using drugs or drug equipment or if a participant is in any way involved in the transport or distribution of illegal drugs. Drug enforcement laws can be extremely severe, and safety of the participant is of primary concern. The police can arrest or detain an individual on suspicion of drug involvement simply by association or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Consequences can result in arrest, jail time, and criminal charges necessitating court proceedings. In some cases, a participant’s personal safety may also be at risk due to their association with people involved with illegal drug use. If a participant is arrested, neither AFS nor the participant's country of citizenship or family can have much of an influence on the process. Therefore, in order for AFS to protect the participant under these circumstances, we have determined that immediate return to the home country is in the best interest of the participant. To delay this action can put the participant at risk of being detained by the police and then entering into the criminal justice system of the host country, from which it can be difficult to extradite the participant.

Why doesn’t AFS depend on a drug test to prove whether or not the participant used drugs and should be returned home?

AFS does not depend on drug testing since the process is often unreliable.

Should a participant become involved in any way with the illegal use of drugs, AFS will be sensitive to and concerned for the impact of the situation on the host family and the community.

“Listening to stories of families who had hosted in the past was helpful. They made thoughtful comments of do's and don’ts they had learned in their experience.”

- Austria
No Driving

AFS does not allow participants to operate any moving vehicle that requires a license to operate. This means that all AFS participants are forbidden from driving cars (this rule applies to driving anywhere, including on private land, in driveways, and in parking lots). Participants are also forbidden from flying airplanes and driving trucks, motorcycles, motor scooters, and powered bicycles. Failure to comply with this rule is cause for termination from the program and the participant’s early return to his or her home country.

Unfortunately, there have been cases in which host parents have allowed their hosted son or daughter to drive. In these cases, the participants have been terminated from the program. This is a very sad situation for all involved, so please do not allow your participant to drive.

Also, please ensure that your hosted participant knows that taking the wheel when a friend or classmate is unable to drive is also not permissible and is grounds for an early return. In such a situation, your participant should know how to obtain an alternate method of transportation by calling you, a local AFS contact, a taxi, or 911 in case of an emergency.

Many states have recently adopted more stringent controls over the use of jet skis, wave runners, and other personal watercraft, and a license is required in many states in order to operate such vehicles. Because this requirement has become so widespread, AFS students are prohibited from driving jet skis, wave runners, and other similar personal watercraft. They may ride as a passenger if the person driving is in legal compliance with the state laws regarding the operation of such watercraft.

If your participant wishes to operate other vehicles such as a snowmobile or tractor, he or she must have your permission as well as his or her natural parents’ permission in writing in the form of an AFS Activity Waiver. The written permission from the natural family must be obtained through AFS staff in the National Office. If you have access to such equipment and anticipate that your participant may use it, contact your local volunteer and ask how to obtain proper written permission from the natural family through your AFS National Service Center. For a complete explanation of the AFS Activity Waiver, see page 45.

On a related note, if you have currently have a teenaged son or daughter who possesses a driver’s permit or driver’s license, you will need to contact your Division of Motor Vehicles to determine whether your hosted participant is considered a family member by your state. Many states have restrictions on the number and type (family member/non-family member, under/over a certain age) of passengers that teens may transport. In some cases, written proof of your hosted child’s status as a family member may be required.

Please note, in addition to the no driving rule, the Participant Agreement specifies:

*It is understood that while on the program, participants will not drive a car or any other vehicle requiring a license... nor will participants initiate actions in order to acquire a license. It is understood that failure to comply is cause for termination from the program and early return to the home country.*

As such, it is not permissible for participants to take a driver’s education course while on an AFS Program.
No Hitchhiking

While hitchhiking may be a common form of traveling in some countries, it is considered a potentially dangerous activity in the U.S. and therefore is not allowed.

Several other considerations have led to the No Hitchhiking rule:

- Hitchhiking is against State law if conducted in the customary way of standing by the roadside with a hand out asking motorist to stop to give a ride. Hitchhiking wherever it occurs is against the law in some states.
- American families generally do not allow their minor children to hitchhike. Therefore, if the participant hitchhikes it could put the placement at risk.
- The participant’s ability to judge the driver’s motivation to stop to give a ride or to offer a ride can be impaired due to limited understanding of host county cultural norms. Limited knowledge of the locale where the ride is offered and the route taken can also increase the risk when the decision is made to get in to a vehicle driven by someone unknown.
- AFS must consider risk to the participant and the organization should the participant suffer harm, be that abuse, a car accident or other incident that brings adverse notoriety to AFS and the Department of State.

The AFS definition of hitchhiking:

To seek transportation by asking strangers for a ride or accepting a ride offered by strangers in their private motor vehicle.

Key words in the definition are:
- To seek transportation. AFS does not consider hitchhiking an acceptable form of transportation for travel in the local community and most certainly not outside the community, which would be unauthorized independent travel.
- Asking or accepting rides. Asking for or accepting rides at or near the roadway or elsewhere within the community. An example of “near the roadway” is using the typical sign of arm out with the thumb up. An example of “out in the community” is at a party asking for or accepting a ride home or to another party from a stranger, as defined below.
- Strangers. Defined as someone the participant does not know, at first meeting, or someone that does not have a recommendation, reference or referral by someone the participant does know and trusts such as host family members, good friends or AFS volunteers.

Asking for or accepting rides from known schoolmates would not be considered hitchhiking. However, host parents must be given the chance to approve rides by schoolmates to ensure participant safety in riding with drivers who have might have new driver license restrictions or are considered at-risk drivers.
Alcohol Policy for Participants in the USA

The safety and wellbeing of our participants is AFS’s highest priority. Working to ensure the safety of a participant requires a partnership between the participant and the host family, in compliance with AFS policies and laws in the host country.

Embarking on an AFS Program in the U.S. implies agreement with the following alcohol policies. Failure to abide by these policies is considered to be irresponsible behavior, a threat to the safety of the AFS Participant, and potentially damaging to the integrity of the program.

Failure to comply with these policies will be considered grounds for early return.

1. Use of alcohol in the United States is regulated by state and federal law. Although U.S. federal law states that no one under the age of 21 may publicly possess or purchase alcohol, state laws regarding the consumption of alcohol by a minor (anyone under 21) vary.

Some U.S. states maintain zero tolerance laws, meaning that no alcohol can be consumed or possessed by anyone under the age of 21. Other U.S. states allow consumption if it is in a private home. No matter where an AFS Participant is hosted in the United States, breaking any laws is strictly prohibited. The breaking of any state or local law concerning alcohol is reason to be removed from the program and returned home. In such cases, a participant faces the possibility of arrest and/or deportation if these laws are not obeyed.

It is important that participants have a clear understanding of the laws of the state and community in which they are living. Please inform your participant of your views on teenage drinking, your family’s rules, and U.S. and state laws and how these will affect him or her.

2. Any abuse of alcoholic drinks, such as binge drinking, and inappropriate behavior related to drinking alcohol is not allowed while on an AFS Program in the United States and is grounds for early return. Any arrest or suspension from school for alcohol use is also grounds for early return.

Should participants abuse alcohol or binge drink, they can potentially place themselves or others in danger. This behavior will not be tolerated on the AFS Program.

In many high schools in the U.S., there are students who abuse alcohol and binge drink. It is important that AFS participants understand that this is not acceptable while on the AFS-USA Program. If participants find themselves in an environment where this is occurring, they should ask their host family or Liaison for assistance.

It is important that AFS participants understand that excessive alcohol use is not acceptable behavior while on the AFS program. Excessive alcohol use includes: frequent/regular alcohol consumption; excessive alcohol consumption in one session; and binge drinking. Should participants abuse alcohol or binge drink, they can potentially place themselves or others in danger. This behavior will not be tolerated on the AFS program. Involvement with friends and/or schoolmates who abuse alcohol can also put an AFS participant’s program at risk.

“Most kids from European countries are used to having a lot of independence because of great public transportation systems, which do not exist in most of the U.S. They will not understand how difficult it is to juggle your schedule to drive them places, so remember that they are likely just as frustrated as you are with transportation difficulties.”

- Czech Republic
Smoking

Attitudes in the U.S. toward smoking, especially teen-smoking, have become increasingly disapproving. Many U.S. families do not permit cigarette smoking in their homes. In addition, many businesses, restaurants, and other public places such as airports and shopping malls have “no smoking” rules. Many schools have a “no smoking” policy. Some schools are quite strict with this rule and may suspend a participant from school for a period of time if a participant is caught smoking.

There is a minimum age law for purchasing cigarettes. Federal regulations, signed into law in 1997, prohibit the sale of tobacco or smokeless tobacco to anyone under the age of 18. In some states, legislatures are considering laws which would fine parents (including host parents) for allowing minors to be in possession of tobacco products in their homes. While this is not a widespread law, it does demonstrate the disapproval of teen smoking by many state governments. Please ensure that your participant is aware of both your position on smoking and your state’s laws.

We will treat violations of the smoking laws in the same manner as violations of local laws for alcohol use. Essentially, this means that our participants will be subject to penalties prescribed by law. If fines or community service are required, the participant will need to fulfill these requirements. The tolerance for smoking varies widely from family to family. Since all AFS participants are either nonsmokers or have agreed to abstain from smoking during their time on the AFS Program, they are expected to be able to live without smoking. Open communication and having clear family rules on the subject will make it easier for your AFS participant to deal with these issues.

A Note about Facebook and other Social Media

Information found on social media or other public websites reflecting participants engaging in such activities as driving, involvement with the use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes, travel in violation of AFS participant travel policy, or other dangerous behaviors may also be cause for early return. This information is stated in the Participation Agreement, to which all participants agree upon entering the program. Please see the section on Electronic Communication and Internet Safety on page 49 for information on how to keep your host son or daughter safe online.

“We did have immediate difficulties with the no smoking policy in our house and how our student behaved at local parties and interacted with host siblings the same age as him. We had the AFS local volunteers intervene fairly quickly and that helped to set things on a smoother path.”

- Germany
AFS Support

How Do We Get Help?: The AFS Chain of Communication

![AFS Chain of Communication Diagram]

- **Student in USA**
  - Host Family (in USA)
  - Liaison (in USA)
  - Local Volunteer Support Coordinator / Local Support (or Associate Support) Coordinator (in USA)
  - AFS Participant Support Staff (AFS Duty Officer) (Mon-Fri 9:00am-6:00pm Eastern Time (212-299-9000))

- **In Home Country**
  - AFS Partner Staff (AFS Duty Officer)
  - Local Volunteer Structure (varies by country)

**EMERGENCIES ONLY: FOR STUDENTS**

If students cannot call anyone on this list first AND/OR it is at night/on the weekend, then call the AFS-USA Duty Officer.

(800-237-4636, option 9)

*YES & CBYX students*

In Home Country; Partner Staff
Your AFS Liaison

Your AFS Liaison is a local volunteer, living no more than 120 miles from your home, who is dedicated to supporting you and your participant. By serving as a sounding board and a personal resource, your Liaison will help guide you through the cultural learning and adjustment that you and your participant will experience. Your Liaison may be neither a member of your family nor a teacher, coach, or school administrator in a position of authority over your participant, so as to offer support from an objective perspective without conflict of interest.

Once a Liaison has been assigned to you and your participant, you will receive an email containing his or her name and contact information. You may have the opportunity to meet your Liaison before your participant arrives, as some Area Teams arrange get-togethers for Liaisons and host families prior to the arrival of the participants.

Liaison Support and Monthly Contacts

Monthly check-ins allow time for you and your participant to explore positive and negative aspects of your respective experiences. They provide the opportunity to speak frankly with someone outside the home who understands AFS and the unique challenges encountered during this experience.

Your Liaison will provide:

- Assistance to you and your participant as needed throughout the hosting experience
- Individual contact with you and your participant each month (the first of these contacts with your participant must be conducted in person)
- For the year program, one in-person visit with you in the fall and one in the spring; for the semester program, one in-person visit in the fall (all other monthly check-ins may be by phone or in-person)

In addition to supporting you and your participant, the Liaison is also responsible for fulfilling the “monthly contact” requirement established by the U.S. Department of State, which regulates high school exchange programs in the United States. AFS is required to maintain monthly contact with every participant and host family involved in the exchange program, and this is achieved through our Liaisons. We ask that you be as flexible as possible in arranging time in your schedule to speak with your Liaison.
How Do We Make Effective Use of Our Liaison’s Assistance?

- **Cultivate and Maintain the Relationship.** This relationship enables you and your participant to process the experience of the program every step of the way.

- **Contact Your Liaison.** You do not need to wait for your Liaison to contact you. You should feel free to contact your Liaison if you are having a problem, or even if you aren’t!

- **Don’t Wait.** Even seemingly small issues between you and your participant can grow if left unaddressed. Your Liaison is there to offer:
  - Advice from a person outside the family with extensive experience and knowledge of AFS
  - Mediation by a neutral third party, which often helps each side to better understand the other’s point of view by offering more objective observations and suggestions

**Chain of Communication**

It is especially important to alert your Liaison when problems are ongoing to ensure that AFS-USA can keep the AFS office in your participant’s home country informed of these problems, and they in turn can discuss such problems with your participant’s natural parents. Refer to the Chain of Communication diagram on page 26. This clear communication chain, starting with contact between you and your Liaison, ensures that all AFS parties fully understand any issues that arise. In order for natural parents to understand and accept decisions made by AFS-USA, the staff must report ahead of time how problems have developed and what efforts are being made to solve them.

**Sensitive Situations**

There are circumstances that our participants may find themselves wherein they are apprehensive about others’ reactions, due to cultural norms or otherwise, and would prefer to keep the situation to themselves or within the host family until they return home (e.g. certain medical conditions, being a victim of harassment, etc.). Participants may be unaware of the resources and support AFS can provide them in these types of circumstances. It is important to know that AFS liaisons undergo in depth training so that they are well equipped to support our participants and host families under such circumstances. If you find yourself in a position in which your participant is dealing with a sensitive situation regarding his or her personal safety or well-being and he or she has asked you to not share it with others, it is important that you share this information with your liaison who has the resources and discretion to provide or obtain the appropriate support for you and your participant.

**When Contacting Your Liaison is Required**

Always notify your AFS Liaison (or, in the event that the Liaison is not available, AFS staff or another volunteer) in a timely manner for the following reasons:

- If your family and/or the participant are away from home for more than 24 hours (give contact details in case of an emergency)
- If serious issues arise, including but not limited to serious illness, injury, or hospitalization; arrest or detention by authorities; violation of AFS rules regarding driving, hitchhiking, or involvement with illegal drugs; potentially harmful or uncooperative behaviors or any other behavior that causes concern to your family or family members
- If you learn that your participant has had unexcused absences from school, has missed classes, is failing classes, or is having other academic problems
- If you are considering hosting any other exchange participant, even temporarily, so that the participant’s natural family can be contacted for approval of the double placement
- If contact from the natural family (via phone, Skype, or e-mail) interferes with the participant’s adaptation process
- In the event of any and all changes in the status of the host family or participant, including but not limited to: changes in address, finances, employment, divorce, loss of a family member, criminal arrests, or if anyone over 14 years of age moves into the home
How Do We Contact AFS in Case of Emergency?

An emergency might be a car accident, broken bones, serious illness, and/or hospitalization of your hosted son or daughter; any situation in which the police are involved; or any time you feel there is important information which must be communicated to your student’s natural parents immediately.

In case of emergency, call 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and press 9.

If you call outside of business hours, you will be connected to the AFS answering service, which will take down your name, phone number, and the nature of your emergency. This information will then be conveyed to the AFS Duty Officer. The Duty Officer should return your call within fifteen minutes. If you don’t hear back from the Duty Officer within fifteen minutes, you should call the answering service back and let them know. They will either contact the Duty Officer again or contact the back-up Duty Officer. The Duty Officer system is available every week night and twenty-four hours a day on the weekends and on holidays. AFS Duty Officers are AFS staff members trained to deal with emergencies at any time.

Should you need emergency assistance and are unable to reach an AFS staff or volunteer, or if you are not satisfied with the level of assistance being provided by AFS, you may contact the U.S. Department of State. For more information, please see Department of State Contact Information page 53.

Legal Issues

If your participant is arrested or detained by the police at any time, you should immediately contact your AFS Liaison (or other AFS volunteer or staff if your Liaison is unavailable). If the arrest or detainment occurs after business hours and you cannot contact your AFS Liaison or other volunteer, please contact the Duty Officer immediately by calling 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and dialing 9. A local volunteer, in cooperation with AFS staff, will provide assistance to the participant and his or her natural parents to obtain legal representation as soon as possible. It is the policy of AFS-USA that our participants never be questioned by authorities without legal representation present due to potential language and cultural barriers. Should police or local authorities contact you or your participant and ask to question the participant regarding a legal matter, please let the authorities know that you need to contact AFS-USA in order to arrange for legal representation for your participant first.

Emergency Travel Situations

Early Return

On occasion, participants will need to return home prior to the completion of their program for a number of reasons including adjustment problems, behavioral issues, illness, natural family emergencies, etc. In these cases, participants will depart from a major airport near the host community, and these flights will be based on non-stop or minimal connections, lowest fare, and arrival time into the gateway to allow check-in for the international flight. Once in the gateway city, the participant will be met by an AFS volunteer who will assist with check-in for the international flight. If an early morning departure is scheduled from the gateway city, the participant may need to spend the night in the gateway city, accompanied by an AFS volunteer. In such cases, this will be arranged ahead of time by AFS.
Early Return for Personal Reasons

When a participant decides to return home early for non-urgent reasons, this is called an “early return for personal reasons.” If your hosted participant plans to leave the U.S. before the end of the program and return directly home for personal reasons, he or she will forfeit all AFS Program services except medical coverage. Forfeited AFS Program services include the care, welfare, and support of the participant; costs for any food, lodging, or travel from the participant’s host family to the international gateway airport; and transit assistance at airports in the U.S. Medical coverage will remain in effect until the international flight lands in the participant’s home country.

A participant who decides to return home early for non-urgent or non-programmatic reasons should contact his or her natural parents who should then contact the home-country AFS Office to make arrangements for their son or daughter’s return.

Emergency Travel Home

Sometimes participants need to return home for short periods of time in the middle of their program due to an emergency or a death in their natural family. In these cases, the participant who flies home and then returns to the U.S. to continue his or her program is responsible for purchasing a new international ticket from an airport close to their hosting community and back. By purchasing an additional ticket, their international ticket can be utilized for their departure with the group in June. As they are choosing to return home for a specific reason, and are temporarily off the program while home, they are generally expected to travel unassisted from their hosted community to their home country. However, this will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Family Relationships

Your Family

The AFS experience is open to all types of families. Single parents, childless couples, and traditional families can all host successfully and learn from an intercultural experience. The composition of your family is not nearly as important as your family’s flexibility and willingness to make adjustments as needed. While there is no formula for knowing in advance exactly what adjustments will be necessary, anticipating the need for some adjustments may make things easier when obstacles arise.

Please remember that a normal hosting relationship will involve difficulties and misunderstandings as well as happy and satisfying times. You might reflect on the fact that your relationships within your own family have included both good and bad times over the years. Hosting a young person from another country is no different. Should difficulties arise, do your best to begin working them out. Do not blame individuals (including yourself!), and do not allow yourself to feel that your hosting experience may not be successful. Try to understand the situation from your participant’s point of view, and be patient and supportive while he or she is trying to adjust to your way of life. Discuss possible points of disagreement or friction directly with your participant, rather than letting them fester.
If you have children at home, it is helpful to discuss with them their expectations of having a host sibling. An open discussion can sometimes reveal that children’s expectations are not very realistic. For example, a common expectation is that an AFS participant will be your son or daughter’s best friend. Thinking this through in advance will help children see that siblings may or may not share the same friends and interests. Discussing expectations prior to your participant’s arrival can help avoid possible disappointments and misunderstandings.

It’s possible that other children may also feel neglected or overly competitive with the participant. They may feel burdened by having to “look after” the participant at school. If misunderstandings, jealousy, or other signs of friction develop, begin by giving each person a chance to talk to you privately about the relationship. Try to bring the situation to a point where a three-cornered discussion can take place. Your role is to serve as a neutral referee. Using this approach, the grievances on both sides can be aired and a possible resolution to the problem can be reached.

Agree to work out adjustments as they arise. Your children and your AFS participant need to be willing to share their feelings with each other while feeling comfortable retaining their individuality. If there is tension between your participant and one of your children, handle the situation as you would among your own children. Likewise, should discipline become necessary, trust that your approach to your own children is also appropriate for your AFS son or daughter. Consistency in approach can prevent tension or jealousy. If you need assistance, do not hesitate to contact your local AFS volunteers. Please see page 101 and page 104 in the Resources section of this handbook for two articles on the topic of teens.

Keep in mind that you may need to take the lead in a discussion about problems or friction with your participant. He or she may feel reluctant to confide in you for fear of hurting your feelings, seeming ungrateful, or making matters worse instead of better. In addition, some participants come from cultures in which the accepted practice is to keep problems to oneself. If the participant appears unwilling to discuss problems at first, do not jump to the conclusion that he or she is being uncooperative or disinterested in finding a solution. Be patient and keep trying.
In some cultures, sharing concerns directly with those involved in the conflict is not generally done. The preferable way to resolve the situation is indirectly, through a third party. This allows for all parties to “save face” and maintains outward harmony in the relationships. This style of communication is common in more group-oriented cultures, such as Japan and Thailand, but it can be found in other cultures as well. If you sense that something is amiss with your participant but he or she insists that “everything is fine,” please ensure that he or she has ample opportunity to speak with a local AFS volunteer outside of the presence of family members. Often, this will be enough to get the communication flowing. With guidance from you and the local volunteer, your participant will gradually learn to communicate with family members in a more open and direct manner.

Younger Siblings
If you have an infant, toddler, or young child in your family, we encourage you to discuss basic practices regarding how your AFS participant should deal with him or her, for example: how/whether the participant should/may hold the infant, the child’s nap/sleep schedule, diet, and any allergies or medical conditions about which all members of the family are aware. In addition, please inform your participant of how your family deals with disciplining the very young child in your home. For example, “We do/do not give spankings in this home,” “Only the parents may discipline the children in this home,” “Please come to me if you feel the child has done something wrong and we will work out a solution,” etc. We also recommend sharing with your participant some ideas for activities that he or she and the younger sibling may do together.

We recommend having this conversation, even if your hosted participant has had much experience with younger siblings back home, as some practices related to infants and young children that are acceptable in your participant’s home or culture may be unacceptable to your family.

We also encourage you to discuss with your participant any childcare responsibilities you may ask him or her to take on as a member of your family, such as occasional babysitting, helping the younger siblings get ready in the mornings, etc. It is very important to ensure that you, the participant, and the younger siblings are all comfortable with any arrangement discussed, and that everyone understands that the participant is here to become a member of your family and participate in an intercultural exchange experience, and not as a child care provider or nanny. We ask that host families not expect participants to babysit younger host siblings on a regular or consistent basis.

Your Participant’s Family
While your family and the AFS Participant are the most visible participants in the AFS experience, your participant’s natural family members are also participants. They, too, have to make some adjustments. They are missing their child as much as their child is missing them. Since they have never met you and your family face-to-face, their natural concerns for their child’s well being and happiness are heightened. While AFS does not recommend frequent e-mail or phone calls with your participant’s natural parents, AFS does encourage you to write them from time to time to let them know how their son or daughter is doing. Reassurance from you that their son or daughter is happy and adjusting will be welcomed and appreciated.

“I found other host families in my area to be a great support for me. Through our chapter families, there are decades of experience out there, and they were a great help!”
- Italy
AFS has a standard statement which is shared with all AFS Participants and their families regarding frequent e-mail and phone contact between participants and their families and friends back home. To read this statement, please see page 47. For information on visits from natural family members, please see page 66.

**Family Changes**

AFS has the sole responsibility of determining host family placements. AFS will assist your family and participant in having a successful hosting experience. However, AFS volunteers have the authority to move the participant to another family if they feel it is in his or her best interest, or the best interest of your family.

Sometimes a placement does not work out, in spite of the honest effort put forth by the participant, family, and volunteers. Whether this is a result of a change in family circumstances, unresolved differences, or simple incompatibility, a change of family is necessary in some instances. Either you or your participant may initiate the change, but the decision to move a participant from the home will only occur after discussions take place with the AFS volunteers in your area. Please be assured that family changes are not all that uncommon and, although changes can be difficult for both participants and families, we hope that if you have one experience that does not work out, you will be willing to try again.

In the event that a family change is made, the participant will be placed, when possible, in the same community so that he or she does not need to change schools. In the case of a family change, AFS does not place blame on anyone. Rather, AFS seeks to ensure that both the participant and family feel supported. In all cases, AFS must take final responsibility for deciding if and when a family change is necessary.

**Multiple Placements**

Government regulations state that two foreign participants may be hosted by the same host family only with express prior written consent from the host family, natural parents, and students being placed. Please notify your AFS Liaison (or, in the event that the Liaison is not available, AFS Staff or another volunteer) in a timely manner if you are considering hosting any other participants, even on a temporary basis. While double placements are permitted, the U.S. Department of State strictly prohibits more than two participants living in one home at any time and for any length of time.

“Host families should be made aware that re-assigning a student to another family is not really a failure. Sometimes it’s just not a good match. It is sad when such a move becomes an angry one instead of a friendly acknowledgement that sometimes people are just too different to live together easily.” - Norway
Culture Learning

While your hosted participant is the one who has traveled to a new country and will be doing the lion’s share of adjusting in this equation, you too may journey not only into new cultural territory, but also down a road of self-discovery. This may seem surprising at first, but this process of mutual enrichment and learning is what thousands of participants, host families, and natural families will tell you lies at the heart of the AFS experience.

You may be wondering, “How can I learn about myself through contact with someone different from me?” It is most often through the contrast between the two that new awareness and knowledge arise. In other words, we may not be aware of our own values, beliefs, and customs until we come into contact with someone who has values, beliefs, and customs different from our own.

A Host Mother’s Story

This host mother’s story helps to demonstrate our point:

About a month after Anne, our student from Denmark, moved in, she questioned why I always ate at the counter, while my husband and children ate at the table. The answer, in part, was because our kitchen table was small, and we generally ate there rather than at the larger, more formal table in the dining room. I would sit closer to the stove in order to refill others’ plates more easily. She also asked why my girls always set and cleared the table, while the boys and my husband usually did nothing to help out at meal times.

She found all of these practices quite odd, and before then, none of us had really stopped to question them, at least not out loud. She told us how things were done in her home, how everyone ate at the same table, and all of the food was placed on the table “family style,” so that people could serve themselves. Her mother and father took turns preparing the meals, and everyone took turns clearing the table and washing the dishes. They often placed candles on the table because of the shorter days of the Danish fall and winter and not just on special occasions, as we might.

This conversation caused a mini-revolution in our home and our family eventually made some changes, some of which the boys would like to have done without! I now sit at the same table as everyone else, and we regularly use the lovely Danish candleholder she gave us to brighten our table. Some things never change though; I am still the cook!”

This mother’s story demonstrates how both the host family members and the hosted participant became aware of cultural and individual differences. In this case, the family made some changes based on their new awareness, but some things stayed the same. The mother was still the cook and, although it was not mentioned, she probably continued to prepare the same kinds of food at the same time of day, something to which Anne grew accustomed. If we asked Anne what she learned from staying with this family, she might have said that she makes some of the foods her mother taught her how to make now that she is back in Denmark.
Generalizations and Stereotypes

Not every American family shares the same practices as the family in the previous example, nor does every Danish family share the traditions of Anne’s family. However, the Danes are generally known for a more egalitarian outlook between the sexes, whereas in the majority of U.S. families, the mother does most of the housework and cooking, even if she works outside of the home. These statements are generalizations about Danish and U.S. culture.

To help us in the process of mutual understanding, it is often useful to look to cultural generalizations, which we define as the tendency of the majority of people within a culture group to share certain values, beliefs, and behaviors. Generalizations do not apply to all people within a culture group, so they should only be used as a guide to understanding the group.

An example of a cultural generalization is the strongly held American value of individualism. Americans like to do things themselves and see themselves as responsible for their own lives. These things are reflected in popular expressions such as “pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps.” Even the Nike slogan, “Just Do It” suggests that we control our own destiny. However, this doesn’t mean that all Americans value individualism in the same way and to the same degree. Rather, on average, Americans hold this value and American culture views individualism as positive.

Cultural generalizations must not be confused with cultural stereotypes, which are fixed ideas or exaggerated beliefs about every individual in a culture group. Stereotypes are often negative in nature and not tested. An example of a cultural stereotype would be “People from Country X are very materialistic” or “Xians are all lazy.”

To better understand cultural generalizations, refer to the diagram below:

On the left side of the spectrum lies the American cultural value of individualism, and on the right side lies the Thai value of collectivism. A collectivist culture is one in which the interests of the group, whether it be the family, classmates, or community, are given priority over those of the individual. People from such cultures tend to avoid conflict and revealing one’s inner feelings or “letting it all hang out” as we often do in the U.S.

The mid-point of the bell curve for Americans shows that, on average, Americans value individualism more than collectivism. However, the curve also shows that some Americans are much closer to the collectivist end of the spectrum. Conversely, collectivism is the Thai cultural value, but some Thais can be found closer to the the individualist side.
The shaded area shows how certain Americans and Thais may be more like each other on this trait than they are like the average American or Thai person. The bell curves show that there is a great deal of value diversity within each culture group, while at the same time there is a preferred or dominant cultural value. It is important to keep in mind that culture is not the only factor that influences behavior. People can differ in many other ways, such as their likes and dislikes, personalities, and life experiences.

