

Inlingua Victoria College of Languages



HOST FAMILY ORIENTATION PACKAGE

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Crossing Language Barriers



HOST FAMILY ORIENTATION PACKAGE --GENERAL GUIDELINES--

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ORIENTATION

Thank you very much for participating in our Homestay Program as host parents. Some of the students' best memories will be of their experiences with a Canadian family. Our host families provide much of the backbone of our program.

Students have come for many reasons, from many cultures and from many socio-economic backgrounds.

In anticipation of some of the many questions you have, following are some points of information:

- A. **inlingua Victoria** sets the host family fee each year. Under no circumstances are private arrangements authorized unless the Program Coordinator gives approval.
- B. The placement of students in host families is for the benefit of the student, not the host family.
- C. The program Coordinator is the custodian of the students and has ultimate authority for their care while they are studying at **inlingua Victoria**.
- D. The issue of telephones arises every year. Some families limit the use of telephone to the hours before 10 P.M. We ask you to be aware that in the East, this may be the only time when students can reach their families. We suggest that you encourage your students to buy telephone cards.
- E. If a student needs to miss school because of illness, then please inform the school. It is also your responsibility to monitor your student re: tardiness and attendance. Contact **inlingua Victoria** directly if you are concerned.
- F. Safety has become an important concern with parents, students and others. To that end, students will be instructed about those issues, but it would be a good idea for you to review safety procedures with your students (without alarming them

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unduly). If you become concerned about any safety issue involving your students, then please inform the homestay coordinator.

- G. If the situation with a student in your home becomes difficult, then it is important to inform us so that we might effect a change. Sometimes students request changes for a variety of reasons. While we do not like to make wholesale changes, we also have to respect the fact that some relationships just don't work. In some cases, there may be problems of personalities. In others, it could be that there is sibling rivalry, which is affecting the tone of the house. In still others, pets may be perceived as being impossible!
- H. Please do NOT telephone the homestay coordinator in the evening except if there is an emergency. Evening is generally family time.
- I. You have gone through a selection process as host families. However, this does not guarantee continued placement of students with your family. We try (as best we can, often given little advance information) to place students appropriately. Please inform your friends or neighbors who have not been selected as host parents at this time that we do not have the time to telephone them and let them know they have not been selected. Nor do we expect them to telephone us.

HOST FAMILY GENERAL INFORMATION

This information is intended to address the broad range of concerns of new homestay parents. You are advised to speak to experienced homestay parents for more details.

1. Why do foreign students come to Victoria, British Columbia?

Students come for a variety of reasons:

- As members of exchange programs
- For a one-year or short-term intensive English program
- To become more fluent in English, which will lead to greater employment opportunities in their home countries
- Experience Canadian culture and lifestyle
- Desire to experience life abroad
- Their parents have sent them

Suggestions: Talk to your student about his/her reasons for coming. Help him/her to set language goals.

2. What am I as a homestay parent expected to provide?

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As a homestay parent you are expected to provide essentially what you would normally provide for your own family:

- Private bedroom
- Three wholesome meals a day and snacks as required
- A quiet, adequate lit and heated study space
- Hot water and facilities for bathing
- Laundry (you may expect a student to do his/her own laundry if you wish)
- Emotional support if the students suffers from homesickness, difficulties at school, etc.
- Academic support (help with homework if possible)
- Inclusion of the student in family outings, trips to restaurants, special occasions, recreational activities and
- Access to the common living areas of the house

Suggestions: Early in the homestay, have a conversation with your student about expectations (yours and the student's). Reach a mutual agreement about the amount of interaction between the student and the family and the kinds of activities in which you will participate together. Discuss regularly as situations change.

3. What kinds of things should the student pay for himself/herself?

- Clothing
- School supplies
- Toiletries
- All long distance phone calls
- Medicines and medications of all kinds
- Any dental work
- Haircuts or other personal services
- Personal entertainment and expenses (If your family is going out for dinner or to a movie you should pay for the students. If the student chooses to eat in a restaurant or go to a movie with friends, and your family is staying home or meals are provided at home, the students should pay for his/her own.)
- Costs associated with participation in school-sponsored activities
- Stamps, stationary, books, magazines, CD's, posters, etc.
- Costs related to renewal of student visas and airplane tickets home

Suggestions: Please discuss this list with your student.

