

2025-2026



HIGH SCHOOL CANADA



STUDENT HANDBOOK



WELCOME TO CANADA!

You have embarked on an amazing educational and cultural opportunity. We are so pleased that you have chosen Canada. Not only will you be challenged academically in a new school, but you will also thrive socially and personally as you come to know a new culture and make new friends. Our students truly cherish their Canadian experiences for the rest of their lives.

All the staff at CISS are here to help guide and support you. We feel proud to be able to share this journey with you.

To help you prepare for your arrival, please take time to read through this Student handbook to make sure you have all the information and helpful hints you need to make this a successful experience for you. ANY QUESTIONS? Reach out to your LOCAL COORDINATOR!

Just remember: each experience is unique to each individual student.
It is up to you to take the opportunities provided and make this the best experience possible!

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page”
- Augustine of Hippo



CANADA FROM COAST-TO-COAST

Check out this short video, showcasing Canada from Atlantic to Pacific coasts:

[Canada: Coast to Coast | 8K on Vimeo](#)

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MLI Education Group



WHO IS CISS?

Canadian International Student Services

CISS (Canadian International Student Services Inc.) is part of the MLI Education Group. Comprised of three of the leading high school student brands in Canada: MLI (Muskoka Language International), CISS (Canadian International Student Services) and MLI Homestay, we have over 75 years of combined experience serving students worldwide. Since 1979, Canadian International Student Services Inc (CISS) has promoted exceptional summer camp, junior and high school experiences for children and teenagers. CISS is committed to meeting and exceeding client expectations through close cooperation with our worldwide network of representatives. Today, the CISS name is globally recognized as the premier choice for academic programming in Canada.

Our Student Care Supervisor will be your Canadian Custodian. Together with the Local Coordinator, they will monitor you throughout your stay.

MAIN OFFICES:

Toronto 415 Yonge Street, Suite 1201, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2E7 T: 416-646-5400

Vancouver 408-197 Forester Street, North Vancouver, BC, V7H 2M9 T: 604-904-9488

CISS Emergency Number: 1-866-388-6543

TIPS FOR LIVING IN CANADA

MONEY

The currency in Canada is the Canadian Dollar (\$CAD), which in April 2024 is approximately \$0.75 USD or € 0.70. You may need some ready cash to cover first-week at school incidental expenses such as school student fees, lock for your locker, bus pass (if required) and initial entertainment. A credit card is most useful for purchasing uniforms (if required).

To exchange foreign currency in Canada, use a bank or registered exchange office.

Canadian Currency:

Bills: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100

Note: Smaller stores may not accept a bill larger than \$50

Coins: 5¢ (nickel), 10¢ (dime), 25¢ (quarter), \$1 (loonie), \$2 (toonie)

The 1¢ (penny/cent) has been decommissioned. Stores either round up or down to the nearest 5¢ if paying in cash. Payment amount will be exact if paying by credit/debit.

Example: Purchase of \$19.24 = \$19.25 if paying cash, but \$19.24 if paying by credit/debit.

Debit cards/Bank cards

Canadian banks promote use of Automated Tellers (ATMs), which accept international banking cards. Provided your bank card from your home country operates on INTERAC, Cirrus, Maestro or PLUS, you should be able to withdraw Canadian funds directly from your own bank account back home (service fees will apply per transaction).

Opening a Canadian Bank account

It is quite easy to open a bank account in Canada and your host family can help you if you ask them (TD Bank offers special accounts for newcomers to Canada). This will allow your natural parents to maintain your funds, and you will have a Canadian bank card/debit card, which will allow you to withdraw money, as you need it, from any instant teller / ATM with lower or no service fees.



Direct Debit/ Point-of-Purchase Payment

Nearly all stores, shops and restaurants in Canada offer a Point-of-Purchase payment option (Direct Debit) using your bank card or mobile phone (Apple Pay, Google Pay, Samsung Pay etc). Contactless payments made by tapping your card (if it has a microchip) is possible in most stores and restaurants.

Credit Cards

A credit card is also recommended for larger purchases or in emergency situations. If your parents have the option to arrange for a supplementary card or "top-up" Visa card, this is a great way for them to be able to help you manage your funds.

We require that you have a credit card if you are bringing medical insurance from your home country. Medical clinics or hospitals may require you to pay up front for visits/services, and then claim back from the insurance company.

EXPECTED PERSONAL SPENDING:

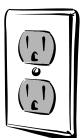
Personal Student Fees at school (varies by school and subjects taken)	\$50-\$400
Gym Uniform (if taking a physical education class)	\$30-\$40
School Uniform (only in Catholic or Private schools or select public schools)	\$300-\$400 Public \$400-\$600 Private
School Spirit clothing (optional) – T shirts, hoodies, hats etc.	Varies by item
Clothes and shoes / cold weather outdoor wear & boots	\$100 ++
Sports (team fees, uniform, equipment, or tickets for pro games)	Varies
Hot lunches in cafeteria (optional – Host family will provide a bag lunch)	\$5-\$7 per meal
Transportation / bus: monthly pass – students have discounted fare	\$50-\$120 per month
Personal care items	
School supplies, paper, binders, pens (textbooks are typically provided)	As needed
Stamps, postcards, souvenirs, long distance phone cards, SIM cards	
Entertainment (movies, trips, outings with friends)	
CISS Trips (up to 3 per school year)	\$300-\$1000+ per trip

TAXES ON GOODS

BEWARE! Sales taxes are typically NOT included in the price seen on a tag on merchandise and food. For all goods and services, expect to pay a Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) of approx. 13% over the price listed (varies by province).

Example: In Toronto you see a shirt for \$19.99. You will pay \$22.59 (\$22.60 if by cash).

VOLTAGE



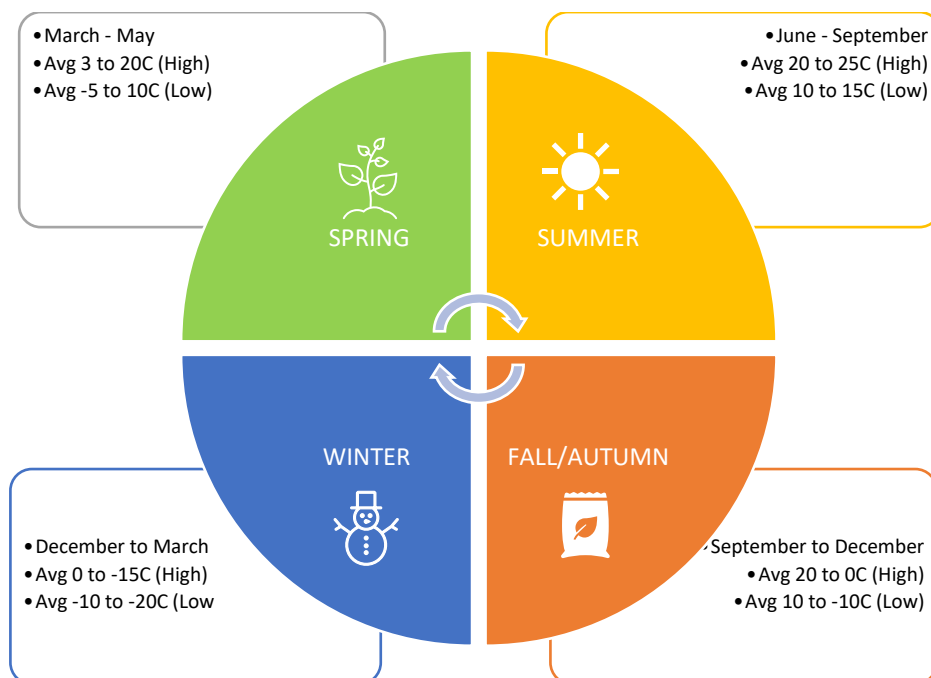
Electrical appliances use 120-volt power, and we have similar outlet shapes as in the USA. Be sure to buy a power converter if your electrical unit (i.e. hairdryer, curling iron, shaver) does not have one built-in, and bring adapters to fit our outlet shape. Alternately you may wish to purchase these items or the actual appliances in Canada.

CONSERVING ENERGY

Please help to conserve energy in your home by taking short (5 to 10 min) showers and doing your laundry after 7:00 PM in the evening. Remember to turn off lights when you leave the room and not leave computers on when not in use. In some locations, electricity costs vary based on time of time (ie. in Ontario between 5-7pm). In Canada, a typical home will have a temperature set at about 20C. Please do not adjust the temperature in the home without asking your homestay first.

WEATHER

Canada is a four-season country. In most locations, you can expect to experience a range of temperatures and weather conditions. As a general guideline:



Dressing for the weather

Experiencing our different seasons is one of the most exciting aspects to coming to Canada, especially if you come from a warmer climate country.

The most important advice we can offer is to **dress appropriately for the weather**.

- Put your city/community into a weather app on your phone and check it each morning
- Dress in layers that can be added or removed as the day goes on and the temperatures vary
- Boots, coats and other layers can be stored in your school locker during the school day

For winter

- Be sure to purchase: warm, water-resistant boots, a warm coat, gloves, hat and scarf
- Winter is not always about fashion – better to be warm and dry than cold and stylish (high heels and ice do not mix well!)
- Purchase good hand cream as your hands will need it
- Purchase a good chap stick as your lips will need it

PACKING CHECK-LIST

You are the best judge of what you need and should bring for your stay in Canada. Keep in mind airline luggage restrictions. Canadian stores sell many popular/trendy clothing labels so you can purchase additional items during your stay, at reasonable costs. Winter clothing – especially outerwear – may be better purchased in Canada, depending on selection in your own country.

CISS does not endorse any particular brand of clothing, however, this may help begin your search for warm winter coats and boots:

- <https://www.cicnews.com/2024/10/first-winter-in-canada-four-questions-you-need-to-ask-when-buying-a-winter-jacket-1047446.html#gs.j7vns7>
- <http://www.switchbacktravel.com/best-winter-boots>

If you are starting in September, the weather is generally very pleasant until mid-October, so there is time to purchase winter clothing once in Canada. Snowfall and skiing season begin around end- November at the earliest, more likely in December. Stores stock fall/winter clothing in late summer.

If you are starting in February, we recommend that you purchase the warmest clothing possible in your home country prior to arrival – INCLUDING coats, boots, hats, scarves and gloves. Additional items can be purchased in Canada, but selection by this time may be limited as stores begin to stock spring wear by February, so winter items may be limited. Purchases made on-line may be sent to your host family home with their prior consent.

DOCUMENTS TO BRING ON FLIGHT

For Immigration

- Passport
- For 10-month students: Study Permit approval letter – your Study Permit will be issued and placed into your passport by Immigration Canada upon presentation of this letter during your pass through secondary immigration. DO NOT LEAVE without showing this letter and receiving the Study Permit.
- Proof of financial support. Students should bring with them the financial document used when applying for their study permit.
- For 5-month or short-term students: eTA confirmation and/or TRV/Temporary Resident Visa
- Letter of Acceptance from the Canadian school
- Custodianship Declaration – pages 1, 2 and 3 - all signed and notarized
- Host Family profile

For First day of school

In addition to the above package, students should also have with them for their first day of school:

- Updated vaccination records, if you have received any vaccinations from time of application to the point of your departure for Canada
- Photocopy of passport, visa documents, identification card from home country
- Photocopy of their FINAL GRADE REPORT or last report received

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

You may choose to bring these with you or arrange to purchase once in Canada. All stores – including Dollar Stores, Walmart, Staples etc carry all essentials for back-to-school, including marketing sales just before school begins.

- Notebooks or binder with paper - NOTE that Canadian paper size is 'letter': 8.5" x 11" so it's easier to purchase this in Canada, as teachers give handouts to be added to binders
- Pens, pencils, erasers
- Calculator
- Backpack (expect to carry books, homework to/from school daily)
- Most schools will provide/loan textbooks (similar to a library).
- Additional supplies can be purchased in Canada throughout your stay as directed by your teachers or by need.

ESSENTIAL CLOTHING/TOILETRIES

- All-season clothing: jeans, pants/trousers, shorts, t-shirts, long-sleeve shirts, sweaters (appropriate for school – see dress code on page 20)
- Comfortable shoes
- Running shoes / sport shoes
- A few nice outfits and shoes
- Light jacket if arriving in September (*you can also bring a warmer coat or purchase in Canada*)
- Warm jacket, hat, gloves, boots if arriving in February (*additional winter jackets, hats, gloves etc. can be purchased in Canada but you may be in Canada for a few days before such shopping can happen, and selection may be limited*)
- Sleepwear / undergarments
- Sports clothing if interested in joining a gym or participating in sports / Swimsuit
- Personal toiletries & grooming items to last at least one month
- Medications (if needed). Ensure your supply will last for the duration of your stay + Photocopy of your medical prescription.

