



**INTERNATIONAL  
Student Exchange**

*Sharing Lives...Sharing Worlds*



# Host Family Handbook



## About ISE



### Sharing Lives...



### Sharing Worlds



**International Student Exchange (ISE)** is the leading not-for-profit high school exchange sponsor and has been arranging programs for exchange students for over 30 years. We are designated by the US Department of State and place approximately 2,800 students yearly from over 40 countries in all 50 states.

Our host families are anything but "typical" and reflect the wide diversity represented in the US. Host families provide a warm and welcoming environment for the exchange student, treating students like they are family members. Students will be involved in nearly every aspect of family life including holidays, hobbies, family outings and even the occasional household chore.

This handbook is a detailed look at the process of becoming and being a host family, and it is designed to act as a reference guide throughout your hosting experience. It is a great resource for common concerns and situations that may happen during your exchange period. We hope this guide enhances your expectations and eases any concerns you might have about the hosting experience.

Your exchange student will also receive a handbook with similar information from the student's perspective. Once your student arrives, we recommend you read the student orientation handbook together.

For any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of the program, your ISE Area Rep will be the first point of contact. You are also encouraged to contact our home office if you feel the need.

We thank our families, schools and international representatives for helping us make such a worthwhile endeavor possible.

# Important Contact Information

**ISE Area Rep (should always be your first contact)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Regional Manager**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***ISE Headquarters Contact Information***

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# Student Medical information

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Nearest urgent care clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

In Network Doctor Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Important ISE Dates to Remember**

Item	Date	Time





## Your ISE Area Representative

Your local ISE Area Representative, will be your main contact for all matters related to the exchange program. He or she is there to help guide you and actively give support throughout the year.

Your Area Rep should be in contact with you and your exchange student monthly. This will be a great time for you and the student to be very open about any issues or concerns. Your Area Rep has experience and training through ISE, so he or she will be able to assist with many common situations.

Your Area Rep can assist you with various stages of the exchange process, including school issues and ISE policies. Your Area Rep is also a great resource to help with student adjustment issues and is there in the unlikely event of a student emergency.



### Exchange Students

Hosting a foreign exchange student means opening your home and your heart to a teen from another country.



### Host Family

Being an Exchange Student Host Family can bring a new perspective to your life.

## International Student Exchange

### Local Area Representatives

Your local ISE Area Representative, will be your main contact for all things ISE. They are there to help guide you and actively give support throughout the year.

### Regional Manager

Regional Managers (RMs) are the senior field staff. They are responsible for the development and overall quality of a designated region.

New York ● Home Office

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# Basic Host Family Responsibilities

Your student cannot wait to join your family and be part of your warm and welcoming home. These are the basic responsibilities we require from our host families:

- Establish trust and friendship between the student and your family by offering a safe and welcoming environment.
- Offer support and make the student feel like a part of your family. He or she should have the same privileges and obligations as your own children.
- Provide a quiet place in the home where the student may study.
- Encourage the student to learn and participate in the ways of your home.
- Provide a room with a bed and storage for the student's belongings.
- Exercise supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the student's well being.
- Provide three meals per day.
- Encourage involvement in community life by introducing the student to neighbors, friends, and local groups.
- Maintain monthly communication with your Area Rep.
- Voice any concerns and questions regarding the student to the ISE Area Rep, including serious homesickness, difficulty adapting to family life or school, or illness.
- Do not expect perfection.
- Each student will be different – keep an open mind.
- Communicate your expectations clearly.
- Be understanding about cultural differences.
- Acknowledge the student's birthday and other special occasions.
- Ensure the student knows how to contact family members, friends, and other support networks.
- In case of an emergency, have access to a copy of the student's passport and insurance card.





# Basic Exchange Student Expectations

Your exchange student is expected to do his or her part in being active in family and school life. The student will attend school, participate in family events, and pay for personal items. He or she will be expected to do household chores and follow family rules. These are the basic responsibilities that we expect from our exchange students.

- Actively participate in family activities.
- Be respectful and considerate of host family.
- Have at least \$300 spending money per month provided by their natural parents.
- Do not borrow money from or lend money to your host family.
- Pay for school lunches purchased at school.
- Pay for school supplies.
- Pay for extra activities and fees.
- Adjust to host family.
- Follow ISE and Host Family rules.
- Attend school and take a full academic schedule (at least four academic classes).
- Take English and an American studies course (US History, US Government, etc.).
- Follow school rules including attendance, behavior and dress code, and respect school officials and teachers.
- Maintain an overall C average.



# Before Student Arrives

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It's important to be prepared before your student arrives. We strongly encourage you to be in frequent contact with your student once his or her placement with your family is approved. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), email and Skype are effective and free forms of communication. By communicating early and often, you will build a relationship with your student before he or she arrives. You'll learn about their favorite activities, foods and expectations and help them form a bond with your family.

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## Learn About Your Student's Culture

We recommend reading about the history and culture of your student's home country before the student's arrival. Take note of cultural differences between the student's home country and the United States. For example, they might celebrate some of the same holidays, but the way they celebrate might be very different. Knowing some of the history and culture of the student's home country can help you better engage with your student when they arrive. Here are a few reference websites that may be helpful: [culturecrossing.net](http://culturecrossing.net), [everyculture.com](http://everyculture.com), [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org).

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## Medical Information

All students come with insurance managed through United Healthcare Network. United Healthcare has one of the largest physician networks available and you can check to see if your family doctor is a member. If the student has to go to a different doctor, we recommend you put the doctor's number on the contact sheet list.

If your student requires surgery or other significant medical treatment, contact your Area Rep prior to their treatment.

Students will be given an ID card with specific policy information. Detailed information about United Healthcare can be found on page 31.

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## Preparing the Student's Room

Besides a bed, the student will need space to study and store belongings. Setting up a living space ahead of time makes things go more smoothly once your student arrives. It's nice to even give the student wall space if you can. They might want to hang up pictures of family, friends, or posters of a favorite band or actor.

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## Understanding Your Student's School Schedule

Make sure you know the school schedule and how the 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 participates in afterschool activities, how will he or she be getting home?

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## School Activities

Many 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.

