



www.StudentAmericanInternational.com

Student Handbook

Important Names & Phone Numbers

**Student American International –
National Offices**

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United States

843-650-2101

800-639-0564

studentamericaninternational@gmail.com

www.studentamericaninternational.com

Your LC is:

Your LCs phone number is:

Your LCs email address is:

Your Regional Director's name and contact info is:

Student American International CEO & Responsible Officer: Melissa Polos

Melissadir.sai@gmail.com

[Email Studentamericaninternational@gmail.com](mailto:EmailStudentamericaninternational@gmail.com)

National Office Contact 800-639-0564 / 843-650-2101

Department of State contact info:

US Department Of State Contact: Toll Free 1.866.283.9090 / Email: jvisas@state.gov

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*United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, DC 20522*

January 8, 2019

Dear Secondary School Student:

Congratulations on your participation in the Exchange Visitor Program! On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, I want you to know that your decision to come to the United States is important to us. We want your stay to be a positive and memorable experience for you.

As a secondary school student, you are part of a U.S. Department of State cultural exchange program in which you, like thousands of other students from around the world, will have the opportunity to share your language, culture and customs with your American host family, your American school and also the broader local community. Your participation in this program fosters a greater understanding between our countries.

You are a valued guest in the United States, and we want you to succeed in this program. Your goal should be to learn as much as you can about American customs, values and culture and to build strong relationships with your host family, new classmates, and new friends. You will be living with a host family and attending a new school, both of which may have different rules and ways of life from what you are used to, so keeping an open mind will be very important to your success.

You and your host family have agreed to follow the program rules that govern the secondary school student exchange program. We hope you have taken the time to review the program rules carefully and that you understand your rights and responsibilities. If you have any questions and/or do not understand your rights and responsibilities, please contact your U.S. sponsor.

Your U.S. sponsor is your first point of contact throughout your stay in the United States. Your sponsor is identified on your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Program (J-1) Status. If you have any questions about your exchange program, if you need assistance of any kind while you are here, or if something just does not feel right to you, immediately contact your U.S. sponsor. It is your sponsor's responsibility to help you with any problems, needs, or concerns you may have. Your U.S. sponsor should have given you an emergency telephone contact number in your program orientation materials. This telephone number should be available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have concerns and/or issues that your U.S. sponsor has not resolved, or you find you cannot reach your sponsor, please contact the Department of State through our J-1 Visa emergency Helpline (1-866-283-9090), which is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or by e-mail at JVisas@state.gov.

We are pleased that you made the decision to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program and I hope you enjoy your stay in the United States.

*Sincerely,
G.K. Saba
Director, Policy & Program Support for Private Sector Exchange*

Attitude of Gratitude

What it takes to make it work & holding up to your responsibilities while on this program.

Let's be clear up front. You are here because your agent overseas and SAI believed you possessed the maturity and desire to be here, along with the other requirements. We do not care how much money it cost you to come. *This program is a privilege, NOT a right.* It is not a travel program either. Regardless of what you may think, it is not "all about you" and what you think you are entitled to. It *is* about you, your host family and your host school. It is about experiencing a typical American family and high school and learning our customs and traditions. Being on this program means being held accountable for *your* actions and *your* decisions during both good and bumpy times. It takes work and dedication from you and nothing will be just handed to you. You can be assured that SAI has provided you with a family, we believe, will offer you a safe and caring environment for the duration of your program. If at any time you feel you are in an unsafe or in a dangerous situation you are to contact SAI immediately.

Who is SAI? SAI (Student American International) is your US agent. We are a Department of State designated sponsor for the J-1 Secondary exchange program. Like you have an agent in your home country that you applied through, SAI is your agent while you are in the States. Your local coordinator works with SAI and is here to support you and your host family during your program.

What is a host family? A host family is a family that has made the conscious decision to open their hearts and home to you for a semester or a year. They receive nothing in the form of payment to host you. This means no money, no gift cards for gas, no Christmas presents, no dinners out or anything from your US organization, SAI. This means no money for the food they provide you, no gas for running you to your activities or money for the additional power and water expense they will pay. Remember, your host family does not NEED you, they WANT you. You, on the other hand, need them. You need them to care for you and about you, you need them to take you to school and activities. They do not care that you may have spent thousands of dollars to come here. They receive nothing but what should be a wonderful experience with you.

Why would someone do this? Your host family believes they are giving you the chance to have the American experience you sought during your application process. Every family is different. Some houses are larger than others, some families have more money than others, some have children, and you may even have a single person as your host parent. You might live on a farm, or in a larger city, just like families in your own country. Some travel, some do not or cannot. At the end of the day, these families are all the same. They all have a home, food for you and a caring environment. They believe in bridging the cultural gap, giving you a chance to live this life, and welcome you and your culture to their homes.

If they don't get paid, what do they get and expect? They expect to have you as part of their family. This means when they ask you how your day was, they really want to know. A one word answer of "fine" will not typically work. Give them details, they want to experience your program with you. They expect you to sit with them and watch a movie, they expect you to go to the mall with them, attend family outings, help with dinner or mow the yard. Don't come home from school and give a one word answer then go to your room and hide on the internet. They expect you to

share information about your new friends, dates, homecoming, outings, grades, prom etc. They expect you to ask them about things, they expect you to ask them to take you somewhere. They expect all the same things your own parents expect and possibly quite more since you will have to rely on them more. They get to know and feel they have changed the life of a young person. They get to stay in touch with you and your natural family forever> becoming extended family.

How much does it cost to host me? Different areas of the country are more costly than others. With this in mind, the average host family spends approximately \$7,000-\$10,000 USD per student to host. American taxpayers are also paying your school tuition. It is not free and costs on average between \$9,000- \$15,000USD per year per student. Your host family and school are paying more than you paid to participate on this program.

Where do I fit in? It is up to you to find your place within your host family. They are offering all the requirements of this program along with their hearts. Hiding in your room and or excessive use of the internet will only isolate you from your family. Just being in the same room as your hosts will put you at ease over time. Watching what they do, how they do it and eventually doing it yourself is the best way to find your way. If you see something needs to be done, DO IT FOR THEM. If your hosts have assigned you chores, do them and do them with pride. If they have not assigned them, find some to do. You are a young adult and do not need to be told what to do when it comes to helping others. Do more than they ask! Don't be afraid to ask them questions or ask them how to do something. Make them dinner. Take them to dinner. Say please, say thank you. After all, they are getting nothing from hosting you other than the chance to experience your culture. Do not expect to be waited on. This will not happen. If you do, you will have serious consequences. When you signed your application, you signed it as a mature young person capable of handling yourself during the course of this program. Remember that your host family's normal is not your normal. And most of all, they do not care how much it cost you to come here. They care about you! If you want things to be as they are in your home country, then you should consider going home now.

What if I can't find my way in my family? That is why you have a local coordinator. This person will help you. They understand the changes for you are big and can be difficult. Most students think they can change families when they want. You cannot and will not. Unless your safety is compromised, you cannot and will not be allowed to change families, ever, unless SAI has approved it. You can tell your parents back home anything you want about how unhappy you are but unless you tell SAI and allow SAI and you the opportunity for everyone to work together, you will continue to be unhappy. It may make you uncomfortable for a couple days, and you may even feel that your family doesn't like you, however, that is not the case. *You must understand that just like you cannot change families in your home country because you don't like your parent's rules, you cannot change families here just because you have a problem.* The reason "I am not comfortable" is not a valid reason. You are not expected to be comfortable at first. New language, new family, new food, new school schedule, new rules. No student should expect to feel comfortable during the first 6-8 weeks. Give yourself time to adjust. You made a commitment to be flexible and adaptable and *you will* be held accountable to the program rules, requirements and guidelines. You will be required to make changes during your program. SAI, you and your host family will be counseled on any valid issue that may arise. All parties understand there will be differences and the goal is to work together to solve them. Just as the United Nations has to work

our Program Director examines each prospective student's application before any student is accepted for placement by SAI. In order to qualify for SAI placement, a student must meet standards for academic and personal achievement, as well as meet proficiency requirements for both speaking and writing English.

The desire of international students to experience American culture and life could not be fulfilled without the cooperation of public high schools, host families, and a field organization to support both. Local high schools may choose to accept international student, or not. Since the cost of these students is paid by local taxpayers, school boards must see a benefit to the student population in order to assume this expense. The primary benefit to high schools is to increase the diversity of their student population, and to expose their students to other cultures, in hopes of teaching them tolerance of other cultures. As you know, our host families do not receive compensation (a visa requirement), so they also have no financial reasons for hosting an international student. Their reasons for hosting are similar to high schools' reasons. Most families are interested in learning about other cultures, exposing their children to other cultures, and forming a lasting relationship with a child from another country. Our field organization is trained to support the needs of our exchange students, but also to support the needs of school and our host families. SAI is committed to making the exchange experience rewarding to all parties – the student, school personnel, and our host families.

SAI complies with all U.S. Department of State requirements, as well as their suggested guidelines. At the end of this Handbook, you will find the U.S. Department of State requirements which govern organizations handling exchange students.

We have tried to make this handbook as useful for you as possible. The content was developed based on the real experiences of thousands of students, as well as their schools and host families. No matter how much material we have incorporated in the handbook, nothing can replace regular and open communication with your host family and SAI Local Contact.