PROM: if you are entering Grade 12 (or Grade 11 in Quebec) and will be in Canada until June, you can expect to have the option to purchase tickets to attend the senior prom or grad (formal dance). This is usually held in May or June. Boys rent tuxedos or wear good suits, while girls usually purchase formal dresses. You may wish to purchase your dress in Canada to match the styles worn here this year.

OTHER ITEMS:

- Laptop / Mobile phone / Tablet
- Power converter/adaptor if bringing electrical units (shaver, hairdryer, hair stylers etc.)
- Pictures of your family to show your host family, teachers, friends
- Pictures or a book of your country
- Article of clothing or something representative of your country (sometimes, schools will have cultural theme days to showcase the countries where students are from or the ethnic background of local students)

TO DO BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

- Make a list of activities you would like to do and sites you would like to see in your community during your time in Canada
- Make a list of things you want to show your host family and new friends about your hometown or your country
- Make copies of 3-5 of your favourite home recipes to bring/share/make with your host family – they will love that you are sharing your culture with them!
- Bring a small gift for your host family - this can be a small token/souvenir representative of your country. Lightweight and non-breakable is best; NO ALCOHOL!

YOUR CARE TEAM IN CANADA

YOUR LOCAL COORDINATOR

When you received your Host Family profile, you also received the profile for your Local Coordinator (LC).

LOCAL COORDINATOR: Your LC should always be your **FIRST point of contact during your stay**. Once you arrive at your homestay, they will reach out to ensure you are well-settled, answer any questions you may have about your homestay, help you navigate any issues you may be facing, and generally be available to answer any questions you may have.

Your LC will

- Live in your community (either in your city, or in a nearby town)
- **Be your FIRST POINT OF CONTACT anytime you need CISS support**
 - **IMPORTANT** - load your LCs contact details into your phone !!
- Help you adapt to your new life in Canada
- Ensure you are settled, answer any questions you may have about your homestay, help you navigate any issues, and generally be available to answer any questions you have.
- Assist with communication between you and the family, and assist to troubleshoot issues (he/she is also responsible to managing the homestay relationship)
- Arrange personal or online visits and wellness checks with you
- May arrange social events for all the international students in their care

BEHIND THE SCENES: There are many other people that you may not have direct contact with but who are helping you behind the scenes. These people have processed your application, placed you in your Host Family, and are in contact with your local agent back home. Your LC will always be supported by a Student Care Supervisor (SCS), who will be in communication with your agency (or parents, for students without an agent). The SCS will:

- Assist the LC when support is needed
- Act as your official custodian
- Ensure that your school is aware of any special needs like covalidation
- Be in communication with your agent in your home country (or parents if you do not have agency representation)

MONITORING FOR STUDENTS AND HOST FAMILIES

After Arrival: Your LC will set up a virtual or in-person check-in with you within the first week of your arrival. This timing allows you to settle in with your host family, adapt to your first days of school life, and adjust to your new environment.

Student Support – You will have monthly contact with your LC for the duration of the programme.

- One in-person meeting will be scheduled with you each semester with additional check-ins as needed virtually or by phone (or if deemed necessary by the LC, in-person)

- Your agent (or parents for students with no agent representation) will receive formal updates about you twice per semester. These updates will be shared in October & December for first semester and March & May for second semester.
- Should time-sensitive issues arise between reporting periods, our Student Care Team will communicate with your agency (or parents, for students with no agent representation)

Host Family Support – The LC is also responsible for managing the relationship with your host family. LCs will conduct general check-ins with your host family from September to June. Should any issues or concerns be noted, your LC will discuss with your SCS who will send an email to your agent. If issues arise between visits they will be addressed as required

SCHEDULED VISITS for 5 or 10-month students

Short-Term students will receive a modified version.

MONTH	Full Year / 10-month students	Semester / 5-month students
September	Arrival Call within 72 hours (online video or FaceTime, WhatsApp) Welcome Orientation (online or in-person)	Arrival Call within 72 hours (online video or FaceTime, WhatsApp) Welcome Orientation (online or in-person)
October	In-person meeting + report	In-person meeting + report
November	Virtual Check-in	Virtual Check-in
December	Virtual meeting + report	Virtual meeting + report
January	Virtual Check-in	Departure Check in & Survey (conducted by Head office)
February	Phone call / Check-in	Arrival Call within 72 hours (online video or FaceTime, WhatsApp) Welcome Orientation (online or in-person)
March	Virtual meeting + report	Virtual meeting + report
April	Virtual Check-in	Virtual Check-in
May	In-person meeting + report	In-person meeting + report
June	Final virtual Check-in & online Survey (conducted by Head office)	Final virtual Check-in & online Survey (conducted by Head office)



COMMUNICATION EXPECTATIONS

Outside of these formal check-ins and reports, you can reach out to your LC as needed using: phone calls, email, text, WhatsApp or other chat methods. **Arrange with your LC what method works best for you both.** We accept no excuses for no communication!.

COMMUNICATION is the most important and the most efficient way to answer any questions or resolve any concerns. You should expect a response from your coordinator within 24-48 hours.

If you are in an emergency situation and cannot reach your LC, please call the Emergency Line, available 24 hours, 7 days a week, at: **1-866-388-6543** (see page 15 for Emergency Phone use)

If your LC reaches out to you, please reply to your LCs within the same day or provide a date or time for when you can respond.



It is vital to the overall success of your programme and immersion, that you connect with your coordinator if you have any problems. We are here to help you – AND we are closer to you than your parents while you are in Canada.

- If you call your parents first when you have a problem or something is not working for you, they will worry and the situation will seem worse than it is in reality.
- **Call your LOCAL Coordinator first**, together you can solve your problem, come up with solutions, or clarify what can be a misunderstanding.
- If the problem cannot be resolved quickly, CISS will connect with your parents through your agent representative, and as a team, we will work together to resolve the issue.

REMINDER FOR NATURAL PARENTS

- If you have agency representation: you **MUST** communicate with your agency, and not contact CISS, the LC or SCS directly. Our team will redirect you to your agent
- **ONLY** if you do not have agency representation, your main contact will be the SCS.

STUDENTS: REMEMBER...

- When your coordinator contacts you – you must answer, or reply as soon as you are able.
- Be open and honest – it's the only way we can truly monitor how you are settling in, and how successful you are in your programme

Who do I contact if...

I HAVE AN ISSUE WITH MY HOMESTAY...

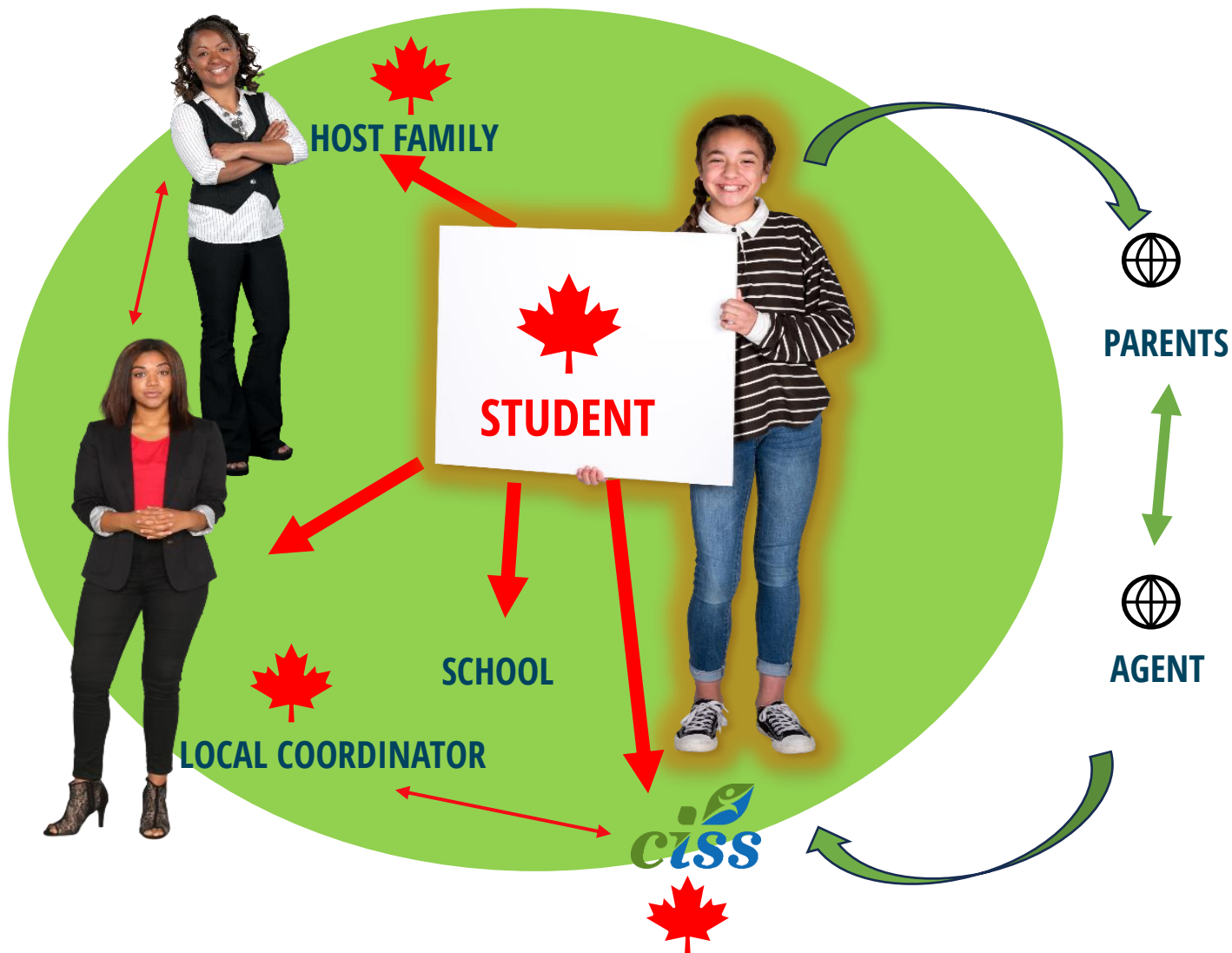
1. If the issue is small and just needs a clarification – speak with your host mom or dad
2. If the issue is larger and you are comfortable – speak first with your host mom or dad
3. Then contact your LC and let him/her know about the issue and any resolution that you've already come to – OR – ask your LC for help and advise on how to resolve or move forward

Always follow up with your LC to let them know if the issue is resolved or if you need further help.

I HAVE AN ISSUE WITH SOMETHING IN A CLASS OR AT SCHOOL...

1. Talk first with your teacher or guidance counsellor directly
2. If you don't know who your school counselor is, please visit the school office or the Guidance/Student Services office. The staff there are very helpful and will let you know the name of your designated counsellor
3. Then contact your LC and let him/her know about the issue and any resolution that you've already come to – OR – ask your LC for help and advise on how to resolve or move forward

Always follow up with your LC to let them know if the issue is resolved or if you need further help.



We are here to support you!

- Your Local Coordinator is IN YOUR Community, in the same time zone, and ready to help you!
- Let them guide and support you as well as share in your successes!

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

IF your LC is not available (after office hours, on a weekend or a holiday), and you have an **EMERGENCY situation** that cannot wait for the next business day, you may use this free telephone number, which will connect you to a staff member for the High School programmes.

1-866-388-6543

The person who answers the phone will not be your regular contact. Be prepared to give the following information in ENGLISH:

- Your name
- Your Canadian community/city where you are living
- Phone number where you can be reached
- Brief description of the emergency

The following are **EXAMPLES OF AN EMERGENCY:**

- Severe health issues
- Life or death situations
- Risk of harm (at school, in homestay, in your town, city)
- Being lost
- Illegal activities
- Harassment
- Issues at the airport (examples: flight cancellation, lost passport etc)

The following are **NOT EMERGENCIES**

>> DO NOT USE the emergency phone. Contact your LC during regular office hours or wait for a call back.

- Request to change classes
- Directions to local places
- General issues with your host family or school (unless you are at risk of immediate harm)
- Homesickness
- Last minute travel requests / permissions
- Your parents want to talk about your academic progress or an issue at your homestay



IF you need immediate police, ambulance or fire truck
Life or death situations

Dial: 9-1-1

CANADIAN SCHOOLS

Standard information for public high schools

We hope you've done some research about your new Canadian school! We encourage you to check out your school's website and get a true sense of what the school is like, the activities and sports it offers, and what other great things happen.