## Arrival

ISE standard policy is for students to arrive 5 days before the start of school. If you need them to arrive at a different time, please contact your ISE 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. Our rule of thumb is that the arrival airport needs to be within 90 minutes of the host family home. If this creates a significant hardship for you, please contact your ISE Area Rep and we will try to make alternate arrangements.

If there is any other reason you cannot pick up the student, contact your ISE Area Rep. If the rep is not available, call ISE's main office at 800-766-4656. If it is after business hours call 631-297-6100.



## Airport Pickup

You should discuss your student's flight details with your ISE Area Rep. The airport meeting will be the first face-to-face meeting. Both you and your student will be excited and a little nervous. Make the student feel welcomed by bringing a sign with you. Also, be sure to take a picture.

**When you arrive to your home, make sure the student calls home to let his or her parents know they arrived safely.**

## First Couple of Days

The first few days can be quite an adjustment for both your family and the student. When the student first arrives, you may want to show them the town and do all sorts of fun activities. However, the student may be tired from traveling and may just want to eat and go to bed. If this happens, do not be offended. The student may just need a day or two to adjust to the new time zone and country. Try not to overwhelm them too much in the beginning, but also make sure they don't just stay in their room after the first day.

**If more than a day (two days for students coming from Asia) go by and your student is saying he/she is extremely tired and/or not coming out of their room except for meals, call your ISE Area Rep.**



# Student Adjustment Period - The first two weeks

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The adjustment period is different for all families and students. Some are very quick, and the student feels like part of the family right away. Others can take a little time, which is perfectly normal. This section is designed to assist you with various stages.

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## Language Adjustment

Even though all of our students are tested for English, they are not used to speaking English all of the time. It's very important to give the student time to adjust. For some, this may mean speaking to them slowly and repeating sentences if necessary. The student may be translating English to their native tongue in their head, and then translating back to respond. It also may be difficult for you to understand the student's accent. This is also very normal. The student's pronunciation should improve over time and your ear will adjust to their accent as well. Communicate frequently and encourage the use of a dictionary and to ask questions. If you are concerned about your student's English proficiency please contact your ISE Area Rep.

There may also be communication that isn't spoken. It's important to pay attention to body language and social cues. For example, the student may not feel comfortable telling you they don't like a particular dish while your own kids may be very vocal so you might want to pay attention to see how much they eat off their plate. Paying attention to simple cues like this, can help with the adjustment.

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## Establish Rules and Expectations

It is a good idea to have a family meeting within the first few days. Tell the student should be treated like a member of the family, and should be expected to participate as one.

Please keep in mind that the students are coming from a very different cultural backgrounds so don't expect them to know even basic things that you might take for granted. For example, in the US, children usually take their own dishes off the dinner table, but this is not a common practice in many countries. It might take some time to explain the details of your home and family customs, but it will help prevent misunderstandings and hurt feelings.

Go over specifically what you expect the student to do. This would also be a great time to talk about school schedule, transportation, sports, activities and other family activities.

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## First Days of School

Your student will be completely immersed in American culture which can be very overwhelming. If they come home tired, frustrated or homesick, don't panic. These are very normal emotions for someone who has just entered a new culture. Each day it will get easier for them. We recommend that you help them get involved in activities. Meeting new friends and staying busy can help with the adjustment.

If your student is the only high school-aged child in your house, we suggest to try to find a "buddy" that can show them around school for the first couple of days. This can be the child of a neighbor, a cousin, or any other similarly-aged person in your area. If you don't know anyone, the school may be able to help.



## Communication Back Home

There is no question technology has jumped leaps and bounds over the last 10 years. The emergence of smart phones has enabled students to keep in touch with their friends and family back in their home country. Students should be able to speak with their natural family and friends, but if communication is every day, it can hinder their ability to adjust properly. That is why it is important to establish limits on communication home very early in the program.

What usually works best is to set aside 1-2 hours on a Saturday or a Sunday for your student to call home and speak to their family. That makes it consistent, something the student can look forward to, and ensures that schedules are aligned. The student's parents are also told to limit their contact to no more than once per week so there should be no misunderstanding. If you feel that the student is maintaining excessive contact with family and friends back home, please contact your ISE Area Rep.

iPads and laptops have also come along way. Students will want to communicate with friends through email and social media. They may want to watch movies or shows in their native language. We strongly recommend that you limit their engagement with their home culture or language. For detailed recommendations, see the computer and internet section of the guide book.

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## Cultural Fatigue

It can be very helpful to go over basic US cultural items and keep in mind that the student is going through a dramatic adjustment to both American culture and your own family's day-to-day life. The student may be nervous and not yet comfortable with basic American social customs, so give them time to adjust. Things that are completely natural to you, such as shaking hands or speaking directly to adults, may be unnatural to them and subtle things like American humor or sarcasm can be confusing. They will become more accustomed to these nuances as time goes on.

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## Homesickness

Many students go through feelings of homesickness when they arrive and experience highs and lows in their first few weeks or even months. Your family will also notice adjustment issues as you take on a new family member. ISE encourages you to keep the student active, even if it's around the house.

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## They are Part of the Family

This can be the toughest thing to establish in the beginning but it's very important to remember. **They are not a guest in your house, they are part of your family.** It's natural to want to treat them as a guest at first. However, this can make it harder to establish a normal family relationship later on.

# Student Cycle – August / September

Students are starting school and adjusting to everyday life in the US and with your family. Your family is growing accustomed to having a new family member around.

## Family Feels:

Everything is going well and the student is a great fit. This is known as the “Halo Effect”. You might feel the need to be a part of everything the student does.

## Student Feels:

They are getting more comfortable with speaking English daily and spending time with your family. The student is starting to enjoy school and is now less homesick.

## What ISE Recommends:

You should avoid putting the student on a pedestal. This can be very easy to do since everything is going so well. You should encourage the student to get involved in school with a club or sport. If they have met new friends, arrange for their friends to come over. This also is a great time to talk about culture differences.

## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Medical Information** - Once your student is settled, be sure to go over medical insurance information so you are prepared in case of an emergency.

**Classes** - We recommend that you coordinate with your ISE Area Rep to make sure the student is taking the required classes, especially if it's important for their home country.

**Finances** - Sometimes it is helpful if students set up a local bank account. Students must keep their finances completely separate from the host family and should not share their PIN or credit card information with the host family. You may also want to talk to your student about budgeting and expected expenses that might occur during the year.



