



Pre-Departure Guide

A publication of
Academic Year in America



Important Contacts While You are Studying in the U.S

Emergency Phone Numbers

AYA National Office: 203.399.5417

AYA Emergency Hotline (24/7): 877.240.5225

AYA Toll-Free: 800.322.HOST (4678)

U.S Department of State Emergency hotline: 1.866.283.9090

U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
State Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20255-0505

Email: JVisas@state.gov

Phone: 866.283.9090

AYA Contact Information

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Website: www.academicyear.org

AYA's website is constantly being updated with new and improved forms, pictures and stories from host families and other students. It has valuable information and other links of interest that you will need throughout the year.

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Welcome

The Academic Year in America (AYA) staff is excited to welcome you to America! We are pleased to count you among the courageous students who choose to study abroad with Academic Year in America, the not-for-profit organization sponsored by American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS) Foundation.

Young people just like you from around the world will begin this great adventure with AYA in a very short time. You may be feeling nervous, anxious and excited all at the same time. Remember, you are not alone. AYA staff, Local Coordinators and incredible host families are here to support you and help you to have an amazing experience in America. We are proud of our program and confident you will enjoy and benefit from your participation with AYA.

As a participant this year, you will be a representative of your country and the AYA program in your community, host family and school. This pre-departure guide has been prepared by the AYA staff to assist you in your preparation as an exchange student before

you leave home. Please read it carefully and share the information with your family before you begin this adventure. We have tried to include everything that you will encounter in the course of the year, but you may still have questions. If so, your questions will be answered at the AYA Student Orientation.

Your communication, patience and commitment to this exchange are the most important components to success. We believe that you will get out of this year whatever you put into it. We hope your experience is rewarding and we look forward to meeting you!

Best wishes for a great experience!



Michele Kabel
Executive Director, Academic Year in America (AYA)

The AIFS Foundation

The Academic Year in America program has been in operation since 1981, and is conducted under the auspices of the American Institute For Foreign Study Foundation.

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational organization founded in 1967 with the assistance of the late Robert F. Kennedy. Its mission is to promote worldwide understanding through cross-cultural exchange. In addition to sponsoring the AYA program, the AIFS Foundation awards grants to high schools for projects that encourage intercultural awareness. The Foundation is governed by a board of trustees that includes prominent educators and international business leaders. The board meets regularly to review the effectiveness and quality of the Foundation's AYA program to ensure adherence to standards of excellence.

The Foundation has been designated by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) as an Exchange Visitor Program authorized to issue the Form DS 2019 which enables qualified participants to apply for a J-1 exchange visitor visa from the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy.



The late Senator Robert Kennedy with AIFS Students in 1967

The AYA Program

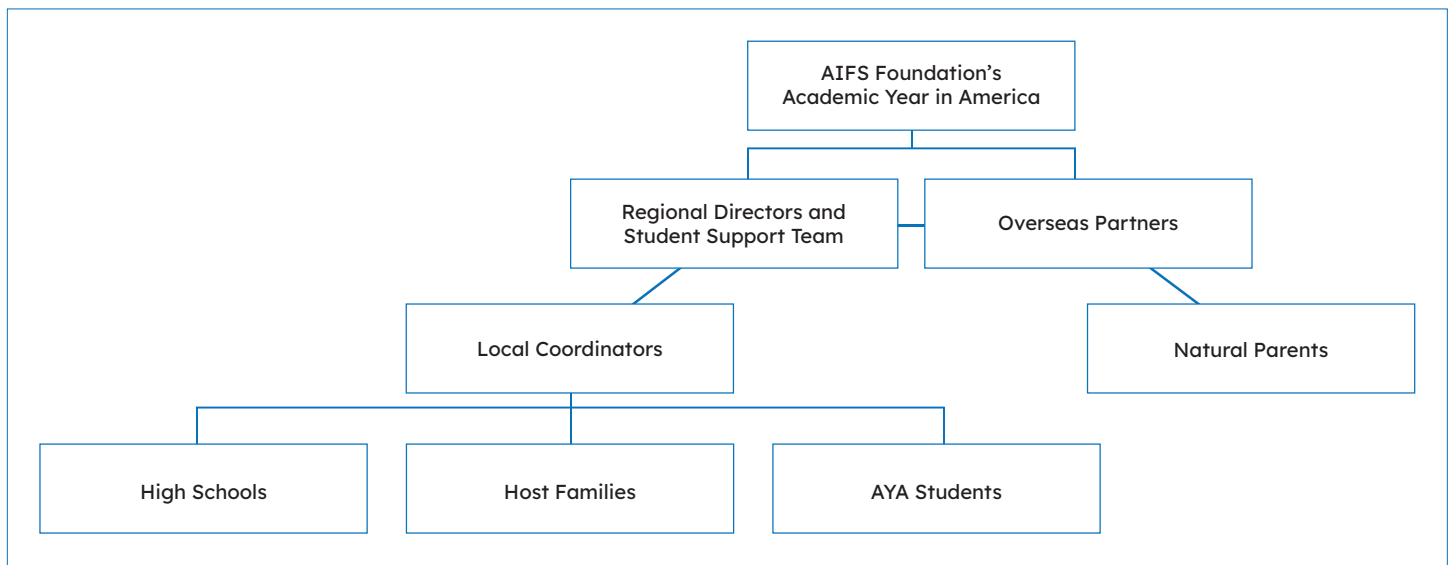
The AYA program has been developed for high school students, ages 15 to 18 ½, from all parts of the world, who wish to spend a semester or full academic year studying in the United States while living with American families. Carefully screened teenagers who have a demonstrated ability in the English language, a solid academic record and positive references, are hosted by American families and attend local high schools. While improving their English, these young people share a cross-cultural exchange with their host families, schools and communities.

AYA students arrive in August for the 10-month academic year or for the 5-month fall semester program; or in January for the 5-month spring semester program.

The Goals of the AYA Program are to:

- Encourage the education of young people about foreign cultures and languages by arranging for qualified individuals to live and study in countries different from their own.
- Encourage Americans to learn more about foreign countries, cultures and languages.
- Create opportunities for cross-cultural friendships.
- Increase understanding of the United States, its people, culture and history, among young people all over the world.
- Provide a solid educational experience for all participants in the program.
- Make participants better citizens of their countries through cross-cultural exchange of ideas.
- Continue to offer programs that are superior from both experiential and administrative perspectives.

AYA Communication



AYA Key Players

AYA Students

- Our students are between the ages of 15 to 18 ½, have a minimum of three years of English, a grade point average of C+ or better and a passing score on an English language test.
- Their reasons for joining the program differ but all have a desire to improve their English, a curiosity about U.S. culture and customs and the dream to be a student in an American school.
- Students must adhere to the program rules. For questions or problems they should turn first to their host family or Local Coordinator (LC).
- Both students and their natural parents read and sign AYA program rules.
- Students are fully insured and have their own spending money.

AYA Host Families

- Host families must provide a bed, a place to study and all meals unless the student prefers to purchase school lunch. (Note: Host families must provide all meals daily for government sponsored grant students.) They also help the student integrate into their daily life. Host families should contact their Local Coordinator whenever they have a question or problem.
- There is no typical host family. Some are two-parent families with children at home. Others may be retirees, younger couples without children or single parents with or without children.
- Host families are financially secure and are able to give the love and support a young person away from home will need.

- Some host families can only commit to welcoming and hosting a student for a short time. These families are called Welcome or
- Temporary Arrival families and usually host a student for approximately 3-6 weeks at the start of the program. Being in a welcome family can be a great way to start your year and get to know your school and community before you move to permanent host family.

U.S. High Schools

- High schools accept our students as members of their student body. The Local Coordinator is their primary contact for any questions, problems or paperwork.
- Students attend the local public high school serving the districts in which their host families live or a private school in the area.
- Students enroll in full course loads and can participate in most activities such as band, sports, etc.
- The school administrators determine a grade placement. Students are not guaranteed diplomas.
- Students must maintain an average grade of C+.

AYA Local Coordinators

- Local Coordinators screen and select host families and make themselves available to students, families and schools with whom they work.
- During the year, Local Coordinators supervise their students with monthly contacts.
- Local Coordinators work with Regional Directors in the national office for support.

AYA Regional Directors

- Regional Directors work full time in our national office. They are responsible for administering the program in their specific region and managing the placement process for a certain number of student participants.
- Regional Directors supervise Local Coordinators and communicate with overseas partners.
- The Regional Directors are responsible for supporting Local Coordinators with student and host family problems when they arise.