4. What problems can I expect at the start?

Students may suffer from several overlapping conditions for the first few weeks or in some cases, even months:

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- Culture Shock: Culture shock is what people experience when they are suddenly immersed in a culture, which is different from their own. "Culture" means the largely unwritten patterns of behaviour that govern the lives of a particular group of people.
- Culture Shock comes from the realization that basic assumptions about life and familiar ways of behaving are no longer appropriate or useful.
- Remember that your student is struggling with the following new things: language, climate, community, (and in many cases) strange customs, food, home, family, behaving and showing emotions. It is worth noting that if you as a host family have had little or no experience in another culture, you then may experience some culture shock yourselves.
- Jet lag: most students have traveled through several time zones to reach the Victoria area. They may suffer from the effects of jetlag for up to two weeks, including sleeping problems, drowsiness at the wrong time of day, loss of appetite, general fatigue and disorientation.
- Homesickness: many students have left their family, friends and pets for the first time, and they are far away. Natural feelings of homesickness may be further exacerbated by culture shock.
- Loneliness: students may feel very alone in this strange new situation. They may feel like outsiders in the community, in the school, even in your home. Limited English ability may contribute to their feelings of isolation.
- Teenage mood swings: even though they come from another country, they are still teenagers dealing with the physical and mental changes that all teenagers go through. At times you may find yourself on the emotional roller coaster so familiar to parents of teenagers!

All of the above may exhibit themselves in any of the following ways: quiet, unresponsive, withdrawn behaviour, crying spells, isolation from the family (long periods alone in the bedroom), lack of appetite, despondent behaviour, depression, anger, anxiety, moodiness, lethargy.

Suggestions: If you suspect that your student is suffering from any of the above conditions, talk about it, explaining that it is perfectly normal, that it will get better in time, and that you would like to help. Plan some outings or activities together. Encourage your student to phone or write parents. Ask about his/her family and life in his/her country. Look at photographs together. Plan topics of evening conversations. Develop the habit of watching a weekly TV show together or taking walks together. Help the student build an active and busy life in this community. Help him/her develop friendships with people of a similar age. Talking through difficult times can lead to a close and more caring relationship.

5. What kinds of rules should I have for the student?

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The student should be expected to follow whatever rules you have for other members of your household. The following are suggestions, some of which you may choose to adjust for the age of your student:

- Be at home on school nights, unless participating in an organized activity e.g. Swimming lessons, study groups, etc.
- You should set an age-appropriate curfew for weekend nights
- Be expected to let you know where they are, at all times
- Expected to respect your rules regarding smoking
- Prohibited from using drugs or alcohol unless over 19
- Expected to have chores or assist with some duties in the home
- Ask ahead of time if they need rides to special events or if they wish to have friends overnight, etc.
- Not to be left alone overnight; adult supervision must be arranged if you are away
- Immigration Canada does not permit students to hold jobs while in Canada
- Expected to attend school every day that school is in session unless they are ill
- Homestay parents are asked to inform the school if the student is ill
- Phone calls limited to 15 minutes at a time
- Homestay parents are advised never to allow students to leave the community overnight or for a weekend without carefully checking to ensure where the student is going and what adult supervision will be
- Host families may wish to make additional rules: shower/bathing, table manners, other manners, use of household appliances, laundry, bringing friends home, etc.

Suggestions: Discuss rules early and often, making sure that the student understands. Deal with a few rules at a time. Reach mutual agreement about as many rules as possible. Explain the reasons for your rules. Be fair and firm.

6. What about food?

Canadian food can be a problem for international students at first. Certainly the food you serve in your home will be different from the food they are used to. People worldwide derive great comfort from their familiar and favourite foods. Eating times, table manners, and methods of serving and presenting food will also be different for the students. Most students adjust quickly to a Canadian diet but some take longer than others.

- *Suggestions:* Give your students a tour of the kitchen and the refrigerator, naming items and explaining what they are for. Ask the student what different items are found in the cupboard and refrigerator at home. Talk about favourite foods and what is eaten at mealtimes at home. Take the student food shopping

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with you, especially to a large food store where various ethnic foods are available. Ask the student what he would like to take to school for lunch. Have a good variety of fresh fruits and vegetable on hand.