**Sports & Activities** - Ask your guidance counselor or Athletic Director to review the options of clubs and sports at the school. Encourage your student to pick several that interests him/her and go to their first meeting. Students that join clubs or sports consistently have much better experiences on the program.

**Warning Signs** - Pay attention to warning signs. Make sure your student is active and spending time with your family. You also want to limit their contact with their natural family to once a week.



# Student Cycle – October

This month can be an “emotional roller coaster” as the student and host family experience the highs and lows of family life together.

## Family Feels:

They can see the student starting to become comfortable in the home and making new friends. This is a positive and important step, but sometimes the host family can feel a bit left out as the student starts to develop some independence.

## Student Feels:

They might be missing their friends and family, especially if they haven't made any American friends yet. School can be hard due to the language and culture barriers.

## What ISE Recommends:

If you see the student is spending too much time in their room or communicating too often with their natural parents. It is important to address this issue. Talk to the student to see how they feel. If they haven't made a lot of friends yet, try to get them more involved with school. Homecoming dances, Halloween parties and school activities can be great opportunities for the student to get involved.

Do things around the house to involve the student. Go out to dinner as a family or even go apple or pumpkin picking. Encourage the student to cook an authentic dish from their home country. Limit computer time if you feel the student is on too much. If any issues seem too challenging, call your ISE Area Rep for assistance.



## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Student Trips** - Students often want to see other parts of the US during their stay. Sometimes they travel with the host family and other times they participate in ISE sponsored trips. If they are interested, they can visit ISE's website [www.iseusa.org](http://www.iseusa.org) and click on Student Trips to see what is available.

**Project HELP** - All students are required to do 5 hours of community service and most students do much more. If your student doesn't have an opportunity in their local area, ISE has suggestions through the Red Cross and Ronald McDonald House. All of this is available on the ISE website.

**School** - This is a good time to check the student's grades. If the student is struggling with a course, or their English isn't progressing, contact your ISE Area Rep. It may be important to arrange a tutor or other special assistance to help the student improve.

# Student Cycle – November

Many of our past host families say that they really start to feel a “family connection” to their student around the holidays. Thanksgiving is a very American tradition and many exchange students look forward to it. This also might be the first time your student meets your extended family.

## Family Feels:

The student is now communicating more and you are seeing their true personality. Everything begins to feel relaxed and normal. This holiday season allows you to share some of your family traditions.

## Student Feels:

They now start to feel a part of the family and not a guest. They will joke around with you and will feel comfortable hanging around the house and bringing friends over. The student may also start to test you as host parents a little, just like any teen.

## What ISE Recommends:

The student is a little more independent and may not be as reliant on the host family. This is a great time for the student to branch out and try new things. The student may also test boundaries, and it's important to recognize and address their issues and if necessary, revisit your family rules.

If you still feel your student has not connected to your family, you should speak with your ISE Area Rep.



## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Travel** - Many families travel for Thanksgiving. If you do leave your state, be sure to tell your ISE Area Rep. We encourage sharing your holiday traditions with your student so they get the full American experience.

**Project HELP** - Around the holidays is a great time for students to accomplish their Project HELP hours in. There are usually many opportunities through school, churches and food banks to help out.

**Winter Sports** - Tryouts for winter sports may start in late November or early December. We greatly encourage students to participate in sports. Students from warmer climates may be especially interested in snow sports.

**Cold Weather Issues** - If you live in a region that gets snow, your student may need to get a new jacket and hat. For students from warmer climates, they may have no comprehension of snow and cold and the potential dangers they may present. You may want to talk to them about basic cold-weather preparations that we often take for granted like dressing in layers, staying dry. Talk to your student about the risks of hypothermia and frostbite if this is a concern in your region.

# Student Cycle – December

This is often one of the most enjoyable times of year for the student and host family. Your student may not have the experience of celebrating the same holidays and it's something many students look forward to.

## Family Feels:

You may feel very excited to share your holiday traditions and also learn about your student's traditions.

## Student Feels:

Your student may actually feel a mix of joy and possibly some melancholy. They are excited about the upcoming holidays, but may miss their own family and holiday celebrations.

## What ISE Recommends:

Involve your student in your holiday celebrations. Share your family's customs and if the student has some of his own, ask the student about them and incorporate their customs into your celebrations.

It is helpful if the student is active over the break and does not spend too much time in the home. You should talk with your student about winter break activities. Make sure the student does not spend an excessive amount of time talking with his or her family at home, as it may reignite feelings of homesickness.



## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Travel** - Many families travel for the holidays. It is strongly encouraged and gives the student an opportunity to see more of the US. If you do leave your state, be sure to tell your ISE Area Rep.

**Natural Family Travel** - Some natural families may want to visit the United States during this time. ISE does not permit natural family visits as it is disruptive to the student and host family. Students are also prohibited from returning to their home countries while on the program, of dire emergency involving an immediate family member.

**Students Leaving in January** - If you have a 5 month student, you may need to start the Convalidation process. [See convalidation section on page 37.](#)



# Student Cycle – January

After the high from the holidays, the low of winter can follow. Even in the US, we feel a natural letdown after the holidays come and go. The winter can be especially hard on your student.

## Family Feels:

You might be tired from the holidays and need to adjust back to your own schedule.

## Student Feels:

Your student may feel the winter doldrums. Since the excitement of the holidays is over and the program is only half over, the student may enter a little bit of a slump.

## What ISE Recommends:

Winter sports or community service offers a great outlet during the winter months. It may be exciting for students who have never seen snow. You may take your student skiing, snowboarding or tubing. Some students even get to go ice fishing. You can also introduce your student to activities you used to do as a child like sledding, winter hiking or building a snowman.

## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**School** – Check on your student's class schedule for the new semester. remove: since his or her classes might have changed. After seeing their first semester grades, you may realize the student needs extra help. If the student has not attained a "C" average, please make sure your ISE Area Rep is notified.

**Warning Signs** – This is another time of year to pay attention to warning signs. If a student isn't used to a long winter, he or she may feel a little cabin fever. Make sure the student is eating well and staying involved in family time.

