



IFF

621 Holly Ridge Road

Severna Park, MD

21146-3520

www.iffusa.org

Host Family Guide

Intercultural Friends Foundation (IFF) welcomes you to an extraordinary opportunity to become acquainted with an unfamiliar culture - and in your own home!

IFF believes that interaction with people from other countries motivates young people and adults alike to examine their own biases and stereotypes, values and behaviors. People who have this opportunity generally develop a clearer understanding of the similarities and differences people share from culture to culture. The young people who participate in homestay programs become intimately involved with their hosts and in so doing greatly increase their English proficiency as they broaden their world views.

IFF is convinced that the friendships established between students and host families provide a lasting basis for friendship among nations. IFF is proud to participate with you in this worthwhile endeavor.

WHAT IS A HOMESTAY?

A Homestay is a mutually beneficial partnership based on generous hospitality and an eager willingness to participate, experience and learn. This experience produces substantial rewards for both the student and the Host Family, such as:

- ✓ An environment which enables each person to accept, share and personally experience another's heritage and ideals.
- ✓ An amazing educational experience, developing a true understanding of other people and cultures.
- ✓ A deeply satisfying feeling of contributing to global understanding.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

IFF Program #: _____

Community Coordinator: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Group Escort: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

IFF FIELD TEAM AND OPERATIONS

Successful homestay programs require extensive planning and effective execution. The organizational structure of IFF has been expressly designed to accomplish these essentials of operation. You have become part of our team and we would like you to understand the functions of the other team members.

Each program is operated by a Community Coordinator whose familiarity with and ties to the community provide him or her with the ability to plan a program uniquely suited to that particular community. The responsibilities of the Community Coordinator include locating and assisting Host Families, planning the program itinerary, developing an academic schedule as needed and arranging for transportation.

Community Coordinators maintain regular contact with the IFF home office to ensure successful, well-organized and highly supervised homestays.

However, the real key to a successful program is you, the Host Family. Your hospitality, warmth and enthusiasm are the corner-

stones on which a meaningful and successful homestay is built.

IFF works with carefully selected foreign clients. These clients recruit students through schools, professional associations, clubs, and community organizations. In addition, the foreign client makes air arrangements and determines the overall cost to the student. IFF has no authorization over the program cost to the student.

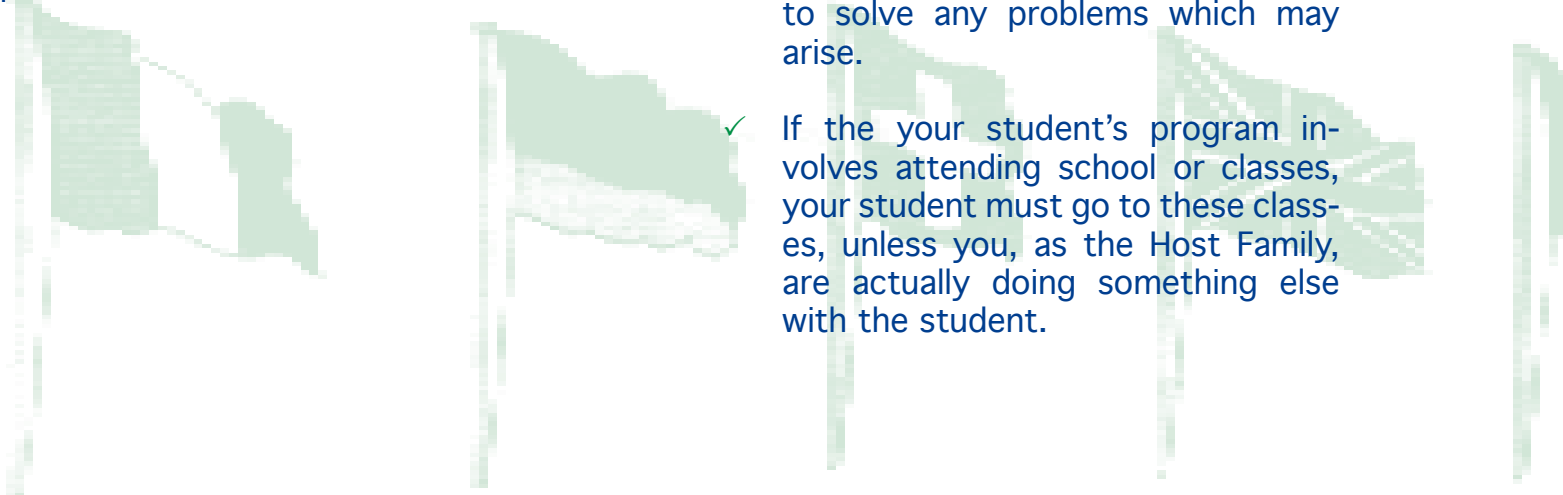
Each student completes an application which includes biographical information, interests, hobbies and photographs. Applications of enrolled students are passed on to the Community Coordinator. He or she matches each student with an appropriate family, taking into consideration the family's preferences as expressed on the Host Family Application as well as the student's stated interests. The student application is then given to the Host Family.

