



Rotary

District 5080 Youth Exchange

Host Family Guidelines

Thank you for sharing your home and your life for a brief time with a Rotary Youth Exchange Student from another country and culture. The time spent with you will be a treasured experience for your student.

Benefits of Youth Exchange

According to the 2022-23 Rotary Youth Exchange Report, Rotary exchanged 5,664 students from 52 countries in 8,738 host families. Exchange students unlock their potential to develop lifelong leadership skills, learn language and culture, build lasting friendships with people from around the world and become global citizens.

The Rotary Youth Exchange Program enjoys the advantages of more than fifty years of experience. This experience and support system ensure the best possible exchange for youth in the program.

But why do we do it? It's all about **PEACE**. Our program helps students around the world connect with each other and discover we all have the same wants and desires. We are really not that different from each other and when we are friends it is hard to engage in conflict. Our students become ambassadors to spread *Peace and Understanding*. When they return home they continue through the rest of their lives to be ambassadors for **PEACE**.

The Rotary Youth Exchange Program – How It Works

Rotary Youth Exchanges are arranged and managed by Rotary District Committees, but always in cooperation with Rotary Clubs and host families. Rotary Clubs recommend local students for exchanges in other countries and serve as hosts for students inbound to their community from Rotary Districts in other countries. Host Clubs select and orient at least two, usually three, host families for each inbound student. For each inbound student, the host club also chooses a Rotarian from its club to serve as the Youth Exchange Officer (YEO) and another as the student's Counselor throughout the student's exchange year. The YEO and counselor serve as advocates for host families as well as the student.

The District Committee is responsible for the final selection and orienting both inbound and outbound students and for training host club members who work in the program. Due to their close relationship with inbound students, host families, YEOs and Rotary Counselors are key to a good exchange for an inbound student.

Objectives of the Youth Exchange Program

- To further International goodwill and understanding by enabling students to study first-hand some of the accomplishments and problems of people in other lands.
- To enable students to further their education by studying for a year in a different environment and by undertaking courses of study in subjects not normally available to them in schools of their own country.
- To urge students to broaden their own outlook by learning to live with and meet people of different cultures, creeds, and colors and by having to cope with day-to-day problems in a new environment.
- For students to act as ambassadors for their own countries by addressing Rotary Clubs, community organizations and youth groups in their host countries and by imparting as much knowledge as they can of their own countries to the people they meet during their year abroad.
- To enable students to study and observe all facets of life and culture in their host country so that on their return home they can pass on the knowledge they have gained.

Acting as a family to an exchange student can be a tremendously rewarding experience for a family, but it also entails some important obligations. This document contains a few guidelines for host families. Please refer to Rotary International’s “A Guide for Host Parents” on our website for more in-depth information.

In addition to the strict rules of exchange in the Inbound Student Agreement, host families should be aware of general practices for students in District 5080. These are listed below, along with some suggestions that will make your experience more rewarding – and may help avoid problems.

Suggestions for All Host Families

It cannot be stressed too much that the student should not be treated as a special “honored guest” by the family. The whole value of this program centers on the acceptance by both students and hosts that the student will be “one of the family”, not receiving any special favors or treatment and undertaking all the normal family chores.

The student should most certainly make their own bed, keep their room tidy – very difficult for some - and assist with general household chores such as setting the table, doing dishes, vacuuming, taking out the garbage, etc. Some of our students are used to doing these tasks at home but for others doing chores may be an unfamiliar activity. Guidance will certainly be required.

- If possible, try to establish a relationship with the student prior to their arrival via emails or video conferencing.
- Don’t have expectations as to what the student will be like.
- Go through the First Night Questions with your exchange student after a couple of days following their arrival.
- Spend time talking to the student getting to know him or her.
- Don’t compare the student to your own children or to previous exchange students – they are all individuals, and are not the same.
- Allow the student – and yourself – some private time.

The First Host Family

- It is especially important that the first host family contact the student and make him or her feel welcome. A few emails or video conferences will make the student feel that he or she knows your family, and will make the adjustment on arrival easier for both parties.
- Meet the student at the airport, along with the student counselor, YEO and other Rotary members.
- The first host family's job is to make the student feel welcome, establish firm guidelines for behavior, and make sure the student meets the community and gets off to a good start. The student's Rotary counselor and YEO will help you with the process.