**You can contact any member of the AYA team at:
1 800 322 4678 or 203 399 5417.**

Staff Directory: www.academicyear.org/lc_com/directory.asp

Overseas Partners

- Students are interviewed and selected by overseas partners that have a working relationship with AYA.
- Our overseas partners also provide a pre-departure orientation and serve as a liaison to each student's natural parents during the program year.
- AYA works with over 50 countries all around the world.

What makes AYA the Gold Standard?

Giving Back to Your Community – Community Service

AYA's vision is to encourage students to become considerate and forward-thinking citizens of the world. With this pursuit in mind, AYA students are asked to complete a minimum of 10 hours of local volunteer community service activities over the course of their homestay. Volunteering is a special way to give back to your host community and say "thank you" for the support and encouragement you have received. Students who volunteer will benefit from personal development including a greater sense of cultural and social awareness, increased empathy and personal growth. In addition to being personally rewarding, volunteering is also an excellent way to make friends and socialize!

There are many ways that students can volunteer in their communities. Your Local Coordinator can help you identify local opportunities. Many students choose to volunteer through their school or a local church; popular activities include helping out at an animal shelter, food pantry or community fundraisers. Students may volunteer with any local charitable organization that they feel particularly connected to. AYA will be checking in with students every quarter to see how their community service hours are going and offer support to students who may be struggling to find opportunities.

Cultural Presentations

In addition to completing community service hours, AYA students are asked to complete at least one cultural presentation at their high school, or another school within their community (i.e. elementary or middle school). Sharing your culture with American students is an important part of citizen diplomacy and a great way to give back to local educational community, while promoting exchange programs. Students who present will benefit from presentations by building leadership and presentation skills as well as their overall confidence.

Responsibilities and Expectations

AYA's Responsibilities

The AIFS Foundation agrees to provide all students enrolled in the AYA program with the following:

- An optional 4-day orientation in the U.S. before traveling on to their host families or a community student orientation upon arrival.
- Lodging with an American host family able to provide a student with his/her own bed, a place to study, all meals (except lunches purchased at school) and a loving, supportive environment that welcomes the student as a son or daughter (three meals a day are required for grant students).
- Enrollment in the local high school.
- Transportation to and from school (usually provided by a school bus).

- Support from an AYA Local Coordinator who lives near (within a 120 mile radius) the student and his/her host family.
- A DS 2019 form, enabling the student to secure a J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa to come to the U.S.
- A guarantee of medical insurance that provides coverage for illness and injury.

Students' Responsibilities

Students on the AYA program are responsible for:

- Following program and host family rules.
- Spending money for personal expenses such as independent travel, school lunches (hot lunch only), phone calls, clothing, school supplies, books, uniforms, laboratory fees, entertainment, proms, etc.
- AYA recommends a minimum monthly spending allowance of \$250, however monthly spending may vary depending on the individual needs of the student. AYA also recommends that each student bring \$300 with him/her to start the year and have \$300 in reserve for medical expenses for use during the program.
- Adequate clothing for a 5-month or 10-month stay in his/her host community climate.
- All participating students are expected to carry full course loads and participate in school as would any American student. Students must report to AYA within 10 calendar days any changes to his or her telephone number, e-mail address, actual and current U.S. address, and site of activity.

Local Coordinator Responsibilities

AYA Local Coordinators share a deep belief in the value of cross-cultural exchange. They enjoy working with students and are key to the success of the AYA program. Every one of the responsibilities listed below is an important function of the Local Coordinator position:

- Working with accredited high schools and understanding each school's policy on foreign exchange students.
- Identifying, screening and selecting appropriate host families for AYA students.
- Conducting orientations for host families prior to the arrival of students, meeting students at the airport (if possible) and introducing them to their host families.
- Conducting arrival orientations for students who elect to travel directly to their host community.
- Providing support and supervision for students and host families throughout the AYA program year or semester.
- Contacting each student and host family monthly; meeting each student in person at least every other month; submitting monthly student reports to the national office.
- Helping to resolve problems as they arise.
- Providing emergency assistance if necessary and informing the AYA national office immediately of any urgent situations.

Host Family Responsibilities

AYA carefully selects host families based upon their desire to host a visiting student and their ability to provide a safe, comfortable home and a positive cultural experience for you in the U.S. All AYA host families are well screened and all members of their household 18 years of age and older are vetted through a background check as part of our screening process. People of all ages and from many diverse backgrounds volunteer to serve as host families. Grandparents, families with younger children, single-parent families and traditional two-parent families have all hosted successfully. Remember that AYA host families are volunteers; they are not paid for hosting students. Additionally, you may live with a family who has a second exchange student in their home. Single individuals are also eligible to host; however, you and your parents must agree to a single person placement in advance of arrival.

Your host family will expect you to join them in family activities. They will expect you to share the privileges and responsibilities of being a family member as if you were a natural son or daughter. This includes doing your share of chores around the house, attending religious services (at least in the beginning of your stay) to learn about the family's practices and communicating with all family members. Your host family will want to learn about your country and will want to help you understand life in America. They will be eager to answer your questions and explain things to you when you don't understand. Above all, they want to open their hearts and share their homes with you, their "son" or "daughter."

Host families are responsible for:

- Providing you with a home for the academic year or semester. Welcoming you as a member of their family and encouraging you to participate in all aspects of family life.
- Providing you with your own bed and a place to study, either in a room you share with a family member of the same sex and age range, or your own room.
- Providing you with meals, including a bag lunch for school. If you wish to purchase lunch, you are responsible for that cost. Encouraging the exchange of ideas and providing you with exposure to the cultural and social environment of the home and community.
- Providing the love and understanding a young person needs to enjoy a successful academic year in America.

Host families are located all across the U.S., primarily in smaller towns and rural areas. You may live in a home in a suburban community or a farmhouse out in the country. **There is no "typical" host family.** You could be within walking distance of your high school or you may need to take a bus to school daily. Students may not request where in the U.S. they would like to be placed and may not change host families because they do not like the area in which they are living. As you will learn, America's communities are as diverse as its people.

Arrival in the U.S.

Prior to departure for the U.S.

- Once you receive your open-ended, round-trip ticket you should keep it in a safe traveling pouch with your:
 - > Passport (DO NOT remove any papers from your passport)
 - > All visa documents
 - > Host Family information – name, address, phone numbers, etc.
- Do not pack passport, visa documents or host family information in your luggage
- Do not throw any part of ticket in trash upon arrival
- If your agency provided you with apparel prior to departure you should wear this during your flights
- You should have a maximum of \$300 in cash with you
- You can exchange money for dollars prior to departure or at the airport
- Keep the AYA Travel Emergency Procedure Guide with you for information while traveling, and call AYA:
 - > **If** flight is delayed or canceled
 - > **If** you miss flight
 - > **If** you lose ticket or other documents
 - > **If** you arrive in wrong location
 - > **If** you cannot find AYA staff or host family member

High Schools in America

Communities selected for the AYA program have quality schools that provide a valuable educational experience. American schools offer an “interdisciplinary” approach to education, which means that students take a variety of courses in language, history, geography, mathematics, literature and science. Extracurricular activities are also considered a big part of the learning process and students are encouraged to participate in these.

AYA compiles and provides complete information to your high school on your background before you arrive. Your school will review your health records and transcripts to ensure that you meet the immunization requirements and are placed in the proper classes and grade level. Whenever possible, AYA will notify you of any required immunizations that you may be missing prior to your departure to the U.S. If this was not possible or if your school requires that a specific immunization, physical or other related item be conducted in the U.S., you will be required to meet that requirement. Your Local Coordinator or host family will arrange these for you, but you will need to pay for anything that is not covered by insurance out-of-pocket.

Since school systems vary from country to country, you may not always be placed with students your own age in every class. School enrollments can vary from less than 100 to 3,000 students. All participating AYA students are expected to carry full course loads and participate in school like any American student. Schools operate on various academic schedules and course lengths may vary. Examples of some schedules include semester, block system, trimester and full-year.

As mentioned, most high schools offer a complete program of extracurricular activities for students to enjoy in addition to their class work. Students are highly encouraged to participate in these. Options include a variety of sports, cheerleading, bands, choral groups, school newspapers, academic teams and service organizations. Also, there are many special interest

clubs which allow you to expand on your studies in areas such as drama, science, debate, music and many others. There is NO guarantee that you will be able to participate in sports while you are on the AYA program.

