



**Cultural Academic  
Student Exchange**



# Host Family Handbook

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# Your CASE Network

**Thank you for opening your heart and home to an exchange student,** we are happy to have you as part of the CASE community! Throughout your program, you'll interact with a few key groups. They include:

## EXCHANGE STUDENTS

CASE exchange students are 14-18-year-old high school students from over 25 countries around the world. They are accepted into our program based on their English skills, demeanor, adaptability, and eagerness to experience American culture. As participants in a cultural exchange program, their goal is to become part of your family, learn about your way of life, and immerse themselves in your community.

## AREA REPRESENTATIVES

You and your student will be assigned a personal Area Representative to offer guidance and support throughout the duration of the program. Your representative will also conduct your interview, home check, orientation, and maintain monthly contact with you and your student (with an in-person visit every other month.) If any questions, concerns, or issues should arise at any point throughout your program, your Area Representative should be your first line of contact.

## CASE HEADQUARTERS

Our headquarters is based in Montclair, NJ. This is where our Program Management Team and Student Services Team operate from. In addition to your Area Representative and Regional Management Team, you will also have additional support from a Student Services Facilitator who will review your student's monthly check-ins, provide updates to the student's international agency, collaborate with the regional management team, and provide guidance when necessary.

## INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

CASE works with international agencies in our students' home countries to facilitate our program. These agencies assist in screening potential applicants, conducting pre-departure orientations, and working alongside CASE as liaison to the student's natural family during their stay in the U.S.

# Host Family Responsibilities

Your student cannot wait to join your family and be part of your daily life! You may be wondering what exactly is expected of a volunteer host family. We've outlined the basic responsibilities below.

- **Treat your student like a family member, not a guest.** He or she should have the same privileges and obligations as your own children.
- Exercise supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the student's well being.
- Provide a quiet place in the home where the student can study.
- Provide a room with an exit window, bed, and storage with no more than one roommate of the same sex.
- Provide three meals per day. *Note: If the student chooses to buy lunch at school rather than bring from home, they are responsible for the cost.*
- Allocate time for a mandatory Host Family Orientation (conducted after application acceptance and before student arrival.)
- Allocate time for a mandatory Second Home Visit within 60 days of student arrival.
- Cooperate with CASE by adhering to program regulations, guidelines, and policies (regular progress reports, home visits, etc.)
- Voice any concerns and/or questions regarding the student to your Area Rep, including but not limited to: serious homesickness, difficulty adapting to family life or school, or illness.
- If the relocation of your student is required, please allow the area representative time to locate a new host family.
- Acknowledge the student's birthday and other special occasions.
- Ensure the student knows how to contact family members, friends, and other support networks.
- Notify your rep of any household changes during the program (i.e. new family members moving in, moving to a new home, etc.)
- Have access to a copy of the student's passport and insurance card in case of emergency.
- Host families are *not* expected to help students apply to US schools or drive students to college test preparation services or campus visits.



# Official Rules for Students

**Below you'll find the official rules for CASE students.**

- The use/possession of alcohol, tobacco products, or illicit drugs is forbidden.
- Program participants are expected to maintain an overall C average in core academic courses and attend classes as scheduled. Any school absence must be approved by your host family and school. Students are also expected to know and abide by all school rules and regulations.
- Independent travel is not permitted. Overnight travel is only allowed with a host parent, school approved chaperone, church group, exchange program representative, or a tour guide approved by the exchange program.
- Obscene, indecent, violent, or disorderly conduct (in-person or digitally) while on the program is grounds for dismissal. In the case of early dismissal, program fees will not be reimbursed.
- Host families determine the rules and expectations for living within their household. Program participants are expected to take part in family activities and follow rules with regards to respect, chores, curfews, social activities, and cell phone/internet use.
- While participation in your host family's church/religious activities is encouraged to help you make friends and experience U.S. culture, it cannot be required.
- Program participants are required to have their own spending money while on the program to pay for their phone bill and other personal expenses, including specific dietary needs. Students are not to lend or borrow money from the host family.
- American friendships are encouraged. Sexual relationships and/or intimate relationships that detract from the program's focus are not allowed.
- Visits from family and friends from your home country are not recommended. Special permission from CASE headquarters must be granted in advance.
- Program participants are required to participate in 5 hours of community service during their program.
- The program participant may not drive any motorized vehicle. A student is allowed to register for a school-sponsored driver education class. If a license is obtained through this program, the license must be immediately given to the exchange organization's local representative. It will be returned to the student on the day of departure for home.
- The handling of firearms by students on the CASE program is strictly forbidden. Students may not partake in any event/function involving firearms whether it be but not limited to sport, hobby or educational purposes.
- Program participants are required to depart five days from the last day of school.



