

# *District 7080, Canada Youth Exchange Manual*



## **Chapter 6**

### ***The Host Family***

#### **GUIDELINES FOR HOST CLUBS**

Host clubs are responsible for selecting families who are representative of their community and are willing to assume the responsibilities involved in hosting an Exchange Student.

Most districts have found it best to have the Student live with three or four host families, because this gives a broader base for understanding the culture of the host country.

#### **SELECTION**

There is no 'perfect' family situation that makes for a good host home. The most important ingredient is the willingness to show love and understanding to the student and to make the student a part of the family. Host families may or may not be the families of Rotarians.

Although families with teen-aged children are sometimes recommended as the first host family, successful host families have been 'empty-nesters', young couples with small children or no children at all, as well as single parent families.

It is important that the Rotarians working to identify and select host families have a complete knowledge of Rotary's Youth Exchange program. It is useful if they have experience in hosting a Student and working with host families.

#### **Some suggestions for finding prospective families:**

- Ask fellow Rotarians for the names of families they feel may be interested in hosting a Student.
- Ask your fellow Rotarians to consider hosting a Student, perhaps making your request during a meeting where spouses are present.
- Do not forget to ask families of former outbound Students. Many of these families would like to participate in the program because of the opportunity it provided their children.
- Ask former outbound Students for the names of families in their community they feel would make good host parents.
- Make a presentation about the Youth Exchange program to your local school Parent-Teacher Association or School Council. Ask if anyone in attendance is interested in becoming a host family.
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- Ask families that have hosted Students successfully if they know of other families in the community who would be interested in hosting.

Be sure to visit with the host parents in their home prior to their selection as a Rotary host family. At that time, review the Student's application paying particular attention to the medical section and the Student's response to the general questions posed.

Review the responsibilities of being a host parent, and be sure to provide them with a copy of 'Guidelines for Hosting an Exchange Student,' which explains the program to the hosts and provides them with helpful tips for hosting Students from abroad. It is advisable to have the entire family involved in the decision making of taking a Student (mom, dad and the children).

The biggest barrier for potential host families is fear of the unknown. Informing them about the program and their responsibilities as host families should break down this barrier.

Assure the families that they will have the full support of the local Rotary Club as well as the Rotary District 7080 Youth Exchange Committee while they are hosting the Student.

Inviting a stranger to come live in your home, for perhaps 3 to 4 months, requires a special type of person. Host families provide love and understanding to a stranger who may not even be able to speak their language. Consider giving your 'hosts' recognition from your Rotary club (Mother's Day, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) and invite them to a meeting if they are not Rotarians.

#### **ORIENTATION**

When the families have been selected for the inbound Student, meet with all the host parents to discuss:

- the Rotary Rules of the program that each Student must abide by during his/her stay.
- general rules that each family will have for the Student.
- dates on which the Student will move from one family to the next.
- the name and telephone number of the Student's Rotarian counsellor and spouse.
- the dates on which the Student will be expected to attend district meetings and functions.

During the exchange, be sure to contact the host family at least once each month. This helps achieve a successful hosting situation, and successful host families are a club's salesperson for recruiting new ones. When communicating with a Student on a weekly basis, be sure to inquire about his/her relationship with the host family. Sometimes what appears to be problems are only misunderstandings that can be resolved easily if discussed early.

## **GUIDELINES FOR HOST FAMILIES**

Acting as a host for an Exchange Student can be a tremendously rewarding experience for a family, but it does entail responsibilities. Following are some of the obligations:

- provide room and board for the Exchange Student.
- exercise parental responsibilities and supervision, as would the exchangee's own parents.
- advise the Student about matters, such as the family, school, and community functions during the period of the exchange.
- notify the Rotary counsellor if the exchange Student is encountering any problems (such as illness, difficulty in adapting to the host family or school, or serious homesickness).

## **COUNSELLOR**

The Host Rotary Club will appoint a Counsellor who will act as confidant to the Student during her stay in Canada. The Student is expected to go to the Counsellor for guidance on any problems that arise. The Counsellor is also available to help the Host Family with any problems that they encounter in hosting the Student. Do not hesitate to consult the Student's Counsellor if problems of any kind arise.

## **NOT A GUEST**

It cannot be stressed too much that the Student should not be treated as a special 'honoured guest' by the Host Family. One value of the exchange centres on the acceptance by both Student and host and that the Student will be 'one of the family,' not receiving any special favours or treatment, and undertaking normal family responsibilities (chores). For this reason it is desirable that the Student address the Host Parents as 'Mom' and 'Dad' or other similar terms rather than the formal 'Mrs.' and 'Mr.' Other adjustment issues are addressed in the "Questionnaire For First Night With New Host Family". It is important that this questionnaire be discussed fully with the Student as soon as possible.

## **HOUSEHOLD CHORES**

The Student should most certainly make his/her own bed, keep his/her room tidy and assist with general household tasks such as table setting, dishes, lawn mowing etc.