Students on the AYA program may be able to receive official transcripts of their study in American schools. This document lists the courses you have taken and the grades you achieved. Students must request transcripts **before** they leave the U.S. In some cases, schools may award you a certificate of attendance or a diploma if you have completed all the necessary courses for graduation. **The AYA program does not guarantee diplomas or participation in the graduation ceremony.** AYA students, like American students, are responsible for school fees and expenses. Program participants must bring money for expenses such as science laboratory fees, school transcripts, school sport and activity fees, school-sponsored trips, book fees, yearbooks, school proms and other occasional out-of-pocket expenses. AYA recommends that the natural families provide \$200-\$250 a month to cover these costs.

AYA may monitor your school performance and quarterly grades. You are subject to the same academic and social rules as any other student in school. Teachers and guidance counselors are asked to contact your Local Coordinator and host family immediately if problems arise. To remain in good standing with the program, a student must enroll in a full academic curriculum (no less than four academic courses per semester for a traditional style schedule). As part of a student’s academic course load, each student must enroll in an appropriate English language or literature course and an American Studies/US Government or Social Studies class, and are encouraged to take a math and a science course. **AYA students are required to maintain a C+ or better average in all classes.**

Upon Arrival in the U.S.

If you are traveling on a non-stop flight to your host community:

- > All arriving international passengers and luggage must be screened by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).
- > Make sure to collect all your luggage before exiting the CBP facility.
- > Passengers will exit onto the arrival level.
- > You will be met by your host family or Local Coordinator who may have a sign with your name on it.

If you are traveling on a connecting flight to your host community:

- > Passengers connecting to another flight may need to re-check their luggage and go through screening by TSA.
- > Once you have arrived at your final destination look for your host family or Local Coordinator in the baggage claim area.

If you cannot locate your host family or Local Coordinator, miss your connecting flight or need assistance on the day of your travel please contact AYA toll free at 1-800-322-4678 to be connected to a staff member who will assist you. *Please refer to the Travel Emergency Brochure for helpful tips and information.*

DO NOT leave the airport unattended or with any person other than your host family, Local Coordinator or AYA representative.

Student Arrival Orientation

All students are required to receive an arrival orientation, in addition to the pre-departure orientation, upon their arrival to the U.S. You will receive a Community Orientation from your Local Coordinator and will be provided with the AYA Student Handbook. In addition, AYA will conduct a series of virtual arrival orientations which will cover topics such as the importance of communication, cultural issues for today's teens and what to expect from your Local Coordinator, host family and high school.

Important Information for your AYA Experience

Student Supervision

Each AYA student will have a Local Coordinator (LC) who can answer questions or help solve a problem and be a friend. The LC is the person in your community to whom you, your host family, and school will turn to with any questions and concerns.

AYA Student Support Staff

AYA provides a tiered support model, designed to provide the best possible service to each of our students. While the LC is the local contact, AYA has a student support team, that is committed to ensuring that you have a safe and rewarding year abroad. You will be assigned a Regional Director, who will oversee your placement and is available to answer any questions or address any concerns you may have throughout the year. AYA also has a dedicated Director of Student Services who will reach out to you on a regular basis, and counsel you on any adjustment issues, academic, social or host family concerns you may be having. AYA encourages our students to use the outlets provided and contact our national office support team for any reason.

AYA provides 24-hour service and access to our staff via telephone for the convenience of students, host families and Local Coordinators. AYA ensures that you receive the support you need and have access to a trained staff member, a toll-free number and a 24-hour emergency telephone service. The 24-hour emergency service operator will record the message and contact the AYA staff member on duty. The AYA staff member will call back as soon as the message has been received.

AYA Toll-Free Numbers: 203.399.5417 or 800.322.4678

AYA 24-hour Emergency Service Number: 877.240.5225

Host Family Changes

Changing host families is uncommon and considered a last resort. Students cannot change families and schools without a Face-to-Face meeting or due process. Students are not to change host families within the first 30 days of the program unless an emergency occurs. You are expected to make a concerted effort to adjust to your host family. Every host family has been selected by your Local Coordinator. The family goes through a very rigorous application process and interview just as you have to participate in the AYA program.



Often times, host families have made many changes in their homes to welcome an exchange student for an academic year or semester.

You will not be moved based on simple dislike of your location, school, style of housing or host family. You must make an effort to adjust to the community and high school that you are originally placed in. The majority of AYA students are placed in rural communities and/or small high schools. Unless there is a possible danger present, you are expected to stay with your assigned host family. You may not change host families on your own or without permission from the AYA National Office. Should a host family change be deemed necessary by the AYA office, the Local Coordinator and the National Office will make every effort to keep you in the same community and high school. If you move as a result of your behavioral issues, your natural parents will be responsible for paying the costs of all the travel arrangements. AYA may suspend all host family changes nationwide based on the status of the health crisis or emergency.

Remember...

- Don't expect your host family to plan special travel or constant activities during your stay. You are a family member, not a guest. Don't expect your host family to buy different food or plan a special diet for you. You're here to fit into their lifestyle, not to make your host family adjust to yours.
- Don't expect your host family to drive you around to special functions within the community. Most American teenagers rely on car pools
- (sharing ride with others), public transportation, bicycling or walking to get places.
- Do expect to ask permission to go out with friends or participate in extracurricular or social activities. American parents will expect to know who you are with, where you are, and when you will be back at all times.
- DO EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED! This is going to be a year filled with many surprises!

Financial Information

Regardless of the amount of money you have brought with you, place it in a bank account. Your host family or Local Coordinator can help you with this. NO ONE but you should have access to your bank account or personal identification number. DO NOT under any circumstances lend money to your host family no matter what the situation. Never put your money into your host family's account. Make sure all wire transfers are made in your name and not to the host family. If your family asks to borrow money contact your Local Coordinator or National Office as soon as possible. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you or keep large amounts at home. AYA is not responsible for missing money. Your money should be used to cover your personal expenses such as clothes, school lunches (if not taking a bag lunch from home), haircuts, school supplies, prom ticket, movies, entertainment with friends, long distance phone calls, medical bills, toiletries, local transportation and other personal needs. Remember to get a receipt whenever you pay with cash to keep track of your spending. Plan a budget. Since you will be here for 5 – 10 months, divide the total amount of money by 5 or 10 and spend no more than that amount each month. Realize there are many year-end expenses (class trips, prom, yearbook, class rings, good-bye gifts, etc.) Plan ahead and save for the end of your stay. If you need more cash, you can have money "wired" to you by your natural parents via Western Union. It operates throughout Europe and other parts of the world and is supposed to reach you at any Western Union branch in the United States within 24 hours. If you need money wired to you, ask your host family or Local Coordinator to assist you. Make sure that money transfers are in your name only. If you bring over a credit card, you should keep the account number and expiration date of your credit card in a secure place. In the event that your card is lost or stolen, this will help you cancel your old card and receive a new one. VISA is the most widely accepted card in the U.S., so we do not recommend American Express. Please make sure to come prepared with a PIN for your credit card so it can be used at ATMs. Be sure to let your host family and Local Coordinator know if your credit card is not working for any reason so they can help you get a new one.



Student Safety

When you are an exchange student, there will be times when you may be confused about behavior and what is culturally acceptable and what is not. One of our main goals is to make sure that you are safe during your experience. We would like to share this list that will help you to understand what types of actions and behaviors are socially acceptable and those that are not regarding your personal safety.

Positive/Appropriate Displays of Affection could include:

- Brief hugs
- Pats on the shoulder and back
- A handshake
- High-fives/slapping hands
- Verbal praise
- Brief touch on hands, face, shoulder, arms Arms around shoulder
- Holding hands during prayer
- Brief kiss on the cheek

Negative/Inappropriate Displays of Affection could include:

- Inappropriate/lengthy hugs and embraces Intentional brushing against a person's body, patting or pinching
- Adult holding hands with student
- Kisses on the mouth
- Student sitting in adult's lap
- Touching bottoms, chest or genital areas Showing affection in isolated areas like bathroom, bedroom
- Laying on same bed
- Touching of the knees or legs
- Wrestling and tickling
- Any type of massage

- Written or spoken compliments referring to body or body development
- Giving excessive personal gifts or money Private meals in intimate places
- Any unwanted attention

Modesty Guidelines:

- No nudity by student or host family
- No contact between student and adult in underwear
- Wear robes over your pajamas
- Do not leave the bathroom only wearing a towel
- No suggestive or revealing clothing

Behavior Guidelines:

- No request for meeting with students privately
- No telephoned, mailed or e-mailed messages of a sexual or intimate nature No flirting
- No jokes with sexual connotation
- No lewd remarks, whistles
- No sharing or displaying photos or material of a sexual nature

It is never appropriate, under any circumstances, for a student to be approached or touched in a sexual or sexually suggestive manner by any member of the host family or anyone else. If anyone attempts to inappropriately touch or speak with you, you must contact your Local Coordinator or the AYA office immediately.

