



COWBOY COUNTRY ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE
ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 5440
Long-Term Youth Exchange



HOST FAMILY ORIENTATION

Congratulations, as you begin an adventure for you, your family and your new student. Acting as a host family for an international student is a challenge - and an opportunity! It is an opportunity to get in touch with a young person and share his or her hopes and ambitions for all or part of a school year. The experience enriches every member of your family who participates. In the broader sense, you share in international understanding and fellowship.

By agreeing to be a host family for a Rotary Exchange student, you have agreed to assume parental responsibility for this young ambassador from another country, to provide shelter and sustenance, guidance and counsel, and love and support to the child of strangers who may live thousands of miles from you. But we do not ask you to do this all on your own; Rotarians in your local community as well as those of us who serve on the Rotary District Youth Exchange Committee will do all we can to make this exchange a success. We provide you with the information you need, through our Host Family Orientation meetings and this information booklet. We meet with and provide orientation training to the exchange students upon their arrival. And we will, throughout the exchange period, be in contact with both you and the Exchange student to answer questions, address concerns, and resolve problems.

The student comes into your home as a stranger in a strange land, with preconceived notions and expectations, similarly, you may hold certain stereotypes about the homeland of your visitor. The experience will require acceptance, cooperation and understanding on everyone's part and possibly a modification of traditional beliefs and attitudes about other people.

You should share your culture with the student as it exists in everyday life. This does not mean elaborate entertainment; it does mean making a visitor a part of your family with the opportunity to share in all aspects - home, school, community and nation.

All too soon, it will be time for your student to move on to the next host family or return home at the end of the exchange year. Many of the host parents who preceded you do not say "goodbye" when that time comes, but instead say "farewell, until we meet again", with the full intention that this new member of the family will indeed be met again. We hope you experience those feelings, and will do all we can to have that happen.

In Youth Exchange Service,

Dirk Miller, Chairman

What is Youth Exchange?

The Rotary youth exchange program begins with the selection of a student, 15 to 18.5 years old, who has finished, or is about to finish, high school. Exchange students are selected for their adaptability, linguistic ability, general awareness and scholastic attainment, among other traits. It is a country-to-country exchange for a cultural and educational experience for both the student and those serving as hosts. The duration of the exchange is 10-12 months, and generally follows the school year as defined by the exchange student's home country.

What is Rotary?

Rotary International, as the sponsoring organization of this program, is an international volunteer organization comprised of Rotarians around the world dedicated to improving their community, both locally and world-wide, through service to others. **District** is the geographic organization of a number of local Rotary clubs for purposes of governance and support. We are **Rotary International District 5440**, consisting of 53 Rotary clubs representing Wyoming, northern Colorado and parts of Idaho and western Nebraska.

Objectives of the Program

- To further international goodwill and understanding by enabling students to learn first-hand some of the problems and accomplishments of people in lands other than their own.
- To enable year-long exchange students to advance their education by studying for a school year in an environment entirely different from their own and undertaking study courses and subjects not normally available to them in secondary schools of their own country.
- To broaden their own outlook by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in an environment completely different from the one they have experienced at home.
- To act as ambassadors for Rotary and for their own country by addressing Rotary clubs, community organizations and youth groups and/or sharing information with families and acquaintances, imparting as much knowledge as they can to their own country and its people.
- To study and observe all facets of life and culture in the country where they are hosted so that, on their return to their home country, they can pass on the knowledge they have gained by addressing Rotary clubs and other organizations.

Role of the Rotary District and Youth Exchange Committee

Rotary Youth Exchange is an exchange of students between two Rotary Districts in different countries. Conduct and administration of the Exchange program is the responsibility of each participating Rotary district under the authority of the respective **District Governor**, a Rotarian elected for a one-year term to provide leadership to the clubs and Rotarians in that District. All Rotary districts participating in the Youth Exchange Program agree to comply with Rotary International guidelines, but retain autonomy in conduct of the program. This responsibility is delegated in District 5440 to the **District Youth Exchange Committee**. Cowboy Country Rotary Youth Exchange (CCRYE) is the official name of the District 5440 Youth Exchange Committee. In order to participate in Rotary Youth Exchange, districts must demonstrate compliance with all of the certification requirements listed in the Rotary Code of Policies sections on Youth Protection and Rotary Youth Exchange. In addition to the policies of Rotary International, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) regulates youth exchange as a public diplomacy program. DOS has implemented an extensive set of regulations to implement federal laws regarding exchange visitors.