HOST FAMILY COMMITMENT

As a Host Family, you have made a marvelous commitment to host a foreign student. Embarking on this intercultural adventure should be an exciting experience. The intercultural experience of the homestay program involves questioning, accepting, changing and occasionally experiencing frustrating moments. Ensuring a valuable exchange for both you and your student will be predicated upon mutual, open communication and respect.

As a Host Family, we ask that you keep the following items in mind:

- ✓ Your student, as a member of the family, is provided a home, lodging, and meals, as well as transportation assistance for the entire program.
- ✓ Your student is to be provided his or her own bed. Sharing a bedroom with another family member of the same age and sex or having a separate bedroom are both acceptable.
- ✓ Your student needs to be accepted as a family member and encouraged to take part in all aspects of family life.
- ✓ A Host Family is not required to change their way of life, to plan special activities, or to provide for special diets.
- ✓ Students are encouraged to participate in intercultural exchange through community involvement. As a Host Family, we ask that you expose your student to the various social and cultural aspects of your home, neighborhood, community and school.
- ✓ Open communication with your Community Coordinator is essential. He or she is available to assist you by answering questions and helping to solve any problems which may arise.
- ✓ If the your student's program involves attending school or classes, your student must go to these classes, unless you, as the Host Family, are actually doing something else with the student.



YOUR STUDENT & YOU

There is no need to overdo yourself on entertainment. Your student is here to experience **TYPICAL** North American life. You are encouraged to maintain your normal family routine as much as possible. If you want to take your student around, feel free to do so. Let your student know the cost and ask if he or she would like to go with you. Your student expects to pay for his or her own entertainment.

After you have chosen to become a Host Family, your Community Coordinator will review your foreign student's application with you. Your student also has the opportunity to review your application with similar information. This is the first step to establishing a good rapport between family and student. The Host Family is encouraged to begin an exchange of letters as soon as possible. Here are some suggestions for information to share in these letters:

- ✓ *A description of your family, ages and gender of the children, and profession(s) of the parents.*
- ✓ *A description of your neighborhood and community, including sights, upcoming events and weather.*
- ✓ *Personal information, such as hobbies, photos, your reasons for participating in a homestay, etc.*

Letter exchange is an effective method to ease apprehensions for both your family and your arriving student. Family members, as hosts, and the foreign student, as a participant, are both equally curious and eager to know and understand each other's family, community and interests

HELPFUL HOST FAMILY HINTS

PREPARATION FOR YOUR NEW FAMILY MEMBER

Your authority and responsibility extend over your student as it would for your own children. Only major decisions must include IFF. We suggest you have a family meeting prior to the student's arrival to discuss where the student will sleep, keep his or her belongings, study and to decide which household chores, rules and family practices will be the student's responsibility. Each family member should take part and be fully apprised of what to expect. If you are a planned Host Family, both you and the student will have well-defined expectations and fewer adjustments to make.

Plan for a quiet day of arrival so the student will have time to rest, adjust to his or her new surroundings, begin developing family relationships and be completely briefed on the household and family expectations. Depending on the time of the day and your student's inclination, a snack or light meal may be in order.

AFTER ARRIVAL

Give the student a sense of belonging through household orientation. Take nothing for granted; the student's lifestyle is very different from yours. Show him or her the bed, closet, drawers and study area. Take him or her to the bathroom and kitchen, demonstrating how to operate the plumbing facilities and all appliances. Make it a grand tour, including door locks, light switches, radios, television, stereo and the telephone. Be sure to let your student know if anything is "off limits."

This would also be a good time for each family member to share their expectations, household chores, rules and family practices. This is an important discussion which can be very rewarding. An open, caring and affectionate conversation about the rules and expectations, in terms of "acceptance" rather than "right or wrong," will be the most effective.