Likewise, it is never appropriate for a student to initiate any sexual contact with anyone.

If you are ever concerned, uncomfortable or simply have a question about an interaction or relationship you have or are experiencing with an adult or peer, **please contact the AYA Student Support team immediately.** We are here to help you and support you throughout your stay.

Additional Safety Tips

- Check with your host family or Local Coordinator before going anywhere new or unfamiliar to ensure that it is a safe place/area.
- Ask your host family and/or Local Coordinator if there are any parts of town to avoid when walking around during the day or night.
- When going out, try to always be with two or more people and avoid situations where you will be alone.
- Always carry a cell phone or ensure that the person you are with has a working cell phone.
- Keep your home phone number, your Local Coordinator's number, and AYA's office and emergency numbers with you at all times. Ask your host family to write down emergency service numbers if you are going to be staying home alone for any length of time.
- If you are ever in a situation with friends or an adult that makes you feel uncomfortable for any reason, leave immediately and/or call your Local Coordinator, host family, or a trusted adult right away.
- Always trust your instincts—if something doesn't feel right, let someone know!

Traveling During the Program

The primary purpose of the AYA program is to learn about the American culture through a homestay and high school experience while sharing your own culture with others. Students will be expected to attend classes regularly and become a part of their family. The AYA program is not a travel program for you to see the famous sights and landmarks of the U.S. Please do not expect your host family to take you to America's big cities and national parks. They may take you to local tourist spots but that may only be a few times during the year. Further travel can always be done later in life when you return to visit your host family and the friends you made while on the program.

One of your first priorities to the AYA programs is to attend school daily. There are a few school breaks throughout the academic year and this is when you and your host family should plan any vacations. If you must miss school for host family travel, students should get written approval from the school in advance and are responsible for any missed assignments during that time.

When the opportunity to travel does arise, AYA allows you to travel with your host family or Local Coordinator without any special permission. However, if you plan a trip with someone other than your host parents or LC, AYA will require written permission from your natural parents, your overseas

partner and AYA. It is your responsibility to contact your Local Coordinator at least four weeks in advance whenever you want to travel without your host parents in order to complete an Independent Student Travel form. **Please note, under no circumstances will the AYA office permit trips taken without any adult supervision.**

A school sponsored group trip does not require an independent travel form but must be approved by the Host Family and LC. However, if travel away from home will be more than two days, the host family should advise your Local Coordinator so AYA can reach the student in case of an emergency involving the natural family.

Contact with Visitors from Your Home Country

It is important to start the bonding process with your host family early so that you can better acclimate to your new surroundings. One way to accomplish this is by limiting communication with your natural family and friends back in your home country. Please try to limit the number of times you contact those back home to once a week or less after the initial settling in period.

Your natural parents and/or friends may want to visit you during your stay in the U.S. It is very important to understand that the AYA and overseas partner do not allow visits from those back home. The reason is simple: Our experience has shown us that visits from home can be very disruptive to your year in America and can lead to difficulties with adjusting and can result in extreme homesickness and possibly an early return home. If your natural family or friends intend to visit you while you are in the U.S., please arrange for this to occur at the end of the school year, after April 15. Additionally, you must seek permission from your host family well in advance of the visit (and before any flight tickets are booked) to make sure they are comfortable with the visit.

Insurance

All students have medical and accidental insurance. Insurance providers vary by country and overseas partner. Each student will receive an insurance card and policy information prior to departure and/or at orientation. Student AYA ID cards will also have the student's policy number and contact information printed on the back, along with AYA's emergency number in case of an emergency.

For detailed information on coverage, each student must refer to the private insurance information provided to him/her by their home country organization. Most insurance plans do not cover pre-existing conditions, routine physicals, immunizations, or injuries sustained as a result of participation in extreme sports or activities. Activities that are usually not covered by insurance include, but are not limited to: boxing, combat sports, aerial sports, rock climbing, hang gliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, horse-racing, scuba diving, white water rafting, jet skiing, water skiing, heli-skiing.

For detailed information on coverage, each student must refer to the private insurance information provided to him/her by their home country organization. Most insurance plans do not cover pre-existing conditions, routine

physicals, immunizations, or injuries sustained as a result of participation in extreme sports or activities. Activities that are usually not covered by insurance include, but are not limited to: boxing, combat sports, aerial sports, rock climbing, hang gliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, horse-racing, scuba diving, white water rafting, jet skiing, water skiing, heli-skiing.

Submitting Claims

Students should refer to their individual insurance policy for instructions on how to submit a claim. Depending on the provider, some students may need to make direct payments to the attending physicians and medical facilities and then submit their bills to the insurance provider for reimbursement. Students should keep copies of all bills they pay and forward them to their natural parents to ensure that expenses are reimbursed and bills are paid in a timely manner. It is important that the Local Coordinator, host family and student understands the claims process for a student's insurance provider. A basic summary of each policy will be sent to each host family.

End of Stay

Students should arrange to return home a few days after the last day of school. If necessary, students may stay up to one week after the last day of school if your host family is able to continue hosting for that time. Students whose natural parents are picking them up in the U.S. must sign off the program when their parents arrive.

Visa Shortening Regulations

Because this is considered an academic program, the end of the program is defined as the last day of school. All full year and spring semester students join the program with a visa end-date of June 30. In accordance with the US Department of State, AYA is required to shorten that visa end-date if the student's last day of school is more than two weeks prior to June 30. The student's grace period will then begin immediately after the end of school.

Rules and Regulations

In the back of this guide you will find the Department of State (DOS) Federal Regulations. These standards and regulations enable us to offer exchange opportunities for students around the world while providing a safe environment.

The DOS regulates exchange student programs. The DOS has designated AYA to issue visas that allow exchange students to live and study in the U.S. for a semester or school year.

AYA is accredited by the Council on Standards for International Education Travel (CSIET). CSIET is an independent body that evaluates international exchange programs to ensure they provide a meaningful and safe exchange experience

AYA has established their own program rules and guidelines to reflect the policies of the DOS and CSIET. This section provides all of the guidelines mentioned above. It is important to understand each of the rules and guidelines prior to coming to America.

AYA Student Code of Conduct and Program Rules

The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to establish a consistent set of expectations for student behavior on the AYA program. AYA's primary objective is to ensure that each of our participants has a safe and rewarding experience wherein the rights and dignity of all individuals are valued and respected. The standards and values set forth in the Student Code of Conduct are the foundation of AYA's disciplinary process and program rules. As a participant on the AYA program you are a reflection of our goals and values, and AYA expects you to represent the program well and behave in a way that honors the integrity of the program as well as our mission to bring the world together. If your behavior or attitude is determined to undermine the AYA mission or the Code of Conduct and Rules, your participation on the AYA program could be terminated prematurely.

AYA is dedicated to helping you succeed and enjoy a safe and rewarding experience. As such, we have outlined the standards of conduct that we expect all of our participants to uphold, and included examples of behaviors that are not acceptable. Please review this information carefully so that you are aware of AYA's expectations and prepared for an exciting and successful year ahead!

Standards of Personal Integrity and Honesty

AYA students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that positively reflects the AYA program, their home countries and most importantly, themselves. This means being truthful, ethical and accountable for your behavior, action and intentions. Your ability to be honest, respectful and thoughtful to your friends, family and the community around you is a reflection of your character and will help you build trust and goodwill during your program. Below are a few examples of behaviors that violate AYA's standards of personal integrity and honesty:

Misrepresenting personal circumstances or deliberately issuing false statements, to change host families or obtain any outcome that is favorable to the student is considered a serious infraction of the Student Code of Conduct. Student safety is paramount to AYA and the program encourages students to report any and all circumstances that have the potential to compromise a student's health, safety or overall wellbeing. AYA takes any allegations of impropriety, misconduct or unsuitable housing arrangements seriously and will take swift and appropriate action to ensure that the student is safe and investigate the claims accordingly. Students must be aware that issuing false claims or statements about any person or circumstance associated with the placement has the potential to permanently damage the reputation of an individual, family or community and is considered a serious breach of ethics. If a student is found to have deliberately issued any false statements or intentionally misrepresented their circumstances for any reason, he or she will be subject to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification.