If you're hosting an August – January student, please review the "Departure Section"



# Student Cycle – February

Depending on where you live, February can be the last of the winter months. It's also the time for two un-official holidays: Valentine's Day and the Super Bowl.

## Family Feels:

The school year is starting to move along as winter sports and clubs are being wrapped up. Everything feels very normal now and routine.

## Student Feels:

The winter doldrums are finally ending as the weather might start to become nicer. School has become much easier as the student's English and cultural understanding has improved. The Super Bowl might be something the student looks forward to as a truly "American" experience.

## What ISE Recommends:

At this point, the student knows your family very well. This is a great time for the student to really document their stay. Encourage them to take pictures of the family, his or her friends and the events they take part in.

## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Red Cross Month** – This is a wonderful time for your student to do their Project HELP hours if they haven't already. All of the information is available on [www.iseusa.org](http://www.iseusa.org).





# Student Cycle – March

Depending on the year and your location, March can feel like winter or the height of spring. Because April can be so hectic, we actually recommend you start speaking with your student about their departure plans.

## Family Feels:

Just when everyone has gotten comfortable, you realize the program is ending soon. This can bring feelings of anxiety or uncertainty.

## Student Feels:

The student has now made very good friends and feels accepted in both school and at home. He or she may not want to think about the program ending.

## What ISE Recommends:

Start to look at end of school dates so your student can book their return flights. This is also a great time to make a list of what the student wants to do with the rest of their time in the US.

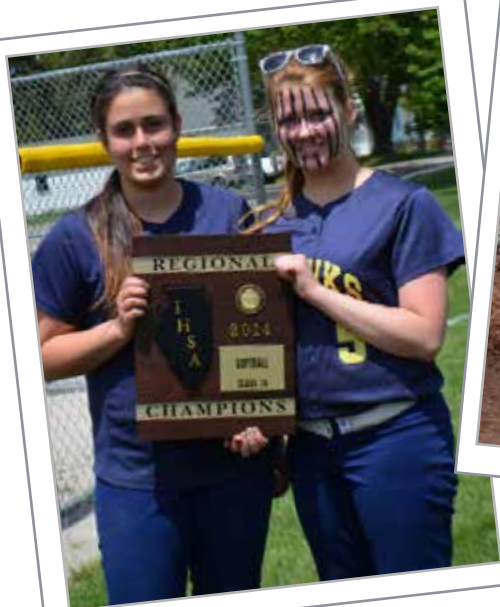


## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Return Flights** – Once your school has finalized any adjustments that might be required due to snow days or other weather delays, it's time to start looking at return flights for the journey home.

**Spring Sports** – This is the time your student should look into spring sports. Be sure he or she contacts the school to confirm tryout dates.

**Spring Break** – If you plan to travel for spring break with your student, be sure to contact your ISE Area Rep.





# Student Cycle – April

April can be one of the busiest months of the year. Your family may celebrate Easter or Passover and there are many other school and family activities occurring at the same time.

## Family Feels:

Things are starting to go by way too fast.

## Student Feels:

They want to experience as much as possible. They are starting to get excited for the prom and other parties that are coming up. They might start to slack on their school work.

## What ISE Recommends:

Make sure you talk to your student about their spending habits during this time of year. Prom can get expensive with a dress, renting tuxes, limos, etc. Tell him or her to budget their money wisely.

It's also a good time to talk about end of the year parties and the temptations they might encounter. Use of drugs or alcohol by exchange students is strictly prohibited and each year students are sent home early because they violate these rules.



## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Not to ruin their experience** – It's good to make sure your student is staying focused and staying out of trouble.

**School Work** – Make sure they keep studying and maintaining at least a "C" average.

**Community Service** – This is also one of the last months the student can fulfill his or her community service obligation.



# Student Cycle – May

May can be both the most enjoyable and the hardest month with your exchange student. You really start to plan your student's goodbye, but there are many activities that happen to keep your mind occupied - Memorial Day, Mother's Day, end of sports and clubs - it will go by very fast.

## Family Feels:

You might feel anxious about sending the student back to his or her home country. You might also be envious of the time others spend with your student. You are also sad because the student is leaving.

## Student Feels:

The student has mixed feelings about returning home. He or she wants to return home to his or her natural family and friends, but the student does not want to say goodbye to his or her host family. **Sometimes the student may start to pull away because it makes it easier for them to leave.**

## What ISE Recommends:

Set aside a time to talk with your student about his or her feelings. Understand that this isn't goodbye forever. Plan future communication with your student via phone or email. Many host families will visit their past students in the student's home country. Your ISE Area Rep is always a great resource to help with these types of conversations.



## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

**Convalidation** - Many countries require an official Convalidation process in order for an exchange student to receive credit for their courses while in the US. See convalidation section, page 37.

**Students getting ready to leave** – By this time your student should have their return flight information. You should work out the logistics for their departure. The student may need to ship items home rather than carrying them on the plane.

# Student Cycle – June

End of school graduation and farewell parties can be overwhelming. The reality that the program is coming to an end feels “real”.

## Family Feels:

You may feel sad to say goodbye and will want to spend every minute with your student.

## Student Feels:

Your student may withdraw emotionally or feel overwhelmed. He or she might anticipate reverse culture shock or anxiety about returning home.

## What ISE Recommends:

Support your student as much as possible. Get him or her excited about returning home and how wonderful it will be to see everyone. Remind the student about how he or she will always remain part of your family.

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## IMPORTANT TOPICS:

Review the “Departure Section” on page 37.





# Rules and Policies

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WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES, THE STUDENT IS REQUIRED TO OBEY ALL GOVERNMENT LAWS REGARDING IMMIGRATION STATUS. THE STUDENT IS ALSO REQUIRED TO OBEY ALL STATE AND LOCAL LAWS, HOST FAMILY RULES, SCHOOL RULES, AND RULES SET BY ISE. BELOW ARE SOME OF THE ISE PROGRAM RULES AS PRESENTED IN THE STUDENT APPLICATION AND IN THE STUDENT HANDBOOK.