Schools across Canada have a similar general structure and offer courses that follow each provincial Ministry of Education's guidelines.

Daily timetables vary from school to school, but in general follow a schedule like this:

Arrival at school	between 7:45-8:30 am
1 st class starts	between 8:00-9:00 am
Lunch	typically 40-60 min; around 12:00 pm
End of school	between 2:30-3:30 pm

REMEMBER!

Be ON-TIME for the first arrival bell and all classes.

- IF YOU ARE LATE for school or any class, you must report to the main office and receive a LATE SLIP, to present to the teacher in the class for which you are late.

Warning: Too many

COURSES



If you have already advised us of specific courses that you must take, then we've already informed the school. They will do their best to ensure you are placed in your requested classes, especially if required for covalidation.

Either during a pre-school start Orientation OR on your first day of school you will meet with an appointed **GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR**. This person will review your course timetable and ensure you are satisfied with the choices. Some changes may be possible in the first 1-2 weeks of each semester. Please discuss this with both your guidance counselor and your Local coordinator. Changes are usually not permitted after the first two weeks.

Typical course choices include:

Math	Sciences	English / ESL	French
History	Geography	Fine Arts	Music
Drama	Technology	Other languages	Business/Computers
Physical Education	Fashion / Culinary	Digital Media	Communications

Courses for Covalidation

If you are from a country that requires you to Covalidate your studies (e.g. Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, Spain), you **MUST** register in classes as mandated by your country, state or school. If your programme duration or timetable permits additional courses, you can request to be placed in classes of interest as available in your school.



No class or course changes will be permitted if this means that your covalidation is at risk. Please feel free to discuss this with your coordinator.

SEMESTER VS. LINEAR SYSTEM

The Canadian school year is 10 months, starting in **September** and ending in **June**.

SEMESTER SYSTEM (most public schools normally follow this model)

The school year is divided into 2 blocks of 5 months each and students take 4 courses in the first semester and 4 different courses in the second semester:

SEMESTER 1					SEMESTER 2				
----- 4 courses -----					----- 4 courses -----				
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
4 classes start		Mid-Term exams		FINAL exams	4 new classes start		Mid-Term exams		FINAL exams

LINEAR SYSTEM (schools in Québec, some schools in British Columbia and Toronto)

The school year is divided into 3 terms, and students take the same 8-10 courses from September through to the end of June.

FULL YEAR									
----- 8-10 courses -----									
Term 1				Term 2			Term 3		
Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
All classes start		Mid-Term exams				Mid-Term exams			FINAL exams

WHO'S WHO AT YOUR SCHOOL?

Principal	Head of the school, main decision maker
Vice Principal(s)	Reports to the Principal, handles much of the daily issues including student discipline
Secretary / Office staff	Work in the main office – see the secretary if you are late and need a special paper to enter class late. Be nice to them!!
Guidance Counsellor / Student Services	Work with students to sort out courses, social issues, academic pathways, post-secondary options and more. Some schools have Guidance Counsellors specifically for International Students! Talk to Guidance if you are having integration issues, feeling homesick, unsure of expectations, want to know about clubs or sports, etc!
Teachers	Deliver the lessons in each of your individual courses. Each course will have a different teacher. They are approachable – talk to them if you have challenges, don't understand something or need help! ESL teachers are especially approachable for international students.
Coaches / Club leads	Every sport or club requires a teacher lead. Coaches are responsible to coaching specific sports, deciding who makes the team etc.

HOW TO ADDRESS TEACHERS:

Male:

Mr. + Last Name
OR simply “Sir”

Female:

Mrs./Ms./Miss + Last Name
OR simply “Miss”
or “Ma’am”

Teachers will advise their preferred form of address

It is not common for a teacher to be addressed as “teacher”.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Canadian schools have many facilities to meet the needs of staff and students, in all areas of study. Below are the most common facilities found in schools:

SCHOOL FACILITIES VARY BY INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL	
Classrooms	Gymnasium(s)
Science labs	Sports fields
Computer labs	Fitness rooms
Auditorium	Art rooms
Library / Learning Commons	Music rooms
Student success rooms	Dance studios
Student Counsellors	Media Arts / Communication tech rooms
Teaching kitchens	Student lounges
Cafeteria (including fast-meal service, seating and self-serve microwaves) + vending machines	Technology workshops – automotive, engines, design tech, manufacturing, woodworking, metal work, construction, TV/Film, Broadcasting, etc.

You must respect the open/closing times for specific areas/rooms of the school. Schools typically open earlier than the school start time, and later than the end of the last class, allowing you to settle in before school, meet for clubs, music or sports practice before or after school, or make appointments to see a teacher for support.

PERSONAL SCHOOL FEES

On your first day of school you will be asked to pay personal school fees

**** These are EXTRA - not part of your programme fees.**

These vary by school - approx. \$50-\$100 CAD in most schools // up to \$350+ CAD in Québec schools.

Additional sundry/extra fees may also be required throughout the year. School fees typically cover the following:

- *Student card*
- *Various student activities arranged by the school throughout the year*
- *Student Council fees*
- *Yearbook (or this may be charged optionally if purchase is desired)*
- *Textbook rental (small deposit might be required, but typically no costs)*
- *Gym uniform (if taking Gym class. T-shirt + shorts - estimate cost: approx. \$20-\$30)*
- *School uniforms (if attending a private school, Catholic school, or public school that requires a daily uniform). Uniforms are purchased online at the designated supplier.*
- *School photos (option to purchase various packages)*
- *Daily transportation – if taking a public bus to/from school. Ask about a monthly student pass*

Lockers: the school will assign you a locker to hold your coat, books and other personal belongings. This may be a personal locker or you may share with another student. The locker allows you to carry only the books you need for the next class, and to leave other, heavier items and your lunch in the locker until you need it. Each locker must have a lock – which is typically purchased from the school (approx. \$5-\$10), or it may be included as part of your personal school fees.

MOVING FROM CLASS TO CLASS

As you may have seen on North American TV shows, in Canadian High Schools it is **the students who move from classroom to classroom**, not the teachers. For each of your classes, you will have a different classroom, teacher and classmates. Each student has a unique timetable based on the courses he/she selected. While this may appear confusing at the beginning, you will soon get used to this system, and will enjoy seeing new friends in each class – and between classes. It also means that you will practice your English more!! You usually have 5-6 minutes to move between classes!

Teaching methods: Canadian teaching methodologies follow student-centered learning. Teachers involve students in group discussions, debates and group work, rather than always using the traditional lecture-based learning methods that you may be familiar with.

Evaluation methods are divided into various categories, each holding a weighted percentage. While this may vary depending on the course, class participation and homework are valued contributions toward the final mark. We encourage you to get involved and participate in all class discussions. The final exam is usually only about 30% of the total mark. The rest is calculated by tests, projects, participation and homework. **DO your homework and all assignments!**

AT SCHOOL COMPUTER USE / WIFI / PERSONAL DEVICES

Schools typically have WiFi available, either throughout the school or specifically in certain areas or computer labs. School libraries/Learning Commons have computers for students to use during lunch or before/after school and may have charging stations for personal devices. Teachers may also bring a set of laptops/tablets/Chromebooks into a classroom for use in a particular session. **BYOD** (Bring Your Own Device) for students is an option in many schools.

For this school year, students should have a laptop or tablet for use in their homestay that is capable of word processing, completing and submitting online assignments and joining online group discussions.



Mobile phones, iPads, tablets etc. may be permitted in class for research or academic use only. Teachers may remove usage privilege if you are not using it for academic reasons, or if it distracts your peers from learning. Schools are not responsible for lost or stolen items.

NOTE: Mandated in Ontario, and possible in other provinces – schools only permit use of personal cell phones if explicitly allowed by the class educator.

Schools may restrict access to select websites and/or social media sites to keep you focused on academics or if the website is deemed inappropriate.

ALL schools require students to sign a Computer Use policy that outlines the policies and expectations for appropriate use of computers and posting to social sites.

ONLINE SCHOOL PLATFORMS / TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Teachers may use educational platforms such as “Google Classroom” or “D2L” to facilitate their lessons and communicate with their students. Schools offer student portals where information can be obtained about classes and communication. Homework, assignments, deadlines and other communication is now typically communicated by the teacher to students using an online platform. You will receive a school-designated email, which you must check regularly.

Assignments are often submitted using this same platform. **Incomplete assignments or homework because you did not check the portal is not considered a valid excuse!**

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to work to your best abilities both socially and academically – regardless of your programme length. All students are expected to:

1. Attend all classes unless ill – your host family must call the school to report the absence (or you may be asked to bring a doctor's note depending on length of illness)
2. Arrive to school and at each class on time
3. Pay attention, participate and take notes in class
4. Hand in all homework and assignments on the due date
5. Study and prepare for any tests/exams scheduled during your time in the school
6. Ask for academic help well in advance of a test or exam

You will receive a personal agenda or daily homework guide. Use this to keep track of assignments and due dates.

Academic advisors closely monitor academic success. Each student is assigned to an advisor or guidance/student services counsellor who is there to help. Do not be afraid to talk to this person...he or she wants you to do well.

Schools understand that international students often require a little time to settle into a new routine, school style and language environment. Support will be given where needed – but you need to talk to your teachers and the guidance department to ask for help!

DIFFICULTIES IN CLASS



If you do not understand an assignment or your homework, ask your teacher before you leave class or school that day.

It is NOT acceptable to decide not to do the homework assignment simply because you do not understand it. You must seek clarification. Teachers are more sympathetic to students who ask for help. If you find you are struggling to understand what the teacher is explaining, or you are confused about the content of the class

- **ask for help AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!**
- If you wait for many weeks, months or just before the final exam, it will be too late for the teacher to help you.



TIPS...

- Some teachers can offer you special assistance before or after school or even during lunch. Discuss with them before the end of class or the school day
- Ask your host family, host siblings or friends for help
- Allow yourself ample time to complete assignments so you can ask for help during the process.
- Review the day's work each evening so you can be prepared with specific questions the next day
- **Remember:** overall marks are based on many different components of classwork. One poor test will not bring you down too far IF YOU SEEK HELP to improve for the next one.

SPORTS & SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Canadian schools are well-known for their varied sports and extra-curricular options.



THE BEST WAY TO MAKE FRIENDS IS TO GET INVOLVED OUTSIDE OF CLASS!

We cannot stress this enough. Your time in class is focused on classwork so doesn't always allow for time to socialize. With class sizes of 20-30 students, it can also be hard to find peers with similar interests with whom to be friends. By joining a sport or social activity, not only are you meeting people with similar interests, but you are doing this in a much smaller, and sometimes more inviting environment.

Social/Extracurricular activities: Below are some of the most common...but check at your school for actual options.

ARTS & CULTURE	SCIENCE & TECH	RECREATIONAL/SPORT
Art club	DECA competitions	Environment club
Bands – concert, jazz, choir	Math club	Geography club
Drama, Musical Theatre	Robotics club	Leadership club
Dance, Fashion Show	Science club	Multicultural students
French club	Stage crew	Prom Committee
Photography club	Yearbook committee	Ski/Snowboard club
Reading club		Student Council



SUGGESTION...

- Visit your school's website to see what is currently offered (but the list may change next year)
- Make a list of the clubs or activities that might interest you
- Talk to your Guidance Counsellor when you arrive at school to understand how to find clubs that are happening, and how to join!
- Listen to morning announcements – this is often when sport try-outs or new club meetings are announced. Morning announcements are often printed/posted on a common board near the office if you do not hear or understand them



SUCCESS IN SCHOOL & MAKING FRIENDS

- Be open-minded – try new things
- Say “hello” and smile
- Get involved
- Class attendance and participation counts toward your final mark
- Prepare in advance for tests/exams – ask for help early! Teachers are approachable!



Sports: different sports are offered throughout the year, depending on the season. Teams vary by school, but most schools typically offer the following – usually for both boys & girls.

(note: season of play may vary by province and school district. Check individual school profiles for most accurate details)

FALL (SEPT TO NOV)	WINTER (DEC TO MAR)	SPRING (APR TO JUN)
Basketball (Girls)	Badminton	Baseball (Boys)
Cross Country Running	Basketball (Boys)	Rugby
Football (Boys)	Curling	Soccer (Girls)
Soccer (Boys)	Hockey (Boys and Girls)	Softball (Girls)
Tennis	Ski (alpine or Nordic)	Track & Field
Volleyball (Boys)	Volleyball (Girls)	
	Wrestling	

Additional specialized sports may also be available including: cheerleading, swimming, rowing, gymnastics, field hockey, ultimate frisbee and more.