Intentionally furnishing, misrepresenting or omitting information on the student application. AYA student applications must be completed accurately and honestly in order for AYA program staff to make an informed decision about a student's eligibility to participate on the program.

Academic Dishonesty is defined as any academic act of deception that is intentionally done to gain an unfair advantage for the student or another individual. This includes, but is not limited to, giving or receiving assistance in an academic assignment/exam; plagiarizing, copying, or paraphrasing without appropriate citation; obtaining the answers to a test or quiz in advance; and intentionally taking credit for the work of others.

Standards of Respect and Kindness

All students are expected to show respect and kindness to others, particularly their host family members, AYA Representatives, teachers and figures of authority. Students should always use polite language, speak calmly, address individuals kindly and with consideration to their feelings. Students are entitled to the same respect and kindness from others. Except in cases where safety is an imminent risk, students are also expected to follow AYA's communication chain when reporting a concern. The following are examples of behaviors that undermine standards of respect and kindness:

Shouting, screaming, using a hostile tone or expletives towards any member of your host family, Local Coordinator or individual in a position of authority. Students must resolve conflict in a manner that is culturally appropriate and respectful. AYA has a comprehensive process in place to resolve any issues and will help students address and resolve issues in a constructive manner.

Speaking negatively or sharing personal and potentially damaging information about your host family or Local Coordinator. Barring situations of imminent danger, students should be respectful and discreet regarding their host family's personal affairs. This includes conversations, texts, messages or social media posts or exchanges that could be potentially hurtful or damaging. Host families open their hearts and homes to students with the understanding that students will respect their privacy and be considerate of their reputation within their community and/or school, even when conflicts arise. Any issues should be discussed with your LC or the AYA support team only.

Bullying: Bullying is defined as unwanted, hostile, or aggressive behavior among children and teenagers that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power. Bullying actions can occur on or off school grounds, in person, or digitally via text, internet or social media. AYA will not tolerate bullying of any kind, and any indication that a student is involved with bullying another individual will result in immediate disciplinary action up to and including disqualification. AYA students should also let their host family, Local Coordinator or AYA know if they have been or are currently being bullied on program. Bullying actions include but are not limited to:

- Making threats or disparaging comments
- Spreading rumors
- Assaulting someone physically or verbally
- Intentionally excluding an individual from a group

Standards of Safety and Dignity

AYA believes that all participants are entitled to have their experience in a nurturing environment where the rights, safety, health and dignity of all individuals are respected. As such we expect students to use sound judgement and always consider how their behaviors, decisions, actions and words could impact their own physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing, as well as the physical, emotional or psychological wellbeing of others. **Students should also conduct themselves in a manner that preserves and protects their own dignity and the dignity of others when engaging in behavior or dialogue that could negatively affect how they or someone else is viewed among friends, family, peers and community members.** Below are a few examples of behaviors that violate AYA's standards of safety and dignity.

Intentionally or recklessly endangering the student's own health, safety or welfare or that of any individual. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- a. Possession and/or use of any object classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, firearms, bludgeon weapons, brass knuckles, explosives, etc.).
- b. Operating a motor vehicle without a license or outside of AYA program rules.
- c. Driving with a person who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- d. Driving with a person who is showing irresponsible behavior (i.e. cell phone use, texting, speeding, racing, etc.).
- e. Consuming and/or sharing drugs, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, and including abuse of over the counter drugs, supplements and prescription drugs being used for recreational purposes.
- f. Possession of drugs or alcohol, tobacco or e-cigarettes, and/or related paraphernalia (any equipment, product or item intended or designed for the use, including growing, harvesting, packaging, testing, storing, concealing or ingesting drugs, alcohol or tobacco).
- g. Possessing and/or using marijuana in any form is explicitly prohibited while on-program regardless of a student's age or specific state laws.

Disorderly Conduct: Any behavior that is intended to be disruptive, threatening, lewd or indecent. This includes the intentional or reckless destruction or damage of personal property (i.e. vandalism, tire slashing, damaging pranks).

Demonstrating a lack of sound judgment and maturity by engaging in behavior that could compromise the student's own safety and wellbeing. For example:

- a. Getting into a car with a stranger or hitchhiking
- b. Engaging with or making arrangements to meet with an individual who the student met online
- c. Leaving the home or school without permission and/or knowledge of your surroundings
- d. Knowingly going to places where illegal activity could be present (i.e., parties or a friend's house; concerts, after-prom parties, etc.)
- e. Spending time in areas or with individuals that are known to be unsafe

Irresponsible use of social media/communication outlets:

- a. Engaging in sexually explicit conversations via social media, text messages or other digital communications
- b. Sharing, sending or receiving sexually explicit or violent images or videos
- c. Posting or sharing photos that may be sexually suggestive
- d. Posting or sharing content that disparages or demeans any individual, race, religion or sexual orientation
- e. Posting, sharing or commenting on content that could compromise the trust, privacy or character of the student, his or her host family or any other peer or member of the community

Spreading Gossip: Intentionally sharing private, confidential or salacious information is considered reckless and irresponsible and will not be tolerated. AYA students should at all times be mindful of how their actions and behaviors could impact their reputation or the reputation of others.

Harassment: AYA defines harassment as any instance or repeated instances of conduct which annoys, threatens or causes an individual to fear for his or her safety. AYA will not tolerate any behavior that is intended to threaten, disparage or offend an individual. Examples of harassing behavior include but are not limited to:

- a. Uninvited comments about any individual's appearance
- b. Unwanted touching, gestures or comments of a sexual nature including, verbal, non-verbal and written communication
- c. Derogatory comments intended to disparage or demean an individual based on sex, religion, race, ethnicity, physical or mental challenges, or sexual orientation)
- d. Physical assault of any kind

AYA Program Rules

The program 'rules' are part of the AYA Student Code of Conduct that highlight and reinforce specific provisions that students need to be aware of and follow at all times in order to remain in good standing with the program. Failure to abide by the Code of Conduct which includes all the AYA Program Rules will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program. It is important to note that AYA has several **Zero Tolerance** rules that will result in immediate disqualification from the program. Other serious infractions that could result in immediate termination will be reviewed by the disciplinary committee in a disqualification hearing. **Zero Tolerance** rules and behavior that could result in immediate dismissal from the program are noted below.

