

# HOMESTAY GUIDE

River East Transcona School Division International Education Program



**River East Transcona**  
SCHOOL DIVISION  
International Education Program









## HOMESTAY GUIDE

Thank you for your interest in the River East Transcona School Division (RETSd) International Education Program!

This guide explains our homestay program and outlines some of our basic rules and expectations. Please read the guide completely and carefully. It is important for all of our participants and partners to understand that they represent the RETSD International Education Program and, as such, they must conduct themselves as positive ambassadors for the program.

We have established certain rules that support and protect the student, the homestay family, and the RETSD International Education Program's legal responsibility and liability.

The rules and expectations that follow do not cover all situations. They do, however, provide sufficient information for the students and their homestay parents to make solid decisions within the RETSD International Education Program's guidelines and policies.

Certain rules and expectations are very precise and imperative, while others call for judgment on the part of the students and their homestay parents. As with the natural parents, homestay parents must use their discretion and make decisions based on their understanding of the situation and the maturity of their student.

Additional information can also be found on our website. These resources will help make your experience with us a positive and memorable one.

Hosting an international student can be extremely rewarding, as we explore new cultures, build relationships and make memories together. We are incredibly grateful for the experiences we have been able to share with so many students and homestay families, as well as our local and international partners.

Thank you, again, for your interest in the program!

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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### Regular Office Hours

Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. (Hours are subject to change during the summer and holidays.) Please call ahead to schedule an appointment with a member of the International Education Program.

### For After-Hours Emergencies Only

Call 204.667.7130, enter extension 2209. Leave a message explaining the emergency and be certain to provide a number so we can return your call.

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## PRIME EXPECTATIONS

Being a homestay family can be very rewarding and at the same time it is a significant responsibility, as they assume a parental role for someone's child while they study with River East Transcona School Division. The program works hard to ensure students are placed with homestay families who best match the needs of the student, including:

- Proximity to school of choice
- Dietary needs
- Pets
- Siblings
- Common characteristics and interests
- Other guiding factors

Despite the program's best efforts, "perfect matches"—including all requested specifications by the student and/or the homestay family—may not always be available.

Disclaimer: Not every family qualifies to host a student with the program. In addition, we cannot guarantee applicants or existing homestay families the placement of a student in their home or the frequency of hosting students, as we assess several factors during the matching process.

### Prime Expectations of a Homestay Family

When people ask what the homestay program involves, we explain the prime expectations required, so they have the information they need to decide whether to take the next step and apply. What follows are prime expectations a homestay family must meet and adhere to in order to participate in the program.

1. Homestay families must complete an application in full detail to be considered for hosting.
  - a) The information provided must be accurate, up-to-date and honest.
  - b) Homestay families must report any changes immediately to the program, so their file remains current. For more information regarding family changes, please review the "Reporting Family Changes" section in this homestay guide.

- c) Near the end of each semester, homestays should ensure we have their latest update and their information is correct, as the program considers them for upcoming student placements. This would include specific details within your application, a new "Welcome to Our Family" introduction letter for your student, and new photographs of your family and home.

2. Homestay families must obtain current criminal record checks and Child Abuse Registry checks.

- a) Every person residing in the home who is over the age of 18 must obtain a current criminal record check including a vulnerable sector search. It is the responsibility of each individual to apply for their initial criminal record check and apply for a new one every three years. As with most organizations that require them, individuals are not reimbursed by the program for their criminal record check expenses. When the homestay family receives their criminal record check, they must inform the program so it can be reviewed and processed for their file, after which the originals are returned to the homestay.

- b) In addition to the criminal record check, each individual over the age 18 must also complete a Child Abuse Registry check, which a member of the program can help them with. As with the criminal record check, the Child Abuse Registry check must be renewed after three years to remain current. Child Abuse Registry checks are submitted to the River East Transcona School Division Administration Offices and are considered property of the division; therefore, they cannot be returned or lent to applicants.

- c) During the year, if an individual residing in the home turns 18, they must inform the program and apply for a criminal record check and Child Abuse Registry check.



3. Homestay families must have a house inspection and receive notification that the home meets homestay requirements.
  - a) The home should be within the River East Transcona School Division catchment or near its boundaries to qualify as a homestay.
  - b) Each student is guaranteed their own private room where all construction has been completed, including and not limited to fully finished ceilings. Each room should have a locking door, desk and chair, lamp, closet, standard bed (not a futon, air mattress, waterbed or cot) and appropriate bedding.
  - c) Once a home is approved, if a homestay family wishes to have the student stay in a different room or if new rooms are constructed, the program must be informed and a new homestay inspection must take place.
  - d) Students should have access to bathrooms and bathing facilities. (Students are aware we cannot guarantee private bathroom facilities.)
  - e) There should be adequate ventilation, heat, light, and dampness control through a dehumidifier.
  - f) Basement bedrooms must meet building code regulations:
    - Each basement bedroom must have a window large enough for a fireman to enter through and for people to easily escape through it. An approximate minimum window size is 16"x26."
    - All window hardware must be present and operational. Windows must not be painted, sealed or nailed shut, or have locks or bars on them.
    - If there is a window well, it must be large enough to provide easy access through the window.
    - There cannot be anything obstructing one's ability to reach and then pass through the window from either the inside or outside of the house, including snow in the winter.
  - g) If there are any security cameras inside the house, especially hidden surveillance cameras, it is mandatory that the homestay family inform their student and the program of the presence and exact location of the cameras.
  - h) It is recommended that homestay families maintain a landline phone in their home during the time they are hosting a student. If there is no landline, then an alternative must be in place. One recommendation is for the homestay family to maintain a home-base emergency cellphone with a pay-as-you-go plan. The phone number must be shared with the program, school and student themselves. An "emergency" phone such as this should remain plugged in and not removed from its location, so it is readily available for the student in the event of an emergency inside the home.
4. When they apply to be a homestay family, applicants must understand they are accepting a role as partners and ambassadors of River East Transcona School Division. They must host under the direction and rules of the program and conduct themselves appropriately in all situations to positively represent the program.
5. If there are any firearms or unsafe items in the home, homestay families must take the proper precautions before the student's arrival.
6. Homestay families should have a clearly mapped out fire evacuation plan that is explained to each student they host. There should also be smoke detectors near each student's room. Fire extinguishers are advised, especially in the kitchen.
7. English must be the language of use when the student is in the house and homestay families should encourage the student to speak and practise their English with them.
8. Each home must be equipped with Internet access, preferably with Wi-Fi.
9. Students should have access to laundry facilities and procedures/routines. Remember that the operation of the washing machine and dryer, as with other household appliances, will possibly need to be explained and demonstrated if students are to do their own laundry.
10. Homestay families are expected to provide three meals a day for their student, including fruits and vegetables. They are also expected to provide the students with a reasonable amount of healthy snacks.
11. Homestay parents must have a valid driver's licence and either own a reliable vehicle or have immediate access to one for hosting and emergency responsibilities.

12. Unlike with a rental arrangement, homestay parents must understand that they will be looked upon to assume the full role of parents and parenting for their student. This includes such things as:

- a) Attending one homestay orientation per year.
- b) Greeting their student at the airport upon arrival or making alternative arrangements should an emergency prevent their ability to do so. A program team member will be present for airport arrivals for first time students, new homestay families or returning students staying with a new family. The program staff may not be at the airport for returning students staying with the same homestay, but will monitor the arrival.
- c) Knowing the role, expectations and rules found in the homestay guide and following them.
- d) Providing a clean, safe and nurturing home environment.
- e) Providing a key to the home, the alarm code, the instructions for the house alarm, and telephone numbers where homestay family members can be reached in case of emergencies.
- f) Maintaining appropriate supervision, as homestay families are caring for someone's child. Homestay families should inform the homestay facilitator if they have plans to be away from home.
- g) Being prepared to meet certain transportation requirements. Some examples being: pick up and drop off the student at the airport, bring them to doctor's appointments, attend parent teacher nights, be their safe grad driver, and other potential transportation needs.
- h) Being present and willing to meet the emotional and care needs of their students, who above all the common aspects of life, must deal with: being separated from their family and friends; integrating into someone's home and a new culture; language acquisition challenges and culture shock; and homesickness, among other things.
- i) Assisting them with banking or the paperwork for such things as memberships, which does fall under the category of basic parenting support. We don't, however, encourage homestay families to co-sign, lend money, or sign memberships or other contracts for the student's cellphone.

- j) Ensuring students are not allowed left alone with members of the opposite sex with their bedroom door closed or locked.

