

Wisconsin Rapids International Education Program (WRIEP)

Host Family Rules and Responsibilities

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in considering to host a foreign exchange student through the Wisconsin Rapids International Student Exchange Program. We are delighted to be able to offer this program to international students as it provides an opportunity not only to enrich their lives, but also the lives of the many high school students and families we serve here in Wisconsin Rapids. Our hope is to provide these students with a true cultural immersion experience, and it is only with your help that we can make this possible. The following information is designed to outline the duties, responsibilities, and expectations that you as a host family should understand as you consider your role as a homestay host family.

What to Expect

Homestay families are expected to act as the international student's "family away from home." You are not merely offering room and board to these students. Your role is to offer a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for these students to live in, just as you would your own children. Conversely the international students are not to look at your relationship as if they are "guests" to be waited on hand and foot. The relationship we are looking for is one of mutual understanding and trust, and one where the homestay students should respect you and your children (if you have children) as they should respect their own family in their home country. We hope that not only can your homestay student learn much about American culture and lifestyle, but that you too can learn much about your student's culture and way of life. These intrinsic rewards should be first and foremost for you rather than financial considerations.

Your Responsibilities as a Homestay Family

- The homestay family must provide a clean, friendly, and safe living environment.
- The homestay family's primary consideration in hosting a student is for the cross-cultural experience and the intrinsic rewards that this would bring.
- The homestay family must provide the student with a private bedroom complete with a bed, dresser, desk, chair, lamp, closet space, and full access to a private or shared bathroom. The homestay family can expect the student to do reasonable household chores, but should not expect the student to maintain their house or yard, babysit their children, or cook their meals.
- Homestay family members must be willing to respect the religious or non-religious beliefs of their student.
- Homestay family members agree to respect the culture and values of their student.

- The homestay family will provide a variety of nutritional, well-balanced meals as well as snacks.
- The homestay family should be willing to do the student's laundry, or provide laundry detergent, instructions, and a schedule for the student to do their own laundry.
- Homestay family members must be willing and able to involve the student in various activities and outings.
- Homestay family members are not to abuse alcohol or use drugs.
- Homestay families are under no obligation to provide accommodations for a student's family. In the event a student's family chooses to visit the student while attending school in America, visiting parents are expected to arrange their own travel and hotel accommodations during their visit.

District Weekend Enrichment Activities (Four Weekends During Year)

Throughout the school year in which you host your international student, the school district will be providing four different cultural enrichment experiences for your student. These activities may involve an overnight stay and could include such activities as attending a Wisconsin Badger Football game, traveling to the Twin Cities for a museum/Mall of America excursion, visiting Chicago, or taking in a Brewer game at Miller Park. Depending on demand and availability, you may have the option to chaperone one or more of these activities.

All expenses for these District sponsored activities for the student are covered as part of their tuition costs. Should you be allowed to participate in these activities, you would be responsible for your own expenses.

The Process

If you wish to be a host family and participate in the Wisconsin Rapids International Student Exchange Program, please complete the Homestay Host Family Application form available at Lincoln High School, 1801- 16th Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494, or on the school district's web site at http://www.wrps.org/schools/lincoln/wriep_lhs.cfm Return the completed application to Lincoln High School, Attention: Ronald Rasmussen, 1801 – 16th Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494.

As a prospective homestay family, all members of your family 16 years of age and older must have a criminal background check completed prior to being granted approval to host an international student. Furthermore, the District WRIEP Coordinator or Administrator may conduct a home inspection and an interview with all family members. If you are successful in your application, you will be placed on our roster of homestay families. When there is a match between the expressed wishes and conditions of a homestay family and those of an incoming student, we will supply you with the specifics

regarding your new family member. Once this information has been provided to you, we encourage you to begin communicating with your new student and their family. They will no doubt be thrilled to hear from you! You will receive more direction from the WRIEP program personnel, and have a number of opportunities to have any questions answered prior to your student arriving.

Homestay Family Q & As

The following information is intended to address the broad range of concerns of prospective homestay parents. In doing so, it deals with potential challenges, problems, and responsibilities that homestay parents may have to face in accommodating a foreign student. It should be emphasized that homestays are generally very rewarding experiences for all parties.

