



EDMONDS COLLEGE
HOUSING AND
RESIDENCE LIFE

Host Family Handbook



2026-2027



EDMONDS COLLEGE
HOUSING AND
RESIDENCE LIFE



Dear Homestay Family,

Welcome to the Homestay Program of Edmonds College. We appreciate your willingness to serve in this way, and we expect that you will find hosting an international student a mutually rewarding and enriching experience.

This handbook is meant to acquaint you with our program and offer help and information that will be useful to you and your students.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Housing Office at 425-640-1080 or send us an email at housing@edmonds.edu. Please direct friends interested in the program to our website - <http://edmonds.edu/housing>. **In case of an emergency only after office hours**, our cell phone is 425-308-4061.

Thank you for your interest in this exciting and educational program. I'm looking forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Luke Botzheim
Director
Housing and Residence Life
Edmonds College
luke.botzheim@edmonds.edu
425-640-1080

[Learn More about Edmonds College Housing in our Website](#)

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Information for Host Families

Housing Office Information

Location of Housing Office

Rainier Place Residence Hall (first floor, near the lounge) on the EC Campus

Physical address

19920 68th Ave. W
Lynnwood, WA 98036

Mailing address

Attn: Housing Office
20000 68th Ave. W
Lynnwood, WA 98036

Contact Information

Open Monday to Thursday 9:00am - 5:00pm and Friday 9:00am - Noon

425-640-1080 – housing@edmonds.edu

<http://www.edmonds.edu/housing>

Residence Halls

Rainier Place and Triton Court have been leased to house EC students. There are a total of 400 beds available for U.S. and international students wanting to live in a residence hall environment. The residence halls are open to all EC and CWU Lynnwood students.

Homestay Program

Since 1976, the Housing Office has managed a Homestay program in hopes of supporting cross-cultural understanding. We work with almost 300 host families each year who host up to 700 students. There have been over 30,000 Homestay students at EC.

Office of International Programs

Location and Contact Information

Snohomish Hall, Suite 301

Open Monday to Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm

425-640-1518

oip_desk@edmonds.edu

The OIP Office can help students with many matters such as admission, ESL and college academic classes, immigration, and cross-cultural information. Please encourage your students to call to make appointments so the appropriate advisor can be prepared to meet with the students.

The OIP Office is also staffed with part-time office assistants. All personnel are available to assist anyone with questions or concerns related to international education or direct them to the appropriate staff if needed. Students seeking information on churches, mosques, or other religious institutions providing services in foreign languages can also contact the OIP Office.

International students must keep their resident address information current with the OIP Office. When your student moves, please advise them to go to the OIP Office and update this information.

Types of Student Programs

Quarterly/Regular Students

Students can come any quarter, but most come in Fall Quarter (September). Some come through schools or companies (agents); some come on their own (private).

Length of Stay – Varies

These students can be here from one quarter to multiple years. There is no way to know for sure. It depends on various factors, such as relationships with host family, classes, finances, desire to live with friends, etc.

Expectations of Host Family

- Only English is spoken at home when student is present
- More help and involvement for the student's first month and then student may become more independent
- Other expectations outlined in handbook and orientation

HEF (Hospitality Education Foundation)

This program sends a group of students every year from Japan to Edmonds College. They have their own teachers and advisors to help students and families.

Length of Stay – 9 ½ months (1st Saturday of March - Mid December)

Expectations of Host Family

- No other Japanese resident in home (including other students)
- Only English is spoken at home when student is present
- Higher involvement with student throughout duration of program
- Other expectations outlined in handbook and HEF orientation

Short Term Programs

OIP arranges these programs throughout the year to promote EC. Each group is from a different country or program.

Length of Stay – Varies (generally ranges from one week to one month)

Expectations of Host Family

- Only English is spoken at home when student is present
- Higher involvement with student throughout duration of program
- Possibility of driving student to and from campus
- Spend time showing student around local area
- Other expectations outlined in handbook and orientation

Homestay Program Procedures

1. Initial inquiry regarding hosting results in an invitation to a Homestay Family Orientation. We ask that the family checks the bus schedule and makes sure that total travel from front door to classroom is under 60 minutes.

2. We hope all family members that will have responsibility for student(s) will take part in this orientation. We encourage families to return to orientations while they are hosting to review information. Families that leave our program for more than a year must return to an orientation and update all information.

3. After the orientation, families are given paperwork to take home and fill out. These forms must be filled out before our staff member comes to visit your home.

4. **The items below must be completed and ready before we visit. If they are not, we will not visit your home.**

- A completed and signed application
- A completed and signed agreement
- A completed and signed Disclosure of Information form
- A completed Washington State Patrol Form on each member of the household over 18 years of age or older (\$15 each)
- A room with a bed, desk, dresser, window, closet, chair (not a folding chair), lamp, hangers, and linens
- Photos of every member of the household and front of the house
- A payment of \$60 (\$40 for returning families) for the site visit and preparing file (no cash). This does not assure a student will be placed in your home.
- W-9 Form
- A generic welcome letter to future students (a short page introducing your family). To make sure your letter remains valid, please use only birth dates and other dates, not ages or lengths of time. **Please email this to housing@edmonds.edu so that we may cut and paste it into our database.**

5. After you have the rooms ready and **all** forms are filled out, please email the Housing Office (housing@edmonds.edu) to ask to set up a home visit. During the visit, a staff member will meet the family members and ask questions about your family's culture. They will tour the house, especially the room for the prospective student, and survey the safety of the area.

6. Safety aspects we are looking for in home: working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide alarm outside every sleeping area, walk from house to bus stop (lights, sidewalk, etc.), and exits and entrances.

7. Once we have visited and approved your home, received all paperwork, done our background checks, and received letters from your references, your family will be ready to host.