To assure a complete understanding of the program, CCRYE provides a comprehensive orientation to our inbound students shortly after their arrival. Even before the student's arrival, the Youth Exchange Committee establishes and maintains communications with its counterparts in the exchanging district, the inbound students both before their arrival and during their year here, and the outbound students we are sending overseas.

CCRYE is a valuable resource for both you and the exchange student, and its members are familiar with the conduct of the Exchange Program both here and in the country your student is from. There is one committee member assigned as the CCRYE liaison to your local Rotary Club. This Country Representative is based on the home country of your student. They are available to help with all aspects of the program from problem solving to ensuring compliance with program rules. Please contact them if you have questions or problems and are unable to contact your local Rotary club contacts. Feel welcome to contact any member of CCRYE anytime you have a question or need help with a problem. Names and contact information for the committee are available on the CCRYE website (<http://rotary5440.org/SitePage/year-long-youth-exchange>).

The Hosting Rotary Club's Role

The local Rotary club provides another level of support to you and the student. Each Rotary club will identify an individual Rotarian as the **Youth Exchange Officer (YEO)** to administer the club's exchange program. Another member of the Rotary club, will be designated as the inbound exchange student's **Club Counselor** for the duration of the exchange. The **Club Counselor** serves primarily as an advisor and advocate for the student, and should be in regular contact with the student and host family. The YEO and Club Counselor are available to answer questions or direct host parents to the appropriate resource when needed. Either the YEO or Club Counselor will contact the host family at least once a month. If you have questions or problems do not wait for them to contact you.

The hosting Rotary club has made or will make arrangements for enrolling the exchange student in your community's high school shortly after he or she arrives. The YEO or Club Counselor will assist the student in selecting a course of study that should be neither overly-challenging nor boring for the student. As a host parent, you should discuss school work with the student, teachers, and school officials if academic or social problems are becoming apparent.

The host club will regularly invite the exchange student to attend Rotary meetings and other Rotary events. While students are encouraged to attend Rotary meetings and other events as often as possible, only attendance at the Inbound Orientations (September and January) and the annual Rotary District Conference are mandatory for the student.

Rotary Support -- District + Club

This Team of the **District Youth Exchange Committee**, the local Rotary club **Youth Exchange Officer** and **Club Counselor** are here to help the Exchange student and host family have a successful exchange experience. They are available to you, 24 hours a day, to provide you with assistance on any matters of concern. We strongly urge you to seek our involvement before problems become too large for simple solutions. An exchange cannot be terminated early without consultation with the District Youth Exchange Committee.

Youth Protection Policy

Youth protection is the highest priority for all Rotary youth programs. Rotary International, Cowboy Country Rotary Youth Exchange and the U.S. Department of State have rigorous policies to ensure the safety of exchange students. Full details are in the CCRYE Youth Protection Policy and Crisis Management Plan. Those documents can be found on this website

<https://rotary5440.org/sitepage/youth-protection-policy-1> Those requirements are summarized below.