**Individualism and Collectivism**

We chose to use the example of individualism and collectivism in the explanation of generalizations, since many misunderstandings in the hosting experience arise from situations in which a participant from a “collectivist” society is placed in an “individualist” society, or vice versa, and neither party is aware of the distinction between the two.

According to social psychologist, Geert Hofstede:

> Individualism pertains to a society in which ties between the individuals are loose. Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

As with any cultural characteristic, degrees of individualism and collectivism vary between cultures and among members of any given culture. Through extensive research, Hofstede rated 50 countries and three regions on an index of individualism versus collectivism. From this research, we know that the U.S. is characterized as the most individualist of societies, followed by Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands. On the opposite end of the spectrum, we find the most collectivist culture to be Guatemala, followed by Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, Colombia, and Indonesia. For a list of countries and their individualism ratings, please see page 118 in the Resources section in the back of this handbook. For more on the work of Geert Hofstede, visit [http://www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com).

**What does this mean for you and your hosted participant?**

If your hosted son or daughter is from a more collectivist society, he or she is more likely to be accustomed to a situation in which personal space and privacy are more limited than what we typically find in the U.S. As a result, he or she will need guidance in understanding your family’s norms and rules. For example, which household and personal items can be shared or used, either with or without the consent of the “owner”? Which rooms of the house are off limits? Does a closed door in your home mean that a room is not to be entered without first knocking, or simply that you are trying to regulate the temperature of the room?

Greeting all family members in the morning and before going to bed at night would be the norm in the collectivist home; however, in the U.S. the child or parent may be out the door with breakfast in hand without saying a word before others have risen. They may also retire to their room without comment while others are watching television or otherwise occupied. It is important for you to be aware that a person from a more collectivist culture might interpret

> “You can never take for granted the presumptions and the stereotypes of a particular culture. We learned through our student that Thai people can be quite different than how they are generally portrayed.”

- Thailand
this kind of behavior as uncaring, just as you might interpret his or her use of your hair brush without asking as rude or uncouth.

As mentioned earlier, in any one culture, there are individual and familial variations along the range of individualism versus collectivism. Although you and your family are members of the U.S. culture, your own personalities or ethnic background may result in a more collectivist than individualist orientation. In this case, you may find little or no problem incorporating a hosted participant from Latin America, an Arab country, or Thailand into your home, but you may be in for a few surprises if your hosted participant is from Scandinavia, Germany, or Switzerland.

Whichever the case, be careful not to jump to conclusions or automatically judge the behavior of your hosted son or daughter. Instead, consider whether a cultural misunderstanding may be at play and approach the situation as an opportunity for mutual learning. Explore the difference in question with your hosted participant and if he or she comes from a more collectivist society, gently explain or demonstrate how things are done in your home. We specify “gently” as another characteristic of collectivism is the tendency to use a more indirect style of communication, while individualism corresponds with the more direct style of communication common in the U.S.

**Communication Styles**

In indirect communication, the meaning of the message is often derived from factors other than the words spoken, such as body language, tone of voice, and other context clues. Conflicts are often sorted out through intermediaries, rather than through direct communication or confrontation. Stories may be told to make a point, instead of stating one's opinion outright. When it comes to the indirect style of communication, a verbal “yes” may actually mean “no,” so pay close attention to how your participant reacts (and how much food is left on his or her plate) when you ask whether he likes that tuna noodle casserole you made for dinner!

People who employ a more indirect style of communication tend to keep their feelings to themselves, whereas we in the U.S. often strike up conversations with strangers or share our feelings or events of the day with anyone from our hairdresser to the clerk at the grocery store. When asked if everything is going OK, the participant from the culture characterized by indirect communication will likely say “yes.” However, that may not be the case if his or her demeanor is telling you otherwise. If you suspect that something is amiss, try to find out through a friend of your hosted participant, a host sibling, teacher, or your local volunteer what factors might be at play.

If you discover that something is wrong, try using the storytelling method to demonstrate how a situation might be resolved. For example, “When I was 16, my family moved to a new town and I was very lonely at first. I told my mother and she gave me some good ideas how to meet people and make new friends. For example…”

If not already, your hosted participant will eventually become accustomed to the more direct and to-the-point style of communication common in the U.S. However, early on in the experience, it can be quite disconcerting, especially if your participant’s English languages skills are less developed. Use the
communication strategies listed on page 16 to ensure that you and your hosted participant understand each other, regardless of cultural orientation.

Communication Styles

Now that we have shared some information and strategies that we hope will help you and your hosted participant understand each other and communicate more effectively, we will outline other common issues and concerns related to the hosting experience.

Cultural Resource: CultureGrams

The CultureGrams website is a great resource for finding out more about your hosted participant's country and culture. Through this site, you can, among other things, read about the languages, holidays and food in your student's home country. As an AFS host family, you may access the site by using the login information below. Keep in mind that this access is for host family use only, so please do not share this login information with others.

- **Website:** [http://online.culturegrams.com/index.php](http://online.culturegrams.com/index.php)
- **Username:** afsusa
- **Password:** cgrams

Diversity and Social Structure

Diversity is defined as the ideology of including people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and also the political and social policy of encouraging tolerance for people of different backgrounds. It is a word commonly used in the United States. Although many place value on diversity in our communities, when someone from outside the U.S. looks at our country, questions may arise surrounding some paradoxes built into our culture: the ideals of diversity are not always present in what is practiced in our political and social policy. This is an issue you may be asked about by your participant, who is trying to understand his or her local host community and also the larger picture of the U.S. It is important to have a conversation with your participant about diversity and social structure in the United States as they may not have experience with some of the elements of U.S. society. However, do realize that every student's experience with diversity will be different; there may be significant differences in experiences between two students from the same country.
**Diversity within the United States**

The movement to acknowledge diversity is generally accepted in the United States and it is not common to discuss diversity from a negative standpoint. The U.S. teaches about our diversity with reference to the history of our country, being a place that has integrated many different cultures to form a nation. There are currently debates in the U.S. around charged topics such as immigration policy and race relations in our communities and schools.

These debates emphasize the unique situation in the United States, a nation with a complex and diverse make-up. Though whites are currently considered the majority, 29% of the total U.S. population is non-white. Additionally, 18% of the population consider themselves to be Hispanic, with the percentage of Hispanics living in some communities is much greater. (Note that Hispanic is not considered non-white according to the U.S. Census Bureau.) The idea of the “typical U.S. American” is changing as our country continues to diversify.

**Class and Status**

Contemporary U.S. society is egalitarian in nature, whereas some societies around the world may be more hierarchical. This differentiation is sometimes expressed as “power distance,” which is a term used by Geert Hofstede in his research on the cultural tendencies in countries around the world. Hofstede has calculated a numerical score to express the level of power distance typical of a given country. According to Hofstede’s research, countries like the U.S., Australia, Costa Rica, Denmark and Austria have relatively low power distance scores, meaning that the culture in these countries tends to be more egalitarian in nature. Conversely, countries like Brazil, France, Panama and Indonesia have relatively high power distance scores, meaning that these countries tend to be more hierarchical. Whether your participant is from a country that is more egalitarian than the United States or more hierarchical, having open discussions about these issues will help your participant adjust to life in your community. For more information about power distance or Geert Hofstede’s other cultural analyses, visit [http://www.geert-hofstede.com](http://www.geert-hofstede.com).

In hierarchal societies, status is based primarily on who you are, the family you were born into, your age, seniority, etc. Conversely, in an egalitarian society, status is based on what you do and your personal and professional accomplishments. It is important to be aware that your participant may not have experienced having classmates at school from significantly different socioeconomic circumstances. Prepare your participant for this reality if it applies to his or her school and remind him or her that it is appropriate to treat everyone with decency.

Some students may be uncomfortable with the apparent classless identification of U.S. Americans. Understanding the relationships between groups in the U.S. is made more difficult by individuals in each group being able to be a member of a number of different groups at the same time, and the ability to enter and leave groups as a matter of choice. A host parent’s work group, church group, tennis, bowling, or golf group, and the group of old high school buddies may be made up of completely different people from one group to the next. Treating everyone with the same courtesies and considering everyone’s opinions are adjustments that may take some time. Tell your participant that regardless of one’s perceived or actual status in the U.S., it is important to treat all people equally and with respect.
Cultural, Racial, and Religious Diversity

Some students may have had relatively little sustained exposure to cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles different from their own in their home country. Conversely, your participant may have experience with cultural diversity in their home country, which may manifest differently than it does in the United States. There may be tensions surrounding the subject of immigrants in your student’s home country, as there often are in the United States. Regardless of your student’s personal experience, discussing diversity in the U.S. may prove to be a sensitive conversation. You should also be aware that your participant may be coming from a society in which he or she is a part of a racial or religious majority, whereas he or she may be in the minority in the U.S. If this is the case for your participant, it may take some significant adjusting. This is also a good opportunity to discuss any preconceived notions about typical U.S. American behavior or norms, such as the belief that all U.S. Americans are rich. As a host family, you can help your participant develop a more realistic understanding of the U.S. by exploring cultural, racial, and religious diversity through attending ethnic celebrations, pointing out (perhaps even visiting) different churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues, particularly if you live in or visit a large city.

Disabilities

In the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has made accommodating those with disabilities a national requirement. The same is not true everywhere in the world. Your participant may have had limited contact with individuals with any kind of disability. As such, it is a good idea to include this topic in the conversation you have with your participant about treating all people in the United States with respect.
School and Teenage Life

The First Days

As your participant’s first days at school can be bewildering and overwhelming, make arrangements to ensure he or she is not left alone to cope. AFS recommends that someone accompany your hosted son or daughter to and from school during the first week or so, depending on the complexity/duration of the trip. This may be a host sibling, AFS Returnee from your area, your AFS Liaison, a neighbor, or classmate. (Please see the Budget and Transportation section of the Participant and Host Family Questionnaire on page 89 in the Resources section of this handbook.)

If your hosted participant is the only child living at home, it is helpful to find someone in the same high school class to explain school routines and facilitate introductions to other teenagers. American AFS participants who have returned from abroad can be very helpful. Your local AFS Liaison is available to help you in identifying Returnees and other means of support for your participant at school.

Outside of your home, your participant will spend the greatest number of hours at school. Because of its importance in the continuation of his or her education, school is a very significant part of the AFS experience. If any question arises about your participant’s curriculum, particularly if it involves his or her education at home, please refer the matter to your local AFS contact or Liaison.

Most students in other countries do not have a chance to choose what courses they will take. Instead, they follow a prescribed schedule. Participants benefit, therefore, from a clear explanation of the local system and from guidance in selecting courses. If your participant’s English is limited, the academic schedule should be geared to his or her ability.

“Getting and keeping them busy in good, healthy ways is important and helps keep their minds off of what they are missing at home. Get them involved in school or outside activities, especially early in the year, even if it means an extra hassle for you in transporting, etc.”

- Costa Rica
Titles are often used differently in other cultures than they are in the U.S. Be sure to let your participant know what the expectation will be in terms of how they are to address teachers in school. Most schools in the U.S. expect students to address teachers with their title and last name; for example, “Mr. Jones” or “Ms. Rodriguez.” It may also be helpful to have a broader conversation about the use of titles in the United States. In general, the U.S. is a more egalitarian society than many other countries, so there are many situations in which all people, young and old, are addressed by their first names. This can be confusing for your participant, so be sure to inform him or her as to what is appropriate in different situations.

Please be advised that AFS is an academic program and participants are required to attend school, complete assignments, and abide by all school policies. While AFS participants are not required to maintain a specific grade point average (unless required by their host school), every AFS participant should be prepared to make an honest effort in school, even if they have already graduated in their home country. They must attend school regularly, complete all assignments, and participate in class. Host families are asked to please contact their Liaison should they find that their hosted son or daughter is having any problems at school, or if the school expresses any concerns. Your Liaison’s efforts in support of the participant, your family, and the school are what set AFS apart from many other organizations, so please keep him or her apprised of any situation which may be for concern.

**Enrollment**

Most AFS participants are enrolled in the junior or senior class. Occasionally, an AFS participant will be placed in the sophomore class as a result of his or her age or the number of years of schooling your participant has completed in his or her home country.

**Testing**

Testing is an important component of the educational system in the U.S and, as such, AFS participants are expected to take any tests required of other students in their grade level and classes. Failure to do so can damage AFS’s relationship with the host school and prevent future AFS participants from being placed in the same school. Please ensure that your participant understands that he or she is expected to take all of the same tests as his or her classmates.

**Diplomas**

Some participants may request high school diplomas. However, all participants and their natural parents have been informed that no school is required to grant a diploma to a foreign participant and no participant is promised a high school diploma following participation in an AFS Program. AFS follows individual school policies regarding diplomas. The awarding of a diploma is also dependent on a participant’s ability to meet state and local requirements. Some schools may issue an honorary diploma or certificate of attendance.

If your participant requests a diploma and his or her school will not allow one to be issued, please do not pressure the school officials to make an exception. Doing so puts the relationship between AFS and the school at risk.

“If they want to graduate with the class, make sure that you tell the guidance counselor up front, as soon as you get them into school. That way if they need to get special documents required for that state, they have plenty of time.”

- Denmark
and may prevent other AFS participants from being hosted in that school in the future. If you become aware that your participant and/or his or her natural family are pressuring the school to grant a diploma, please inform your AFS Liaison or local contact. He or she will get in touch with AFS Support staff who will communicate with partner staff to ensure that the natural family understands this policy.

In some instances, participants aspire to obtain a diploma in order to facilitate enrollment in a U.S. institution of higher education. Please be advised that all students with U.S. government-sponsored scholarships (including CBYX and YES) are subject to the Department of State’s “two-year home country residency requirement.” In addition, the two-year home country residency requirement can be applied at the discretion of the consular officer issuing the visa. The two-year home residency requirement means that a participant must prove that he or she has returned and lived for at least two consecutive years in his or her home country before being eligible for certain categories of U.S. visas. If your participant wishes to pursue enrollment in a U.S. institution of higher education, he or she should ensure that the two-year home residency rule does not apply to him or her. For more information on the two-year home residency requirement, please see page 72.

Social Life
Forming Friendships
The social norms of teenagers your community are probably quite different from those to which your AFS participant is accustomed. For example, many participants are used to doing things with a group of friends and find single dating quite unusual. Your participant may be confused by casual invitations to “drop in,” not knowing how to judge when the invitation is sincere. Casual American friendships may be confusing to a participant accustomed to deeper relationships that take time to develop. Many AFS participants are accustomed to a teen gathering place and initially wonder “where the action is.” They do not recognize, at first glance, that much social life in the United States centers around school and school activities. The emphasis should be on helping the participant enter local teenage life in a way that will enable friendships to flourish.

Sexual Mores
Relationships between young men and women, dating, and sexual mores may be different in your participant’s culture from that to which you are accustomed. AFS participants may misinterpret the behavior of their new friends, or their own actions may convey unintentional messages. While AFS recognizes that sexual mores vary from country to country, community
to community, and indeed from family to family, we also recognize that there is an equally wide range of sexual behavior among young people throughout the world. Ultimately, it is the decision of an individual whether or not he or she will become or remain sexually active during his or her stay in the United States.

However, it is important for the participant to understand early on what your family’s standards are for this behavior. As in other situations, AFS participants are asked to be sensitive to and respectful of these views. In addition, they should be made aware of the risks posed by HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Additional information is available from the sources to the right.

Although discussions regarding these subjects can be emotionally charged, it is important that you be candid and clear in order to avoid conflict later on. Talking about these issues openly and objectively helps a great deal. Sometimes including a peer in the discussion can make communication easier.

**Extra- and Co-Curricular Activities**

AFS participants are encouraged to become involved in extra and co-curricular activities, as sports and other school-sponsored activities play an important role in U.S. teen life. Participation not only provides an excellent way to become acquainted with one's classmates, but it also provides insight into U.S. culture’s concept of teamwork. Be aware, however, that many states restrict graduated students from participating in any interscholastic sports. And, as with diplomas, no participants are promised inclusion on sports teams when coming on an AFS Program.

In addition to school sports, many other activities are available to participants in U.S. high schools and exchange students are encouraged to participate. AFS Clubs or International Clubs can be found in many high schools and often sponsor activities of particular interest to international participants. Members of these clubs can also offer guidance and support to international participants especially in the first days of school. Joining a 4-H, Scouts, or a youth group are also good ways for your participant to meet people and make new friends.

The earlier the participants become involved in such activities, the better! A participant who has more friends and acquaintances early on in the experience is more likely to have a balanced social life and one which is not based entirely on host family members and/or the host family’s friends (this can become burdensome, especially for similar-aged siblings).

**School-Related Expenses**

Since schools vary greatly across the world, it will be useful to explain to your participant if there are any school-related expenses, and which expenses he or she will need to cover, versus any that you, the AFS Chapter, or the school may cover. To help facilitate this conversation, there is a section in the *Participant and Host Family Questionnaire* on page 89 in the Resources section of this handbook.
Sports and Other Activities

The Parental Authorization Form

As part of the AFS application, participants and their natural parents are asked to sign a form called the Parental Authorization Form. One of the clauses on this form states:

“...We authorize the AFS host parents for our son/daughter during his or her participation in the AFS Program to execute any authorization required by our son/daughter’s school to participate in any school-sponsored activities, events, or programs...”

This authorization form therefore gives you the right, as host parents, to sign school permission slips required for your hosted participant to take part in school activities. Please remember that as a host family you are not the legal guardian of the AFS participant (nor is AFS), and you must make this clear if you are asked to sign any permission forms or other forms the school may send home. Before signing any document, be sure to cross out the words “parent or legal guardian” and write in “host parent.”

The Activity Waiver

Natural parent permission is required in advance whenever participants are planning to take part in any activity that could potentially pose any risks or bodily injury to the participant. For such risky, non-school-sponsored activities in which your participant may wish to take part, either with your family or on his or her own, an Activity Waiver must be on file. The Activity Waiver serves as consent to participate in certain activities that may be considered risky. It is a release and indemnity agreement, which means the natural family agrees not to sue AFS, its agents, or affiliates, for any issues arising from participating in such activities. It also gives AFS the right to seek reimbursement should any suits be brought against the organization as a result of the participant having taken part in the activity.
You must contact the Support staff in the National Service Center to inquire whether an Activity Waiver is on file. Many partner countries include the standard Activity Waiver in the participant’s application. However, the inclusion of this form is not yet universal, so it is essential that you check with AFS to ensure that a signed waiver is on file before your participant takes part in any risky activities. If a form is not yet on file for your participant, AFS Support will obtain a signed form from your participant’s natural family through our AFS partner in your participant’s home country.

Host families should not contact natural families directly regarding the Activity Waiver.

Is there a list of “risky” activities?

There is a list of activities that are considered to be “risky” included in the standard Sports Activity Waiver, a sample of which is located on page 106 in the Resources section of this handbook. However, this is by no means an exhaustive list. Be sure to consult the Support staff regarding the activity in question when you call to inquire about your host son or daughter’s activity waiver.

We ask that our volunteers and host families carefully assess each potential activity and determine on a case-by-case basis if they feel that additional natural parent consent would be prudent. Some questions you should ask yourself include:

- Is there any possibility of physical injury or other risk to my hosted son or daughter as a result of participating in this activity?
- Will there be any outside parties involved (such as a white water rafting tour operator, for example) who may need a signature from a natural parent/legal guardian on their own consent and release form?
- If my own child were going to participate in this activity in another country, would I want to be notified and asked my permission?
- Is this an activity that my hosted son or daughter participates in at home?
- Is this an activity that is common in my hosted son or daughter’s home country?
- Is this an activity for which I want to have the natural parents’ consent?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, contact your AFS Support staff to obtain additional permission from your host son or daughter’s natural family.

Firearms

You must secure extra permission for your participant to take part in any activity that involves the use of firearms or other weapons. Please refer to the activity waiver process above.
Common Issues and Concerns
The following issues are dealt with in the Welcome to the USA booklet which participants receive prior to their arrival in the U.S. We strongly recommend you discuss these issues with your participant to help with his or her acclimation to your home and U.S. culture.

Please and Thank You
Many host parents have been surprised by their participant’s initial lack of the use of “please” and “thank you.” In the U.S., we generally use these words with everyone, from a cashier in a store to our parents. This is a reflection of the egalitarian nature of our society and the basic respect that we feel is due to all, regardless of their relationship to us. In cultures with a more hierarchical structure or division between social classes, these terms are not used as freely, and would not generally be expected by someone who is perceived to be of a “lower” status when speaking to someone of a higher status.

In cultures that place a higher value on familial relationships, parents (especially mothers) would not necessarily expect their children to use these terms, and vice versa, because they are only providing or doing what is expected of them as a member of the family.

Whatever the case may be for your participant, if the use of “please” and “thank you” is important to you and your family members, please explain this early on to the participant and remind him or her of this until it becomes a habit. Don't let it slide in the beginning or unnecessary resentment will build!

House Rules
Your AFS son or daughter may be more or less independent than your own children. Be prepared to give more guidance, if necessary, and to make your household rules clear. Many AFS participants are allowed by their parents to drink alcoholic beverages in their own homes. Some are accustomed to smoking cigarettes and come from cultures in which the vast majority of adults smoke. Some participants may also be unaccustomed to performing chores around the house because in their culture hired household help is very common or because their mother or someone else in the family (such as sisters or grandmother) takes full responsibility for the household work.

Cultural norms in your community may be quite different from those to which your participant is accustomed. Discuss similarities and differences openly, and work to arrive at an agreement that is acceptable to your family. Complete the Participant and Host Family Questionnaire found on page 87 in the Resources section of this handbook. As in any situation, if you have difficulties communicating or reaching an agreement, contact your AFS Liaison.
Religion
Your participant may have very different religious beliefs and practices from your family and may or may not wish to join you in your worship. Attending a place of worship is an individual choice, and respecting each other’s religious beliefs is a fundamental step in the intercultural learning process. If your participant prefers not to attend services with your family, do not try to persuade him or her. Neither AFS nor a participant’s host family can require a participant to attend religious services of any kind. AFS does encourage participants to attend religious services with their host family at least once, however, to better understand that aspect of the family’s culture. Should special arrangements need to be made for the participant to observe his or her own religious practices, AFS volunteers can assist you. AFS strives for compatibility in all placements. However, should religion become a serious issue between you and your participant, it may be necessary for you, your participant, and local volunteers to consider a change of family.

Natural Family Contact
The following statement reflects the AFS-USA guideline on natural family contact and has been shared with your participant and his or her parents in the Welcome to the USA booklet, which is sent to all participants prior to their arrival in the United States.

Going abroad on an exchange is no reason you can’t stay in touch. Hearing news and sharing the experience is important. Periods of loneliness are common, and during those times communication from home may seem like the best medicine. Unfamiliarity with a new country, culture, language, school, and family is a big part of it; and the only way to make it better is to work hard at adapting to it all. Below are some guidelines to help in effective communication during the exchange period so that the process of adaptation can proceed smoothly.

Telephone Use and Contact during the Exchange Period
Some host parents have found it useful to purchase an inexpensive cell phone for their hosted child and they or the participant can then purchase a limited amount of minutes for use within the U.S. This can help you keep in communication with your host son or daughter and can serve as a direct line to you in case of emergency. Please note: AFS strongly advises against purchasing a cell phone which requires a contractual commitment. We recommend purchasing “pay as you go,” pre-paid minutes.

These days, most international calling is done over the internet with programs such as Skype and Google Voice. These services provide inexpensive or even free ways for participants to call their families overseas and eliminate the need for you to examine the phone bill. Using such services can also help participants budget their spending money and avoid surprisingly large bills that sometimes appear early on in the experience and during bouts of homesickness. If it is your preference, you can find out about special international calling

“I would recommend going over the rules at the beginning and posting them on the refrigerator the first week when the student arrives. Set up some family meetings on your calendar every so often to talk about how things are going and what rules are and are not being followed. It would have made it a lot easier to broach a contentious subject if I had had meetings already on the calendar to talk about stuff.”

- Costa Rica
phone plans that might make calling a particular country more affordable for the time your participant is living in your home.

Homesickness can become a common problem for participants if they and/or their families and friends call frequently. During “voice-to-voice” interaction (via the internet or phone), participants are powerfully reminded of their home culture, language, customs, and home activities at a time when they are feeling especially vulnerable in an unfamiliar environment. The sound of a loved one’s voice can cause sadness for hours or days, as participants are constantly reminded of the distance and the differences around them. This sadness adds to the difficulties of adaptation, as participants are distracted from integrating into their host community.

AFS recommends that families and their participants determine how frequently their son or daughter will call home before the exchange takes place. It is ideal to keep in touch primarily through email and to make calls only on special occasions, such as birthdays and holidays. We recommend that students connect with their families no more than once a week via email, and that they have “voice-to-voice” communication (talking via Skype or the phone) no more than once a month for about a half hour per call.

AFS encourages writing emails rather than making phone calls since writing gives the correspondent time to reflect and to gain perspective. Furthermore, regular and frequent telephone and/or e-mail contact between your participant and his or her natural family can hinder your participant’s adjustment, prolong homesickness, and disrupt the experience.

Electronic Communication and Internet Safety

E-Mail, Online Chat and Social Media

Although often viewed as a substitute for normal mail, e-mail is immediate and rivals the phone in that respect. In host countries and families where e-mail is common, participants may have difficulty deciding how much is enough. As with the phone, participants communicate in their native language and if communication through e-mail, instant messaging, and/or social media are too frequent, participants may have similar adaptation issues as with too much phone contact.

AFS recommends that participants send a general e-mail to family and friends once a week, making it similar to a letter. Participants should limit the amount of time that is spent writing e-mail to friends and family back home, as well. AFS recommends one to one and a half hours once a week maximum.

If your participant engages in frequent online communication with family and/or friends back home, discuss with him or her the effect of such constant communication. If contact from the natural family or friends from back home (via phone, online chat, or e-mail) interferes with the participant’s adaptation process, please contact your Liaison who can work with you and the participant to help remedy the situation. The Liaison may also get in touch with the appropriate AFS National Support staff, who will contact the hosting partner staff, who will work with the natural family to work toward a solution.

“Limit access to instant messaging and email, especially early in the stay. This will help them adjust faster, instead of clinging to friends at home.”

- Thailand
American teenagers frequently use electronic communication—especially social media such as Facebook—to coordinate activities, find out about homework assignments, and socialize. Your participant might be expected to make use of this technology in pursuing friendships with classmates or even completing school work. However, internet usage varies across cultures from countries with limited access to those with more freedom and accessibility to the web. It will be important to talk with your participant about expectations for internet usage, including online safety. Remember, it can be difficult to interpret the meaning or tone of written messages, especially when they are written in the online shorthand that many American teenagers use. The ability to distinguish subtle meaning in online messages can be very important to maintaining safety online.

The government website OnGuard Online (www.onguardonline.gov) features an exercise called “Friend Finder” that allows users to practice distinguishing between good-natured messages and more sinister requests for personal information. It might be useful for host families and participants to complete this exercise together in starting a discussion about staying safe online. For more resources about internet usage and online safety, refer to page 92 in the Resources section of this handbook.

Electronic Communication and Participant Websites

On page 93 in the Resources section of this handbook, you will find AFS’s policy on Electronic Communication and Participant Web Use. This information is shared with participants in the Welcome to the USA booklet which they receive prior to arrival in the U.S. Host parents should review this policy with their hosted son or daughter to ensure full understanding of the material.

Pornography and the Internet

Adult and child pornography is accessible on the internet, both on a voluntary basis (through search engines) as well as on an involuntary basis (appearing on a screen under a name not usually associated with such material). We strongly recommend that you discuss this matter with your participant at the beginning of the program during the discussion about internet usage. By discussing this subject up front, you raise your participant’s awareness and equip him or her to make the right choices and avoid serious legal action associated with involvement in internet pornography.

It is important to be very sensitive when discussing this subject with your participant. Keep in mind that pornography is a subject that may not be openly discussed in other cultures and your participant may feel uncomfortable talking about it. To help cope with this potentially awkward situation, open the conversation by explaining that you need to discuss this information because you want to help him or her to avoid making mistakes. See page 92 in the Resources section of this handbook to access important information on this topic to share with your participant.

Should you discover evidence of pornography in your or your participant’s computer or you suspect that your participant may have accessed a pornographic website, you should suspend judgment until you give the

“The internet is a big problem because students tend to use it excessively to talk to their friends at home or AFS students who speak their native language. Setting strict limits on usage from Day 1 is extremely important.”

- France
participant the opportunity to explain the presence of such material. Whether you are satisfied with the explanation or not, you should immediately contact your AFS Liaison. This is an important step, not only because the Liaison needs to be aware of any situation that could affect the host family/participant relationship, but also because this could be an opportunity for providing additional guidance to the participant with the purpose of helping him or her avoid similar incidents in the future.

**Downloading Music and Media from the Internet**

Your participant should be informed that it is illegal to download music, movies, and other copyrighted materials from such sites as Limewire, Kazaa, or sites hosting BitTorrents, and that legal action may be taken against him or her for engaging in illegally downloading or sharing copyrighted materials. Copyright laws vary around the world, so your participant may not understand that while his or her internet practices may have been legal in his or her home country, those same practices may be illegal here in the U.S.