### **Homestay Fees**

Students enrolled in the program and residing with one of our homestay families are required to pay a monthly homestay fee (as per our current homestay fees). There are set expectations regarding how the homestay fee is to be used. The homestay fee is considered to be a "cost-sharing arrangement," meaning it is not designed or intended to be an income-generating arrangement. The fees paid by the student are meant to closely balance with the expenses the family incurs while caring for the student.

Approximately half of the homestay fees are designated for food—to provide three healthy meals a day that include fruits and vegetables. The fees are also intended to provide the student with a reasonable amount of healthy snacks.

In addition to food, the fees are to cover a variety of expenses, such as an increase in utilities, fuel for occasional transportation needs, and student costs for cultural activities or family outings to which the homestay parents take their student. The fees are also to cover, among other things, some basic household goods like laundry detergent.

- Homestay fees are not negotiable between the student and homestay family. The fees outlined by the program must be adhered to at all times.
- Homestay fees are intended to cover basic household costs incurred in hosting a student. These fees are not intended to be viewed as complete cost recovery of all expenses. The program does not allow charging extra fees over and above the monthly homestay fees.
- Homestay families should cover the cost of the student's tickets for the homestay year-end barbecue and other program events for students, such as the Christmas party.
- Internet access in the homestay home is considered part of the expectation of hosting a student and is mandatory. Homestay families must be willing and able to provide Internet access in their home for their student and cannot charge extra fees to cover these costs.

- The homestay family will also meet reasonable transportation needs. However, this does not include daily transportation to and from school, sporting events or extracurricular activities. Homestay families are expected to include the student in local family outings and cover their student's costs from the homestay fees.
- It is the sole responsibility of the homestay family to ensure their student covers any and all fees attached to long distance telephone calls, etc., made before they depart for their home country. The program cannot assume responsibility for charges left unpaid.
- Please note that homestay fees will not be prorated during a month when a student chooses to travel. It is similar to when one rents an apartment and full rent payments continue during vacation and travel—full homestay fees will be required from the student if and when they choose to travel.
- Students arriving three days before the start of September or February—or within three days after a new month—will not be charged the prorated daily homestay amount (as per our current homestay fees) for those extra days. Note: The program sets designated arrival and departure dates for each semester. Students are to respect this by arriving during those periods. To see updates on the arrival and departure times, please refer to the RETSD International Education Program website.
- Monthly homestay fee payments will be deposited into the bank account of the homestay family on the last working business day of each month.
- Should a homestay move be necessary, fees will be prorated at a daily rate per night that the student resides in the home.

#### **What Do the Students or Natural Parents Pay For?**

- Personal toiletries, such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hair products, feminine hygiene products, and deodorant
- Cellphone and monthly fees
- Long distance phone calls and fees
- Memberships while in Canada (e.g. YMCA)
- School supplies
- Specialty food items, such as protein powder, vitamins or large amounts of food products (above normal grocery amounts) that the student wishes to regularly purchase
- Bus passes and taxi fares
- Clothing

- All fees related to sports teams, clubs or extracurricular activities
- Travel expenses, such as cost of flights, baggage fees or other related items—if the student is travelling with their homestay family, it is the expectation of the homestay parents to cover meal expenses as per the homestay fee expectations
- All travel expenses if the student travels apart from the homestay family
- Social events and food when the student goes out with friends
- Immigration consultant fees for assistance with visas and study permits
- All medical expenses, including medication, which is not covered by their health insurance
- Yearbook and school memorabilia fees, as well as postage fees for those items to be mailed to the student after they return home

#### **Student's Role in the Family**

While there are prime expectations pertaining to the homestay family, there are also prime expectations that apply to the students.

The RETSD International Education Program aims to integrate the student as a regular family member as much as possible. The student should not expect to be treated as an honoured guest, independent traveller or a renter. Instead, he or she will be included in family life and activities as a regular member of the family.

It has been determined that the homestay environment provides the greatest opportunity for the learning and acquisition of the English language. It is also the ideal setting for learning new skills and experiencing Canadian life. It is for this reason that we have based the homestay and student relationship on a family model.

Some of the prime expectations of the students enrolled in the program include the following.

- The RETSD Code of Conduct applies to all of our students, including international students. It can be found at: [www.retsd.mb.ca](http://www.retsd.mb.ca) > Your RETSD > Policies > Code of Conduct
- Students are expected to follow the rules of the program as outlined in this guide.
- Students must be enrolled in a minimum of three academic courses per semester to remain in the program.
- Regular attendance at school is expected and mandatory for all students. Students signed up for an academic program, so this is a key expectation.





- Students should share a mutual respect with their homestay family. Examples of this would include:
  - o Talking and interacting with family members in a respectful manner
  - o Treating the homestay home with respect
  - o Keeping open communication with the homestay and respecting their rules
  - o If they are going to be late for supper, they should call the family and let them know as soon as possible
  - o The student should plan to spend some time with the family as a member of their family

Students are expected, as part of the family, to have some chores assigned to them. Examples of chores the program supports includes:

- Helping with grocery shopping
- Helping prepare meals
- Setting the table and cleaning up after meals
- Loading and emptying the dishwasher and/or at times helping to wash the dishes
- Helping keep the house tidy, in part by putting their belongings where they should go
- Keeping their room clean
- Helping clean the bathroom
- Learning to do their laundry

Chores that are not expected of the student include:

- Shovelling snow

- Walking or taking care of pets
- Babysitting or providing child care
- Excessive chores, such as cleaning the whole house, extensive yard work, washing walls and baseboards, etc.

All forms of household chores and work are, in fact, excellent learning opportunities and sharing moments between family members. The homestay family must discuss these responsibilities with the student and outline their expectations while he or she resides in their home. It is also important not to assume a student knows how to perform the chores agreed upon. Homestay families may need to teach the student how to perform a task or how to use an appliance, and how to do so safely (e.g. how to use and clean the microwave). Please remember that homestay families are ambassadors of the program and do not work independently of the program.

It is recommended the homestay family sit down with their student shortly after their arrival and share with them that soon they will be given some responsibilities around the home. They should allow the student some time to adjust to their new surroundings and let them observe what the family does. After a couple weeks of settling in, they can have a conversation with the student to see how they are doing and introduce them to the family systems and expectations at that time. It is also important that the homestay family adhere to the expectations set by the program. Otherwise, there may be confusion or a perception of mixed messages on the part of the student regarding their responsibilities in the home.

## STAGES OF THE HOSTING EXPERIENCE

When the program staff feels confident they have found a good match between a student and a homestay family, the staff initiate the student placement protocol. This includes sharing the student's information with the homestay family. If the family agrees that the student could be a good match, then the program staff forwards the homestay information to the student's agency or natural parents, introducing the student, their agency and/or family to the student's homestay family. The students are then advised to make contact with the homestay family, which initiates the student and homestay relationship.

What follows are the various stages of a hosting experience with key advice given for each stage. This section is meant to help homestay families understand what is involved in the stages of hosting a student for RETSD and to educate them on various particulars for each stage. While the duration of a student's stay can range from three months to a full year or longer, the following stages are a normal part of each hosting experience (the length of each stage and the intensity of each stage can vary).

### Stage 1: Pre-Arrival

The pre-arrival stage is an important time for both students and homestays. For homestays it allows families to prepare their homes, and emotionally prepare for the hosting experience, to plan, update their homestay file information, and to make some initial contact with their student.

#### Prepare a Welcome Package

Create your own welcome package with the following information, which you can save, update and give to each student you host.

- Consider making a list of family names and what each of you like to be called, including nicknames you use for each other. Also write down the names of your pets.
- Make a list of important dates such as birthdays, anniversaries and significant cultural holidays.
- Include contact numbers (work, cell, alternative emergency person contact information, email addresses, Facebook addresses, alarm company, etc.).
- Prepare a small information paper for the student with your address, names and contact numbers in case they get lost.
- Consider putting your weekly family schedule on

the fridge, including work, kids' lessons or practices, upcoming family gatherings, etc.

- Prepare a "Welcome" sign to greet your student at the airport. Many students keep these as valuable mementos after their departure. You may wish to include some family photos on it.
- Visit the Winnipeg Transit website and print off some key bus route maps for them, including routes to their school, Polo Park, The Forks and Kildonan Place ([winnipegtransit.com/en/navigo](http://winnipegtransit.com/en/navigo)).
- Notify your house insurance company that you will be hosting an international student.
- Get a house key cut for your student.
- Map out your home, note important rooms in the home or rooms, doors, dressers or drawers that are private and must remain closed.
- Complete any final renovations in your student's room (if applicable).
- Ensure your student's room has a door that locks, finished ceiling, desk and chair, lamp, dresser, closet, standard bed (not a futon, air mattress, waterbed or cot) and appropriate bedding.
- Prepare their room for their arrival "home."
- Consider setting up Internet content blocking software for your home.
- Write down brief instructions for various things within your home.
  - o Water main shut-off valve
  - o House alarm with instructions if the alarm goes off
  - o Thermostat
  - o Toilet water shut-off valve
  - o Breaker box (how to tell if a breaker switched off and how to turn it back on)
  - o Appliances
  - o TV remote
  - o Emergency cellphone (if no landline is available)
- Prepare a reference sheet that teaches the student about systems and routines in the home.
  - o Who does the laundry in your home? When? What is the family laundry routine?
  - o What chores do each family member do? Is there a chore schedule?
  - o What time does everyone get up?