SAI Organizational Structure

All operational decisions are made by our CEO, Melissa Polos, who also sits on our board. Melissa has over twenty years of experience with international students. She has acted in every capacity within our organization, including being a host parent. Our national office is located in Myrtle Beach, SC, where Melissa is assisted by a well-trained staff. SAI's field organization consists of both Regional Directors (in our larger territories) Area Managers and Local Coordinators, known hereinafter as your **LC**. These are the individuals who you will deal with far more often than the national staff.

Chain of Communication

If you have a problem, or simply want to ask a questions, your first point of contact is your LC. Hopefully, you have already developed a relationship with this individual. If at some point, you have a problem, and are unable to resolve it with your LC, or he/she is unavailable, your next point of contact would be your Area Manager or Regional Director. If you are still unable to resolve the problem, you should contact the national office, and you will be directed to the appropriate

individual to assist you. If you are located in one of our territories where there is no Regional Director or State manager, then your next level of contact would be directly to the national office, and you will be directed to the appropriate individual to assist you. ***If you decide to contact your school or overseas agent with an issue before trying to resolve with your host family and then your LC, your agent will in turn contact SAI and SAI will contact your LC who will then contact you. By following the proper chain of communication, you will save yourself much time and headache. What starts with you, will end with you. Use the proper chain of communication.***

Supervision and Monthly Reports

A program **requirement** is that you have monthly contact with your LC. This means you MUST respond to them each month either with a phone call, text message or other electronic media or in person visit. A common misconception you may feel is that your LC is “best friends or close friends” to your host family, making you feel that you cannot discuss issues that may bother you. This is not the case. All LCs know their host families from the communities they live in and the application process itself. This does not mean they are the best of friends and see each other in their daily lives. They will always put our student’s best interest first. We require our LCs to meet with you, email you or call / text you on the telephone, at least once each month. They will also make contact with your school, as well as your host family. The LC will use the information obtained from all sources to file a Monthly Supervision Report. The Reports are reviewed by the national office staff, and our overseas partners, who in turn provide your natural parents with a report on how you are doing. If your LC has attempted to contact you and you have not attempted to contact them back, then this will be noted on your report as a violation of program rules. When your LC has contacted you, *you are required to contact them back.*

If you or your host family, identify a problem, your LC will determine what action needs to be taken. Minor problems may be dealt with during your monthly contact phone call or meeting. Other problems may require further conversations with the involved parties, and more detailed documentation than a Monthly Supervision Report. This is called an Incident Report.

There are several levels of discipline for students, which may result from either behavioral or academic issues. The first level is simple a discussion of the issue between you and your LC. The next levels generally result from an Incident Report. Depending on the severity of the problem, and if the problem has been ongoing, you may receive a verbal warning, a written warning, a probationary letter, or be dismissed from the program. Levels of discipline are determined by the severity of the violation.

Hopefully, if you have an issue or problem, you will not wait until your LC person does his/her monthly check-in. *Problems are far more easily controlled when they are dealt with as soon as they arise. Your LC is there to help you, call if you need help!*

If your program is going well, you will likely only hear from your LC once per month yet they are always available for support any time in between. For non-emergency issues, please allow at least 48 hours before receiving a response from your LC.

24/7 Support

Our normal National Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. EST. Emergency support is available to our students on a 24 hour a day basis, 365 days a year. If you have an emergency, and your LC is unavailable, call your emergency telephone number, which is 1-800-639-0564. You will be prompted how to receive direct support for your emergency. Have a pen and paper ready to write down instructions.

They Don't Know Unless You Tell Them

When you signed up for this program, you signed stating you had the maturity it takes when dealing with new situations. You must use this maturity throughout your program. What you stated about yourself in your application is what your host family wants to see. All too often students have what they feel is a valid issue or concern with their host family. If you do, talk to them. Just like you don't know what the house rules are until they tell you, they don't know how you feel unless you tell them. There is a respectful way to address your concerns with your host family. Sit down with them and tell them what you are feeling. They understand how far from home you are and what you might be feeling already. If you do not tell them yourself, the situation may only aggravate itself making your living conditions unbearable. Your host family will likely give you suggestions on how to make things better. While you may not like their suggestions, most host families are well prepared to help you deal with issues in their homes. It is worth repeating: *If you decide to contact your agent with an issue before trying to resolve with your host family and then your LC, your agent will in turn, contact SAI and SAI will contact your LC who will then contact you. By following the proper chain of command, you will save yourself much time and headache.*

Emergency Procedures

If you become seriously ill, or injured, and require immediate medical care, your host family should take you to the hospital emergency room. Be sure that you have your medical insurance card with you at all times. Once you are at the emergency room, your host family will telephone your LC first, and if he/she is unavailable, contact the Regional Director or State Manager. If you do not have a Regional Director or State Manager and your family can't reach you LC, they will call the national office staff at the emergency number 1-800-639-0564. It is imperative that you or your host family keep SAI informed of all emergency medical procedures, and the status of your health, so that we can keep your natural family advised of your medical status.

We can never anticipate all of the situations which may arise. If you are faced with a non-medical emergency, get in touch with your LC, Regional Director, Area Manager or the national office staff for guidance. It is not our intent to scare you, but other types of emergencies may include sexual assault, death of a family member, or some other unfortunate situation. The likelihood that this will happen is very remote, but could happen. We are here to assist you no matter what you are faced with.

Accidents/Natural Disasters

Sometimes things happen unexpectedly. An accident or Mother Nature can cause disruption during your program. Your LC, our offices and overseas partners will be concerned until we hear from you or your host family. Should you be faced with an incident such as a tornado, fire, accident or any other unforeseen event, please follow this simple checklist so all parties can be informed, assist you where possible and notify your agent and natural parents.

- Always carry your ID card issued by your agent. This contains crucial information about who you are, where you are staying, for example.
- Notify your LC immediately of your situation. Be prepared to tell them who, what, how, when and why and where.
- If your LC is not available, please contact your Regional or Area Manager or someone in this office. Our emergency line is 800-639-0564. Be sure to have pen and paper when calling our emergency line as you will be given instructions to receive prompt assistance.
- Provide any documentation or photos when available.

Insurance

U.S. Department of State regulations require that every SAI student is covered by medical and travel insurance, and you are. You should have received an insurance identification card which you should carry with you at all times. Your host family is not responsible for your medical expenses. You and your natural parents are. Your insurance covers most major illness or injury sustained during the exchange period. Whenever you require medical attention, you will need your medical history, the medical release form (both included in the original application which was provided to your host family), and your insurance card. Please notify your LC if you receive medical care.

All insurance policies exclude some services. Routine physical examination (as for sports), common colds and flu, vaccinations, which you should have received prior to coming to the United States, and dental care are NOT covered. However, dental emergencies, such as dental treatment related to an accident, may be covered. Your insurance will only cover what is considered a reasonable charge for the services provided. This will vary according to what state you are residing in. You and your natural parents will be responsible for any amount not covered by insurance.

All medical bills / deductibles must be paid at the time of visit without exception. Your doctor's office may tell you they will file the claim, however, you must pay at the time of service. While Emergency room visits for true emergencies may be covered, it is still you and your natural parent's responsibility to handle any outstanding medical bills not covered. **Just because a claim has been filed does not mean your claim will be paid Remember, you must call the insurance company to receive preauthorization when necessary. Any questions about claims must be directed to the insurance company.**

Your host family and SAI are not responsible for any of your medical bills.

Please understand that due to the US HIPPA laws, the insurance company will not discuss student's situation without the student being present and sometimes they will still not discuss over the phone. The student needs to contact the claims department themselves should they have questions. SAI will assist when necessary.

**** Note: If you play football, lacrosse, soccer or rugby with the school, be sure to purchase insurance from the school.**

Pre-existing Conditions are not covered by this policy.

What is a Pre-existing Condition? It is any medical condition, sickness, injury, illness, disease, mental illness, or mental nervous disorder, regardless of the cause, including any congenital, chronic, subsequent, or recurring complications or consequences related thereto or resulting therefrom that with reasonable medical certainty existed at the time of application or any time during the 12 months prior to the coverage start date of this policy, whether or not previously manifested, symptomatic, known, diagnosed, treated, or disclosed. This specifically includes but is not limited to any medical condition, sickness, injury, illness, disease, mental illness, or mental nervous disorder, for which medical advice, diagnosis, care, or treatment was recommended or received or for which a reasonably prudent person would have sought treatment during the 12 months immediately preceding the coverage start date of this policy.

Program Participation Dates

All DS2019 forms are issued with a general start date of August 1 and a general end date of June 30 of the participant's years. A student's program **start date** may be revised due to arrival date and or birth date. A student's program will be revised in the SEVIS system to show **program ended** the last official day of school. A student's 30 day grace period will begin on the last official day of school. These updated start and end dates will not be reflected on the original DS2019 form the student is issued, however, when necessary an updated DS2019 will be provided to the students. These dates will be updated in the SEVIS system.