8. When a student is placed from outside the United States, a Housing Office staff member will email or call to discuss students with the prospective host family. You should be aware that when we call for placement:

- We usually do not have much time for placement and if we do not hear back promptly, we usually call the next person.
- You should make sure you want to take the student, as it causes a lot of stress for the student and works for our office if you change your mind even a day later.
- Some students may still not show up on arrival dates, as there can be changes in their decision to come, visa issues, money issues, etc.

If it is agreed that the family would like the student to be placed in their home, information about the family is sent to the student from the packet provided by the family. Included in the information to the student is the letter, photos, email address, and a little bit about the family.

9. The host family will also receive information about the student. Included in this packet are the following:

- Basic application information
- Arrival information
- Photos (if available)
- Medical waiver if required (under 18 years of age)
- Additional pertinent information

10. If the student is already in the area, the procedure will be slightly altered. After receiving a call that there is a student needing placement, the student can meet the host family at the Housing Office. The family can take the student home to visit and get to know them. Following the visit, the family and the student will contact Housing Office staff. If both the student and the family agree that this is a match, arrangements will be made to move the student at a mutually agreed upon date. The family will receive a packet of information about the student. Both parties have to agree, or it is not a match.

11. On Arrival Day each quarter, the student will usually be brought from the airport to the Housing Office. Host families will pick up their students at the Housing Office. The families and

students will be introduced to each other and then everyone is free to go home. Please check in with the staff before leaving with the student.

**Washington State law (RCW 19.27.530) requires carbon monoxide alarms to be installed outside every sleeping area in new residences. As of January 1, 2013, carbon monoxide alarms are required in existing apartments, condominiums, hotels, motels, and single-family residences, with some exceptions. Owner-occupied single-family residences, legally occupied before July 26, 2009, are not required to have carbon monoxide alarms until they are sold.*

Welcome Letter

Please type up a "Welcome Letter" for prospective new students coming to your home. There needs to be information about your family, jobs, activities you like to do, as well as pets and any other information that might be interesting to a new student. Please use very **simple English**: short sentences that use simple grammar structure, simple vocabulary, and no idioms or slang. Your student is probably still studying English. If you use **dates instead of ages**, your letter will stay current longer. Also, please make it sound warm and welcoming. When you are finished, please email it to: housing@edmonds.edu

Sample Welcome Letter

“Welcome to our home!

My name is Helen, and my husband’s name is Fred. We are so excited that you will come and live in our home! We have enjoyed hosting other students from different countries very much, and we have learned a lot from them. I hope we can all share together and learn much from each other too. We have three children who are all grown and married. Two live close by, so we see them and four of our grandchildren quite often. The third lives in California and we get together at least once a year.

I am a teller at Bank of America. Fred designs and runs tests on airplanes at Boeing. We enjoy traveling, hiking, bowling, and church activities together. Fred loves watching car racing and building model race cars. I love gardening, cooking, and making Christmas decorations that I sell and give to friends each year.

Our young German Shepherd dog, Lassie, loves riding in the car, going for walks with us, and making friends with anyone she meets.

We have a small but pleasant home, with a beautiful backyard, and an extra bedroom we are glad to share with you. We hope that you will enjoy living with us as much as we anticipate enjoying living with you.

Your new host family,

Helen and Fred Sample”

Homestay Family Agreement

In agreeing to be a Homestay family for an Edmonds College student, the Homestay Family (hereinafter “the family”) agrees to and understands the following:

1. The family agrees to accept and welcome the student into their home as a member of the family and will include them in family mealtimes and activities. Students may be asked to help with chores, but an assignment of regular chores, other than cleaning their own room and cleaning up after themselves, is discouraged as it may be misunderstood (i.e., that the family wants a maid, not a student).
2. The family will have a daily conversation and listening time available for the student, in order to help them learn English.
3. The family will accompany the student one time on the bus route between the home and the college the student is attending prior to, or on the first day of school.
4. The family will provide all food for three meals a day, prepare the evening meal a minimum of five evenings per week (the other two can be fast food or going out...). and make sure students know where food is and how to help themselves to other meals. The family will allow student input into the grocery list and will be thoughtful of student’s food likes and dislikes.
5. The family understands that all utilities (**including high-speed internet**), are the responsibility of the host family.
6. The family agrees to notify the EC Housing Office of any changes in the home situation immediately (i.e., death, divorce, birth, adoption, marriage, students from other programs, family members, or pets added).
7. The family agrees to indemnify and hold harmless EC and/or its agents, employees, or officers from any and all claims, actions, suits, proceedings, costs, expenses, damages, and liabilities, including attorneys' fees arising out of, connected with, or resulting from a student living in their home.
8. The family waives the right to privacy under the Washington State Privacy Act allowing EC to reveal their address and telephone number for business purposes only to students, agencies, and doctors.
9. The family agrees not to have or use any illegal substances in their home. This includes marijuana as it is still illegal federally.
10. The family agrees not to host any students attending EC that have not registered with the Housing Office, realizing that while students may request their home they can only be placed there within the guidelines of space available, avoiding to place 2 students of the same nationality/language in a home.

11. The family agrees to notify the EC housing office of filling a room outside of the housing program (i.e., another school, agency, high school) so that EC can keep a record of vacancies and student nationality.
12. The family agrees to see that moderation is used in the consumption of alcohol around students in their home. Students under 21 are prohibited from consuming alcohol.
13. The family understands that the \$60 fee (\$40 for returning families) is a one-time registration/visit charge and does not assure student placement in their home.
14. The family understands that a criminal background check may be made by any local, state or federal agency. The family consents to a background check on behalf of all adults 18 years of age or older residing in the home, or frequently visiting. There is a \$15 fee for each person.
15. The family is aware that there is a 3-day grace period of students arriving, departing and moving between host families. The Housing Office encourages both students and families that all moves occur on the 1st of the month or during Arrival Dates.
16. The family agrees to try to work out any differences with student(s) to the best of their ability. A second recourse will be to contact EC Housing Office to intervene, although it is understood that EC Housing Office is under no obligation or liability to settle disputes.
17. The family understands that the EC Housing Office reserves the right to remove a student from their home at its discretion without prior notice; and agrees to reimburse the prorated Homestay stipend beginning with the date the student moves out. Damages in the home caused by the student will need to be collected as separate funds from the student.
18. The family agrees not to ask students to be moved out because: they desire a student of a different sex, want to leave the homestay program, or have family coming to visit. The family understands they must wait until the student(s) moves out on their own or the quarter ends.
19. The family agrees to notify the EC Housing Office of any concerns or emergency needs of students. This includes: rape, arrest, drugs, and harassment.
20. The family is subject to Title IX and should have a hands-off policy with students. Please be aware of Title IX and how it impacts your position as a Homestay Family and for students at <http://www.edmonds.edu/titleix/>.