1. Why are students from foreign countries interested in coming to Wisconsin Rapids and studying in our high school?

There are a number of reasons for this. Despite what you may read in the news, universities in America are considered to be a premier destination for students interested in earning a college degree. It is further held that students who first receive an American high school diploma have an upper hand on those that haven't when seeking enrollment in U.S. colleges. Still one additional advantage to gaining entry into an American university relates to the rigor of high school coursework. Schools and communities in Wisconsin are recognized as safe, clean places to be that provide a multitude of cultural immersion opportunities. In addition, Lincoln High School's academic record of success and our pathways with local educational partners make our campus a desirable destination.

2. When would these students be coming to the School District of Wisconsin Rapids?

You will be contacted about the exact date and time that your international student will arrive. Typically the student would be arriving a few days (4-10) prior to the start of the school year, and leaving a few days shortly after the school year ends. You will be given specific instructions on when and how you can meet your international student.

3. What can a homestay family do to prepare for an international student?

Once you have your student's contact information, you should send an email message or letter introducing yourself. Describe your family, any pets you may have, lifestyle, and your neighborhood. Relate funny or typical family incidents. Include photos of your family, home, neighborhood, and the city of Wisconsin Rapids.

You should also send an email message or a letter to your student's parents. Reassure them that you are looking forward to hosting their son or daughter. Encourage them to write to you. Don't worry if they can't speak English. They will

be very excited and grateful to receive your letter and will quickly find someone to translate if necessary. After all, you will be the caregiver for their son or daughter while their child lives and learns in a country halfway around the world. It would be very reassuring and comforting to know their child will be well cared for.

Do some homework. Study a few words of your student's language and read up on the history and culture of your student's country of origin. Learn to pronounce your student's name correctly.

Prepare your student's room with the required desk, lamp, bed, chair, and dresser. Other niceties such as putting up a welcome banner, providing a plant, magazines/pamphlets, or perhaps a small gift or treat on the bed would no doubt be greatly appreciated and make the student feel welcome in their new home.

4. What are international students like?

First and foremost, they are children. They share many of the characteristics common to young people anywhere. As individuals they are at various levels of maturity and sophistication. Through time you will be able to determine your student's personality and degree of responsibility. Just treat them with respect and they will act accordingly.

Some have previous international travel experience. Some have grown up in an urban environment. They may be used to greater (or less) personal independence than our children's experience.

All students will have studied some English prior to arriving in our schools. They will have been screened and required to pass basic English proficiency exams. However, their English abilities will undoubtedly vary to some extent. Some students will arrive quite fluent and confident in their English abilities, while others may face language challenges. With these students you will have to repeat and re-word sentences. Check for comprehension. Be patient and understanding, but encourage them to speak English immediately. Although it is difficult and frustrating to speak English all the time, it is important they practice and learn our native language.

5. How will our foreign student adjust to life in Wisconsin Rapids?

The first few weeks of the homestay will involve significant adjustments on the part of the students and the homestay families. Often students are away from their families for the first time. They can experience jet lag, culture shock, and homesickness. Homestay families should expect "shyness." Generally speaking, oriental students are not used to outward shows of affection such as hugging in their own cultures, and therefore may be embarrassed by it. Students from many other cultural backgrounds are much more comfortable with such outward signs

of affection. Furthermore, the academic workload is very demanding for these students, especially in the beginning. Be supportive of your student, comfort them and try to ease the pressure they may feel to excel.

The homestay family should do whatever it can to smooth the way for the student and at the same time adjust family life to accommodate the student as a new family member.

Within the first few days of arriving the homestay family should:

- Inform the student how to address you, e.g. Mr./Mrs., John/Mary, Mom/Dad, etc.
- Take them through the home routines, e.g. mealtimes, snacks, showers, laundry, chores, how to make a bed, etc.
- Demonstrate how to use all electrical appliances.
- Invite the student to go grocery shopping.
- Give the student your name, home address, and phone number on a card that will fit into a wallet.
- Take the student on a sightseeing tour of the area.

Because of the cultural and language barriers, it may be difficult at first for the students to make friends. They will not automatically make firm friends with family siblings. Much like natural siblings, they will relate better to some family members than others.