Competitive sports: Competitive sports require try-outs and a demonstrated skill in that event – **AND require that the student is enrolled for the entire duration of the sport season.** We know international students want to try or learn new sports, but a competitive team coach may be hesitant to allow you on the team without the necessary skills – or he/she might allow you to train and learn, without formally being part of the team. It is up to the coach to decide.

During the lunch hour, many schools offer non-competitive intramural sports options that are better suited to learning. Ask your school about these options.

If you already play a sport at home, we encourage you to try out for the competitive team. Many of our international students have become the “star” players!



SUGGESTION...

- Visit your school’s website to see what is currently offered and is which season/months each sport is played
- Make a list of the sports you want to play or try out for (keep in mind that sports are seasonal)

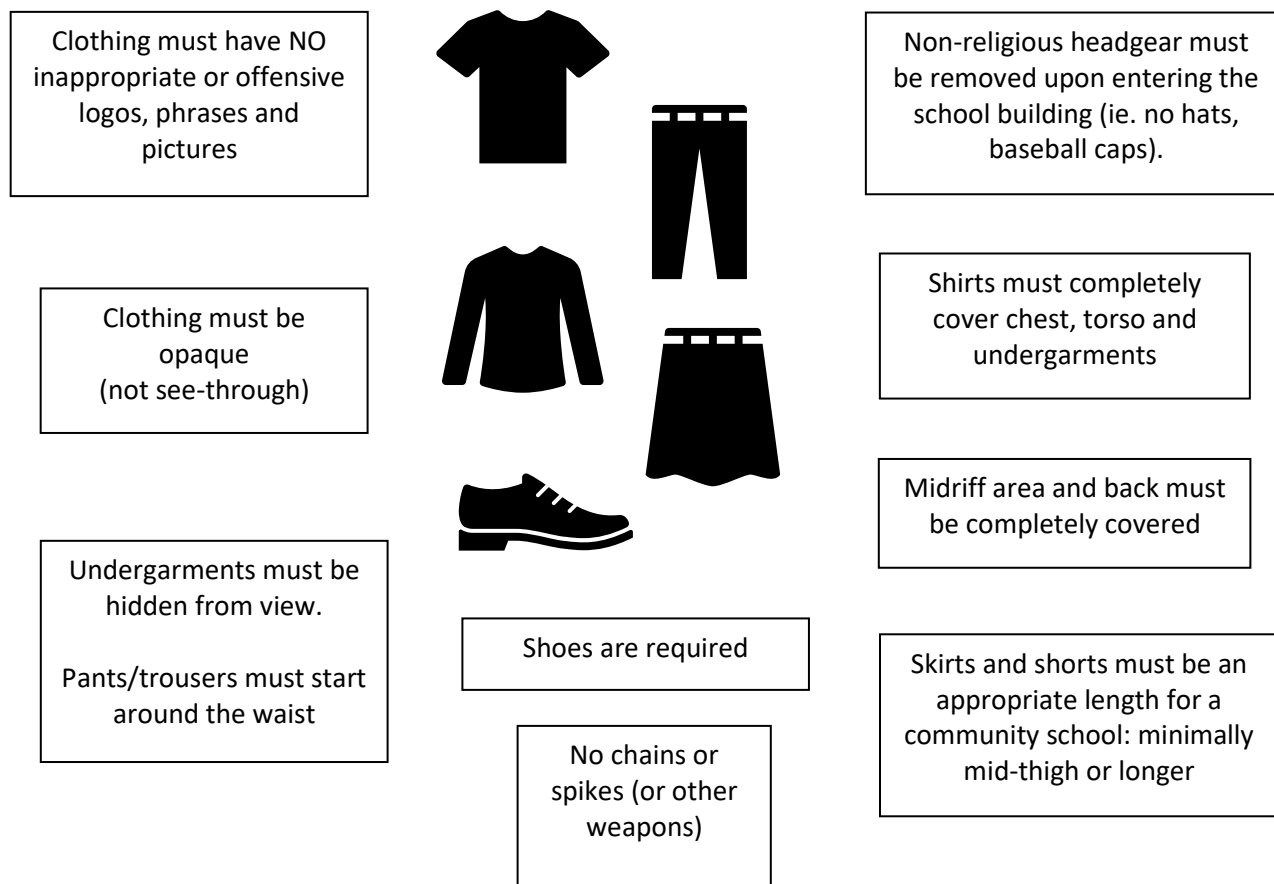
DRESS CODE IN SCHOOLS

Unless your school has a required uniform (*Catholic schools and some public schools in Quebec*), students wear casual and comfortable clothing. A modest dress code is in effect restricting torn clothing, ball caps, offensive slogans, bare midriff or other inappropriate showing of skin or private body parts.

You may be called to the Principal's office, and/or required to return home to change if clothing is deemed inappropriate by staff. Appropriate dress code must also be followed during online classes or group discussions.

Most schools do not impose restrictions on jewelry, makeup, piercings, or hair accessories provided they do not interfere with your or other students' learning environments. Some schools may restrict perfumes if students or staff have known allergies.

If your school does NOT require a uniform, the following is representative of most school policies:



The diagram illustrates a school dress code with various items and their corresponding rules. The items shown are a t-shirt, pants, a long-sleeve shirt, a skirt, and a shoe. The rules are as follows:

- Top Left:** Clothing must have NO inappropriate or offensive logos, phrases and pictures
- Top Right:** Non-religious headgear must be removed upon entering the school building (ie. no hats, baseball caps).
- Middle Left:** Clothing must be opaque (not see-through)
- Middle Right:** Shirts must completely cover chest, torso and undergarments
- Bottom Left:** Undergarments must be hidden from view. Pants/trousers must start around the waist
- Bottom Center:** Shoes are required
- Bottom Right:** Midriff area and back must be completely covered
- Bottom Far Right:** Skirts and shorts must be an appropriate length for a community school: minimally mid-thigh or longer
- Bottom Center (Below Shoes):** No chains or spikes (or other weapons)

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Public / Catholic Schools:



If you are attending a school that requires a daily school uniform, **you MUST be in appropriate dress at all times while at school** and while representing the school in the community at large. The expectation is that the school uniform will be worn proudly and neatly. If you are not in appropriate uniform, teachers will send you to the office, or you may be sent home to change.

- Uniforms are casual and comfortable. Most students wear a specified colour shirt (typically a golf shirt or oxford-style long-sleeve shirt, often crested). Sweaters, rugby shirts or fleece (crested) is often worn on top. Specified-colour/style pants/trousers for boys and girls. Girls may still be given the option of a kilt or skort. Be sure to read information about your specific uniform to understand what is appropriate and what is not – and where/which supplier to order from
- AVERAGE COST OF A UNIFORM: \$300-\$400+CAD
Orders are usually done online – with payment online at time of purchase
- Some uniform suppliers will have a physical store. Talk to your host family about taking you there so you can see and try on uniform items.
- Some schools may also sell some uniform items directly at the school store, inside the school building. Talk to your guidance counsellor about this.
- Uniform items may be purchased throughout the school year – at the uniform supplier or if available at the school store. You can start with just a few items and purchase more as the semester/year goes on.

HOLIDAYS AND P.A. DAYS

There are no classes held on national or provincial holidays, or on Professional Activity (PA) days which are designed for teacher meetings/training. On these days you can stay at home or attend specially designed trips or activities. **Be sure to check your individual school calendars for specific holiday and PA days. A copy will be provided to you when you start school.**

Typical holidays and important dates in Canada (2025-26 school year):

Schools may mark other religious observance days including those from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other religions; but with no official time off school. If you are of a faith that requires an absence for a special observance, please speak with your school's guidance counselor during your arrival meeting.

2025	
Labour Day	September 01
1st day of classes	September 02: Some schools will be starting last week of August
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	September 30 (school attendance still required)
Thanksgiving Day	October 13
Remembrance Day	November 11 (not a holiday in all provinces)
WINTER BREAK	December 26 – January 04 - TBD
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26
2026	
New Year's Day	January 01
Return to classes	January 05 - TBD
End of Semester 1	January 31 (will vary by province/school)
Start of Semester 2	February 2 (will vary by province/school)
Family Day	February 16
SPRING BREAK	1-2 weeks: mid-March (will vary by province)
Good Friday/Easter	April 3-5
Victoria Day	May 18 (In Quebec, "National Patriots' Day")
End of school year	Mid to End June (will vary by school)

Canadians also celebrate the following traditions (but there is no day off school):

Halloween	October 31 – dress up in costume for the day/evening
Valentine's Day	February 14 – celebration of love & friendship
St. Patrick's Day	March 17 – dress in green – everyone is Irish on this day
April Fool's Day	April 01 – funny jokes – beware of pranks
Mother's Day	May 10 – honour your mother/host mother
Father's Day	June 21 – honour your father/host father



*And let's not forget the best holiday of all for our students: **SNOW DAYS!***

These are unexpected school closure days due to heavy snowfall or other inclement weather.

Note: *some teachers may still assign work or assignments to be completed online during these days!*

KNOW THE RULES

Understanding Canadian laws and CISS policies

To ensure you have the best experience possible, please remember the following Canadian laws and CISS policies. These are in addition to any already mentioned in this handbook.

SMOKING



NO SMOKING. The purchase of cigarettes and e-juice/e-liquid, including but not limited to all vape and juice pens that might be common back in your home country is regulated in Canada. The legal age to purchase cigarettes or e-juice/e-liquid is 19 years old (18 in Alberta and Quebec). Smoking/vaping is NOT permitted in any public building, including schools and school property, shopping malls, restaurants, movie theatres and public washrooms. Canadians are very strict about enforcing this law. It is also illegal to ask an adult to purchase cigarettes/ e-juice/e-liquid on a student's behalf if he/she is a minor.

NOTE: CISS policy also restricts students smoking or vaping in the homestay programme (including in home and on property). Students who are already in the habit of smoking or vaping must be willing to quit before arriving to Canada unless they have disclosed their smoking habit with CISS prior to arrival and seek acceptance and obtain approval as a smoker into the CISS Programme. Students identified as smokers may be limited in their host family placements.

ALCOHOL



NO ALCOHOL. It is illegal to purchase or consume alcohol, including beer, if under the age of 19 (18 in Alberta and Québec). It is illegal to ask an adult to purchase alcohol on your behalf if you are a minor or to drink alcohol in a public place including a beach, car, or park.

Students caught purchasing, consuming or in possession of alcohol will be sent home immediately.

DRUGS / CANNABIS



NO DRUGS / NO CANNABIS. Narcotic drugs are illegal in Canada and are by law punishable by heavy fines or jail. This includes misuse of prescription drugs including opiates. It is illegal to purchase or consume cannabis in any form if under the age of 19 years (18 in Alberta and Quebec). It is also illegal to ask an adult to purchase cannabis on a student's behalf if he/she is a minor, or to consume cannabis in any public place as deemed unacceptable by each province. Students caught purchasing, consuming or in possession of cannabis will be dismissed from the programme and sent home. Purchase, possession, use or sale of cannabis is AGAINST PROGRAMME POLICY. CISS requires all host families to offer cannabis-free homes.

Students caught purchasing, consuming, in possession of, or selling an illegal drug, cannabis or abusing a prescription drug, will be sent home immediately, either by CISS or by Canadian police and/or Immigration Canada.

THEFT & VANDALISM

Stealing any property from a store or person is illegal in Canada.

Willfully defacing or vandalizing public or personal property is also against the law.

Students caught shoplifting items from a store, in possession of stolen items, stealing personal possessions from their host family or other students, willfully defacing or vandalizing any property not belonging to them, will be sent home.

HARASSMENT / BULLYING

Bullying or harassment of any kind is not tolerated by CISS or any school. Harassment includes words, acts or gestures of a malicious or abusive nature directed at a person or group of persons, and directed towards: *academic ability, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, language, race, ethnicity/nationality, religion, appearance or colour.*

Remember: Canada is a diverse and tolerant country. Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, all persons deserve to be treated with respect regardless of their race, skin colour, religion, sexual orientation, or mental/ physical capabilities.

Students involved in acts of harassment or bullying (including cyber-bullying) will be sent home immediately.

VIOLENCE

The use of violence is not tolerated by CISS or by any school. Students must solve differences between themselves and another student or member of their host family in a reasonable and diplomatic manner. Violence is defined as any use of physical force directed at another person with the intent to inflict pain, cause personal damage or coerce the other.