I (we) have read and understand the above agreement.

Print	Host Family Signature	Date
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Print	Partner's Signature	Date
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Stipend and Other Money Matters

These guidelines are subject to change depending on the situation/need. Please check with the Housing Office if there are questions or concerns.

Stipend Checks

Host families receive a stipend check (or direct deposit) each month for each student. The amount will be prorated if the student is not in the house for a full month. There is a three-day grace period for students moving in and out. This stipend covers only food and utilities for students. You will find that you do not make rent money from the program. At no time may families take student bills or damages out of this stipend. Checks are mailed within the first full business week of the month. Do not depend on the check's arrival for mortgage payments or other non-student related expenses. For students arriving at the start of a new quarter, checks will be mailed at least one full week after the student arrives. For Short Term Programs, we will try to have checks available on arrival to give to families, but this is not guaranteed.

Student Payments

Students pay to the college for every quarter. The only circumstances that the student pays directly to the host family are if they move in prior to the stated arrival date, or move out after the last day of the quarter (although these situations are not encouraged). Students are required to commit to the full quarter if they choose to remain in the program, but may not remain in the same house for the entire quarter. Students may ask to pay privately to the family for staying in the house rather than going through the college. This would put the family in violation of the Host Family Agreement and the host family could be terminated from the program. Other students would be removed from the home and no new students would be placed in the home.

Students Moving Out of Program

Students are committed to staying in the program for each full quarter that they choose to remain in the program. Students may not leave the program in the middle of the quarter unless allowed by the Housing Office for extenuating circumstances. Students expressing interest in moving out of the program must talk to the Housing Office. Host families will only be paid for the time that a student is in their house, even if the student moves out without consent. Host families may need to return part of a stipend already sent to the Housing Office, but should never return funds to a student unless they are going on vacation (out of area) for 10 consecutive nights or more (see vacation policy). Even if a student moves out early at the end of the quarter, do not return any funds to the student.

Vacations (Student)

If a student is away from the area on vacation during quarter breaks between quarters for at least 10 consecutive nights or more, the host family will return 50% of the stipend per night to the student. This is to refund the food and utility expenses that the student will not be consuming. This only applies to students' vacations, not when they move out. This only applies to students going out of town, not when they stay somewhere else in the area.

See the EC Housing website or contact the office for the current vacation rate.

Vacations (Host Family)

If the host family travels without the student, a family friend or relative should stay in the house so the student can remain in the home and continue their normal routine and schedule. If the student cannot stay in the home, the family should contact another host family in the program to have the student stay with them. The families will exchange stipend amounts for that time. Please email the Housing Office (housing@edmonds.edu) to inform the staff of where the student will be, emergency contact information, and all other important information.

Student Leaves for Entire Quarter

If a student returns home for an entire quarter but wishes to keep their place in the Homestay program, they have two options:

1. The student pays half of the normal quarter fee to reserve their room. The student pays the college and the college will send a check to the family. The student will be able to leave their items in their room and the room will not be used for students or other guests while they are gone.
2. The student does not pay for the quarter and moves all of their items out of the house. The room would be available for students or other guests. This option does not guarantee that the room will be available when they return, but they would be placed with a new family if needed.

Student Insurance

All EC international students have LowerMark Student Medical Insurance. HEF and short-term program students do not have this specific insurance, but they have coverage through their own programs. If the host family or the EC student has questions, the website can be found at: <https://www.edmonds.edu/international/current-students/medical-insurance.html>

Nearest Walk-In Medical Clinics:

- **Virginia Mason Clinic** (425) 775-9474
Walk-in Clinic Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00am-7:00pm,
Saturday - Sunday 9:00am - 4:00 pm
7315 212th Street SW Suite #101 (1st floor) Edmonds, WA 98026
Route from EC: bus 114 to Aurora Village
- **Community Health Center of Snohomish County** (425) 835-5200
Walk-in Clinic Hours: Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 7:00 pm,
Saturday - Sunday 9:00 am - 6:00 pm
4111 194th St. SW Lynnwood, WA 98036
Route from EC: bus 166 to Silver Firs
- **Concentra Urgent Care** (425) 774-8758
Walk-in Clinic Hours: Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm,
Saturday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm, Sunday Closed
4320 196th St SW STE D
Route from EC: bus 114 to Lynnwood
- **Swedish Hospital & Emergency Room** (425) 640-4000
Hours: Monday - Sunday open 24 hours
21601 76th Ave W, Edmonds, WA 98026
Route from EC: Swift Blue to Aurora Village

Important to Know Before Going to the Clinic:

- **Please remember to bring your insurance ID card (download from <https://www.lewermark.com/school-detail/?SID=edmondsc> when you're going to the clinic or hospital.**
- If you get a bill from the clinic or hospital, please bring it to OIP and they will help you process the payment.
- Please do not pay upfront; you only pay a \$20 deductible for in-network clinics and \$100 for an emergency room.
- Urgent care clinics are open evenings and weekends for immediate treatments. However, for broken bone, heart attack, heavy bleeding, and unconsciousness, or for any sort of sudden or very painful illnesses or serious accidents, please go to the nearest hospital.