- o When are meal times?
- o Does the family just arrive at the kitchen for meal times or are people called to the kitchen?
- o What are everyone's responsibilities as they pertain to meal preparation and cleanup?
- o When does everyone normally go to bed?
- o What are the house rules regarding noise from rooms, etc., especially after a specific time at night?
- o Instructions on when to lock and not lock doors
- o What are some other rules or routines in your home?

### **Prepare Your Family**

- Review the homestay guide.
- Think about the feelings and expectations you may have regarding the hosting experience.
- Discuss with your children how the family will deal with certain feelings they may experience.
- Read through the Conflict Resolution Guide (page 22), which will better equip you to engage in conversation and de-escalate situations.
- Look up details about your student's country and culture to better understand them.
- Consider speaking with someone who has hosted before or doing some research on hosting experiences.
- Think of the habits or systems you would like the student to follow. Then, as a family, lead by example so the student can learn the way you operate in your home.
- Inform the program of any changes to your homestay file information (including change of phone numbers).
- Go on the student's school website and take note of any relevant school updates and information (<http://www.retsd.mb.ca/Schools/Pages/default.aspx>).
- Find out where the student can get a bus pass.
- Consider talking with your bank about what could be involved in helping an international student open up an account with them.
- Start to look at events taking place in Winnipeg or elsewhere for that year that you can enjoy with the student.

### **Begin Your Relationship**

- Prepare some fun questions you can ask the student about their city, culture and country. These are topics the students know well, and easy ice breakers.
- Consider writing your student an introduction letter or sending them a pre-arrival post card from Canada.
- We ask students to reach out and make the first call to you, rather than you make the first call or email. If approximately two weeks after a student has been placed with you, you have not heard from them, email the program and inform them. We can try to get in touch with the student and encourage them to contact you.
- If possible, tour each other's cities using Google Street View while you are talking with them.
- Keep your initial conversations with the student light. They are leaving their comfort zone, while you will still be within yours. You don't want to initiate a lot of discussion about rules, which may only create anxiety for the student and cause concerns about coming here or living with you.
- If you can do a video call before their arrival, try to introduce each other to your families.
- You can ask them to have their parents send along some of their favourite home recipes with them to Canada.
- Depending on the student's nationality, they may need a visa to visit the U.S. If they don't have one, you may suggest they apply for one while still in their home country and bring it with them, so they can potentially go to the U.S. while they are here. If you do not plan to visit the U.S. during the student's stay, you do not have to mention this information to the student.

### **Stage 2: Arrival**

- If the student sends you their flight information or informs you of any delays or changes regarding their arrival, please forward it to the program so we are informed.
- When a student submits their flight information to the program, we send it to the homestay family.
- Once a homestay family receives their student's flight information, it is their responsibility to monitor the flight and any changes to the arrival time, as well as to meet their student at the airport. With the arrival of over 100 students for the program, it is impossible for us to monitor flight changes and get that information out to all our homestay families in a timely fashion.

- Student pickup is an important first step in the hosting experience. We ask that homestay families ensure a family member is there for their student's arrival with a sign to help the student find them upon arrival.
- Please be early for pickup! Arrival anxiety is high for students and nothing is more disappointing than arriving and not seeing a family member there to welcome them.
- When you prepare to pick up your student, be sensitive regarding the words you choose about other students you may have hosted. Arriving students can feel like they are being compared, or not as wanted, if the conversation is focused on how great the students were who preceded them. This is their arrival time and their special moment, and it's your chance to bond with them.
- Spend some time trying to learn the student's real name and how to pronounce it. Then ask them what they would like to be called. You can also help the student learn all the names of your family and how to pronounce them. This is a great bonding opportunity.
- If you pick up your student during the winter months, we ask that you bring a spare jacket for the student, who may not be dressed appropriately.
- Prepare some initial "memory making" moments upon the student's arrival, such as a quiet dinner out, a special welcome cake at dinner time, a driving tour around the city, some flowers, etc. A big welcome party upon their arrival is not recommended. They will be tired, jet-lagged, and already somewhat nervous. A party may be overwhelming on their first day here.
- Help your student make their room their own. Let them know what they can put onto the walls and what they can use to do so.
- When you get home, along with the student, go through the airport package they were provided with by us. You can guide them through the start-of-school activities highlighted in the package. Also, ensure they put their guard.me insurance card in their wallet or purse. We recommend homestay families make a copy of it for emergency purposes.
- Some students may arrive with strong perfume or cologne, air fresheners or moisture controls such as moth balls in their luggage. To avoid any strong scents from spreading through your home or triggering any family allergies, you can share with the student that your home is scent-sensitive and ask if they have anything in their luggage that may have a strong scent before they unpack.
- Welcome your student into the family (as a part of the family) and let them know you want them to spend a week or two resting from the jet lag, getting to know the family and relaxing. Explain that in a couple of weeks, you will introduce them to how things work in the program and your home. They will be watching you from the first day, so use the first few weeks to lead by example—taking shoes off at the door, cleaning the table as a family, washing hands before dinner, etc. You can slowly teach them many things as they watch you, instead of going into a long list of rules on the first day or two.
- Once the student is settled, provide them with a welcoming orientation to your home, including the resources and information you prepared during the pre-arrival stage.
- Help the student get familiar with the bus to school and the Winnipeg Transit Navigo website. We encourage a family member to take a practice trip with the student before their first day of school.
- Prior to any major holiday, take some time to explain the customs, traditions and expectations to your student. If gifts are involved, such as for birthdays, Christmas, etc., treat them like your own children but realize they may not be accustomed to celebrating as we do. So, either free them of any gift expectations toward your family or be thankful for whatever they provide.

### Stage 3: Hosting

- Current homestay families are required to attend one homestay orientation meeting per year for continued training and networking.
- Students are here to improve their English, so it is a requirement for homestay families to speak English at all times and have entertainment units—TV, radio, etc.—in the common areas of the house set in English. These are all opportunities to help the student learn English and feel welcomed in the home.
- Be proactive and share some cultural norms with your students before they become uncomfortable issues to discuss. Some being:
  - o Basic bathroom etiquette. Explain the use of shower mats, towels (and hanging them up after use), turning on and off bathroom fans, not entering the bathroom if the door is closed, 10–15-minute shower lengths, soaking up water that has dripped on the floor, when to flush and what gets flushed versus what goes into the waste basket, toilet seat instructions, and washing hands with soap every time we use the washroom, etc.



- o Personal hygiene. You can highlight personal hygiene as you discuss bathroom etiquette. Things that can be raised include brushing teeth after meals, showering once a day and/or after physical activities, combing hair, not wearing socks and other clothes twice, and other hygiene basics. This topic is also further explained in the student's handbook. Hint: If you wish to highlight a personal hygiene issue or another lesson, give your family little intentional reminders such as, "(son or daughter), be sure to wash your hands, it's time for supper." Or address the group, "Okay, everyone, wash up, it's time for supper," and let your student hear and observe things as you bring them up with each other.
- o Canadian concept of time. With explanation and patience, help the student gain an understanding of the exact time someone should be ready to go somewhere or to eat, etc., and consider the time required to meet the time schedule.
- Students may be required cover the cost of repairing damage to the homestay family's house or property. If the student caused some unintentional damage to the home and there is no doubt the student's actions caused that damage, they will be required to pay to have it fixed. Please contact the program staff so we can help you through this process.
- Plan some cultural events with the student while they are here, such as taking them to a festival, the zoo, a museum, a ski trip, tobogganing, or having a campfire. The ideas are endless and, as ambassadors of the program, you are a significant part of helping them get the most out of this experience.
- Take an interest in your student's school activities and new friends.
- You are their Canadian family. Plan to attend student/teacher/parent interviews or relevant meetings, some of their sports events, plays they are in and other events organized by the student's school.
- Try to correspond with their natural parents, even if their natural parents do not read English.
- Occasionally revisit house rules and make some adjustments, if necessary.
- Inform program co-ordinators immediately of any changes within the home environment (moving, obtaining pets, family breakup, adult children moving home, friends or family moving into home, serious or prolonged illness within the family, etc.).
- Invite your student to join in family activities and help him or her adjust to our Canadian culture.