Students caught using violence will be sent home immediately.

Students are not permitted to travel with weapons (penknives, caps, cap guns, play guns etc.) These are not tolerated in home or school. Any of these actions could lead to criminal charges.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all classes, every day that school is in session and complete all required homework, assignments, tests and exams. Unexplained absences will be noted on the student's academic record. Students will be disciplined for excessive truancy and skipping classes. Continued unexplained absences may result in mediation with a school counsellor, suspension or even expulsion from the school. If the student is ill and must remain at home, the host family must call the school to advise. Valid absences are noted on the student's academic record, but are not cause for discipline.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism, copying text, images or other work without crediting the author, is illegal, especially for academic work. Schools regularly run anti-plagiarism software when checking student assignments. Students caught willfully plagiarizing on a school assignment will receive a zero as a mark on that assignment, and will be disciplined.

Use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) to support learning or research (ie. ChatGPT) is under review in most provinces. Your individual school or course teacher will review with you the guidelines for acceptable use – or prohibition of use – of AI for research or assignments.

BIKING/CYCLING

Students are permitted to use a bicycle with the permission of the host family and CISS. You MUST:

- wear a CSA approved biking helmet
- exercise caution at all times
- use bike lanes where available
- stop at all stop signs and red lights; obey all traffic laws
- use appropriate hand signals when making turns or lane changes
- For future information please review:

<https://files.ontario.ca/mto-young-cycling-skills-en-2021-09-16.pdf>

Cyclists are expected to understand and use driving rules of the road. While drivers of vehicles are expected to respect the space of a cyclist on a road, road sharing can be challenging, especially in more urban and congested cities.

If the host family or CISS deem your community to be unsafe for cycling, you may be denied permission.

DRIVING

Students are never permitted to drive ANY motor vehicle while in Canada, including cars, ATVs, motorbikes, snowmobiles, watercraft or any other motorized or battery-operated vehicle, including e-bikes or e-scooters, even if the student holds a valid license from his/her home country.

TRAVELLING IN A VEHICLE

UPDATED JUNE 2025: Students are permitted to ride in a vehicle driven by any host family member with a valid driver's license. This may be a driver under the age of 25 with a valid license rating according to the province – G or G2(Ontario), N(BC), GDL(Alberta), Probationary License (Quebec). In all cases, the driver must be of legal age to hold a valid driver's license in the province of residence and must be authorized to carry passengers. The driver must not have consumed alcohol, cannabis, or any intoxicating substances prior to or during the ride.

Adult drivers outside of the host family or other than a licensed taxi, Uber, Lyft, or other regulated ride-share provider, must be 25 years of age and must be either personally known to the student (e.g., a trusted adult) or school-affiliated individual.

Students are not permitted to be driven by anyone, other than their host family or a licensed taxi/Uber/Lyft driver, who is under the age of 25, at any time. Under no circumstances may another student or friend under the age of 25 - regardless of their driving experience, or programme affiliation - serve as the driver.

By choosing to use permitted transportation options outside of their host family, students and their natural parents acknowledge that they do so voluntarily and at their own risk. The programme, host family, local coordinator, and custodian will not be held liable for any loss, injury, or incident that may occur as a result of third-party transportation.

UBER® / LYFT® / TAXI / OTHER RIDE SHARE

UPDATED JUNE 2025: Students are permitted to use a taxi, Uber/Lyft or other reputable car-share in cases where the host family is unavailable to drive the student and public transit is not a viable option. The student and natural parent(s)/legal guardians understand that using such services means riding in a car with a driver unknown to the student. Students are urged to use caution to ensure personal safety.

RISK AND CAUTION

This “Travelling in a Vehicle” and “Uber/Taxi / Ride-Sharing” policy modification carries inherent risks for student safety. Natural parent(s)/legal guardians must ensure their child is fully versed in understanding risks and taking necessary precautions and will discuss their comfort level with permitting their child to be a passenger in various scenarios. MLI Education Group does not permit students to become passengers in vehicles driven by local friends who may not have a full license, who do not have extensive driving experience or who are under the age of 25. The only exception will be in the case of host siblings, where the host parent permits their child with a valid class driver’s license to drive their host sibling. This decision to give permission for the student will be at the discretion of the student and their natural parents.

All students must continue to follow the established travel protocols regarding travel outside of their community, regardless of the mode of transportation to do so.

EMPLOYMENT / VOLUNTEER WORK

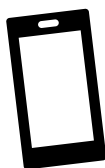
The purpose of this programme is for students to have a successful cultural and academic experience. While Canadian students may find part-time employment at age 16+, your study permit and permissions for entry to Canada prohibit you from obtaining paid employment. Volunteer work or work experience through a co-op school programme is permitted

ENGAGING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Engaging in sexual relationship(s) while enrolled in the programme is not permitted as it can result in several unwanted consequences and may be a breach of moral standards in certain cultures. This policy applies to students of any age in our high school programme.

TELEPHONES & CELL / MOBILE PHONES

Cell / Mobile phones: If you wish to wait to purchase a SIM in Canada, you can ask your Local Coordinator or host family to help you purchase a phone and/or a phone plan. If you have an existing mobile phone from your home country, you may be able to receive an e-SIM or replace the SIM card for Canadian use. Only discuss options with a reputable phone company. Your host family can also advise best options but will not sign contracts for you.



We encourage you to consider purchasing an eSIM through [PhoneBox](#).

Other reputable providers in Canada include: *Rogers, Bell, Telus, Freedom Mobile, Virgin Mobile, Fido, or Koodo.*

NOTE: in Canada, people use the term “Cell Phone” more commonly than “Mobile”.

Home phones: The use of home phones (or land lines) is diminishing, but many families still have this in their home. Your host family will show you how to use the telephone and explain their rules for using the phone. Please respect these rules since some families do not wish to receive phone calls after certain times at night.



Not all home phones have long distance plans connected to the account. Talk to your host family before making ANY calls outside of your city.

Make long-distance calls home using your personal cell/mobile phone, WhatsApp, Line or other web-based services.

If you make long-distance calls on the family's phone, you are responsible for paying for this when the bill comes. If using WhatsApp (or other internet-based communication tool), be sure to verify with the family the best time and duration for your communications. Internet plans will vary.

COMPUTERS / INTERNET / WIFI

Most host families have internet access in their home, but plans, speed and limits will vary so BEFORE YOU CONNECT and use the home internet, discuss with the family:

- Time/duration that you may use the computer and internet/WiFi, since by using it you are using their data plan which may be limited (remember, WiFi is a privilege, not a right)
- Usage rules / WiFi connection if you have a laptop or tablet
- Bandwidth limits for their internet as well as the wireless access codes and security
- Remember that WiFi speeds will vary by location - if your usage exceeds the allowed limits you may be responsible for paying for this when the bill comes in!

SOCIAL MEDIA

RESPECT your own and other people's personal integrity on your posts

DO NOT WRITE/POST HURTFUL or negative messages about any other students, staff or situations that occur at this programme, your host family or your school

THINK TWICE before you post anything – does this need to be said? By me? Now?

REMEMBER: what is posted remains forever



CYBER-BULLYING IS A CRIME

On-line Chatting

It is forbidden for a student to engage in online “chatting” with strangers. Students must be aware that online chatting poses severe risks if personal information is divulged. Hosts may monitor computer use for this reason.

NEVER AGREE TO MEET IN THE REAL WORLD ANYONE YOU HAVE “MET” ONLINE!

REMEMBER:

- **DO NOT** make a habit of spending all your time on the computer; you should interact with your host family as well.
- Under no circumstance are you permitted to download/create illegal material, pornography, video games, songs or movies even if you bring your own laptop

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

STUDENT DISCIPLINE – CISS

We encourage you to take advantage of your Canadian experience, but you must abide by the policies of CISS, your school and Canada. If you violate these rules/policies/laws, you will receive warnings and discipline.



Note: Some serious offenses such as use/possession of drugs, overt alcohol use or other criminal activity, may result in immediate suspension from the school and/or the programme, **even if this is your first offense.**

If at any point your misbehaviours result in a request to move from your host home to a new host home, charges may be incurred.

For most situations:

1. FIRST OFFENSE: TEACHABLE MOMENT

Your local coordinator will arrange to have a talk with you – in person or by phone/online. He or she will review the situation, the issue, and work with you to understand your thought process, what to do differently the next time and ensure that you are clear about how to improve the situation. We want to help coach you through your cultural adaptation and integration in Canada, and work with you to correct small issues

Depending on the severity of the offense (i.e. drug or alcohol use, criminal offense), CISS may skip this step and you will receive a written warning immediately or be expelled from the programme. You may also receive an in-school or out-of-school temporary suspension. This action is at the discretion of the school and is outside of CISS policy.

2. SECOND OFFENSE: VERBAL WARNING

Your local coordinator will again review the situation with you and discuss why the behaviour was again inappropriate. He or she may review our participation agreement with you to ensure that you understand the programme rules and our expectations, and to outline concerns to your or others' safety or well-being. The LC will at this time issue a verbal warning and expect that this same or similar behaviours will not be repeated. An email to your agent will be sent.

Depending on the severity of the offense (i.e. drug or alcohol use, criminal offense), CISS may skip this step and you will receive a written warning immediately or be expelled from the programme. You may also receive an in-school or out-of-school temporary suspension. This action is at the discretion of the school and is outside of CISS policy.

3. THIRD OFFENSE: LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING OR REFLECTION LETTER

Your local coordinator will again review the situation with you and will escalate the situation to the Student Care Supervisor who will issue a Letter of Understanding

for you to sign. This will capture the issue and explain why the behaviour must stop re-occurring. This will be signed by you and a your natural parent(s).

You may also be asked to write a Letter of Reflection, to reflect on your actions and your understanding of how to improve to make your programme successful.

This step is typically used for behavioural issues that can be adjusted (ie Poor behavior, poor communication skills, tardiness, clumsiness, or an intolerable attitude). Major conflicts such as breaking the law of Canada or the rules of the program will lead to a warning letter.

4. FOURTH OFFENSE: FINAL WARNING LETTER

If you continue to display inappropriate behaviours (of the same nature or by violating a different rule/policy/law), you will receive a written warning outlining the offense. A copy will go to your parents with a request for signature.

In addition, you will be placed on a two-week probation. During this time, you are only permitted to leave your host family home for school or other academic reasons. You may NOT attend any extracurricular activities/clubs/sports nor socialize outside the home with friends. We expect you to be on your BEST behaviour during this probationary time.

You will receive another discussion either face-to-face or over the phone to ensure that you truly understand why your actions were once again inappropriate. You will be reminded that this is the LAST WARNING. Any further offenses will result in your dismissal from the programme. You may also receive an in-school or out-of-school temporary suspension. This action is at the discretion of the school and is outside of CISS policy.

Depending on the severity of the offense (i.e. drug or alcohol use, criminal offense), CISS may skip this step and you may be expelled from the programme immediately.

5. FIFTH OFFENSE: DISMISSAL FROM PROGRAMME

If despite the previous warnings, you continue to display inappropriate behaviour (of the same nature or by violating a different rule/policy/law), you will be deemed unable to abide by the policies of the programme and will be dismissed.

CISS will communicate immediately with your parents and home agency to arrange for the next available flight home



X

STUDENT DISCIPLINE - SCHOOL DETENTION / SUSPENSIONS / EXPULSION

Schools reserve the right to discipline students who commit offenses that go against school policies - separate from the CISS discipline. School discipline may be issued together with CISS discipline as outlined above.

Detention: minor inappropriate behaviour (i.e. rudeness to a teacher or fellow student, skipping classes or high absences/late arrivals without valid reason) may result in lunch-time or after-school detention. During this time, students report to a specified room for the duration specified. Students are supervised and are expected to use this time to work on homework or assignments. Detention durations may be one day to several days.

Suspension: continued misbehavior or a serious offense (bullying, use or possession of alcohol or drugs, insulting a teacher, uttering threats or bodily harm to a staff or other student, theft, fighting, cheating on tests/exams etc.) will result in a school suspension. This may be an in-school suspension (student must arrive at school daily but is removed from his/her peers. He/she is monitored in a specific room or area for the duration of the school day). In this case, students do not attend classes but are given school work to complete. Alternately, students may receive an out-of-school suspension where the student must remain at home for the day. He/she will be given school work or specialized projects to complete. Suspensions may be one day to several weeks.

Depending on the severity of the offense, CISS and the school may determine at this time that dismissal from the international programme is required.

Expulsion from school: students who continue to exhibit inappropriate behaviour or commit a crime against Canadian law will be dismissed from the school and from the CISS High School programme.