7. What if my student gets sick?

It is likely that at some point during a long-term homestay your student will get ill. All inlingua students must have a medical insurance throughout their study period. Anytime a student visits a doctor or hospital they should have their medical insurance card with them.

Your student may find Canadian medical practices and medicines strange and prefer to use medicine from his/her own country. However, the same common sense applies to illness worldwide. A student who is ill should stay in bed and see a doctor if any condition persists more than a few days.

Suggestions: Discuss illness with the student as one of your early conversations. Ask the student what kinds of medical problems he/she has had in the past and what the usual treatments are. Please try to escort your student to go see a doctor as medical term English can be very challenging.

8. How can I best prepare my family and myself for the homestay experience?

It's a good idea to discuss the expectations of all family members before the student arrives. Children may think that the student will be like a new brother or sister or that they will become best friends. In fact this doesn't happen very often. Sharing the same home does not guarantee that your own children and the student will have anything in common with each other. An honest discussion about the difficulties of forming a cross-cultural friendship, with the added barrier of language can save disappointment later on. The more you know about the country and culture that your student comes from, the better able you will be to understand and support him/her. You should at the very least, have an idea of where the country is and what kind of environment your student likely comes from.

Experienced homestay families can give you lots of helpful suggestions to help you prepare for the homestay experience and also advice about what pitfalls to avoid. If you seek the connection, please contact our Homestay Coordinator.

Suggestions:

Visit Make a list of things to talk about and things to do during the first few days and

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weeks. Talk to an experienced homestay parent. Prepare a welcome for your student: a sign, a gift, flowers, or any small gesture of welcome.

9. What should I do during the first few days?

- Keep the student busy but also give him/her some time alone
- Encourage him/her to phone home soon after arrival
- Contact the parents yourself saying how pleased you are to have their son or daughter with you, even if they don't understand English, they will appreciate the gesture
- Introduce your student to extended family members, neighbours and close friends
- Write down names to help him/her remember them
- Take the time to learn the correct pronunciation of your student's name
- Discuss how you would like the student to address you and other family members
- Take your student to the place that sells bus passes or bus tickets
- **Show your student how to take a bus to downtown and how to get to inlingua before their first day of school**
- Show girls where they can buy personal supplies and discuss how you would like them to dispose of sanitary items in your home
- Visit other local points of interest and make sure the student knows the route from your home to school
- Go over school information with her and discuss the plans and the times for going to school every day
- Ask him what he would like to do
- Provide her with a transit schedule
- Relax! Focus on making the student comfortable and your own feelings of nervousness and anxiety will disappear
- Celebrate small milestones right away (the end of the first week, the first month, etc.)
- Establish a pattern of daily conversation. Have the student help to make a list of conversation topics to get through the first few weeks

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PROGRAM PROCEDURES

To facilitate communication and to ensure that the program operates smoothly, we ask you to follow these procedures:

1. Please contact the program coordinator out of office hours for emergency purpose only

These are emergencies:

- a. A health emergency (including accident),
- b. A student is missing
- c. An emergency has arisen in your family or in the student's family at home

These are **NOT** emergencies:

- a. A student is not obeying host family rules,
- b. A student is missing class
- c. A student is late for curfew.

We ask you to use common sense in dealing with these issues.

2. If you and your student have issues, then please follow these directions:
 - a. If a student is missing school, is late, or not completing homework, then please contact the Student Services Coordinator at inlingua.
 - b. If a student is not obeying host family rules contact the coordinator during office hours.
3. Please be aware of the following considerations about our role in dealing with host families and students:
 - a. If the student becomes ill at school, then instruct your student to inform one of the teachers, staff or the coordinator. The coordinator will inform you or take the student to the clinic if you are not available.

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- b. If the student must stay home for illness, then please inform the school directly. The coordinator does not need to be informed if a student must miss a day of school, unless there is an emergency.
- c. Please have your student direct any health or safety concerns to the program coordinator.
- d. The issue of health and safety for students is paramount. When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Basically it works like this: When a student arrives, he or she is enrolled in private insurance, if he/she did not arrange medical insurance prior to leaving their home country. This insurance is effective for three calendar months prior to the student's coverage by MSP if they are staying longer than 6 months.