In the U.S., not only can legal action be taken against your participant for downloading copyrighted materials, but legal action can also be taken against you if the materials are illegally downloaded onto your family’s computer and/or via your family’s internet service.

If your participant utilizes your family’s computer and/or your family’s internet service with his or her own computer, it is reasonable for you to monitor what your participant is downloading to help ensure that no one becomes involved with copyright infringement.

**Clothes**

Your participant should arrive with suitable clothing for the duration of the program. Certain items, however, may not be available in his or her country and some clothes he or she may bring may not be appropriate for certain situations. If your participant needs additional clothing but does not have the necessary funds, contact your AFS volunteer for assistance. Local volunteers may be able to find new or used clothing that could be donated for use during your participant’s stay. Some AFS communities have clothing pools for this purpose.

**Spending Money**

Participants are advised to be prepared to spend about $250 per month. Many participants opt to have access to funds in their home country via automatic debit or credit cards and can easily obtain money in this manner. It is advised that host families do not open a joint account with their participant, nor allow the participant to deposit their money into the family’s account.

It may be helpful for your family to suggest a budget on which your AFS participant can live wisely and comfortably. He or she may not be familiar with typical expenses in your country. Some participants will want to buy small gifts towards the end of their year to take home to their families and friends, in which case they will need to budget accordingly. Participants are discouraged from spending a great deal of money on gifts and souvenirs and from accepting expensive gifts. Extravagant gift giving conflicts with the purpose of the AFS programs.
Despite AFS recommendation, some participants may not arrive with adequate spending money. If you feel your participant does not have adequate funds, please contact your AFS Liaison.

**YES Spending Guidelines**

The YES scholarship provides all students with a monthly stipend of $125 as a way for students to integrate into their hosting communities. Students are expected to use this money towards fun activities such as going to the movies, shopping with friends, or buying snacks at a sporting event. Their monthly stipend can also assist students in developing personal money management skills and allow them to gain a sense of independence. This money is not to be saved or sent home.

The YES monthly stipends will begin the first month after your participant arrives. In the subsequent months, stipend checks will arrive approximately during the second week of every month. Should you encounter any problems regarding the stipend checks, please contact the Sponsored Programs Specialist by calling 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).

YES students also receive an “incidentals allowance” of $300 for year students. This allowance is intended to ensure that your participant has the basic necessities and is to be used toward expenses such as activity participation fees, school event fees, school and personal supplies, weather specific clothing, yearbooks, etc. Please note that this money is not intended to be a financial subsidy or reimbursement for general expenses incurred by the host family.

Purchases made with funds from the incidentals allowance must be submitted to AFS for reimbursement. We request that you make the purchases on your hosted student’s behalf and submit the *Incidentals Allowance Expense Report* with original receipts in order to be reimbursed. We encourage you to submit your expenses as they are incurred rather than wait until the end of the year for reimbursement. Reimbursement guidelines and the *Incidentals Allowance Expense Report* can be accessed via the AFS Wiki:

http://www.afswiki.org/index.php/Host_Family_Money_Matters

**Opening a Bank Account – YES Participants**

As YES students receive a monthly stipend, it may be advisable for your participant to open a bank account. Opening a bank account varies from region to region, however the participant will likely need to present his or her passport and Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visiting (J-1) Status, also known as the DS-2019 form, as well as a piece of mail showing his or her host address. It is best for a host parent to accompany the participant in order to help answer any questions the bank might have and to show proof of address. Some banks may require additional documents like a W-8 or a W-9 form, which they will provide onsite. Participants can open bank accounts without social security numbers. For more help or questions about opening a bank account, please contact your AFS Liaison.

**Common Expenses**

AFS participants are responsible for covering the costs of their own discretionary activities both inside and outside of school, such as going to the movies or shopping at the mall. Other typical high school expenses such as those related to graduation, school trips, yearbooks, proms, and class rings are optional and participants are expected to cover them, as well. (Check with your host child’s school counselor, as some schools will cover the cost of some of these items for exchange students.) Participants may choose to cover expenses through their spending money or with money earned from odd jobs. You may choose to cover any of
these expenses, as you would for your own children. Although very kind, this is not expected of the host family. Whether or not you choose to cover these expenses for your hosted participant, it is important that you and your participant agree, early on, who will be responsible for covering these expenses. Awkwardness arises when lack of clarity results from conflicting expectations. Be sure to review with your participant the Budget and Finances section of the Participant and Host Family Questionnaire found on page 89 in the Resources section of this handbook.

**Income Tax Deduction for Host Families**

Public Law 86-779 of the 86th Congress, section 170(g), permits you to deduct up to $50 a month for the time your AFS participant is living with you. The deduction is considered a charitable contribution. A copy of a form entitled *Host Family Income Tax Deduction Form*, which documents your participation in AFS as a host family, is included in the *Welcome Packet*.

**Jobs and Social Security Cards**

AFS participants on the high school program enter the United States on Secondary School J-1 Visas. State Department regulations for this visa category state that:

> "...participants may not be employed on either a full-time or part-time basis but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work."

**Department of State Contact Information**

AFS-USA is regulated by the U.S. Department of State. The U.S. Department of State is the lead federal agency responsible for U.S. foreign affairs. AFS-USA is designated by the U.S. Department of State to operate an Exchange Visitor High School Exchange program in the United States.

For communications with the U.S. Department of State, program sponsors, program participants and host families may contact the Department via the following:

**Non-emergency situations:**

**E-mail:**

JVISAS@STATE.GOV

**Fax:**

202-632-2701

**Mail:**

U.S. Department of State
Office of Designation
ECA/EC/D, SA-44
301 4th Street, SW, Room 668
Washington, DC 20547-4406
Medical Concerns

Authorization for Medical Treatment

Both the participant and natural parents have signed an AFS Participation Agreement and a Parental Authorization Form. This agreement and form allow AFS to act on behalf of the natural parents should authorization for emergency medical treatment or surgery be needed when there is not sufficient time to contact the natural parents. A copy of the Parental Authorization Form is included with your student’s application and can be presented to medical personnel if authorization for treatment is requested. Contact your Liaison to assist you in getting a copy of the Parental Authorization Form from the AFS National Office if your participant doesn’t have a copy and if required by the overseeing physician or hospital. Participants have also been asked to bring with them the Health Form Addendum, which provides any updated medical information, such as inoculations, from the time of application. Participants may be required to present this form in order to enroll in school. Please make sure you receive a copy of both the Parental Authorization Form and the Health Form Addendum from your participant upon his or her arrival and keep them in a safe place.

The statement signed by natural parents on the Participation Agreement is as follows:

Final determination of medical care and treatment is the decision of the natural parents/guardians; however, AFS medical insurance will only provide reimbursement of covered expenses incurred while in the hosting country upon the recommendation of the attending physician (see Condition 19d). Concerning medical care and treatment we understand and accept the following conditions:

a. In the selection of medical care providers, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the care providers selected meet the standards of competence prevalent in the local hosting community. We understand that the laws of confidentiality and medical practice procedures in some countries may restrict AFS access to medical records and documentation regarding treatment of our son or daughter.

b. Should any medical emergency arise, if time permits, AFS will communicate with us through the National Service Center and request permission for surgery or other necessary treatment; however, if in the sole judgment of AFS, time and circumstances do not permit communication with us, we authorize AFS to consent to medical treatment, the administration of x-ray examination, anesthetics, blood transfusion, medical or surgical diagnosis or treatment and hospital care which is deemed advisable by, and is to be rendered under the general or special supervision of, any physician and surgeon.

c. Should the attending physicians recommend medical evacuation, once the participant leaves the host country and arrives in the receiving facility, the Participant Medical Plan ceases, in accordance with these Conditions of Participation.

d. We will not hold AFS responsible for any actions relating to the emergency treatment.

“We were very pleased with the medical coverage since our student had to go to urgent care several times and the emergency room once. The coverage was excellent and easy.”

- Germany
**Participant Medical Plan**

The *Participant Medical Plan* booklet, which has been shared with the natural parents of all AFS participants, describes the medical coverage participants receive while on the AFS Program. The booklet outlines covered and non-covered expenses, what to do in the event of a car accident, and includes claim forms and instructions for submitting claims. This publication should provide you with ample information to determine specifics of the *Participant Medical Plan* and the financial responsibility for medical treatment. You will receive a copy of the *Participant Medical Plan* in the mail. Additionally, it can be accessed on MyAFS at: [http://www.afsusa.org/host-family/resources/](http://www.afsusa.org/host-family/resources/)

**Going to the Doctor**

If your participant needs to see a doctor, please bring the student’s medical ID card to the appointment. The medical ID card has the student’s ID number and the insurance billing information for Global Medical Management. Please be sure the doctor knows to submit the bill to Global Medical Management and *not* to AFS. Sending the bill to AFS will delay payment.

Please note that pre-existing conditions, vision, dental, and routine physicals are not covered. For more information, please refer to the *Participant Medical Plan*. AFS does not need to be notified of doctor’s visits for minor illnesses.

If your participant requires a doctor before his or her medical ID card arrives in the mail, please contact your AFS Liaison, who can assist you in obtaining a temporary card.

**Required Vaccinations**

Vaccination against the seven childhood diseases — Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, and Polio — as well as Hepatitis B, is required by all states for entrance into school. Additionally, many states require vaccination against Chicken Pox and TB testing. You can check your state’s requirements at the following website:

[http://www.nvic.org/vaccine-laws/state-vaccine-requirements.aspx](http://www.nvic.org/vaccine-laws/state-vaccine-requirements.aspx)

If your host son or daughter appears to be missing any required immunizations, please contact him or her before arrival to ensure that these are being handled in the home country. Some schools require a series of shots that must be started in the home country and completed in the U.S. Any AFS participant whose health certificate does not include all of the inoculations required by your state and school district has been advised to bring with them a *Health Form Addendum* with the missing information. When your participant arrives, please check this document and the health certificate to make sure he or she meets the requirements for school admittance. Any missing immunizations should be administered by your local physician or local county Health Department (which may offer these free of charge).

Natural parents are responsible for payment of any expenses related to obtaining immunizations or TB tests. Your hosted participant should call his or her natural parents to let them know if they will require any immunizations in the U.S. We also ask that you call your AFS Liaison or National Support staff to let them know about these expenses so that they can alert staff in your participant’s home country and assist us in ensuring payment from the natural family.

Note: For YES students, some required immunizations are not available in their home countries or they may otherwise be prevented from getting their full course
of immunizations prior to arrival. Their respective scholarships are prepared to reimburse for any immunizations that the host school requires but which they may arrive without having had. Please contact your AFS Liaison or National Support staff in case further immunizations are necessary and they will help to coordinate reimbursement.

**Sports Physicals and Chest X-Rays**

The health certificate is a reflection of the physical examination required for participation on the AFS Program. Occasionally, additional school-mandated sports physicals or x-rays are required for students to participate in school sports. As with vaccinations, natural parents are responsible for payment for these expenses. Your hosted participant should call his or her natural parents to let them know about these costs and to arrange payment. We also ask that you call your local volunteer or National Support staff to let them know about these expenses so that they can alert staff in your participant’s home country and assist us in ensuring payment from the natural family. Check with your host child’s school counselor to see whether the school will pay for the sports physical in the case of an exchange participant.

Note: For YES students, as with vaccinations, their respective scholarships are prepared to reimburse for such expenses if necessary. Please contact your AFS Liaison or National Support staff in case a sports physical or chest x-ray are necessary and they will help to coordinate reimbursement.

**Dental and Eye Problems**

The *Participant Medical Plan* does not cover expenses related to dental care and vision correction for participants while on the AFS Program. Should your participant require such treatment while on the program, he or she should contact his or her natural parents directly. It is essential that no treatment be started before the natural parents have a chance to approve the treatment and the expense, and make arrangements for the payment. If available, such payments can be done with the participant’s credit card or with a bank draft to be sent by the natural families, possibly to the medical facility directly. Once the participant has contacted his or her natural parents and they have arranged for payment, please contact your local volunteer or the National Service Center to inform them of the treatment that the participant will undergo and to let them know that the natural parents have been contacted. Staff in our partner country can then follow up with the natural parents. Eye and dental care required as a result of an accident occurring while the participant is on the AFS Program is covered in the *Participant Medical Plan*.

**Minor Illnesses**

Colds, sore throats, flu, upper respiratory infections, sprains, and uncomplicated childhood diseases need not be called into AFS unless, after seeing a doctor, the ailment appears to linger for an unusually long period of time.

**Endemic Illnesses**

Some diseases are endemic to certain areas of the United States, such as Lyme disease in the Northeast and Valley Fever in the Southwest. If such a disease exists in your part of the country, please inform your participant of any precautionary measures that he or she should take to avoid contracting the disease. Checking for ticks after spending time in the woods may be a routine practice for you, for example, but your participant may not be aware of the importance of doing so. Should your participant begin to show signs of any such endemic disease, do not hesitate to have him or her seen by a medical professional and inform AFS.

**School Injuries**

The *Participant Medical Plan* provides secondary medical coverage for all participants. Global Medical Management will contact you and ask for information regarding the high school’s participant accident insurance in relation to claims for injury sustained during a school-related activity.

If the school has student accident insurance, this is the insurance with which the medical
bills should be paid. If the school has accident insurance that only pays a portion of the bill, the balance remaining will be paid by Global Medical Management. It is important that you include the information requested on the back side of the Medical Claim Form when bills are forwarded to Global Medical Management.

Please ask the school whether they have insurance coverage for your participant. If so, please provide the name of the insurance company on the Medical Claim Form.

**Serious Illness and Hospital Admittances**

Always notify the AFS Liaison (or, in the event that the Liaison is not available, AFS Staff or another volunteer) in the event of serious medical situations or conditions. Serious situations include any type of ongoing illness, a broken bone, hospitalization, proposed or emergency surgery, or any condition lingering for an extended period of time. By contacting your Liaison or other staff member or volunteer, we can ensure that this information is communicated immediately to the AFS Office staff in your participant’s home country so that they can inform the natural family and obtain written authorization for treatment or surgery, if needed. In the case of a life-threatening emergency, as noted earlier, when there is not sufficient time to contact the natural parents, AFS can authorize treatment or surgery on behalf of the natural parents. The Parental Authorization Form can be presented to the hospital or doctor’s office, if needed. If this form is not accepted, contact the National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).

**Serious Situations Occurring Outside of Regular Hours**

The AFS-USA National Service Center is open from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm., Monday through Friday. To report a serious situation which arises outside of these hours, call 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and dial 9. The AFS answering service will contact the Duty Officer who will return your call and assist you. If you don’t hear back from the Duty Officer within fifteen minutes, you should call the answering service back and let them know. They will either contact the Duty Officer again or contact the back-up Duty Officer for you. This service is for emergencies only. An emergency might be a car accident, serious illness and/or hospitalization of your hosted son or daughter, any situation in which the police are involved, or any time you feel is there is important information which must be communicated to the natural parents immediately.

**Automobile Accidents**

Automobile accidents involving an AFS participant must be reported to the AFS National Service Center as quickly as possible. The AFS participant must be seen by a physician even if there is no apparent injury. Please complete the Accident Form (on the back side of the Medical Claim Form) and forward it to the National Service Center. Do not sign any release form pertaining to insurance or allow your participant to do so without consulting the AFS National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).

If a participant has been injured in a car accident, it is important to get an accident report from the police. The accident report should show the names, addresses and relevant insurance information of all drivers involved in the accident. Please note that when medical expenses are incurred by participants as the result of an automobile accident, responsibility for the expenses is often governed by local law. See the Participant Medical Plan for more information.
Donated Medical Services

AFS is a non-profit organization. Donations by physicians are welcomed. If a physician wishes to do so, the bill still needs to be submitted to Global Medical Management, Inc. The check sent to the physician should be endorsed, marked as a financial donation, and mailed to the attention of the Accounting Department in New York with a cover letter explaining that the check is a donation. Upon receipt of the returned check, AFS will issue an income tax deductible receipt for the amount of the check. Donation of services is not an allowable deduction by the IRS, but a returned check is recognized as an acceptable donation.

Payment of Your AFS Participant’s Medical Bills

When a participant incurs a medical expense in the U.S., please ask the health care provider to submit a completed industry standard claim form (HCFA-1500 or UB-92) to the AFS Third Party Administrator for the U.S.:

Global Medical Management, Inc.
880 SW 145th Avenue, Suite 400
Pembroke Pines, Florida 33027
Phone: 1-954-370-8130 or 1-888-444-7773 (toll-free in the US)
Fax: +1 (954) 370-8130
Email: customerservice@gmmi.com

Alternatively, if the medical expense is paid by the participant or host family, a reimbursement claim can be made by submitting the bill to Global Medical Management. In this case, it is important to use the Medical Claim Form provided by AFS. Care should be taken to fill out the entire claim form, detailing the nature of the treatment given.

The Medical Claim Form can be found in the Participant Medical Plan, which you should receive in the mail from AFS. You can also access the Participant Medical Plan on the AFS-USA website at: http://www.afsusa.org/host-family/resources/

Follow instructions below:

- Request a copy of the completed industry standard claim form from the health care provider (Form HCFA-1500 or Form UB-92). If this form is provided, you do not need to ask your physician to complete the “physician or supplier” section on the second page of the Medical Claim Form.

- Host family or participant should complete a Medical Claim Form.

  Claim form available online: https://www.afsusa.org/host-family/resources/

- Submit both forms to Global Medical Management (Medical Claim Form and either HCFA-1500 or UB-92 Form). Submitting the completed information above will expedite the processing of claims.

- **Do not forget to include the participant AFS ID Number on the form.** Your participant’s ID number can be found on his or her ID card, or on the front page of his or her AFS application which was sent to you with the placement confirmation. The ID
number is noted on the sticker affixed to the bottom right-hand side of the outer wrap. It can also be found on the tax deduction form which you should have received along with this booklet.

**Calling for Information about Medical Expenses in the U.S.**

Doctors, host families, or participants can talk to Global Medical Management about claims or coverage by calling 1-888-444-7773. Questions that arise about medical emergencies in the U.S. after office hours should be directed to the AFS-USA Duty Officer by calling 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and dialing 9.

**Additional Benefits Coverage Summary**

AFS provides a package of additional travel-related benefits for AFS participants. This insurance is provided by the Starr Indemnity and Liability Company, also known as Starr, and is in effect for all participants on AFS Programs. This program offers seven kinds of benefits that can be helpful with illness or injury that happens during travel, but that are not covered under the **Participant Medical Plan**.

1. **AD & D $10,000 Benefit** paid in event of death. Lesser benefits paid for other kinds of losses, such as loss of limb or faculties. Coma and paralysis benefit also provided.

2. **Emergency Dental Up to $500** For dental treatment for the alleviation of pain.

3. **Emergency Reunion Up to $5,000** Airfare and/or lodging for immediate family member to visit participant hospitalized for 24 hours or more.

4. **Trip Interruption Benefit Up to $5,000** Airfare for participant to return home due to life-threatening illness, injury, or death of immediate family member.

5. **“Tail” Medical Up to $100,000** Covers medical expenses incurred up to one year after return to home country as a result of an accident (but not illness, other than endemic disease) incurred while on the AFS Program.

6. **Permanent Disability Up to $100,000** Benefit for permanent and total disability arising from an accident (not illness, other than endemic disease) incurred while on an AFS Program.

7. **Bereavement and Up to 10 sessions** Available to participant and/or family members, Trauma Counseling at maximum of $100 per session as a result of a covered accident or endemic disease suffered by participant.

Additional Benefits are provided in addition to coverage under the **Participant Medical Plan**. The terms and conditions of coverage for these benefits are different than the terms and condition of the coverage for the Medical Plan, which covers medical expenses, medical evacuation, and repatriation. No deductibles or co-pays are payable by the participant.

Additional Benefits provide “secondary” coverage and are not payable if there is primary insurance available either through private or national health insurance. A more detailed description of the seven benefits can be found in the **Participant Medical Plan** brochure. Some exclusions apply.
Participant Travel While in the U.S.

Naturally, many participants want to travel to see more of the United States, and in some AFS communities and/or host families, participants have the opportunity to travel with their host family or school. However, the AFS experience is built around immersion into the host family, school, and community; additional travel is not a focus of the AFS Program.

When traveling, AFS compulsory events and participant school attendance must not be interrupted. Furthermore, the AFS Participation Agreement, which is signed by all AFS participants and their natural parents, states:

We understand that participation is assigned for one AFS Program and that participants will remain in their host community for the duration of the program and will not leave prior to the conclusion of the program, nor travel between home and host community during the program. It is understood that participants will return to their home country at the conclusion of the program.

Participants are not allowed to return to their home country during their AFS Program, for the same reasons that we discourage visits from natural family members and friends. A trip to the home country interrupts the student’s integration into American life, as relationships and cultural norms from home are resumed. Your role as a host parent is also interrupted, which may confuse relationships and/or weaken the bond you have built with your hosted son or daughter. Therefore, we ask that you not plan to take trips with your participant back to his or her home country during the AFS Program.

The following are the AFS-USA Independent Travel Guidelines which have been shared with participants and natural families in the Welcome to the USA handbook they received prior to their arrival.
Hosted Participant Travel Guidelines

AFS-USA travel guidelines are designed to maintain the integrity of AFS Programs and to help participants adapt fully to their lives as exchange students in the U.S. AFS Participants have obligations to their host families, communities, and schools. In addition, AFS is responsible for participants; AFS must know a participant’s whereabouts in the event of an emergency. So that participant and family travel is managed within the context of these factors, AFS-USA has established the following guidelines.

Unauthorized participant travel away from the host family or host community is strictly prohibited and can result in Program Termination - Early Return.

Some types of travel do not require special permission and some types require permission from AFS, in the form of a Travel Waiver. The table below outlines the most common situations and what is required.

Even if a Travel Waiver is not required, the host family should always notify their Liaison or Area Support Coordinator of any overnight stays outside of the host community.

**Trips that require a Travel Waiver (including Belo Tours) have these basic conditions / restrictions:**

- Approval is required from: the Host Parents, AFS-USA, AFS or partner office in the participant’s home country, Natural Family (who signs / submits the Travel Waiver through their home country AFS office), and the local AFS Support Coordinator.
- Travel may not interfere with host family plans or mandatory AFS events.
- Participant must not be experiencing adaptation problems.
- Travel must not be detrimental to the participant-host family relationship.
- Travel must be deemed safe by AFS-USA staff, taking into consideration mode of transportation, time of day, duration, stops, etc.
- Request should be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the date of travel. Only after approval has been granted should the participant begin making concrete travel plans.
- Participants may **not travel alone outside of the U.S.** while on program.
- Travel must be completed at least one week prior to the End of Stay activity in the host community.
- If trip is outside of the U.S., the DS-2019 form must be signed and natural parent permission obtained prior to making final arrangements. Sponsored Program participants must also get Department of State (DoS) permission, including DS 2019 signature by DoS staff, for out-of-country travel. Travel outside of the country can only be with the Host Family or other authorized / organized group. Participant is responsible for securing a visa if required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Travel waiver required</th>
<th>Maximum length</th>
<th>School absence permitted</th>
<th>Additional Restrictions/Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Spending the night with a local friend of the participant or host family within the host community</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Prudent Parent Policy applies for a stay of up to 4 days. Longer stays require Host Family screening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Travel with host parents or host family household member who is at least 25 years of age (21-24)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Subject to school guidelines</td>
<td>Yes, as long as it complies with school</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Hosted Participant Travel Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Travel with AFS volunteer who is at least 25 years of age (21-24 with AFS Support Coordinator permission)</th>
<th>Subject to school guidelines</th>
<th>Yes, as long as it complies with school guidelines and visa requirements</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Required/official school trip (required as condition of being in a school group such as choir or band and with school chaperones)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Subject to school guidelines</td>
<td>Yes, as long as it complies with school guidelines and visa requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Optional school trip (organized by someone at school such as a teacher but not an official or required trip, such as a senior trip)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Subject to school guidelines</td>
<td>Yes, as long as it complies with school guidelines and visa requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belo Tours (optional trip; not a required AFS program activity)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel with organized group in host community such as church or scouts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To visit, <strong>without a host parent</strong>, a host family member not in household such as aunt or grandmother</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>Up to 5 days with school permission</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural family or friends from home country come to visit the participant in the host community</td>
<td>No, if participant stays in host community.</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Travel with natural family or friends (who are at least 25 years of age) from participant’s home country who are visiting the U.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hosted Participant Travel Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>To visit friends or family member over the age of 25 from participant’s home country who live in U.S.</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>10 days</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Must have been on program for 5 months or in last month of program. Any exception must be approved by AFS-USA Staff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>To visit the home of the host family of another AFSer from participant’s home country who is hosted in the U.S.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Must have been on program for 5 months or in last month of program. Any exception must be approved by AFS-USA Staff. Requires permission of other AFSer’s support coordinator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Other travel</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Case-by-case basis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definitions:

Area Support Coordinator – AFS volunteer in charge of Support in the local team.

Host community – the immediate area in which the participant lives and goes to school.

Outside of the U.S. – places outside of the United States and its territories.

DS-2019 – Official document titled "Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status" issued by the US Department of State (DoS) and required to enter the U.S. This document must be validated by AFS-USA (or DoS for Sponsored Programs students such as CBYX and YES) before the participant travels outside the U.S. Validation of the document is processed by AFS USA travel staff and takes at least 2 weeks (3 weeks for Sponsored Programs students).

Prudent Parent Policy

On occasion, host parents may need to leave a participant in the care of a friend or relative for short periods of time. This is permitted when a business trip, family emergency, or other unavoidable situation requires the temporary absence of the host family for up to four days. In such cases, the host family may treat the participant as they would their own family member and arrange for appropriate, temporary care without first obtaining permission from AFS. However, prior to leaving their participant with another responsible adult or family, the host parents must inform their AFS liaison of: (1) the duration of the stay, and (2) complete contact information for the adult or family with whom the participant will temporarily reside. In these cases, the friend or relative who will host the participant on a temporary basis is not required to complete the AFS application process.

If the temporary absence exceeds four days and/or the host parents are unable to provide temporary care for a participant and need assistance from AFS, AFS volunteers or staff will identify a screened family for the temporary placement.
Steps for Obtaining Approval for Independent Travel

All requests for independent travel must be made to the Area Team Support Coordinator (ATSC) or designated volunteer at least two weeks prior to the participant’s proposed departure date. All of the following steps must be taken before AFS will grant approval for an Independent Travel request. Only after approval has been granted should the participant begin making concrete travel plans:

1. The participant must first obtain approval for independent travel from the host family, Area Team Support Coordinator (ATSC) or designated volunteer and AFS Staff. The participant should inform the host family and volunteers of the dates and destinations of the proposed travel, as well as the purpose of the trip. In all cases of participant travel, the participant must provide emergency contact information to an AFS volunteer or staff person. This contact information should include the participant’s travel plans and itinerary, accommodations, and how the participant can be contacted in case of emergency. If the host family and ATSC or designated volunteer do not grant permission, then the participant will not be allowed to go on the trip.

2. If the host family and volunteers approve the participant’s request for travel, volunteers must confirm the plans with AFS-USA.

3. Natural parent permission is required for all Independent Travel. The participant is responsible for contacting the natural family to inform them of the travel request. The natural family must then make a formal request to the AFS Office in the participant’s home country for a Travel Waiver. A Travel Waiver releases AFS-USA from any costs, arrangements, or responsibility for any actions to or by the participant during the travel period. Participants are not released from the terms and conditions of the AFS Participation Agreement during travel.

4. The AFS Office in the participant’s home country will forward a signed copy of the Travel Waiver to AFS-USA. Participants may not travel until the signed waiver has arrived in the National Service Center.

When the preceding four steps have been completed, the participant is free to make travel arrangements. A participant may not make travel arrangements until these steps are completed and the travel is approved by all parties.

If you have any questions regarding visits or travel policy, please contact the National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).
Participant Travel outside the U.S.

Reentry Documents for the U.S.

Participants on J-1 visas who want to go on vacation with their host parents outside of the U.S. must make sure they have all their travel documents in hand, complete and endorsed for travel. Important: see section on next page on Verifying Documents for Foreign Participants Traveling Outside the U.S.

Entry documents for countries to be visited

It is the responsibility of the participant to contact the consular offices in the U.S. or consult the consular website of the country(ies) that will be visited to ensure that he or she has the proper visa and documentation needed for admission into the country(ies).

Foreign Consular Offices in the United States: http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco

Embassies in Washington, DC: http://www.embassy.org/embassies

Travel to Canada and Mexico

Please be advised that a visa may be required for a hosted participant to travel to Canada or Mexico. It is the participant’s responsibility to determine whether a visa is necessary and, if so, to take steps to obtain one. Participants may contact their local Canadian or Mexican consulate for further information or consult the following websites:

Embassy of Canada: http://www.cic.gc.ca

Embassy of Mexico: http://www.embassyofmexico.org

Both Canada and Mexico require any minor entering the country to present a letter signed by one or both natural parents not present at the crossing, stating that the natural parents give permission for their child to enter the country alone. This letter must be notarized and it must be the original document (rather than a copy or a fax). These letters need not go through the AFS offices, as they have nothing to do with AFS requirements; the natural parents should send these letters directly to their children. While this letter is a legal requirement in both Canada and Mexico, not all border officials ask for this letter. For this reason, it is the responsibility of the host parents to seek out immigration requirements when entering another country with their hosted participant.