- Meet Rotary International and Cowboy Country Youth Exchange eligibility for working with students including an application, background checks, reference checks, and training.
- Understand and comply with Rotary International and Cowboy Country Youth Exchange guidelines for the Youth Exchange program.
- Undergo a comprehensive interview that determines their suitability for hosting exchange students. This should include:
 - Demonstrated commitment to the safety and security of students
 - Motivation for hosting a student consistent with Rotary ideals of international understanding and cultural exchange
 - Financial ability to provide adequate accommodations (room and board) for the student
 - Home visit must be conducted for each family and will include both announced and unannounced visits, both prior to and during the placement.
- All individuals age 18 and over who reside in the home of the host family, must meet the selection and screening guidelines, and will be subjected to an appropriate background check assuring they:
 - Have not admitted to, been convicted of or otherwise found to have engaged in an offense which resulted in harm to an individual, including assault or sexual assault or sexual battery.
 - Have not been convicted of any offense which, in the opinion of the DPO, suggests an unacceptable risk of harm to a person in the care of that individual.
 - Are not subject to a court order or decree prohibiting a person from being in contact with any other individual.
 - Have no children under the age of eighteen living in or frequenting their residence that have been convicted of or treated for sexually inappropriate conduct.
- The Rotary Youth Exchange Officer for the local Rotary Club will meet with you and review the rules governing the Youth Exchange Program. In addition, a separate counselor will be appointed for the student. These two people can be of major assistance throughout the exchange.
- If possible, it is desirable that the student has his/her own room but this is not absolutely necessary. It is not necessary to have children in the home of the same age as the student – younger siblings, older siblings, or no siblings can all be very successful exchanges.
- You will be given a copy of the student's application. This includes confidential information and should not be shared except if needed for medical or academic purposes. At the end of the exchange you should destroy any printed or electronic copies you have of the document.

Meeting Your Exchange Student

- The first host family should correspond with the student as soon as names are known. Extend a welcome - and include such practical information as to the type of clothing required by the climate, information about the community and the school. The student will be interested in knowing the composition of your family - how many members, their ages, names, etc. Ask

yourself what you would like to know about a strange home and a strange country and supply that kind of information. Let them know which airport to fly into so they can make travel arrangements.

- The exchange student should be met on arrival. If possible, members of the host family should be among the welcoming delegation and certainly should be on hand upon arrival in the community.
- Remember that the student may suffer “jet lag,” the cyclic confusion arising when natural body rhythms must adjust to a new time sequence. Allow time to adjust.
- Once in the home, the exchange student should meet all the family members and be shown their room.
- The student’s passport, visa and return airline ticket should be kept in a safe place. The student can give them to the Youth Exchange Officer or Club Counselor for safekeeping but cannot be forced to give those documents up against their will. The host parent should have a copy of the student’s insurance policy and parental medical release which will be provided by CCRYE or the host club. The medical release is included in the application materials.
- It is suggested that the host family correspond with the student’s parents about their arrival as well as providing updates during the year. You would want to know how your child was doing.

Family Adjustments

- The operative word here is ***Family***, and we ask you to help your exchange student become a part of your family during the period that he or she lives with you. That means treating this young person as you would your own son or daughter, not as a guest, and exercising all of the **parental responsibilities and authorities** you would for your own child.
- **Establish a clear understanding of expectations** soon after your student arrives. Go over the “Questionnaire for First Night with New Host Family” that we provide to both students and host parents that cover most of the topics that will help define those expectations. For interactive first night questionnaire in the student’s native and host languages, see: <http://fnq.yeoresources.org/> Cultural differences as well as personality differences often lead to misunderstandings unless these topics are discussed and clarified. Many students will use the questions as a “check-off list” to make sure nothing has been overlooked during the first few days; we suggest that host parents also review this list for any topics that are important to them.
- This will open up many areas of conversation with the student including normal household routines (meal and bed times, study hours, etc.), rules about going out and having friends over, laundry procedures, keys to the house, explanation of emergency phone numbers, etc.
- Let the student know by what name to address you both - something that is comfortable for both parties. In addition, nicknames or “Americanized” pronunciation for the student’s name should be discussed.
- The student should not be treated as special guests by the host family but, rather, try to involve the student as a member of the family. The student should keep his/her room clean and assist with other household responsibilities, as any other child in the family is expected to do. The host family should plan and supervise the school and leisure activities of the student as if he or she were their own son or daughter. Encourage the student to become involved in school and community activities.
- The student should adapt to the routine and discipline of the host family but remember that this student has been raised for 16 or 17 years one way - don’t expect overnight changes. It is extremely important for the lines of communication to be kept open. Many times, the foreign

student will not know what is expected of him/her or he/she may not understand a particular situation. Every country has its own traditions and customs and, for this reason, each person must be very understanding. The student must be made to understand clearly that he/she is expected to conform to host country conditions. The host family is not to change the lifestyle and/or the food that is served on the table.