- Inform your student if you will be away for a meal, and if you need to be, then we ask that you prepare their supper in advance or have leftovers ready for them.
- Have a backup emergency contact/plan/number in case the program fails to reach you regarding an emergency, student medical appointment, etc. The details of such backup contacts and their contact information should be relayed to the program and saved in your file should it be needed.

### **Hosting Younger Students**

- We ask that you use due diligence and intuition in protecting and caring for your student at all times, having been given the full responsibility of being the student's "parents."
- Legally, in Manitoba, children cannot be left unattended if they are under the age of 12.
- Students may require a babysitter when the homestay parents are not home or available.
- It is important the student have some age-appropriate toys. The student may come with money to buy toys and it would be expected that the homestay family take the student to buy them.
- The student may have the opportunity to sign up for extracurricular activities, such as soccer, dance, etc. It would be a responsibility of the homestay family to assist them in getting registered and to get them to their games or help them get set up in a car pool for their events.
- Student's chores, curfews and expectations must be adjusted and age-appropriate.

## Stage 4: End-of-Year Responsibilities

The end of a student's time can be very emotional and difficult for them. Some students have to write important exams upon return to their home country, many are heading into final exams, and others are working through applications for university. But above all, they are preparing to say goodbye to everyone here. In many aspects, this time can also be very difficult for homestay families as they prepare to say goodbye—for now. Here is some advice to help you through this final stage.

- Let your student know they are not alone, and as their Canadian parent, you are there to help them get through this difficult time of year.
- Let the program know your plans for the next hosting season. Are you wanting to host or take a break?
- Provide the program with any changes or updates to your file, so when the next round of student placements take place, your information, criminal record checks and Child Abuse Registry checks are all up-to-date.
- If your student is going to graduation, we request that our homestay families register as the student's safe grad driver for the event.
- If your student is ordering shirts, yearbooks, etc., from their school, talk to them about making the necessary financial arrangements with the school, so the postage for any orders is paid in advance and recorded, and the correct mailing address is provided.
- Help the student close any accounts, memberships, etc., and make sure they pay for any outstanding long distance bills, medical bills, etc., before they leave.
- Students are able to depart for home as soon as they finish their last exam.
- The program concludes each school year by July 2. We ask that every student make the necessary arrangements to have their flights booked by that date. We do not encourage students to stay past that date; nor do we encourage families to invite students to stay longer.
  - o We need homestay families to share the same message with the student regarding departure dates.
  - o The program will reinforce that message with students. Avoid confrontation or awkward discussions by stating you cannot invite your student stay longer as it is a program rule and responsibility.
- o Homestay families will not have the same support if the students are allowed to stay in their home past July 2, as the team will focus on preparations for the upcoming year.
- o If homestay families allow or invite their student to stay longer, they need to help the student purchase additional health coverage.
- o It is mandatory to let the program know if your student is staying longer, as the director of the program is the legal custodian of the student as long as they are in Canada.
- o When the student arranges their departure flight, please share the information with the program and if the program receives the information first, we will let you know.
- o Students do not need to fill out travel forms at the end of their stay to return directly home. However, upon leaving Winnipeg, if a student is planning on going somewhere else before going home, then the student must go through the student travel procedures.
- Reaffirm with your student that they are a part of your family and you would like to keep in touch with them upon their return home, if applicable.
- Consider a departure party or dinner out, and even a memento for them to take home.
- Ensure the student has all their belongings before they leave.
- Ask for the house key and lent items to be returned.
- Plan to drive your student to the airport.
- As when you picked up your student, consider your words carefully as you say goodbye to them, especially as it pertains to other students from the past or near future. This is often a sad time for them and it is their moment—be sure you focus on them and their immediate needs and don't quickly shift your attention to or talk about who is coming next.



# BASIC RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

## Custodianship

Children who are under the age of 18 years and come to Canada to study—without a natural parent or legal guardian—must be cared for by a responsible adult. This person is referred to as a custodian. The director of the International Education Program assumes legal custodianship for all students under the age of 18 years who are participating in the homestay program.

Custodianship requires that a legal arrangement be made to give the custodian in Canada the permission to act in place of a parent/guardian. Two notarized documents are required (“notarized” means that the document and signatures have been certified by a notary).

The first notarized document must be signed by the custodian in Canada. The second notarized document must be signed by a parent/guardian of the child in their country of residence. Homestay families will not participate in this process.

When the custodian (director of the International Education Program) will be unavailable for a length of time, alternate arrangements will be made and another program team member will manage the custodial responsibilities.

The director of the program may not be able to fulfil every expectation, but will delegate these responsibilities and oversee the care received by students. Homestay families, our homestay staff, teachers and other school staff play a crucial role in providing each student with a safe and caring environment, and making sure their well-being is looked after.

## Reporting Family Changes

If there is a change in the homestay family’s status, they must let the program know so we keep their file up-to-date. Examples include:

- When a family member turns 18 while hosting for the program, a criminal record check (with the vulnerable sector search) and Child Abuse Registry check must be submitted to our office. These checks are valid for three years after the date of issue at which time they must be renewed.
- When homestay families host students for other educational institutions in addition to River East Transcona School Division, we ask that they notify the program. We guarantee our agents that the students will not be in homes with other students who speak the same language.

- When homestay families receive guests (e.g. extended family members or out-of-town friends) who intend to stay in their home for an extended period of time during the time they host a student, they must notify the program. Long-term visitors over the age of 18 are required to provide a criminal record check (with the vulnerable sector search) and a Child Abuse Registry check. Note: The student must continue to have a private bedroom.
- When the status of pets in the home changes, homestay families should inform the program so their file can be updated and agents informed.
- When adult children move out or move back into the home, homestay families should notify the program.
- When additional changes occur, such as employment or marital status, homestay families should notify the program.

## Facing Challenges & Changing Families

It is not uncommon for challenges to arise during the hosting experience. As with any family, there may be differences in (among other things) opinion, personality, communication and culture.

There may be instances when the root of the problem is unclear. However, these situations can be opportunities for growth and learning. Situations must be dealt with proactively and appropriately, while understanding the custodial role of the homestay parent and the fact that homestay families will be dealing with children or teenagers. Though it may be difficult at first, patience and respect will go a long way when dealing with conflict.

Situations can arise wherein the student and/or the homestay family request a change. It is important that both our students and homestay families know they are encouraged to deal with the situation themselves or contact us for support. Pressuring or prohibiting a student from sharing their concerns with the program is strictly prohibited.

- It is recommended that the program be informed of any issues during the early stages to provide the greatest opportunity to resolve them amicably. The program staff will assess the situation and, together with the student and family, work towards a reasonable solution. If moving a student is the best option, please note that a homestay move takes time. As well, staff have the right to move a student without the usual advance notice if the program believes it is the best course of action.

- Casual requests by the students to change families will not be entertained. Requests supported by evidence of a problem will be seriously considered and handled in the manner outlined above.
- A “family meeting” with the homestay family and their student may be suggested by the program as part of solving existing issues rather than directly initiating a move.
- The program reserves the right to terminate a homestay family’s participation in the program if the family no longer meets the requirements or expectations of the program.
- If homestay families have questions or concerns regarding homestay practices and procedures, they should contact the program staff directly.

To assist homestay parents and students in approaching their challenges calmly and constructively, we have created a Conflict Resolution Guide that can be found on page 22 of the homestay guide.

### **Food & Meal Times**

The program makes an effort to match students with dietary issues with families who share similar diets or values. Should a student inform their homestay family of certain dietary requirements upon their arrival, please inform the program staff immediately.