Automatic Revalidation of U.S. Visa

Before your hosted participant travels outside the U.S., be sure that his or her visa allows "multiple entries." An "M" on the visa next to "entry" signifies multiple entry; an "S" signifies single entry. Single entry visa is not eligible for automatic revalidation as it is presumed cancelled rather than expired. Visas will automatically be considered revalidated for participants with an expired, multiple entry J-1 visa stamp in their passports when they re-enter the U.S. from Canada or Mexico as long as ALL of the following are true:

• Participant has been in Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days
• Participant has a valid admission status (I-94 electronic record)
• Participant has an expired, multiple entry J-1 visa in the passport
• Participant is in possession of an endorsed DS-2019 form
• Participant will not apply for a U.S. visa while abroad or have a valid pending visa application to the U.S.
• Participant is not from one of the countries currently considered by the U.S. federal government to be state sponsors of terrorism
Print out a copy of your I-94 electronic record before departure for presentation to the immigration officer upon your reentry:

https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html

For details, refer to the following website under the section entitled Re-Entry into the U.S. - Important Information:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1299.html

Verifying Documents for Foreign Participants Traveling Outside the U.S.

Your participant must verify that his or her passport is valid before traveling outside the U.S. Check the front of the passport to determine the expiration date. An expired passport cannot be used for international travel. Passports must first be renewed at the consulate with jurisdiction over the participant’s state or city of residence.

Your participant must verify that his or her J-1 visa is valid. The J-1 visa appears as a holographic stamp on their passports. Also check that the visa allows “multiple entries.” An expired or “single entry” visa cannot be used to re-enter the United States. (See exceptions in the Automatic Revalidation of U.S. Visa section above.)

Prior to traveling outside the US, it is essential that the participant make arrangements to have the Certificate of Eligibility (DS-2019) signed by a Responsible Officer in the National Service Center. He or she should mail the Certificate of Eligibility (DS-2019) to the attention of the Regional Travel and Logistics Coordinator (RTLC) at least three weeks prior to the intended travel. The Responsible Officer will endorse the form, which states that a participant is in good standing with the program, and will return the form by mail to the participant. If the participant wishes for the form to be returned by overnight or any other type of courier service, they must include a prepaid mailing envelope for this purpose. Any forms received without pre-paid courier envelopes will be sent back by regular mail.

We strongly recommend including a postage-paid, trackable return envelope for the DS-2019, to ensure the form’s timely return. (Please note: the signature required on the Certificate of Eligibility [DS-2019] is that of the “Responsible Officer.”)

Please refer to the Travel Checklist for U.S. Hosted Participants on page 119.

Verifying Documents for Sponsored Programs Participants Traveling Outside the U.S.

Sponsored Programs Participants traveling outside of the U.S. must gain prior permission from the U.S. Department of State. To do this, please contact the Regional Travel and Logistics Coordinator (RTLC) who will confirm permission for travel with the YES or CBYS Sponsored Programs Specialist. This process must begin at least four weeks prior to the intended travel.

The Sponsored Programs staff will secure the necessary approval from the Department of State Program Officer, and will provide directions for where to send the DS-2019 for endorsement at the U.S. Department of State.

Please note: The original DS-2019 form must be sent via courier (UPS, FedEx, etc.) when going to the U.S. Department of State, as all standard postal service documents are delayed by weeks in their internal screening processes. AFS cannot guarantee how quickly a signed DS-2019 will be returned.

Please refer to the Travel Checklist for U.S. Hosted Participants on page 120.
Stays with Host Family Relatives and Friends

On occasion, host parents may need to leave a participant in the care of a friend or relative for short periods of time. This is permitted when a business trip, family emergency, or other unavoidable situation requires the temporary absence of the host family for up to four days. In such cases, the host family may treat the participant as they would their own family member and arrange for appropriate, temporary care without first obtaining permission from AFS. However, prior to leaving their participant with another responsible adult or family, host parents must inform their AFS Liaison of: (1) the duration of the stay, and (2) complete contact information for the adult or family with whom the participant will temporarily reside. In these cases, the friend or relative who will host the participant on a temporary basis is not required to complete the AFS application process.

If the temporary absence exceeds four days and/or the host parents are unable to provide temporary care for a participant and need assistance from AFS, AFS volunteers or staff will identify a screened family for temporary placement.

Visits from Home Country Friends and Family Members

As our world becomes a smaller place, AFS-USA realizes that many of our participants have relatives or family friends who live in the USA. Additionally, many parents and other family members may have the opportunity to come to the USA on scheduled business or holiday trips. However, visits from natural family or friends from home can often pose problems for a student’s adjustment into the host culture and community.

Through 60 years of experience, AFS volunteers, participants, and host families have learned that natural family visits are disruptive to the participant’s exchange experience. For the participant, the arrival of someone from home interrupts integration into American life, as relationships and cultural norms from home are resumed. For the hosts, it interrupts their role as parents, may confuse relationships, and imposes additional hospitality burdens. Visits take the focus away from the participant and burden AFS volunteer and staff support structures. In keeping with the AFS Standards and the participant adjustment cycle, AFS-USA highly discourages any visits during the program.

The AFS Participation Agreement, which is signed by all AFS Participants and their natural parents, states:

Many years of experience have taught AFS that a visit by relatives and friends can negatively impact the participant’s experience. We understand that AFS does not encourage visits from family members or friends during the AFS Program. If family or friends plan to visit the participant, we agree to obtain consent in advance from the AFS National Office in the hosting country. We also agree to abide by the hosting country regulations regarding the timing and duration of the visit. We understand that the AFS host country and or host family are not required to consent to a visit. In addition, we agree not to make any lodging or other impositions on the host family during the visit.

If a natural family does plan a visit, it should be for no more than three to four days total and must be approved in advance by the Team Volunteer Support Coordinator or other designated volunteer. If the participant wishes to travel with the natural family during this
time, the host family, Team Volunteer Support Coordinator or other designated volunteer, and staff must give permission before the trip is planned and the participant must obtain a travel waiver. See Steps for Obtaining Approval for Independent Travel on page 64.

The following information outlines the AFS-USA policy regarding natural family and friend visits. **Non-adherence to the following standards may result in an early return of the participant from the AFS-USA program.**

- AFS Participants hosted in the U.S. will not be permitted to request approval for any visits from relatives or friends until after they have been on the program for five months or are in the final month of their program.

- AFS Participants will not be allowed to travel independently to visit relatives or family friends in the U.S. until after they have been on the program for five months or are in the final month of their program. If an AFS Participant wants to visit a friend who is on an exchange in the U.S., this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

- All visits must be approved by AFS-USA, the participant's host family, and the Team Volunteer Support Coordinator or other designated volunteer. AFS-USA recommends that approval from all three parties be confirmed prior to purchasing tickets. AFS-USA reserves the right to deny permission for a visit if a participant is having adjustment issues or other support problems at the time.

- Participants will not be allowed to miss school to travel with their natural parents, other relatives, or friends. AFS is an educational program and all schools in the U.S. offer several vacation periods. An AFS Participant traveling with his or her natural parents, other relatives, or friends is considered independent travel and subject to the Independent Travel Guidelines and requires a Travel Waiver.

- Since visits can be disruptive to a participant's adjustment and adaptation, they should last no longer than three to four days.

- Natural family members should not plan to stay with the AFS Participant's host family, but rather are expected to arrange for their own hotel in the area.

- Natural family visits should not conflict with host family plans or required AFS events and orientations.

- Any visiting natural family member or friend must obtain travel insurance prior to departure from the home country. AFS will not manage, oversee, or pay for any medical care needed by visitors.

If you have any questions regarding travel policy, please contact the National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).
Departing the U.S.

**End-of-Stay Orientation**

Your hosted participant will participate in an End-of-Stay Orientation immediately prior to departure. The length and format of the event varies, but it usually takes place during the last 24 hours before departure.

The purpose of this event is two-fold. First, it is a celebration of the participant’s completion of the AFS Program. Second, it provides a transition period for the participant, a buffer between saying goodbye to one family and hello to another. The End-of-Stay Orientation is a required activity for all AFS Participants.

Immediately following the End-of-Stay Orientation, depending on their distance from the gateway city, participants will travel by bus or air to one of the five international departure sites for the Departure Day event (summer departures only).

Note: Some YES students may depart prior to the End-of-Stay Orientation. See below for details.

**Summer Departures**

Departure Day is the final event for AFS Participants departing in the summer, and is the culmination of their semester or year abroad. From the End-of-Stay Orientation, the hosted participants will travel to the Departure Day site, which is located in their gateway city, and will reconnect with the participants traveling back to their home country.

At the end of this section is a description of luggage and security guidelines for your hosted participant. In March, you will receive further information from the National Office with more extensive luggage and security guidelines for your AFS Participant. Please read this information carefully and assist us in preparing your participant for his or her departure in late June.
**Winter Departures**

Winter departures generally take place in early to mid-January. Participants travel from their host families to their gateway city and then to their home country. In most cases, they will travel to their gateway city, usually by flight but sometimes by bus or shuttle, on the day before their international flight. They may spend the night with an AFS volunteer and other departing participants in the gateway city if they have an early flight to their home country the following day. You will be contacted by the Travel and Logistics department regarding the arrangements that have been made for your participant’s return travel.

**Departure of CBYX and YES Participants**

**CBYX Participants**

Once the CBYX German students have attended Departure Day with their fellow AFS students, they will travel to Washington, D.C for a special Pre-Return Orientation, after which they will fly to Germany. During this special Pre-Return CBYX Orientation, students will attend workshops on leadership and discuss what it means to be a CBYX Alumni and how they can stay connected once they return home. They will also meet with the Department of State Office of Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau. Your Travel and Logistics coordinator will contact you with more specific information.

**YES Participants**

YES students will travel to Washington, D.C for a special Pre-Return Orientation, after which they will fly to their home countries. During this special Pre-Return YES Orientation, students will attend workshops on leadership and discuss organizing alumni activities once they return to their home countries. They will also meet with the Department of State Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau. The country that your YES student is from will dictate when he or she departs from his or her host community, usually sometime in mid-June. Your Travel and Logistics coordinator will contact you with more specific information. General information is posted on the AFS website (https://www.afsusa.org/host-family/resources/yes-host-family-resources/) around the middle of the program cycle, typically in January/February.
Program Release

Every year, there are a number of participants who wish to remain in the United States after their AFS Program has ended. U.S. Immigration law does allow AFS Participants to remain legally in the U.S. for up to thirty days after the end date of their program. When participants remain in the U.S. after their AFS Program has ended, this is called a Program Release. Arrangements for a Program Release must be made by the AFS Staff in your participant's home country, in communication with the participant's natural parents. The natural parents must give their permission for their son or daughter to remain in the U.S. at the end of the AFS Program and must sign a form releasing AFS from all responsibility for their son or daughter upon the end of the AFS Program, acknowledging that they understand that all AFS Program services will end on that date, including medical coverage.

Participants who Program Release can either release before or after the End-of-Stay Orientation. Those participants who do not plan on attending the End-of-Stay Orientation or traveling with their group to the Departure Day site may receive their international e-ticket from the AFS Office via e-mail. In this case, the participant will be responsible for arranging his or her own transportation from the host community to the gateway city, from which the international flight will depart.

Participants may choose to attend the End-of-Stay, travel with other AFS Participants to the Departure Day site, and Program Release at the gateway.

Please note: Some partner countries may be willing to work closely with the natural family to make the international booking for the participant. This information, if possible, will be communicated to you at the time the ticket is mailed to you and your participant.

If you have any further questions about your participant remaining in the country following Departure Day, please contact your Regional Travel and Logistics Coordinator for detailed information on the Program Release option.

Deadline for Requesting Program Release/Personal Early Return:

**Summer Departure:** May 1

**Winter Departure:** November 15

Special note for participants from China, Ghana, CBYX and YES Programs:

Participants from China, Ghana, and those in the CBYX and YES programs are not permitted to Program Release and must return home on the dates specified for those programs. For further information on eligibility for Program Release, please contact the National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).

Immediate Departure in case of Early Return

AFS Students who early return and do not complete their academic year or semester program must leave the country immediately. AFS-USA is required by the Department of State to report the student’s adjusted program end date to SEVIS. Students who do not successfully complete their programs are not entitled to the post-completion 30-day grace period.
Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement

J-1 exchange visitors who participate in programs that are financed in whole or in part by an agency of the U.S. Government must return to their home countries after completing their program in the United States and are subject to a two-year home residency requirement. Under the terms of this requirement, they must reside physically in their home country for two years – cumulative, not successive – before they may become eligible to apply for an immigrant or temporary worker (H-1) visa. It is possible for an alumnus to gain permission from a US consular officer to defer the fulfillment of this two-year requirement if he or she is granted an F-1 (student), B-1 (tourist), or other type of non-immigrant visa by the U.S. Embassy or consulate in his or her home country. However, the participant still remains under an obligation to fulfill the two-year requirement and must return home to do so when the period of deferment ends. There is no guarantee that a student will be granted a deferment; he or she may be required to fulfill the two-year requirement immediately after completion of his or her program. The Department of State will not facilitate any scholarship student’s efforts to remain in the U.S. by changing a participant’s visa status. Simply stated, the policy of the Youth Programs Division of the Educational and Cultural Affairs Bureau of the U.S. Department of State is to require students to return to their home countries upon completion of their grant-funded program.

Baggage on the Return Trip Home

Luggage is always a challenging issue when participants return home. Throughout the year, they have purchased new clothes, books, and accumulated gifts. Host parents can help their participant by initiating a discussion about luggage in early May. Participants will need to decide exactly what they will bring home in their luggage, what will need to be shipped home, and which items will need to be left behind. Neither host families nor AFS are responsible for the cost of shipping items home and this should be made clear to the participant during this conversation. Don’t allow the participant to leave this planning and shipping to the last minute, unless you are prepared to take on the work and cost yourself!

Here are some guidelines to help with these decisions:

Given the amount of “stuff” the typical teenager will accumulate over a year, we strongly suggest students abide by the minimum international airline limitations on the charter bus. Most international carriers only allow one bag at 50 lbs. and one carry-on. Any additional pieces of luggage or boxes must be shipped home.

In all cases, AFS Participants are responsible for any overweight charges incurred on domestic or international flights. Every participant will receive a detailed luggage letter in the mail in March.

Domestic Flights to the Gateway City

Participants that depart from Alaska, Colorado, New Mexico, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky, may need to take a domestic flight instead of a charter bus to their gateway city. Most airlines charge upwards of $25 per checked bag and have a weight limit of 50lbs per bag, with additional fees for overweight luggage. These fees are the student’s responsibility and will not be reimbursed by AFS-USA. Carry-on luggage is generally restricted to one piece per passenger of no more than 45 linear inches.

International Flights

The maximum weight on most airlines for an international flight is 50 pounds/23 kilograms per checked bag, with dimensions of 58 linear inches (about 158 centimeters; add the length + depth + width of your luggage to calculate the size). Some airlines may allow one bag to be checked free of charge on international flights, but others charge a fee for each checked bag. The maximum weight per carry-on bag is typically 40 lbs/18 kgs. Carry-on bags must be less than 45 linear inches. Check with the airline for details on allowed baggage. As with domestic baggage, all overweight fees must be paid by the participant and will not be reimbursed by AFS-USA.
Special note for South and Central America:
During the summer, there is an embargo to South and Central American countries, and no extra baggage is allowed under any circumstances.

If you have any specific questions regarding luggage allowances for an airline, we recommend that you contact the airline that the participant is flying on directly, as all luggage information is subject to change.

Security Information
Below are the guidelines set by the Transportation Security Administration for travel through security in American airports, for both domestic and international flights.

• Do not pack or bring prohibited items to the airport. For a complete list of prohibited items, please visit www.tsa.gov.
• Refrain from taking wrapped presents to the airport. TSA recommends that you either ship wrapped packages ahead of time or wrap gifts after arriving at your destination. If a package sets off an alarm, TSA will need to unwrap it to investigate the source of the alarm.
• Pack all undeveloped film and cameras with film in your carry-on baggage. Checked baggage screening equipment will damage undeveloped film.
• All liquids, gels, and aerosols must be in three-ounce or smaller containers. Larger containers that are half-full or toothpaste tubes rolled up are not allowed. Each container must be three ounces or smaller.
• All liquids, gels and aerosols must be placed in a single, quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag. Gallon size bags or bags that are not zip-top such as fold-over sandwich bags are not allowed. Each traveler can use only one quart-size, zip-top, clear plastic bag.
• Each traveler must remove their plastic bag from their carry-on and place it in a bin or on the conveyor belt for X-ray screening. X-raying separately allows TSA security officers to easily examine declared items.
• Carry-on baggage is limited to one carry-on bag plus one personal item. (Personal items include laptops, purses, small backpacks, briefcases, or camera cases.)
• Place identification tags in and on all of your baggage. Don’t forget to label your laptop computer, as these are one of the most forgotten items at screening checkpoints.

Dress the Part
Be aware that any metal detected at the checkpoint must be identified. If you set off the alarm, you will be required to undergo a secondary screening, including a pat-down and hand-wand inspection.

You may remove metal items at the security checkpoint and place them in the bins provided. The bins will be sent through the X-ray machine. You can save time, however, by not wearing metal items or by placing such items in your carry-on baggage before you get in line. For further information, recommendations, and restrictions, please visit www.tsa.gov.

Saying Goodbye
Saying goodbye to an AFS Participant can be a bittersweet occasion. For some family members, saying goodbye provides a sort of relief; for others it is a heartwrenching event, the emotional impact of which they do not anticipate. Many host families and participants feel a sense of accomplishment, and there is a desire to keep in touch after the program ends.
Keep in mind that your host son or daughter will experience an adjustment process in his or her home country, similar to what occurred upon arrival in the U.S. For this reason, you may not hear much from your host participant within the first few weeks or months following his or her return. Do not take this personally. Your hosted participant will be busy catching up with family members and friends, and too much communication with those back in the U.S. can actually be detrimental to their readjustment process. Experience has shown that relationships do survive, even spanning generations. Try to be patient and let go, as did their natural parents.

The AFS Tradition Continues
As an AFS Host Parent, you are the best person for sharing the rewards of hosting an AFS Exchange Participant, and part of serving as a host parent is sharing your experience with other potential host parents.

There are several ways you can work with your AFS volunteers to share the benefits and rewards of hosting an AFS Exchange Participant with other families in your community.

If you think a friend, neighbor, or colleague would benefit from the AFS hosting experience, ask them to think about serving as a host family and put your local volunteer in contact with them. If you know of several families who might make good host families, host a get-together to tell them about your experience. Your local volunteer can provide suggestions on how to organize these sorts of activities.

Often, local newspapers and TV or radio shows are interested in interviewing host families and their hosted participants, especially Education or Family editors. Contact your local volunteer to consider how best to approach a contact that you might know or call the AFS Marketing and Communications Department at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636).

Speaking at your place of worship, a community forum, or a school about your experience are also excellent ways to encourage interested families to host an AFS Exchange Participant while promoting intercultural education.

By sharing your experience with other excellent families, you are helping to create a more just and peaceful world through international learning experiences, one family and one community at a time.

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![Image: Three individuals standing together, smiling. Text: DREAM]
Resources

AFS Learning Objectives .................................................................................................................. 76
More Advice from Experienced Host Parents .................................................................................. 78
Real Talk for AFS Brothers and Sisters, ......................................................................................... 83
Participant and Host Family Questionnaire .................................................................................. 86
The Web and Social Networking: Ensuring Your Safety ................................................................. 91
Electronic Communication and Participant Web Use ...................................................................... 92
Tips for Parents without Adolescents ............................................................................................. 96
Checklist for School Enrollment, .................................................................................................... 98
The Teenage Brain .......................................................................................................................... 100
Characteristics of Teenagers .......................................................................................................... 102
Talking To Your Teenager .............................................................................................................. 103
Sample Activity Waiver .................................................................................................................. 106
Cultural Iceberg .............................................................................................................................. 107
Culture ............................................................................................................................................. 108
Generalizations and Stereotypes ..................................................................................................... 108
Contrasting Values .......................................................................................................................... 109
U.S. American Values ..................................................................................................................... 110
Tips for Adjusting: The First Days and Beyond ............................................................................ 113
Culture Survey .................................................................................................................................. 116
Individualism Index ....................................................................................................................... 117
Goals and Expectations .................................................................................................................... 118
AFS Travel Checklist for U.S. Hosted Participants ...................................................................... 119
CSIET Standards for Long-Term International Educational Travel Programs ......................... 128
Department of State Regulations .................................................................................................... 132
AFS Host Family Welcome Letter .................................................................................................. 137
Department of State Host Family Welcome Letter .......................................................................... 139
AFS Learning Objectives

Personal Realm

Creative thinking

• AFS helps participants view ordinary things, events, and values from a fresh perspective so that they are able to generate innovative ideas and solutions.

Critical Thinking

• AFS leads participants to become unwilling to accept superficial appearances and to be skeptical of stereotypes.
• AFS participants accept that things may be different from how they appear on the surface.
• AFS participants recognize that there are different ways to view things, more than one source of information, and more than one solution to a problem.

Self-Awareness and Responsibility

• AFS helps participants become more self-aware, willing and able to view themselves objectively, and able see themselves as deeply influenced by their own culture.
• AFS leads participants to act responsibly and to exercise self-control within the context of social norms and expectations.
• AFS helps participants learn how to manage their internal states and impulses and to use their inner resources to handle stress and to show patience with people who are in learning situations.

Defining Self in Terms of Ideals and Values

• AFS participants develop personal goals in terms of academic knowledge and skills, character building, family interaction, etc.
• AFS participants value themselves in terms of ideals and goals rather than material worth.

Interpersonal Realm

Adaptability

• AFS helps participants learn how to adapt to new environments.
• AFS participants learn to adapt to changing social circumstances and show greater flexibility in the process of adjusting to new people, social situations, and cultural norms.

Empathy

• The AFS experience leads participants to a deeper concern for and sensitivity to others and expands their capacity to perceive and respond to the values, feelings, and realities of others.
• AFS teaches participants to listen and be mindful of the needs of other people and to use different perspectives in approaching problems and everyday situations.
• AFS encourages participants to become part of groups that they find meaningful
and to become involved with others in a spirit of cooperation, with respect and appreciation for the goals and decisions of the group.

Communication Skills

- AFS enables participants to develop skills in listening actively and thoughtfully and to respond with respect for other people.
- AFS teaches participants to learn how to express themselves verbally and non-verbally and to ask others for help.
- AFS participants are able to converse actively with a wide range of people.
- AFS encourages participants to be willing to make an effort to engage in conversations, even without full language ability, and to become more aware of verbal and non-verbal cues from others.

Self-Assurance

- AFS participants learn how to enjoy themselves in the company of others and are less preoccupied with their own needs or how others view them.
- AFS participants feel competent in their own abilities and are able to comfortably handle a wide range of social situations with their peers.

Intercultural Realm

Cultural Awareness:
Understanding of Countries and Cultures (Host and Home Culture Learning)

- AFS teaches participants how to discuss other cultures and how to explain key dimensions of their host country’s culture without stereotyping or making judgmental statements about the home or host culture.
- AFS participants develop a greater curiosity about their host culture and better understand its institutions, customs, traditions, and practices.
- AFS participants become more aware of their own culture and are able to appreciate and describe the complexity and richness of both their home and host cultures.

Sensitivity to Cultural Differences

- AFS leads participants to learn how to recognize cultural differences and to adapt their behavior and perceptions according to the cultural context.
- AFS participants learn to respond to people from other cultures respectfully and to show them that they are valued.
- AFS teaches participants an appreciation of different attitudes, opinions, lifestyles, and values.

Building Intercultural Friendships

- AFS participants develop and maintain meaningful and long-term relationships across cultures and backgrounds.
- AFS participants are able to interact with people or communities which are different from their own.
- AFS participants actively seek out new relationships with people from different cultures or backgrounds.
Language skills

- AFS participants learn to speak, read, and write in the language of the host culture, and come to understand its jokes and humor.
- AFS participants learn to recognize, use and react appropriately to non verbal signals of the host country.
- AFS participants enjoy using another language and seek opportunities to use foreign languages in day-to-day life.

Global Realm

Global Concern: Interest in and Concern about World Affairs and Awareness of One’s Choices on Others

- Through AFS, participants develop an increased curiosity and concern about world affairs. They have a sustained commitment to obtaining information from many sources and seek out perspectives from other cultures in order to understand world situations and problems.
- AFS participants grow to have an increasing knowledge of a range of world issues that affect and divide people, such as human rights, environmental issues, and poverty.

Global Understanding: Appreciation of Cultural Interdependence

- AFS teaches participants about the interdependence of the global community and raises their awareness of the larger impact that their personal choices and actions have in other parts of the world.
- AFS participants gain competence in understanding the causes of conflict between cultures and seek ways to resolve them and to build peace.

Commitment to Contributing to the World Community

- AFS encourages participants to work with others to build peace, to improve world conditions, and to commit to actions that they believe will bring about a just and peaceful world.
- AFS encourages participants to engage in voluntary service toward the improvement of local and global communities.
More Advice from Experienced Host Parents

**Orientations & Handbooks**
The meeting that we attended before our student came really opened our eyes as to what we might expect.

**Austria**
The Participant and Host Family Questionnaire brought up a lot of different things to go over in the first week that I probably wouldn’t have even thought about, and it gave a format for bringing things up.

**Germany**

**Support & Resources**
Use the AFS Liaison as a sounding board if challenges arise. It is difficult to assimilate a teenager into an existing family unit so challenges are almost a given. Help the student develop friends or a social circle outside of AFS and the family.

**Germany**

Make a connection with someone through AFS that has some understanding of your host child’s culture. Don’t take things personally. Sometimes it felt like he was rejecting us when he did not take our advice. It was helpful having our AFS connection who knew something about the culture.

**Denmark**

Talk to other families who have another student or who have recently hosted. This was incredibly helpful in figuring out that most of our difficulties were related to personality differences between our family’s rambunctious, politically-involved, hands-on style and our student’s very reserved, independent style.

**France**

Give the student every possible chance for things to work out. If you encounter difficulties, enlist the help of AFS, school personnel, and others, but try to work it out together. Be clear about expectations and if they don’t know how to accomplish something, tell them how. They are just teenagers and this is a monumental challenge. Most handle it well with the proper preparation and support.

**Chile**

**Family**
Siblings should have realistic expectations that this exchange student might end up “bothering” them as much as or more than their own siblings! Prepare for the whole year; remind everyone that there will be a honeymoon phase and then there will be real work to make the family accept the exchange student as one of their own.

**Germany**

We found new ways of interacting in our own family. Perhaps because we were always conscious of having someone there with us, we saw through someone else’s eyes. It made us more aware of how we treated one another and we became kinder and more patient with one another.
Our student was more family-focused. I don't know if this can be generalized about all students from this country. This was the biggest adjustment for our student, as well as for us. I think it changed our family for the better!

Argentina

Volunteers told us that we should have no expectations for any particular relationship between our exchange student and our child. This was a changing relationship which became more and more positive over the course of the year.

Germany

All family members should make a weekly schedule to ensure everybody's activities will be considered and nobody gets left out or forgotten. Both host children and new children need to know that parents will not drop everything solely to cater to the new child.

Norway

I caught myself trying to be more of a friend than a parent at times. It is hard, because participants seem more mature than American teenagers in certain situations. However, they continue to need the guidance of a parent and the security of knowing we are there for them.

Portugal

It is hard not to expect same-age host siblings to include the student in all of their activities. Try to resist that impulse and encourage the student to make their own friends. The student should join teams, clubs, church activities, etc. as soon as possible after they arrive to give their days structure and provide a pool of possible friends.

Norway

Don't expect your children of the same age to be automatic best friends... let the participant adjust slowly and friendship comes with time. Also, it is invaluable that they make friends outside of the family.

Germany

My children were initially excited to have an exchange student, briefly became resentful, and then enjoyed the experience again. Be prepared for this - spend some alone time with your own kids.

Italy

Get the student to interact with your child/children. Insist on it. Have a family night, watch a movie together or play board games and order pizza. Show your whole family that you love and accept them. Let them know that they must show respect to all family members and spend time with their American brothers and sisters and not just run out to be with their school friends.

Denmark

If you are hosting without any siblings in the house, provide opportunities for your student to interact with friends whenever possible. Open up your home for sleepovers, etc. Let them take friends on vacations. It’s always a lot more fun with peers.

Philippines

We learned to look at how we interact as a family in a slightly different way. Barbara made us think about why we did things the way we did and we learned to take a different point of view into consideration.

Austria

Just remember that this person was brought up by a different set of parents with a different set of values. He or she is probably already considered to be an adult in his or her native country and this sometimes leads to friction. Explaining why you have certain rules (oftentimes frequently) can help alleviate this. You will probably also have to explain to the children that you raised why there might be differences in expectations.

Iceland

Another problem might arise if you don’t have teenagers... We’re used to our 9 year old daughter who tells us everything she’s doing. Teenagers obviously like their independence and this was something we had to get used to.

Sweden

First, they are teenagers. So if you don’t have experience with those of your own, ask for input from friends that do. Your Liaison can help a lot, also. Second, recognize that behavior is culturally-oriented-- the student is probably not being stubborn or unresponsive, they may just not understand the question.

Japan
Communication & Culture Learning

Culture is much more than learning to run the dishwasher, vacuum or use a garbage disposal. Our student adapted easily to all these new household conveniences. Culture is all about communication.