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1. Obey the disciplinary rules of the Host Family and school. Be sure to keep communication open.
2. Alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs or abuse of prescription medication is **strictly prohibited**. Students may be sent home for violating this policy.
3. Driving of automobiles (except in the case of Drivers Education) or other motorized vehicles is prohibited. Contact your ISE Area Representative or the NY office for clarification. Operation of family motor vehicles is prohibited.
4. Students are expected to have a minimum of \$300 personal spending money per month for the duration of the program.
5. Student must never borrow money from nor lend money to the host family.
6. Student is responsible for personal expenses including cell phones (pay-as-you-go plan is advised.)
7. Students must return home within 5 days of the completion of school.
8. Students must maintain a "C" average in his/her classes.
9. The student is not allowed to make "life changing decisions" while on the ISE program. This would include, but not be limited to: marriage, pregnancy, body piercing, tattoos, changing religions, etc.
10. Students are required to participate in 5 hours of community service during their program.
11. Only the NY Office can terminate a student's program.

## Travel

Overnight travel is only allowed when the trip is with:

- The host family
- A school, church or similar group
- An Area Representative
- An ISE sponsored trip

All Area Representatives must work through his or her regional supervisor to obtain proper authorization. Any violation of these rules can have serious consequences which could result in program termination.



**Students may not travel to visit relatives or family friends while on the program.** At the end of the program, after school ends, a student can travel with the permission of his or her parents.

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## Visits

Visits from the natural family during the program are prohibited. In our experience, visits from natural family are disruptive of the program and can negatively impact the host family and student bond. Both the student and natural family have been made aware of and agreed to this rule prior to participation in the program.

The natural family should not visit until the end of the program and **even then, only if the host family agrees.** If you would like the natural family to visit, please notify your ISE Area Rep. We also recommend that natural family guests stay in local hotels or B&Bs rather than at the host family home. You may want to suggest some places near your home. If you do not feel comfortable having the natural family visit but don't want to upset them, please contact your ISE Area Rep and ISE will address the issue with the natural family.

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## Food and Meals

In order to host a student, families must be willing to provide "three square meals daily" without compensation from the student. Host families must be willing to provide three meals that roughly meet USDA nutritional requirements (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/nutrition-standards-school-meals>) without cost to the student. Basically, this means the following:

*Breakfast: Milk, cereal, fruit*

*Lunch: Milk, fruit/vegetable, bread or pasta, meat or other protein*

*Dinner: Milk, fruit/vegetable, bread or pasta, meat or other protein*

*If the student wants to eat significantly more than this, the host family can ask that the student to contribute to the cost of meals.*

Students can be expected to pay for food in the following circumstances:

- If the student does not want to bring a "sack lunch" to school and would rather buy the school lunch in the cafeteria, the student can be expected to pay for this themselves.
- If the student wants "special" food or snack items that the family does not normally purchase for themselves or their children, the student can be expected to pay for these items themselves.
- If the student has special dietary needs or wishes to only eat organic food (and the family does not), the student can be expected to pay for these specific food items.

One question that often comes up is who should pay at a restaurant? If the host family is bringing the entire family to a restaurant, the host family should pay for the student's meal since there is no other meal option. However, if the student chooses to go to a restaurant with friends and not as part of a family gathering, the student would be expected to pay for his own meals. If you have other questions, please contact your ISE Area Rep.

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### **Money Issues**

Students are required to bring sufficient money to cover their expenses while on the program. This includes school supplies and books, electronics, clothing, cell phone, special food items and other expenses. These items are entirely the student's responsibility and the host family should not provide additional money to the exchange student.

The host family may never ask for, or accept, any money from an exchange student to cover household expenses. Host families may not ask a student to pay for gas, home utility, cable or internet or other expenses.

If the host family is taking a family vacation, the student can be expected to cover the costs of specific items related to the vacation. These costs should be detailed to the student in writing and must also be discussed with your ISE Area Rep. They can include airfare, theme park admissions or similar items. If the student is to have his/her own hotel room, then he/she can be expected to bear the additional cost of that room. If the family is renting a home, or the student is sharing a room that would have already been booked for another family member, the student should not be expected to cover that cost.

Under no circumstances should a host family member have access to or use a student's credit card, cash, bank account, PIN or other personal financial information.

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### **Medication**

If your exchange student has arrived with a supply of medication, please make sure you notify your ISE Area Rep. Your ISE Area Rep will ask the student to provide detail on what the medication is, what ailments it covers and they will also need to provide any doctors prescriptions to detail any directions for taking medication.

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### **Religious Services**

Exchange students are encouraged to attend religious services as a family activity. Religion is a deeply personal issue. Note what the student said in his or her application regarding religious participation. If they said they attended religious services with a certain frequency in their student application, it is reasonable to expect them to continue that practice in the US. If a student does not feel comfortable attending services, they should not be forced. Be respectful of the student's religious beliefs and please do not impose your own on them.

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### **Computer and Internet Usage**

Cell phones and computers are part of everyday life now, but the use of electronics should not interfere with a student's exchange program. We recommend that host families allow their students to use the internet for non-school related activities for about an hour per day during the week and 2 hours per day on the weekend. As a host parent, you are free to establish your own rules that are consistent with your family rules.

Students must obey family and ISE rules for improper use of the internet. This includes accessing pornographic, inappropriate or offensive material, making inappropriate posts to social media or otherwise sharing private family information.

Your student should not be modifying any computer or router settings, or downloading any content to your computer.



## Social Media & Cell Phones

Social media and smart phones are a basic activity of teen life. We recommend the student not use his or her cell phone during school hours or family time. It can be very easy for the student to communicate back home and disengage from his or her host family.

Host parents will sometimes “cell-phone ground” their own children. However, due to government regulations, this is not allowed for exchange students. Regulations require that students have reasonable access to their phone and computer, so they have a way contacting their natural family or other support structures. Therefore, ISE does not allow host families to take away a student’s phone or computer.

However, it can be appropriate to limit your student’s access to his or her phone or computer at night. This can help prevent them from losing sleep staying up all night chatting with friends back home, or watching movies.

We also do not recommend that you put your student on your cell plan. Your student’s personal expenses should be kept entirely separate from your family’s.



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## Natural Parents and Friends Back Home

We recommend that you limit the student’s communication with his or her natural family to once per week. Your student should not be contacting his or her family and friends from their home country as it can exacerbate homesickness and slow down the student’s progression with English.

