

# STUDENT HANDBOOK



[www.StudentAmericanInternational.com](http://www.StudentAmericanInternational.com)

*"The world is in your hands..."*

## Introduction

Student American International (SAI) is a Connecticut based, not-for-profit student exchange organization. An SAI student comes to the United States to live with an American family and attend an American high school, experiencing American life first hand. Every student selected to participate in this program has been personally screened by our overseas partners. In addition, 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 high 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 students, 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 the 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 SAI Local Contact.

## SAI Organization

### 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) State Managers and Local Contacts. 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 question, your first point of contact is your Local Contact. 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 Local Contact, or he/she is unavailable, your next point of contact would be your State 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.

### Supervision & Monthly Reports

A common misconception you may feel is that your Local Contact 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 Local Contacts know their host families from the communities they live in and the application process itself. This does not always mean they are best of friends or see each other in their daily lives. They will always put our student's best interest first. We require our Local Contacts to meet with you, or call you on the telephone, at least once each month. They will also contact your school, as well as your host family. The purpose for this contact is to ask you how things are going, and to get feedback from the school and your host. The Local Contact will use the information obtained from all three sources to file a Monthly Supervision Report to the national office. The Reports are reviewed by the national office staff, and forwarded to our overseas partners, who in turn provide your natural parents with a report on how you are doing.

If you, your host family, or school personnel identify a problem, the Local Contact 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 simply a discussion of the issue between you and your Local Contact. 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 terminated from the program.

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

## 24/7 Support

Our normal National Office hours are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 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 Local Contact is unavailable, call our emergency telephone number, which is 1-800-639-0564. You will be prompted as to how to receive personal support for your emergency.

## 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 in the event of an emergency. Once you are at the emergency room, your host family will telephone your Local Contact 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 your Local Contact, 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 Local Contact, Regional Director, State Manager or the national office staff for guidance. It is not our intent to scare you, but other types of emergencies may include a 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.

## Insurance

U. S. Department of State regulations require that every SAI student is covered by medical and travel insurance, and they 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, your natural parents are.

Your insurance covers 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 Local Contact if you receive medical care.

All insurance policies exclude some services. Routine physical examinations (as for sports), inoculations 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, are covered.

If you would like additional information regarding the insurance program, please visit the SAI website at [www.studentamericaninternational.com](http://www.studentamericaninternational.com). You will find a link for "insurance" on the menu. Simply click on the link and it will take you to the insurance carrier's program website.

**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. Emergency room visits for true emergencies should be covered 100%. Your host family is not responsible for this.**

## Program Rules

SAI has very strict 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 Student Orientation Meeting. If you, or your host family, have questions regarding any SAI rule, discuss them with your Local Contact.

### 1. 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 SAI Local Contact for resolution.

*It is extremely important 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 that includes you! You should do any chores assigned to you, without complaint, and offer assistance at other times. Your host family has been advised that you should not be treated as a guest.*

*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 rules or family routines. 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 Local Contact, 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 international phone calls to/from your family and friends back home. Our rule is no more than one call to your family per week during the first two or three weeks of arrival, and one or two calls per month following that. Telephone calls or Skype calls/visits should not exceed a half an hour each. Students who make or receive frequent international phone calls do not adjust well to their American environment.*

## **2. 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 termination 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. Not participating in the use of drugs is not sufficient. 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.*

### 3. 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 termination 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 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.***

### 4. Smoking

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

*This is another area where the United States is more conservative than other countries. Your home country may not have Laws regulating the age of smoking. You may be a student who has been smoking for several years before coming to America. Under no circumstances are you allowed to smoke 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 in your possession, we will assume that they are for your personal use, and you will be disciplined accordingly.*

### 5. Driving Motor Vehicles

Students (including those who have a driver's license) are not allowed to drive any motor vehicle for the 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 is a residence requirement, and required hours behind the wheel which 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*

## 6. "Life Changes"

No "life changes" are allowed while the student is 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 piercing, cosmetic surgery or dying the hair an unnatural color (such as green, purple or blue).

*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 Local Contact for clarification.*

## 7. 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 laws 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 made 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.*

## **8. Travel**

Students *must* obtain written permission prior to travel while under the SAI Program. A Travel Release Form must be signed by the natural parents and host parents. The student's Local Contact must be informed of any travel plans a minimum of three weeks prior to planned departure. Travel without SAI or other approved adult supervision, either alone or with a group, is forbidden. 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.