Students are to return to their home country within 5-7 days after last official day of school. If the student does remain beyond 7 days, a Program End Release with detailed plans outlining where they will stay during this time and approval of natural parents must be on file with SAI. This form must be submitted to SAI and approved prior to any change in flights

Program Rules

SAI has Program Rules all students must comply with. As part of the application process, and before you left your native country, you and your natural parents agreed, by your signatures, to accept the SAI program Rules. These rules should have been covered in detail at your Departure Orientation Meeting in your home country. If you, or your host family, have questions regarding any SAI rule, discuss them with your LC

Host Family Rules

The host family establishes household rules including chores, curfew hour, as well as telephone and internet use. It is the responsibility of the student to follow all rules established by the host family. If the student has issues regarding the host family's rules, he/she should discuss them with the host family. If the issues can't be resolved between the student and the host family, either the student and/or the host family should contact their SAILC for resolution. The following represents the most basic rules of all host families. Stick with these basic rules and you will be off to a great start.

***MAKE YOUR BED EVERY DAY -you will accomplish one task successfully every day by doing this**

***If you wear it...Hang it up**

***If you drop it...Pick it up**

***If you eat from it or on it...Wash it**

***If you step on it...Wipe it off**

***If you open it...Close it**

***If you empty it...Fill it up or let someone know**

***If it rings...Answer it**

***If it howls...Feed it**

***If it cries...Love it**

***If you break it...Fix it**

It is extremely important and mandatory for you to accept the role of a member of your host family. It is rare for an American family to have hired help with household cleaning or yard work. This is typical of American culture. All household and yard work is done by the family, and includes you. You should do any chores assigned to you, without complaint, and offer assistance at any time. You are not a guest in your host family.

Host families come in all sizes and shapes. Each family has their own specific household rules and routine. We have provided your host family with a Host Family Workbook. This Workbook covers typical topics which should be discussed with you, such as chores, meals, telephone and internet use, who pays for what, etc. By completing this Workbook, your host parent(s), and you should both have a good understanding of what the rules are, and what is expected of you.

Do Not Challenge

Any of the program rules, family rules or family routines. Again, every family has different rules and guidelines and comparing them will not benefit you. Just like families in your home country have different rules, the same is done here. You may certainly ask for clarification, but you must not argue with your host family. If you have serious concerns about what is being required of you, please call your LC, and discuss your issues. Remember that it is **your responsibility to adapt to the host family – it is not their responsibility to adapt to you!** SAI limits internet usage especially in the beginning months of your program. Telephone calls or Skype calls/visits should

not exceed a half an hour each. Students who frequently use the internet, do not adjust well to their American environment and are likely to have more problems. It is perfectly acceptable for your host family and or SAI to require the removal of your cell phone, laptop or any other technological communication devices for a period of time if your use is considered an issue. This is done to help you immerse in the program and is not a punishment.

Illegal Drugs (including marijuana)

Use (or possession) of illegal drugs will not be tolerated. Any possession or proven use of illegal drugs will result in immediate dismissal from the program and return home. If SAI has sufficient evidence that a student is using illegal drugs, the student may be required to submit to a drug test.

If you find yourself in a situation where there is illegal drug use. You must remove yourself from the situation immediately. Being around, but not participating in the use of drugs is not an excuse. If you are caught with others who are using illegal drugs, the assumption will be that you were participating in the activity. Your only defense is to get out of the situation immediately. If need be, telephone your host family and they will come get you. Your host family is aware that you will contact them if you find yourself in this type of situation and need to be picked up. If you do not immediately remove yourself from the situation, you could face disciplinary action, since you will be perceived by SAI as willingly being in an at-risk social situation.

Alcoholic Beverages

The purchase and/or consumption of alcoholic beverages by anyone under the age of 21 is a violation of United States law, and grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Exceptions to this will not be made.

*The United States is very conservative in their drinking laws compared with other countries. Your country may have a legal drinking age of 16, but in America, it is 21. You are not allowed to be anywhere out of your host family home where there is underage drinking of alcohol. As with drug use, if you find yourself at a party or function where alcoholic drinking occurs, you must remove yourself from the situation immediately! Picture this...you are invited to a party, you go, there is drinking, and the party is raided by the police, and arrested along with everyone else at the party. You end up at the local police station, and have to call your host family. This is a situation that you do NOT want to be faced with. Think this won't happen to you? It can, and it has happened to other exchange students. Don't let it happen to you! **Even if your host family allows you to drink, under SAI program rules and per Federal Law, underage drinking, even in the home, is not permissible.***

Smoking / Vaping

State laws restrict the purchase and use of cigarettes and nicotine products to at least age 18. Also, smoking / vaping is considered culturally unacceptable by most host parents. Therefore, SAI has a strict no-smoking/no vaping rule for their students. Disciplinary action will be taken against any student found with cigarettes and or vaping products in their possession, or found smoking and or vaping, up to and including dismissal from the program.

You may be a student who has been smoking / vaping for several years before coming to America. Under no circumstances are you allowed to smoke or vape while you are in America. And, your host family won't believe it when you say.... "but they aren't mine" – I'm just holding them for a friend." If you are found with cigarettes or vaping products in your possession, we will assume that they are for your personal use, and you will be disciplined accordingly.

Driving Motor Vehicles

Getting a driver's license is not part of your program. Students (including those who have a driver's license) are not allowed to drive any motor vehicle for their duration of their SAI program. There is one exception to this rule. Students enrolled in an accredited Driver Education Program, may drive only the vehicle(s) owned by the Driver Education Program.

You are NOT, under any circumstances, allowed to drive a motor vehicle other than one owned by a Driver's Education Program. This means at ANY time – not in a parking lot, not in the host family driveway, nowhere, ever including 4-wheelers, snowmobiles or mopeds! In most states, our students cannot meet the requirements of obtaining a driver's license. There are residency requirements, and required hours behind the wheel which typically cannot be met through driving a vehicle owned by the Driver Education Program. So, signing up for a Driver's Education Program may be pointless. Be sure to check your states requirements. Do not expect your host family to go out of their way to help you get a license. Most importantly your insurance, nor your host family's insurance will not cover any accident or injury as a result of you driving a motorized vehicle.

“Life Changes”

No “life changes” are allowed while you are in the United States under the SAI program. This includes, but is not limited to: changing religion, getting married, becoming pregnant, causing a pregnancy, and profound alterations of appearance such as tattoos, body piercings, cosmetic surgery or dyeing the hair an unnatural color (such as green, purple, blue, blonde to jet black or vice versa are examples).

This rule should be self-explanatory. We return you to your natural parents in the same condition that you arrived. SAI is not interested in how your natural parents feel about something that you want to do, a tattoo for example – it is forbidden! If you have questions about whether or not something falls within the restricted category, feel free to call your LC for clarification.

Local, State and Federal Laws

Students must comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations. Claiming ignorance is not considered a valid defense against breaking the law.

Most laws are fairly apparent. However, there are situations where this may not be the case. One of our students was expelled from his high school for setting off the fire alarm at school. The law governing fire alarms were set by the local government, and setting off an alarm in that school

calls for immediate expulsion. This WAS in the School Handbook, which the student had been required to sign, stating that he had read it in its entirety and agreed to comply with all school rules and regulations. The student argued that he didn't know he would get in trouble for setting off the alarm. Make sure that you understand all laws and rules. It is bad enough to get in trouble because you broke a rule that you knew about, and make the conscious choice to face the consequences of your actions. It is even worse, and possibly much worse, to face the consequences of breaking a rule that you were not aware of. If your high school has a handbook, read it carefully so that you understand what is required of you, and the consequences of violating a rule.

Making false allegations towards your host family.

Often times a student who is not feeling comfortable in their host family will tend to exaggerate their situation in the hopes of creating major issues that they feel may lead to faster resolution towards getting what *they* want. Students do not take into consideration the impact this can and will have on the host family both professionally and personally for adults and children in the home.

Your host family was screened prior to your arrival. This screening process included an in home interview with members of your host family and a tour of the host family home. This process includes taking photographs of certain areas of the home where you will be spending much of your time.

Some examples of false allegations are:

Taking staged photos that do not represent the whole picture. Focusing in on one small messy area rather than the entire room.

There is no food in the house. Does this mean there truly is no food in the house? Could this mean there is no food you like or are accustomed to eating in the house? Could this mean you do not know how to make something for yourself? Keep in mind if you make an allegation such as this, the local rep will come for a visit to your host family home and most likely will take photos of all areas of the home that you have addressed in your complaint. If there truly is no food in the home, or there are unsanitary conditions in areas that you inhabit do exist, and then proper arrangements will be made to correct the situation swiftly. Areas considered as private and not accessible by a student regularly will not be considered under any circumstances. These areas may include a host parents' bedroom, a sibling's bedroom, a storage room, garage, or a bathroom not normally used by you.

If you have concerns regarding any aspect of your host family or their home, the one and only person to contact is your local representative. Your natural parents, friends, family and other exchange students cannot assist. The more people you involve, contradictory to your beliefs, will only slow down the process, should there be real issues that need to be addressed. The chain of command that is addressed at the beginning handbook is there for your protection and a speedy resolution to your issues. Keep in mind that a solution does not mean an agreement to how you think this should be resolved.

Travel Within the US

Students must obtain written permission prior to travel if you are not traveling with your host family or a school sanctioned trip while under the SAI program. A Travel Release Form must be signed by the natural parents and host parents. The student's LC must be informed of any travel plans a minimum of three weeks prior to planned departure. Students should not miss school to travel, unless the trip is sponsored by the high school. Your host family has been provided information on our travel program and the requirements of this as well.