- Monitor friends.
- In regard to religion, many students are quite flexible and usually will accompany the host family to their church. If the student wishes to follow his/her own religion, every effort should be made to assist. If the student does not want to attend your church they should not be forced to do so. There should be no attempt to “convert” a student and they should not be forced to practice or study any religion against their will.
- Health - Does the student have any particular health problems - illnesses and/or allergies?

Youth Protection And Crises

- Rotary International, District 5440 and Cowboy Country Rotary Youth Exchange (CCRYE) are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all participants in Rotary activities. To the best of their ability, Rotarians, Rotarians’ partners, and other volunteers must safeguard the children and young people with whom they come in contact and protect them from physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.
- If the student in your care notifies you that they have been assaulted, abused, or are accused of assaulting or abusing another person, or if, after talking with your exchange student you feel that they have been assaulted, abused, or are accused of assaulting or abusing another person, you must follow the procedures outlined in the CCRYE Youth Protection Policy and Crisis Management Plan. Those documents can be found on this website <https://rotary5440.org/sitepage/youth-protection-policy-1>

Schooling

- The YEO or Club Counselor is responsible for getting the student registered in school and helping the student select appropriate classes. Some students feel obligated to assume an almost impossible academic load. Guard against this! In most cases the courses they take here will not count back home so there is no point in a very rigorous course load. Help them choose a few classes that don’t have homework.
- It is helpful if the first host family has a student attending the same school so that the local student can help introduce the foreign student to other classmates and assist him/her in becoming acquainted.
- Interact is a Rotary program for high school students. If your high school has an Interact club please encourage the exchange student to join.
- You should be sure that the student knows how to get to and from the school. Review bus schedules and walking routes.
- The host family must supervise the regular school attendance of the student. This includes visiting with teachers periodically and attending parent-teacher conferences. The exchange student is expected to attend school regularly and maintain satisfactory grades (a C is satisfactory, failing is not). Failure to do so may result in revocation of visa by U.S. Immigration authorities.

Language

- All students arrive with some understanding of the English language, and some can speak and understand our language well, having studied English for several years in school. But for most, considerable effort will be needed on their part to understand the English we speak, which is often different than the English they were taught in school. Practice, by engaging in real conversation, reading, and writing our language are necessary to develop true proficiency. You can help by asking questions that require more than “yes” or “no” answers, having patience when communications are not clear, and consciously speaking slowly and clearly, with frequent checks for understanding.
- You, as host, are in the best position to help. Primarily, it is a matter of being certain of communication and understanding. Be sure that the exchange student understands what is being said about such things as school assignments, geographical directions and so on.
- On occasion, it may be necessary to seek help from someone fluent in the guest’s native language. Do not hesitate to do this. The Club Youth Exchange Officer can help put you in touch with someone who speaks the language.
- Be patient. Speak slowly and clearly, listening to a simple conversation in English can be mentally exhausting until the student begins to “think” in English.

Electronics

- Most host clubs will provide your exchange student with a cell phone.
- Sometimes problems arise in host families over the use of electronic devices (phones, tablets, computers). Particularly if the student isolates themselves and stays in constant contact with friends and families back home. Some communication with friends back home is to be expected. If it becomes excessive you should discuss it with the student and establish time limits and frequency of contact. CCRYE discusses the “never leave home” phenomena at the inbound student orientation. Please remind the students to engage in their exchange. It is best to discuss limits and expectations when the student arrives.

Finances

- The host family is not under any obligation to provide the student with pocket money. The Host Rotary Club will provide the student with an allowance of between \$150 and \$200 per month for school lunch money and miscellaneous expenses. The student’s own family is expected to provide funds for clothing, travel or other expenses. The host family is expected to pay for the student’s activities with the family. For example, if you take your family out for dinner you should pay for the student’s meal, if the student goes out with friends they should pay for that meal.
- Supervision of the student’s finances is recommended. Sometimes, a local checking account will be established with the student and YEO or Counselor both listed on the account. Some students will have credit cards and ATM cards that work here and won’t need a local account.
- There will be some extra expenses to the host family such as meals, gas, extra school outings, haircuts, etc. This is like adding another child to your family for a short period of time. Be prepared to make the financial commitment.