*A student 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](http://www.studentamericaninternational.com) under the menu item "SAI Students." 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 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. And remember, as stated above, travel without adult supervision, either alone or with a group, is forbidden, so don't even ask!*

## **9. 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 students 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 terminated 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. We expect you to demonstrate appropriate respect to both teachers and students at all times. Under no circumstances should you make comments like "my country's schools are better, the kids 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 Local Contact, and may result in disciplinary action.*

*You are required to take an English and American History class as part of your curriculum. Quite often, this means that you may be taking one or both of these classes with students who are younger than you are. If this happens to you, accept the situation without complaint.*

*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.*

*You should actively participate in school-related activities, particularly on a team sport. Being a member of a sports team 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 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 Local Contact, 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!*

## 10. School Attendance and Grades

Students must attend school every day unless they are ill. They 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 the student is placed in a class with students who are younger than he/she is.

*Since our program is academic and cultural in nature, 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 should 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. Exchange students are not entitled to ESL (English as a Second Language) support while they are attending school in the United States. The U. S. Department of State requires that international students take a typical course load, in English, without additional support.*

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

Natural parents, friends, and relatives from abroad may visit the student **ONLY** at the end of the program. End-of-program visitors 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 a family member.

*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. 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 in reverse. Please don't say that your situation is different, and that this won't happen to you. We don't want to hear it!*

*Under no circumstances will SAI allow a visit during the exchange program, or allow the student to go home, unless there is a death or imminent death of an immediate family member. If your host family learns that your family (or relative or friend) plans a visit, they have been instructed to notify your Local Contact immediately.*

*Often, students' parents come to visit at the end of the program. It is an opportunity for you to visit the United States, and meet the family who has become an integral part of your life. A visit such as this can be rewarding for everyone. However, you and your natural family should not expect that your host family will provide your family with a place to stay if they visit. Your host family would probably be more than happy to answer questions such as what airport to fly into, how to get to your specific area, and what hotels are close by.*

## **12. Employment**

Students are not allowed to secure employment while under the SAI Program. However, they may accept non-competitive employment, such as baby-sitting 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.*

## **13. Change of Medical Status**

If there is an undisclosed medical condition which is diagnosed after the student's arrival in the United States, your American agent, or Local Contact, 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 to 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 Local Contact. 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 their medical condition, then we would look to moving you to a new family.*

## 14. Change of Host Families

A student may not change host families unless an SAI Local Contact has approved the move, and completed all of the necessary documentation. If difficulties arise between the host family and the student, it is important that you first attempt to resolve the problem by speaking to your host family. If this does not resolve your problem, speak with your Local Contact, then your Regional Director or State Manager or the National Office if necessary. A student may NOT, under any circumstances, make the decision to move. Should you move without the approval of SAI, you will be considered off the program and your visa will be terminated.

*Sometimes, when there is friction between a student and his/her host family, wants to resolve the problem by finding a friend to live with. You may not do this! The SAI screening and placement process of host families is time consuming, with a lot of required documentation. All decisions regarding the placement of our students are made by SAI – we are your legal guardians while you are under our program.*

*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**, it will be handled by SAI, not the student. The Local Contact may ask you if you know a family who might be interested in hosting you. At that point, the Local Contact 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 could take several weeks.*

## 15. Proper Clothing

The dress code in the United States is much more conservative than in many other countries. We expect ALL students 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 our dress requirements, and those of your local community. What you are allowed to wear in your native country is of no consequence 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 America 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."**

## 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 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 Local Contact 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 really 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 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 of nutritious food. They are not required to provide you with junk food or sweets 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 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, and or for clean-up.

\*There will, almost certainly, be occasions when your host parent(s) will not be home to prepare dinner, and you will be required to make your own meal.

\*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 certain foods should be eaten in moderation such as snacks and luncheon meats. An afternoon snack is typically a piece of fruit or a bag of chips, *not 2 sandwiches or a whole pizza by yourself.*

\*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.** Bottled water is not an expectation.

\*Food items should not be stored 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, in America, our culture requires that you eat what is put in front of you. Unless you specifically disclosed a valid food issue on your application, 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 foods 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.

There will be times when your family will want to go out to dinner. You can expect them to give 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.

### Emotional Support – Know When to Call Your Local Contact

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 maybe not alone. 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 Local Contact

No matter how much you like your host family, there are certain to be situations when you don't agree. 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 home 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.