6. Can homestay families expect foreign students to conform to family rules of conduct?

Absolutely! It would be wise to establish with your student an understanding of house rules and regulations as soon as possible. Be sure to explain why you have set such guidelines. Kids are kids no matter where they come from. They will likely conform to your household routines and family rules much more easily if it is clear to them what they are.

- Students must understand that hosts are surrogate parents – not landlords or house fellows. Students are expected to conform to the normal rules of family life and contribute to the routine operation of the household.
- The use of drugs and/or alcohol by students is strictly prohibited.
- Overnight stays outside of the family home and out of town are subject to the prior approval of both the homestay family and coordinator of the homestay family. It is the duty of the homestay family to make personal contact with the parents in the home where the student will be temporarily staying before approval for the overnight stay will be considered.
- The students must not be left overnight unattended. Adult supervision (someone twenty-five years of age or older) must be arranged for your student if you will be away from home overnight. The homestay family is

responsible for compensating the substitute family (\$25/night) unless other mutually agreeable arrangements are made.

- If students choose to participate in family holidays and/or travel where costs are incurred, they are expected to assist in bearing the costs. Where students choose not to participate in the activity, they must accept alternate arrangements made by the homestay family.

- You will have to determine a curfew for your student based on their age and maturity. Make sure that the curfew is clearly communicated to your student and that they always communicate to you where they are going and who they will be with.

- Explain clearly your rules regarding:
 - ✓ showers and baths
 - ✓ use of the telephone (the student may want to get their own telephone)
 - ✓ table manners
 - ✓ manners in general
 - ✓ calling home when late
 - ✓ smoking rules
 - ✓ other family and house rules that are designed to provide a safe and nurturing environment

7. What are host parents expected to provide?

Homestay families provide students with a home away from home in a supervised environment where the student's welfare is as important as that of any family member.

Students expect to have their own rooms, including a bed, bedding, chair, dresser, desk, and study lamp. Students should be able to have reasonable access to the bathroom and other common areas of the home. Outline to the student where they may go and which household areas are out of bounds.

They may want to phone friends and home often, during irregular hours. Parents should set a clear telephone policy as to when it is reasonable to place and receive phone calls. The students are responsible for all of their own telephone charges. Reasonable use of the computer and internet should also be clearly outlined.

Parents are expected to provide the student with three wholesome meals and snacks each day. Remember how much a growing teenager eats. Students can be expected to get their own breakfast and make their own lunch if this is what you prefer. In all instances, parents are expected to prepare the supper meal for the student. It is strongly recommended that you take the student with you to grocery shopping on several occasions first to determine their tastes and to make them feel at home.

8. What additional responsibilities do homestay parents have?

a) Medical Coverage

You do not have to be concerned about medical coverage for your student as that will be taken care of by the Coordinator of the WRIEP.

b) Bank Accounts

Please assist your student in opening a bank account immediately and guide them in handling their finances as they wish. It is advisable to use your own bank and branch. Students should be encouraged to have checking accounts and to use debit cards to pay for their personal items and expenses.

c) Home Insurance Policy

Your property is most likely covered by your homeowner's insurance in the unlikely event that your student should damage anything. However, please contact your agent to be sure that you have adequate coverage.

9. What support is available to homestay families and students?

The WRIEP Coordinator and Lincoln High School Principal are based at Lincoln High School and are the Designated School Official (PDSO) overseeing the program. These individuals work to help students with any school related or personal problems or concerns.

These individuals are available to you as a resource. Do not hesitate to contact them regarding any matter concerning your student. Furthermore, academic and personal counseling services will be available at the school for the international student in the same way that they are available to any other Lincoln High School student.

10. What should homestay families do if they discover they are incompatible with their international student?

Families and students are expected to make every effort to ensure that the homestay relationship is a success. Nevertheless, problems could arise as they do in any field of human activity. If families and students are incompatible and every effort has been made to improve the situation, the WRIEP Coordinator may decide to intervene and locate another homestay family for the student.