- The student is now a family member, so the same food rules and freedoms that apply to the homestay family should extend to the student. There shouldn’t be different rules for the student and the family.
- We recommend homestay families ask the student about the types of meals they’re accustomed to eating in their home country—types of food, times of day and portion size—so they can understand them better. For example, it may help them understand why some students don’t eat with them at 5 p.m. but are hungry at 8–10 p.m. We ask that the family help them transition from the norms of their culture to a happy medium in our Canadian culture.
- If a student does not join the homestay family for meal times, they may be avoiding types of food or they may be too shy or embarrassed to sit with the family yet. We recommend the homestay family talks with them and nurtures them into the family.
- If a student misses a meal, preparing a plate and keeping it in the fridge will suffice. Homestay families are not required to “cook on demand” when the student is hungry or when they return.
- Students are promised prepared dinners and are encouraged to help with breakfast and lunch preparation until they become self-sufficient and can do it themselves.
- Many students do not know how to prepare meals, especially food that is uncommon to them. They may also not be aware how to operate many of your appliances. We encourage homestay families to take the time to encourage and teach their student to become more confident and capable to cook and use the tools of the kitchen.
- As with the homestay family’s own children, if a student wishes to have some friends over at their home, this should be prearranged with as much notice as possible. Regarding snacks for a small gathering, if a friend stops by or the student wishes to have friends over for supper, families must use their judgment as to what would be considered reasonable—similar to if their own children were asking them the same thing—and discuss the arrangements with their student.
- Homestay families should explain to their student when they need to know if they will not be joining the family for a specific meal.
- There are multiple cultural differences that can surface pertaining to meals and eating habits. Upon their arrival they will be observing their homestay family, but the family can also help their student learn basic food handling and eating etiquette, such as washing hands before touching food, not drinking out of jugs or bottles that are for the whole family, and the use of utensils, etc.
- There are many websites that address typical meals, appropriate portion sizes, aspects of the Canadian food guide, and foods of different cultures, etc. We recommend homestay families make use of the resources available that can assist in their hosting experience.
- Homestay families should explain to their student the rooms where food is allowed and not allowed (e.g. if food is allowed in the bedroom or basement rec room).
- If students choose to purchase lunch at the school cafeteria or elsewhere rather than take a bagged lunch from home (or come home for lunch), it is their responsibility to cover the extra cost.



## School Attendance & Reports

Regular school attendance is expected of all students participating in the program. Classes missed due to illness must be documented by a note from either the homestay family or a doctor. Students are not allowed to call in their own sick days. Unexcused absences will be reported to the homestay family by the school. We advise homestay parents to speak to the student regarding calls from the school due to absences. It is the student's responsibility to go to the school office and discuss the absences; it is not the responsibility of the homestay parent.

If a homestay family notices their student is missing classes frequently, they should bring this to the attention of their homestay facilitator. Excessive absences may result in loss of credit and/or expulsion from the program.

Student report cards, progress reports and attendance reports must be presented to homestay families. When report cards are released, copies are forwarded to the program office, and the program assistant will send a digital copy to the student's agency/organization.

Homestay families will be notified when parent-teacher meetings are scheduled throughout the year, and are encouraged to attend and discuss the performance of the student.

## Graduation

International students who are graduating with a Manitoba High School Diploma are eligible to attend the Graduation Convocation, Dinner & Dance.

## Making Social Plans

While academic study, growth and development are the principal goals of the program, group interaction and socializing are also important elements of the student's experience and of any teenager's life.

Regarding social plans:

- Students should ask for permission before going out, as opposed to simply informing their homestay family that they are going out.
- In accordance with program rules, students must provide detailed information to their homestay families as to where they are going, how they can be reached (i.e. phone number), the time they will be back, and with whom they are going out. It is an expectation of the homestay family—as the student's de facto parents—to request this information and follow up on the whereabouts of their student.
- Students should set aside a regular amount of time each week for leisure activities and relaxation. While

some of this time will be with members of the homestay family, activities with school friends are also important.

- Communication with the homestay family is important for the safety of the student, and to prevent confusion, misunderstandings and uneasiness.
- If a student is going to be later than planned, they must immediately contact their homestay family by phone and inform them.
- A homestay family can enforce limits on the amount of socializing the student may do, and the hours of socialization they keep. The home is not to be treated as a hotel where individuals are at liberty to come and go as they please. A homestay family can decline a student's request to engage in certain plans. However, if they feel they need to take such action—including grounding a student—the program asks that they share those thoughts or intentions with us prior to enforcement. Our program staff may be able to provide helpful guidance and support to help the homestay family avoid potential conflict in the home.

## Dating

Due to the private nature of dating, it is practically impossible to prohibit students from doing so. In dealing with dating, it is wiser to share words of care, wisdom, self-care and self-worth, and to assist the student in their maturing process. Homestay families should consider the following:

- Seek opportunities for mother/daughter or father/son talks.
- Clarify prohibited behaviour in the home, such as no couples in the home alone without homestay parents present, and no students of the opposite sex in bedrooms without doors open and access for supervision.
- If the homestay family has true concerns of dating issues regarding their student, they should contact the program and inform them of their concerns. Then, they can personally approach the situation as a teachable moment, and if necessary consider a conflict-resolution-type discussion.
- If homestay family is in regular contact with the student's natural parents, they can request that the student inform their parents of the dating situation and explain that the homestay family may need to speak to them because of concern about their well-being.

- Students may have a boyfriend or girlfriend in their home country. Homestay families are not expected to host the boyfriend or girlfriend at their house if they visit Winnipeg. Families can contact their student's natural parents to ask for their feedback on this situation. They should contact the program, as well.

## Parties

- If a student wishes to attend a party, the student and their homestay family must follow the same basic program rules as listed for social plans, sleepovers, and the alcohol and drugs policy; in addition to basic homestay parental supervision.
- If a homestay family is concerned about the party or is not getting sufficient information from the student, they have the authority to deny the student the right to participate, and should provide the program with any significant details.
- Similar to sleepovers, the program does not force homestay families to allow parties in their home.
- Any party to take place in a homestay home should be discussed with the homestay family, along with a clear understanding of expectations and what is allowed, including any relevant program rules, house rules, food plans and cleanup responsibilities.
- Students should be encouraged to be smart at parties; for example, if they are feeling uncomfortable to contact their homestay family so they can leave the party.

## Curfews

As a member of the homestay family, students must respect the individual rules of the household. This includes the hours they are able to spend outside the home. Factors determining this may include school night vs. weekend, type of activity, the homestay family's schedule, age of the student and program rules. The program's curfew regulations are as follows:

10–10:30 p.m.

Curfew from Sunday to Thursday

12–1 a.m.

Curfew for Fridays and Saturdays (for senior high school students)

- We instruct the students to discuss their plans and curfew with the homestay family and not to demand it, especially upon the student's arrival; a trusting relationship between the student and homestay family has not been given time to develop.

- Upon arrival, the student will not be aware of hazardous areas of the city. So, we ask homestay families to be especially cautious and assist the student in transitioning to their respective curfew times.
- We ask that the homestay family and student make the necessary plans to ensure the student arrives home by the expected curfew times. For example, students should leave events in time to catch their bus. Homestay plans should also be considered to ensure communication and proper supervision is arranged, and all parties should have contact numbers charged phones.
- Students should be reminded to phone their homestay family if there is a problem.
- The program rule for a 1 a.m. curfew maximum (age-related) is in place for student safety and program liability. We cannot and do not give homestay families the option to allow their students to stay out after 1 a.m. Special arrangements and rare exceptions can be made under certain circumstances, but any exceptions to the 1 a.m. maximum should be discussed with the program for consideration. This protects the program and student, and provides the homestay family with support to help enforce program rules.
- Students in the program are expected to complete homework assignments and schoolwork, so it is recommended that homestay families monitor the amount of time their students spend out on weekdays.
- Junior high school students' curfew should appropriately reflect the age of the student. The 1 a.m. weekend curfew does not apply to them.
- We know homestay families will use sound judgment regarding the age of their student when establishing these curfews and related rules.

## Sleepovers

Sleeping over at a friend's house during the week is not permitted, and on weekends it must be approved by the homestay family. It is recommended that students limit sleepovers to twice a month. It is also a rule of the program that students of the opposite sex cannot have sleepovers together.

If a homestay family has concerns related to the nature of the sleepover, they can stop allowing sleepovers. Sleepovers are a privilege, and should only take place under the guidance and approval of homestay families. Note:

While students can be granted permission to sleep over at a friend's house, we do not force homestay families to allow sleepovers in their own homes. If a homestay family does not allow sleepovers at their house in general or under specific circumstances, they can simply share that with their student.

### **Sleeping Over at Another Homestay Home**

Students may sleep over at the home of a friend who also resides in one of our homestay homes, as we can verify with the natural parents that we have done due

diligence to keep their child safe. The student must provide the full name, address and telephone number for the other homestay family. It is the expectation of the homestay family to call ahead to the other home, speak with the homestay family and confirm the plans and their contact information. The homestay family and student will agree upon an expected time of return home the next day. Note: Late-night, last-minute sleepover requests will only be considered if it is early enough in the evening for the student's homestay family to connect with the receiving homestay family, as plans need to be confirmed and proper supervision must be provided. If that homestay family connection is not made, or if it is too late to arrange the request, the sleepover must be rescheduled for another day.

### **Sleeping Over at a Non-Homestay Home**

The program is confident in our due diligence to clear current homestay families and deem them safe and welcoming. However, we cannot give such assurance for non-homestay homes. We do allow students to sleep over at non-homestay homes; however, for safety and liability reasons, certain measures must be followed. The parents of the family hosting the sleepover must sign a form created by the program, and the student's homestay parents and natural parents must fill it out and sign it, too. Only after the form is clearly filled out, signed and returned to the program can the student be granted permission to sleep over at the non-homestay home.