1. Students must abide by all U.S federal and state laws (**Zero Tolerance**). This includes laws related to drugs, alcohol, theft, assault, and other criminal behavior. Students who violate U.S. law may be subject to prosecution within the American justice system. Students who are 18 years old should be especially mindful that if they break the law, they will be charged and prosecuted as an adult, which could have serious and longstanding effects on their criminal record. **Breaking the law may be grounds for immediate program termination.**
2. It is against the law in the United States for high school students to buy or drink alcohol (**Zero Tolerance**). AYA program rules strictly prohibits the purchase, possession or consumption of alcohol while on-program. The legal age for buying and consuming alcohol in the United States is 21.
3. The use and/or possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia under any circumstances is strictly prohibited (Zero Tolerance). Sharing, selling, and using prescription drugs for recreational reasons is forbidden. Examples of illicit drugs include, cocaine, marijuana, LSD, methamphetamines, etc. Breach of this rule will result in immediate termination. It is important to note than even if you are 18 years old or live in a state where marijuana is legal, use and possession of marijuana is strictly prohibited while on the AYA Program and will result in immediate disqualification.
4. Expulsion from school (**Zero Tolerance**). If a student is expelled or a high school rescinds a student's enrollment for behavioral or academic reasons, the student will be disqualified immediately. School suspension will result in immediate probation and is grounds for a disqualification hearing.
5. The possession or use of vaping devices, e-cigarettes, tobacco, or nicotine products is strictly prohibited under AYA policy and U.S. law for individuals under 21. While not classified as a zero-tolerance offense, this is a serious violation of program rules which will result in immediate probation and is grounds for a disqualification hearing.
6. Harassment/bullying of any kind is strictly prohibited. This includes but is not limited to physical assault, verbal harassment or sexual harassment. **Students who engage or are complicit in the harassment of another individual will be subject to a disciplinary hearing that may result in immediate disqualification.**
7. AYA students are not permitted to purchase, carry, or use firearms or any items classified as a weapon (i.e. knives, air/pellet guns, cross bows) under any circumstances including under the supervision of an instructor or host parent. Students should report any instance of firearms being stored improperly or being offered to a student to handle to their LC or the AYA national office. Possession or use of weapons is grounds for a disqualification hearing.
8. Students are not permitted to drive any motor vehicle (including motorcycles, mopeds, and cars). Driving outside of program guidelines is grounds for a disqualification hearing.
9. Sexual intercourse while on program is strictly prohibited and grounds for program termination. Students must be cognizant of inappropriate relationships, including (but not limited to) contact with minors, persons over the age of 18, or any members of the Host Family. **Sexual intercourse is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
10. Along with maintaining a minimum grade point average of C+, students must be in good behavioral standing with their high school at all times. This includes attending classes daily and on time, and turning in all required assignments. All students must enroll in a full course of academic classes, which must include math, science, English and U.S history or social studies. **Failure to maintain or demonstrate a concerted effort to maintain grade requirements is grounds for serious disciplinary action including disqualification.**
11. Daily attendance at school is mandatory. Students who are home sick for more than a few days must provide a doctor's note for their absences. Repeated tardies (lateness) or unexcused absences from classes are grounds for a disciplinary committee hearing. **Failure to maintain proper attendance and participation in school is grounds for serious disciplinary action including disqualification.**
12. Grade placement, graduation eligibility, and athletic participation are determined by the high school. AYA students are required to comply with the policies of the high school in which they are enrolled. Students will not be permitted to change schools or host families in order to obtain a diploma, change grades, take a specific course, or participate in sports or extracurricular clubs.
13. AYA is an academic cultural exchange program for high school students. Students should expect to complete one semester or year in the U.S. and return home to pursue future educational endeavors. Students should not expect to take college examinations, apply to college/university or initiate a change in visa status while on the AYA program. Students may be subject to disciplinary action if their actions while on program are not aligned with the AYA's academic and cultural objectives.
14. Students must abide by AYA's social media policy and remain aware that while they are a participant on the AYA program, they are a reflection of AYA and its values. Any social media activity that may bring the student, host family or program negative attention is considered grounds for disciplinary action. Students must act responsibly when using social media and the internet and be mindful of the websites and platforms they are using. Students are not permitted to visit adult websites, or websites that promote illegal or violent activity. **Using social media or digital communication to exploit yourself or another individual intentionally or otherwise is grounds for a disqualification hearing.**

15. Students are expected to be honest and ethical at all times. Misrepresenting personal circumstances in order to change host families or obtain any advantage or desired result, is considered very serious. **If a student is found to have intentionally falsified or misrepresented his or her circumstances within the host family or the community, he or she will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including disqualification from the program.**
16. With the exception of emergencies, students may not change host families or schools within the first 30 days of their program or without due process, which in most cases includes Face-to-Face meetings and corrective action. Students may not move from the host family home without permission from their Local Coordinator and approval from the AYA national office.
17. Students must respect and abide by all host family rules, act as a member of the family, and voluntarily help with household chores. Students must show respect for their host family and Local Coordinators and follow all program guidelines. Students are expected spend holidays, birthdays and special occasions with their host family.
18. Except in cases where a student's safety is in question, students must follow the appropriate chain of communication and contact their Local Coordinator or an AYA support staff member if there is an issue or concern with their host family. **Students may not discuss their host family's private affairs or family life with people outside of the home or the AYA program.**
19. Students may not make any major life decisions while on program. AYA expects you to return to your home country in the same physical condition that you arrived; this means students may not get pierced, tattooed, or drastically alter their appearance in any way. No student, regardless of age, may enter into any contractual agreement, be it business, marital, or religious, while on the program.
20. AYA students are prohibited from using ride-sharing services such as Uber or Lyft without being accompanied by a host parent.
21. Students are strictly prohibited from operating or being a passenger on All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) of any kind. Students are also not permitted to operate or be a passenger on small, private, or non-commercial aircrafts, even with a licensed pilot.
22. AYA students are not permitted to hold part time jobs; the J-1 visa does not allow it. A non-immigrant alien who accepts paid employment is subject to deportation. If students would like to earn spending money during their stay, they are permitted to hold small jobs (no more than 10 hours per week) such as baby-sitting or grass-cutting.
23. Students must abide by the AYA travel and visitation policies noted in the student handbook. Students may not return to their home country for holidays or for any reason other than an extreme emergency. **Traveling or arranging visits with family or friends without permission or outside of program guidelines will result in immediate probation and may be grounds for a disqualification hearing.**
24. The AYA program concludes on the last day of school; students must return home within a few days of that date. If absolutely necessary, students may stay up to one week after the end of school, and only with the explicit approval of their host family and AYA. When the program ends, students may only sign off the program to be placed in the care of their immediate natural family.

Disciplinary Policies and Procedures

Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in manner which positively reflects their home country and the goals of the AYA program. Students are expected to follow all U.S. laws and AYA, host family and high school rules and guidelines. Students are required to sign a copy of the AYA rules prior to their arrival in the U.S. Disciplinary decisions are made at the discretion of the AYA Disciplinary Committee based on information provided by the Local Coordinator and/or host family. It is strongly recommended that students carefully review the program rules with their natural parents prior to departing from their home country.

Face-to-Face Meeting

Face-to-Face sessions are conducted any time there is an issue that needs to be addressed on the part of the student or the host family. This meeting is usually conducted by the Local Coordinator and gives the student and host family an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with the Local Coordinator acting as the objective mediator.

- Face-to-Face meetings have proven to be very successful in opening a dialogue between host families and students as well as clarifying cultural and/or language miscommunications.
- Face-to-Face meetings are a critical step in the support process and will be done **prior to any consideration for a host family change.**
- Students and host families are expected to attend a Face-to-Face meeting with an open mind.

Guidance Directive

Over the course of the year, students may receive a guidance notice, this is a guidance directive that serves to:

- Document a particular concern or behavior.
- Implement guidelines on how to make the necessary adjustments to be successful on the program.

A guidance directive may be issued with an advisory or in lieu of an advisory letter. Guidance directives may be used to document a pattern of behavior during the disciplinary review process.

Advisory Letter

An advisory letter is issued by the AYA Regional Director after a breach of conduct or program guidelines have been reported. Advisory letters are usually issued after a Face to Face meeting has occurred and the student has been formally advised of the program or host family guidelines that have been compromised. A copy of the advisory letter is sent to the student, the local coordinator, overseas partner, host family and high school when applicable. Overseas partners also forward a copy of the advisory letter to the student's natural parents for review.

The intent of the advisory letter is:

- To formally advise a student, the natural family and the overseas partners of unacceptable behavior or program violation.
- To inform the student that there should be no further infractions.
- To advise the student that the national office is aware of this behavior. To advise what specific steps must be taken by the student to avoid further disciplinary action.
- To formally define a time frame for reviewing the student's performance.

Probation

Being placed on probation is considered very serious. Students will be subject to probation for the following reasons:

- A major breach of program rules or host family guidelines.
- Not abiding by the terms of a previously issued advisory letter.
- Conduct unbecoming to an exchange student that may jeopardize the reputation of the student, host family or the AYA program.

Prior to being placed on probation, the student will be contacted by their Regional Director to discuss the disciplinary concerns. The Regional Director will also speak with all other parties – host family, Local Coordinator and High School if applicable. The Regional Director will then discuss the case with the AYA Disciplinary Committee who will then determine if probation is warranted. The Support Specialist will then issue a Probation Letter and a copy is sent to the student, Local Coordinator, host parent and overseas partner. The intent of the probation letter is to clarify the issues and outline actions for improvement. Overseas partner then forward the Probation letter to a student's natural parents for review. Probation is considered a student's final opportunity to abide by all program rules and expectations prior to disqualification. If a student continues to demonstrate poor judgment or behavioral concerns while on Probation, the AYA Disciplinary Committee will recommend that he or she be terminated from the program.