For this private insurance, a student is covered for emergency medical or dental problems. The student is issued with an individual card, which he or she should carry. The student pays "up-front" and then is reimbursed through the insurance company. The card the student is issued gives a telephone number contact as well as an individual registration number, which must be given when a student is making an enquiry about insurance. As well, a pamphlet outlining the details about the insurance is given when the card is issued.

This is the procedure to follow:

1. In the case of a medical emergency, take the student to a doctor, clinic or hospital as the case might be. Have the problem treated. Normally, the student will be billed immediately. Have the student pay this bill.
2. Telephone the contact number on the insurance card. The contact person at the insurance office will issue a claim form, which must be completed and submitted if the student is to be reimbursed.
3. After the necessary forms have been completed, then the student will submit them to the insurance office and then will receive payment.

Here are some common questions asked about this insurance:

1. What conditions are covered?

This coverage applies to emergencies only and does NOT take the place of regular health care.

2. What happens if my student becomes sick?

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Take the student to the appropriate treatment center. Then, inform the coordinator. If the illness is serious, inform the coordinator immediately. If not, then inform the coordinator during working hours.

ACTIVITIES

- Some of the international students' best experiences have to do with participation in activities both in the school and in the community.
- Many new students need encouragement to participate in activities because of shyness or because of language difficulties.
- The community also provides activities available to young people. Again, we encourage you to help your student become involved.
- Another way our host parents can help is to volunteer to coordinate an activity that may involve a small or large group of students.
- For example, one host family may offer to host pizza evening with movies for a few students. Others may offer to take a group hiking.
- The idea is not to have mass activities, but instead to offer a variety of small-scale events which would help to "break the ice" for everyone.

CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO HOSTING STUDENTS

As a host family, you are the parents **NOT** the best friends of the student. You are expected to act in a "in a kind and judicious" manner with respect to your dealings with your student. That means that you must be the adult!

A primary responsibility of the host parent is to care for the student and to keep the coordinator informed about the welfare of the student. That includes informing us of behaviour of other students which may impact on your student and in making us aware of potentially dangerous or inappropriate personal relationships.

Issues with respect to hosting students include:

Safety:

1. As host parents, you must be aware that safety is key. Students must be properly supervised at all times. Students should not be left alone overnight for any reason.

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If you plan to be away, make certain your student stays with an adult who has been approved by this program.

2. Do not allow your students to be 'wandering at large' downtown at night, especially alone. There are certain areas of the city, which are dangerous and should be avoided. The key is to make certain you know where your student is at all times.
3. If a student asks to participate in a 'sleep over', then make certain to check the particular with the adult supervisors.

Relationship protocols:

As you know, different cultures have different protocols about personal space. We ask you to "be smart". For your own protection, take a very careful approach to hugging, touching or showing affection to your student. Actions are easily misinterpreted by young people and others around you.

Examples:

- Japanese students rarely have a warm, physically demonstrative relationship with their natural parents. Therefore, be cautious in demonstrating physical affection until you are sure of your relationships with the student.
- Latin students are very demonstrative, as a general rule. Again, you must take a cautious approach.
- European and Latin American students often greet each other with hugs and kisses on the cheek; this is normal. In fact, many of these students consider Canadians 'cold' because they do not demonstrate this open affection. (Do not misinterpret overt signs of friendliness as being any more than that.)
- If we receive any kind of information about 'inappropriate conduct' by any adult, then we must investigate. That is a legal requirement.

Please note these points:

- Adults should remember to dress appropriately while in the company of students
- Adults should not use 'sexually suggestive' language or tell off-colour jokes in front of students
- Overt or excessive displays of affection in public are completely inappropriate
- Some students might want a family type of relationship with their host family and some may just want room and board. Don't be hurt if the latter is the case. Each student is different.

If you have any questions or concerns we encourage you to seek answers or advice from the program coordinator.

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*Remember, we have chosen you because we think you would make great host families for our students. Have fun and enjoy the amazing experience of hosting a student from another country!

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