Any issues with your host family are to be directed to your local coordinator. Host family / program issues are not to be addressed with the 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 local coordinator only. Any issues with school can be handled by school administrators and the help of your local coordinator. 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 Local Contact. Your Local Contact 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 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 documentation and information. Inappropriate behaviors will be documented by your local coordinator and used by the National Office to determine if you will be terminated from the program. Your host family and local rep do not have the authority to make this decision. Please be assured that if you receive these threats they need to be documented to SAI and we will address these threats.**

### Assistance With School Registration

Prior to your arrival, your host parent(s) may have called the high school to make an appointment to register you for classes. Ask them if they made an appointment, and when it is scheduled. Most schools will place you in class levels based on your English proficiency, so get a good night's sleep the night before your appointment so that you are well rested. You will find that you have more difficulty expressing yourself in English when you are tired, and you want to be as articulate as possible for your meeting with your school counselor. When registering for classes please keep in mind AP Classes may not be available in your district. ESL classes are not allowed while on this exchange program. If you are having a difficult time with the language, you will need to hire a tutor at your own expense. Remember, many students will be registering prior to the start of school so keep your appointment to the time allotted.

If your high school has a website, or a course catalog, it would be helpful for you to review the course offerings prior to your registration appointment. List those courses that you are interested in, but understand that your ability to take classes of interest will be based on both your schedule *and* availability of a particular class.

Prior to your registration appointment, review the Rules of the Program (specifically points 9 and 10) outlined earlier in this Handbook which addresses school issues, as

well as the section later in this Handbook entitled High School.

## 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, for transportation needs. You should provide your host family with a minimum of two days notice if you need a ride to some school-related activity or social event. This does not mean they can always provide it, but you must give them 2 days 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 some 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. Many 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. There may be a way of sharing the driving responsibilities with other parents so that your host parent(s) is not burdened with driving you 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. 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 their best interest. 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. 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. We 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 tell them where you are going, who you are going with and what time you will be back. This is normal parenting in America.

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.

#### Guidelines for Showing Affection

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 or 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, shoulders and arms.
- Arm around shoulders.
- Holding hands during prayer.

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate between host parents or other adults and students:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Adult holding hands with student.

- Kisses on the mouth.
- Student sitting on the lap of an adult.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas.
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with the student for *any* purpose.
- Touching knees or legs.
- Wrestling, tickling or piggyback rides.
- Any type of massage.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) by adult to student that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
- Giving gifts or money to the student.
- Private meals in an intimate environment.

#### 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 alone and behind a closed door.
- No contact between adults and student 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 Local Contact 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 Local Contact, and determine how best to proceed.

## Adjustment Issues

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 also will be surprised, dismayed, amused and sometimes even offended about your views on life. A good sense of humor and lots of goodwill helps both of you.

As you adapt to the culture of 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:

- One: Enchantment or Euphoria

*Gosh! This is so great! I love it here! Everything is fantastic!*

- Two: Disenchantment or 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'll feel better. Maybe I should go home now.*

- Three: Reality.

*I like my host family most of the time. I don't like doing the 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 or 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 think that you are “stuck” in this phase, your Local Contact should be brought in for additional assistance.

### Limit Contact with Family And Friends

When you decided to become an exchange student, you may have thought that 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 telephone or e-mail, your body may be here, but your mind and heart are still back home. We expect that you will require more frequent contact with your family during the first week or two that you are here. However, by frequent, we do not mean daily! After the first week or two, SAI recommends two telephone calls per month to/from your family, and e-mail on a weekly basis. Instant messaging should be discouraged, and snail (postal service) mail is encouraged. We don't expect that this will be easy for you, but it is necessary. Your host family will more be encouraged and or require that your internet usage is on a schedule and in a common area of the home only. You must respect this schedule and adhere to this. They may also ask that you turn in your phone and laptop 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. You should purchase a cell phone at a local store to use while you are here. Your host family is not expected to put you on their cell phone plan. 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 on your program.

### English Only In America

While you are in America, you should speak *only* English. There are obvious reasons for this, including just being polite, improving your proficiency, and increasing the rate at which you begin to “think” in 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 other students in your school if you separate yourself from them by language. The only exception to the English-only requirement is when you are on the telephone with your natural parent(s).

### 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 aren't going to wake up one day and say, "I have culture shock." You may not even realize there's a problem. Look for these signs:

- Excessive homesickness
- Frequent and persistent criticism of the USA and insistence that things are better "at home"
- Persistent sadness and 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 at all
- Weight gain or loss
- Wanting to spend most of your time with other exchange students
- Refusal to communicate
- Irritability or 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 Local Contact.