Either a student or homestay parents may request a transfer to a new home. If the student initiates the request every effort will be made to find a way to resolve the situation such that both the student and the homestay parents are happy with the solution, and the student will stay with their original homestay family. If a mutually agreeable solution cannot be reached, the student will be allowed to move to a new homestay location. Any student requesting a second homestay change within a year will be subject to a thorough investigation before a third placement is considered, and depending on the findings, the student may be asked to leave the School District of Wisconsin Rapids.

11. What should a homestay family do when a student first arrives?

- a) Your student will be brought to Lincoln High School and you will be notified of the estimated arrival date and time.
- b) Have a quiet, relaxing day at home. Remember, your student has in all likelihood been up for over twenty-four hours and is coming from a country where the time difference may be as much as seventeen or more hours from our local time. Therefore, there's a good chance that they may want to spend some time alone to adjust and rest.
- c) Ask your student what they would like to do that might ease their acclimation to their new surroundings. They may wish to get their bank account opened, sightsee, or purchase some personal items. Find out if they have any concerns or worries. Offer whatever you can to ease their burden of being placed in this new and unfamiliar world.
- d) Gradually during the week, discuss family routines, rules, behavior, and expectations.
- e) Be sure to take your student on a tour of the area within the first few days upon their arrival.

Additional Guidance for Homestay Families

Cultural differences can often make the most basic areas of daily life a problem for an international student. Sensitivity and awareness on your part will help ease the student's adjustment to life in your home. As mentioned earlier, it would be helpful to both you and your student if you discuss family rules, expectations, and schedules shortly after your student arrives. Patience will be required in all of your explanations to the student. If they seem to have difficulty understanding you, it is often valuable to write things down. The students often have a greater comprehension of written English than they do of spoken English. When you guide the student through your home, it is a good idea to explain how to use some of the facilities. Encourage them to ask questions and try to use simple language in your explanations. We hope that the exchange of cultures that occur as you and your student interact on a daily basis will be an exciting and rewarding part of the homestay.

To help ensure that you and your student have an enjoyable time together, the following is intended to provide you additional guidance and ideas on how to create the best possible homestay for your student. International students will also be given guidelines covering most of the same points, but from the student's perspective.

a) Food

To a student from overseas, American cooking may seem very exotic indeed. Just as you may find squid a little unusual (or not), your best barbequed bacon cheeseburger may puzzle your student. The whole idea of a homestay is to experience American life so don't make drastic changes to your family's meals. Most students enjoy trying new food. However, you should be aware of your student's preferences. If you and your student are so inclined, it might be fun to go to the grocery store together to purchase groceries that would allow the student to cook a traditional dish or meal from their country for your family. Students are normally happy to share their culture with you in a way that would be mutually beneficial.

Your student will hopefully begin to feel as part of your family for the time they are with you. Inviting them to join in a few household responsibilities will help them feel more as if they belong. Shyness comes from not knowing what to do. Setting the table, helping with lunches and so on, when defined clearly by you at the outset, can become activities to further your communication. Clearly inform students of meal schedules in order to avoid confusion and suggest that they notify you in the event they may be late.

Children like snacks – this is a universal phenomenon. Please discuss this topic with your student explaining what snacks and drinks are available, how to prepare them, and when it is appropriate to have a snack. You will probably want to include the topic of “cleanup” in this discussion.

b) The Bathroom

The bathroom is probably the most puzzling room in your house for overseas students because once the door is shut, they are on their own. Start with the guided tour – show your student where extra towels, face cloths and soap are, how the shower is turned on and how to draw the shower curtain. Students from Asia, for example, have very different bathroom routines. Bathrooms are fully tiled and equipped with a drain in the floor so many students from Japan, China, and other Asian countries are not used to keeping water contained in a tub. Any generic brand of soap, shampoo, and toothpaste should be provided by the homestay parent. Any exotic soaps or shampoos, toothbrush, hair sprays, cosmetics, etc. are the student's responsibility.

c) Sleeping Arrangements

Here again, your guidance is essential to help your student feel at home. Define clearly where the student can put his or her clothes and belongings and make sure they understand how covers on the bed work. The Japanese, for example, often simply use a futon and a quilt and are not accustomed to getting under the many layers of covers that we use.