Insurance/Medical Treatment

- All inbound exchange students must have a medical/accidental injury policy that meets Rotary's requirements. Some will have insurance from a provider in their host country. Most students will have a policy issued by the American International Companies through CISI Bolduc. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/rotary/cisibolduc.asp> Instructions for submitting a claim are provided to the student. If you have any questions or problems contact your local YEO or Club Counselor, members of CCRYE are always available to help.
- **The cost of any medical treatment is the responsibility of the student** and his/her natural parents, and the insurance provides for either payment or reimbursement of a portion of those expenses (usually after a nominal deductible has been met). Students should have the financial ability to pay for any medical expenses at the time provided, and host families should not incur any costs in this regard.
- **However, as host parents, you are asked to make arrangements for medical treatment when necessary**, as well as to determine when medical treatment is called for. Your student may be reluctant to discuss medical problems initially, and their own culture, or medical system at home, may be quite different than that which we have, so you may need to patiently ask questions and offer suggestions when you observe conditions that may be medically-based. Many Rotary clubs have arrangements with local medical-services providers (often a member of the Rotary club), and you should be apprised of these arrangements by the YEO or Club Counselor before a medical problem arises.
- **It is always advisable to inform the host Rotary club of any medical treatment or medical problems that have occurred so that information is made available to subsequent host families. Serious illnesses or injuries should be made known to the District YE Chair as soon as possible.** Please notify your local Rotary YEO or Club Counselor before expensive procedures to be sure they are covered by the insurance.
- Host parents should keep a copy of the medical release for treatment available in the event medical treatment is necessary.
- Remember that most of these students come from socialized medical systems so they have no idea about deductibles and copays so be sure to explain things clearly and ask for help from the Rotary Club and CCRYE if needed.

Alcohol And Drugs

- It is legally permissible to offer the student alcoholic beverages in the confines of your own home if your family custom allows this. This should be done only after you have determined if the student has been used to drinking in his/her own home. Consumption of alcohol at any other time is expressly prohibited.
- Any student indulging in drug-taking in any form while participating in this program is subject to immediate return to his/her home. If the parent has any reason to suspect the student of taking drugs, you should report your suspicions to the Youth Exchange Officer.

Driving

- The student is specifically forbidden from driving a motor vehicle while in the program due to liability reasons. The student's insurance excludes injuries incurred while operating any motor vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to, 4-wheeler, ATV or UTV, snowmobile, motorcycle, boat, jet ski, airplane, or automobile. Host parents could be liable for injuries if they ignore this rule.

Romance/Excessive Devotion

- The student should refrain from becoming “romantically involved”. This is a difficult area but the rule is in place because a student who becomes romantically involved centers all his/her interests on one person to the exclusion of the Youth Exchange Program. It does not mean they cannot date, it does mean they should not become involved in a relationship with only one person.

Travel

- Travel for the exchange student as part of your family, or with school or church groups, is highly encouraged and will provide the student with opportunities to learn about the host country. However, **independent travel, or travel without adult supervision** should be given the same level of parental control you would impose on your own children of that age. Additionally, Rotarians at both the host club and district committee need to know where exchange students are in the event of an emergency. The **Travel Policy** will be reviewed in detail with your exchange student, and **compliance with this policy is a condition of the exchange**. We ask that you be familiar with this policy, and enforce it with your student. ***Please know that we will always support the host parents when you say NO to travel by your student that YOU are not in agreement with.***
- Other members of the host club are asked to invite the student during outings with their respective families. Anyone that the student travels with must have a background check prior to the travel.
- Any out-of-town trip that is not school, host family or other Rotary member related requires the **written** permission and release of the student’s own family and permission from the **District** Youth Exchange Chairman. This can be easily arranged but requires some advance planning.
- **Visits by the student’s parents, family, and friends:** Program rules prohibit any visitors from the student’s home country during the first 6 months of the exchange year, and **specifically at any time that will interfere with school, or that will cause an inconvenience to the host family. Furthermore, visits by family or friends during the traditional Christmas and New Year holiday periods are expressly forbidden.** On the other hand, parental visits near the conclusion of the exchange year are great opportunities for the student to share their mastery of our language and knowledge of our culture, and introduce natural parents to all of the host families they’ve lived with. Any such visits planned by the student or his/her parents should be fully acceptable to you, the host parents, and should be discussed with the appropriate Rotarians **before** being finalized.