**Philippines**

If you are looking for a new experience this is great, but do some research on the country you choose and don’t just assume things. Our student assumed Wal-Mart was possessed since that is what he had seen on “South Park” and we assumed he’d like Mexican food since he spoke Spanish...

**Chile**

Our student seemed very laid back and unconcerned with time and schedules. This was probably cultural in good part. Be aware of this and spell out expectations.

**Ecuador**

We found that watching films from India together helped us get to know our student more easily. They provided common experiences that we could refer to later and they also provided a reason to talk about cultural differences.

**India**

You need to positively reinforce the student to talk...as much as possible. Although many students can understand the language, speaking is uncomfortable and they are afraid to embarrass themselves.

**Costa Rica**

When the fit isn’t right, be receptive...and open the lines of communication.

**Germany**

Hosting can be a very rewarding experience and a very difficult experience. I think the most important thing is communication right from the start. Set guidelines and stick to them.

**Thailand**

One thing an AFS Volunteer told us is that when communicating with your student, make sure he or she understands. Usually a student will be polite and nod yes that he or she understands. Have them repeat or explain what you have just said or done.

**Paraguay**

Our biggest challenge was having the participant feel comfortable telling us when she wanted or needed something. We had to continually remind her that it was okay for her to request something.

**Japan**

I learned that good communication skills make a huge difference in any experience. It was very difficult at times to really feel like we were communicating effectively. I also realized that I had to have my own boundaries and that they are easier to establish at the beginning rather than trying to change them during the course of the stay.

**China**

Be patient. Treat your student as you would your other children, not as a guest in your home. Talk to your student, especially about their communication style (and yours). Let them know your expectations right away, and realize that it will be an ongoing dialogue.

**New Zealand**

Deal with small problems before they become big ones. Often, we were afraid to confront our student with little issues (up too late, on the computer too much, not doing chores). But, when we brought them up, she was very cooperative. Complete the questionnaire with the rules and expectations soon, and review it whenever needed. Although our student spoke excellent English, we realized we couldn’t assume that she always understood us.
Even before the student arrives, establish the relationship via email, photos, phone calls, etc. I really think this helps them to feel like they belong. Also, set realistic expectations. Communication is important... You need to understand their method of communication and culture. What might seem disrespectful could simply be a matter of misunderstanding.

Keep a channel open at all times for communication, let the student know that they can talk with you about anything. Sometimes they may hear a word that they don’t understand, let them know that you will tell them exactly what it means no matter what the word is. This can be a little uncomfortable at times but just give them an honest answer.

Brazil

It is challenging to determine which behaviors of a hosted student are due to their culture, and which may be due to their unique personality and nurturing in their family. It is difficult to know when the communication problem is due to language or deliberate self-direction. It’s very important to establish a routine of communication, perhaps a place (the kitchen table) and a cue for either party, (we need to talk). We did this, and still had difficulties, but it helped enormously to have established that simple routine, which could happen at any time.

Ecuador

Homesickness & Participant Adjustment

Realize that your student may have never lived alone in a single space before, and that the experience might be wonderful and scary. In addition, the time change (11 to 12 hours) was a factor for her to adjust to, as was Daylight Savings Time.

Indonesia

Our daughter typically got sad at the holidays. We made sure that she was aware of how we celebrated, and that she was a part of the planning and execution of it.

Germany

Our student had a time in February when she wanted to go home. We say it was the mid-winter slump. Being there to talk is always a comforting thing, but I think that the most important thing is to keep them involved in the winter even though we all tend to get a bit lazy. Keeping them involved will keep them on their toes and experiencing new things.

Argentina

These kids are away from friends and family. They have the normal problems all teenagers do... girlfriends, school activities. Just be there and be supportive when things at home are not going right, or when the girlfriend calls and breaks up. Be there and make them part of your family...not a guest.
Rules, Safety & Internet Time

The hardest thing is that the students generally aren’t used to your house rules, whereas your own kids have grown up with them. You need to explain things—often and well. Don’t get angry or offended if they question why you do the things you do, or why you have certain rules. Many AFS kids are used to more freedom than American kids are, and that is something you have to be prepared for.

Great Britain

Really crack down on computer time at the start. AFS gives this advice, but we thought it seemed cruel to cut our student off from friends and family. The result was that he became extremely dependent on the computer and this was stressful for us. It also limited the student’s ability to make meaningful connections with people and events in our own town.

Germany

The biggest challenge is balancing the student’s need for independence with the rules and regulations of your home, school, etc., and getting to know the emotional needs of your student. Open your hearts as well as your home.

Japan

Curfews are something that most students have never heard of. Explain what they are, and what the consequences are if the curfew is not obeyed. If you explain things in the beginning...and stick to your rules...you will have a great experience. But be flexible.

France

Find a fine line between safety and freedom for your student. If they are independent then try to let them be while guiding them in what is safe here. Do not let your fears hold them back but provide safe rules.

Japan

Always set clear rules and regulations for the use of household items. That is where most of the tension in the experience comes from during the year. Also, reiterate those guidelines frequently for clarification and understanding.

Indonesia

Make more rules in the beginning and then you can relax or take some of them away as the year goes on. It’s much harder to add rules as you go, as it is with any teenager. Deal with them as you would if the student were your own child.

Italy

The difference in the drinking age of some countries can be frustrating for the student. Make sure they understand the rules of this country.

Germany
Real Talk for AFS Brothers and Sisters

AFS is a worldwide family made up of local volunteers, school club members, natural families, and hosting families. As a host brother or sister, you play an important role in the experience of the AFS participant who shares your family’s life for a semester or a year. Sharing your home with another student is an adventure with the potential for your own personal growth, the chance to make a lifelong friend in another country, and to have a lot of fun. Remember that every family has its ups and downs, butting heads occasionally, but there are some things you can do to make sure you and your new brother or sister have every opportunity to make the most of this experience. By trying to understand another person’s perspective, you are beginning to understand more about others and yourself. Here are some tips:

Be Yourself

First of all, be yourself. This is not a job or task with a right and wrong way of acting. The AFS Exchange is a chance for you and your host brother or sister to learn, share, and grow. It will, of course, require a little more patience than if you were making friends at school; for one thing, the participant lives with you. If you start out trying to impress the participant, you will find later that it is more difficult to be yourself. Your new brother or sister expects you to be you, just as he or she wants to be himself or herself. So relax and be honest with each other. This is how the best friendships begin.

Be a Brother or Sister

“Show the student the ropes. It is actually quite frightening to not know anyone...Take them places, spend time together with him and your parents, but also give the exchange student his quiet time and privacy.”

- Kyle, participant from South Africa

Try to think of the AFS participant as a new brother or sister. This does not mean that you will be expected to spend every minute together or have the same friends. You will have your own personality differences and your own interests, just like you have with your real brothers, sisters, and friends. You and your host sibling may often enjoy each other’s company, but also pursue individual interests. If your parents seem to spend a lot of time with your new brother or sister, it is because they want him or her to be as comfortable in your home as you are. You can help with a little patience and understanding, and by always lending a hand. Don’t let the daily differences cloud the overall importance of a good relationship between all the members of your family. Above all, try to be open with everyone in your family and share how you feel so that misunderstandings and differences can be quickly overcome and do not grow into bigger problems.

Be a Friend

“Through Janet, I have built new friendships with people she has come to know and she has made friends with people whom I know. I have enjoyed her company, her funny British accent, her quiet times, and her not-so-quiet times. It has all been meaningful to me because of our friendship.”

- Carol, host sister in Iowa

Beyond your role as a host brother or sister, you will want to become friends with the participant. This will make living together easier and give you a better understanding of the participant and yourself. Like all friendships, it will take time and a lot of shared experiences before you are comfortable with each other and have learned each other’s strengths and weaknesses. This requires patience, tolerance, acceptance, and flexibility. The results will be
worth it. When the experience is over and the participant has returned home, your friendship will still be there along with the satisfaction that you have reached across a great distance to understand another person.

**Be a Guide**

The AFS Participant is not a guest in your house but a member of the family. To feel “at home,” however, he or she needs to be able to find his or her way around and to know where and how things are done. You can help the AFS participant a lot by introducing him or her to people in the neighborhood and community and by being a guide to important places around the house, the school, and the community. During this time, you may discover new things about your environment which you took for granted or never saw before. By discovering this new perspective, you are, like your AFS Participant, discovering something new about your world.

“Remember that they are 1000s of miles away from home, in a totally new environment, and may not always be up to doing some things. You might need to encourage them.”

- Caitlin, host sister in New York

**Be a Language Teacher**

For some AFS students, English is not their native language. They will not, of course, speak as quickly or confidently as you do. Sometimes when they are tired or nervous, their ability to communicate in English will be slowed down. By having a little patience you can help the participant adjust, as well as demonstrate your ability to perceive and respond to the needs of other people. Below are several things that you can do that may be very helpful for your new brother or sister:

- Speak slowly, using short simple sentences
- Make sure rule, dates, and other important information is understood
- Repeat important information; repetition will help the participant absorb the important things
- Try to be a good listener

We all like for others to listen to us as we try to communicate, so it is only polite to give the AFS Participant the opportunity to ask questions and practice learning English. Correct only the most important things at first, don’t worry about good grammar or complete sentences. Instead, just encourage the participant to talk and look for words to express feelings or needs. In the process, you might learn some of his or her language. The thought of learning an entirely new language can be frightening (imagine trying to learn yourself!), so give the participant a compliment now and then. It will work wonders.

**Relationships and Rewards**

There is no formula for the perfect relationship with your AFS brother or sister; each interaction between two people is unique. It’s often a matter of chemistry, the mixture of personalities, interests, and environment, as well as cultural differences. Your willingness to see another point of view, to compromise, and overcome minor irritations will help establish good communication. Sometimes your expectations of friendship may be fulfilled and sometimes they may not be, but accepting and respecting each other’s individuality will be a tremendous learning experience.
Making Adjustments

“I’ve never had a sister before which means I’ve never had to share my room and belongings, my privacy, my mom and dad. It’s difficult to see how one could love a person you’ve never known before, yet I couldn’t help but love my host sister and her actions. Through this love, I’ve learned patience. The biggest adjustment I had to make was sharing my parents, for when Minh came she needed extra love at the beginning. I wouldn’t trade this sharing experience for anything else in the world.”

- Jennifer, host sister in Oklahoma

During your AFS experience, it is natural for you or your host sibling to want to speak openly with someone outside the home who understands AFS and the unique challenges that accompany the hosting experience. Your AFS Liaison and other volunteers can provide an objective and informed point of view, and they are willing to listen and help both you and your participant. Throughout the exchange, your Liaison will initiate separate contact with you and your host sibling each month. It is important to remember, however, that you don’t need to wait for your Liaison to contact you. In fact, we urge you to ask for assistance at any time, before difficulties and misunderstandings become serious. In many cases, small but persistent problems can be resolved if an AFS volunteer talks separately with the participant and family. Mediation by a neutral third party often helps each side to better understand the other’s point of view. Whomever you choose to talk with, you deserve a great deal of credit and thanks for your efforts to work through any difficulties which may arise. Learning to understand yourself as well as others is all part of the AFS experience.

Gaining a New Perspective

The AFS hosting experience gives you the opportunity to form a new perspective on your values, obstacles, and goals. You may gain new insights into your way of life or into the world around you. By opening your heart and home as a host brother or sister, you are a central part of the AFS experience.
Participant and Host Family Questionnaire

Laying down very clear house rules early on will help your hosted participant adjust to life in the U.S. Some of the questions below may seem obvious to you, but daily life can differ in surprising ways around the world. Take some time before your participant arrives to consider your answers to these questions. Review these questions with your participant within the first two to three weeks of arrival.

Around the Home

What should I call you? (mom/dad, first name, etc.) _________________________________

What chores am I expected to do on a daily basis? (e.g. tidying my bedroom/bathroom/common spaces, etc.) ____________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Are there any chores that I will share with my siblings? (e.g. set/clear the table, wash dishes, vacuum, etc.) __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What appliances may I use around the house? (e.g. stove, computer, washing machine, etc.) __________________________________________________________________

May I personalize my room by moving the furniture, putting up pictures, etc.?  Y  N

If yes, what should I use to place items on the walls? _________________________________

Where should I study? ___________________________________________________________

Are there any areas in the home in which I am not allowed? ____________________________

How should I leave the bathroom after I am finished (door open or closed, fan, lights, heater off/on, etc.)? __________________________________________________________________

Where should I put my towel, toothbrush, shampoo, etc. after I use them? ________________

(For girls) How/where do I dispose of sanitary napkins and tampons? ____________________

Will I use the family supply of personal toiletries or should I buy my own? ________________

At what time(s) do family members wake up (weekdays/weekends)? ________________________

At what time should I wake up (weekdays/weekends)? ________________________________

Will someone wake me up or is there an alarm clock I must set? ________________________

At what time do you expect me to go to bed (weekdays/weekends)? ________________________
At what times and for how long may I spend doing the following:

Watching TV: _______________________    Doing homework: _______________________
Listening to Music: ___________________   Showering/bathing: ______________________
Using the Computer: ___________________    Other: _______________________________

What are typical meal times (weekdays/weekends)?

Breakfast: ________________   Lunch: ________________   Dinner: ________________

May I help myself to food from the refrigerator/cupboard between meals?  Y   N
May I take food outside of the kitchen?   Y   N   If yes, to which rooms? _______________
Will I take a sack lunch to school or will I be given an allowance to purchase lunch from the
school cafeteria? ________________________________

(If applicable) Who will prepare the sack lunch? ________________________________

May I use the phone to talk with my friends from school?   Y   N
If so, for how long? At what times? ________________________________

What are the rules for making long distance phone calls? Should I ask first? Am I to pay for
each call? ________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What are the rules regarding internet usage? Should I ask first? ________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What should I know about internet safety and protecting my privacy and that of the family?
______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

May I invite friends to the house? If so, at what times(s) and under what conditions? ________

What are the rules regarding spending time with members of the opposite sex, both in and
outside the home? ________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

May I go out with friends at night during the week or on weekends?   Y   N
If so, by what time should I return home? ________________________________

Does the family share certain activities in which I will also be expected to participate? (e.g.
sports games, community events, etc.) ________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Does the family attend religious services? If so, may I attend them as well? ________________
Is it possible to arrange for me to attend different religious services than the family, if desired? If so, how can we arrange this? ______________________________________________________
Are there any other house rules that we have not yet talked about (e.g. smoking, punctuality, tidiness, curfew, etc.) ______________________________________________________

Money Questions

How much money might I need for common expenses? (clothing, school uniforms, entertainment, etc.) _____________________________________________________________
What kind of expenses will I cover myself? __________________________________________
Where is the nearest bank? _______________________________________________________

In the Community

How far away is my school? ______________________________________________________
How will I get to and from school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Transportation</th>
<th>Car/Carpool</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method (e.g. bus): __________</td>
<td>Name of Driver(s):</td>
<td>(e.g. walking, bicycle, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (provided by host family): _______</td>
<td></td>
<td>Route:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop/Station Location: ______________</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Time of Departure: _______</td>
<td>Time of Departure: __________</td>
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<td>Time of Return: __________</td>
<td>Time of Return: __________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration of Trip: __________</td>
<td>Duration of Trip: __________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How difficult is it to get around the community by myself? ____________________________
Is there a bike or other transportation options available? _____________________________

Is there any public transportation that I can use? Y N

If so, what are the restrictions? _____________________________________________________
Who will be able to give me a ride for after-school activities? __________________________
What are the family expectations about providing transportation? _________________________

What are the rules or restrictions for me to arrange for friends to give me a ride? __________
Is there anything I should know about safety in certain parts of town? _____________________________________________

What are the guidelines about where it is safe/unsafe to walk during the day and after dark? _____________________________________________

What do we do in the event of a fire or other emergency? _____________________________________________

What are the telephone numbers of related emergency services? _____________________________________________

Where is the nearest hospital or clinic? _____________________________________________

How do you secure the home? Lock the doors and windows? _____________________________________________

How do I keep my belongings safe such as my passport, money, and camera? _____________________________________________

If home alone, how should I respond to someone on the phone or someone at the door? _____________________________________________

What do I need to know about traffic and pedestrian safety? _____________________________________________

What do I do if I get lost in town? _____________________________________________

What do I do if I don’t have a key and nobody is home? _____________________________________________

Is there anything I should know about the high school culture, school rules, peer relations, or social tensions? _____________________________________________
Are there activities, people, or places I should avoid? What should I find out about a party, concert, etc. before deciding to go? ________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What is the legal age for drinking alcohol? How is it enforced? What repercussions may result from breaking this law? ________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

What is the legal age for smoking cigarettes? What repercussions may result from breaking this law? What are my family’s expectations regarding smoking? ________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Use this space to make notes on anything else your family shares with you about life in their home and community: ________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
The Web and Social Networking: Ensuring Your Safety

There are many resources on the internet to advise you on how you can help to ensure your safety on the web. We recommend that you take the time to explore information regarding cyber safety and that you continually review your own online activities to make certain that you are putting safety ahead of socialization at all times.

One site you may want to explore is:

AFS-USA has fan pages and other sites that are open forums for members to share advice, experiences, videos, photos, etc. about hosting an AFS exchange student and the experience of studying abroad. While these are open forums and can provide information, please refer to the AFS-USA website as your information guide: http://www.afsusa.org

Social Networking Sites

AFS takes participant safety very seriously. We recommend that you be extremely careful with your personal information. Please use care when connecting with or ‘friending’ others. On AFS social networking sites like Facebook, we make efforts to keep our community restricted to individuals who are directly involved with AFS Programs, such as volunteers, students who are studying abroad and AFS Returnees, students who are hosted in the U.S., staff, etc.

Please customize your privacy settings so that only authorized people can see your personal details, and be careful about what kinds of identifying information you publicly share about yourself.

Posting for AFS Fan Pages and Groups

When you become a member of an AFS group online, this indicates that you agree to conduct discussions and other postings with respect.

Members should not spam, defame, harass or stalk members, encourage illegal activity, or in any way falsely represent themselves, nor should they post explicit, obscene, or otherwise objectionable content. Posts should be relevant to hosting with AFS-USA.

We reserve the right to delete inappropriate or off-topic content, and posting such content may result in being blocked from our fan page. If you find anything inappropriate, please notify a page administrator so that we can handle it appropriately.

Questions

While we try to monitor discussions, AFS fan pages and other sites are not official forums for discussion. Urgent questions and concerns should be addressed directly to AFS-USA staff at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636). Discussions, photos, and other entries on AFS social networking sites do not necessarily represent the opinions and/or policies of AFS-USA.
Electronic Communication and Participant Web Use

The following information consists of tips for safe and effective participant internet use. Host families should be aware that customs involving internet use differ around the world, and should discuss the following sections with their students, including Guidelines for Internet Use, Practical Tips for Internet Use, and Pornography on the Internet.

Think twice if it isn't nice!

Whenever you send an email or post something online, there is a chance that it will be shared with people other than the intended recipients, including the media. Not only could negative communication cause problems for you within your circle of friends, but it could also hurt your host family and the reputation of AFS in your community. Additionally, laws exist that prohibit the transmission of negative information about others.

You are, of course, free to discuss your experience in the U.S. with anyone, however, for your own protection and in the best interest of AFS, we ask that you not email or post on the internet any content that is critical of particular individuals, your host community, or the U.S. Choosing to disregard this policy could result in an early return or other disciplinary action.

Privacy Counts

Did you know that it is against U.S. laws to share detailed personal information about others, such as their full names or address without permission of those individuals? Similar laws may apply when sending a photograph or likeness of someone without their permission. Social security numbers should never be posted on a website or sent via e-mail, under any circumstances. Sharing information about yourself or others on the web puts you and them at risk for identity fraud and other security concerns. Don't do it!

“My” Space

If you create a blog or post information to websites, remember that (unless password-protected) any information posted on the internet can most likely be accessed by the general public. Because search engines regularly index most sites on the internet, it is possible that members of the public may be able to locate a participant’s personal blog by searching for information about AFS-USA or a particular country. This is possible even if you don’t actively promote your website.

If you are part of a social networking site such as Facebook, make sure you are not disclosing private information about yourself or your host family, and that your privacy settings are set so that only friends can access your profile. Remember that many people (your host family, teachers, students, etc.) may have access to information linked to you, including pictures. Make sure to control the information on these sites to maintain a good impression of yourself, your host family, and AFS.

Please note that any information about you on social media or other public websites about activities such as driving, involvement with drugs, or other dangerous behaviors may be cause for early termination of your program. Violating host country travel policies or other policies established for your safety may also be cause for early return to your home country. This information is explained in the Participation Agreement to which you agreed upon entering the program. Please respect AFS rules and exercise discretion when choosing what to post on social media.
**Guidelines for Internet Use**

Given the realities previously mentioned, you are responsible for ensuring that your internet use is consistent with the following AFS-USA guidelines:

**Approval:** We highly recommended that participants who create their own blogs or post material to social media discuss the content in advance with their host family and Liaison to ensure that the material is suitable and complies with these guidelines.

**Disclaimer:** Any website maintained by a participant during his or her AFS-USA program must reflect the fact that it is not an official publication of AFS-USA. The site must be labeled clearly and prominently with an appropriate disclaimer such as: "The contents of this website are mine personally and do not reflect any position of AFS-USA."

**Use of the AFS-USA Logo:** Because use the AFS-USA logo is reserved for official activities authorized by AFS-USA, the logo cannot be used on participant websites.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** The thoughtful opinions that participants convey in their communications with others can contribute substantially to developing a better understanding of other countries. However, given the broad access to participant-posted material on the internet both in their hosted country and elsewhere, participants should remain culturally sensitive with respect to the material they post to any website. Participants should be reminded that people in their host countries and members of the U.S. public may make assumptions about AFS-USA or the participant’s community based on the material a participant posts to a website. Although we encourage participants to express themselves freely, participant-posted material on the internet should make efforts to not reflect poorly on AFS-USA, the host family, or the host or home country.

**Safety and Security:** As a safety precaution, participants are urged to not to post details about where they or other participants live, or information about events to be attended by a large number of participants such as orientations or parties. For example, participants who live in small towns or rural areas should not post the name of their community or town online and, instead, should refer to the general area of the country (Northwest, Southeast, etc.) For their own protection, it is also advisable not to provide information about participants’ personal possessions.

**Publication Policies:** As with the AFS policy regarding employment, participants may not accept payment for anything they write or photograph that appears on the web. Participants should be advised that posting materials to the internet that they have not authored or created may violate U.S. copyright laws.

**When in doubt...**

When in doubt about whether something that you are planning to email or post is appropriate and/or lawful, consider these questions and discuss the answers with a host parent or Liaison:

- Am I revealing any personal information about someone without their permission?
- Am I revealing personal information about myself which might be misused?
- Am I revealing personal information about my host family without their knowledge and/or permission?
- Am I using materials protected by copyright (such as the AFS logo)?
- Even if I have permission, is it wise and safe to share this information on my website, blog, etc.?
Practical Tips for Internet Use

- **DO NOT install any software without your host family's permission.** Even if the software itself is okay, it may have a bad reaction with other software on the computer. It may also introduce spyware. Spyware is a program that is installed silently along with another legitimate program. This software is usually poorly written and almost always results in the computer running dramatically slower. It can silently record your vital information and send it to a third party. You may also find spyware masquerading on websites as something helpful. Often, an offer to speed up your computer, reduce spam, or uninstall spyware is actually spyware in disguise. Remember, nothing is free and you are NOT the lucky winner of a free iPod!

- **DO NOT use or install any file sharing programs.** File sharing programs are those such as Morpheus, Kazaa, or BitTorrents that allow users to share files with each other.

- **DO NOT download illegal materials.** Illegal music includes files such as MP3s, which come from a source other than the music's owner, without permission from the owner. The use of file sharing programs to trade MP3s is illegal in the U.S. The Recording Industry of America (RIAA) aggressively pursues and prosecutes people caught downloading MP3s illegally, resulting in large fines and/or jail time. Illegal software is software or games which come from a source other than the original developer, without permission from the developer. It is illegal for your friend to send you software so that you don't have to buy it. There are software programs and games that the developer allows to be given away for free (gratis), but these should come from the original developers so that you know that they allow it.

- **Copyright laws vary around the world.** What may be legal to download or file share in your home country might be illegal in the U.S. Illegally downloading or sharing materials exposes you and your host parent(s) to potential legal action. Even if you feel illegal downloading and file sharing is harmless, you may not take risks that could potentially harm your host parent(s). For this reason, it is acceptable for your host parent(s) to monitor your internet practices to help ensure your actions are safe and legal. If you are unsure, please ask for guidance.

- **DO NOT open any attachment you are not expecting.** This is true even if it looks like it’s from a friend, especially files that end in .zip or .exe (.jpg, .png, and .gif are okay). Files ending in .zip or .exe can introduce a virus, a program which is intended to cause a problem on a computer. The problem could be small and harmless, or it could destroy information on your computer or infect other computers. Even if you have your own computer, if it is connected to your host family's computer through a network, a virus on your computer could affect your host family’s computer.

- **DO NOT turn off the firewall on your computer.**

- **DO NOT follow a link in an email from someone you don't know.**

- **DO NOT put any personal information about you or your host family on any public forum** (full name, email address, street address, phone number, birth date, etc.)

- **DO NOT post anything on a public forum that you would be embarrassed to have your host family or natural family see.** A public forum is a place that anyone can see without entering a password set by you.

- **DO NOT put your email address on a website or blog.** You will get spam.

- **DO NOT respond to spam, even to take you off the email list.** You may get more spam.

- **DO NOT forward any email that says you should forward it to your friends.**
**Pornography on the Internet**

As you may know, adult and child pornography is accessible on the internet through search engines and on websites names not usually associated with such material. “Child pornography” is generally defined as material depicting a minor or minors in actual or simulated sexual conduct. In most states of the United States, a minor is a person under the age of 18.

Receiving or sending pornography is illegal in most states in the United States; receiving or sending child pornography is a crime in all states. This includes the transmission of photographs of persons known or unknown to the sender under the age of eighteen, via cell phone, smart phone, or the internet, regardless of whether the subject of the photo has provided his or her consent. Accessing child pornography sites and transmitting child pornography is liable to criminal investigation and prosecution.

Whether you seek out pornography or you open a pornographic message sent to you without your knowledge, a record of your “contact” with the pornography will be kept in the hard drive of the computer you are using. Such messages may also be traced to a cell phone or smart phone. This record is accessible to interested parties, including government authorities. Should the receipt of such materials be reported to or detected by government authorities, a criminal charge against you could follow.

In addition to the very serious legal ramifications, participants should be aware of the negative impact accessing such sites can have on their host family, school, volunteers, and community. It is very unlikely that any host family in the United States would want to continue hosting a participant that they feel associates him or herself with these types of materials. Because of these very serious consequences, if any participant avails him or herself of adult or child pornography, he or she may be terminated from the program and returned home early.

As mentioned earlier, sometimes you may receive access to pornography involuntarily, in the form of an email or pop-up box on a site that doesn’t appear to have any pornographic content. If you open or click on either and pornographic material appears, you must immediately tell your host family and the local AFS volunteers. Not only will a record of this be kept on the computer’s hard drive, but by accessing one such email, you are telling the sender that your address is “live” and they will send additional messages, which will make the situation worse.

In order to avoid accidentally opening a pornographic site that may have come to your computer as spam, you should immediately delete any message from a sender unfamiliar to you without clicking on or opening it.

While it may be uncomfortable for you, your host family is likely to discuss this issue with you upon arrival in the United States. Please know that they are only doing so to make sure that you understand the information presented here and to protect you from the potentially very serious consequences should you accidentally or otherwise access any pornography.
**Tips for Parents without Adolescents**

This tip sheet provides some “food for thought” for those host families who do not have experience parenting adolescents. Please refer to the articles that follow this section concerning teen brain development, general characteristics, and communication. The sections on *House Rules* (page 47), *Computer Usage* (page 49 and page 92), and *Social Life* (page 43) should also be carefully reviewed.

Host families without teenagers are advised to set and communicate guidelines with their hosted teen early on in the experience. Each family should establish what is comfortable for them according to their own family norms and AFS policies. Including the participant in this process will promote further understanding and accountability in the parent/participant relationship. The *Participant and Host Family Questionnaire* on page 87 is an excellent tool to assist you in this process.

Despite your best efforts, you and your hosted participant may occasionally experience misunderstandings. We encourage you to communicate with your host son or daughter about such incidents and to view them as opportunities for growth in interpersonal and intercultural understanding.

**The following subject areas are frequently monitored by host families:**

**Curfews**
Your city or town may have ordinances or laws in regard to curfews which should be taken into consideration when establishing a curfew with your participant.

**Ride Sharing Safety**
Understand and communicate to your participant the laws other teens must adhere to according to their junior licensing for driving. This may vary from state to state, but often newly licensed students cannot transport passengers, or passengers under a certain age, for several months.
Computer/Internet Usage
If possible, position the family computer in a communal area of the house, such as the kitchen or other high-traffic location, to facilitate supervision (however, please respect your student’s wishes should he or she request to have a private online conversation with his or her parents back home). Social networking websites, such as Facebook, are the standard tools for teenagers to connect with their peers. Consider this when determining an appropriate amount of time for internet use with your teen. Internet usage can be regulated through software that allows specified daily use via a password system. Students should be aware that high schools often have rules regarding internet use at school, as well. Last, make sure that your participant knows that it is illegal to download music, movies, and other copyrighted materials from the internet, and that legal action may be taken against him or her, as well as you, if the materials are downloaded onto your family’s computer or via your family’s internet service.