In case the student arrives in the evening, you may wish to plan for “family time” on the next day. This discussion is the time for careful explanations of, and reasons for, rules. The following guidelines may be helpful suggestions:

- ✓ Frequency of bathing and changing clothes
- ✓ Bathroom schedule
- ✓ Laundry - where to put it, when to do it
- ✓ Supplies - their use and locations, such as tooth paste, laundry products, and soap
- ✓ Independence - rules which apply to whereabouts, time of arrival and departure, curfews, phone use
- ✓ Picking up after himself or herself
- ✓ Household responsibilities
- ✓ Table manners and family manners of respect and consideration
- ✓ Dietary concerns
- ✓ Program itinerary

Begin developing a rapport with your new family member by assisting him or her over any stumbling blocks. Come to an agreement on an appropriate and comfortable method of addressing one another. Please keep in mind your new family member is not accustomed to the North American way of life, its ideas and customs. Your student may be accustomed to either doing or not doing household chores, and a very different set of concepts. This is the initial intercultural sharing of concepts and behavior patterns based on different cultures, history and background.

The first few days remember to RELAX! Humor, warmth, and understanding are the keys to success for your first meeting. They will melt away your student’s feeling of insecurity and your own apprehensions. Let your new family member set the appropriate pace. Fatigue and struggling with a new language and family take a lot of energy.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Mutual respect of religious beliefs and practices are essential to a happy Homestay Program. It is your student’s choice whether to attend or not to attend church services. No attempts should be made to change religious beliefs. Your student may prefer quiet time or need to make special arrangements to observe his or her religion. Please assist your student in any efforts to arrange for observation of his or her beliefs that will fit comfortably with your family schedule.

An interesting, intellectual and cultural alternative could be for the student and/or the entire family to visit, observe and discuss a variety of churches and synagogues. Additionally, your student would probably enjoy explaining his or her religion, beliefs and religious holidays, and family recognition of the holidays occurring during the homestay.



MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Please take the appropriate action for the following emergencies:

MEDICAL - ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS

1. Provide initial care for the student, seeking medical attention or hospitalization if needed.
2. Contact the Community Coordinator as soon as possible. If he or she is not reachable, contact the Foreign Escort. If the situation is serious and neither the Coordinator nor the Escort are available, contact the IFF Home Office.
3. Proceed with the doctor's advice for emergency treatment. Both the student and his or her parents have signed a medical release which allows you and IFF to take the necessary action to safeguard health and life. You must bring the student's application which contains the medical release and present it to the hospital or physician to obtain treatment.
4. IFF will contact the overseas agency which will then contact and relay advice from the parents abroad.
5. Complete insurance procedures are explained at the Host Family Orientation.

Each student has complete medical coverage and an insurance card. Should your student have an accident, you or the Community Coordinator should take him or her to the doctor and fill out the insurance claim form provided by the student's insurance. Should the student become sick during the homestay, you may take him or her to the doctor. The student or the Group Escort will pay the bill. The student will then be reimbursed in his or her home country through the insurance company. **Please do not pay for any doctor bill or use your own address for billing.** Should the doctor's office ask for a billing address, use the address of the IFF home office: IFF, 621 Holly Ridge Road, Severna Park, MD, 21146-3520.

LOST STUDENT

1. Contact the Community Coordinator
2. Contact the Group Escort
3. Contact the IFF home office
4. Contact the local police if necessary

DRUGS AND/OR STUDENT ARREST

1. Contact the Community Coordinator immediately for any student under the influence of drugs, in possession of drugs or under arrest.
2. For a student under the influence of drugs, seek medical attention immediately.
3. Contact the Group Escort and the IFF home office.
4. IFF will contact the overseas agency and the student's parents to make immediate arrangements for the student to return to his or her country.

EARLY RETURN HOME OF STUDENT

1. Students would be sent home early only for medical reasons or as a last resort under unusual and extreme circumstances.
2. At all times the Community Coordinator, Group Escort, Host Family, and the student should make an extra effort to resolve any problems which may arise.
3. Should the problem persist, the Community Coordinator will contact the IFF office for final resolution.
4. Students are dismissed from the program only under extreme situations. Threats of expulsion are an unacceptable method of obtaining behavioral improvement.

PLEASE NOTE

The student's health and safety should always be your first priority of concern. If you are unable to contact the Community Coordinator or Group Escort in an emergency, please call the IFF home office toll-free at 1-877-647-9500.

SMOKING, DRINKING, DRUGS AND BREAKING THE LAW

Smoking and drinking customs vary widely around the world. Many students may smoke and have been served beer, wine and liquor at home with their family from the time they were young children. When your student arrives, openly discuss your feelings and policies. Additionally, it is important that the student clearly understand local and state regulations.

IFF prohibits use of alcohol by program participants under 21 years of age and the use or possession of drugs not prescribed by a physician. If your student is invited to a party by other host families, we ask the host families not to serve any alcoholic beverages, even sangria and punch-type drinks.