When participating in a family vacation, students are expected to cover the costs of their food and attractions costs associated with the trip so please budget accordingly.

An academic cultural exchange program is NOT a travel program – it is a cultural and academic program. Many students expect that they will have an opportunity to visit many different areas within the United States while they are here. They have no appreciation for how large our country is, and/or how long it takes to get from one place to another. For this reason, SAI works with a company that arranges chaperoned package travel trips for exchange students. Information on these trips can be found at the SAI website at www.studentamericaninternational.com. Click on the student trips icon. If you are interested in traveling while you are in the United States, you should sign up for one of the trips on our website, or participate in school or church sponsored trips. You should not expect your host parents or those working with SAI to provide you with travel opportunities.

SAI is very strict with their travel policy. Just because you have an opportunity to go on a trip, it is not a guarantee that the trip will be approved by our national office. This is not a travel program.

Travel Outside the US with your host family

If you travel with your host family outside the US you MUST notify SAI. There are important documents that need validating BEFORE you leave in order for you to return into the United States, Travel requests for travel outside the US must be submitted to the National Office of SAI no later than 30 days prior to your trip departure.

*Send the following to the SAI national office by an overnight traceable mail only method i.e. Federal Express, UPS or USPS overnight:

- The original form DS-2019 (copies will not be accepted).
- A completed Travel Release Form with all appropriate signatures
- A self-addressed, overnight, prepaid envelope via Federal Express, UPS, or U. S. Postal Service Express Mail for the return of your documents. (Students are responsible for these expenses, and no exceptions will be made.) If papers are received with no prepaid return envelope, paperwork will be held in national office until prepaid arrangements have been made.

No out of country travel will be approved after April 30th each year of participants program.

**For any travel, deadlines are in place and should you wish to travel you must submit all information PRIOR TO THE DEADLINE to be considered for attendance. If you miss the deadline, it will only affect you as reservations and meal plans must be made well enough in advance in order to ensure a great trip. Turn in your forms on time to avoid missing an opportunity.*

High School Code of Conduct and Student Guidelines

Students must follow all guidelines in the High School Code of Conduct or Student Handbook, regardless of how the student feels about the rules. A student is a guest in his/her high school, which requires exemplary behavior. SAI will take disciplinary action against student with persistent disciplinary problems. Students may get dismissed from their high school for persistent disciplinary problems. SAI is not required to place a student in a new high school if he/she is dismissed from his/her original school. If this occurs, the student will be dismissed from the program and sent home.

It is a privilege for international students to be allowed to attend an American public high school. They are invited guests, attending school at taxpayer expense. You are expected to be at a higher level of maturity and represent your country and culture while in attendance. We expect you to demonstrate appropriate respect to both teachers and students at all times. We expect you to maintain a C or better in each class at all times. Under no circumstances should you make comments like "my country's schools are better, the kids here are stupid, they let anybody attend this school", or any similar statement. Although you may think this way, speaking it is unacceptable. Any negative statements you make regarding your school experience will be reported to your LC, and may result in disciplinary action.

You may request particular classes of interest, if space is available, but may NOT demand a class because of some requirement in your home country. Also you may not demand an honors level class. International students are required to take a peer-appropriate course load (meaning that you take the courses that other American students would typically take), not load up your schedule with electives.

Homework: Educational standards and expectations in your home country may be very different from those in the United States. Homework is common in American high schools. In addition, exchange students are generally unprepared for the number of quizzes and tests that are common in our schools, especially "pop" quizzes. We often hear comments like "that's not fair" especially regarding "pop quizzes." However, fair or not, it is part of our academic culture and something you need to accept. Do not use the excuse of "poor" English with your teachers to get out of a quiz, test or assignment. The State Department requires an exchange student's English be at a proficiency level to handle a typical American high school course load, and they are not entitled to ESL. (English as a Second Language) If you are having difficulty with your English at school, call your LC for suggestions on how to improve. If you are having difficulty with a particular class, see your teacher and ask how you can arrange for a tutor. If you need a tutor, you will be required to cover this expense from your personal funds.

You should actively participate in school-related activities, particularly on a team sport. Being a member of a sports team or active in a club is the quickest and easiest way for you to make new friends. However, you should not expect to be placed on a varsity team, even if you are quite talented. Participation in a sport or club is a means of making friends, not a way to demonstrate how good an athlete you are. Making friends may be the most difficult challenge that you face as an exchange student many of the students in your school may have been in school together since they were quite young, and are close friends. They don't need new friends, you do. That means that you will have to make a significant effort in order to make friends. If you need assistance with how best to make friends, talk with your host parent(s) or call your LC, and they should be able to provide you with opportunities specific to your particular area.

It is your responsibility to obtain a copy of the high school's handbook. Many schools have their handbook, as well as their code of conduct and dress code on their website. Make sure that you understand all school rules and regulations. Ignorance of school policies is no defense!

School Attendance and Grades

Students must attend school every day unless you are ill and have been to the doctor. Students must maintain a grade of "C" in ALL classes at all times. Failure to comply with this rule may result in disciplinary action. Students must take at least one English class and one American History class. This may require that you to be placed in a class with students who are younger, or older than you are.

Your J1 visa is issued as an academic / cultural visa. We expect you to be diligent about your studies. Whether or not you will receive credit for your exchange year when you return to your natural country will make no difference in how seriously you take your studies while under our program. You are to do all assignments, turn in all homework, take all quizzes and tests, and receive no special treatment. Should you fail to fulfill your academic obligations, you may risk being returned home.

Your school counselor / advisor should be just that - a counselor / advisor for school related issues. You should only discuss school related issues with your counselor / advisor and / or teachers. If you have a concern or question about living with your host family, you are to speak with your host family or your LC. If you have a question or concern about the exchange experience, you must talk with an SAI representative. *You are not to go to your school counselor with any kind of problem not related directly to school. Personal problems are not to be discussed with school staff.* If you have a personal problem again, you must talk with an SAI representative. Following the proper chain of command ensures quick results to your situation.

Visits of Natural Parents/Friends/Relatives and Students Temporary Home Return

Natural parents, friend, and relatives from abroad may visit the student **ONLY after you have successfully completed your program. This means no visits from family or friends during your program.** Visitors at the end of your program should not expect to stay with the host family. Students are not allowed to return home temporarily at any time during the program except due to

the death or imminent death of an immediate family member. In these cases, the SAI National Offices must be notified in order to process documentation to allow for your return to the US.

One of the most disruptive events that can occur during an exchange program is a visit from family or friends from home. It is exceptionally difficult for most students to separate from their family friends, adapt to a completely alien culture, and develop a strong bond with their host family. Remember the beginning of your program? If your year is interrupted by a visit, you will be torn between your life in America and your life back home. Once the visit is over, you may suffer from homesickness. Depending on when the visit occurs, you may never get back on track with your American experience or relationship with your host family and new friends. The same is true if you were allowed to return home for a vacation, only reverse. If your host family learns that your family or friend planned a visit during your program, they have been instructed to notify your LC immediately.

Employment

Students are not allowed to secure employment while under the SAI Program. However, they may accept non-competitive employment, such as baby-sitting, tutoring or lawn mowing, but must not exceed 10 hours a week. This rule is very straightforward. We seldom have an issue with our students regarding employment. However, many do ask about incidental work such as baby-sitting, lawn mowing, etc. These are perfectly acceptable ways for you to stay occupied with a constructive activity, and earn a small amount of money.

Change of Medical Status

If there is an undisclosed medical condition which is diagnosed after the student's arrival in the United States, your LC and SAI National Office, must be notified immediately, in order to determine what steps must be taken. Failure to do so may compromise your status with the SAI program.

All student applicants on our exchange program are required to disclose any medical condition that they have. If you are diagnosed with an undisclosed medical condition after you have arrived in your host family's home, contact SAI immediately – either the National Office at 1-800-639-0564, or your LC. Depending on the condition, and your family's feelings about it, there are several options available to us. For example, a serious medical problem such as a heart condition, which is discovered during a routine sports physical, would require that you return home for treatment. On the other hand, a mild allergy which develops after you arrive (a fairly common occurrence), and can be easily managed, does not have the same consequences. SAI would need to know what is required to manage the condition then determine if your host family has no objections to you continuing to stay in their home. If the family does not want to continue to host the student as a result of your medical condition, they we would look to moving you to a new family if your condition is seen as manageable.

Change of Host Families

Just like things are not always happy and perfect back home and you cannot change your natural family back home, do not expect to change host families "just because" you don't like something. The first stage of working through issues is to discuss this with your host family. Remember, they have been informed that you will have high periods and low periods so talk with them about this and anything you are having issues with. Remember too, it is your responsibility to adjust to your family, not theirs to adjust to you. Moving you from one family to another is a serious decision. Every attempt will be made to resolve a problem between a student and their host family, before a move is considered. If SAI determines that a move is necessary **due to a serious condition or because your safety has been compromised**, it will be handled by SAI, not the student. The LC may ask you if you know a family who might be interested in hosting you. At that point, the LC will get in touch with the family to determine their interest, and if they meet the necessary host family requirements of our organization. If so, all of the necessary documentation would be required, which takes time and will not happen overnight. *Should you move without the approval of SAI, you will be considered off the program and your visa will be terminated.*

All decisions regarding the placement of our students are made by SAI. We are your legal guardians while you are under our program.