Tax Information

Here is some information about reporting your income from being a host family. Neither our office nor the accountant can be detailed and help you completely, as we could get into trouble with the IRS.

- If you make more than \$600 during the year, you will receive a form 1099 Miscellaneous around the end of January/beginning of February.
- We recommend talking to your accountant or tax preparer.
- We will have a tax session in January for families, and an accountant at the session will give some advice. Again, we cannot give each individual family detailed advice – you must see your accountant or tax preparer for that information.
- The use of Schedule E (or C) may be the best use for your family.
- Keep records of all your spending on students during the year (they may or may not be useful).
- If you are making lots of trips for students (for example: with short-term programs families often pick up students and drop them off) be sure to keep a record of the days and mileage.
- If you would like to use an accountant – the one that has worked with our office to put on sessions is:

Allan Dadgar
 Elite Accounting and Financial Services Inc
 19221 36th Ave West #204
 Lynnwood, WA 98036
 425-775-8406
allan@eliteAFS.com

Safety Protocol

Medical

- All students have insurance and should have a card
- Host families should react to situations as they would for any emergency, but call the office if it is life-threatening
- Walk-in clinics work well with insurance and times

Family's House Damages/Insurance

- If there are small damages take care of them with the student and let the office know
- If there are expensive damages, let the office know right away
- Many families get an umbrella insurance to cover more in their home

When a Host Family Should Call the Office Right Away

- If the student says they are moving out during the quarter (no students should move during this time unless going to a new family)

- If the student is breaking the law
- If the student has repeatedly broken house policies and did not change after being spoken with
- If they were involved with a sexual assault, harassment, drugs, underage drinking, or fighting
- If the student goes to the hospital for an emergency
- If the host family is not sure what to do in an unusual emergency-like situation

Guidelines for Housing International Students

Reminders for the First Few Days

- First impressions are important. When picking up students, be on time and bring a small gift – flowers, candy, etc. (or have it in their room).
- You may need to put the student’s name on your mailbox so that your mail carrier knows there is a new person in your home.
- Remember there is a great difference in customs of greeting. Try to take the student’s lead, but err on the side of being more reserved rather than being too effusive and touching.
- Show the student their room and the bathroom, and explain any safety issues. Explain only necessary items on the first day.
- Offer the student something to eat and drink. Remember, many of our students will not ask for this. Even when asked, they may say no. Have something ready for your student that is easy to offer.
- Be helpful and positive. Keep asking if there is anything they need help with.
- As the student adjusts to your home, explain the use of equipment/house expectations in greater detail.
- Please help your student get to and from school on the first day. Make sure they understand the directions for walking or taking the bus as needed.
- Enjoy your experience together.
- If there are concerns, you may call the Housing Office at 425-640-1080. In the event of an emergency only, call the on-call staff at 425-308-4061.

My Student Stays in Their Room All the Time, What Do I Do?

Here are some suggestions for interacting with any student, but especially shy or isolated students:

Adjusting to a new school is difficult. Adjusting to a new city is too. Add on a new home, a new culture, a new language, a whole new country, and you have a very overwhelming load of adjustments. Add the frustration of never being able to fully express what you are feeling or thinking, and you have a full-blown case of culture shock. Isolation and withdrawing from this overwhelming, confusing, exhausting world is a normal reaction.

As a host family, you can help. Be understanding, warm, accepting, and gentle. Lovingly show your student(s) that you truly care about them, their background, and their comfort. Don't force interaction when they are exhausted and overwhelmed, but gently continue to encourage them to interact with you and their new world.

Here are a few suggestions.

- Maybe plan some special weekend activities, and even tell them they can invite a friend. Students from some cultures have a hard time functioning as an individual. In the beginning, activities that require lots of interaction can be overwhelming – maybe just go somewhere interesting, like the Chittenden Locks, or somewhere beautiful like the beach. Or go for a drive and a short hike.
- Include them in dinner conversation. Don't just talk over them, leaving them lost and uncomprehending to what you are talking about.
- At the end of dinner ask everyone at the table what the best thing was that happened that day. Same with the worst thing.
- Every day ask them if they have any problem they would like help with, or if anything is making them feel uncomfortable. Maybe after 50 times, they might get the idea you really want to know! Most students never tell their host what is making them feel uncomfortable in their homestay.
- Every day ask if they have any questions about English, American culture, school, or anything else they do not understand.
- Ask them to stay at the table after dinner for more conversation, even just 10-15 minutes.
- Ask them if they have pictures of their family, hometown, or country that they could show and tell you about, and that you could ask questions about. Other days you do the same for them.
- Get a children's book with lots of pictures about their culture from the library and have them tell you something about one picture each day. You do the same with a book about America/Washington State.
- Play a simple card game or board game once or twice a week. In the first weeks choose ones that do not require much language or thinking, later choose ones that require more English.
- If they like computer games, play a computer game with them. Or join them in any other activity you find that they like to do.

- Help them understand that research shows that *using* a language, especially interacting with native/fluent speakers of that language, helps them learn that language much more than just studying *about* that language. Doing their homework is important, but interacting with their host family is just as important. In the beginning they will find this difficult and tiring.

Also, remember that culture shock and homesickness can lead to depression or aggression, especially during the first quarter. Adequate exercise and sleep, as well as getting acquainted with people and surroundings, can go a long way to relieving depression and anxiety.

Top Ten Reasons Students Move Out

There are many reasons students move out, and families should not take it personally. We do not guarantee that families will always have a student.

1. Distance to school
2. Food issues
3. Distance to the bus stop or walk is not well lit at night
4. Family only in it for the money (student does not feel like part of the family)
5. The family does not speak English in home
6. Personality and cultural differences in everyday living
7. Student cannot handle American food and family does not want them to cook
8. Their friends ask them to live with them
9. They want to be independent
10. Too many issues with phone and computer

If a student wants to leave your home, please make sure that they come to the Housing Office to talk to us. We need to make sure:

- Can they leave the Homestay program? Some students can't.
- Are there any issues we should know about? Perhaps we can help.