# Student Arrival

**CASE standard policy is for students to arrive 5 days before the start of the program.** If you need them to arrive at a different time, please contact your CASE Area Rep as soon as possible so that students do not book flights on a date conflicting with your schedule. Once a ticket is booked, it is very difficult and expensive to change.

Due to the fact that students are arriving on international flights, it is usually best to have them arrive at the nearest international airport - which may not be the closest airport to your home.



# Airport Pickup

Because the first in-person meeting is one of the most important bonding experiences for both you and your student, **we always encourage you to pick the student up from the airport.** Your student is traveling a far distance and is likely nervous about everything that awaits them. Having you there to pick them up helps the program begin on a positive, cheerful note.

Many families make this an even more memorable experience by creating welcome signs and having the entire family there to experience the moment! Your Area Representative will inform you of your student's arrival details as soon as they become available so that you can plan your pick up.

**In the event that you cannot pick up your student, please inform your Area Representative immediately so that alternate arrangements can be made.**



# Setting Up for Success

Here are a few things you can do before your program begins to make sure you and your student start off on the right foot.

## Decide on Family Rules & Expectations

One of the best ways to avoid program issues is to have a firm understanding of your family's lifestyle, rules, and expectations before your student arrives. Think about how you expect your home to operate – and how you can explain this to a teenager from another country.

Some examples of family expectations can include:

- Curfews
- Phone/Internet Use
- Rules regarding going out with friends
- Studying/Homework
- Chores and household duties (Laundry, making the bed, doing dishes, etc.)

## Establish a Relationship

It's a great idea to get in contact with your student before they arrive to have a little extra time to get to know one another before their arrival. Remember that your student is excited - and nervous - so this early introduction can go a long way towards strengthening your relationship early on.

Platforms like Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp, and Facebook are great ways to communicate internationally. Your Area Representative can always offer you advice if you have questions about getting communication started!





# Setting Up for Success

## Look Into Your Your Student's Cultural Norms and Traditions

Before your student arrives, it's wise to look into the culture of their home country a bit. What dates and holidays are important? What is the typical diet? What is an average teenager's daily schedule like? Gaining insight into the customs and norms of your student's home country can help you gain perspective when handling the adjustment phase. Plus, learning a bit about the culture you are about to experience can be fun for the whole family!



## Understand the School Schedule and Activities

Make sure you know the school schedule and how your student will get to and from school. Are there buses? Will the student need a ride? Is there a carpool he or she can join? If the student plans on participating in afterschool activities, how will he or she be getting home?

Getting involved in school sports and activities is a great way for students to meet new friends. Many of these clubs and sports start before the school year begins. If the student is interested in participating in one or more of these activities, make sure your student knows the schedule and can adjust travel plans if needed.



# 5 Things Your Exchange Student Wants You to Know

Ideally, host families and their exchange students have relationships built on open communication and honesty. But sometimes, coming into a new host family's home can cause students to feel unsure about how to approach unfamiliar or confusing situations. Add in a language barrier and cultural differences, and you could experience some communication speedbumps.