Proper Clothing

The dress code in the United States is much more conservative than in many other countries. We expect ALL student to dress in proper clothing for both the United States and their host communities. The following are examples of unacceptable clothing and/or accessories:

- Thong underwear that can be seen by anyone other than the wearer.
- Skin-tight pants, shirts or sweaters.
- Shirts or sweaters that show the stomach, midriff, or cleavage.
- Halter tops or shirts with no sleeves or straps
- Obscene t-shirts or other clothing.
- Skirts and shorts that are shorter than where your fingertips touch your leg.

Be sure to check with your local high school for additional dress code rules.

You must adhere to the dress requirements, and those of your local community. What you are allowed to wear in your natural country is of no bearing when you are in America. Your host family will provide you with guidance on what is acceptable, and what is not. If you arrived with clothing that is inappropriate for our culture, you will have to pack it away or ship it home. You may also need to purchase clothing that is appropriate, which will likely mean that you need to ask your natural parents for additional money. If your school has a dress code, you need to read it and be aware of their guidelines. If you do not comply with our requirements of acceptable clothing and/or your school's dress code, you will face disciplinary action.

Your Host Family

Your host family is providing you with a safe place to stay, nourishing food, and supervision. They are volunteers, and receive no financial compensation for hosting you. Because they do not get paid, they have agreed to host you because they want to open their home to a student from another country, get to know you, and learn about your country and culture. You must treat your host family with respect at all times. SAI expects that you will be a responsible and considerate member of the family. It is customary in American to say “**please and thank you**” for just about everything...if you ask for something, it is prefaced by “**please**” and to acknowledge that someone has done something for you, no matter how minor, you should always respond with “**thank you**”.

Holidays will also be an important part of your exchange. These include, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's day. Be sure you budget accordingly to have something to give/share with your host family during these special times. A budget guide for your year is found at the end of this handbook.

Room & Board – Not a Bed & Breakfast

Before you arrived in your host family's home, you were probably told what your living arrangements would be. Your host family's application should have stated whether or not you would have your own room, etc. If you share a room with a host sibling, they should be of your gender, and typically within five years of your age. There should be a door on your bedroom that closes in order to provide you with privacy in order to change clothes, etc. You should have space for your clothing and personal possessions – possibly space in a bureau and/or closet space. If there is a significant difference between what your host family explained on their application, and the space that they provided you with, contact your LC to discuss the situation.

We provided your host parent(s) with a Host Family Workbook. Within a few days of your arrival, you should sit down with your host family to complete the Workbook. It was designed to help you understand the family's routine and rules, and covers topics such as meals, established times (for curfew, bed, etc.) chores, laundry, use of electronics (computer, internet, TV, stereo, etc.) telephone use, money, and the family's pet peeves (things that annoy them). It is very important to use the Workbook to understand the host family's expectations of you. As we said earlier, you will not be a guest in their home, but a functioning member of the family. You don't want to get to a point in your relationship where your host family loves you, but just can't live with you. Remember...it is your responsibility to adapt to the family. It is not the family's responsibility to adapt to you!

The remainder of this section will address the “board” portion of the Room and Board heading above - meaning food. Your host family is expected to provide you with two meals a day. This does not mean they will cook each meal for you. This means they will have foods cooked or available to you. They are not required to provide you with junk food, sweets, bottled water or sodas. We are not saying that you can't eat this type of food, or drink soda, only that your host family is not required to provide it. If you want junk food or sweets, your host family may ask that you purchase it with your own money and provide you with a space to keep it. Your host family is not expected to wait on you.

- It is reasonable for your family to expect you to make your own breakfast – a bowl of cereal, toast, bagel, etc. Most families do not sit down to a cooked breakfast daily.
- It is reasonable to expect you to be able to make yourself a sandwich for lunch.
- *On school days, you are required to buy your own lunch in the school cafeteria with your own money or purchase lunch foods to take with you at your expense.
- Dinner is “What it is, when it is”. Most host families take time after work to unwind and decide what they will do/have for dinner. The first words out of you upon arriving at home should not be “What’s for dinner?”.
- In general, most evening meals (what we call dinner) will be prepared by your host parent(s). However, your chores should include some assistance at mealtime, either help while the meal is being prepared, setting the table, and clean-up: clearing the table/ loading the dishwasher.
- There will almost certainly be many occasions when your host parent(s) will not be home to prepare dinner, and you will be required to make your own meal. American families schedules are often hectic during after school events and have little time to prepare a full meal between events.
- Most exchange students come from areas where meals are made fresh each day. Most American children are very independent and know how to feed themselves all meals. You may not see fresh items in your refrigerator and assume “there is no food”. Be sure to ask your host family where the freezer and cupboards are for the readymade meals and snacks Americans traditionally have and learn proper use of the host family microwave. In rural areas, fresh fruits and vegetables are less likely to be found in the host family home due to the lack of availability to get them in winter months. Many families will only go to the market every 2 weeks, and some once per month, picking up small items such as milk and bread to carry them through until the next trip.
- Understand that foods should eaten in moderation. An afternoon snack is typically a piece of fruit or a bag of chips, *not* 2 sandwiches or a whole pizza by yourself. Do not help yourself to a second serving without permission.
- It is also known that most students will drink excess amounts of sodas and juices. If you drink more than that of your host family, then expect to buy drinks/snacks for yourself and ask for a space to keep your items. In most American homes, sodas are limited in the amount consumed by the host family and bottled water should not be an expectation. **Most American families drink their water directly from the tap and it is safe.**
- Food items cannot be stored or eaten in bedrooms - ever.

Your host parent(s) are expected to provide you with one, normal, adult-sized portion for a meal. You may be allowed second servings if your host family offers it, but it should not be expected. Students are expected to eat what is provided to them. Remember, this is not a restaurant, **members of your host family are volunteers, and do not get paid.** In addition, American culture requires that you eat what is put in front of you. Unless you specifically disclosed a valid food issue on your application or prior to your arrival, such as being a vegetarian or a food allergy, you are to eat what the family eats. It is rude and unacceptable for you to refuse to eat food simply because you don’t like it, or decided after you submitted your application that you want to be a vegetarian. If you identified a valid food issue on your application, you may be required to purchase additional food suitable to your dietary/ health needs. You must plan on eating on the family’s schedule not yours. This means don’t come home from school and have a “meal size”

snack, then not eat dinner with your family, then return to the kitchen in the evening to prepare additional food for just yourself. This is rude and in most homes unacceptable. Sneaking to the kitchen in the middle of the night to eat without them knowing or seeing you will be detected by your host family regardless.

There will be times when your family will want to go out to dinner. You can expect them to provide you the anticipated cost of the dinner and make your decision based on the cost. Otherwise, they will leave you meal items for you to prepare yourself in the event you choose not to go out. If your family takes you to dinner and covers the cost of the meal, please be sure to use your manners and promptly offer a Thank You. This is not an expectation. Take them to dinner, buy pizza, or make a dessert on occasion without being asked.

Emotional Support – Know When to Call Your LC

Your host parent(s) is there to be just that – a parent(s). Talk with them and share the good times and the bad. Being an exchange student is probably a lot harder than you thought that it would be. It is certainly not a sign of weakness to seek guidance or support from your host parent(s). They want to be involved in your life, and they want to help. Your first day of school will likely be difficult, and some students have been known to come home crying, “I can’t do this!”. You can do this, but perhaps not alone. That’s why we are here. You may have headaches the first days after you arrive, and the first days of school. This is most often due to your total dependence on English when you arrive, and learning in English when you begin school. If this happens to you, tell your host parent(s). Your host family has been told that this might happen, and should know how to help you. Once your brain has adapted to the demand of being exclusively English-speaking, the headaches should stop.

Communication and Conflict Resolution – Know When To Call Your LC

No matter how much you like your host family, there are certain to be situations when you don’t agree. Just as it is not perfect all the time in your natural family, it will not be perfect here. It is absolutely imperative that you address these situations in a constructive manner. In all likelihood, there will be many things which are very different than they are back home, and you do not like. For example, most exchange students are shocked with their American curfew, or a family rule that says you cannot go out on a school night. A rule is a rule, and you must follow it. However, if you want to attend a special event, ask your host family if you may have a later curfew. This should be for a special event only...not every Friday night! If your family says no, then accept their decision politely-whether you agree with them or not.

Sometimes, there is difficulty in relationships between students and their host siblings. It is often more difficult for a host sibling to adjust to having another child in the house (that’s you) than for the parent(s). Think of how you would feel if the situation were reversed-someone moves into your house for an extended period of time. It might be fun at first, but sharing a bedroom, a bathroom, and even their parents, may not be fun for long. It is not appropriate to fight with your host siblings, or go to your host parent(s) and complain about their children or discipline their children. It is appropriate to calmly explain a situation to your host parent(s) and ask how they would like for you to handle the situation, or if they would prefer to handle it themselves.