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## Driver’s Education

The student may attend a school-sponsored Driver’s Education program if the requirements for the state program can be met within guidelines listed below:

- Students may only practice driving in an authorized Driver’s Education car and never in a family vehicle.
- Your family must provide permission to participate in Driver’s Education.
- **The student may not drive even after they obtain a license.**
- The student covers all cost associated with Driver’s Ed.



# Addressing Problems

While most exchange experiences are very successful, there are few that are perfect every moment of every day. We are talking about teenagers after all. There will be bumps in the road, but if the student, host family and ISE Area Rep work together, most problems can be addressed quickly and easily.

Your ISE Area Rep will be in contact with you and your exchange student on at least a monthly basis. When you speak to her/him, be sure to make her/him aware of any issues that have occurred since you previously spoke, even if the issue has been resolved. This will ensure that the Area Rep has a history of any issues and helps them understand the student's progress during the program.

When minor issues arise, you should discuss them with your student. Keep in mind that they are teenagers can be in a somewhat rebellious phase, but make clear to them your feelings and ask them to explain their perspective. We find that a large percentage of issues are just cultural

misunderstandings, so don't always assume that the student has ill intent.

If more significant issues arise, or minor issues continue, involve your ISE Area Rep. It is helpful to provide them with written detail of the specific issues and/or behavior and try to be as impartial as possible. Your ISE Area Rep will speak to you and the student about the issues before developing a plan of action. Keep in mind that while many of the issues are the result of the student's actions, sometimes issues are related to interaction with host family members. Again, try to keep an open mind and focus on how the issue can be resolved, rather than trying to assign any blame.

If issues are more significant or ongoing, your ISE Area Rep may begin a disciplinary process for the student. This is a multi-step process that is intended to formally notify the student that their behavior is inappropriate and needs to be addressed.

## MINOR ISSUES AND SIGNIFICANT ISSUES:

### "Minor Issues" that most families with teenagers experience

- Adjustment issues
- School grades
- Difficulty with English
- Curfew
- Internet/phone usage
- Cleanliness
- Household chores

### What we consider "Significant Issues"

(CALL YOUR ISE AREA REP OR ISE HOME OFFICE IMMEDIATELY)

- Alcohol usage
- Drug usage
- Pornography
- Sexual conduct
- Sexting
- Arrest
- Psychological issues
- Depressions or Eating Disorders

All student issues are evaluated individually and all mitigating and exacerbating factors are taken into account when we try to address student and host family issues. We highly value the input of the host family members when we make decisions and all factors are considered as we try to find a reasonable resolution to these challenges.

Regardless of the student's behavior, neither the host family nor the ISE Area Rep should ever threaten a student with being sent home. Only the ISE home office can make such a decision.



# Student Disciplinary Process

## **The process works as follows:**

*Problem Identification* – At this stage your ISE Area Rep will meet with you and/or your student to discuss the issues at hand. A Problem Identification form will be completed and sent to ISE headquarters. The student's agency will be notified.

*Problem Resolution* – If a problem persists, your ISE Area Rep will conduct another meeting that will be documented with a Problem Resolution form. Again, this form will be sent to ISE headquarters and the student's agency will be informed. This form will clearly define the issues to be resolved along with what the student and host family can do to improve the situation.

*Probation* – Finally, the Probation 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.

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## **What are the possible outcomes of the process?**

### **Problem solved**

*Issues are addressed and the student continues on the program. In the vast majority of the cases, students and host family resolve issues on their own or with the help of their ISE Area Rep and end up having a great program.*

### **Student is relocated to a new family**

*Sometimes the host family or ISE feels that the match between the student and the host family simply isn't working and the student should be relocated.. No one should "take the blame" and everyone should just recognize that it just was not a good match. If you feel this is the case, first try to work with your ISE Area Rep to resolve the issue before taking this extreme step. If nothing works, it may be time to consider a relocation.*

*Keep in mind that a relocation can take some time. If it is possible, please try to establish a "truce" with the student until they are moved to a new home.*

### **Student may be sent home**

*In the case of severe violations of ISE program rules or ongoing issues that are not addressed by the student, ISE may decide to terminate a student's program. This decision is entirely up to ISE's home office. Neither the host family nor ISE Area Rep should ever threaten this drastic action.*

*One of the most common reasons for students to be sent home is drinking while on the program. Many students come from countries with drinking laws that are more lax than they are in the U.S. Regardless of the cause, we review each termination case very carefully and try to make a decision that is in the best overall interests of the student and the exchange program. We ask that host families be considerate of our final judgment.*



# Other

## Holidays

Your student will be spending the holidays with you. He or she will not be going home, nor should their natural family visit. This can lead to homesickness.

## Graduation

ISE does not guarantee graduation for students. It's up to the individual schools to allow the student to graduate. The student has been made aware of this fact and he/she should not argue with the school officials regarding their decision.

## Project HELP

All students must participate in at least 5 hours of community service. For students that have a hard time finding opportunities, ISE has partnered with the Red Cross and Ronald McDonald House Charities. Through ISE's website, the student can find many different community service projects in your area.

## Colleges and college test prep

The J-1 exchange program exists as a way for foreign students to spend time embedded in a host family and fully experiencing life as an American. The students are expected to return to their home country at the end of the program and continue their studies in their home country. Host families are not expected to help students apply to US colleges or high schools, or drive students to college test preparation services or for college campus visits.



# Insurance

## Three things to remember

- The student is provided with a travel insurance policy, not a health insurance policy. There are substantial differences between the two. A travel insurance policy covers a much smaller number of issues and excludes any pre-existing condition.
- Be prepared. Find a local doctor and urgent care provider that accepts the insurance. Go to the website <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance/> and have your student sign-in.
- NEVER sign your name on the student's doctor or hospital admission form. This can result in substantial financial repercussions for you and your family. Instead, write the name of the student's natural parents. If this is a problem, have the doctor call ISE.

## Never sign as guarantor

When you bring your student to a medical provider, you may be asked to fill out a guarantor form. Please DO NOT DO THIS. You should not be guaranteeing any student expenses as it can lead to significant financial complications for you and your student.

Instead, provide the name and contact information of the student's natural parents on the form. If asked, tell the doctor's office that you are the student's host parent, not their legal guardian. If the doctor's office still has issues, have them call ISE at 800-766-4656.