### Loss Of Freedom

Exchange students may be far more independent and "worldly" than American students of the same age. As we covered earlier in this Handbook, our country is unique in its dependence on the motor vehicle as our primary means of transportation. Students from other countries are generally accustomed to mass transportation, both bus and train, as their means of transportation. You may have been using mass transportation independently for several years. It is quite a jolt to come to America and find that, in most cases, you are dependent on your host parent(s) for transportation.

A significant cultural difference between our country and many others is teenage curfew. A typical weekend curfew for an American 16 or 17 year old is around 11:00 p.m. Your curfew may be significantly later than – possibly as late as 4:00 a.m. Obviously, this is a *significant* difference, and will take some getting used to. In addition to having a curfew in your host family, curfews may also be imposed by your community.

Again, it's been mentioned earlier in this Handbook, but bears repeating, the drinking age for many of our students in their home countries is 16 years old. Because of this, night clubs are very common, and teenagers often "go clubbing" when in their home country, while in America we expect our teenagers to be safely at home watching television. As is stated in our Program Rules, you are prohibited from drinking alcoholic beverages while in the United States.

You were probably told about transportation, curfews, drinking, and other cultural differences many times before you arrived here. However, the reality of these differences can still be quite a shock. Loss of freedom and independence is probably the most difficult part of the exchange experience to cope with.

### Basic Courtesies

\*Do not "tell" your host family anything. You should 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 family has planned an 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 or in the company of others. Texting while with family or out at an event is socially unwelcomed and your host family will frown on this.

\*Do not use phrases such as "Back in my country we do things like this and it is better". It's ok to share how things are done in your country but do not do it in an offensive way.

\*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 different in every home just as all are 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 your siblings will not be tolerated!

\*Avoid name calling. Phrases such as "You Americans", or name calling such as dummies, or stupid, or I hate you or 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 to know your host families 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.

\*Actively participate in conversation. If you do not participate, at least listen attentively. The more you speak, the better your English will be. Do not walk away from someone who is speaking to you.

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.

## Homesickness

Homesickness is different from culture shock. While culture shock tends to set in after a period of time, homesickness may overcome you on the way home from the airport. It is generally overwhelming for a student when they first arrive – everything is totally new, speaking a foreign language 24/7 is probably harder than you thought, your sleep pattern is likely disturbed, the food may not agree with your stomach, and the list goes on and on.

There are a couple of times that we expect to see homesickness, but it can happen at any time. Some students become homesick as soon as they arrive, for others it comes at about six weeks (once the excitement is over and the newness has worn off), over the Christmas holidays, on his/her birthday, or that of a close family member. It is important to understand that homesickness is normal, and will pass by maintaining a positive attitude, keeping busy, and *not* contacting family and friends back home too often. If your homesickness seems particularly severe, or if it persists, call your Local Contact for assistance.

## Firearms

The use of firearms is not permitted under any circumstances by our exchange students. Many of our host families go hunting annually and while students are permitted to travel with proper permissions, they are not allowed to use a gun of any type. Bow and Arrow are allowed.

## Money

Your natural family will provide spending money for you during the exchange experience. Let your host family know what arrangements have been made for you to receive your monthly allowance. Do you have a credit or debit card? Did you bring travelers checks or a significant amount of cash? You will not be able to open a bank account while you are here because the bank requires a social security number which only American citizens have. Depositing your money into your host family's bank account, and then withdrawing it as needed, may seem like the best solution. It is not! Your money should be completely separate from that of your

host family's. **Do not co-mingle funds.** You should keep your money and valuables in a safe place. A good choice is a fire-proof 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 suggests \$300 a month should cover your expenses in most states, and requires that your natural parent(s) provide this to you while you are here. 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 what your money is being spent on. Some parts of America are more expensive to live in than others, and you may need additional funds on a monthly basis.

Pay for your own expenses! You are required to pay for all of your own expenses, including school lunch, toiletries (shampoo, deodorant, etc.), clothing, entertainment, etc. If you go some place with your host family, such as out for dinner, to a movie, or other event, you are to pay for your portion of the expense. It is not the responsibility of your host family to assume these expenses, and you must not become a financial burden to them.

Trips: If your host family asks you to give them the money for a planned trip with SAI or another group, DO NOT give to them. Call your local contact and they will advise the best way for you 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 local contact will protect your money. For a trip not taken with your host family, where deposits are required, you must get a receipt for this. Take accountability for your expenses and get proper receipts / documentation of your money spent.