Disqualification

This occurs when an offense is deemed serious enough to merit disqualification. Any student who fails to comply with the AYA rules, the host family rules or local and federal laws may be terminated from the AYA program. Sending a student home is usually considered a last resort and is made at the sole discretion of the AYA Disciplinary Committee. This step is usually taken after other corrective measures have failed or if the infraction has violated a major program rule or a federal or state law.

Disqualification is determined after careful review and deliberation by the Disciplinary Committee. Notice of disqualification is sent by the Deputy Director of AYA or the Associate Director of Student Support to all parties concerned and arrangements for the student's return flight home are then made. Once a student has been disqualified his or her visa will be cancelled and they will not be entitled to a refund. Students are responsible for any cost or expense incurred as a result of disqualification.

In some cases, a student's actions may result in disqualification from the program without prior disciplinary action such as advisory and/or probation. For example, consumption of alcohol, drugs, expulsion from school or violation of U.S. law will result in immediate disqualification from the program.

Disqualification/Early Termination from the program

A student can be disqualified from the program and sent home for a variety of reasons, including breaking AYA rules. However, AYA has a zero tolerance policy for breaking the rules listed below and any infraction will result in immediate disqualification from the p

- Drinking, purchasing, or possession of alcohol
- Using, procuring or possessing drugs or drug paraphernalia
- Not abiding by the U.S. and local laws
- Being expelled from school from any reason
- Any action that qualifies as harassment towards another person

Medical Disqualification

In the unfortunate situation that a student falls ill or requires medical treatment beyond the scope of what the program can reasonably offer, a student may be terminated from the program. This decision is made with the interest and well-being of the student in mind, and in the context of what the AYA program can safely offer a student. Reasons for a medical disqualification may include, but are not limited to:

- Discovery of preexisting medical conditions not disclosed on a student's application, particularly nervous disorders or conditions that require close monitoring by a physician.
- Injuries requiring surgery and/or ongoing physical therapy. Serious medical conditions that require extensive medical care and follow-up care.
- Eating disorders.
- Emotional or psychological concerns.



Reprint from the Code of Federal Regulations

Washington, D.C. 20547

Criteria for Exchange Teenager Program sec. 22 CFR 62.25 Secondary school students

PART 62—EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

■ 1. The Authority citation for part 62 is revised to read as follows:

Authority: 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(15)(J), 1182, 1184, 1258; 22 U.S.C. 1431–1442, 2451 et seq.; Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, Pub. L. 105–277, Div. G, 112 Stat. 2681 et seq.; Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1977, 3 CFR, 1977 Comp. p. 200; E.O. 12048 of March 27, 1978; 3 CFR, 1978 Comp. p. 168; the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, Pub. L. 104–208, Div. C, 110 Stat. 3009–546, as amended; Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA PATRIOT ACT) (Pub. L. 107–56), Section 416, 115 Stat. 354; and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, Pub. L. 107–173; 116 Stat. 543.

■ 2. Section 62.25 is revised to read as follows:

§ 62.25 Secondary school students.

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

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

(1) With tax-exempt status as conferred by the Internal Revenue Service pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and

(2) Which are United States citizens as such term is defined in § 62.2.

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

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

(2) Allow entry of exchange students for not less than one academic semester (or quarter equivalency) and not more than two academic semesters (or quarter equivalency) duration; and

(3) Ensure that the program is conducted on a U.S. academic calendar year basis, except for students from countries whose academic year is opposite that of the United States. Exchange students may begin an exchange program in the second semester of a U.S. academic year only if specifically permitted to do so, in writing, by the school in which the exchange student is enrolled. In all cases, sponsors must notify both the host family and school prior to the exchange student's arrival in the United States whether the placement is for an academic semester, an academic year, or a calendar year.

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

(1) Are adequately trained. Sponsors must administer training for local coordinators that specifically includes, at a minimum, instruction in: Conflict resolution; procedures for handling and reporting emergency situations; awareness or knowledge of child safety standards; information on sexual conduct codes; procedures for handling and reporting allegations of sexual misconduct or any other allegations of abuse or neglect; and the criteria to be used to screen potential host families and exercise good judgment when identifying what constitutes suitable host family placements. In addition to their own training, sponsors must ensure that all local coordinators complete the Department of State mandated training module prior to their appointment as a Local

Coordinator or assumption of duties. The Department of State training module will include instruction designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Exchange Visitor Program; its public diplomacy objectives; and the Secondary School Student category rules and regulations. Sponsors must demonstrate the individual's successful completion of all initial training requirements and that annual refresher training is also successfully completed.

(2) Are adequately supervised. Sponsors must create and implement organization-specific standard operating procedures for the supervision of Local Coordinators designed to prevent or deter fraud, abuse, or misconduct in the performance of the duties of these employees/agents/volunteers. They must also have sufficient internal controls to ensure that such employees/agents/volunteers comply with such standard operating procedures.

(3) Have been vetted annually through a criminal background check (which must include a search of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(4) Place no exchange student with his or her relatives;

(5) Make no exchange student placement beyond 120 miles of the home of the Local Coordinator authorized to act on the sponsor's behalf in both routine and emergency matters arising from that exchange student's participation in the Exchange Visitor Program;

(6) Make no monetary payments or other incentives to host families;

(7) Provide exchange students with reasonable access to their natural parents and family by telephone and email;

(8) Make certain that the exchange student's government issued documents (i.e., passports, Forms DS–2019) are not removed from his/her possession;

(9) Conduct the host family orientation after the host family has been fully vetted and accepted;

(10) Refrain, without exception, from acting as:

(i) Both a host family and a Local Coordinator or area supervisor for an exchange student;

(ii) A host family for one sponsor and a Local Coordinator for another sponsor; or

(iii) A Local Coordinator for any exchange student over whom he/she has a position of trust or authority such as the student's teacher or principal. This requirement is not applicable to a boarding school placement.

(11) Maintain, at minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the exchange student. The first monthly contact between the Local Coordinator and the exchange student must be in person. All other contacts may take place in-person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring that issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(12) That a sponsor representative other than the Local Coordinator who recruited, screened and selected the host family visit the exchange student/host family home within the first or second month following the student's placement in the home.

(13) Maintain, at a minimum, a monthly schedule of personal contact with the host family. At least once during the fall semester and at least once during the spring semester, (i.e., twice during the academic year) the contact by the Local Coordinator with the host family must be in person. All other contacts may take place in person, on the phone, or via electronic mail and must be properly documented. The sponsor is responsible for ensuring the issues raised through such contacts are promptly and appropriately addressed.

(14) That host schools are provided contact information for the local organizational representative (including name, direct phone number, and e-mail address), the program sponsor, and the Department's Office of Designation; and

(15) Adhere to all regulatory provisions set forth in this Part and all additional terms and conditions governing program administration that the Department may impose.

(e) *Student selection.* In addition to satisfying the requirements of

§ 62.10(a), sponsors must ensure that all participants in a designated secondary school student exchange visitor program:

(1) Are secondary school students in their home countries who have not completed more than 11 years of primary and secondary study, exclusive of kindergarten; or are at least 15 years of age, but not more than 18 years and six months of age as of the program start date;

(2) Demonstrate maturity, good character, and scholastic aptitude; and

(3) Have not previously participated in an academic year or semester secondary school student exchange program in the United States or attended school in the United States in either F-1 or J-1 visa status.

(f) *Student enrollment.* (1) Sponsors must secure prior written acceptance for the enrollment of any exchange student in a United States public or private secondary school. Such prior acceptance must:

(i) Be secured from the school principal or other authorized school administrator of the school or school system that the exchange student will attend; and

(ii) Include written arrangements concerning the payment of tuition or waiver thereof if applicable.

(2) Under no circumstance may a sponsor facilitate the entry into the United States of an exchange student for whom a written school placement has not been secured.

(3) Under no circumstance may a sponsor charge a student private school tuition if such arrangements are not finalized in writing prior to the issuance of Form DS-2019.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(6) An identification card, that lists the exchange student’s name, United States host family placement address and telephone numbers (landline and cellular), sponsor name and main office and emergency telephone numbers, name and telephone numbers (landline and cellular) of the Local Coordinator and area representative, the telephone number of Department’s Office of Designation, and the Secondary School Student program toll free emergency telephone number. The identification card must also contain the name of the health insurance provider and policy number. Such cards must be corrected, reprinted,

and reissued to the student if changes in contact information occur due to a change in the student’s placement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Utilize a standard application form developed by the sponsor that includes, at a minimum, all data fields provided in Appendix F, “Information to be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications”. The form must include a statement stating that: “The income data collected will be used solely for the purposes of determining that the basic needs of the exchange student can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities.” Such application form must be signed and dated at the time of application by all potential host family applicants. The host family application must be designed to provide a detailed summary and profile of the host family, the physical home environment (to include photographs of the host family home’s exterior and grounds, kitchen, student’s bedroom, bathroom, and family or living room), family composition, and community environment. Exchange students are not permitted to reside with their relatives.