## Be Prepared

When your student arrives, sit down with them and have them log into the <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance/> website. Have him/her locate a nearby doctor, urgent care facility and hospital that will accept the plan. Also, have him/her print-out their ID card and keep it in a safe place. Avoid calling an ambulance or going to the emergency room for non-emergencies. However, when in doubt, the student's safety is the highest priority.



## Travel insurance vs. health insurance

Students on ISE's exchange program are provided with a travel insurance policy that provides coverage for sudden accidents and illnesses. It does not cover any pre-existing conditions or many other things that you might normally expect a health insurance policy to cover like checkups, "normal" teen issues, physical therapy, counseling and many other issues.

The main reason for this limited coverage is that the costs in the US healthcare systems are much greater than those outside the US. It would simply be cost-prohibitive to offer a full coverage health policy.

Because of this limitation, it is especially important that any medical provider be made aware of any pre-existing condition the student had before coming on the program. Preexisting conditions are not covered and may result in thousands of dollars in medical bills that must be paid directly by the student and his/her natural family.

## Other things to keep in mind

If your student has a health issue, please contact your Area Rep as soon as possible.

If your student was treated for an illness or injury, please try to make sure that any financial obligations have been resolved before the student leaves the program. The student can check the status of any pending claim by going to the <http://www.esecutive.com/MyInsurance/> website.

# Case Studies - Homesickness

## Exchange Student

Emili is from France and is an only child. She wanted to come to the US very much. Her parents are very protective, but understood the benefits of going to the US for a year.

## Host Family

Susan and Jon King live in northern Oregon and have two girls in high school. Jon is a local police officer and Susan is a teacher. For the most part, both are at home by 5 PM.



## The Issue

When Emili came to Oregon, she found her surroundings to be similar to her home in France. However, she was very tired from the travel and mostly kept to herself.

The situation got worse as several days passed. She wasn't making any friends in school and immediately went to her room after school. She wouldn't eat much and would only study at night until she went to bed.

One day at school, Susan saw Emili at lunch on her cell phone. She asked who she was talking to. Emili told her it was her mother from back home and said that she called her daily. After speaking more, Susan realized that instead of studying at night, Emili was actually chatting with her mother and friends.

## Solution

Susan decided to call her Area Representative because she was unsure how to approach the situation. The Area Rep spoke with both parties separately, and then together. The Area Rep realized Emili's mother missed her terribly. Emili was also missing her friends and being in constant contact with her mother was making her transition more difficult.

ISE Area Rep had this issue addressed with Emili's natural parents and they came to understand that their contact was negatively impacting Emili's experience. They decided to limit their conversations to once a week on Sunday's, and one email during the week. Susan and Emili also established a rule that Emili would leave her cell phone on the kitchen counter from 10pm until the next morning. Emili bought an alarm clock from Walmart so she wouldn't need her cell phone alarm to wake her up.

## Follow-up

After the adjustment, Emili became very active in her school through theatre. The school play helped Emili make new friends and kept her very busy. It limited her time to chat with friends and family back home. By October, Emili really felt that she was part of the King Family.



# Case Studies - Internet

## Exchange Student

Bao is from China and came to the US. He wants to become a director one day. He loves watching movies and takes summer film classes. He wants to go to film school next year.

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## Host Family

Caroline and Hugh Sweeney are from Texas and live on a ranch. Hugh and Caroline raise cattle on their ranch while also running a household. They have two older sons that live near Dallas.

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## The Issue

Bao is from a city of 5 million that is close to Beijing. He wanted to experience something different and was looking forward to his exchange experience in Texas. He had been studiously watching "Friday Night Lights" on TV in preparation for his trip and had many expectations about what Texas would be like. Shortly after his arrival it was clear that Bao was experiencing severe culture shock. He didn't know how to relate to his host family, and he had feelings of isolation, living on a ranch in a rural community. Bao spent most of his time in his room watching movies in Chinese.

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## Solution

The Sweeneys had very active boys that played sports. Hugh was very good friends with the Varsity football coach. Hugh gave him a call even though Bao wasn't interested in playing sports. Hugh was able to convince the coach to allow, Bao to assist with the filming of the games. Bao started filming the home games and soon ended up traveling with the team for away games too. He would even work in the editor's room to prepare the video for the team to watch.

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## Follow-up

Bao got to know the players very well from traveling with them to games. He was eventually invited to team dinners and was hanging out with some of the players on the weekends (they even watched movies in English). Today Bao is looking to go to school in China for Sports and Entertainment production.

# Case Studies - Academic

## Exchange Student

Andre from Sweden is a great hockey player. He came to the US to improve his English and to learn more about American culture. He wanted to play American football as well as hockey.

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## Host Family

Ed and Krissy Goldberg live in upstate New York, near Lake Placid. They own and run their own restaurant. They have two younger daughters that are ages 9 and 11. They decided to host for the experience and wanted someone very active.

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## The Issue

Andre had no problem making friends. He is outgoing, a good athlete and even made his high school football team. By the third game of the season, he was starting at tight end. Andre was enjoying his time very much in the United States. Ed and Krissy were very happy everything was going so well. They really enjoyed going to his football games and loved Andre's personality.

Then his first quarter grades came in and they weren't good. He had a D+ average. As the Goldbergs didn't have children of their own in high school, they weren't sure how much Andre should be studying. They assumed he was making good grades and handling everything. The high school put Andre on probation for his grades. Andre wasn't allowed to play in games until his grades improved.

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## Solution

Krissy made new house rules until Andre got his grades up. After practice and dinner, he wasn't allowed to talk to any of his friends and until he showed his homework to Ed or Krissy. Krissy saw improvement right away. Andre started asking questions and Krissy noticed much better study habits.

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## Follow-up

By the middle of October, Andre's grades improved and he was able to play in games again. For the rest of the year, Krissy kept the strict study schedule during sport seasons. Andre's parents really appreciated it and sent the Goldbergs a fruit basket. The Goldbergs didn't realize it, but Andre ended up getting the best grades of his life.

# Case Studies - Chores

## Exchange Student

Maria Paula is from Spain. She loves music and plays several instruments. She wants to travel and see New York. She even signed up for the ISE NYC trip.

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## Host Family

Cathy and Cameron Robinson live in Minnesota with a daughter who is 15 and a son who is 13. Cameron works for a local manufacturing company while Cathy teaches piano lessons. Since Maria Paula is into music, she was a natural fit for the family.