Host family or your program issues are not to be addressed with a school staff. The school cannot help you and in fact may inadvertently send you down the wrong road if you speak with them about an issue regarding your host family. Host family issues are to be directed to your LC only. Any issues with school can be handled by school administrators with the help of your LC. Remember, you are here to experience a traditional American home and school. If you find yourself in a situation that is difficult, and you're unable to resolve it on your own, call your LC. Your LC has been trained in conflict resolution, and will be able to help you and your family work through the problem. If not, they will reach out to the Regional Director, State Manager and/or National Offices for additional support and guidance.

To ALL Students

No one can return you home but the National Office. SAI's main office consisting of 2 Alternate Responsible Officers and one Responsible Officer are the only people in the United States who can return you home based on the documentation and information. Inappropriate behaviors will be documented by your LC and used by the National Office to determine if you will be dismissed from the program. Your host family and local rep do not have the authority to make this decision however, their recommendations will be considered in any final decisions. Please be assured that if you receive these threats they need to be documented to SAI and we will address these threats.

Please understand that only SAI headquarters can make FINAL decisions regarding the status of your exchange program here in the United States. Your host family, Local Representative, Area Manager, Regional Director, community members, school personnel, your natural parents and your agent back home cannot make any final decisions regarding your program here in the US.

Reasonable Transportation

One of the biggest shocks to international students when they arrive is our lack of a mass transit system. Our country is unique in its dependence on the private passenger automobile for transportation in all but the most populated metropolitan areas. No matter what your host family said in their application about transportation, or what you were told in your home country, it is hard to imagine that you can't hop on a train or bus to get where you need to go.

You will need to plan, and ask permission in advance, for transportation needs. You should provide your host family with a minimum of *two day's notice* if you need a ride to some school-related activity, social event or store. This does not mean they can always provide it, but you give them at least 2 day's notice for planning. Your family may have to rearrange their schedule in order to meet your transportation needs, so planning is important. You don't want to find yourself in a situation where you want to attend an event, but just can't get a ride. If you join a team sport, or after school activity, transportation needs to be considered as well. Some schools have a late bus to accommodate these situations – others do not. If there is no bus option, talk with your host parent(s) about the situation PRIOR to making a commitment. There may be a way of sharing the driving responsibilities with other parents so that your host parent(s) is not burdened with driving on a daily basis.

Do not be surprised if your host family is not able to meet all of your transportation needs. If there is an event that you want to attend, and the family is unable to drive you, be polite! They are not being mean, or inconsiderate, but are busy, and you are not the only priority. You may ask your host parent(s) if they can suggest an alternate means of transportation, or they may simply tell you that you have to make your own arrangements. Families with multiple children might not be able to handle additional transportation. Be flexible with your host family and stay in the know! Meet with them on Sunday and review the upcoming week's plans and events that will require transportation. If your host family is unable to provide, seek alternative arrangements through friends.

Safety of Students

The safety of our students is paramount. While international students are under our program, SAI is their legal guardian. We take the responsibility for our students very seriously, and all decisions we make are in your best interest whether you agree or not. While you are in America, we want you to make friends and have a good time. However, we want you to be safe. We have asked your host family to share in our responsibility for your safety. As you make friends, it would be a good idea to ask your host family if they think that the friends you are making are responsible and of good character. Introduce your new friends to your host parent(s) to reassure them that you are making the right kind of friends. If you ask permission to go out, your host family will almost always ask where you are going, how you are getting there, who you are going with and what time to expect you back home. If a teenager is driving, they will want to know who it is and may say "yes" or "no" depending on how well they know the driver, and if they have a reputation for being a safe driver. These types of questions are typical of American parents, and are not being asked because they don't trust you. Understand that you probably had far more freedom at home, but you're in America now, and subject to American culture and your host family's rules. When asking your host parents to go somewhere, be prepared to answer all these questions. This is normal parenting in America.

Guidelines for Showing Affection

One area where our students are particularly vulnerable to cultural differences is what forms of showing affection are appropriate, and preventing seductive behavior. For your protection, and that of your host family, it is important that your behavior, as well as the behavior of adults in your American life, does not increase the risk of unacceptable situations or abuse.

SAI encourages love and affection between our host families and exchange students. However, it is important to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate forms of affection. Due to cultural differences, this distinction is not always clear. Although each culture differs somewhat in what is acceptable versus unacceptable when displaying affection, the following guidelines apply to American culture.

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection between host parents and other adults and students are listed below:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- “High fives” and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Brief touches to hands, face, shoulder and arms
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands during prayer

The following are warning signs you may be facing abuse or manipulation from an adult or other person:

- You suddenly decide you don’t want to go to school
- Experiencing a change in your behavior or academic performance at school
- Abrupt mood changes, or aggressive behavior
- Withdrawal from your host family and friends
- Someone is providing you new toys, clothes, or money with no obvious reason
- You experience a loss of appetite
- You are experiencing nightmares and cannot sleep
- Inappropriate touching, rubbing against you that creates an uncomfortable environment

If you feel you are facing abuse and or unwanted manipulation from someone, contact your LC immediately. He/She can help you determine the best course of action.

Guidelines for preventing seductive behavior

As with displays of affection, there are differences among cultures regarding what constitutes modesty and seductive behavior. The following guidelines apply to American culture for both students and adults

Modesty

- Absolutely no nudity under *any* circumstances, unless done behind a closed door
- No contact between adults and students while either is wearing only undergarments
- Bathrobes or housecoats should be worn over sleepwear
- No suggestive or revealing clothing
- Student must strictly adhere to school or church dress code
- No thong bathing suits

Seductive Behavior

- Absolutely no flirting between adults and student
- No language or jokes with sexual connotations

Your host family has received these guidelines, so they should act appropriately. However, if you have concerns about how your host family demonstrates affection or with modesty or behavior which may be perceived as seductive, contact your LC for assistance. In the unfortunate event

that some other individual is inappropriate with you, you should discuss the situation with your host parent (s), or LC, and determine how to best proceed.

WAIT 48

Adjusting to life in America takes time. You and your host family will need to be flexible and willing to learn from one another. You may find yourself surprised, dismayed, amused and sometimes even offended by what your host family takes for granted about life. Your host family may also be surprised, dismayed, amused and sometime offended about your views on life. A good sense of humor and lots of goodwill will help you both. **BEFORE YOU LODGE A COMPLAINT, WAIT 48 hours.** Ask yourself are you over reacting? Is it really that bad? Am I just mad right now? Remember your normal is not your host family's normal and things will be different. Unless your safety is in jeopardy, do not write your parents or your rep about an issue that likely can be resolved by you and your host.

As you adapt to a new country, there will be high points and low points, and at times it will be overwhelming. At first everything may be new and exciting. Later you may miss the security of your familiar way of life back home. Intercultural adjustment tends to follow a pattern. Becoming familiar with this cycle may help you deal with it. The pattern is in three phases.

- 1. Enchantment/Euphoria:** *"Gosh this is great." "I love it here." "Everything is fantastic."*
- 2. Disenchantment /Negativity:** *"Why did I do this? I hate everything about this rotten place. No one knows how to do anything right. It's boring and stupid. I shouldn't have come here. Maybe if I change families I will feel better. Maybe I should go home now."*
- 3. Reality:** *"I like my host family most of the time. I don't like doing dishes, but hey, at least I don't have to do them by myself. Some of my teachers at school are really great. I don't like riding the bus. I like my electives a lot. Living here is ok. Tonight we're going to the basketball game. I think we'll win."*

Obviously, the most difficult is the Disenchantment / Negativity phase. Be aware that you will likely feel this way at some point. Stick with it, and try and maintain a positive attitude. Talk with your host parent (s) and explain that you are going through a difficult time. We have explained these phases to your host family and told them to expect them. They should be able to help you through this difficult period. If you or your host family thinks you are "stuck" in this phase, your LC should be brought in for additional assistance.

Live in Life in the US and not online

When you decided to become an exchange student, you may have thought you would have frequent and ongoing contact with your family and friends back home. Unfortunately, frequent contact with family and friends back home undermines your ability to adapt to life in America. If you have frequent contact with family and friends, either by phone, internet, email, Facebook, texting, your body may be here, but your mind and heart are still back home. **Your mind AND body need to be here.** Do not let your bedroom or the couch become your best friend while here.

We expect that you will want more frequent contact with your family during the first week or two you are here. However, by frequent, we do not mean daily. After the first week or two SAI recommends two calls per month to / from your family, and an email on a weekly basis. Skyping, instant messaging, Facebook, and texting are strongly discouraged. We do not expect this will be easy for you, but it is necessary. Your host family will be encouraged and or require that your internet usage is on a schedule and use of your computer will be limited to a common area of the home such as a living room, dining room. You must respect and adhere to this schedule. Host families may also ask you to turn in your cell phone and computers nightly and return to you the following morning. Isolating yourself to your bedroom and staying on the internet/cell phone will only make your adjustment period more difficult. Your host family is not expected to put you on their cell phone plan. SAI recommends going to a local store and purchasing a prepaid phone that can be reloaded as needed. You are expected to pay for any charges related to cell phone use. You are not allowed to enter into any form of a contract while here.