When Your Student Moves Out

- Be sure the Housing Office knows.
- Check the room for any damages or issues that you want to work out with the student. If there is extensive damage, send pictures and a copy of receipt to the office. The student will be billed if they have not already paid the host family.
- Make sure the student returns your house key and any other borrowed items.
- Make sure the student changes their address with the post office, bank, etc. so you don't keep getting their mail. You can help them do this online.
- Ask for contact information in case you need to let them know something (phone call from family member, package arrives after they move out, etc.).
- If they are returning home, how are they dealing with possible re-entry culture shock?

Why Did My Student Wait Until the Last Minute to Tell Me They Are Moving Out? How Can I Avoid This Problem in the Future?

It's a cultural thing. Most cultures of the world, with the exception of us in the West, are what we call "Kinship Cultures." This means that everything is based on your kin – the people you know (especially your relatives) and the groups to which you belong. What they value is not planning ahead, but peace, harmony, and balance in those relationships.

Keeping harmony and balance in relationships in a group, such as those living together, is valued so highly that it is considered very rude to disturb that harmony any more than you need to. If you are leaving a group, you should not disturb the group twice by announcing ahead of time that you are leaving later, and as a result changing some of the dynamics in the group, and then disturbing the group again when you actually leave. That is considered to be very inconsiderate of the others in the group.

Also, because of the value of commitment to the group, when a group in kinship societies knows that one of the members is leaving the group, their commitment to that member evaporates, and sometimes there is even some anger felt towards that member. Frequently the member who is leaving the group is treated very differently by the rest.

As a result, most students from most of the world do not have any idea that planning ahead is important to us. They do not want to be rude and disturb the dynamics in your home twice. They will be afraid that you will treat them differently if you know they are planning to leave, especially if they sense that you are dependent on them in any way (for money, for company, etc.).

When they notify the Housing Office that they want to move out of your home at the end of the quarter, generally the Housing Office will email you approximately one month before the end of the quarter to notify you if a student is moving out of your home.

The best way to avoid this problem? Communication! Be proactive: YOU ask THEM what their plans are for the break and next quarter, so you can plan for the future. You let them know that you will be sad if they decide to move out, but it is okay with you and you will not treat them differently if you know they are moving out. Building relationships and keeping open communication are the best antidotes. You can also always call our office for support and advice.

Common Questions and Answers

1. What are the house requirements in order to be a Homestay family?

In addition to the desire to share your home and your life with another person, and being less than 60 minutes from campus by bus, there are some requirements within the home in order to accommodate the student.

Each student needs to have a private room (at least 81 square feet) with a window, a bed, linens, dresser, closet, desk, a desk chair (not folding), light, and a door that can be locked.

The student should not feel isolated (for example: in the basement alone and the door is kept closed between floors).

2. Is there a limit to the number of students any one family can have?

Our first goal is to try to get each family at least one student. There are limits put on by the city as to how many non-related people can occupy a single dwelling. Each student must have their own space as stated in question #1. As each family situation is different, specific concerns can be discussed with the Homestay Coordinator on a case by case basis.

3. What about transportation?

Each host family must be under 15 minutes of walking to the bus stop and 60 minutes by bus to the college (including transfers and the walk to and from bus stop). If your family does not fall into either of these categories, it does not mean that you cannot be considered. However, students placed in your home would most likely be those with their own transportation or it would be on a sight first basis. This means that the student would be able to visit the home first before being placed there.

4. What about the use of equipment in the house?

In addition to bathroom and eating facilities, each student needs to have access to laundry, and internet. It is not recommended to let a student use a business computer. Family computer is optional. It is great if there is a “student computer” available.

5. What if my student wishes to make long distance calls?

The student is expected to pay for all long distance calls that they make. A telephone card or a cell phone might be the best answer. EC does not recommend that the student be allowed to make long distance calls on the family phone bill. Exception: The student should call their family on arrival night.

6. What do I do about meal times?

Each household is different. Communicate with your student about when meals are served. Homestay families are expected to provide food for 3 meals per day. The evening meal should be prepared at least 5 nights a week. If you will not be home at mealtime, let your student know. If the student will not be home, they should let you know. In either case, have food available for the student to eat when they arrive home.

7. Can we enter the student’s bedroom, and what are the rules around it?

As a host family, you must provide the student with a lockable bedroom door and a key to ensure their privacy. You may enter the room at any time for official purposes such as repairs, emergencies, inspections, or conduct concerns. For any other reason, you should give at least 24

hours' notice before entering. Some families choose to clean student rooms or change linens, if so, discuss this with the student and agree on expectations. If not, the student is responsible for keeping their room clean.

8. What are the house rules students should follow?

Again, each family is different. What works for one family may not work for another. The important thing is for you and your student to communicate. Some of the items to discuss are:

- How to use all the equipment: laundry, stove, microwave, bathroom appliances, telephone, emergency equipment, phone numbers, etc.
- Where the food for the student is and how to prepare it if no one is home
- Mealtime guests – will you permit students to bring home guests, how often, and what kind of notice you need to accommodate the guests
- Overnight guests if appropriate
- Quiet time – particularly if there are people sleeping during the day
- Household hours – what time the house is usually locked at night

Remember that your student is an adult. You are not responsible for their behavior; however, you have a right to state your expectations and what is appropriate in your home. This is true even for students under age 18, as their parents have signed for them to be here and be treated the same as all college students.

Most typical hosting concerns can be remedied through communication. This requires both listening and speaking by all parties concerned. If there are difficulties and you feel additional help is needed, the Housing and Residence Life Office is there to assist you.

Overview of Pertinent Immigration Information

Non-U.S. citizens are required to follow various rules and regulations to enter into and continue their stays in the United States. International students are required to follow procedures particular to their situations. OIP is available to assist or to direct the students to appropriate INS offices.