Smoking by students under 18 years of age is prohibited. Furthermore, if the student is at least 18 years of age, and he or she did not indicate that he or she is a smoker on the student application, the family may prohibit him or her from smoking.

Please understand and inform your student that he or she has no immunity from the local, state and federal laws regarding the use of drugs, alcohol or involvement with shoplifting or vandalism.

All students will be informed that shoplifters are generally prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and that shoplifting is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and return to his or her home country.

OTHER INFORMATION

Please use your own discretion with reference to social excursions. When a student leaves your home, the following guidelines apply:

1. Know and approve of the driver
2. Know and approve of the destination and type of activity involved
3. Know when the student will be returning

Prior to the student's arrival, he or she will be given the Student Guidelines and IFF Rules. Below is a copy for your information. You might wish to review some of the more important ones with the student.

STUDENT GUIDELINES

The host family is the key component to a homestay. You may find yourself in a family with a completely different background from your own race, religion, education, etc. You must be willing to accept the lifestyles of your host family and be mature enough to make the necessary adjustments. IFF is sure you will see the benefit of seeing life through your new family's eyes and join in its activities.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

1. **Your host family is not being paid.** It is generously opening its home and heart to you as a new family member. They are warm, kind people who have made a commitment to you. They are not running a hotel, so act accordingly.
2. **Become part of the family.** You will be invited to join family activities. Try to do so. If you cannot, thank them for the invitation. It is important to be sensitive.
3. **Invite your host brother or sister to join you in your activities.** Your family will be insulted if they are ignored and you spend time only with your friends from home.
4. **Ask permission before you make plans.** Your host family should always know when you are leaving the house, where you are going, and what time you will return. If you are going to be late always telephone your family. Remember, you must always follow family rules regarding curfew.
5. In the United States, it is customary for all **family members to help with household chores.** You are expected to make your own bed and clean up after yourself daily. Offer to help clear the table and help wash dishes after supper and assist in other household chores.

6. Inviting your friends over to the home of your host family is done only with permission from your family.
7. If you or your Group Escort has organized an extra activity, you will be responsible for transportation costs as well as excursion costs.
8. Your host family is only asked to provide transportation for official IFF activities listed on the approved itinerary.
9. Talk with your host family as much as possible.
10. Discuss any problems you may have with your Community Coordinator rather than among your friends.

Following these guidelines and being polite will ensure a good relationship with your host family. Always remember that they are hosting because they want to share their life with you. So talk to them; spend time with them; make friends.

MANNERS

Being polite and courteous is important not only with your host family but with all people you meet. Here are some important reminders:

1. To say thank you when kindness is shown or help is given is an important custom in the United States. It is a simple, yet important way of showing you appreciate someone.
2. It is considered very rude to speak a foreign language if even one person in the room does not understand. Moreover, the only way to improve your English is to practice 24 hours a day. Yes, you should even dream in English!
3. Be friendly. North Americans are often very friendly and expect others to be friendly as well.

IFF RULES & EXPECTATIONS

1. If your group has arranged an optional trip, you must ask your host family for permission before agreeing to go. You will be responsible for all additional costs (meals and all transportation and entrance costs).
2. The use or possession of any controlled substances (drugs) is a violation of the law and is not tolerated. It is illegal for persons under the age of 18 years old to purchase or use tobacco products. It is illegal for persons under the age of 21 to purchase or consume alcoholic beverages.
3. The use of tobacco products (e.g., smoking cigarettes) is prohibited by all program participants under 18 years of age. For students at least 18 years of age, smoking in the house is not permitted without permission from the host family.
4. You must go to all scheduled activities and classes unless your family is planning an activity. You must inform your Group Escort or Coordinator of any such plans.
5. You are expected to be responsible for your phone bills, entertainment, social, and personal miscellaneous expenses. For all family activities, which are an extra expense to the family, you are expected to volunteer to pay your expenses. If the host family tells you that it is not necessary for you to pay, you may accept their hospitality.
6. You are required to follow all rules set by your host family, including curfews.
7. You are required to follow all school rules, including:
 - ✓ *No smoking in the school or on its property.*
 - ✓ *Being in class according to your schedule at all times.*
 - ✓ *Being respectful to teachers and quiet in their rooms.*
8. Students are not allowed to drive the following motor vehicles: automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, motor-scooters, power bicycles, motor boats, jet skis. This applies to driveways, private land, and parking lots, regardless of the special purchase of liability or other insurance - **THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS!**
9. You may not change your host family at will.

CONTACT IFF

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