LIVING IN CANADA







Canadians are well known for their hospitality and friendliness. But we know that living with your host family will take some adjustment as it may be very different from your own family and culture.

To make this successful, **keep an open mind and an open heart!**

Participate in family events, spend time playing games or just talking to your new family. The more time you spend with them, the more you will know them and they will know you.

HOST FAMILY

 <p>"nuclear family" (mother, father, children) or "blended family" (second marriage with children from previous marriage who may or may not live full time in the home)</p>	 <p>single parent with child/ children living in the home</p>	 <p>couples with no natural children or "empty nesters" - couples or singles who have older/ grown children no longer in the home</p>	 <p>single adult retired or working with no children in the home.</p> <p>Single hosts will often have extended family that is an active part of their lives.</p>	<p>** IMPORTANT **</p> <p>The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects all citizens from discrimination based on race, skin colour, ethnic background, religion or sexual orientation.</p> <p>CISS MLI does not discriminate against host families who meet our criteria based on any of the above.</p> <p>When you come to Canada, you will be welcomed and become part of our inclusive society.</p>
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Your new family is excited to have you be a part of their family!

Canadian families may be parents with young or teen kids, working or retired couples with grown children, childless couples, single parents or even a single woman or man. Families are also very diverse, coming from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Families often reflect both typical "Canadian" lifestyles as well as traditions brought from their original culture.

Regardless of the outward appearance or demographic of the family, be assured that your new host family is ready to look after you, care for you and treat you as they would their own child. They have been approved by our homestay team and want you to have the best possible experience while you are in Canada. They take responsibility for your safety and welfare very seriously. Your own parents have put trust in this host family, as have you. Make the most of this experience, and open yourself to a wonderful, new cultural life.

If your new family has host-siblings, please treat them with respect, regardless if they are older or younger than you. If the siblings are younger, be kind to them – they will look up to you as an older sister or brother. But also don't be afraid to tell them nicely if you are busy or need time to study. If the siblings are close in age to you, be sure to recognize that friendship may not be instant - it will take time to become friends. **The more you participate in the everyday life of the family, the faster you will be seen as a member of the family.**

What is provided:

The host family will offer:

- Family interaction and personal support
- A private bedroom, with a bed, closet/ dresser/wardrobe, a desk or workspace (in bedroom or in a quiet area of the house)
- Clean towels and bed linens (not replaced daily!)
- Three (3) meals daily (including a packed lunch on school days)
- Laundry facilities (host parents may require you to do own laundry using the facilities)
- Respect for your culture and a willingness to share theirs

Personal items not provided by the host family:

Students are expected to buy the following items from their own personal spending funds:

- Public Transit pass / bus pass / tickets / tokens
- SIM cards for personal mobile phone and/or reimbursement if charges are made on host family phone plans
- Personal entertainment costs
- Personal hygiene items / toiletries
- Unique food items that you crave and that the rest of the family would not typically eat

You are expected to:

- Treat your family with respect and participate as a member of the family
- Obey family rules, especially with respect to curfew and internet usage
- Keep your bedroom clean
- Keep common areas tidy, including private or shared bathrooms)
- Voluntarily help with reasonable household chores
- Respect the family's privacy
- Respect cultural differences - be open to new cultures
- Respect the family's property and treat it as if it were your own. You are responsible for notifying the family of any damages and may be asked to pay for damages caused through willful neglect, or when damage is extensive.
- Speak English (or French if that's your target language) to get the most of your Canadian immersion!





SUGGESTION...HELPING YOU INTEGRATE INTO YOUR FAMILY

- Be open to new experiences AND ask questions
- Participate in activities with your host family
- Show interest in their lifestyle
- Talk to your host about the family rules, what are their expectations of you...and what are some of your top goals while you are in Canada?
- Offer to cook or bake something from your country – share your culture with them!

HOUSE RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

Canadians live in a variety of homes. Some may be large, detached, suburban-style homes, while others may be apartments, condominiums or townhomes. Whatever the style, you can be sure that the home will be clean and inviting.

- You have your **own bedroom** which you are responsible for keeping clean.
- You are expected to make your own bed and keep the room tidy
- If you share a bathroom with the family, be sure to keep your personal belongings tidy and clean up after any showers or baths. Your host parents will show you where you can put your personal items. If you have a private bathroom, you must ensure it is kept clean

Sit down with your Host Family and talk about *their* house rules & expectations. These may be different from what you are used to back home. **This should be a sharing time, a time for you to learn about life in Canada** and for your new family to get to know you and life in your country

Understand your host family rules

Your host family should discuss with you certain family rules, especially with regard to curfew and communication, including:

- Curfew on school nights and on weekends
- Use of phone/internet/WiFi
- When you can have friends over
- How and who to call if you will be late for dinner ...and more

Before making plans with friends, be sure to always tell your family:

- Where you plan to go
- Who you are with
- How you will get there and back
- What time you will be back

Your host family may refuse your request to participate in certain activities because of safety concerns or a conflict with their own plans. **Do not assume that you can just do what you wish, even if your friends are doing it. Always discuss plans with your host family – they are your parents while you are in Canada!**

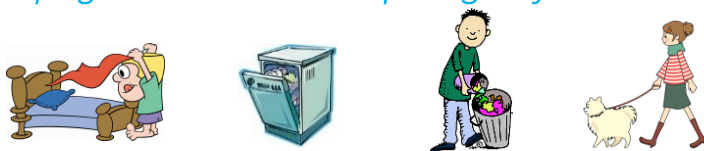
Expect changes and compromise

Canadians hold a reputation for being friendly and open. Many families have pets in the home, such as a dog, cat, or fish. You will likely notice a casual atmosphere in the home. Most families laugh and joke with each other, and may be openly affectionate (hugs, etc).

Canadian parents encourage independence from their children as it is not common for middle and working-class families to have maids, drivers or other domestic staff. As such, your host mom or dad will encourage you to **keep your room tidy, make your own breakfast or lunch, wash your own laundry, and will show you how to take public transit on your own to get to places in the community.**

Do not mistake this for indifference or not caring. It is typical for Canadian children to behave this way, so the family will encourage you to do the same.

Helping with the home to keep things tidy



Remember: since most Canadian families do not employ a full-time housekeeper, each family maintains their own schedule for house cleaning, which may not be daily. This is especially true if both host parents work full-time jobs. This does not mean that the house is 'dirty', as is a common misinterpretation.

Tidying your own space: you are provided your own bedroom which is your space. However, the host family will have expectations for keeping that space clean and tidy. You will be expected to:

- do a tidy at least once weekly
- refrain from eating and keeping food in your room
- put away your clothes and personal belongings
- vacuum your room. Some hosts may opt to vacuum for you, which means that the floor needs to be accessible.

Tidying other common areas: your host family will also expect you to help as a member of the family to keep the common areas of the home clean and tidy – in the same manner as they would ask of their own children. You may be asked to help clear dishes after a meal, to empty or fill the dishwasher, to tidy a living/rec room, take the dog for a walk etc. Please talk with your host family about the expectations. If you have any concerns, your local coordinator is available to talk to you.

HOME ROUTINES

Discuss expectations and how things work

Your host family will provide you with a house key - be responsible! Keep it safe!. They will show you how all the house appliances and facilities work. Please discuss with your family the following as a START to understanding how things work:

- How and when to lock the doors
- How to operate the security system if they have one – keep code secret!
- The most suitable arrangement for doing laundry - where to keep clothing to be washed, if you should do your own laundry, how to use the machines, etc.
- How to operate the dishwasher / where supplies are kept
- Your role in maintaining common areas - bathroom, living room, and kitchen
- If they have certain "house clean-up" days
- What are the meal schedules; do you need to make your own breakfast etc.
- Any allergies you have/foods you truly dislike

Showers: hosts will always allow you to shower at least once daily but please ensure you understand any time limits that hosts may ask you to keep. Showers lasting longer than 10-15 minutes may not be the norm in the family, nor is taking several showers daily. Please speak with your host family about any limits they wish you to follow, or time guidelines that fit within the family routine.

GETTING TO AND FROM SCHOOL

Generally, students who live within 3-3.5km from the school are expected to walk, take public transit, or otherwise find their own way to school. The actual distance varies by location. It is common for a daily one-way commute to take 20-45 minutes on public transit.

If you live more than 3 to 3.5km from the school you may be eligible to be on a school bus (the big yellow bus!). You will be assigned a designated pick up/drop off location (the bus will not come to your front door).

Your host mom or dad already know if you are on a bus route OR your local coordinator will confirm this with you soon after your arrival. If you are not sure – talk to your host mom or dad, or LC!

Before/after school activities:

The host family may be available to assist with taking you to activities or events at the school or in the city. **You must make any transportation requests politely and in advance of any activity.** Last-minute requests may not be possible, nor is the host family responsible for daily transit to activities or after school events.

If you intend to join an extra-curricular activity, school sport or activity outside of school

- discuss the days, times and requirements with your host family before making any commitments
- If your family is unable to provide transportation, you may be able to make arrangements with friends or other students in the activity or sport
- You are expected to independently make your way to any activities when possible, but your host family may be able to assist you if necessary.

FOOD & MEALS

Canadians have adopted many different foods from various cultures and countries.



Most typically, families eat standard breads, dairy, vegetables and meat during their meals. BBQ cooking is common in the warm weather, while hearty soups and pastas are more common in the colder months. Be open to trying new foods...but also don't be afraid to tell your host family of any food that you truly dislike, or to which you have an allergy.

Your host family will provide you with all your meals but that may not always mean that every meal will be served to you. Be ready to help prepare meals!

Portion sizes: your family will offer a reasonable portion of food at each meal. If you wish to have more – please ask or accept if it is offered to you. **It is acceptable to have more than one serving of a meal.** If you feel that portion sizes are not adequate for you, speak with your host parent(s). They certainly do not wish for you to be hungry, but their supply of food may not be unlimited. At the same time, if you feel the portion sizes are too large, you can request to have smaller portions.



Breakfast: Most families have two working parents, so morning schedules vary. It is important to discuss schedules with them and establish the best routine. Some families eat a large breakfast; others prefer something simple such as cereal or toast. Your family might leave it up to you to determine what you prefer in the

mornings and will show you where the food is kept and allow you to make your own breakfast.

- If they do not serve you breakfast that does not mean you have nothing to eat! You may need to make your own breakfast in the mornings.
- Discuss the meals with them in your first days in the home or when you are unsure - they always want you to be fed and certainly never want you to go to school hungry.



Lunch: Monday to Friday, lunch is eaten at school, usually at some point between 11am and 1pm, so your family will provide you with a bagged lunch to take with you (or advise what you can take for your lunch). Weekend lunch times may vary and may or may not be eaten together as a family, depending on the family plans.

- Canadian school lunches are typically a sandwich, a snack like cookies or fruit, and a drink.

If your school has a full-service cafeteria, you may choose to buy a hot lunch on occasion (at your own expense) or you can ask your host mom/dad to bring leftovers from the previous dinner that you can heat up in a cafeteria microwave. Not all schools offer this, so check your school cafeteria first. Make sure you communicate with your host family to fully understand your lunch options.

Snack items and drinks can also be purchased from vending machines at most schools, and many schools have adopted “healthy snacking” options.

Note: Schools may follow a NUT-FREE policy as nut allergies are common in Canada and can be life-threatening. Be sure that any food you bring onto school property follows this and other guidelines established by your school.



Dinner (or Supper): In Canada, this is typically the **largest meal of the day**. Your hosts will attempt to have a sit-down family dinner as often as the daily schedule allows, and so should you! This is a great time to share stories of the day.

It is very important that you communicate with your family the time for dinner. In Canada, dinner is usually eaten between 5:00 and 7:00 pm. **Let them know in advance if you will be late or have made other plans – which should only be done on occasion, and not regularly!** Family meals go a long way toward establishing a good connection with your host parents and siblings and improving your social communication skills!



Snacks: As a *courtesy*, always ask or clarify which foods are available for snacks throughout the day or evening. If you are unsure what is permitted, talk to your host family. They will tell you which foods are common for the family and which foods may be reserved for specific reasons (ie. may be intended for a meal the next day; if a family member has allergies he/she may need to have specific food purchased just for them, etc). If you want certain snacks or food that the family does not typically purchase, speak with your host family and/or be willing to buy these on your own.