Passport - This document is issued by the student's own country of citizenship. It is important to keep in a safe place but must be carried whenever the student leaves the U.S.

I-20 - This document is issued by the school to which the student has been accepted. It is taken along with other documents to the U.S. consulate or embassy in the student's country in order to obtain a student visa. This should be stapled into the passport along with any previous I-20s.

Visa - A visa is a stamp in a passport issued by the country to which the student wishes to enter. EC students receive their visas from U.S. authorities overseas. These are issued in the students' countries of origin. U.S. visas are not given in the U.S.

When our students wish to go to Canada, some need visas that are obtained from the Canadian consulate in Seattle.

I-94 - This is an arrival document that should be stapled into the passport at the port of entry. It is surrendered upon leaving the U.S. except for brief visits to Canada.

Most Important to Remember

1. These documents, along with health insurance information, should be brought to school on the first day of orientation.
2. These documents should be kept together in a safe place.
3. When a student wishes to go out of the country, they should bring documents to the OIP Office for checking and signatures **at least one week** in advance of leaving.
4. If traveling out of the country, these documents need to be carried by the student.

Going to Canada or Out of the Country

It is essential that certain documents be signed and carried when international students are going to Canada, Mexico, or any other country besides the United States.

Here is a checklist.

- Bring passport, I-20, and I-94 to the OIP Office **at least one week in advance** of a trip outside the U.S.
- The passport must be valid (not expired). The visa stamp to re-enter the U.S. must be checked. It is not recommended that students go to Canada with expired visas. The I-94 must be checked. The I-20 must be signed on the back by one of the OIP designated signers.
- Some students will also need to go to the Canadian consulate to obtain Canadian visas. Others do not need these. As they are only issued at certain times of the week and day, it is important to check early to see if one is needed. The OIP Office can help determine this.
- The student needs to carry their insurance card. This should be carried at all times.
- Take any medication in its original labeled container.
- Be aware of the restrictions for transporting items such as cigarettes or alcohol over the border. Fresh fruits and vegetables are restricted as well as any illegal substances or firearms.

- Have Canadian money for purchase of food, parking, bus fare, or other items.

Sample Home Guidelines

This is an example of information to give your student a few days after they arrive. Just give them important safety information on their first day while they adjust.

These are some guidelines that will help you to know what is expected in our family. We hope to provide you with a comfortable and safe place to complete your studies. Your studies are important to us as that is why you are here, so studies come first. It is important to us to keep a good atmosphere for everyone. Consideration of others is important. If there is something that you don't understand, please ask us. We lead a busy life but will find the time to talk to you.

Bedroom:

Your bedroom is for your use. Bedding is provided, and if you need more, please ask us. It is your responsibility to keep your room clean and vacuumed. We will show you how. You may have a heater in your bedroom. If you do, the heater must be plugged directly into the wall (no extension cords). You must have the door and window closed and the heater turned off when you leave the house. This is very important for fire safety. Please do not leave open food or dirty dishes in your room.

Bathroom:

There are different color towels for each bathroom. Please use the towels in the bathroom you are using. Use one bathroom for showers depending on where your room is located. Put the towel in the hamper when you are finished and Bill or I will wash them. Do not use the towels in the other bathrooms as they are for others to use. You may shower as often as you need, but be considerate of others by not taking really long showers so all the hot water is gone for the next person. Please do not stay in the bathroom for extended periods of time if others are waiting to use the bathroom. If you have more things than can fit in the bathroom cabinets, please keep them in your room. Please leave the bathroom neat for the next person by putting your things away.

Kitchen:

Dinner is usually between 6pm and 7pm. If you will not be there, let us know ahead of time. You can eat almost anything at any time unless it is marked or you have been told that it is for a special occasion. Please add the food items that you would like to the grocery list on the side of the refrigerator. Please rinse your dishes and put them in the dishwasher if the handle is up. If the handle is down, you may rinse the dishes and leave them in the sink. If you make a mess – clean it up. Warning: Our stove is very hot on high and it is easy to burn things so try a lower heat. If you break a dish, please let us know so we aren't looking for it. Please ask us if you want to borrow things from the kitchen.

Smoking:

We do not allow smoking in our home. We have a covered deck that has chairs and a table with an ashtray. Please put your cigarette butts in the ashtray and empty the ashtray when it is full in the outside garbage can in front of the house. Bill is allergic to smoke and it is unhealthy for us all. If you are uncomfortable asking your guests to smoke outside, I will do that for you if you wish.

Guests:

If you want to have guests for dinner, let us know ahead of time if possible. If you have a friend in our home at dinner time, we will ask if you are eating dinner with us. Your friend can always eat with us, but sometimes not enough food is prepared. We can usually fill in with grilled cheese sandwiches or by adding another dish. If you want a guest to stay overnight, please ask us. You are responsible for your guest's dishes, etc. Guests should leave our home by 11:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. Please be considerate of the noise level (including music) as others may be studying or sleeping.

Messages/Mail:

Please write on the whiteboard by the front door any message that you need to leave us. We will also leave messages for you there. Erase your message when you get it but do not erase messages for others. Your mail will be put in your box by the front door. If you bring in the mail please put the mail in the correct boxes and leave our mail on the dining room table.

Laundry:

We will show you how to use the washer and dryer. We provide soap and fabric softener. Please do large balanced loads and clean the dryer lint trap for fire safety. If someone has left laundry in a machine, you may remove it to a laundry basket. Do not dry someone else's clothes unless asked. We never know when there is something in the load that can be ruined by the dryer. We will do the same for your laundry. It is nice to leave a note on the board in case the other person forgot their laundry.

Telephone:

You may make local phone calls on our phone, and your friends may call you before 11:00 p.m. Please be respectful of our needs and other students' needs to use the phone by answering calls waiting. Long-distance calls need to be made by credit card or prepaid calling card. If you do not have a card yet, we will dial you out to let your parents know you arrived safely and you can pay us, then you can get a card. There is a second line in the kitchen for outgoing calls. Incoming it goes to our computer and fax machine. If you need to receive a fax, the number is (425) ____ - ____.