**To help you understand and bond with your exchange student, we've gathered some important things exchange students want their host families to know.**

## We Don't Always Understand the Rules

Exchange students understand that there will be new rules when they arrive in your home. Part of the experience is learning to do things differently, and students are almost always willing to do what is asked of them.

However, sometimes students need a little extra help understanding the "why" behind the rules. When it comes to things like curfews, chores, and expectations about new friends, students may need extra help understanding why certain rules are put in place.

**Here's a tip:** Write down house rules on a piece of paper, and have them ready for your student when they arrive. Allow your student some time to read them and think about questions they have. After they've settled in, sit down and talk about each rule — and answer any questions your student might have.

Remind your student that they can ask questions whenever they come up. It's important that students feel they are able to ask when they feel unsure!



# 5 Things Your Exchange Student Wants You to Know

## Don't Be Afraid of Awkward Silences - We Just Need Time to Think!

Even if a student has studied English for years before arriving in the U.S., adjusting to a new language full-time is emotionally and mentally difficult. Sometimes students need a few extra seconds or minutes to think something through. Don't feel tempted to fill awkward silences with more questions.

**Here's a tip:** After asking a question, wait at least a few moments before asking another. If it seems like your student is struggling to find the right words, be patient. Sometimes it takes time to “switch over” to thinking in another language. Also, complimenting your student on his or her current English ability can provide the self-confidence they need to use English in conversation and improve.



## Sometimes We Just Need a Time Out

Learning a new language and adjusting to a new culture can be tiring. Just like doing jumping jacks makes people feel physically tired, speaking in a different language can leave students mentally fatigued. Consequently, exchange students who are dealing with a bigger language barrier may need to sleep more in order to “bounce back” after a long day of speaking English. While it's a good idea to encourage social engagement, exchange students sometimes hit a mental wall that leaves them irritable, exhausted, and more emotional than usual.

**Here's a tip:** If you think this might be happening with your exchange student, consider giving them a “time out” to recuperate and recharge. You can set ground rules for these “time outs”, which might include no cell phones or lengthy conversations with friends back home. Remember to talk to your student about what they might need in order to conserve energy and adapt to their new language.



# 5 Things Your Exchange Student Wants You to Know

## Homesickness is Always Harder Than We Expect

Most students have never spent significant amounts of time away from their family, much less in a new country. Consequently, students may fall back into old patterns when homesickness sets in. The temptation to talk to family and friends back home will be almost impossible to resist!

**Here's a tip:** Patience is key. You might think rigid rules are the only way to help your student cope with homesickness, but this isn't always the case. Talk to your student about what they're feeling, and how you can help. **Encourage them to get involved in school and community activities that can help them make friends.** Try to reduce their amount of contact back home by inviting them to spend more time with your family rather than alone in their room. Distractions such as movie nights, shopping trips, visits with family and friends, etc. can also help a great deal!



## Reverse Culture Shock is Difficult, Too!

When it comes time for your student to return to their home country, there will be plenty of mixed emotions: excitement, relief, sadness, and uncertainty.

Don't be surprised if your student starts reaching out to your family only days after they've returned home. Once the "honeymoon period" has worn off, they'll be missing American culture more than they realized they would!

**Here's a tip:** Plan a few video calls after your student returns home. This will help ease some of the sadness that comes with returning to their home country.

If your student doesn't stay in touch with you after they've returned home, try not to take it personally — every student deals with the ups and downs of cultural change differently, and it may not have anything to do with their opinion of you!

# Overcoming Challenges

Whenever you feel an issue arising with your student, you should try to address it immediately. **Open and honest conversations can often prevent a small issue from snowballing into a larger one.** Some typical “teenage” issues you may face include communication struggles, poor academic performance, trouble getting along with friends and family, etc. **If you are experiencing a persistent issue that requires extra assistance, we are here to help.** Our Student Services Department has an official problem-resolution process intended to get your student’s program back on track. The process works as follows:



## Problem Identification

When addressing an issue, it’s important that both you and your student are crystal clear as to what it is. To do this, your Area Rep will meet with you and/or your student to discuss the problem at hand. A Problem Identification form detailing the issue will then be completed and sent to CASE headquarters. The student’s agency will be notified.