## High School

Although we have addressed school-related issues earlier in this Handbook, there are a few additional points that need to be covered. You already know that you must attend school regularly, and must maintain a "C" average in every subject at all times. As you also know, you must take English and American History, and be prepared to be placed in a class with younger students in order to meet this program requirement.

Your school counselor or advisor should be just that - a *school* counselor. You should discuss only school-related issues with your school counselor/advisor and/or teachers. If you have a question or concern about living with an American family (yours in particular), you should speak with your host parent(s). If you have a question or concern about the exchange experience, you must talk with an SAI representative. *You are not go to your school counselor with this kind of problem. Personal problems are not to be discussed with school staff.* If you have a personal problem, either discuss it with your host parent(s), your Local Contact, or another

SAI representative. Following the proper chain of reporting helps to expedite the handling of your issues more timely and effectively.

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. You may not have been required to do homework in your native country. 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 that you need to accept.

Do not use an excuse of "poor" English with your teachers to get out of a quiz, test, or assignment. The State Department requires that 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) support. If you are having difficulty with your English at school, call your Local Contact for suggestions on how to improve it. If you are having difficulty with a particular class, see your teacher and ask how you can arrange to have a tutor. If you need a tutor, you will be required to pay the expense out of your own funds.

## Vacations

Some families invite their student to accompany them on a vacation. If your host family extends an invitation to go on vacation with them, ask what expenses you will be responsible for, and what the approximate costs will be (including spending money for mementos or gifts). Generally, the cost will require that you ask your natural parent(s) for additional funds in order to accompany your host family on their vacation. You must ask your parent(s) if they will give their permission for you to go on vacation with your host family, *and* if they will provide the additional funds necessary to cover your expenses.

If your host family is planning a vacation and you will not accompany them, they must make arrangements for you to have adequate adult supervision while they are away. Prior to their departure, have them notify your Local Contact of their travel plans, the supervision plans for you, and how you they can be reached while they are away. And remember, as stated in the Program Rules, students should not miss school days for travel.

## Travel With Your Host Family Within The United States

If you plan to travel with your host family in the United States, certain SAI notification procedures must be followed. At least two weeks in advance of your planned departure, you *must* notify both your Local Contact and the SAI national office of the following:

- Your emergency contact telephone number
- Your destination

- Date of departure
- Date of return
- Signed Travel Release Form

## Travel With Your Host Family Outside The United States

Normally you must remain within the United States during your exchange program. Leaving the country is not generally a problem, but readmission is. Traveling outside of the United States *may* be possible, provided you adhere to the following procedure *exactly*:

- Contact the SAI national office for procedure information *at least one month in advance* of your planned departure outside of the USA. (This applies to all countries, including Canada and Mexico.)
- Immediately send the following to the SAI national office by an *overnight* mail only method ie Federal Express, UPS:
  1. The *original* form DS-2019 (copies will *not* be accepted).
  2. A completed Travel Release Form with all appropriate signatures.
  3. A detailed travel itinerary.
  4. A self-addressed, *overnight*, prepaid envelope via Federal Express, UPS, or U. S. Postal Service Express Mail. (You are responsible for these expenses, and no exceptions will be made.)

SAI must be able to contact you at any time, no matter where you are, or for how long. Please keep your Local Contact informed of *any* overnight stay away from your host family's home.

\*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.

## Disciplinary Procedures

As covered in the beginning of this Handbook, SAI has a disciplinary procedure 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. 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 Local Contact, 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.

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. Termination

Termination 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 termination 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.

## **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 documentation and information. Inappropriate behaviors will be documented by your local coordinator and used by the National Office to determine if you will be terminated from the program. Your host family and local rep do not have the authority to make this decision. Please be assured that if you receive these threats they need to be documented to SAI and we will address these threats.**

# U. S. Department of State Requirements

Title 22 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Chapter I (4–1–02 Edition) § 62.25

## § 62.25 Secondary school students.

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

(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 terms are defined in §62.2.

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

(1) Require all participants to be enrolled and participating in a full course of study at an accredited educational institution;

(2) Allow entry of participants for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) nor more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and

(3) Be 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 in the second semester of a U.S. academic year if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange visitor is enrolled. Both the host family and school must be notified prior to the exchange student's arrival in the United States that the placement is for either an academic semester or year, or calendar year program.