## **DISCIPLINE**

The Student is expected to adapt to the discipline of the Host Family. The Host Family is under no obligation whatsoever to adapt to the Student. All the adaptations must be done on the part of the Student and if the Student shows some unwillingness to accept this point of view, the Host Family should approach the Counsellor to make this point clear to the Student.

It is usually better that such a ruling came from the Counsellor rather than the Host Family. Problems can arise unless the Student clearly understands the fact that she is expected to conform to the Host Country conditions. At the same time, Host Families should be aware of the problems of adaptation and be prepared to be flexible.

## **RELIGION**

Somewhat surprisingly, this issue poses very few problems. Most Students are very flexible on attitudes and usually will accompany the Host Family to their place of worship even where religions differ. Host Families, however, should not force an issue and if the Student wishes to follow his/her own religion, every effort should be made to assist him/her in this respect.

## **ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES**

IF as Host Parents you offer the Student alcoholic beverages in your home and IF the Student wishes to accept it, this is permissible. IF as Hosts, alcoholic beverages are not permitted in your home, then the Student will abstain also. Students will not drink in public places. It should be noted that the legal drinking age in Ontario is 19 years.

## **DRUGS**

There is a total prohibition on Students indulging in drug taking. It is against the law. Any Student breaching this rule may face criminal charges and will definitely be expelled from the Youth Exchange Program and be sent home. If Host Parents suspect that a Student in their care is taking drugs or involved in drugs, they should immediately report their suspicions to the Counsellor and the District Committee.

## **DRIVING**

The Student is not permitted to drive a motorized vehicle of any kind. This includes automobiles, motorcycles, boats, tractors, mopeds, snowmobiles, jet skis, aeroplanes, or any other motorized vehicle. The only exception to this rule is the riding garden tractor for cutting grass or snow removal. Here both the host parents and the Student should exercise caution.

## **DATING (ROMANCE)**

The rules state that a Student should not become 'romantically involved' with members of the opposite sex. If Host Parents consider that a relationship is becoming too serious, they should report this to the Counsellor. This is a difficult area but the rule is sound because a Student who becomes romantically involved may centre all interest on one person to the exclusion of the broader aspects of the program.

## **FINANCE**

The Host Family is under no obligation to provide the Student with an allowance. This is the responsibility of the Host Club. If a Student does not carry a lunch to school, the Host Parent should provide lunch money.

## **MONEY PROBLEMS**

Young people may need guidance in handling money if they are to live within the monthly allowance provided by Rotary. The Student is required to bring an emergency fund of \$500.00 and this must be replenished by the Student's own parents. This fund must not be used for day-to-day spending but can be used for large items such as seasonal clothing and travel. It has been found that some supervision of this emergency fund is desirable and the best method has been the establishment of a special account which requires the signature of both the Club Counsellor and the Student before a withdrawal can be made. This issue should be discussed with the Counsellor at the beginning of the exchange and a firm policy established.

## **TRAVEL**

The Host Family is under no obligation to provide the Student with travel experiences. Should the Host Family or other Rotarians wish to include the Student in their travel plans, this is most acceptable and special permission may be required provided it does not infringe on school attendance. (Also refer to District 7080's Travel and Approval Rules For Inbound Exchange Students.)

Travel both inside and outside District 7080 is a privilege, not a right, and must always be with the approval of the host parents. The general principle of the approval policy is that the further or longer away from the host home by the Student, the greater the number of people who should know about it (i.e. counsellor, host club, natural parents, RYE District chair).

## **CHANGE OF HOSTS**

Host Families should keep in touch with the Host Rotary Club through the Counsellor on hosting arrangements so that both the Student and Host Families know exactly when each change of hosting is to take place.

## **HOMESICKNESS**

Every Student experiences homesickness to some degree. Host Parents should appreciate this and expect the Student to have some adjustment problems. The Student who is actively involved in community youth groups and school extra-curricular activities will be less likely to suffer from adjustment problems and homesickness. Host Parents should do all they can to encourage the Student's participation in community activities.

## **SHARED KNOWLEDGE**

One of the main purposes of the Youth Exchange Program is the exchange of knowledge on an international level. The Student is an ambassador for his country. Opportunities should be provided both on a formal and informal level for the Student to share their expertise. In turn, Host Families are also ambassadors for Canada and should impart as much knowledge as possible about the Canadian way of life so the Student will be able to take home a portrait of Canada that is as accurate as possible. This two-way exchange of information can be very stimulating and a rewarding adventure in international goodwill and understanding.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

The host Rotary club will have made the necessary arrangements at a local secondary school. Your part as host parents is to ensure the Student attends regularly and to encourage participation in school activities. Students must attend full-time except when participating in or attending Rotary functions, or when travelling with host Rotarians or families. Any problems with school attendance should be made known to the counsellor immediately. The Student has entered Canada on an Educational Visa and the terms of the Visa states that the Student will be in regular attendance.

## **A PRIMER for HOST FAMILIES**

Parents may wish to read the Rotary International booklet, "A Primer for Host Families." A copy of this booklet is available through the host club or District 7080 RYE committee.