### **Pets**

All pets in homestay homes must be vaccinated and well-socialized. The program should be updated if there is any change in the status or behaviour of the pet. It is not the student's responsibility to provide training, care or support for the pet. If the student shows any interest, we ask that homestay families introduce their pet to the student in a safe way to avoid any negative experiences for either. In arrival plans, homestay families should include the following information.

- Name, likes and dislikes of their pet
- Inappropriate behaviour from their pet and how to correct it (if applicable)
- Emergency numbers, in case of a pet emergency

If the pet behaves aggressively towards the student, we will move the student immediately. We have a zero-tolerance policy regarding pet hostility, and that may also impact a homestay family's ability to host another student in the future.

### **Smoking**

Smoking and vaping is greatly discouraged by the program. The legal age to purchase cigarettes or e-cigarettes in Manitoba is 18 years. It is also illegal to purchase cigarettes or e-cigarettes for someone under the age of 18. Students will be made aware that regulations and expectations pertaining to smoking may be different than in their home country.

Many Canadian families do not permit smoking or vaping in their homes and students are expected to follow the rules of their homestay family. Smoking is also prohibited in all public buildings, including restaurants, in Manitoba. These regulations and expectations must be respected at all times.

Failure to comply with legal regulations pertaining to smoking, as well as regulations set by the homestay family, may result in expulsion from the program.

### **Alcohol & Illicit Drugs**

The legal age in Manitoba to consume or purchase alcohol is 18 years. This includes legal entry into lounges, nightclubs and bars where alcohol is served. Students in the program who are 18 years of age or older are allowed to drink responsibly. Drinking underage, the use of false identification, excessive drinking (at any age), and the use of or trafficking of illicit drugs is strictly prohibited and may result in expulsion from the program. Homestay families are expected to inform the program if their student behaves in any way that puts them at risk or breaks program rules regarding alcohol/drug use.

### **Pornography**

Watching or purchasing pornographic material while in the program is strictly prohibited. The use of pornographic material conflicts with the ethics of the RETSD International Education Program.



## **Personal Spending**

Students are responsible for monitoring their own budgets. Homestay families can guide their students with their spending habits by reviewing online prices for local stores.

The program discourages students from carrying or displaying large amounts of cash or valuables. For security purposes, a personal bank account may be opened by students who study here for the full year. The homestay family can assist the student in opening a personal bank account at a local bank or credit union.

Excess money often attracts a lot of attention; potentially from other students who may begin to expect the international student to pay for meals and extracurricular activities. International students with extensive cash flow may be distracted from their studies.

Students should be reminded not to lend money to or borrow money from homestay family members or other students. The program does not allow the student's parents to purchase their son or daughter a vehicle (please see Driver's Licence & Driving on page 18).

## **Clothing**

It is the responsibility of the student to purchase and/or bring appropriate clothing. It is recommended that students wait until they arrive in Winnipeg to purchase winter clothing. Clothing found in their home country, although considered to be "winter clothing," will often not be warm enough for our climate.

If a student arrives from a warm country during the winter, we ask that the homestay family meet them at the airport with winter clothing. They will be able to use those items until the homestay family can take them shopping to purchase their own. It is helpful for homestay parents to offer advice to students when purchasing seasonal clothing.

Students have the right to their own taste in clothing. They are, however, required to follow the same dress code at school that Canadian students must follow. Homestay parents should not try to change the student's tastes; however, if certain clothes are deemed inappropriate around the house, the homestay is within their parental role to explain the type of clothing that is inappropriate and respectfully recommend the student change their outfit.

## **Showers & Baths**

The length of a shower/bath and the time of day must be mutually agreed upon for each family. It is suggested that a reasonable showering time is approximately 10

minutes, as longer showers tend to drain the hot water tank. If there is not sufficient hot water for all family members who need to shower in succession, this can create problems. It can be helpful for the homestay family to show their students the hot water tank, to help the student understand that the hot water is not unlimited. It is also important that each homestay family explain the use of bathmats, hanging of towels, hair dye usage, turning on and off the bathroom fan, and basic bathroom etiquette.

## **Telephones & Phone Calls**

Students must follow household rules regarding use of the landline or home cellphone, such as appropriate times and length of calls. Collect calls or calls made with a phone card are recommended.

Students are responsible for all costs incurred in relation to long distance telephone calls. Students must also let their homestay family know when they have made a long distance call. The homestay family should use a highlighter pen to indicate the long distance calls made by the student on the phone bill each month (or if their bill is digital, keep track in a log). As there are many long distance providers who offer reduced rates in their long distance plans, we encourage our families to investigate options.

For safety purposes, students and homestay families must have a way to communicate with each other while not at home. We suggest homestay families have a plan with their student in case they only have a Wi-Fi cellphone plan (e.g. finding a pay phone or asking a friend to use their phone). In those cases, students need to have a reliable phone number to contact their homestay family.

## **Use of the Internet**

When a student uses the Internet, whether at their homestay home, at school or on their personal devices, they should follow the RETSD Code of Conduct as a student and ambassador of the program.

As most Canadian homes now have computers and the Internet is easily accessed, the student may wish to stay in contact with family and friends this way. While not a requirement, many students arrive with a laptop or purchase one when they arrive.

Homestay families must be willing and able to provide Internet access, preferably Wi-Fi, in their home for students and cannot charge extra fees over and above the monthly homestay fee for this access. It is not a requirement for a homestay family to have a computer for their student.

It is important to establish appropriate times when the student, as well as other family members, can access the Internet. When considering the student's use of the Internet, we ask that the homestay families keep in mind:

- The student's homework needs.
- The student trying to connect with family and friends in various time zones, which could be in the middle of the night.
- That high computer usage can also be a sign of homesickness or, among other things, depression.

With Internet access being one of the guaranteed amenities to our students, we do not encourage families to shut off Internet access to students. If the homestay family is having an issue with the student regarding computer or Internet use, we ask that they contact the program for guidance and inform us of any Internet rules for their home.

It is recommended that homestay families discourage their student from spending an excessive amount of time on the Internet and encourage them to seek a healthy balance between computer use and other activities.

Homestay families may also wish to set up Internet content blocking software for their home.

### **Driver's Licence & Driving**

Students in the RETSD International Education Program are prohibited from operating any type of motor vehicle, including but not limited to: automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, motorized scooters, snowmobiles, mopeds, airplanes, quads, boats or other forms of watercraft.

Some students may inquire about the opportunity to get a driver's licence during their stay in Canada. While the legal driving age in Manitoba is 16 years of age, no participants in the program will be granted permission to take driver education classes or other forms of driver training, including written tests. They are also not permitted to purchase vehicles while enrolled in the program. Failure to abide by these rules may result in expulsion from the program. It should also be added that driving without a licence at any age is strictly prohibited and is punishable by the laws of the Province of Manitoba.

We realize that not being able to drive may be frustrating for some students; however, it does eliminate a source of accidents. In addition, the complications of trying to co-ordinate international driving authorization among various countries would be enormous.

Homestay families cannot loan their vehicles to their student at any point during their stay in Canada.

### **Part-Time Work**

Students may offer and accept paid part-time work, such as babysitting, mowing the lawn or shovelling snow, but they must not feel obligated to do so. And if they wish to decline such jobs, they can do so at any time. Students may not take a paying job that requires a Social Insurance Number. The Government of Canada does not issue Social Insurance Numbers to international students. This is clearly outlined in the study permit for temporary residents granted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

### **Transportation**

- A student's homestay fee includes some compensation for transportation costs.
- Host parents should have a valid driver's licence, valid insurance, and a vehicle in safe operational order. In addition to a safe driving record.
- Students are encouraged to gain confidence and independence regarding their transportation needs.
- We recommend homestay families assist their student by taking them on some car rides around the neighbourhood and city to help them gain perspective and identify certain landmarks.
- Homestay families should teach their student how to use Navigo on the Winnipeg Transit website.
- Homestay families are not to be considered on-call chauffeurs.
- Homestay families should consider their parental role and use their discretion regarding transportation requests or needs.
- Homestay families are not expected to regularly drive their students to school; nor are they expected to transport students to sporting events, extracurricular activities or volunteering responsibilities.
- If an international student is graduating and attending the dinner and dance, their homestay parent will be required to be the student's safe grad driver for the event.

## Religion

The RETSD International Education Program asks both the student and the homestay family to respect each other beliefs or lack thereof.