The website OnGuard Online (www.onguardonline.gov) has extremely helpful resources for keeping everyone safe online. There are also games and exercises to test users’ knowledge of the various challenges they may encounter while surfing the web, including spam and phishing scams, cyber bullying, and social networking safety.

Cell phones
The use of cell phones to efficiently coordinate rides, check-in with parents after school, and stay in touch with friends is popular among teens today. It is also becoming standard for U.S. high schools to have strict policies regarding cell phone use during school hours. The subject of text messaging should also be addressed with students that will be using a cell phone. Text messaging will often be subject to extra charges. Texting can be used to instantly communicate internationally, and this connection to the home country is not advised. When cell phones are the practical tool for communication within a family, they are great, but they can also be a complicated tool to regulate with students. For more information, please refer to the section on cell phone use on page 48.

Sleeping habits
Some teens will sleep 10 or more hours if you let them and they tend to stay up and sleep in late (more on sleep issues on page 102). If this is not an option in your household, explain why and make sure that your hosted participant has access to an alarm clock.

Eating habits
Many teenagers, especially boys, eat a lot. If you are casual about snacking, be sure to communicate to your participant what foods qualify as “snacks,” i.e. cereal, fruit, or toast. These may not be considered snacks in the student’s home country. Otherwise, the chicken filets that are thawing for dinner may end up as an after school snack.

As always, feel free to contact your Liaison for assistance in understanding this new, teenaged addition to your family. You may also find it helpful to consult with other AFS Host Families in your area.
Checklist for School Enrollment

The enrollment procedure will vary from school to school. This checklist will give you some direction as to what information you will need to make the school enrollment process go more smoothly. Some schools may require the student to be in the USA before selecting classes, whereas other schools will want to work with you and/or the student to create a school schedule ahead of time, via e-mail.

**School Personnel Contact Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best time to contact:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer hours:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guidance counselor name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best time to contact:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer hours:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School Enrollment Information**

Prior to enrolling your student you will need to find out the following:

What documents are required by the school in order to enroll the student?

Will I need to bring a copy of the passport? [ ] yes [ ] no

Will I need to bring a copy of the student’s application? [ ] yes [ ] no

Do I need to obtain approval from District Administration? [ ] yes [ ] no

List of classes required by home country school:

List of classes required by US school: (Are there any requirements if earning a diploma? Please note - not all schools will give diplomas. Some will place all exchange students as “seniors” and give a certificate of completion, some will identify them as juniors.)
Will the student be able to participate in graduation?  ☐ yes  ☐ no
Will the student be able to receive a diploma?  ☐ yes  ☐ no
Will the student be able to receive a certificate of completion?  ☐ yes  ☐ no
When can we meet to create a tentative/actual student schedule?

Extracurricular Activities
AFS students are encouraged to join a club or sports team. It is a good idea to let the coaches and/or club advisors know your student is interested in participating before they arrive and try-outs begin. The following is a list of suggestions to facilitate the joining of a fall sport, especially if try-outs start or are held before the student arrives.

Sports/Activity Director:
Phone number:  Extension:
Email:
Best time to contact:
Summer hours:

Questions/information to obtain from Activity Director
☐ Obtain a list of extracurricular activities and clubs, coaches. Advisors and when the fall try-outs begin
☐ Contact any coaches, band directors, or club sponsors to inform them of approximate student arrival date.
What are the requirements for playing school sports? (Student’s health form and addendum? AFS physical? State High School Association physical after arrival in the USA?)
Any special paperwork needed for students to play sports. (State High School Athletic Association requirements?) If time allows, email form to student.

Contact Info for Person in Charge of Sport or Club
Club or sport:
Coach or advisor name:
Phone number:  Extension:
Email:
Best time to contact:
Summer hours:
Club or sport:
Coach or advisor name:
Phone number:  Extension:
Email:
Best time to contact:
Summer hours:
The Teenage Brain
A Lesson in Understanding for Parents of Adolescents
By Glenn Goldberg, J.D., R.C., Adolescent Specialist and Parent Coach

Have you experienced problems, conflicts, challenges or frustrations in parenting your adolescent? Is your teenager ever moody, sarcastic or negative? Does their behavior ever hurt your feelings, "push your buttons" or leave a residue of anger and resentment? Have you ever been the target of the legendary teenage "glare," which can devastate your confidence and spirit? Has your child displayed defensive or defiant body language like folded arms, rolled eyes, tightened jaws or clenched fists? Have you seen other behaviors, maybe less dramatic, that are nevertheless deeply disturbing?

Most parents of teens have experienced bad attitudes and disrespectful interchanges. It’s not fun, but it is normal. Most teens are rude and disrespectful some of the time. This seems to be one of the ways they react to their internal turmoil. Rebellious behavior can also be a way for them to feel some degree of power in a family and a world where they often feel totally powerless, regardless of the reality.

You have a very tough job: redefining or renegotiating your authority with your teen. Just when you were starting to feel reasonably comfortable and competent in your parental role, you may now be experiencing what seem to be endless and exhausting tugs of war over who sets the rules, where are the boundaries and what are the limits. Your teen may move tantalizingly closer, then suddenly pull away – cuddling one minute and cursing the next – in a way that leaves you confused and disoriented.

Separating From You
Adolescence also hands your child a challenging new job description. Their primary developmental task is to form their own identity separate from you. In earlier stages, your child found their identity within your family. Now, their friends seem to be more important than you. Your teen may be spending more time outside your family than inside it. Being accepted as a member of their peer group has become their paramount emotional need, their badge of belonging, and this permits them to start severing their emotional ties and reducing their dependence upon you.

This is a necessary and positive phase. What’s most important is that you remember this: It’s not personal; it’s developmental. It’s difficult but vital to remember that when your teen is acting out their adolescence, it’s all about their developmental process and it’s not at all about what you said, did or deserve.

Certainly some parents are abusive to their children, some parents don’t care and some parents never learned how to love or nurture a child. These parents may need professional help. Certainly parents can and do make mistakes and can act hurtfully, impulsively or inappropriately. But in most cases, parents do a pretty good job, and their heart is in the right place. Then they start to doubt themselves and their parenting skills when the going gets rough during adolescence. Has this happened to you?

Still Growing
Science is unraveling the biological reasons that teens act like teens. New research provides some explanations for previously puzzling aspects of adolescent behaviors.
For example, it turns out that teens' brains are still growing and developing and that they really are different from adult brains. These differences may account for (not excuse) some of the mood swings, impulsiveness, risk-taking, defiance, aggression and alcohol/drug and sexual experimentation that may characterize adolescence. "It seemed like a good idea at the time," a classic teenage excuse for bad choices, may be more a product of their unfinished brain wiring than any deliberate recklessness. Apparently, adolescent behavior is much more complicated than simply "raging hormones." Teenagers seem to have less wiring in the part of their brain that organizes and moderates behavior. Their brains are wired in a way that floods them with emotional responses to external events. Have you ever noticed this happening?

**Say What You Mean**

Another biological difference in a teenager's brain makes them more likely to misread facial expressions. This could explain and potentially cause problems in interpersonal relationships, especially between parents and their teens. If you don't explicitly tell them what you're feeling and wanting, they will most likely guess wrong.

Because their brain's wiring is still in process, adolescents may have special problems setting goals, establishing priorities, planning, organizing and controlling impulses. They may have serious difficulties seeing the long-term consequences of their short-term behaviors or evaluating risks they're taking. Can you see how this plays out in the behaviors, reactions and choices of your adolescent?

**Sleep Issues**

Also, have you ever wondered why your child loves to sleep in and why they can be so grumpy when they leave for school? It's because most teenagers suffer from sleep deprivation.

The average teenager needs nine hours and 15 minutes of sleep each night to be optimally efficient, but only gets seven and a half hours. Each day compounds the cumulative sleep deprivation deficit. Consequently, if your teen is not "filling up their tank" at night, they may be starting each day "running on empty." This affects their mood, ability to think and ability to make healthy choices. The best predictor of a teen's academic performance may not be their score on the SAT or other standardized test or their IQ, but whether they're getting enough REM sleep!

Understanding more about your teenager's still developing brain may help you release some of your hurt, resentment and confusion. It may also encourage you to give your child some extra grace, patience and compassion as they complete their passage from dependent child to independent adult.

*About the Author: Glenn Goldberg, J.D., R.C., was an adolescent specialist and parent coach. He is the author of *Embracing the Dance of Independence*, a unique four-CD parenting program designed for parents of adolescents. Goldberg is also the founder of GUTS, a nonprofit youth development agency and training center that has helped hundreds of teens improve their self-esteem, attitudes, behaviors and family relationships.*
Characteristics of Teenagers

**General Characteristics**

- Interests shift from solitary to group pursuits
- Having the right or “in” type of clothing becomes particularly important
- Vocational interests become more prominent and realistic
- Strong attitudes towards religious, ethnic, and racial groups begin to emerge
- Concern about social issues develop
- True sense of self begins to develop

**Physical Development**

- Rapid weight gain at beginning of adolescence; enormous appetite
- Sexual maturity, with accompanying physical and emotional changes
- Females usually about two years ahead of males; sometimes a period of glandular imbalance
- Bone growth completed; adult height reached; improved muscular coordination
- Rapid heart growth

**Characteristic Reactions**

- Going to extremes, emotional instability, and “know it all” attitude
- Return to habits of younger child (nail biting, tricks, impudence, day-dreaming)
- High interest in philosophical, ethical, and religious problems; search for ideals
- Preoccupation with acceptance by the social group; fear of ridicule and of being unpopular; over sensitivity; self-pity
- Strong identification with an admired adult
- Assertion of independence from family as a step toward adulthood
- High interest in physical attractiveness
- Females usually more interested in males than males in females, the result of earlier maturation of females

**Special Needs**

- Conformity with and acceptance by the peer group
- Adequate knowledge and understanding of sexual relationships and attitudes
- Adult guidance which is kindly, unobtrusive, and does not threaten the young person’s feeling of freedom
- The assurance of security; seek both dependence and independence
- Opportunities to make decisions and to earn some money
- Provision of constructive recreation and, if possible, a worthy cause
Talking To Your Teenager

Listen actively

- Be available. Make sure you have some relaxed, non-confronting conversation every day.
- Concentrate on what is being said. Make eye contact and show a genuine interest in what is being said.
- Listen between the lines to your teenager’s concerns and feelings, so you hear the feelings of frustration, anger, happiness, etc.

Talk with your teenager

- Use “I” messages or statements about how a specific behavior affects you rather than “you” messages, which criticize and condemn, creating a defensive reaction (e.g. "I feel angry when...").
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage responses. For example, “What do you think?” “What does it look like to you?” “How else could you handle the problem?” Be accepting of their ideas.
- Avoid name calling and put-down remarks. If you are extremely angry, wait until you calm down before talking to your teenager. “I'm angry right now; let's talk about it in 20 minutes.”
- Be courteous in tone of voice and avoid abruptness which may produce feelings of hostility in your teenager
- Remember, how you handle communication in your own life will be the most powerful.

Set consistent, firm, and reasonable limits

- Establish consequences that fit the situation and are meaningful for the young adult and the value system of the parents.
- Give as much freedom as the teenager is able to reasonably handle, and increase freedom when responsibility is shown.
- Choose limits that fit the age but have value. Example: drop bedtime but enforce your established curfew.
- Don’t panic when teens test the limit. Calmly enforce consequences for the behavior and make clear statements about your future expectations.
- Remember that how you handle consequences in your own life will be the most powerful teacher of all.

Promote a positive personality with your teenager

- Live together in mutual respect. As you do so, you and your young adult will be more trusting and less interested in denying each other’s rights.
- Focus on positive behavior. Notice and comment on efforts, contributions, and any movement toward cooperation. Minimize mistakes he or she makes.
- Let your teen learn from the logical consequences of living. Avoid a relationship based only on reward and punishment.
• Have the courage to be imperfect. Recognize your own limitations and don’t place unreasonable demands on yourself. In the same way, encourage your teen to have the courage to be imperfect and to live with limitations.

• Take your young adult seriously. Care about things that are important to them: friendships, art, music, school activities, books, movies, etc.

• Understand and accept the wonderful way your teen is developing.

Make sure your teenager is developing the capacity to make decisions and accept responsibility for their actions

• Understand and use decision-making strategies so that their choices are made by action rather than inaction or reaction. As decisions become more difficult and/or fine lines become blurred, more and more elaborate decision-making skills must be put into play.

• First give your teenager a voice, and, when appropriate, next give the participant a choice in matters that affect them. Parents need to suggest and help rather than direct and decide.

• Examine the potential consequences of choices: choosing, and then accepting the responsibility for the choices they make.

• Model decision making in your own life will be a valuable teaching tool. Explain how and why you made the decision. If you feel that you could use more information in this area, contact the guidance department for references.

Give continued emotional support; it helps teenagers withstand peer pressure

• Peer pressure is a reality, and the need for teens to conform is great. Finding importance and sense of belonging outside the home is a necessary step to maturity. To the teenager this conformity may mean making a decision totally different from his or her parents.

• Give support through eye contact, brief physical contact, and most importantly, time.

• Give more time, not less. When parents genuinely offer time, pressure is relieved and open communication and trust can occur. This can be a very meaningful time in your lives.

Know who your young adult’s friends are

• Accept the friendships, as long as you are certain that the friend in question is not influencing your child in a negative way (drugs, alcohol, sex, behavior in ways unacceptable to your family style). Negative responses usually encourage relationships of which you disapprove.

• Encourage your teen’s friends to come to your home so that you can get acquainted.

• Call other parents; often they share the same concerns.

• Develop an awareness of warning signs and symptoms of drug abuse.
Some of these are normal in a young adult and must be approached with concern rather than suspicion:

- Withdrawal from family and former friends
- Lack of interest in formerly favored hobbies, sports, or activities
- Extended periods of moodiness, irritability, depression, anxiety
- Frequent outbursts of temper and a generally resentful attitude
- Sudden interest in a new group of friends or new hangouts
- Persistent boredom and lack of motivation to do anything
- Noticeable drop in attention span, lack of concentration
- Vague or secretive attitude about friends and activities
- Stealing money or salable items from home
- Drop in performance levels at school
- Over-reaction to minor mishaps
- Loss of short-term memory
- Distort time

Practice as a parent

- Keep open communication with your young adult.
- Serve as responsible role model for your teen.
- Give your participant emotional support and a stable family life.
- Express your expectations regarding your teen’s use of alcohol and other drugs.

Communicate with other parents

- Make sure that parties are chaperoned.
- Let other parents know you expect alcoholic beverages will not be served.
- Find out when parties will be over.
- Know where your teenagers are.
- Learn what the school can do for you by providing counseling help and referral resources.
- Call your teenager’s guidance counselor if you suspect your participant has a problem.
Sample Activity Waiver

HOST COUNTRY ACTIVITY WAIVER

We, ________________________________ understand and agree that our son/daughter, ________________________________, may have the opportunity to engage in a wide variety of recreational, athletic, or other activities while on AFS organized activities, with host family members, on school activities or with friends and that there are risks associated with these activities. A list of examples of such activities is provided in this two page document. By signing this form, we hereby consent to our son/daughter participating in such activities and confirm that we will not hold the host family or AFS responsible for any harm or injury suffered by our child while participating in these types of activities.

We further understand and accept that if there are certain activities that our son/daughter should not engage in, it is our responsibility to inform AFS ________________________________ in writing that we do not authorize our son/daughter to engage in that specific type of activity and to advise our child that we have done so and that they are not authorized to engage in such activities while on the AFS Program. We also confirm that if we are unfamiliar with any of the activities our child might participate in, including but not limited to those listed below, we will take steps to ensure that we understand the scope of those activities and if we are not comfortable with those activities, we will inform AFS ________________________________ in writing that we withhold authorization for those activities.

We hereby release the host family and AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. (AFS), its employees, agents and affiliates (such as AFS national and local organizations) from and hold each of them harmless against, any and all liabilities, including but not limited to claims for negligence, that they may jointly or severally incur to us or our child, our heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns, in respect of any claim, suit, or cause of action, including legal fees and expenses of litigation, on account of any personal injury, bodily injury, death, loss of health, financial loss or damage to property directly or indirectly sustained by us or our son/daughter as a result of our son/daughter’s participation in the types of activities described in this release or other similar activities. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this release does not apply to intentional wrongdoing or gross negligence on the part of the host family, or AFS, its employees or volunteers. We further understand that the list of activities below does not constitute a promise by AFS or by the host family that our child will have the opportunity to engage in those activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print name</th>
<th>Signature – Parent/Legal Guardian</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Name</th>
<th>Signature – AFS Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

List of Activities including but not limited to:
- **Motorized Activities (not requiring a license):** ATV (operate or ride), Riding Lawn Mower/Tractor (only on private property), Snowmobile (only on private property)
- **Outdoor Activities such as:** Biking, Hang Gliding, Horseback Riding, Rock Climbing (indoor/outdoor)
- **Team and/or School Sports such as:** All School Sports
- **Water Sports such as:** Canoeing, Rafting, Scuba Diving, Swimming (pool, lake, river, ocean), Water Skiing
- **Winter Sports such as:** Cross-country Skiing, Downhill Skiing, Sledding/Toboggan, Snowboarding, Snow Tubing
- **Other Activities such as:** Caving/Spelunking, Paintball, Ropes Courses, Shooting (targets, trap, etc.)
Cultural Iceberg

Culture is a very complex topic, so it helps to think about it like an iceberg. Just like an iceberg, some parts of culture are visible, like food, clothing, and language. Other cultural aspects are harder to pinpoint and exist under the surface, things like values, beliefs, and norms. These are what we call the “hidden dimensions” of culture.

About 10% of culture is visible; the other 90% lies outside of our conscious awareness. The 90% below the water line are all those hidden aspects of our lives. Like an iceberg, these hidden dimensions may likely surprise you at any time as you get to know your participant.
Culture

“...is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one category of people from another.”

Geert Hofstede

“...refers to the total way of life for a particular group of people. It includes [what] a group of people thinks, says, does and makes - its customs, language, material artifacts and shared systems of attitudes and feelings.”

Robert Kohls

Culture...

• Is shared by all or almost members of a group
• Is passed on from generation to generation
• Shapes our behaviors and structures our perception
• Is constantly, but slowly, changing

Generalizations and Stereotypes

Generalizations

The word generalization means “categorizing all members of the same group as having similar characteristics.” Generalizations are based on considerable research or many observations in a wide range of situations. Generalizations are flexible and open to new information. They can lead to increased curiosity and awareness and improved cross-cultural relationships.

Stereotypes

The word stereotype refers to “categorizing all members of a group as having the same characteristics.” Stereotypes may or may not be based on tangible facts and can be positive as well as negative. For example, both “Asians are good students” and “Americans are superficial” are stereotypes, despite the fact that one may be considered positive and the other negative. Stereotypes tend to be inflexible and resistant to new information. They can, and often do, lead to prejudice and discrimination.

Flexibility is the key difference between the two. Stereotypes do not leave room for exceptions or new information, whereas generalizations serve as a basis for comparison and a springboard for further intercultural exploration and understanding.

Adapted from 52 Activities for Exploring Cultural Differences, Donna M. Stringer and Patricia A. Cassiday, 2003, Intercultural Press.
## Contrasting Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.S. Culture</th>
<th>Another Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Perception of Self</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Concept of oneself</td>
<td>An individual unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. How one should act</td>
<td>Solve own problems, develop own opinions, self-reliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Perception of the World</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Relationship to nature</td>
<td>Humans are separate from nature and must change/master environment to suit human needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Concept of time</td>
<td>Moves quickly, one must keep up with it, time is a moving river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Concept of Achievement</td>
<td>Fulfillment in personal achievement which is largely a matter of individual determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Psychology of motivation</td>
<td>Competition is primary method of motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Form of relating to others</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Nature of personality</td>
<td>Personality can be fragmented, need not accept totality of another in order to work with him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Status in person</td>
<td>Egalitarian ideal, treat others as equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Resolution of differences</td>
<td>Face confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Form of Activity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Importance of “doing”</td>
<td>Doing and being active is highly valued; what a person does is important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marian Bean and Judy Case UNC Charlotte*
U.S. American Values

1. Attitude Toward Age
   - Emphasize physical beauty and youth
   - Fire older people to hire younger people for less money
   - Judge a worker’s worth based on production, not seniority

American View: The American emphasis on concrete achievements and “doing” means that age is not highly valued, for the older you are, the less you can accomplish. Age is also suspect because new is usually better in American culture, and the elderly are generally out of touch with what’s new.

2. Concept of Fate and Destiny
   - You can be whatever you want to be
   - Where there’s a will, there’s a way
   - The American Dream is rags to riches

American View: The concept of self-determination negates much of the influence of fate and destiny. Parents tell their children they can be whatever they want to be when they grow up. There are few givens in life, and people have little sense of external limits. Lack of success is their own fault.

3. View of Human Nature
   - Courts consider a person innocent until he or she is proven guilty
   - People should be given the benefit of the doubt
   - If left alone, people do the right thing
   - We need to discover how a vicious killer “went wrong”

American View: People are considered basically and inherently good. If someone does an evil deed, we look for an explanation, the reason why the person turned bad. People can and should be trusted, and we are fairly open to strangers, and willing to accept them.

4. Attitude Toward Change
   - New is better
   - A better way can always be found; things can always be improved
   - Just because we’ve always done it that way doesn’t make it right

American View: Change is considered positive, probably because Americans believe in the march of progress and the pursuit of perfection. Improvements will always move us closer and closer to perfection. Traditions can be a guide, but they are not inherently superior.
5. **Attitude Toward Taking Risks**
   - A low level of personal savings is typical
   - You can always start over
   - Nothing ventured, nothing gained
   - A high level of personal bankruptcies is common

**American View:**
There will always be enough opportunity to go around, so taking risks involves no real danger. For the truly ambitious, failure is only temporary. Experimentation, trial, and error are important ways to learn or to improve your product or service.

6. **Concept of Suffering and Misfortune**
   - People rush to cheer up a friend who’s depressed
   - If you’re unhappy, take a pill or see a psychiatrist
   - Be happy

**American View:** Because we are ultimately in control of our lives and destiny, we have no excuse for unhappiness or misfortune. If you are suffering or unhappy, then just do whatever it takes to be happy again. If you’re depressed, it’s because you have chosen to be.

7. **Concept of Face**
   - It’s important to tell it like it is; be straight with people
   - Confrontation is sometimes necessary to clear the air
   - Honesty is the best policy

**American View:**
In individualist cultures, no premium is put on saving face because people can take care of themselves. What other people think is not crucial to survival or success. We can say what we think without worrying about hurting people’s feelings, and we likewise appreciate directness.

8. **Source of Self-Esteem/Self-Worth**
   - People judge you by how much money you make
   - First question at a party is, “What do you do?”
   - Material possessions are a measure of success

**American View:**
In an individualist culture, you are what you’ve achieved; that is, you create your own worth rather than receiving it by virtue of birth, position, seniority, or longevity. Your self-esteem comes from what you have done to earn self-esteem.

9. **Concept of Equality**
   - People try to treat everyone the same
   - While jogging, the President stops at McDonald’s for morning coffee
   - Putting on airs is frowned upon
**American View:** In a strong reaction to the repressive class structure in Europe, Americans created a culture virtually built around egalitarianism: the notion that no one is superior to anyone else because of birth, power, fame, or wealth. We are not all the same, but we are all of equal value.

### 10. Attitude Toward Formality

- Telling someone to help themselves to what’s in the refrigerator is common
- Using first names with people you’ve just met is fine
- Using titles like “Dr.” for someone with a Ph.D is presumptuous

**American View:** Because of the strong egalitarian ethos, Americans tend to be casual and informal in social and professional interactions. Informality is also more necessary in a mobile society where people are always meeting new people. We don’t stand on ceremony, nor do we use titles or rank in addressing each other.

### 11. Degree of Realism

- Things will get better
- Bad things happen for a reason
- It can’t get any worse
- Tag line of fairy tales: “They lived happily ever after”

**American View:** Largely because of the notion that the individual is in control, Americans are generally optimistic. We don’t see things the way they are, but as better than they are, particularly if they’re not so good. We feel it’s important to be positive and that there is no reason to be negative.

### 12. Attitude Toward Doing

- Doing is preferred over talking
- The absentminded professor, the ivory tower reflects anti-intellectualism
- Be practical
- Arts are an adornment of life but not central to it

**American View:** Individuals survive because they get things done, generally on their own. Words and talk are suspect and cheap; they don’t put food on the table or a roof over your head. Pursuits not directly related to the creation of concrete results, e.g. academia and the arts, are less highly valued. What is practical and pragmatic is favored over what is beautiful and inspiring.

### 13. View of the Natural World

- Building dams to control rivers
- Seeding clouds to produce rain
- Erecting earthquake-proof buildings
- Spending billions annually on weather prediction

**American View:** The natural world is a kind of mechanism or machine that can be studied and known and whose workings can be predicted, manipulated, and ultimately controlled. It is not to be feared.

Tips for Adjusting:
The First Days and Beyond

In the first days after Arrival, your participant may be tired/hyper, scared/fearless, insecure/overconfident, quiet/talkative, or somewhere in between. This is not the sum total of the child you will host all year!

What to do...

- Act naturally; be yourself.
- Don’t assume anything.
- Explain the “obvious” (see Participant and Host Family Questionnaire on page 86).
- Speak very, very slowly and clearly.
- Integrate the AFS participant into your family so that he or she becomes a fully functioning member of the family.
- Break the ice. Bring a small gift to give to the participant upon meeting him or her (e.g. a journal, balloon, t-shirt from your local area, key to the house, etc.)
- Ask to see pictures of the participant’s home and family.
- Show the participant a yearbook from the high school he or she will be attending and a course selection book, if available.
- Be aware that your participant may not be accustomed to riding in a car on a regular basis and/or for long distances. He or she may need a reminder about seatbelt use and car-sickness may occur. If so, provide your participant with some tips on how to avoid/deal with it (don’t read or do any other activity in the car that narrows your focus to one spot inside the car; keep your eyes on some point in the far distance; sit in the front seat; close your eyes; open the window and breathe in fresh air; etc.)
Typical Challenges

Language
- Even if the participant’s English is good, concentrated listening is difficult, extremely tiring, and can actually cause headaches!
- Fatigue – from the journey, from the time change, from encountering so many new things and people, and speaking a non-native language – is normal.
- Participants will fade in and out of conversations.
- Once again, speak very slowly, even more slowly than you think is necessary.
- Watch for slang or idioms that are clear to us, but totally foreign to our students. For example: “That’s a bunch of garbage” or “hop to it!” or “take that chair.”
- Be very clear with expectations. Don’t assume that the participant understood you the first time.

School
- Before school starts, take your participant to school and show him or her around (how lockers work; where the cafeteria, library, bathrooms, and the bus stop are located; etc.)
- Expect great anxiety (who to sit with at lunch, how to get from class to class, meeting American kids, how to make friends, the language, not used to electives, changing classrooms, etc.) Reassure participant that this is normal and will pass.
- Encourage participants to stick with classes that seem hard at first, otherwise boredom will set in later on.
- Let them know teachers often stay after school to assist students.
- Make a guidance appointment if you haven’t already.
- Sometimes a participant has been accepted by school but the Guidance Department isn’t aware, so now is a good time to track down the paperwork.
- Some schools require you to register your participant and provide a passport. Explain that this is not required for exchange students, but a copy of the passport can be made when your participant arrives.
- Your participant will bring the Health Form Addendum, which must go to the school nurse.
- We have sent immunization requirements with all host family information, but you should email your participant to make sure he or she has received required immunizations.
- Students will bring updated school records, which should be brought to school, as well.
- Give each teacher a letter explaining that the student is an AFS participant before classes start.

Sports
- Participants may not be used to rigorous tryouts, which may start the day after arrival.
- Sports physicals must be scheduled and are not covered by the AFS Medical Plan (see page 53 for more information).
- Participants may not be aware that they have to go to every practice.
- Participants may not be aware of sports “seasons.”
- Let the coach know what to expect (limited comprehension, need to speak slowly, differences in eye contact does not equal a bad attitude, etc.)
What can you do to raise your student’s spirits in low periods?

- Encourage your participant to spend time in the communal areas of your home, not in his or her bedroom.
- Get your participant out and about – go for walks, bike rides, to the grocery store, to the library to get a library card, etc.
- Play simple card games or rent videos with closed captions in English.
- Encourage participants to talk about life back home but discourage a lot of emails and phone calls home.
- Help them find something to occupy their time that is similar to something they like to do at home.
- Make sure they establish good sleeping habits. They should not over-sleep or sleep too little.
- Encourage physical exercise, as this releases endorphins and can help boost your student’s mood.
- Make sure your participant is enrolled in at least one elective, and encourage involvement in extra-curricular activities to help him or her make friends at school.
- Help your participant seek out opportunities to help others. Taking your student’s mind off his or her own situation will actually lessen the homesickness.
- Encourage your participant to be in contact with his or her Liaison.

For additional ideas on how to help your participant adjust to life with your family, please review and discuss Real Talk for AFS Brothers and Sisters on page 84. In addition, please contact your AFS Liaison with concerns or questions early on, and encourage your participant to do the same.
Culture Survey

This activity is based on Mr. Geert Hofstede’s research on cultural differences and is taken from “Promoting a European Dimension of Intercultural Learning - Developing School Materials,” EFIL Seminars, Vienna, 17 – 20 April, and Lisbon, 26 – 29 June, 1997.