General:

We would like to have you join us for dinner as often as you can, as that is the time that we share our day and make plans for outings, going out to dinner, figure out schedules, etc. Food may be eaten in other rooms, but dishes need to be returned to the kitchen. If there is a spill, clean it up right away. Cold water is usually safe to use on anything. Please let us know about stains as soon as possible so that we can clean them. If you are the last one coming in at night, please lock the door and turn out all the lights. If you are the last one leaving the house, please make sure everything you have used is turned off, and windows and doors are locked. Please tell us or leave a message if you are not going to be home at the time we expect you. This is for your safety and so we don't worry about you!

Emergency:

For a serious emergency (fire, accident, etc.), dial 911 and tell them what the emergency is and our address _____ which is on your ID card. To reach us call _____.

We want you to enjoy your stay with us and spend time sharing with us. The most important things are honest open communication, and consideration of others in our home. We will always take the time to answer your questions. There may be things in addition to this list that we will find the need to tell you, please be open to things that are of a concern to us. We wish you success in your studies and welcome to our home.

Student Story on U.S. Culture

American Informality through the Eyes of a Moroccan Student

By Bouchra Moujtahid, with comments (in italics) by Janet Davidson

Friendliness, informality, casualness, self-reliance: values commonly associated with Americans, right? Not only do we value these attributes, we consciously look for such qualities in the people we recruit as hosts for international students. We intuitively feel that students placed with friendly, casual, help-yourself-type hosts will more quickly feel at home.

Oops! Another case of cultural myopia, as my friend Bouchra recently pointed out. One of the biggest problems she encountered soon after her arrival was understanding how to relate to the informality she found all around her.

I offer her composition to COMSEC readers because it gives us a view of how others see us, and it clearly shows how best efforts can have effects completely opposite from our intentions.

“Help Yourself”

These two words were the worst words I heard during my first two weeks in the United States. I misjudged these words, and the people who used them, in my ignorance.

When I first came here, I had problems. I could not make anything for myself or touch anything in the house because I thought it would be rude for me to help myself as a guest. I thought my host mom should fix everything for me without my asking. I did not understand what was going on in the house. In my culture, when someone comes for the first time to my house, my mom or I immediately understand that the person needs to be fed without asking any questions. We fix a big meal for him/her and we never say, “help yourself.”

In my home country, my mom used to fix meals for everybody in the house, and I thought it was the same everywhere. In America, in my host family, everybody in the house fixes his/her own breakfast and lunch, which I thought was rude. For me, I was right and they were wrong.

I also had problems with openness. In my first weeks in the United States, I was starving. Food was readily available, and I was asked if I wanted it, but it was not put before me already made. I did not eat. My host mom always fixed dinner, but for lunch and breakfast, I was on my own. I was too shy to fix my own food – even to take an apple! Everyone was helping themselves except me, but I just couldn’t. For one thing, I did not know how to make anything, but I also felt too uncomfortable. I would not help myself to my host’s purse; how could I help myself to her food?

I misunderstood in my first days here that when we finish our meal, everybody has to wash his/her own plates or, at least, put them in the sink. I used to leave them on the table. I did not know that I had to clean my dishes, because in my house in Morocco, once everybody finishes,

either my mom or the maid picks up everything and does the dishes. So, with my host mom, I used to eat and leave the dishes on the table. Even if I saw other people clean the table, it did not occur to me that I should do the same. I didn't even consider the idea that this was the habit of the house.

Even when I began helping myself, I didn't take the risk of fixing anything for others in the house because I thought it might offend them, I did not understand the rules of "help yourself."

Everything has changed now. I have learned to be more flexible and to bend with things I couldn't quite understand. I learned that different people do things in different ways, and I realized that I was mistaken by saying I was right and everybody else in the house was wrong. I used to hate the words "help yourself," but I like the words now. I actually started using them myself, and whenever I use them, I laugh and remember how easy it is to misunderstand or misjudge a situation or a person just because of a few words.

Bouchra had had considerable experience with the U.S. Americans in Morocco and had been oriented both in her predeparture and in her school orientation about informality in the United States. Her experience clearly demonstrates that knowledge and behavior do not necessarily jibe; even after she learned that something was permissible - and, in fact, expected - behavior, she could not bring herself to change her actions immediately. It was not until much later that she was able to change her attitude.

What then is a host family to do? Bouchra's composition reminds us that informality is not necessarily appreciated by newly arriving students. It can confuse students who know, no matter how much we reassure them, that they are not in their own homes. Worse, informality can be misinterpreted as disinterest, or even intentional rudeness, on the part of the hosts.

Bouchra Moutjahid (Morocco) was a student at Edmonds College, Lynnwood, Washington. Janet Davidson is Director, International Programs Office, Skagit Valley College, Mount Vernon, Washington.

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Stages of Adjustment

Stage 1 - Arrival

Students arrive on our doorsteps with their physical and cultural baggage. We greet them with our home and our own cultural baggage. In their honor, we may prepare sweet juicy apple pies laden with cream. In your honor, they may bring you large bottles of pickled fish, head and all. Neither of our stomachs are used to the others' foods. Thus begins our adventure.

Personal Space - To help give a sense of psychological security, show them their place.

Suggestion - Give flowers, a welcome note, a key, and a dictionary.

Safe Arrival Communication - A call home relieves worries.

Jet Lag - This is an unreal tired experience like living in a fog.

Suggestion - Don't overdo the information or sightseeing; allow a few days for recovery.

Names - It's confusing for the students to know what to call you. There are loyalty and respect issues.

Suggestion - Give the student options; discuss.

Language Fatigue - It's hard to speak in a foreign tongue. Students may get very tired. One day they understand and the next they don't.

Suggestion - Correct only those serious errors where a student could be easily misunderstood. Use pictures; take your time.