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## The Issue

Both Maria Paula's parents work and do well for themselves. Since neither parent is home too much due to their careers, they have a maid that does the cooking and cleaning, but the children are responsible for their own rooms and picking up after themselves.

Cathy and Cameron were hesitant to ask Maria Paula to clean up after herself or help with family chores. Their own kids started to protest and which lead to arguments between the host daughter and Maria Paula.

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## Solution

Cathy and Cameron should have established strict rules from the beginning. Maria Paula didn't take the chores seriously enough. Cathy decided to call her local Area Rep since the issue was leading to arguments within the family.

The Area Rep came to visit with the family. She realized that part of the problem was nobody showed Maria Paula how to do the chores. The Robinson family assumed she knew how to run the dishwasher or how to clean the bathroom.

Maria Paula was also reminded that she is part of the family and needs to act like one. So the Robinsons and Maria Paula went over exactly how to do everything.

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## Follow-up

The Robinsons created a chore schedule amongst the three children. They rotated responsibilities throughout the weeks. Maria Paula improved her "chores" effort around the house. When she went back to Spain, she started to clean up after herself.



# Case Studies – Integration with Host Family

## Exchange Student

Noon is a Thai exchange student. She comes from a big family. Her parents own a shipping and trading company. She is very well travelled, but never went to the U.S. before.

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## Host Family

Chris and Erica Brunel are from Colorado. They have one daughter in high school who is very involved and one daughter in college at UCLA. Chris is a principal at the middle school, while Erica owns a local bicycle and outdoors store.

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## The Issue

The Brunels are known in the neighborhood for their great cooking. The day Noon arrived, the Brunel's had a huge welcoming barbeque with all the fixings; huge steaks, baked potatoes, potato salad, and apple pie with ice cream. Erica noticed that Noon barely touched her food. When Erica asked her, Noon said everything was great but that she was tired. The next night, Erica made her famous lasagna. Again, Noon seemed to just move the food around the plate and barely touched it. Erica asked Noon again if she was OK, and Noon said she really loved the lasagna.

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## Solution

Confused, Emily contacted Sherrill, her ISE Rep. Sherrill had hosted two Thai students before and she remembered something similar happening. Sherrill told Emily that in Thai culture, you never say that you don't like someone's food because it is considered deeply insulting.

She also recounted that her Thai student, Loti, had the same issue. Eventually Loti started eating the same things with the family. Several months later, Loti confessed to Sherrill when she arrived, she'd never had cheese before and it seemed "gross" that they ate it. The both had a good laugh and Loti now loves cheese. Sherrill recommended that Erica talk to Noon about the food situation and try to come up with ways to introduce Noon to "American Style" meals .

Erica then talked to Noon and told Noon it was okay to say that she didn't like something. Noon said felt overwhelmed by the transition to American culture, especially the food.

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## Follow-up

Erica and Noon decided to plan a "Thai Night" at the home and Noon was in charge. Erica found out Noon was a very good cook and knew many different dishes because of her travels in Southeast Asia. Eventually, Thai Night became a weekly tradition in the Brunel family and continued even after Noon returned home.





## DEPARTING THE US

It's time to say good bye. I'm sure you are amazed at how quickly the past year has gone by. Before your student leaves, please keep the following details in mind:

**Departure** - The program ends 5 days after the last day of school. ISE does not recommend students to stay with their host families beyond this time. Once school is over, students often don't feel as obligated to follow program rules. A student may decide to travel independently or with their natural family members or friends after the program has ended.

**Convalidation** - If you've hosted a semester student from Brazil, Ecuador, Italy, Spain or Mexico as well as a few other countries, you may have heard them mention something about a "convalidation". A convalidation is an official certification of a student's transcript that the student will need to present to his or her home school in order to get credit for the classes taken in the US. It is the students' responsibility to take care of his or her own convalidation process. However, he or she may need your help in securing some of the documents since the student will often have to return home before their transcript is available. Usually, the host family just needs to forward the notarized transcript to the exchange student. Make sure the student leaves all the appropriate address information, as well as money to cover postage.

*(If your student requires a convalidation, please contact your ISE Area Rep)*

**Packing** – You should begin packing plans a week before the student's final departure. Get a sense of how many bags he or she will need. Encourage the student to donate clothing that will not be needed in their home country. Help the student determine whether he or she will carry everything in their luggage or if it will be necessary to ship items home.

**Shipping Boxes** – It might be cheaper and easier to ship items home rather than carry them with their luggage. This is the student's responsibility, but you may be able to help the student understand the costs and logistics of shipping vs. carrying on the plane.

**Luggage Fees at Airport** – Remind the student that he or she might have to pay luggage fees that can be hundreds of dollars for international flights. Review the rules on the airline's website and weigh the bags on a bathroom scale to make sure there aren't any additional fees or at least the amount of the fees are known in advance. The student should bring enough cash or his/her credit card to cover these fees or any fees. The student should also have enough money to pay for food and drink during his or her journey home.

**Flight** – You and your student should arrive to your flight at least 3 hours in advance. Please make sure your student has all of his or her travel documents, cell phone and charger, and wallet with cash in their carry-on bag and not in their checked bags.

**Natural Family** – The student may depart with his or her natural family and may travel around the US with natural family members before returning to his or her home country.



# Hosting At-A-Glance



*I have hosted 7 now going on 8 next year. All amazing and wonderful experiences. I have learned as much or more than the students and have added 7 new children to my family. My granddaughter loves all her new aunts and uncles from around the world. Highly recommend the experience. - Ann*







I cannot begin to put into words just what the exchange experience is like as a host family. Our precious first exchange “daughter” came to us from Germany arriving this past August. She has brought so much joy to our family and we’ve made memories together that will bridge the physical distance when she returns to her home country. We look forward to hosting our 2nd exchange “daughter” who will come to us from Thailand in August 2015. - Katrina



We have had an amazing experience with the young lady that we are hosting from Germany this year! If I can host anyone can! I am a single mom of a 13 year old son, I work full time and I go to college full time! This is the second year that we have hosted a student. Open your home and your heart to these amazing kids and you will be the one who is receiving the blessing! - Jennifer





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