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

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

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

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

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

of the Department of Justice's National Sex Offender Public Registry);

(8) Maintain a record of all documentation on a student's exchange program, including but not limited to application forms, background checks, evaluations, and interviews, for all selected host families for a period of three years following program completion; and

(9) Ensure that a potential single adult host parent without a child in the home undergoes a secondary level review by an organizational representative other than the individual who recruited and selected the applicant. Such secondary review should include demonstrated evidence of the individual's friends or family who can provide an additional support network for the exchange student and evidence of the individual's ties to his/her community. Both the exchange student and his or her natural parents must agree in writing in advance of the student's placement with a single adult host parent without a child in the home.

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

(1) Inform all host families of the philosophy, rules, and regulations governing the sponsor's exchange visitor program, including examples of "best practices" developed by the exchange community;

(2) Provide all selected host families with a copy of the Department's letter of appreciation to host families;

(3) Provide all selected host families with a copy of Department of State promulgated Exchange Visitor Program regulations;

(4) Advise all selected host families of strategies for cross-cultural interaction and conduct workshops to familiarize host families with cultural differences and practices; and

(5) Advise host families of their responsibility to inform the sponsor of any and all material changes in the status of the host family or student, including, but not limited to, changes in address, finances, employment and criminal arrests.

(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 of 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 host family, the natural parents, and the students being placed. Under no circumstance may more than two exchange students be placed with a host family, or in the home of a Local Coordinator, regional coordinator, or volunteer. Sponsors may not place students from the same countries or with the same native languages in a single home.

(2) Prior to the student's departure from his or her home country, 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 arrival placement, and facilitate and encourage the exchange of correspondence between the two.

(3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances that 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) *Advertising and Marketing for the recruitment of host families.* In addition to the requirements set forth in § 62.9 in advertising and promoting for host family recruiting, sponsors must:

(1) Utilize only promotional materials that professionally, ethically, and accurately reflect the sponsor's purposes, activities, and sponsorship;

(2) Not publicize the need for host families via any public media with announcements, notices, advertisements, etc. that are not sufficiently in advance of the exchange student's arrival, appeal to public pity or guilt, imply in any way that an exchange student will be denied participation if a host family is not found immediately, or identify photos of individual

exchange students and include an appeal for an immediate family;

(3) Not promote or recruit for their programs in any way that compromises the privacy, safety or security of participants, families, or schools. Specifically, sponsors shall not include personal student data or contact information (including addresses, phone numbers or email addresses) or photographs of the student on Web sites or in other promotional materials; and

(4) Ensure that access to exchange student photographs and personally identifying information, either online or in print form, is only made available to potential host families who have been fully vetted and selected for program participation. Such information, if available online, must also be password protected.

(n) *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 any other allegations of abuse or neglect of an exchange student. 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 suspension and revocation of the sponsor's Exchange Visitor Program designation;

(2) 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. The report must be in the format directed by the Department and must include at a minimum, the exchange student's full name, Form DS-2019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placement (current U.S. address), school (site of activity) address, the Local Coordinator's name and zip code, and other information the Department may request; and

(3) A report of all situations which resulted in the placement of an exchange student with more than one host family or in more than one school. The report must be in a format directed by the Department and include, at a minimum, the exchange student's full name, Form DS-019 number (SEVIS ID #), host family placements (current U.S. address), schools (site of activity address), the reason for the change in placement, and the date of the move. This report is due by July 31 for the previous academic school year.

A new Appendix F is added to Part 62, as follows:

Appendix F to Part 62—Information To Be Collected on Secondary School Student Host Family Applications

Basic Family Information:

a. Host Family Member—Full name and relationship (children and adults) either living full-time or part-time in the home or who frequently stay at the home)

b. Date of Birth (DOB) of all family members

c. Street Address

d. Contact information (telephone; e-mail address) of host parents

e. Employment—employer name, job title, and point of contact for each working resident of the home

f. Is the residence the site of a functioning business? (e.g., daycare, farm)

g. Description of each household member (e.g., level of education, profession, interests, community involvement, and relevant behavioral or other characteristics of such household members that could affect the successful integration of the exchange visitor into the household)

h. Has any member of your household ever been charged with any crime? Household Pets:

a. Number of Pets

b. Type of Pets

Financial Resources:

a. Average Annual Income Range: Less than \$25,000; \$25,000–\$35,000; \$35,000–\$45,000; \$45,000–\$55,000; \$55,000–\$65,000; \$65,000–\$75,000; and \$75,000 and above. Note: The form must include a statement stating that: "The income data collected will be used solely

for the purposes of ensuring that the basic needs of the exchange students can be met, including three quality meals and transportation to and from school activities”

b. Describe if anyone residing in the home receives any kind of public assistance (financial needs-based government subsidies for food or housing)

c. Identify those personal expenses expected to be covered by the student Diet:

a. Does anyone in the family follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N)

If yes, describe:

b. Do you expect the student to follow any dietary restrictions? (Y/N) If yes, describe:

c. Would you feel comfortable hosting a student who follows a particular dietary restriction (ex. Vegetarian, Vegan, etc.)? (Y/N)

d. Would the family provide three (3) square meals daily?

High School Information:

a. Name and address of school (private or public school)

b. Name, address, e-mail and telephone number of school official

c. Approximate size of the school student body

d. Approximate distance between the school and your home

e. Approximate start date of the school year

f. How will the exchange student get to the school (e.g. bus, carpool, walk)?

g. Would the family provide special transportation for extracurricular activities after school or in the evenings, if required?

h. Which, if any, of your family's children, presently attend the school in which the exchange visitor is enrolled?

If applicable list sports/clubs/activities, if any, your child(ren) participate(s) in at the school

i. Does any member of your household work for the high school in a coaching/teaching/or administrative capacity?

j. Has any member of your household had contact with a coach regarding the hosting of an exchange student with particular athletic ability?

If yes, please describe the contact and sport.

Community Information:

a. In what type of community do you live (e.g.: Urban, Suburban, Rural, Farm)

b. Population of community

c. Nearest Major City (Distance and population)

d. Nearest Airport (Distance)

e. City or town website

f. Briefly describe your neighborhood and community

g. What points of interest are near your area (parks, museums, his-

torical sites)?

h. Areas in or near neighborhood to be avoided?

Home Description:

a. Describe your type of home (e.g. single family home, condominium, duplex, apartment, mobile home) and include photographs of the host family home's exterior and grounds, kitchen, student's bedroom, student's bathroom, and family and living areas.

b. Describe Primary Rooms and Bedrooms

c. Number of Bathrooms

d. Will the exchange student share a bedroom? (Y/N) If yes, with which household resident?

e. Describe the student's bedroom

f. Describe amenities to which the student has access

g. Utilities

Family Activities:

a. Language spoken in home

b. Please describe activities and/or sports each family member participates in: (e.g., camping, hiking, dance, crafts, debate, drama, art, music, reading, soccer, baseball, horseback riding)

c. Describe your expectations regarding the responsibilities and behavior of the student while in your home (e.g., homework, household chores, curfew (school night and weekend), access to refrigerator and food, drinking of alcoholic beverages, driving, smoking, computer/Internet/E-Mail)

Would you be willing voluntarily to inform the exchange visitor in advance of any religious affiliations of household members? (Y/N)

Would any member of the household have difficulty hosting a student whose religious beliefs were different from their own? (Y/N)

Note: A host family may want the exchange visitor to attend one or more religious services or programs with the family. The exchange visitor cannot be required to do so, but may decide to experience this facet of U.S. culture at his or her discretion.

How did you learn about being a host family?

References:

Dated: October 21, 2010

Sally J. Lawrence,

Director, Office of Designation, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 2010-27200 Filed 10-26-10; 8:45 am]

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Notes

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Notes

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines running across the width of the page, typical of notebook or composition paper. The background is white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.



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