Meals - Food is so important in other cultures, more so than most of us can imagine. It is used as a means of welcome, relationship, pleasure, friendship, respect, ritual, and celebration to a greater extent than here.

Suggestion - Be sensitive to religious customs. Have something on hand which is familiar to the student. Have family members go first to "show the way."

Family Involvement - How much to include the student in is a balancing act. If chores are a part of your family's life, perhaps including the student in a small way is appropriate. Help the student feel included.

Suggestion - Suggest a simple chore like taking out the mail or picking it up.

Orientation - After arrival, give a brief orientation of the home. After a few days, and when the student will use the equipment for the first time, a more detailed orientation may be needed.

Suggestion - Pictures with instructions can be placed near the equipment.

Stage 2 - Settling In

Routines are suddenly different at this stage. It takes time and patience to adjust to new schedules.

Suggestion - Postpone major new projects such as a kitchen remodel. Devise new routines so everyone is comfortable. Expect some irritability, and keep your sense of humor. Disruptions are temporary.

Seeing Reality - This can be a shock to both parties.

Suggestion - Recognize your own disappointments. Neither you nor the student is perfect. Establish true friendship.

Goals - What are your hosting goals? What goals are most realistic?

Suggestion - Compare hosting goals with others in the family. List your reasons for hosting. Discard inappropriate expectations.

Stage 3 - Deepening the Relationship

Students have questions about themselves at this point. How much am I expected to share in the lifestyle of this family? What things are difficult for me to handle and how can I deal with it? Where do I fit?

Suggestion - This may be the time to explain “rules” both spoken and perhaps unspoken. Make discussions “learning experiences”. Be patient. Talk with the student as openly as possible about your family’s lifestyle and expectations.

Common Concerns

Language Problems - Remember that learning a language takes practice.

Suggestion - Speak slowly, and explain idioms. Let the student talk; don’t try to fill in every sentence. Even though English may be at a minimum, the student is used to thinking complicated thoughts in their own native language. Simple language does not mean simple-minded language.

Money - Some students come from wealthy homes, others do not. There may be some major differences in how and how much money is spent and on what. Some hosts tend to skip food. This would be culturally inappropriate for most of our students.

Suggestion - Discuss expectations before venturing out on a family outing.

Phone - There are potential problems with the use of the phone that can be alleviated with advanced planning.

Suggestion - Phone cards.

School Adjustments - School life is different here from in many other countries.

Suggestion - Encourage friendships with U.S. students. Have your own children talk to your international student.

Stage 4 - Culture Shock

Recall *Alice in Wonderland*? Nothing made sense from her old perspective. People talked in riddles; it was gibberish. After a while, trying to make order and sense just gets too tiring. So many of our assumptions are invalid. This is a painful experience.

Suggestion - Be patient. Let time help the student sort things out. Be available for discussion. Find out what will help your particular student. Allow some “down time” and withdrawal. Be prepared for intense feelings and negative remarks from your student. Be as flexible as possible. If negative or withdrawing behavior seems to be excessive or over a long period of time, seek help.

Stage 5 - The Holidays

This may or may not be a stage your student experiences. If holiday celebrations are extremely meaningful and they are away from the common and usual festivities, it may be a difficult period. If your family is celebrating, you may be in a “familiar” mood, with long-standing traditions amongst you, but the student will feel like an outsider.

Suggestion - Plan ahead. Have the student explain their customs. Share background on your own customs so the feeling of being an outsider will not be so apparent. If family and/or friends will be exchanging gifts with the student present, a small inexpensive gift for the student may be appropriate.

Stage 6 - Culture Learning

At this point, a solid relationship needs to have been established. A wonderful enriching cultural experience can be had by both family and student if open communication and bonds have been developed.

Suggestion - Cross-cultural communication techniques.

Stage 7 - Pre-Departure

This is the stage shortly before a student is scheduled to leave. It can be a time for deepening relationships. Others find that students may start to withdraw. It sometimes feels less painful to leave if the relationships are partially closed.

Suggestion - Recognize feelings. Recognize there will be a loss. Prepare the student for re-entry shock. This can be more painful than the initial culture shock. Say good-byes. Do not try to skip this event.

Re-entry - This is the process of arriving in one's own country and adjusting back to one's culture. Two things have happened. The culture may have changed (a little or a lot), and the student has changed irrevocably. They must learn to live in a former culture as a new person.

Suggestion - Over the time the student is with you, encourage him/her to keep in contact with home. Find out what is going on politically, economically, and socially.

Stage 8 - Re-adjustment

Both the family and the student will need to go through this stage. A relationship that had been everyday, will now only be in letters, cards, or the occasional phone call.

Suggestion - Recognize that this will happen. It is a loss. Continue your routines just as you did when the student arrived. Be patient with yourself and give yourself time. Write, but do not overdo it. Make a scrapbook of memories. Put it away for a while then take it out again.

Washington ID and Driving Information

For a Washington ID, the student does not need any parental consent if they are 18 as they have proof of age with them (passport).

For a driver's permit or license, if they are under 18 they can have their parent fill out and sign a form called "Parental Affidavit." It can be printed from the website www.dol.wa.gov. This form must be returned with an original signature, so the parents would need to send it back via mail in addition to the student's birth certificate. Also, anyone under the age of 18 **MUST** complete a driver's education course before obtaining their license.

Each student must have a valid driver's license to operate a motor vehicle. Some international students are allowed to drive on an international license for only a brief period of time. Others

are permitted to drive on home licenses. As this information varies, it is best to check with the Department of Licensing for each student's case.

Anyone owning and driving a motor vehicle must also carry car insurance. It would be most helpful if host parents could remind their students how important this is.

A frequently asked question concerns driving schools. The program does not endorse or recommend any particular school. Please see the phone book or do an online search for schools in the area.

Edmonds College does not recommend that you teach your student to drive. Let the professionals with the "other brake" do it!