Homesickness

- After the novelty of being here wears off, the student may feel suddenly alone in a strange land. One tends to look nostalgically toward home. Be prepared to help your student recover from **homesickness**. This can take many forms, from simply general sadness to wishing to stay in his or her room alone. It is perfectly normal for exchange students to have bad days and experience homesickness. If you are sensitive to this, you will be able to reassure your student that their reactions are perfectly normal. Help them to keep busy and involved. These feelings will pass.
- The best remedy is a full program of activities or a social event. The YEO or Club Counselor may be able to help by providing the opportunity to unburden without fear or hurting any feelings.

Changing Homes

- It is important that the hosts and student know the duration of each stay at the outset. The first move may entail some shock for the exchange student. Inevitably, the exchange student will have become attached to the “family”, assuming good rapport and the prospect of moving may be quite upsetting.
- Sympathetic understanding, couched in terms of a broadening of opportunity, should be offered. Counseling can be a way of smoothing the transition. The exchange student should understand at the outset that such transfers will be made and should have been introduced to his/her next host family early in the exchange.

Helping With Rotary Obligations

- Hosts should expect to help their student meet Rotary obligations. The student should attend Rotary meetings and functions and is expected to address the club and other civic groups. These occasions are an important feature of the exchange, part of the program’s ambassadorial aspect.
- The student should not be permitted to decline speaking on the excuse that “he is no public speaker”. These young people are not expected to be orators; audiences are more interested in hearing the student than they are in polished public speaking.
- The student is required to attend certain Rotary District functions. It is the host club’s responsibility to make travel arrangements for the student for out-of-town trips. A calendar of events will be provided to you. Be sure the students are aware of the mandatory events. Conflicts with sports or other school activities like prom will not get them out of the Rotary obligations.
- Make sure student writes a thank you to each person who does something for him or her.

Questions Or Problems

- While there is no way we or you can guarantee that every exchange student and host parent will enjoy a completely successful exchange, we do our best to help them, and you, and the percentage of unsuccessful exchanges is very small. Most problems that do occur can be taken care of satisfactorily if addressed early, before they become too big to handle. Increased communication is the best solution to most youth exchange student/family problems.
- **IF YOU DO HAVE A CONCERN, AND NEED TO DISCUSS SOMETHING, please contact the local Rotary Club Youth Exchange Officer or the student’s Club Counselor.** If he or she is not available, please contact a member of the District YE Committee. They will get in touch with the student, and if appropriate, the counterpart in the sponsoring district for further information and help, if needed.
- **Please do not dismiss non-compliance with our rules, or try to solve major problems yourself.** Because this is an international program, there may be cultural and/or Rotary subtleties of which you are unaware, and there may also be long-range implications affecting future exchanges. Please call and give us the opportunity to show you that we are as concerned about the exchange student and the host family and club as you are. We can’t help you or the student, if we don’t know that there is a problem.

Summary

The job of hosting a student requires tact, sympathy and patience. But its rewards are great in terms of widening views and understandings - to say nothing of long-term friendships. You will get to know, and love, someone from another country, another culture, and another part of the world. You will have the opportunity to watch, and help shape, the development and maturity of a young person. You will have opportunities to learn of another culture yourself, and in the process of sharing our culture and our country with this student, gain knowledge and understanding for you and your family. And at the end of the exchange, you will have added a son or daughter to your family who may live in a “foreign” country the rest of their life, but will always be a part of **your** family.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for these students. Help to make it a memorable one for both of you.

“Open your heart, and the rest will follow”