



Rotary District 5170 Youth Exchange

HOST FAMILY ROLE

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Necessary Steps for Host Families Participating in Rotary Youth Exchange

Hosting a student can be an extremely rewarding experience for everyone in the family, yet it is a role that requires a lot of responsibility. Host families welcome a teen from another culture into their home and essentially treat them like a member of their family so that the student has the opportunity to experience “everyday” American family life and education – from your family’s perspective. Rotary exchange students are expected to live with at least two host families during their stay so that they get a broader view of the diversity of our culture and family life.

What is expected of a host family?

A host family is expected to provide room & board and a supportive and caring environment for the exchange student. Students are expected to cover “optional” expenses for things like prom dress, going to movies with friends, field trips, clothing, and other non-essential items. The local Rotary Club will be providing the student with a monthly stipend to help cover these types of expenses and if you don’t typically pack a bag lunch for your own children, they will also provide an additional stipend for the student for school lunches or purchase a school lunch card if available.

If your family is planning a vacation that would include large expenses like air fare that you are not prepared to cover but you would like to invite the student to accompany you, it is reasonable to discuss this with the student and if the student doesn’t wish to spend the money on the ticket, contact your Rotarian Counselor so that they can help make arrangements for the student to be taken care of while you are away from home. If your family is going out to dinner together, then the assumption would be that you would cover the student’s dinner as well. But – be clear with your student about budget limits as too. If you wouldn’t allow your own family members to order the most expensive item on the menu, then you need to communicate that to the student – in advance.

Details about host family responsibilities and interactions with the student are covered in more detail during the host family orientation training that is a necessary part of the process that takes place before you become a Rotary Host Family.

If you are a first host family, you will typically receive email contact information about the student so that you can correspond with them prior to their arrival. This will give you some time to get to know them and counsel them on things they might want to know about before arriving in California.

Before the Student Arrives

- Work with local Rotary Club Youth Exchange Committee members to understand and complete necessary paperwork, activities and educational modules.
- Participate in training and orientation sessions offered by the sponsoring Rotary Club and District before you contact the student.
- Establish communication with the student.
- Understand the program rules that the student must follow.
- Know how to contact key Rotarians involved in Youth Exchange and community services in case of an emergency.

During the Exchange While the Student Lives in Your Home

- Provide a safe and welcoming environment for trust and friendship to develop between the student and your family.
- Support and make the student feels like a part of the family, with the same privileges and obligations.
- Gently encourage the student to learn and adopt or adapt to most of the ways of your household.
- Be financially willing and able to provide room and board for the student and emotionally ready to welcome them into your home.
- Notify your Rotary Club counselor if your family circumstances change and it becomes a hardship to host a student so that they may help make alternate living arrangements for the student.
- All students must have their own bed. If the student must share a room, it should be with a child of the same gender and similar age.
- Provide a place in the home where the student may study in private.
- Recognize the student's birthday and other special occasions.
- Ensure the student knows how to contact family members, friends, and other support networks in the community.
- In case of an emergency, know how to access and use the student's travel insurance policy.
- Voice any concerns and questions regarding the student to the Rotarian host counselor, including serious homesickness, difficulty adapting to family life or school, or illness. They are there to assist you and the student.
- Maintain close contact with the host club, and address problems and concerns quickly.
- Exercise supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the student's well being.
- Encourage involvement in community life by introducing the student to neighbors, friends, and local groups.
- Teach the student about local culture, and learn about the student's culture.
- Advise the student about matters related to school, family, community functions, and friendship.

How long will the student be living with my family?

Most long-term exchange students live with two or three host families during their exchange. This means the student may live with you for anywhere between three and six months.

Some anxiety is to be expected if you have never hosted an exchange student. Be sure you are comfortable with the idea before committing to serve as a host family. If you have serious reservations, feel that you cannot meet these expectations, or do not have adequate answers to your questions, please contact your local Rotarian for further information.