Social Media Etiquette - DOWNLOADING OF PRONOGRAPHIC MATERIAL



Facebook,



Twitter,



Instagram,



Vine,



Google+,



WhatsApp

WhatsApp and texting are just some common forms of today's way to connect with friends and family. Keep in mind you are here to improve your English. These forums when used should be in English only while on program. When using these social media forums, you must use your common sense. As a young person, your actions now, may reflect what could be negative repercussions in your future. Keep in mind the following etiquette when using social media:

*Do not discuss "issues" you have in a public forum. Talk with your local rep, the person who

Can solve your problem. Your peers most likely cannot help you with issues you may experience.

*Be cautious is what you post on social media sites. They are open for anyone to see and may

Cause future problems for you, including termination.

*Downloading of any pornographic material will be cause for immediate dismissal from the program.

English only in America

On your application you probably listed that during the course of the program you wanted/ needed to improve your English. While you are in America, you are to speak *only* English. In some cases, this will not be a problem if you are not around students and others from your home country. In other situations, where there are multiple students from the same country placed in the same school, this can become an ongoing problem. If you are in this situation you will not be accepted by the other students in your school if you separate yourself from them by language. The only exception to the English-only rule is if speaking with a natural parent who does not speak English, while on the phone/ skype. English only rules applies to your Facebook postings as well. Remember, one of your goals is to improve your English and the only way this can be done is to

immerse yourself into the language. Your parents spent thousands of dollars for you to improve your English. Be sure they and you get your money's worth.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is defined as "A condition of anxiety and disorientation that can affect someone suddenly exposed to a new culture." Anxiety and disorientation can present themselves in many ways. They sneak up on you. You are not going to wake up one day and say, "I have culture shock." You may not even realize there is a problem. Look for these signs:

- Excessive homesickness
- Frequent and persistent criticism of the USA and insistence that things are better "at home"
- Frequent sadness / depression
- Spending a lot of time alone usually in your room
- Frequent feelings of tiredness and/ or sleeping too much
- Eating too much or not eating at all
- Weight loss or gain
- Wanting to spend most of your time with other exchange students
- Refusal to communicate or irritability and anger without any apparent reason

Culture shock may not happen right away. It is often weeks, and sometimes months, before it appears. It takes time to adjust to life in America and your new home. You need support and help if and when culture shock appears. Talk with your host parent(s) and / or call your LC.

Basic Courtesies

- Do not "tell" your host family anything. You should always ask. For example do not say "I am going to the game." Instead you will ask, "May I go to the game?"
- Be on time. If your host family has a planned activity, you are to be ready to go out the door at the time scheduled. No exceptions.
- If you have a cell phone, you must turn this off when attending family events or other social events such as church, dining out with family etc. Texting while with your host family is socially unwelcomed and your host family will frown on this.
- Do not EVER slam a door. This is unacceptable and will not be tolerated by any family.
- Do not use phrases such as "Back in my country we do things like this and it is better." It is welcome to share how things are done in your country but do not do this in an offensive way. Remember you are being exposed to a new culture.
- Do not question the behavior of host siblings in the home. If you have an issue with a host sibling, speak to your host family or your rep, but do not make derogatory remarks about or to your host siblings habits or behavior unless your safety is compromised. Parents discipline their children very different in every home just as it is different in your home country. You are not here to agree or disagree with how your host family's home is run. In America it is quite common for parents to yell at their children. This is a normal form of discipline so do not be alarmed. Physical aggression towards any host family member will not be tolerated.

- Avoid name calling. Phrases such as "You Americans, or name calling such as dummies, retards, stupid or I hate you or I hate this, is severely frowned on and will only make a situation worse.
- Exercise patience. The lifestyle here is very different. Some homes may be very scheduled down to the minute. Others may not show a sense of urgency or plan ahead. Be sure you know your host family's schedule and adjust accordingly. Be aware that in most American families the host mother runs the household. If your host mother directs you to do something, you should not wait until your host father gets home to confirm the directive, or vice versa.
- Actively participate in conversation. If you do not participate, at least listen attentively. The more you speak, the quicker you bond with your family and your English skills will improve. Do not walk away from someone who is speaking to you. If you do not understand something, do not say yes. Tell the person you do not understand and get clarification. Claiming to not understand something will not be an excuse for anything.
- Always remember to use please and thank you. Showing this basic respect will go very far with any person including your host siblings. Arrogance and demands will get you nowhere.
- Remember the holidays in your home. You should ALWAYS acknowledge the birthday of a host family member. It is best to have a card for them at a minimum. Other holidays are just as important. Mother's day and Father's day should be recognized by you as well. Christmas is a great opportunity to share things from your culture with your family. At the end of your program, a thank you card to your school principal, counselors and some teachers and coaches is a very nice way to say thank you to them for allowing your participation on this program. Plan ahead and don't forget.

Firearms

The use of firearms is not permitted under any circumstances by our exchange students. Many of our families hunt annually and while students are permitted to travel with proper permissions, they are not allowed to use a gun of any type unless specific arrangements have been previously made. Bow and arrow is allowed.

Money

Your natural family is expected to provide you spending money for you during the exchange program. Let your host family know what arrangements have been made for you to receive your monthly allowance i.e.; debit/ credit card, travelers checks, cash etc. You will not be able to open a bank account due to restrictions in place. Depositing money into your host family's bank account, then withdrawing it as needed, may seem like the best solution. IT IS NOT. Your money should be completely separate from your host family. **Do not co-mingle funds.** You should keep your money and valuables in a safe place. A good choice is a fireproof box, which you can purchase inexpensively from an office supply store. **Do not borrow money from members of your host family and do not lend them money.**

SAI requires \$300 per month to cover your expenses in most areas, and requires that your natural parent(s) provide this to you while you are here and in a timely fashion. If you are budgeting your money carefully and still do not have enough, discuss this with your natural parents and be

prepared to explain to them where your money is being spent. Some areas in America are more expensive than others and you may need additional funds on a monthly basis.

You are required to pay for your own expenses including school lunches, toiletries, (shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.) clothing and entertainment (movies, bowling, amusements etc.). If you go to a place with your host family such as dinner out, a movie or other event, you are expected to pay for your portion. It is not the responsibility of the host family to assume these expenses and you must not become a financial burden to your host family.

Trips: If your host family asks you to give them money for a planned trip with SAI or another group, **DO NOT** give this to them. Call your LC and they will advise you the best way to prepay your deposits and balance due for any trips outside the host family. There may be occasions where you will go through your host family for this, however, seeking the advice of your LC will protect your money. For a trip not taken with your host family, where deposits are required, you must get a receipt for this showing you have paid. Take accountability for your expenses and get proper receipts / documentation of your money spent. SAI cannot assist you in any refunds or alleged thefts. Be smart.

Community Involvement

Students must take an active role in giving back to the community that has accepted them. Be prepared to share with your LC the ways you showed your appreciation to the community that has welcomed you.

Here are some ways to share:

- Check with local assisted living housing and make cookies or side dishes relative to your home country culture.
- Attend a Boy / Girl Scout meeting to present your home country. Both clubs have international World Thinking days and different countries are presented.
- In larger areas where more than one exchange student is in the school, organize an International Chorus Show or Talent Show. Check with your local high schools choral director / drama teacher. Donate any proceeds to the schools international club or other worthy cause in the community.
- Plan Ethnic Awareness Day. Focus on your culture using display boards, foods and culturing clothing.
- Organize an International Fair booth at a local school or church function. Use home country games and help raise money for schools or church.
- Volunteer at a local food bank or soup kitchen.
- Become a Secret Santa to a needy family.
- Organize an International Cleanup effort sponsored by the countries represented in your community park or beach area.
- Participate in or organize a food drive.
- Prepare a hallway bulletin board for your school. See your counselor about preparing a bulletin board highlighting your country and its cultures to share with the school. This gives American students and springboard to open conversations with the exchange students.

- Assist in cleanup efforts in your local community in the event of a tragedy or natural disaster. Help remove downed trees, get clothing to those in need etc.
- Join Key Club, Junior Civitans or other service related club in your high school

BE INVOLVED AND GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY THAT HAS SO GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED YOU.

Disciplinary Procedures

As covered in the beginning of this Handbook, SAI has disciplinary procedures for students. Just because your parents paid for you to participate in an exchange program is no guarantee that you can't be sent home. If warranted, you can, and will, be sent home. Disciplinary action may be taken for either academic or behavioral purposes, or both. Disciplinary measures are imposed depending on the level of infraction and may not necessarily occur in this order. If you follow the SAI Program Rules, you should have no reason for concern. If you don't, the following are the established levels of discipline:

1. Verbal warning, a verbal warning, generally given by your LC, is just that. It is a warning, indicating that you have done something wrong. You will be told what the problem is, and cautioned that if it happens again, you will receive a written warning.
2. Written warning, a written warning is more serious. It is formal written documentation that an incident has occurred, detailing what the incident is, and the consequences to you if you do not correct the problem immediately. Overseas agent is notified.
3. Probation. Probation is very serious. If you receive a probationary letter, which will come from the national office, you may be one step away from being terminated from the program. The probationary letter will outline exactly what is required of you in order to continue to remain in the United States. Failure to comply with the requirements of the probationary letter will result in termination and immediate return home to your natural parents.
4. Dismissal. Dismissal from the program is obviously the most severe form of discipline. This form of discipline is reserved for the most serious infractions of the Program Rules, or the student's continued failure to correct a problem which has been identified and documented by a probationary letter.