Show your student how to make the bed and let them know at what times you will be retiring and eating breakfast. This will facilitate setting up schedules and settling into your family's routine.

d) Language

The primary reason for the student's visit to America is to get an American cultural experience. This means speaking English as much as possible. It is therefore a good idea to engage your student in conversation whenever you can. Speak in short, basic sentences at first to help reduce confusion if your student arrives here with limited English skills. Avoid negative questions, such as "Don't you want any more?" because the answer will likely be "Yes, (I don't want any more)" instead of "No, I don't." Many languages respond to the verb rather than the meaning of the sentence. Be clear regarding "yes" and "no." Many times students will indicate that they understand when they do not. This is because they do not want to bother you. You need to paraphrase often and check that they understand clearly. This is especially important when giving instructions so that the students are successful in doing as you ask.

e) Insurance

The students are covered by medical insurance for illness and accident. However, your home insurance may not have coverage for the student's property while in your home because the student is not a relative. Your property is most likely covered in the unlikely event that your student should damage anything. Please contact your agent to be sure that you have adequate coverage.

f) Manners

Manners vary greatly from culture to culture, so your student may require some guidance from you in order to avoid embarrassment. If your family wears shoes inside the house, let your student know that it is common in America and acceptable in your house. The Japanese, in particular, always remove their shoes at the door and may feel uncomfortable wearing them in your home.

Meal time is a very personal arrangement in the family, and some of the best times spent with your student will likely be over dinner. If your student is helping with preparations, give careful guidance. Electric stoves and other American kitchen appliances may be new to your student. Forks, knives, and spoons may be familiar, but your student may ask advice on the finer points of using them.

Many Asian cultures feel that making noise while one eats is a compliment to the cook. If it offends you, you may want to explain that Americans usually eat quietly. Teach your student a few of the "Please pass the ..." phrases in order to help them feel comfortable at the table. If your student is going to a restaurant without you, inform them that at many restaurants you must wait to be seated and of the appropriate tip that should be left. In some countries there is no

tipping of people working in the service industry, so the concept of tipping may be totally foreign to your student.

Please set definite guidelines regarding phone usage. The students already know that they are responsible for any long distance charges that they incur. When the telephone bill arrives please show them the charges for the calls they have made (if any) and ask them for the amount they owe. Furthermore, students should be made aware of your rules regarding the amount of time they spend on the phone.

The Wisconsin Rapids International Student Exchange Program strongly discourages its students from smoking, but smoking is not prohibited for admission into the program. In the unlikely event that your student smokes, please make absolutely clear what your own household rules are regarding smoking.

g) Transportation

International students are not permitted to drive any type of motor vehicle under any circumstances while participating in the Wisconsin Rapids International Student Exchange Program. Any operation of a motor vehicle by an international student during their stay in Wisconsin Rapids will result in immediate dismissal from the Wisconsin Rapids International Education Program. Further, if it is discovered through the course of an investigation that permission was granted by a member of the homestay family for such vehicle operation, such action will result in forfeiture of any future homestay payments and the removal from eligibility to participate in the Wisconsin Rapids International Education program.

h) Laundry

Please inform students about arrangements for laundry in your home. Students need to know where to put laundry and the timetable for cleaning as well as their specific responsibilities with their laundry. Some of the older students may prefer to do laundry on their own. Arrange a schedule and a process that suits everyone.

i) Visitors

Your home is your student's home. It may be that they wish to invite a friend home to be sociable or to work on homework. Plan to discuss this in advance with your student and agree on notice, times, and any other expectations you may have. Having guests over if parents aren't present is strongly discouraged.

j) Religion

Please respect your student's religious beliefs (or non-beliefs). Invite them to join you if you go to church, but be very understanding if they decline. Absolutely no attempt should be made to change your student's religious beliefs.

Lastly, Enjoy!

The vast majority of homestay relationships wind up being very pleasurable and rewarding for both the homestay family and the international student. Usually the most difficult part is having to say good-bye when the homestay is over.

The best part is that in most instances, lifelong friendships and wonderful memories are created!

If you have any questions, contact:

**Lincoln High School
Ronald Rasmussen, Principal
715-424-6751 x1
ronald.rasmussen@wrps.net**