- If a student wishes to attend a certain faith group or event, we ask the homestay family to assist them in making contact with the appropriate church/temple/synagogue/mosque, etc.
- It is acceptable for a homestay family to invite a student to attend a faith service; however, no student should be pressured or obligated to attend. Students should not be made to feel uncomfortable if they choose not to participate.
- All students and homestay families have the freedom to practise their faith. Our program also promises that students are under no obligation to follow the belief systems of their homestay families (or vice versa).
- If issues arise regarding faith, we encourage the family and student to discuss their concerns or observations, to try to understand each other, and to work towards a resolution that is respectful for each other's beliefs.

## Health Care

- All students participating in the program are enrolled in our medical insurance plan.
- There is a copy of the medical insurance plan in the homestay folder. It provides full details of the coverage.
- Some medical services may not be covered, for example: holistic practitioners, fees for eye checkups, prescriptions for glasses or contact lenses, elective surgery, transportation by ambulance, dental care or any issues relating to pre-existing conditions.
- Any cost incurred is the immediate responsibility of the student. Our insurance company will reimburse the student after receipts have been forwarded to them. Please be aware that, at the time of the visit, the service provider may bill the student directly.
- Our insurance company provides all students in the program with a wallet-sized identification card, which facilitates visits to the doctor or hospital. The doctor or hospital may refuse to bill our insurance company directly, and may require the student to pay the bill at the time of the visit. However, he or she will be reimbursed in full by our insurance company, as long as the original bill, medical report and pharmacy bills are sent to them on the forms provided. These can be submitted by mail or electronically (EFILE).

- Should a homestay family require assistance with any medical-related questions, including the process to be reimbursed for medical expenses, they can contact a program team member for help.

## Illness & Accidents

Assuming the role of parents, homestay families should be prepared to respond to their student's medical needs, including taking their student to medical appointments and responding to school medical emergencies.

If their student is sick, the homestay family must call the school and notify them of the absence. Students are not permitted to call the school and report their own absences due to illness.

Homestay families do not need authorization to take their student to visit a doctor or a hospital. However, we ask that they notify the program staff immediately of any hospitalization for physical or other illness and for serious accidents.

Students can connect with Canadian doctors on Maple, a telemedicine company, as part of their guard.me health benefits. Maple provides access to doctors, Canada wide, on their phone, tablet, or computer anytime, anywhere.

Also, if the student must undergo any type of surgery, the homestay family must contact the program staff immediately. If the student is injured in a car accident, we ask the homestay family and student not to sign any form discharging the parties of responsibility—forward names of the people involved to the program staff immediately.

In case of a serious emergency or accident, please contact the program staff as soon as you are able. Depending on the circumstances, you may contact the natural parents before you can speak to the program. In those instances, please update us as soon as possible so we can share the information with the student's agency, if applicable. The homestay family can count on us for support and comfort.

## Travel

The RETSD International Education Program realizes that students in the program see travel as a chance to get to know Canada better. However, it is primarily through immersion in family life and school that the students learn about Canada and various aspects of Canadian culture.

It is important that homestay families and students go through our student travel protocol before they finalize travel arrangements and book flights.



## Student Travel Protocol

In order to help students and their homestay families make fair decisions, the program has established this protocol concerning travel.

- Students must respect the laws and values of Canadian society, both while residing in Winnipeg with the homestay family and while travelling. If the student shows disregard for the laws and values of Canada, it might be a sign that the student is unable to adapt to life in our country. This may result in travel plans being denied and in some cases expulsion from the program.
- As soon as travel is considered, students should discuss it with their homestay family. The homestay family should contact a program team member and obtain the appropriate travel documentation and instructions.
- Student travel should not interfere with academic studies and it is advised to schedule travel during designated school holiday periods. Because of the significance of a student's attendance record, the student must first fill out a Proposed Travel Form before permission to travel is granted.
- Students in the program must travel with someone 21 years of age or older and this individual must take on the responsibility for the well-being of the student during the trip.
- If the student will be travelling on a direct flight to the travel destination, they don't need to be accompanied by someone 21 years of age or older. However, the individual responsible for the student must welcome them at the destination.
- Early in the travel process, students need to ensure their official documentation (Canadian visa, stipulations on study permit, passport, etc.), as well as any travel restrictions their agency has, will allow them to travel.
- A Parent/Legal Guardian Permission to Travel form must be completed and signed by the natural parents and homestay parents for each trip outside of Manitoba and Northern Ontario that is not associated with the program.
- All students must share a detailed itinerary of their travels with the program staff, including the names and addresses of those with whom they will be travelling and where they will stay during their travels.

- The RETSD International Education Program assumes no responsibility for student actions taken during such travel. Furthermore, unapproved travel is a serious infraction and may result in expulsion from the program.
- Travel outside of Canada typically involves securing a visitor visa to the destination country. Since most of these visas require written permission from the program, students must make arrangements to receive all required documents in advance. A minimum of two weeks' notice is required in order to secure permission to travel.
- Precise details of our travel policy will be related to each student and their homestay family upon arrival.
- Many homestay families may want to include their student in their own travel and holiday plans. Students are encouraged to participate in such travels. Note: Travel within Manitoba and Northern Ontario with the homestay family does not require permission from the natural parents or completion of travel documents, but the program staff should be informed so we know where to reach you in case of an emergency. However, all travel outside of these areas with the homestay family will require the travel documents to be submitted and permission to be granted from the natural parents.

## Emergency & Crisis Situations

The program staff are available to assist homestay families and students in case of an emergency or crisis situation. Homestays should assume care and responses in case of an emergency, based on their parental role. For example, confirming the school has the means to reach you, including during the work day, in case of emergency.

We ask for discretion when determining the urgency of the situation. If the situation is not of an urgent nature, it should be dealt with during regular business hours.

If a situation takes place with your student that instinctively has you feeling 911 should be called, especially if time is of the essence, we encourage the call be made to 911 and then all measures be taken to notify a program team member.



### After-Hours Calls & Responses

Please be reminded that the program staff will only address *emergency or crisis situations* during evening weeknights and weekends. If a non-emergency incident happens after hours, it should be reported to the program staff by email as soon as possible or the next day, so the team can follow up accordingly.

We should not be considered as first responders in an emergency. The support we provide cannot be seen as parallel to a doctor who is “on call,” for example.

When calling us in the evening or during the weekend for emergencies, call 204-667-7130 and when prompted, dial extension 2209; this will transfer your call to one of the program team members. We ask that you leave a detailed message about the emergency, including a return phone number.

Cellphone messages will be checked periodically by a program team member and your call will be returned as soon as possible—for emergency or crisis situations only. Unlike calling 911, where people on shifts answer calls 24/7, our team will check for calls up until they retire for the evening. We cannot guarantee that we will hear the phone throughout the night. If an emergency takes place and you cannot reach our program staff

through the night, please use your intuition and, as parents, take the necessary action required by the situation.

We understand that when emotions are running high, the situation may appear to be a legitimate emergency to you or your student. The program staff will do its best to determine whether the situation is one that must be dealt with during the evening hours or weekend, or if it can wait until the next working day. Your detailed voice message outlining the emergency is crucial in making this determination. If the circumstances worsen after you have left your message, please call and update your emergency message.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION GUIDE

The program asks for everyone involved, as ambassadors of the program, to treat others respectfully and act appropriately. If there is something that needs to be addressed with your student:

- Plan to address one root cause at a time. Try to focus on that issue and avoid the risk of getting a tainted perception of the other party involved.
- Prepare what you need to say while you are calm and after you have given it lots of thought.

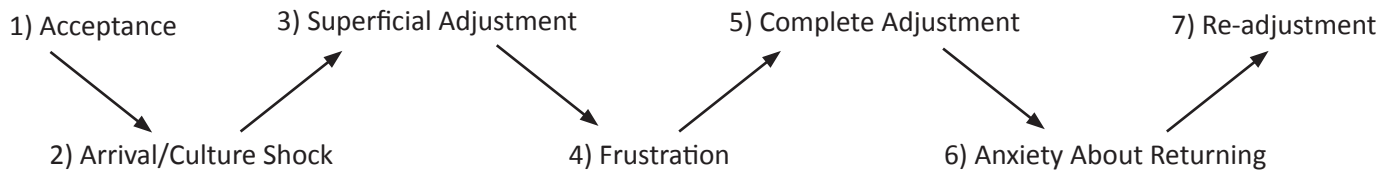
- Ask the other person if you can have some time with them to talk.
- At all times, work to keep the scenario calm and “a safe place,” because as soon as a person feels threatened, they will either back away or will be in a poor state to discuss things with you.
- If you observe the other person may no longer feel safe, share that you see they look concerned, affirm your desire to build on your relationship, and ask to chat at another time that you both agree upon.
- Choose a neutral and calm location to talk.
- Use “I feel” statements and “we” statements rather than “you” statements, which often sound accusatory.
- Share how you are feeling in light of what you are observing.
- Express your appreciation for them and your desire for a positive outcome.
- Draw their attention to just a few observations you have witnessed.
- Ask them to help you understand what is going on.
- Share that you feel like things can’t remain the same and ask how you can resolve this together to create a win-win situation for everyone?
- Discuss together the challenges that could arise from not resolving the issue.
- Discuss what each of you could do to help resolve the situation.
- Promise to do your part in the process to help resolve the situation.
- Make clear the consequences that will more than likely arise or need to happen should there be a failure to make these promised efforts.
- Don’t store up the past and sabotage the potential to solve the issue. A clean slate is vital to move forward at this juncture.
- Discuss a future date when together you can gauge how things are going.
- If one or both of you fail to make your promised efforts, it must be admitted that you failed to make these efforts, and you must voice the willingness to make an honest effort to try again.
- Set up a second time to reevaluate the situation.
- If, when you meet, the situation is reverting or getting worse, then the consequences that were agreed upon must be followed.