Depending on the nature of the problem, the disciplinary action may, or may not, begin with a verbal warning and proceed through each level of disciplinary action. Some infractions, such as drug or alcohol use, will result in immediate dismissal from the program, and return home. Other problems, such as poor grades, may begin with a verbal warning, and proceed through each disciplinary level. SAI will not tolerate violation of the Program Rules. If you want to remain in America, do what is expected of you, and you will have an exchange experience that you will remember for the rest of your life.

Student Budget Guide

Item	Budget	Item	Budget
Monthly cell phone bill		Christmas: Gifts/Cards	
Personal Items/Toiletries		Host Mom	
School Uniform		Host Dad	
School Lunches		Host Siblings	
Fall Sports Tickets		Natural Parents / Family	
Fall School Athletic Fees		Postage	
School Lab fees		Prom	
School Technology Fee		Ticket	
School Yearbook		Dress/ Tux	
School Apparel - Logo		Flowers/ Corsage	
School Pictures		Limo/ Transportation	
School Insurance - Sports		Dinner	
Transportation		Hair/ Makeup	
Meals Out / Snacks/ Drinks		Shoes	
Shopping/Fun Stuff		Manicure/Pedicure	
School Trips		Spring School Sports Fees	
Host Family Thank You Meals		Spring Sport Event Admission	
Birthdays: Gifts / Cards		Senior Pictures	
Host Mom		Graduation	
Host Dad		Cap/ Gown	
Host Siblings		Pictures	
Natural Parents/Family		Announcements	
Halloween Costume Supplies		Party	
Homecoming		Souvenirs	
Ticket		Host Family Thank you gifts	
Dress/ Tux		Vacation/ Travel with Host	
Flowers/ Corsage		New Suitcase for Return	
Limo/ Transportation		Baggage Fees	
Dinner		Other	
Hair/ Makeup		Other	
Shoes		Other	
Manicure/Pedicure		Other	

Winter Supplies		Other	
Coat		Other	
Boots			
Hat/ Gloves			

§62.25 Secondary school students.

(a) *Purpose.* This section governs Department of State designated exchange visitor programs under which foreign secondary school students are afforded the opportunity to study in the United States at accredited public or private secondary schools for an academic semester or an academic year, while living with American host families or residing at accredited U.S. boarding schools.

(b) *Program sponsor eligibility.* Eligibility for designation as a secondary school student exchange visitor program sponsor is limited to organizations:

- (1) With tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and
- (2) Which are United States citizens as such term is defined in §62.2.

(c) *Program eligibility.* Secondary school student exchange visitor programs designated by the Department of State must:

- (1) Require all exchange students to be enrolled and participating in a full course of study at an accredited academic institution;
- (2) Allow entry of exchange students for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) and not more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and
- (3) Ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled. In all cases, sponsors must notify both the host family and school prior to the exchange student's arrival in the United States whether the placement is for an academic semester, an academic year, or a calendar year.

(d) *Program administration.* Sponsors must ensure that all organizational officers, employees, representatives, agents, and volunteers acting on their behalf:

- (1) Are adequately trained. Sponsors must administer training for local coordinators that specifically includes, at a minimum, instruction in: Conflict resolution; procedures for handling and reporting emergency situations; awareness or knowledge of child safety standards; information on sexual conduct codes; procedures for handling and reporting allegations of sexual misconduct or any other allegations of abuse or neglect; and the criteria to be used to screen potential host families and exercise good judgment when identifying what constitutes suitable host family placements. In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all local coordinators complete the Department of State mandated training module prior to their appointment as a local coordinator or assumption of duties. The Department of State training module will include instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program; its public diplomacy objectives; and the Secondary School Student category rules and regulations. Sponsors must demonstrate the individual's successful completion of all initial training requirements and that annual refresher training is also successfully completed.
- (2) Are adequately supervised. Sponsors must create and implement organization-specific standard operating procedures for the supervision of local coordinators designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/agents/volunteers. They must also have sufficient internal controls to ensure that such employees/agents/volunteers comply with such standard operating procedures.
- (3) Have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

- (4) Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;
 - (5) Make no exchange student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of the local coordinator authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from that exchange student's participation in the Exchange Visitor Program;
 - (6) Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;
 - (7) Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and e-mail;
 - (8) Make certain that the exchange student's government issued documents (*i.e.*, passports, Forms DS-2019) are not removed from his/her possession;
 - (9) Conduct the host family orientation after the host family has been fully vetted and accepted;
 - (10) Refrain, without exception, from acting as:
 - (i) Both a host family and a local coordinator or area supervisor for an exchange student;
 - (ii) A host family for one sponsor and a local coordinator for another sponsor; or
 - (iii) A local coordinator for any exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student's teacher or principal. This requirement is not applicable to a boarding school placement.
 - (11) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the exchange student. The first monthly contact between the local coordinator and the exchange student must be in person. All other contacts may take place in-person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.
 - (12) That a sponsor representative other than the local coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family visit the exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student's placement in the home.
 - (13) Maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the host family. At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester, (*i.e.*, twice during the academic year) the contact by the local coordinator with the host family must be in person. All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring the issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.
 - (14) That host schools are provided contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department's Office of Designation; and
 - (15) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.
- (e) *Student selection.* In addition to satisfying the requirements of §62.10(a), sponsors must ensure that all participants in a designated secondary school student exchange visitor program:
- (1) Are secondary school students in their home countries who have not completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary study, exclusive of kindergarten; or are at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years and six months of age as of the program start date;
 - (2) Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and
 - (3) Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status.
- (f) *Student enrollment.* (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:
- (i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student will attend; and
 - (ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.
- (2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.
 - (3) Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS-2019.

(4) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances for a minimum of three years and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.

(5) Sponsors must provide the school with a translated “written English language summary” of the exchange student's complete academic course work prior to commencement of school, in addition to any additional documents the school may require. Sponsors must inform the prospective host school of any student who has completed secondary school in his/her home country.

(6) Sponsors may not facilitate the enrollment of more than five exchange students in one school unless the school itself has requested, in writing, the placement of more than five students from the sponsor.

(7) Upon issuance of a Form DS-2019 to a prospective participant, the sponsor accepts full responsibility for securing a school and host family placement for the student, except in cases of voluntary student withdrawal or visa denial.

(g) *Student orientation.* In addition to the orientation requirements set forth at §62.10, all sponsors must provide exchange students, prior to their departure from their home countries, with the following information:

(1) A summary of all operating procedures, rules, and regulations governing student participation in the exchange visitor program along with a detailed summary of travel arrangements;

(2) A copy of the Department's welcome letter to exchange students;

(3) Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation;

(4) A detailed profile of the host family with whom the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary-arrival family;

(5) A detailed profile of the school and community in which the exchange student will be placed. The profile must state whether the student will pay tuition; and

(6) An identification card, that lists the exchange student's name, United States host family placement address and telephone numbers (landline and cellular), sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers, name and telephone numbers (landline and cellular) of the local coordinator and area representative, the telephone number of Department's Office of Designation, and the Secondary School Student program toll free emergency telephone number. The identification card must also contain the name of the health insurance provider and policy number. Such cards must be corrected, reprinted, and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student's placement.

(h) *Student extra-curricular activities.* Exchange students may participate in school sanctioned and sponsored extra-curricular activities, including athletics, if such participation is:

(1) Authorized by the local school district in which the student is enrolled; and

(2) Authorized by the state authority responsible for determination of athletic eligibility, if applicable. Sponsors shall not knowingly be party to a placement (inclusive of direct placements) based on athletic abilities, whether initiated by a student, a natural or host family, a school, or any other interested party.

(3) Any placement in which either the student or the sending organization in the foreign country is party to an arrangement with any other party, including receiving school personnel, whereby the student will attend a particular school or live with a particular host family must be reported to the particular school and the National Federation of State High School Associations prior to the first day of classes.

(i) *Student employment.* Exchange students may not be employed on either a full or part-time basis but may accept sporadic or intermittent employment such as babysitting or yard work.

(j) *Host family application and selection.* Sponsors must adequately screen and select all potential host families and at a minimum must:

(1) Provide potential host families with a detailed summary of the Exchange Visitor Program and of their requirements, obligations and commitment to host;

(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, “Information to be collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications”. The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.” Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must

be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

(3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home where the student will be living;

(4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment and that the home is clean and sanitary; that the exchange student's bedroom contains a separate bed for the student that is neither convertible nor inflatable in nature; and that the student has adequate storage space for clothes and personal belongings, reasonable access to bathroom facilities, study space if not otherwise available in the house and reasonable, unimpeded access to the outside of the house in the event of a fire or similar emergency. An exchange student may share a bedroom, but with no more than one other individual of the same sex.

(5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references from within the community from individuals who are not relatives of the potential host family or representatives of the sponsor (*i.e.*, field staff or volunteers), attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;

(6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations and is not receiving needs-based government subsidies for food or housing;

(7) Verify that each member of the host family household 18 years of age and older, as well as any new adult member added to the household, or any member of the host family household who will turn eighteen years of age during the exchange student's stay in that household, has undergone a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);