With every statement circle the number which describes the country in which you would feel most comfortable.

I feel most comfortable in a country where...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People in their groups have strong and lasting relationships.</th>
<th>1 2 3 4 5</th>
<th>People choose their friends because of similar interests or sympathy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communal spirit and social solidarity predominate.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Loneliness and freedom predominate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People concentrate mainly on not losing face and in maintaining that of others.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>People concentrate on coming up to their own views and standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion is granted because of loyalty and age.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>Promotion is granted because of performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A superior who does not make use of his or her power in order to get a job for a member of the family in need is regarded as immoral.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>A superior who makes use of his or her power in order to get a job for a member of the family in need is regarded as immoral.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result: ______ x 5 = _____ - 25 = _____

Hofstede is a native of the Netherlands and acquired his doctorate in the field of social psychology there. Beginning in 1966, he undertook a massive research project involving a major multinational corporation identified only by the pseudonym HERMES. In the course of this project, some 116,000 questionnaires were completed by HERMES employees at all levels (unskilled workers to top managers) located in 50 developed and less developed nations.

The questionnaires were administered in the language of each country; a total of 20 languages were employed. The principal difference among the respondents was culture; all of them were otherwise similar because they were carefully matched for other characteristics such as age, sex, and job category and all worked for the same corporation.

Using this unprecedented quantity of data, Hofstede was able to distinguish four key elements, or “dimensions”, of culture: Individualism, Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Masculinity. In other words, Hofstede specified four major dimensions along which the dominant value systems in the 50 countries can be ordered and described. A fifth dimension, Long-term Orientation, was added later after additional research.

For more information and to automatically compare where two cultures lie on these dimensions, see http://www.geert-hofstede.com.
### Individualism Index

Use your score from the *Culture Survey* on the previous page to find out which country you most closely identify with regarding ideas about individualism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<td>Brazil (BRA)</td>
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<td>Ecuador (ECA)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic World (ARA)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Guatemala (GUA)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goals and Expectations
AFS Travel Checklist for U.S. Hosted Participants

Below is a list of documents that AFS participants hosted in the U.S. will need to have in their possession when they travel abroad. These documents must be kept in a secure place and a copy should be retained at home or entrusted to your AFS volunteer for safekeeping. Ensure that you first obtain approval for the planned travel, if required.

___ SEVIS DS-2019 (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Visa Status)
If traveling outside of the U.S., be sure that your DS-2019 is endorsed by an AFS Responsible Officer. If you do not have the Travel Validation by Responsible Officer box completed (bottom right box of the DS form), mail the form with a self-addressed, pre-paid courier envelope – to the AFS-USA Office, 120 Wall St. 4th Floor, New York, NY 10005 Attn: Participant Support Department. Ph: 1-800 237-4636 option 3. For domestic travel, carry a photocopy of your DS-2019, and treat this as you would an original. Please note: The process for DS-2019 endorsement of CBYX and YES participants is different. See instructions starting on page 66.

___ PASSPORT
Your passport MUST be valid at least six months beyond the conclusion of your visit or after your program end date. Before traveling abroad, contact your country’s embassy or consulate in the U.S. to renew your expired passport. You can obtain up-to-date information on passport renewal at http://www.embassy.org/embassies. For domestic travel, carry a copy of the photo and visa pages of your passport.

___ U.S. VISA
Check your J-1 U.S. visa stamp inside your passport. Has your visa stamp expired? Under entries: M is for multiple, 2 for double, and S is for single. Single entry visa is not be eligible for automatic revalidation, as it is presumed cancelled rather than expired. A participant with an expired multiple entry visa stamp and a valid I-94 card may have his or her visa automatically revalidated when upon reentry to the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or one of the adjacent islands. Please read carefully the conditions regarding Automatic Revalidation of US Visa in the AFS wiki or http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_1441.html.

___ I-94 ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE RECORD
Print out a copy of your I-94 record for presentation to the immigration officer upon reentry to the U.S. https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html

___ STUDENT ID and MEDICAL ID CARDS
You will receive Student ID and Medical ID cards within the first several months of your stay. You are advised to carry them with you at all times. Your ID cards contain important contact information. You will be required to present your Medical ID card if you have to visit a health care provider in case of an illness or accident while on a trip. Be sure to contact the AFS-USA Office if you are in need of a replacement ID card, Attn: Participant Support Dept. Ph: 1-800-237-4636 option 3.

___ FOR SPONSORED PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ONLY
Sponsored program participants may not travel outside of the US without explicit approval from the US Department of State. See specific instructions on page 66.

___ VISA(S) TO COUNTRY(IES) TO BE VISITED
It is the responsibility of participants to contact the consulate or check the consular website and make sure that they have the proper visa and documentation to be admitted to the country they intend to visit. For example, border authorities generally require foreign visitors to present a valid passport and visa, roundtrip airline ticket, proof of medical insurance, and for those less than 18 years old, a notarized Parental Consent form.

Foreign Consular Offices in the United States: http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco
Embassy of Canada: http://www.cic.gc.ca
Embassy of Mexico: http://www.embassyofmexico.org
This agreement governs and informs you about your rights and responsibilities as an AFS Host Family. Please read this agreement thoroughly before you sign and retain a copy of the signed agreement for your records. As a host parent your signature at the bottom of this form indicates that you have read and understand the terms of this agreement, the AFS policies described in this agreement and that you and your family members agree to abide by them. **This agreement must be read, signed, and dated at the time of application.**

**HOST FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Our family agrees to host an AFS Exchange Participant. We agree to an in home interview with an AFS representative. We acknowledge receipt of the U.S. State Department Code of Federal Regulations Title 22 Part 62—Exchange Visitor Program. We understand that all members of the household 18 years of age and older who will reside in our household for more than 10 days must complete a criminal background check.

As a host family, we have a right to:

1. Expect the AFS Participant to be a full family member inasmuch as it is possible.
2. Be assigned an AFS Liaison who will be in regular contact with us and with our participant to monitor progress.
3. Contact the AFS Liaison for help with adjustment or other issues.
4. Have access to AFS Staff through a 24-hour emergency number.

As a host family, we agree to:

1. Provide necessary information required for a criminal background check for all members of the family 18 years and older who will be residing in the household for more than ten days, prior to an AFS Participant moving into our home.
2. Provide necessary information required for a criminal background check for any family member that turns 18 years of age after the time the first criminal background check was completed and during the course of the participant living in our home.
3. Provide a safe and nurturing environment, and treat the participant as a member of our family.
4. Provide the participant with his or her own bed (not a convertible or inflatable bed), adequate storage space for the participant's clothes and personal belongings, reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house, and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency.
5. Ensure that if the participant shares a bedroom, it is with only one non-adult individual of the same gender.
6. Provide the participant with three quality meals per day (including lunches and meals eaten as a family in restaurants).
7. Provide access to a fully functioning telephone and access to email in our home that the participant may use to contact his or her natural parents and/or in the event of an emergency.
8. Accept basic, everyday expenses incurred by having the participant in our home.
9. Provide the participant with transportation to and from school, and cover any associated costs.
10. Complete a mandatory online host family orientation prior to the participant's arrival in our home.
11. Attend orientations and activities held for host families as required.
12. Make arrangements for our participant to attend AFS orientations and other AFS events as required.
13. Ensure that our family and our participant have contact with the AFS Liaison or other designated AFS Volunteer on at least a monthly basis and be as flexible as possible in arranging time in our schedule and that of our participant to meet with or talk with our AFS Liaison or other designated AFS Volunteer. Two of the contacts with our family must be in-person (at least once during the fall semester and once during the spring semester). The first contact with our participant must be in-person.
14. Ensure that an AFS Volunteer or Staff is able to make arrangements with us to visit our home within 60 days from the start of our AFS hosting experience or within 30 days and every 30 days thereafter if we are a welcome family or temporary family.

15. Permit an in-home visit by AFS Staff during the time that we are hosting our participant. If requested, we will ensure that the AFS Staff is able to meet with our family and our participant.

16. Help our participant have a successful experience in school and seek help from the AFS Liaison if the participant is experiencing unusual academic difficulties.

17. Encourage the participant to limit communication with home-country friends and family as recommended in the AFS-USA communication guidelines stated in the Host Family Handbook.

18. Abide by guidelines for natural family visits and contact our AFS Liaison immediately should a natural family member propose to visit the participant during the exchange period.

19. Make certain that the participant’s government issued documents (i.e., passports, DS–2019 Form) are not removed from his/her possession.

20. Always notify the AFS Liaison (or, in the event that the liaison is not available, AFS Staff or another AFS Volunteer) in a timely manner if:
   a. Our family and/or the participant is/are away from home for more than 24 hours, and provide contact details in case of an emergency.
   b. A serious issue arises, including but not limited to: serious illness, injury, or hospitalization; arrest or detention by authorities; violation of AFS rules regarding driving, hitchhiking, or use of illegal drugs; or potentially harmful behavior including alcohol consumption.
   c. We learn that our participant has had unexcused absences from school, has missed classes, or is having other academic problems.
   d. We are considering hosting any other exchange participant, even if on a temporary basis, so that the appropriate written consent can be obtained from our family, the participants and their families prior to the second participant moving into our home.
   e. There are any material changes in the status of our family or the participant, including, but not limited to changes in address, finances, employment and criminal charges or arrests of the participant or any member of our household.
   f. Contact from the natural family (via phone, letter, or email) interferes with the participant’s adaptation process.

As a host family, we understand and accept that:

1. We are not allowed to host an AFS Participant to whom we are related.
2. We will not receive any monetary payments or other incentives to host a participant.
3. The participant will come with spending money for optional activities or purchases during the exchange period.
4. We are not the legal guardians of the participant.
5. We may sign forms for school-related activities by crossing out the words “Parent/Guardian” and writing in “Host Family” to make the relationship clear.
6. We must work through the proper AFS channels to obtain the signature of the natural parents or guardians in the participant’s home country for any other documents requiring natural parent or legal guardian signature.
7. AFS has the sole responsibility for determining host family placements.
8. AFS will assist our family and our participant in having a successful hosting experience. However, AFS Volunteers have the authority to move the participant to another family if the AFS Volunteer or AFS Staff believes that doing so is in the best interests of the participant and/or the best interests of our family.
9. As part of their selection process, the participant and natural parents have agreed to AFS rules and guidelines regulating participant behavior, as outlined in the Host Family Handbook.
10. AFS is an academic program and participants are required to attend school, complete assignments, and abide by all school policies.
11. Host families and participants are not authorized to act as agents for AFS for any purpose.
12. AFS does not carry liability insurance for individual participants or host families and is not responsible for claims for damages or injuries.
13. The participant has a right to legal representation if questioned or detained by police. In such a situation, we should contact our local AFS Volunteer or AFS Staff immediately so that they can assist our participant in arranging for an attorney.

As a host family, we have read and are aware of the specifics of the AFS Participant Medical plan and understand and accept that:

1. The AFS Participant is covered by the AFS Participant Medical Plan.
2. Claims should be submitted, preferably by the medical service provider, directly to Global Medical Management, Inc. as outlined in the AFS Medical Plan.
3. The AFS Participant Medical Plan does not cover the following:
   a. non-accident-related dental care.
   b. routine eye exams, glasses, or contact lenses.
   c. routine physicals (including sports physicals), preventative care, vaccinations, and immunizations.
   d. pre-existing conditions.
4. If the participant requires care as described above that is not covered by the AFS Participant Medical Plan, we will notify the AFS Liaison to arrange for natural family consent and payment.

In signing this agreement we confirm that all information and statements given in the AFS Host Family Application Forms A-F, the Criminal Background Checks and any additional supplemental information provided to AFS is completely accurate and true to the best of our knowledge.

I/We also acknowledge that I/we are to immediately report to AFS any material changes in the status of our family or the participant, including, but not limited to changes in address, finances, employment and criminal charges or arrests of members of our household.

Further, we understand that we may be disqualified from becoming or remaining an AFS Host Family if any member of the household conceals, falsifies, or fails to disclose or update any material information during and after the application process.

Finally, I/we understand that the execution of this agreement does not result in, either implicitly or explicitly, an employment contract and we agree that our participation in AFS is strictly voluntary under this agreement.

This agreement must be signed by one host parent and reviewed with all potential host family members aged 18 years and older who will reside in the home more than 10 days during the course of the program. By signing this agreement I acknowledge that all family members responsible for the care and supervision of the participant understand and agree to abide by the contents of this agreement.

________________________________________  ___________________________________________  ________________________________
Print Host Parent Name                        Signature                                      Date
Participation Agreement Terms and Conditions

Read this form thoroughly before signing. Please retain a copy of the document for your records.

Parties to this agreement:

AFS-USA, INC. AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS, INC.
120 Wall Street 4th Floor 71 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10004 New York, NY 10010

Participant Name:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRINT FULL NAME (First/Middle/Last)</th>
<th>CITY</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>ZIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN: PRINT FULL NAME

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN: PRINT FULL NAME

AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation headquartered in New York, New York (with its affiliates, collectively referred to as AFS). Through intercultural learning programs AFS assists participating students, families, volunteers, and community members in acquiring the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully in a culturally diverse, increasingly interdependent world.

AFS programs operate in participating countries through independent affiliate organizations. Through these organizations AFS arranges placements in a hosting school and family (for Homestay programs). Through unaffiliated service providers AFS arranges round-trip international transportation and medical care and special transport should emergency situations arise.

In the United States AFS programs are operated by AFS-USA, Inc. The following Terms and Conditions identify the framework under which AFS will operate programs with the cooperation of participants and their parents.

We, the undersigned participant and parent(s)/legal guardian(s), agree to abide by the following Terms and Conditions of Participation:

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION**

1. We agree to pay AFS-USA the Program Fee based on the attached payment schedule.

2. We understand that AFS-USA reserves the right to impose financial penalties for late receipt of payments of the Program Fee. We understand that students whose Program Fee is not paid in full will not be permitted to depart on programs under any circumstances.

   If our son/daughter decides to withdraw from the program less than 60 days before the program begins, and if this decision is for any reason other than those indicated in 3 (a), (b), (c), or (d) on the attached payment schedule, we agree to pay AFS-USA a non-refundable cancellation fee equal to 20% of the full Program Fee. If our son/daughter decides to rollover to a different AFS program the 20% cancellation fee will be applied to that program fee. (NOTE: Does not apply to CBYX, YES, NSLI Scholarship recipients as all fees paid up until the point of the scholarship being awarded will be refunded)

3. If our son/daughter decides to withdraw from the program prior to the date the program begins, we will be refunded the full Program Fee, minus any late-payment penalties or cancellation fees described above. Any refund of the $500 Fee Deposit will be determined by the policy described in paragraph 3 on the attached schedule.

4. We understand that after our son/daughter begins an AFS program, the full Program Fee for that program is non-refundable.

5. We understand that AFS will send all participants information outlining the visa processes for their respective programs but it is the participant’s responsibility to cover the costs of obtaining visas and/or any other required travel or entry documents. We understand that visa related fees are not covered by AFS Program Fee. We further recognize that visa regulations and fees are established by government authorities who reserve the right to make changes at any time and that AFS cannot intercede or revoke decisions made by
these authorities. AFS is not responsible for any changes in requirements or fees that occur throughout the visa application process and/or after arrival in the host country.

6. We understand that AFS sets the Program Fee based on financial analysis of all anticipated expenses at the time of planning. We accept that AFS reserves the right to increase the Program Fee if AFS must pay unanticipated increased costs.

7. AFS reserves the right to cancel program participation up to seven days prior to departure and not provide a replacement situation should AFS be unable to place our son or daughter in a host family or host school. If this occurs, AFS will refund all Fee payments previously paid to AFS by us.

SAFETY AND SUPPORT

8. AFS strives to promote a positive learning experience but cannot guarantee the health and safety of participants. We understand that while on the program, and in the hosting country, participants must adhere to the internal travel guidelines of the AFS organization in the host country and where appropriate, obtain approval for independent travel from the local or national AFS official prior to formulating any definite arrangements. It is understood that participants may take part in sports or activities in which the participant has not previously engaged or which are not available in our country and by signing this Agreement we hereby consent to such sports or activities. We understand that the visitor the participant, we agree to obtain permission in advance from the AFS national office in the hosting country. We also agree to abide by the hosting country regulations regarding the timing and duration of the visit. We understand that the AFS host country or host family is not required to consent to a visit. In addition, we agree not to make any lodging or other impositions on the host family during the visit.

10. It is understood that while on the program, participants will not drive a car or any other vehicle requiring a license according to local laws, nor will participants initiate actions in order to acquire a license. It is understood that failure to comply is cause for termination from the program and early return to the home country.

11. It is understood that participants will assume the program responsibilities and requirements identified by AFS for the assigned program including orientation activities arranged by AFS prior to departure from the home country, during the stay abroad, and after returning home. For school-based year and semester programs participants agree to attend school and assume course work responsibilities in accordance with the guidelines of the hosting school. Disregard or violation of these responsibilities and requirements, including expulsion from school, is cause for termination from the program and early return to the home country.

12. It is understood that AFS in the hosting country makes the final decision on acceptance and placement. AFS retains the sole right to make host family placements or replacements as AFS determines necessary in the host country and that AFS may place the participant in more than one host family during the program and that participants will accept a placement with a family of any race, creed, or color. We understand that AFS is not obligated to and may not provide another placement opportunity if the original placement made by AFS is not accepted by us. We understand that an accepted status by AFS is not an assurance that a visa will be granted and, therefore, that the candidate can travel to a specific destination with AFS.

Host families are screened in accordance with AFS guidelines. Support from AFS volunteers or staff will be available to participants and host families throughout their experiences, however, it is understood that AFS does not supervise the manner and means by which host families fulfill their function as hosts, and that host families are not authorized to act for and are not the agents of AFS for any purpose. AFS has no responsibility or liability for any claims for damages or injuries claimed to have been caused by the acts or omissions of host family members.

13. Support from AFS volunteers and staff will be available to participants throughout their experience, however, we understand that AFS does not supervise the manner or means by which participants fulfill their functions as participants, and that during the AFS program participants are not authorized to act for and are not the agents of AFS for any purpose.

It is understood that AFS has no responsibility or liability for any claims for damages or injuries claimed to have been caused by the acts or omissions of participants while on a program, and that the prosecution of any claims for damages or injuries suffered by participants while on a program is the sole responsibility of the participant and his or her parents. AFS, upon our request, will assist in recommending possible legal counsel. However, AFS has no obligation to defend participants against claims based on such acts or omissions and will not provide such a defense.

14. Laws on drug use in most countries are severe and may carry lengthy imprisonment or death penalties. We understand and agree that AFS participants are subject to the laws of their hosting country and community and that AFS participants agree to abide by the laws of the hosting country and community; that neither AFS nor the national government of the participant's citizenship has the ability to protect the individual from arrest or punishment with respect to involvement with illegal substances or any other illegal activities. We understand that in the event of legal proceedings related to such offenses or other legal matters, we are responsible for any legal fees and costs. We understand that involvement with the use of drugs for non-medical purposes is grounds for early return.

Participants are subject to laws of their hosting country and community with regard to the purchase and consumption of alcoholic beverages; in addition, AFS expects participants to demonstrate respect for local customs regarding responsible consumption of alcoholic beverages. Any abuse of alcoholic drinks, such as binge drinking, and inappropriate behavior related to drinking alcohol is not allowed while on an AFS program. Should participants abuse alcohol or binge drink, they can potentially place themselves or others in danger. This behavior cannot be tolerated on the AFS program and is grounds for an early return. Any arrest or suspension from school for alcohol use is also grounds for an early return.
15. Program Termination

a) It is understood that AFS has the right to cancel or suspend a program at any time if, in the sole judgment of AFS, the conditions in the hosting country are such that participants' safety may be in jeopardy while traveling to or living in such country. Should we have concerns with respect to conditions in a particular hosting country, we understand that we should contact AFS, which will provide us with any information available to AFS, or refer us to the local governmental agency responsible for foreign affairs. Should circumstances which AFS determines as potentially dangerous develop within the host country during the program, AFS would arrange to return participants home.

b) AFS also reserves the right to cancel an individual's participation and to return the individual home early if she or he violates the provisions of these Terms and Conditions or develops personal behavior or pursues actions which in the sole judgment of AFS would not be in the best interest of the participant or of AFS. Examples: a participant's driving a car (see Condition 10), is cause for an early return to the home country; a participant's abuse of alcoholic beverages, or use or involvement with drugs for non-medicinal purposes (see Condition 14) are cause for an early return to the home country.

Information about a participant on a social media or other public websites about activities such as driving, involvement with the use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes, or other dangerous behaviors may also be cause for an early return. Violating host-country travel policies or other policies established for a participant's safety may also be cause for an early return to the home country.

c) If a participant, with or without our agreement, decides not to complete the AFS program he or she will be released from the program and will not be permitted to remain in the hosting country. We understand that program services will be forfeited for the remainder of the program period, including domestic transportation to the international point of departure. The participant will be provided by AFS with a ticket for immediate return to the participant's home country excluding domestic transportation to the international point of departure. Transportation will not be subject to substitution or postponement.

d) AFS reserves the right to terminate an individual's participation and to return the individual home early if he or she develops or is already in a physical, medical, or psychological condition that in AFS' judgment substantially interferes with his or her continued participation in the AFS program responsibilities, or if in the opinion of medical professional(s) the patient should be returned to their home country for ongoing treatment and care.

We understand that the health certificate(s) submitted with the program application must be true and complete without any errors or omissions. If there is any medical incident (including but not limited to a change in medication dosage or beginning or ending a physical or mental health treatment plan) which occurs after the application is submitted, but before departure for the AFS program participation, AFS will report such incident to AFS immediately, in writing. AFS reserves the right to make determinations on the suitability of a participant to take part in an AFS program and reserves the right to cancel or delay program participation prior to departure when, in the sole judgment of AFS, participation would not be in the best interest of the participant or AFS. We understand that errors and omissions on the health certificate(s) will jeopardize the participant's placement and may result in termination of an individual's participation prior to departure and/or return to the home country.

It is understood that in situations such as illustrated by these examples, the Program Fee is non-refundable. In connection with any early return decision, AFS reserves the right to replace the return portion of the international travel ticket with a one-way ticket of limited time duration to the home country.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

16. We understand that participation is assigned for one AFS program and that participants will remain in their host community for the duration of the program and will not leave prior to conclusion of the program, nor travel between home and host community during the program. It is understood that participants will return to their home country at the conclusion of the program.

17. We agree to pay for travel arrangements and assume costs incurred between home and the points of departure and return withi n the home country, as established by AFS. We also understand that immigration laws impose restrictions and obligations on participants and program sponsors and that AFS is obliged in many host countries, for different reasons, not to allow participants to remain in the host country after release from or termination of the program, and, therefore, requires standardized travel arrangements ensuring that participants depart the host country once the program concludes. We understand and agree that participants being hosted in one of these countries must return home promptly at the end of their participation in the program.

18. We agree to abide by the departure and return dates, travel arrangements, modes of travel and itinerary determined by AFS or appointed agent of AFS to and from the hosting country. We understand that failure to abide by such dates and arrangements will result in forfeiture of program services (to include transit assistance).

AFS will consider changes to the return portion of the international travel in exceptional cases, but cannot guarantee that requested changes can be accommodated. A minimum fee of $500, or the actual cost of the change, whichever is greater, will be charged for any such changes.

19. We agree to reimburse AFS for any additional travel or other costs incurred because a participant fails to comply with document requirements, pertinent travel conditions, and responsibilities or because of inappropriate action on the part of the participant.

20. We understand and agree to the following terms concerning transportation:

RESPONSIBILITY
In the selection of carriers (land, sea and air transportation) by AFS every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the carriers selected meet the standards of competence prevalent in the local community.

When AFS arranges transport for participants, AFS is not responsible or liable for any loss, damage, or injury to property or person resulting from the provision of travel services or transport.
CHANGES AND CANCELLATION
All dates, times, itineraries, and carriers are subject to change and AFS is not responsible for any additional cost, inconvenience or damage by adjustment of travel schedules.

BAGGAGE AND PERSONAL PROPERTY
AFS has no liability for loss or damage to baggage or other personal property. Furthermore, any claim filed with a carrier for damage or loss of property will be limited and subject to the terms of the ticket(s) or contract of carriage issued to the participant by the airline or other purveyor of transport.

Any incidental airline fees which are not part of the ticket, such as but not limited to baggage fees, are the responsibility of the participant.

MEDICAL SUPPORT
21. AFS has secured secondary travel medical insurance. This insurance applies to all covered medical expenses incurred by participants up to US $1,000,000 per occurrence, provided that the services occur between the time the participant arrives at the international departure site and the time of program termination or return to the home country, whichever comes first. This travel medical insurance does not pay for the medical expenses incurred after participants return home (except to the extent detailed in the Participant Medical Plan, whether or not such expenses are related to the conditions arising during participation in the AFS program. We understand that, since AFS coverage is secondary AFS may seek reimbursement from the participant’s primary insurer.

Please refer to the Participant Medical Plan for the terms and conditions of coverage.

We understand that AFS strongly encourages participants to arrange private health and accident insurance if the participant is not already covered under a national health and accident insurance plan.

22. We understand that AFS is not responsible for costs related to pre-existing medical conditions, preventive medication or immunizations, dental care, eyeglasses, contact lenses, routine eye exams, cosmetic or elective surgery no matter when medical services are rendered or cost incurred. A pre-existing condition is one for which treatment has been sought or provided during the 18 month period prior to the participant’s arrival at the international departure site. We understand that if the participant needs such care, we may be contacted directly by our child or his or her host family requesting authorization for the procedure and funds for payment, and that we will forward the necessary funds directly to our child or his or her host family. We understand that the participant is fully responsible for the transport and care of any equipment and medication supplies required for maintenance of any medical pre-existing conditions. We will not hold AFS accountable for medical care treatment pertaining to pre-existing conditions. We agree to reimburse AFS should it incur expenses pertaining to any of the above mentioned circumstances.

23. Final determination of medical care and treatment is the decision of the parent(s)/legal guardian(s); however, AFS medical insurance will only provide reimbursement of covered expenses incurred while in the hosting country upon the recommendation of the attending physician (see Condition 15d). Concerning medical care and treatment we understand and accept the following conditions:

   a) In the selection of medical care providers, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that the care providers selected meet the standards of competence prevalent in the local hosting community. We understand that the laws of confidentiality and medical practice procedures in some countries may restrict AFS access to medical records and documentation regarding treatment of our son or daughter.

   b) Should any medical emergency arise, if time permits, AFS will communicate with us and request permission for surgery or other necessary treatment; however, if in the sole judgment of AFS, time and circumstances do not permit communication with us, we authorize AFS to consent to medical treatment, the administration of X-ray examination, anesthetics, blood transfusion, medical or surgical diagnosis or treatment and hospital care which is deemed advisable by, and is to be rendered under the general or special supervision of, any physician and surgeon.

   We further recognize that in extreme emergencies medical actions such as, but not limited to, x-rays, blood transfusions, and surgery, may be taken before we or AFS are notified if medical personnel determine such actions are necessary to save our child’s life.

   c) Should the attending physicians recommend medical evacuation, once the participant leaves the host country and arrives in the receiving facility, AFS medical expense insurance ceases, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions of Participation.

   d) We will not hold AFS responsible for any actions relating to the emergency treatment.

CONFIDENTIALITY
24. Privacy of personal and sensitive information is a primary concern of AFS. We understand and accept that AFS may process the personal and sensitive information that we have provided here, in the application process, and during program participation, and may transmit such data to third parties for any purpose reasonably required for the proper organization, and fulfillment of the AFS Program. We understand and accept that AFS may further transmit such data to governmental agencies when AFS believes it is reasonable and necessary. We understand that the data will not be sold or otherwise transferred to third parties for any purpose. AFS will transfer and store personal data in central databases in at least two locations to ensure that the data is not lost. Currently those locations are in New York, USA and Bangkok, Thailand. Those databases have a restricted access, which is limited to AFS employees, consultants and volunteers, all of whom will use the information exclusively for the fulfillment of the AFS program.

AFS maintains information on participants and other individuals related to AFS during the program participation that may include personal data of more than one individual related to AFS. In addition, information shared internally among individuals related to AFS regarding
participant support may also be confidential to AFS. This information is the property of AFS and will be retained by AFS as confidential, because it is likely that the suitable implementation of AFS programs would be markedly hindered if this information were not retained by AFS as confidential.

25. This Agreement, along with the AFS application forms, the Host Country Activity Waiver and the AFS Medical Pamphlet, comprise the entire Agreement of the parties.

26. I / We hereby certify that all answers provided in the participant application form are truthful; any changes in information will be reported promptly to AFS.

27. It is understood that AFS has no responsibility or liability for any claims for indirect or consequential damages of any kind arising from or in connection with this Agreement.

28. I / We understand and accept that AFS may process the personal information that we have provided here, in the application process, and during program participation, and may transmit such data to third parties for any purpose reasonably required for the proper organization and fulfillment of the AFS program. We understand that the data will not be sold or otherwise transferred to third parties for any purpose.

29. If any term or condition of this Agreement shall be invalid or unenforceable, it shall not affect the validity of the remaining Terms and Conditions of this Agreement.