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

(1) Are adequately trained and supervised and that any such person in direct personal contact with exchange students has been vetted through a criminal background check ;

(2) Make no student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of a local organizational representative authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from an exchange student's participation in the exchange visitor program;

(3) Ensure that no organizational representative act as both host family and area supervisor for any exchange student participant;

(4) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the student and host family, and ensure that the school has contact information for the local organizational representative and the program sponsor's main office; and

(5) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may from time to time 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 country who have not completed more than eleven 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 participant 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 participant 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) Sponsors must maintain copies of all written acceptances and make such documents available for Department of State inspection upon request.

(4) 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.

(5) 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.

(6) Upon issuance of Form DS-2019 to a prospective participant, the sponsor accepts full responsibility for placing the student, except in cases of voluntary student withdraw 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 the home country, 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) Age and language appropriate information on how to identify and report sexual abuse or exploitation;

(3) A detailed profile of the host family in which the exchange student is placed. The profile must state whether the host family is either a permanent placement or a temporary arrival family;

(4) A detailed profile of the school and community in which the exchange student is placed; and

(5) An identification card, which lists the exchange student's name, United States host family placement address and telephone number, and a telephone number which affords immediate contact with both the program sponsor, the program sponsor's organizational representative, and Department of State in

case of emergency. Such cards may be provided in advance of home country departure or immediately upon entry into the United States.

(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.

(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 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 the parameters of their participation, duties, and obligations;
- (2) Utilize a standard application form that must be signed and dated by all potential host family applicants which provides a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment, family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with relatives.
- (3) Conduct an in-person interview with all family members residing in the home;
- (4) Ensure that the host family is capable of providing a comfortable and nurturing home environment;
- (5) Ensure that the host family has a good reputation and character by securing two personal references for each host family from the school or community, attesting to the host family's good reputation and character;
- (6) Ensure that the host family has adequate financial resources to undertake hosting obligations;
- (7) Verify that each member of the host family household eighteen years of age and older has undergone a criminal background check; and
- (8) Maintain a record of all documentation, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years.

(k) *Host family orientation.* In addition to the orientation requirements set forth in Sec. 62.10, sponsors must:

- (1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange visitor program;
- (2) Provide all selected host families with a copy of Department of State-promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations; and
- (3) Advise all selected host families of strategies for cross-cultural interaction and conduct workshops which will familiarize the host family with cultural differences and practices.

(l) *Host family placement.* (1) Sponsors must secure, prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, a permanent or arrival host family placement for each exchange student participant. Sponsors may not:

- (i) Facilitate the entry into the United States for an exchange student for whom a host family placement has not been secured;

(ii) Place more than one exchange student with a host family without the express prior written consent of the Department of State. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students may be placed with one host family.

(2) Sponsors must advise both the exchange student and host family, in writing, of the respective family compositions and backgrounds of each, whether the host family placement is a permanent or temporary placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two prior to the student's departure from the home country.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances which necessitate a change of host family placement, the sponsor must document the reason(s) necessitating such change and provide the Department of State with an annual statistical summary reflecting the number and reason(s) for such change in host family placement in the program's annual report.

(m) *Reporting requirements.* Along with the annual report required by regulations set forth at §62.15, sponsors must file with the Department of State the following information:

(1) Sponsors must immediately report to the Department any incident or allegation involving the actual or alleged sexual exploitation or abuse of an exchange student participant. Sponsors must also report such allegations as required by local or state statute or regulation. Failure to report such incidents to the Department and, as required by state law or regulation, to local law enforcement authorities shall be grounds for the summary suspension and termination of the sponsor's Exchange Visitor Program designation.

(2) A summation of all situations which resulted in the placement of exchange student participants with more than one host family or school placement; and

(3) Provide a report of all final academic year and semester program participant placements by August 31 for the upcoming academic year or January 15 for the Spring semester and calendar year.

## **Important Names & Phone Numbers**

### **Student American International – National Offices**

**4325 Dick Pond Rd**

**Suite A**

**Myrtle Beach, SC 29588**

**843-650-2101**

**800-639-0564**

**[info@studentamericaninternational.com](mailto:info@studentamericaninternational.com)**

**[www.studentamericaninternational.com](http://www.studentamericaninternational.com)**

**Your Local Contact is:**

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**Your Local Contacts phone number is:**

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**Your Local Contacts email address is:**

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**Department of State contact info:**

USDOS Contact:

Toll Free 1.866.283.9090

Email: [jvisas@state.gov](mailto:jvisas@state.gov)