## Problem Resolution

If a problem persists, your Area Rep will conduct another meeting to come up with a clear course of action to resolve the issue. This action plan will be documented with a Problem Resolution form. Again, this form will be sent to CASE headquarters and the student’s agency will be informed.

## Probation

If an issue persists despite the problem resolution plan, probation might be needed - which sets strong guidelines for improving behavior. If the student fails to make the changes outlined in the probation, it may result in termination from the program.



## Relocation

Sometimes despite everyone’s best intentions, the match between the student and the host family simply isn’t working. In this situation, a relocation to a new host may be necessary. This is an extreme step that should not be considered until attempts to resolve any issues have been made. Only CASE has the authority to relocate a student. If you find yourself in this situation, please keep in mind that a relocation can take some time. If it is possible, please try to maintain the best relationship possible with the student until they are moved to a new home.

*\*Certain behavior may warrant skipping resolution steps/program termination.*

# Community Service: Project HELP

One of our goals is to help the teenagers of today grow into the global leaders of tomorrow. We believe that instilling a dedication to service through our Project HELP initiative is an important part of this process. **Per Project HELP, students are required to complete a minimum of 5 hours of community service.** You are not required to participate, but it could be a fun way to bond together! Some project ideas include park cleanups, food drives, visiting nursing homes, and volunteering at animal shelters.



## Traveling with Your Student

While students are not permitted to travel alone during the program, they are allowed to travel with you and your family provided the appropriate steps are taken. **CASE needs to know where our students are at all times**, so for any domestic overnight trips simply make sure that your Area Rep is aware of your plans. **For international trips and cruises, your student will need a signed DS2019 form from CASE headquarters.** This form is required for your student to re-enter the country. It's important that you work with your Area Rep to complete this process as early as possible to ensure you have everything you need for your trip.





# Medical Insurance

**Your student will arrive in the US with medical insurance, however keep in mind that this program health insurance is not comprehensive coverage.** Pre-existing conditions, immunizations, routine health checkups, and preventative care is not covered. Pre-approval for certain treatment may also be necessary.

**Pre-existing conditions** are defined as any injury, sickness, disease, or other condition that the student had symptoms of or had been seen by a doctor within 36 months of the start of the program. Here are some examples of conditions that are not covered:

- Dermatology visits for acne or other pre-existing skin conditions
- Any pre-existing condition like thyroid, diabetes, vision issues
- Physical therapy
- Dental/Orthodontic Treatment



**It's important that host families do not sign as guarantor on any medical expenses incurred by the student.** The student's natural parents are responsible for any medical bills acquired during the program, which is why it's important that students avoid costly treatment - such as an emergency room visit - unless totally necessary. A good alternative to the emergency room is an in-network Urgent Care. If, for some reason, you are required to sign for a student in order to secure treatment, notify your Area Rep right away so that the appropriate payment arrangements can be made.

Your student's insurance card and policy information, along with in-network providers, will be emailed to them by their provider and should be accessible at all times in case of emergency.

**For more info or to access insurance cards, visit [case-usa.org/j1-insurance](https://case-usa.org/j1-insurance)**

## Important Contacts

Keep track of important program contacts such as your CASE Area Representative, CASE Regional Management Team, and Facilitator below.

**CASE has a 24/7 emergency line: 973-655-0193.**

Relationship	Name	Phone Number / Email
<input type="checkbox"/> CASE Local Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
<input type="checkbox"/> CASE Local Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
<input type="checkbox"/> CASE Local Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitator <input type="checkbox"/> Other		
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