The following is a TYPICAL outline of food eaten in Canada. Each family is different and will have their own preferences and traditions:

BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
Typical: 7am-9am <u>Weekday</u> Cereal Oatmeal Toast/bread Jam, Peanut Butter Fruit <u>Additionally on Weekends</u> Eggs Pancakes / Waffles <i>On weekends, families often have a larger breakfast or a "brunch" which is eaten later and is a combination of breakfast and lunch</i>	Typical: 11 am – 1pm <u>Weekday: Packed lunch</u> Sandwiches – with sliced ham, turkey etc. Soup Pastas Snacks <u>Additionally on Weekends</u> Burgers / Hotdogs Rice / Potatoes /Quinoa Vegetables & salads Meats <i>Hot lunches are more common on weekends, when at home</i>	Typical: 5pm-7pm Meat (Beef, Chicken, Pork, Fish) Pasta Rice / Potatoes /Quinoa Vegetables & salads Stir-fry Soup Burgers / Hotdogs Dessert <i>Canadians like to vary their cooking to include dishes from various countries BBQ cooking is common in warmer weather</i>

WASHROOMS

When asking about public washroom, use the terms: *washroom, bathroom or restroom*.

The terms "WC" or "toilets" are not commonly used.

In Canadian homes, bathrooms have a toilet, sink and either shower and/or a tub. **Bathrooms are not fully water-proof!**

- If you have a bath, you must ensure that water does not overflow the tub
- If you have a shower, please ensure that the shower curtain is inside the tub and not outside, or the shower door is closed - so water does not drip out onto the floor
- Toilets can and should be flushed after each use. All human waste (along with used toilet paper) is flushed down the toilet.
- After using the bathroom always make sure to leave it clean and tidy. Wipe the water up around the sink and put away your toiletries.

Do not flush large amounts of toilet paper or tissue down the toilet. Be conservative – use only what you need!

Do not flush anything else down the toilet including paper towels, plastics or large objects.

If the toilet should become plugged and/or overflow, tell your host family immediately.

Girls: Sanitary napkins/tampons, feminine hygiene products etc., should be wrapped in toilet paper and put into the garbage basket, not flushed.

Personal Toiletries: your host family will provide the basics such as toilet paper, towels and soap. You are responsible for purchasing your own shampoo, conditioner, and other personal care items.

MANNERS

Canadians generally exhibit good manners

- Remember to say “please” and “thank you”
- Helping with household chores is also considered part of good manners – and is expected as part of your homestay experience. Examples may include: clearing dishes after a meal, loading/unloading the dishwasher, offering to vacuum.
- A handshake is the most common way to greet people, although this may be too formal when meeting new friends at school
- Adults (including teachers) should be referred to as Mr. or Mrs. + their last name. For example: “Hello Mr. Jones. It is nice to meet you.”
- Your host mom or dad will advise how they wish you to call them.
- You can address other students/peers by their first name.



SUGGESTION...STAYING SAFE IN YOUR HOMESTAY

- Never give out the Home Security Code
- Keep the house key in a safe place – don’t lose it or give it to friends!
- Always ask before inviting friends over to the home
- Keep doors locked when inside

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON’T GET ALONG WITH MY HOST FAMILY



We hope that you arrive at your host home with an **open mind and open heart**. Your host family may be different from your own family. The home may be larger or smaller than what you are accustomed to. You may or may not have your own bathroom. This is all part of your cultural development – one of the reasons you have chosen to participate in this immersion experience in Canada.

- Give your host family a chance to show you why they have chosen to bring you into their family.
- Be open-minded about their lifestyle and traditions.
- Understand that your host family home might be quite different from your own home – and that’s OK – it’s all part of the cultural experience
- Give the home an honest try before complaining or asking to move. Please don’t seek out or invent excuses to move from a situation that is new to you – before you’ve given it a chance. **Your Local Coordinator can help you!**
- **COMMUNICATE!** This resolves many small issues!
- If you are not talking, you are not communicating

COMMUNICATION

RESPECT

If it's been a few weeks and you truly feel you have some major issues that cannot be resolved by yourself or the host is not responding to you:

- **FIRST ACTION: Arrange a call or to meet with your Local Coordinator (LC)**
- Your LC will listen to you and may give you suggestions of methods to try to resolve the issue yourself – how to say things in English, a different viewpoint etc.
- For major issues, your LC may need to investigate from both sides – your views and your host's views
- Your coordinator may arrange to talk privately with the host in a very neutral way
- **It is always our first goal to help you and the host to resolve issues so that you both can have a positive experience together.**

Continued conflict or ill-match

- If your LC agrees that the family is ill-matched for true reasons (example: neglect or severe personality conflict...and not that you want to be closer to a friend or that the family is from a background that is new to you) then your LC and team will take the necessary steps to find you a new home. However, this is a process that takes time!
- It often takes several weeks to arrange for a new home and move date – any new host must still be in the zone for your school. You cannot change schools because of a host move!
- If you are in a very uncomfortable home situation or have experienced something truly unpleasant, your LC may arrange for a temporary respite host until a new permanent host is found
- Depending on the validity for the reasons for the move or your request for a new host, charges may be incurred, and will be discussed with your Agency/Parents.

What if the host asks CISS to find you a new family?

- Your own (constant) misbehaviours, or disregard for family rules may also cause a host to ask the LC to find you a new host. In such events, the LC will always talk with you and the host to try to find a solution
- They will want to know both views for the situation – yours and the hosts
- The LC will follow our Student Discipline method to work with you to understand how your behaviours have been inappropriate and must change once you move into a new home.
 - Our goal is always for you to have a successful experience...and you need to be an active participant in that effort!
- If a move is necessary, in a similar way as above, the LC will work as quickly as possible to find you a new host family, or a Respite Host may be secured until a new permanent host is found
- Depending on the severity of your behaviour, charges may be incurred, and will be discussed with your Agency/Parents.

- ALWAYS...be open, be communicative, and be honest
- Our team will work with you to try to resolve conflict first and only move you if truly necessary

MEDICAL ISSUES

ALLERGIES AND MEDICATIONS

When you first arrive, please explain to your host parent(s) about any allergies or medical issues you have.

- Give them any prescription medications you are taking – they will store these in a SAFE place and will help administer them if required.
- **Do NOT keep any medications in your room**, especially if the family has younger children in the home. Although the family is expected to respect your privacy – small children may be curious and may become very ill should they accidentally ingest your medication.
- If you are taking homeopathic medicines or treatments, be sure to fully explain what they are to your host parent(s), including the active medical ingredients. They will need to know in case of any emergencies.

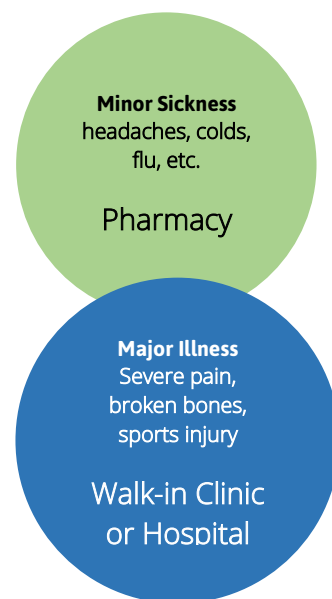
ILLNESS

If you are not feeling well, tell your host parent(s) what your symptoms are (aches, fever, congestion, pain). They will assess you and determine the best action.

- Common cold medicine - may be given by your host mom/dad
- Pharmacists can assess minor symptoms and prescribe treatment
- Walk-in clinics are often the best option for doctor consultations if initial treatments are ineffective
- Hospitals should be the last option as wait-times can be long. Exception: go to hospital in cases of severe injury or cases that require hospitalization

Don't forget:

- Let your LC know if you are unwell for more than a day
- Your host mom/dad will need to call your school to excuse you and to obtain most current illness protocols.



- Medical / Health care in Canada is publicly funded and governed by each province. We do not have many options for private hospitals or clinics.
- Specialist doctors in Canada typically need a referral from a family or general practitioner and wait times for specialist doctors can be several months (emergency situations may be different)
- Specialized diagnostics (MRI, CT Scan etc.) must be prescribed by a doctor and cannot simply be requested by the patient. Student insurance will not cover diagnostics unless required by a doctor for emergency care.

KNOW YOUR INSURANCE POLICY

Give a copy of your insurance policy to your host mom/dad (English version) and to your Local Coordinator

Guard Me / Study Insured / Ingle

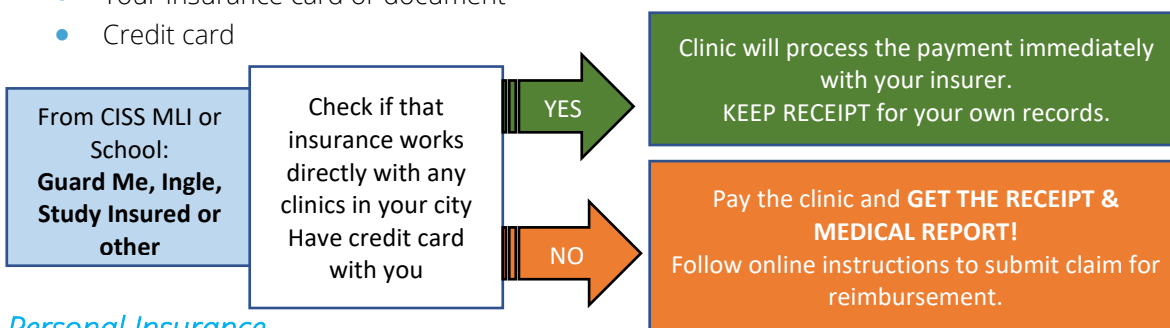
Students covered by GUARD ME®, Study Insured®, Ingle® or other Canadian insurers used by School Boards, have most medical **emergencies** covered. **Accidental Dental Care** is also provided to repair or replace teeth because of an injury caused by an accidental blow to the mouth.

If you need to see a doctor, dentist or medical professional:

- Call insurance ahead of visit if possible
- Check that the issue is considered emergency and is covered by the insurance plan

Bring with you:

- Your Insurance card or document
- Credit card



Personal Insurance

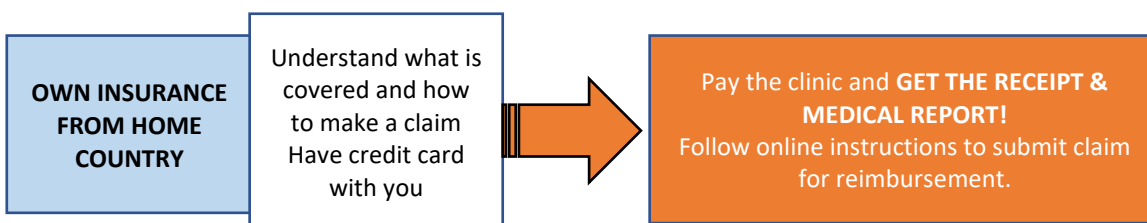
If you are covered by your OWN insurance plan arranged by your family or your travel agency, you are likely also covered for any medical or dental emergencies.

If you need to see a doctor or medical professional:

- Call insurance ahead of visit if possible
- Check that the issue is considered emergency and is covered by the insurance plan

Bring with you:

- Confirmation of your insurance – card or document
- Any claim forms as provided by your provider
- Credit card



- You will be required to PAY UPFRONT for any medical services and then claim as directed by your provider
- Keep all original receipts and ensure the medical centre provides you with the **MEDICAL REPORT** before you leave the facility.

GUARDME STUDENT SUPPORT PROGRAM® MENTAL WELLNESS BENEFIT



<https://gmssp.org/en.html>

24 hours, 7 days per week

Watch video: <https://youtu.be/M69IjEqvF4>

All CISS students, regardless of their primary insurance coverage, have a Mental Health benefit through GUARD ME® called **Student Support Program**. This benefit is for good maintenance of your mental health, and offers a 24-hour, culturally sensitive and confidential counselling.

Free to use, available all day and all night, with counsellors available in many languages, students can [call or chat](#) to discuss any issues they are having related to anxiety or stress from:

Get to know the benefits of GMSSP

- Unlimited real-time support
- Scheduled appointments
- Peer support community
- Confidential access to counsellors
- Campus and community resource referrals
- Free app with 100+ resources
- Match with a counsellor that meets your needs
- Support in 140+ languages

Get help with any school, health, or general life concern

- Managing stress
- Depression and anxiety
- Social isolation
- Homesickness
- Mental health issues
- Coping with trauma
- Family challenges
- Academic issues
- And much more!

Access Support

Easiest ways to access support.