## HOW TO HELP YOUR STUDENT LEARN ENGLISH

- When speaking to people who are just beginning to learn your language, face them and speak distinctly, loud enough to be clearly heard, and a little more slowly than you would when speaking to a fellow native speaker.
- When the learner does not understand you, avoid the common tendency to raise the volume of your voice when you repeat—usually the problem is not that you haven’t been heard. Say the same thing in the same tone of voice, but even more slowly than before, being sure to be consistent in your tempo (i.e. do not speak some phrases slowly and others rapidly). If this doesn’t work, try rewording and simplifying your message.
- Try to use simple vocabulary, uncomplicated grammar and short sentences. Avoid idiomatic expressions, jargon, slang terms, cultural humour and sarcasm as much as possible.
- Use gestures (including pantomime) and facial expressions to reinforce your meaning.
- Remember that common sounds in some languages do not occur at all in other languages. Newcomers may not be able to pronounce or even to hear sounds they have never heard before. Be patient. Keep trying.
- Always encourage the learner to talk as much as possible, regardless of errors. Correct major errors after the learner has completed their thought. Do not interrupt in order to correct. Correct by “modelling”—that is, by simply repeating correctly what the learner was attempting to say.
- Discourage excessive use of bilingual dictionaries by the learner. Dictionaries have their uses, of course, but the learner who carries one about and refers to it constantly may be avoiding the most effective way of learning a language—by listening and talking as much as possible.
- Remember that language learners have good days and bad days. Some days, almost everything comes out correctly and fluently. Other days, even simple sentences seem impossibly difficult. Such fluctuation is natural, and needs to be accepted and downplayed. After all, the bad days are merely bad days, not indications that one’s ability to learn a new language is suddenly in decline.
- Be generous in your praise of progress and in your readiness to overlook temporary relapses or forgetfulness.



# STAGES OF STUDENT ADJUSTMENT



Although students generally understand and enjoy daily life in a new culture, they still have difficulty adjusting to some things. The process of adapting to a new culture involves continual learning through communication, change and commitment. One must be open to new experiences while being attentive to the unfamiliar ways people in the host culture express themselves, both verbally and non-verbally. While it can be exciting learning about new people and their way of life, the process can also be difficult and exhausting at times.

Past experience has shown that individuals go through several emotional stages —the “adjustment cycle”—in the course of living in a new or different culture. The stages vary from person to person and cannot be specifically plotted for any individual, but this general outline may help you to understand your student’s reactions to their new environment.

## Stage 1: Acceptance

The student feels excited when notified of acceptance and placement in the RETSD International Education Program. The student anticipates cultural differences but has only a superficial awareness of adjustment difficulties.

## Stage 2: Arrival/Culture Shock

The student experiences excitement upon arrival, followed soon by discomfort because of many obvious and subtle differences (culture shock). The entire structure of school, family and community life is unfamiliar. Sleeping habits may change. Different food and eating customs may cause difficulty. Many questions arise regarding how to relate to others. (e.g. How does one behave toward the opposite sex in a different culture?)

## Stage 3: Superficial Adjustment

When finally feeling more comfortable with schoolwork, language, the homestay family routine, etc., the sense of isolation is replaced with a sense of belonging. The student adjusts on a superficial level and feels more at ease.

## Stage 4: Frustration

Upon making the superficial adjustment, the student is able to examine their new surroundings more carefully, and deeper differences between them and others may become more apparent. Going to school, participating in community activities and the rest of daily life may seem insignificant. The wish to accomplish something important may surface. The student may feel frustrated with:

- The task of accomplishing study goals in a foreign language, which may seem enormous.
- The difficulty in fully understanding and adjusting to certain customs of the host community.
- Their performance, since coping and adjusting have proven to be more difficult than expected.

## Stage 5: Complete Adjustment

Slowly though, the deeper currents of the new culture are absorbed, accepted, and even valued. A transformation occurs. The student begins to question their original cultural assumptions and way of life.

## Stage 6: Anxiety About Returning

As departure time nears, the student may feel apprehension mixed with excitement at the thought of leaving and returning home. When a student realizes how close they have grown to the people around them, the student begins to sense how they have changed. The student may even feel guilty for wanting to stay and to not return home.

## Stage 7: Readjustment

Once home, the contrasts of old and new may come as a shock. No longer the centre of attention, the student may find no one is interested in the details of their year or feelings. The final part of this stage involves a shift in perspective and brings an understanding of the validity of both cultures.

*It is important to remember that this outline of the adjustment cycle is general in nature and does not have specific boundaries. Some students may experience the cycle as stated, above, while others may find one stage is more pronounced than another and some stages slip by quickly and unnoticed.*

It is important to remember that changes may also take place with the natural parents of students. The following can often be expected.

- Pride that their son/daughter has been accepted into the program
- Worries related to the departure of their son/daughter
- Discomfort in observing the evolution of their son/daughter from afar, perhaps too far
- Fear of change in the parent/child relationship
- Excitement upon the return of their son/daughter
- Shock (or disappointment) when faced with all the changes in their son/daughter, specifically the increased level of maturity
- Satisfaction in concluding that, overall, the experience was a positive and enriching one

To sum up, the international education experience is comprised of a series of ups and downs. Knowing this is a normal and expected part of the experience may make it easier to understand the student, who has to deal with the various cycles of the process as they occur.

## Homesickness

Homesickness is an extremely common type of anxiety that students of all ages may experience when they are away from home. It is characterized by a sad or lonely feeling. The student may find themselves crying for no apparent reason, they may isolate themselves, and they may sleep poorly or have very little appetite. Many people also experience physical symptoms, such as stomach aches, headaches and even flu-like symptoms. Some people will start off being mildly anxious and depressed when they first arrive in a new setting, whereas others will be fine initially and then to their surprise find themselves feeling depressed later in the experience. Homesickness is universal and few people are immune.

### How Do We Recognize Homesickness?

Students may not be aware that they are feeling homesick. They may find they feel a little depressed, lonely, confused and even frustrated. This discomfort could make a student want to return home with the belief that the experience isn't living up to their expectations, rather than simply realize they are going through an adjustment phase and things will get better. Signs that the student could be feeling homesickness are:

- Change of sleeping patterns
- Change of eating patterns
- Isolation from peers and homestay family
- Feeling sick or complaining of minor physical symptoms like nausea, aches and pains
- Acting out/attention-seeking behaviour

Every student is different and they will show different signs of homesickness. It is important to listen to your student and encourage them to talk to you. Through conversation and attention to changes in behaviour, one can discover if the student is struggling with the adjustment process.

If your student is struggling with the adjustment process and they are confused, lonely or frustrated, there are things they can do to help themselves.

Watch for changes in your student's behaviour, because that will be the biggest indication your student is dealing with homesickness.

### What Can a Student Do To Overcome Homesickness?

- Admit they have it
- Talk about it with someone who has been through it
- Bring familiar items from their home to their new location
- Familiarize themselves with their new surroundings
- Make friends—this is a big step to alleviating homesickness
- Keep in touch with people back home but limit it—write family members about their new experiences and adventures
- Plan the date to return home and make arrangements
- Examine their expectations—setting a goal of perfection is the most common way of creating trouble
- Seek new opportunities
- Don't wait for it to go away on its own—do something about it!

**If students or homestay families have further questions or concerns regarding the homestay guide and/or practices and procedures, please contact the program staff directly.**

*We hope this guide has answered any questions students and homestay families have about the homestay experience, and about how international students can be supported during their time as a part of a homestay family. If students or homestay families have further questions or concerns regarding this guide and/or practices and procedures, please contact the homestay team. Our contact information can be found on page 1 this guide.*