30. This Agreement and claims and disputes arising there under shall be governed by the internal laws of the State of New York, United States of America.

31. We understand that photographs and film and video footage (the images) of current and former participants are occasionally used by AFS in promotional materials. By signing this Agreement, we grant to AFS the right to use, publish and/or reproduce for any lawful and legitimate purpose excerpts from interviews and letters, images and audio recordings and any other still or moving images of our son/daughter taken during his/her involvement with AFS and to use his/her name in this connection. We understand that if we do not wish images to be so used, we must mark the following box and initial the space beside it. By leaving this box blank, we understand that we will be deemed to have consented to such use.

Initial here if you DO NOT give permission for AFS to use such letters, images and audio recordings of your son/daughter. In this case, your son/daughter may not be allowed to be part of AFS group photos, etc.

Both parents, or legal guardian(s) and participant must sign this form. If the parents are divorced and the non-custodial parent does not have visitation rights, then only the parent of custody must sign. If the non-custodial parent has visitation rights, both parents must sign.

Note: If only one signature of parent/guardian is provided, proof of sole custody must accompany this form.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CANDIDATE: PRINT FULL NAME (First/Middle/Last)</th>
<th>SIGNATURE</th>
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<td>PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN: PRINT FULL NAME</td>
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<td>PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN: PRINT FULL NAME</td>
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For AFS-USA, Inc.:

[Signature]

Jorge Castro, President and Partner Director, AFS-USA, INC.

For AFS Intercultural Programs, Inc.:

[Signature]

Jorge Castro, President and Partner Director, AFS Intercultural Programs, INC.
CSIET Standards

These standards are intended for use in evaluating both inbound and outbound youth exchange programs of eight or more weeks’ duration. For programs of shorter duration, please refer to CSIET Standards for Short-Term Programs.

Agent: Individual or organization authorized to represent or act on behalf of the organization in administering one or more aspects of the program, for example, an overseas partner.

Organization: Entity that sponsors international educational travel activities.

Program: Organized international educational travel activity that begins with participant recruitment and selection, includes the components outlined in the standards that follow, and terminates when the participant returns to his or her point of origin or otherwise severs the relationship with the program sponsor. Programs applying for CSIET listing must have a minimum of one current exchange participant in each cycle that is being evaluated for each program (i.e. long-term inbound and outbound; and short-term inbound and outbound).

Volunteer: 1. A representative who is compensated for out-of-pocket expenses only. If a representative receives regular compensation, such as a per student placement fee, this individual cannot be considered a volunteer. 2. A host family that provides room and board gratis to a student.

Federal Waivers: The CSIET Board of Directors has ruled that if the State Department or an agency of the U.S. government provides an exception that may affect compliance with CSIET standards, the organization to whom the waiver has been granted may operate under that exemption upon written presentation of such waiver to the CSIET Evaluation Committee.

Important Note: Organizations that apply to CSIET for listing are provided with a list of “Materials to be Submitted” to demonstrate compliance with CSIET Standards. If you wish to obtain the complete set of Standards with “Materials to be Submitted” please contact CSIET for a free copy.

STANDARD 1: EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE
  A. Programs shall be designed to fulfill educational purposes related to an international experience.
  B. The organization sponsoring the program shall have clearly established goals and learning objectives to fulfill the educational purposes of its programs.

STANDARD 2: ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE
  A. The structure and administration of the organization shall be clearly defined.
  B. The organization shall have the personnel needed to administer its programs effectively.
     1. The organization is accountable for the full scope of the programs it administers, including actions taken and representations made by its agents, and maintains responsibility for its students both within the United States and abroad.
     2. The organization shall maintain direct, hands-on control of the placement and supervision of inbound students and the hiring, firing, and remuneration of local representatives. It may not enter into a relationship with another entity that appears to exercise such control.
  C. The organization shall be organized under the laws of one of the 50 states of the United States or the District of Columbia.
  D. The organization shall demonstrate success in international educational travel through at least one full year since its incorporation.

Supplemental Guideline: Date of Incorporation
The CSIET Board of Directors has determined that the intent of this Standard is to ensure that programs have participants on exchange for the Evaluation Committee to review in the current cycle. Accordingly, compliance with Standard 2D could be demonstrated if the applying organization documents one year of incorporation by the final Evaluation Committee meeting of the current cycle.

STANDARD 3: FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
  A. The organization shall be capable of discharging its financial responsibilities to all participants.
  B. The organization shall have sufficient financial backing to protect all monies paid by participants and to ensure fulfillment of all responsibilities to participants.
  C. The organization shall have an independent Certified Public Accountant annually prepare an audited or review financial statement.
STANDARD 4: PROMOTION
A. The organization’s promotional materials shall professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect its purposes, activities, and sponsorship.
B. The organization shall not publicize the need for host families via any public media with announcements, notices, advertisements, etc. that:
   a. are not sufficiently in advance of the student’s arrival
   b. appeal to public pity or guilt
   c. imply in any way that a student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately
   d. identify photos of individual students and include an appeal for an immediate family.

Following are guidelines for public media advertisements:
CSIEE has found the following words or phrases to be unacceptable: Urgently Needed. Don’t let me be homeless, This is an emergency...
CSIEE has found the following words or phrases to be acceptable: Open your hearts and homes, Host a foreign Exchange Student...
It is permissible to use a picture of a student, a first name, age, country of origin, and a composite or generic listing of interests in an advertisement in order to demonstrate the personal nature of the program and the types of interests that students have. It is not permissible to identify that specific student as needing a home, nor is it permissible to refer to a student’s athletic ability or accomplishments. Written waivers must be obtained for the use of any student photographs.
C. The organization shall not promote or recruit for its programs in any way that compromises the privacy, safety or security of participants, families or schools. Specifically, programs shall not include personal student data or contact information (including address, phone or email addresses) on websites or other promotional materials.
D. All promotional materials/activities shall distinguish the program and the sponsoring organization from others operating under:
   a. affiliated or related corporate structures
   b. the same or similar names or symbols.
E. The organization shall fully disclose all fees, including school tuition, host family reimbursements, and other required or optional costs to prospective students and their natural families before enrollment. (If host families provide room and board gratis to the students, publicity should state that fees cover “selection and placement in host families” and not imply in any way that the fees paid by the students cover “room and board.”)
F. Neither the organization nor its agents shall promote its programs as providing opportunities for school athletic participation, high school graduation, driver’s education instruction, household domestic service, child care, employment, or other activities that might compromise the student, program, or school. Standard 4F specifically prohibits the organization and its agents (this includes foreign partners) from promoting its programs as providing any of the aforementioned activities. The word “promote” as it is used in Standard 4F includes any specific focus on or prominence of pictures and/or text depicting these activities. No prominent pictures and/or text will be considered to be in compliance.
G. The organization shall not state or imply in its promotional materials/activities that persons who are compensated other than out-of-pocket expenses are volunteers.

STANDARD 5: STUDENT SELECTION AND ORIENTATION
A. The organization shall screen and select student participants on the basis of criteria appropriate to the program.
B. Supplemental Guideline: Athletic Participation in the United States
C. The following statement must be included on either the student application or other written rules documents:
   “Athletic eligibility or participation is not guaranteed.” This guideline will take effect for exchange students beginning their program in January of 2007.
D. Screening procedures for homestay programs shall include personal interviews with student applicants.
E. Selection shall be completed sufficiently in advance of the student’s departure to ensure adequate time for preparation and orientation.
F. Students shall be given a suitable orientation before departure and after arrival in the host country, including information on how to identify and report cases of suspected student abuse.
G. All inbound students enrolled in a U.S. high school must have adequate English language proficiency to function successfully.
H. All inbound and outbound students enrolled in school must have adequate academic preparation to function successfully.

STANDARD 6: STUDENT PLACEMENT
A. For programs that include a homestay, the organization shall:
   a. select host families on the basis of criteria appropriate to the program.
   b. personally interview all prospective host families in their home.
   c. match students and host families on the basis of criteria appropriate to the program
   d. complete placement arrangements sufficiently in advance of the student’s departure from home to ensure adequate time for preparation and orientation of the host family (Whenever possible, a
student should be placed with a host family who has made a long-term commitment to host the student prior to the student’s departure from his/her home country. In cases where this is not possible, a student may be placed with a short-term host family until long-term arrangements can be made. All short-term families must be selected and oriented according to the same criteria as are long-term families. The short-term nature of the host family placement must be fully disclosed in advance to the student, his/her natural parents, and the school principal and be acceptable to them. Short-term families may, of course, also be utilized when a host family placement has not worked out and a new family must be found.

e. provide suitable orientation and training to the host family. (When a family expresses an interest in hosting a student and a representative makes the initial home visit to explain the program, this is not to be considered the “host family orientation.” CSIEF suggests that host family orientation include information on the student’s expectations about family and school life, customs, religion, and mores of the student’s native country; the academic program in which the student will be enrolled, potential problems in hosting exchange students, and suggestions on how to cope with such problems).

f. Vet all adult members of the U.S. host family residing in the home through a national criminal background check in the United States.

B. Organizations shall not knowingly be party to a placement (inclusive of direct placements) based on athletic abilities, whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party. A direct placement is one in which either the student or the sending organization in the foreign country is party to an arrangement with any other party, including school personnel, for the student to attend a particular school or live with a particular host family. Such direct placement must be reported to the particular school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

Supplemental Guideline: Direct Placement Reports

Direct placement reports should be sorted by U.S. state and include the following information:

- U.S. State:
- Name of Student:
- Country of Origin:
- Local Rep Name/Number:
- Name/City of U.S. Host School:
- Nature of the Direct Placement:

Reports should be emailed to: CSIETREPORT@NFHS.ORG

C. For programs that include accommodations other than a homestay, the organization shall:

1. arrange accommodations on the basis of criteria appropriate to the program
2. ensure the adequacy of the accommodations with respect to location, cleanliness, safety, nutrition, and supervision
3. confirm the accommodations sufficiently in advance of the student’s departure from home.

D. For programs that include enrollment in U.S. high schools, the organization shall:

a. secure written acceptance from the school principal or other designated responsible school administrator prior to the exchange student’s departure from his or her home country.

b. provide the school with the following information about the student:

   1) academic history, including
      a) academic records, translated into English or other language as appropriate
      b) number of years of school completed prior to arrival and number of years required in home country for the completion of secondary school
   2) level of English language proficiency (for inbound students only)
   3) appropriate background information
   4) expectations regarding school experience.

STANDARD 7: OPERATIONS

A. The organization shall ensure adequate care and supervision of students.

B. Supplemental Guideline: Outbound Student Registry

C. Programs must register U.S. students traveling abroad with the U.S. consulate or embassy

D. Local representatives of the organization shall maintain regular personal contact with students and host families. (Contact should be initiated by the organization’s representative at least once a month be it by telephone, a visit to the home, personal contact at a gathering or other means. E-mail alone is not considered sufficient personal contact. Regular monthly contact is to include separate communication with the student and the host family in order to provide each with the opportunity to discuss issues they might not raise in the presence of the other. CSIEF expects that there be formal documentation of this contact such as a monthly form, written journal, written log, etc. This is not to imply that representatives have to record every interaction. Rather it is to provide a record for the organization’s office of the pattern of student and host family adjustments, activities, and relationships through at least monthly contact with each student and host family.)

E. The organization shall notify the student, host family, and/or other supervisor of accommodations regarding the travel itinerary sufficiently in advance of the student’s departure from the home country.
F. The organization shall provide adequate support services at the local level to assist with program-related needs and problems, for example, counseling services, travel, medical care, language problems, changes in host family, emergencies.

G. The organization shall maintain an effective system of screening (including a national criminal background check for U.S. representatives with direct in-person contact with student participants), selecting, training, and supervising program representatives and group leaders.

H. The organization shall provide all students with an identification card that includes the student’s name; the host family’s name, address, and telephone; the local representative’s name, address, and telephone; the address and telephone of the organization’s appropriate national office.

I. For programs involving school enrollment, the organization shall maintain regular communication with school authorities.

J. The organization shall provide an opportunity to the student, host family, and school to participate in a post-exchange evaluation.

K. The organization shall have in place adequate plans and procedures for dealing with emergency situations that may arise during the program.

L. The organization shall respond in a timely and appropriate fashion to complaints received from students, families, schools or others concerned with the program and its quality.

M. For programs utilizing electronic or automated program databases to demonstrate compliance with CSIET Standards, such entries must identify the date and user recording the data. Programs shall also maintain a backup system. To prevent online access to sensitive student information by unauthorized persons, program databases need to be secured by an initial screening prior to issuance of a unique username and password (Standard 7K will take effect for exchange students beginning their program in January of 2007).

**STANDARD 8: STUDENT INSURANCE**

A. The organization shall guarantee that every student is covered with adequate health and accident insurance. Such insurance shall:
   a. Protect students for the duration of their program
   b. Provide for the return of the student to his/her home in the event of serious illness, accident, or death during the program.

B. The organization shall provide students, host families, and appropriate supervisor(s) with detailed printed information regarding the terms and limits of insurance coverage and procedures for filing a claim.

C. Compensated officials and employees of the organization shall not receive compensation from the sale of insurance to its participants.

**STANDARD 9: ADHERENCE TO GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS**

A. The organization shall comply with all appropriate government regulations regarding international exchange or any other activity under its auspices.

B. It shall be the responsibility of the organization to notify the Council of any change in status with respect to government designation, acknowledgment, acceptance, endorsement and/or sanction.

As revised by the Board of Directors, April 2006
PART 62—EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

1. The Authority citation for part 62 is revised to read as follows:

2. Section 62.25 is revised to read as follows:

§ 62.25 Secondary school students.

(a) Purpose. This section governs Department of State designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign secondary school students are afforded the opportunity to study in the United States at accredited public or private secondary schools for an academic semester or an academic year, while living with American host families or residing at accredited U.S. boarding schools.

(b) Program sponsor eligibility. Eligibility for designation as a secondary school student exchange visitor program sponsor is limited to organizations:
   (1) With tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and
   (2) Which are United States citizens as such term is defined in § 62.2.

(c) Program eligibility. Secondary school student exchange visitor programs designated by the Department of State must:
   (1) Require all exchange students to be enrolled and participating in a full course of study at an accredited academic institution;
   (2) Allow entry of exchange students for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) and not more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and
   (3) Ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled. In all cases, sponsors must notify both the host family and school prior to the exchange student’s arrival in the United States whether the placement is for an academic semester, an academic year, or a calendar year.

(d) Program administration. Sponsors must ensure that all organizational officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf:
   (1) Are adequately trained. Sponsors must administer training for local coordinators that specifically includes, at a minimum, instruction in: Conflict resolution; procedures for handling and reporting emergency situations; awareness or knowledge of child safety standards; information on sexual conduct codes; procedures for handling and reporting allegations of sexual misconduct or any other allegations of abuse or neglect; and the criteria to be used to screen potential host families and exercise good judgment when identifying what constitutes suitable host family placements. In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all local coordinators complete the Department of State mandated training module prior to their appointment as a local coordinator or assumption of duties. The Department of State training module will include instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program; its public diplomacy objectives; and the Secondary School Student category rules and regulations. Sponsors must demonstrate the individual’s successful completion of all initial training requirements and that annual refresher training is also successfully completed.
   (2) Are adequately supervised. Sponsors must create and implement organization-specific standard operating procedures for the supervision of local coordinators designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/agents/volunteers. They must also have sufficient internal controls to ensure that such employees/agents/volunteers comply with such standard operating procedures.
   (3) Have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice’s National Sex Offender Public Registry);
   (4) Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;
   (5) Make no exchange student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of the local coordinator authorized to act on the sponsor’s behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from that exchange student’s participation in the Exchange Visitor Program;
(6) Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;
(7) Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and email;
(8) Make certain that the exchange student’s government-issued documents (i.e., passports, Forms DS-2019) are not removed from his/her possession;
(9) Conduct the host family orientation after the host family has been fully vetted and accepted;
(10) Refrain, without exception, from acting as:
(i) Both a host family and a local coordinator or area supervisor for an exchange student;
(ii) A host family for one sponsor and a local coordinator for another sponsor; or
(iii) A local coordinator for any exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student’s teacher or principal. This requirement is not applicable to a boarding school placement.
(11) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the exchange student. The first monthly contact between the local coordinator and the exchange student must be in person. All other contacts may take place in-person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.
(12) That a sponsor representative other than the local coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family visit the exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student’s placement in the home.
(13) Maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the host family. At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester, (i.e., twice during the academic year) the contact by the local coordinator with the host family must be in person. All other contacts may take place in-person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.
(14) That host schools are provided contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department’s Office of Designation; and
(15) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.
(e) Student selection. In addition to satisfying the requirements of § 6210(a), sponsors must ensure that all participants in a designated secondary school student exchange visitor program:
(1) Are secondary school students in countries who have not completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary study, exclusive of kindergarten; or are at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years and six months age as of the program start date;
(2) Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and
(3) Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status.
(f) Student enrollment. (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:
(i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student will attend; and
(ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.
(2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.
(3) Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS-2019.
(4) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances for a minimum of three years and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.
(5) Sponsors must provide the school with a translated “written English language summary” of the exchange student’s complete academic course work prior to commencement of school. In addition to any additional documents the school may require. Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.
(6) Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students from the sponsor.
(7) Upon issuance of a Form DS-2019 to a prospective participant, the sponsor accepts full responsibility for securing a school and host family placement for the student, except in cases of voluntary student withdrawal or visa denial.
(g) Student orientation. In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at § 6210, all sponsors must provide exchange students, prior to their departure from their home countries, with the following information:
(1) A summary of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations governing student participation in the exchange visitor program along with a detailed summary of travel arrangements;
(2) A copy of the Department’s welcome kit to exchange students;
(3) Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation;
(4) A detailed profile of the host family with whom the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary arrival family;
(5) A detailed profile of the school and community in which the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the student will pay tuition; and
(6) An identification card, that lists the exchange student’s name, United States host family placement address and telephone numbers (landline and cellular), sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers, name and telephone numbers (landline and cellular) of the local coordinator and area representative, the telephone number of Department’s Office of Designation, and the Secondary School Student program toll free emergency telephone number. The identification card must also contain the name of the health insurance provider and policy
number. Such cards must be corrected, reprinted, and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student’s placement.

(h) Student extra-curricular activities. Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extracurricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is:

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

(2) Authorized by the state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility, if applicable. Sponsors shall not knowingly be party to a placement (inclusive of direct placements) based on athletic abilities, whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party.

(3) Any placement in which either the student or the sending organization in the foreign country is party to an arrangement with any other party, including receiving school personnel, whereby the student will attend a particular school or live with a particular host family must be reported to the particular school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

(i) Employment. Exchange students may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

(j) Host family application and selection. Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

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

(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, “Information to be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications”. The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.” Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home’s exterior and grounds, kitchen, student’s bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

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

(4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary; that the exchange student’s bedroom contains a separate bed for the student that is neither convertible nor inflatable in nature; that the student has adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings; reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency. An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same sex.

(5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (i.e., field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family’s good reputation and character;

(6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing;

(7) Verify that each member of the host family household 18 years of age and older, as well as any new adult member added to the household, or any member of the host family household who will turn eighteen years of age during the exchange student’s stay in that household, has undergone a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice’s National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(8) Maintain a record of all documentation on a student’s exchange program, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years following program completion; and

(9) Ensure that a potential single adult host parent without a child in the home undergoes a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant. Such secondary review should include demonstrated evidence of the individual’s friends or family who can provide an additional support network for the exchange student and evidence of the individual’s ties to his/her community. Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student’s placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

(k) Host family orientation. In addition to the orientation requirements set forth in § 62.10, sponsors must:

(1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor’s exchange visitor program, including examples of “best practices” developed by the exchange community;

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

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

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

(5) Advise host families of their responsibility to inform the sponsor of any and all material changes in the status of the host family or student, including, but not limited to, changes in address, finances, employment and criminal arrests.

(l) Host family placement. (l) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student’s departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:

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

(ii) Place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the host family, the natural parents, and the students being placed. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with a host family, or in the home of a local coordinator, regional coordinator, or volunteer. Sponsors may not place students from the same countries or with the same native languages in a single home.
(2) Prior to the student’s departure from his or her home country, sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or arrival placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances that necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor must document the reason(s) necessitating such change and provide the Department of State with an annual statistical summary reflecting the number and reason(s) for such change in host family placement in the program’s annual report.

(m) Advertising and Marketing for the recruitment of host families. In addition to the requirements set forth in § 62.9 in advertising and promoting for host family recruiting, sponsors must:

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

(2) Not publicize the need for host families via any public media with announcements, notices, advertisements, etc. that are not sufficiently in advance of the exchange student’s arrival. Appeal to public pity or guilt, imply in any way that an exchange student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately, or identify photos of individual exchange students and include an appeal for an immediate family;

(3) Not promote or recruit for their programs in any way that compromises the privacy, safety or security of participants, families, or schools. Specifically, sponsors shall not include personal student data or contact information (including addresses, phone numbers or email addresses) or photographs of the student on Web sites or in other promotional materials; and

(4) Ensure that access to exchange student photographs and personally identifying information, either online or in print form, is only made available to potential host families who have been fully vetted and selected for program participation. Such information, if available online, must also be password protected.

(n) Reporting requirements. Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at § 62.15, sponsors must file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) Sponsors must immediately report to the Department any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or any other allegations of abuse or neglect of an exchange student. Sponsors must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation. Failure to report such incidents to the Department and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the suspension and revocation of the sponsor’s Exchange Visitor Program designation;

(2) A report of all final academic year and semester program participant placements by August 31 for the upcoming academic year or January 15 for the Spring semester and calendar year. The report must be in the format directed by the Department and must include at a minimum, the exchange student’s full name, Form DS-2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placement (current U.S. address), school (site of activity) address, the local coordinator’s name and zip code, and other information the Department may request; and

(3) A report of all situations which resulted in the placement of an exchange student with more than one host family or more than one school. The report must be in a format directed by the Department and include, at a minimum, the exchange student’s full name, Form DS-019 number (SEVIS ID #), host familyplacements (current U.S. address), schools (site of activity address), the reason for the change in placement, and the date of the move. This report is due by July 31 for the previous academic school year.

A new Appendix F is added to Part 62, as follows:

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

Basic Family Information:

a. Host Family Member—Full name and relationship (children and adults) either living full-time or part-time in the home or who frequently stay at the home)

b. Date of Birth (DOB) of all family members

c. Street Address

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

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

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

g. Description of each household member (e.g., level of education, profession, interests, community involvement, and relevant behavioral or other characteristics of such household members that could affect the successful integration of the exchange visitor into the household)

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

Household Pets:

a. Number of Pets

b. Type of Pets

Financial Resources:

a. Average Annual Income Range: Less than $25,000; $25,000–$35,000; $35,000–$45,000; $45,000–$55,000; $55,000–$65,000; $65,000–$75,000; and $75,000 and above. Note: The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of ensuring that the basic needs of the exchange students can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.”

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

c. Identify those personal expenses expected to be covered by the student

Diet:

a. Does anyone in the family follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe:

b. Do you expect the student to follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe:
c. Would you feel comfortable hosting a student who follows a particular dietary restriction (ex. Vegetarian, Vegan, etc.)? (Y/N)
d. Would the family provide three (3) square meals daily?

High School Information:
a. Name and address of school (private or public school)
b. Name, address, e-mail and telephone number of school official
c. Approximate size of the school student body
d. Approximate distance between the school and your home
e. Approximate start date of the school year
f. How will the exchange student get to the school (e.g. bus, carpool, walk)?
g. Would the family provide special transportation for extracurricular activities after school or in the evenings, if required?
h. Which, if any, of your family’s children, presently attend the school in which the exchange visitor is enrolled? If applicable list sports/clubs/activities, if any, your child(ren) participate(s) in at the school
i. Does any member of your household work for the high school in a coaching/ teaching/or administrative capacity?
j. Has any member of your household had contact with a coach regarding the hosting of an exchange student with particular athletic ability? If yes, please describe the contact and sport.

Community Information:
a. In what type of community do you live (e.g.: Urban, Suburban, Rural, Farm)
b. Population of community
c. Nearest Major City (Distance and population)
d. Nearest Airport (Distance)
e. City or town website
f. Briefly describe your neighborhood and community
g. What points of interest are near your area (parks, museums, historical sites)?
h. Areas in or near neighborhood to be avoided?

Home Description:
a. Describe your type of home (e.g. single family home, condominium, duplex, apartment, mobile home) and include photographs of the host family home’s exterior and grounds, kitchen, student’s bedroom, student’s bathroom, and family and living areas.
b. Describe Primary Rooms and Bedrooms
c. Number of Bathrooms
d. Will the exchange student share a bedroom? (Y/N) If yes, with which household resident?
e. Describe the student’s bedroom
f. Describe amenities to which the student has access

g. Utilities

Family Activities:
a. Language spoken in home

b. Please describe activities and/or sports each family member participates in: (e.g., camping, hiking, dance, crafts, debate, drama, art, music, reading, soccer, baseball, horseback riding)

c. Describe your expectations regarding the responsibilities and behavior of the student while in your home (e.g., homework, household chores, curfew (school night and weekend), access to refrigerator and food, drinking of alcoholic beverages, driving, smoking, computer/Internet/E-Mail)

Would you be willing voluntarily to inform the exchange visitor in advance of any religious affiliations of household members? (Y/N)

Would any member of the household have difficulty hosting a student whose religious beliefs were different from their own? (Y/N)

Note: A host family may wish to host an exchange student who has different religious beliefs than the family members. The exchange student is not required to adopt the family members’ religious beliefs, but should be able to accommodate them if needed.

How did you learn about being a host family?

References:

Sally J. Lawrence,
Director, Office of Designation, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 2010-27200 Filed 10-26-10; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-05-P
Dear AFS Host Family:

Thank you for hosting an AFS Exchange Student! We are glad you have chosen to share this time with an AFS student showing them the American culture and your local way of life. Living with your family and attending school in the United States will provide your student with new skills and knowledge to take back to their home country.

AFS has put into place many procedures to protect the safety and wellbeing of our participants. We hope that these procedures allow for everyone to have a safe and fun time while on the AFS program. However, occasionally, an incident may occur that makes you or your participant uncomfortable or nervous. If this happens, please tell us even if you are not sure if there is cause for alarm, and even if your participant has expressed a desire to keep the situation to him or herself or within the host family. AFS is required, by law, to report certain events and occurrences to the U.S. Department of State and local authorities. We also ask that you inform us of circumstances within the host family that could result in the need for the participant to be removed from your home due to the stress that they may place on your family and/or the participant or otherwise. We appreciate your help in understanding what is happening locally.

Some examples of things that we ask you to tell us immediately are:

1. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, is seriously injured
2. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, is a victim of a crime or has committed a crime
3. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, has been sexually abused or there are allegations of sexual abuse
4. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, has been perceived as having sexually abused another person
5. Any issue that has the potential for press coverage
6. You are unable to provide sufficient and appropriate food, housing, or transportation for your hosted student
7. You feel that your local AFS volunteer is not able to assist you with your concerns or is threatening you, or your participant, in any way.
8. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, has run away or is missing for longer than 24 hours
9. Your hosted student, or another AFS student, alleges that someone in their host family has taken/used their money, credit or debit card
10. A member of the host family becomes seriously ill, is charged with a crime other than a minor traffic infraction, such as a DUI/DWI, domestic abuse, theft, etc., or is investigated by child protective services.

There are many ways that you can provide this information to AFS:

1. First, we ask that you talk to your local AFS Volunteer. If the situation is urgent, they will help you report it to the AFS Staff.
2. During business hours, and if you are uncomfortable speaking with or unable to reach your local AFS Volunteer, you can call the AFS National Service Center at 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and dial 9 to reach the Participant Support Department.
3. After business hours, if it is an emergency and you are uncomfortable speaking with or unable to reach your local AFS Volunteer, you can call 1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636) and dial 9 to reach the AFS Emergency Duty Officer.
4. AFS has developed an email address where you can send information regarding anything that you are worried or concerned about involving an urgent situation. You can write to hotline@afs.org. This inbox will be checked each business day for new messages.
5. Finally, if you are unable to get a response from any of the above options, you may call the U.S. Department of State’s toll free number that has been established for this purpose at 1-866-283-9090.
Thank you for your assistance in keeping us informed. All of AFS, the volunteers, and the staff want you and your family to have a wonderful experience while hosting an AFS Exchange Student. But, we need your help in notifying us if any concerns may arise.

Sincerely,

Robin A. Weber
Director of Risk Management and Quality Assurance
Dear American Host Family:

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

High School programs have been a part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts since 1949. Approximately 25,000 high school students from around the world participate in this program each year. The good will of American host families in opening their homes to these young international visitors is vital to this program’s success.

The health, safety, and well-being of the young people who participate in this program are our highest priority. A host family has many responsibilities, the most important of which is properly caring for an international student during the course of his/her program. The student is a guest in your home and in our country and you may be the first “real Americans” this young person meets. How you relate with this student will create a lasting image of our country and its people.

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

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

Sincerely,

G.K. Saba
Director, Policy & Program Support for Private Sector Exchange
AFS-USA Mission

AFS-USA works toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools and communities through a global volunteer partnership.

National Office

120 Wall Street, 4th Floor
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Fax (212) 299-9090

1-800-AFS-INFO (800-237-4636)

http://www.afsusa.org