- 1 Chat by downloading the **Student Support App**. Scan QR code.
- 2 Call anytime from anywhere in the world
Within Canada & USA [1-844-451-9700](tel:1-844-451-9700)
Outside of Canada & USA [+1-416-380-6578](tel:+1-416-380-6578)
- 3 Visit gmssp.org



ENSURING VACCINATIONS ARE UP-TO-DATE

The CISS team has your vaccination schedule as provided to us in your application file.

If between the time you submitted your application to us, and your arrival, you have received any new vaccinations, be sure to have a confirmation copy with you and submit it to your Local Coordinator.

If your school or the public health unit for your location requires further information about your immunization/vaccine record, your Local Coordinator may ask to see any updates you have received to ensure that our records are up-to-date.

Students studying in Ontario

Ontario Public Health Units for the city or town where you are living and attending school will review your immunization/vaccine record. Reviews begin in September and may be done any time after.

All students studying in Ontario must have the following vaccines, with timing as outlined (others are not mandatory)

NOTE in the chart below the dates that each vaccine is given in ONTARIO, which may be different from the dates you received them in your home country. **Public Health will only accept the Ontario dates as valid** (ie. MMR dose #1 must have been given on or after 12 months of age. If you received it at 9 months, it will be considered invalid)

- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio - IPV
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Varicella (if born in 2010 or later)
- Meningococcal C conjugate (Men-C)

If you receive a notice from your Public Health unit that you are missing or are not in adherence to the vaccine schedule, you **MUST** share this memo with your Local Coordinator so that our head office can help you address the situation. This may mean receiving a booster vaccine or having an antibody test. **DO NOT DISREGARD THIS NOTICE!**



Failure to address the issue and/or disregard receiving any missing vaccines **WILL RESULT IN YOUR SCHOOL SUSPENSION** until it is remedied.

ONTARIO ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION

AGE	Diphtheria	Tetanus	Pertussis	Polio	Hib <small>Haemophilus influenzae type b</small>	Pneum-C-13 <small>Pneumococcal conjugate</small>	Rotavirus	Measles	Mumps	Rubella	Varicella	Men-C <small>Meningococcal conjugate</small>	Hepatitis B	Men-CACYW <small>Meningococcal conjugate</small>	HPV <small>Human Papillomavirus</small>
2 months	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
4 months	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
6 months	●	●	●	●	●										
12 months						●		●	●	●		●			
15 months											●				
18 months	●	●	●	●	●										
4-6 years	●	●	●	●				●	●	●	●				
12 years (Grade 7)													●	●	●
14-16 years	●	●	●												

STAYING SAFE IN CANADA

Canada is generally a very safe country. However, it is important that you use common sense and take certain precautions to avoid any unpleasant experiences.

- **House Key:** your family entrusts you with a key to their home. Don't lose it! Don't give it to anyone!
- **Home Security Codes:** do not disclose/give out the code to anyone – not even close friends!
- **Money/Cash:** Canadians don't tend to carry a lot of cash with them. We advise the same for you. If you have a Canadian bank account, you can pay for most items (food & goods) using your bank card, credit card, Apple/Google/Samsung pay, etc.
- **Strangers:** Although everyone will be a stranger to you at first, be cautious to whom you speak. If someone makes you uncomfortable, walk (or run) away to a nearby store or place of safety. **NEVER agree to go anywhere with a stranger.**
- **New Online Friends:** NEVER agree to personally meet anyone you have “met” on-line.
- **Alone after dark:** Most communities are safe, but it is often advised that students (girls especially) not walk alone after dark
- **Host mom/dad contact:** know your host mom or dad's cell number!

Walking

- Know where you are going and how you will get there before you leave. Canadians are friendly and helpful to visitors, but you don't want to mark yourself as a 'stranger' and potential target.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel you are being followed or something doesn't feel right – change direction, go into a store. Use your common sense.
- Avoid walking alone – travel in a group
- Avoid walking in the dark or in isolated areas – alleys, vacant parking lots or deserted places.
- Carry a whistle to alert attention if you need it
- Girls: Carry your purse across your body
- Boys: if you have a wallet or money clip – carry it inside your jacket pocket rather than in your back pants or jeans pocket
- Avoid carrying a lot of money/cash with you
- **Never approach anyone in a car or on the street, even if they seem friendly or are asking directions.**
- **Never accept a ride from anyone other than your host family or a close friend that you know you can trust (and who is 25 years of age or older!)**
- **Never hitchhike**

Friendships

- Be selective in your choice of friends and be wary of engaging in activities that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Be respectful of the decisions of others. You should never pressure nor be pressured into engaging in activities or acts that are uncomfortable. (No means No!)
- If you no longer wish to befriend someone, be clear about ending the friendship/relationship. Should you experience any form of physical or sexual abuse, please seek assistance from a trusted adult, your local coordinator and/or your CISS/MLI Coordinator.

Parties

It is very likely that during your stay you will be invited to attend a party. We want you to have fun but also that you stay safe, recognize dangerous situations.

- Accept invitations only from friends you know
- If the party seems too big or out-of-control, leave the party and return home
- Local students could consume alcohol/drugs at parties. If police are called, their consequences may not be as severe as yours! **You may be expelled.** DO NOT consume alcohol or drugs!
- NEVER leave any drink unattended OR accept a drink from someone, as anyone can put an illegal substance into it. This is especially true for girls. BE CAUTIOUS!
- Open your own cans of soda/pop/juice!
- Always be sure you have a safe and reliable ride home. Talk to your host before you go!

Identifying and communicating abusive situations

Abuse (sexual, physical, or verbal) is a rare occurrence on exchange programs. However, as an international student you are a long way from home in a new country and culture. We want you to know how to recognize abuse and to openly communicate about it if it happens to you, or if you see it happening to someone you know.

During your exchange, it may be hard to understand different cultural practices and behaviours. Sharing affection between family and friends is very common and, in most cases, a positive experience. Hugs and kisses on cheeks are common among family members or even close friends, but Canadians, in general tend to be less openly affectionate in public or with strangers.

However, it is possible that someone may show you a type of affection that makes you feel uncomfortable.

At no time is inappropriate or uninvited touching of private body parts acceptable.

If you find yourself in this situation, please tell the person to stop immediately as you are not comfortable with the behaviour or situation. Similarly, should you feel that someone is being verbally aggressive or physically abusive towards you, please tell them to stop and seek assistance from a trusted adult, or your Local Coordinator. You may also choose to talk to a teacher, a host parent, or a school counsellor. Regardless of whom you choose to talk to, please understand that the abuser is the responsible party, IT IS NEVER YOUR FAULT!!

- Claims of abuse are taken very seriously, and all claims will be investigated by CISS, the school and the police.
- If you experience or witness any form of abuse, please speak with trusted adult and/or Local Coordinator
- If you need immediate medical attention, call 9-1-1 as well as our Emergency Phone



- CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY
- HANG OUT WITH GOOD PEOPLE
- MAKE GOOD CHOICES

TRAVELLING WHILE IN CANADA

PERSONAL TRAVEL – TRAVEL REQUESTS / ICENT



ALL personal travel requires that you submit the travel request via the iCent mobile app. Request will be reviewed and approved by our team provided it follows the guidelines for independent travel. If your LC has any questions or additional details are needed, they will contact you. Your natural parent will also be able to provide their required permission directly on

the app as well. **Watch the timing for the request!!** A large trip outside of your community, province or out of Canada will need you to send this at least 2 weeks prior to a planned trip.

Reminder:

- CISS permits personal travel only if accompanied by your host family or other responsible adult, such as another host family
- **Overnight travel on your own or with your friends is not permitted.**
- Students cannot stay in hotels or hostels alone.

SLEEPOVERS

If you wish to arrange a sleepover at your host home, you must discuss this in advance with your host parent(s) AND your Local Coordinator, obtain their permission and provide them with the name and contact information for your friend's parent(s). Your LC will contact the other parent(s) to confirm the arrangement.

If you wish to arrange a sleepover with a friend at another home you must:

- Send your LC an email/text a minimum of 2 days in advance with the details of the sleepover family.
- If the sleepover is sooner than 2 days, still connect with your LC – even day of – but you cannot attend a sleepover until you have received a written permission from your LC!!
- Remember LCs also have other jobs, so reply may not be instant!

Send the following information to your LC

- Indicate if the student is with another MLI host family, is a local friend or an international student in another programme
- Confirm that a parent will be home during the night
- Does your host family agree to this?
- How do you plan to get to/from this sleepover home?

After you have followed the requirements for a sleepover, **you must wait for approval from your LC before going.**

SCHOOL

Schools often offer trips for students in select classes, sports or extracurricular activities (i.e. school band, debating club, sports tournament, charity work). The school will provide a full outline of the trip itinerary, chaperones and costs.

- Day trips within your community can be approved by your Local Coordinator.
- Trips of a longer duration that include travel outside of the community, province or Canada will require approval of your natural parents.
- Submit the travel request via iCENT

CISS ARRANGED TRIPS

CISS offices in Toronto and North Vancouver will offer overnight or multi-day trips to places of interest. Participation is voluntary and details, pricing and sign up deadlines must be adhered to. **Travel Requests for all CISS-arranged trips will be managed via iCENT**

In addition to the cost of the trip, travel to city of departure or necessary overnight in city of departure prior to trip start will be extra cost. Your Local Coordinators and Student Care Team can help guide you to arrange necessary travel to point of departure.

WINTER AND MARCH BREAK:

If you are enrolled in a 10-month CISS school programme, you may be permitted to return home for school breaks with a duration of one week or longer (ie Christmas or March break). **Trip must be approved in the iCENT app before arrangements are finalized.**

Once approved, your flights must:

- be arranged by your parents or your agent representative in your home country
- adhere to the holiday break schedule - you are NOT permitted to miss or reschedule tests, assignments or exams (if applicable) due to travel plans
- **Departures and Returns must be scheduled in collaboration with your Local Coordinator! Please check before confirming any flights.**
- Flights scheduled on December 24, 25, 26, 31 or January 1 are not supported by CISS
- Airport transfers may be arranged by CISS (extra fees apply), or student may arrange travel on own, but with approval by their Local Coordinator to ensure it is a safe mode.



CAUTION!

In our experience, returning home for a short break (i.e. Christmas/Winter, Spring break) can reverse much of the cultural adaptation that you have already achieved during your time in Canada. We find that after a return home, it is common for students to revert to the start of their adaptation path. You might become homesick once again, and it could take you longer to re-adjust. This is especially dangerous after the winter holiday with final exams at the end of

If your natural family wishes to join you in Canada, please arrange this at the **END OF YOUR PROGRAMME**. This will allow you to be able to share all your knowledge and the highlights of your experience with them.

REMINDER: Do you have all the necessary visa and travel documents?

If you plan to travel out of Canada, please be sure that your visa into Canada accepts multiple entries. You want to keep this in mind when submitting your visa/study permit application.

If you plan to travel to or through the United States of America, even just as a stop-over, you may be required to have a US Travel visa or ESTA (depending on your country of origin). If you do not currently have this document and are from a country that requires one, you must apply for this **PRIOR TO ARRIVING IN CANADA**. The process to apply for and receive a US visa from within Canada is very difficult and involves a personal interview at a US consulate in Canada. We do not recommend students plan to obtain a US visa once they are in Canada.

Travel to any other country (outside of your home country) may also require you to obtain travel permissions for that country. This must be obtained before you travel and may be a challenge to obtain from within Canada. Be sure to check this before arranging trips.

TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED!!

For students living in cities that border another province in Canada or the USA, talk to your local coordinator or your Student Care Supervisor about obtaining a special permission for regular trips across the border with your host family.



IMPORTANT TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL TO USA

Effective as of June 2025 until further notice

The government of the United States of America has, since the spring of 2025, tightened immigration protocols for travellers seeking entry into the USA. Increased scrutiny from American border officials is not widespread but the selection criteria is unclear, unpredictable, and in some cases has caused confusion, delays, or refusal at the immigration point.

In consideration of some recent occurrences at the Canada/USA border, CISS has temporarily suspended discretionary student travel into the United States (whether by land, air, or watercraft).

Our goal is to proactively avoid potential challenges and unnecessary border crossings for both students and host families. This position aligns with the guidance by our partners at CAPS-i (The Canadian Association of Public Schools – International) and with many other school boards. This caution is in the interest of student safety. CISS is your acting Custodian while you are in Canada, but any difficulties encountered in the United States or other foreign country during the High School experience cannot be supported by CISS.

Host Families have been advised not to plan unnecessary travel with their international student which requires crossing the American border and we urge you to do the same when planning arrivals, departures and potential visits to relatives or natural parents.

BECOMING A “GLOBAL CITIZEN”

Living Abroad: The Adjustment and Cultural Adaptation



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