The Second Host Families

- Try to get to know the student before he or she joins your family. Talk to the student's Rotary counselor, YEO, and previous host family and find out if there were any challenges that had to be addressed.
- Remember that previous families may have become very attached to the student – and vice versa. Encourage some continuing contact between the student and those host families.

The Last Host Family

When the student comes to the last host family, he or she will speak English fairly fluently, be established in the community – and hopefully be doing all the right things.

- In the last month or so the student will receive many invitations from the previous host families and friends. The last host family must be understanding but should counsel the student not to run himself or herself down trying to accept all invitations.
- The last few weeks, and especially the last week of the student's exchange should be "quiet" ones. The student will need extra support during this time as they will be "grieving" the end of their exchange and may have many mixed feelings about going home. These last few weeks are a time for the student to prepare for their departure, for last goodbyes to their friends. The Rotary Club will organize a farewell party for the student, their host families, and the club members. The student will give their final presentation to their club. This is **not** a time for the student to be travelling! It is a time for reflection, for good-byes, for the student to enjoy their last days in their community. It is a time for "closure" for the student, their host families, and their friends.
- The student may have gathered a lot of gifts, souvenirs, clothes, etc. over the past year. The student may need some assistance from you to sort through what to take home or what to leave behind. Compare mailing costs vs costs of taking a second suitcase on the flight home.

Communication

Shortly after your student arrives in your home, you should sit down with your student to clarify any questions they may have. *First Night Questions* will help your family to get off on a good start with your new student. This process will preclude any future misunderstandings and will put the student at ease.

A copy of the *First Night Questions* is included in the Host Family binder. Students will also be provided a copy at orientation in September.

Language

Most inbound students to Canada/USA will have had a good deal of experience with the English language. However, in the beginning, even if your student answers you and seems to understand, you cannot be sure that they do. Sometimes they are just trying to avoid embarrassment by not asking for repetition and/or explanation. Make an effort to help your student become familiar with interpretations of words and/or phrases that may not be literal. For example, to say that someone is “sick” does not necessarily mean that they are ill.

Resolution of Problems

When a problem does arise, timely communication is important. The first avenue of this communication should be between the host family and the student. This action will usually resolve any issue. However, if this does not occur satisfactorily, do not hesitate in contacting the student’s Counselor or Youth Exchange Officer. If after all this the issue is still not resolved, the Counselor will contact the District Youth Exchange Inbound Coordinator. Refer to *When a Host Family Needs Help* in the Host Family binder.

Discipline

Expectations of Student

The student is expected to adapt to the supervision and discipline of the host family. Remember, the host family does not adapt to the student, rather the student must learn to adapt to the family. Any sign of reluctance or unwillingness on the student’s part to accept this point of view should be brought to the attention of the Counselor who should then clarify this point with the student. It would be better that such a ruling come from a third party such as the Counselor, rather than from the host parents. Problems can arise unless the student clearly understands that they are expected to conform to host country conditions. At the same time, host families should be aware of the problems of adaptation and should be prepared to be flexible.

Standards of Behavior

Rotary District 5080 has clear standards for the type of behaviors that can end a student’s exchange. The *Standards of Behavior* document is signed by the student at their orientation in September. A copy of the *Standards of Behavior* document is in the Host Family binder.

Poor behavior will be reviewed on a case by case basis and may result in a warning, a behavior plan or immediate termination of the exchange. The response will depend on the circumstances of the incident and discussion between the host club and the District Inbound Coordinator and District Chair.

The *Standards of Behavior* are to protect the exchange student, host family, host Rotary Club, and District 5080 who have a responsibility to the sponsor club and the natural parents.

In addition, the student in completing their exchange application pledged to adhere to the *Rules and Conditions of Exchange* and signed the District 5080 Rules of Exchange in the student District Welcome letter. Copies of these are in the Host Family binder.

If Things Go Wrong

It is not common, but occasionally some student placements do not work out, and the student must be moved ahead of schedule. When this occurs, it is usually a question of compatibility and should not be judged as a fault of the host family nor the student. No one should feel embarrassed. If things are becoming a little uncomfortable, contact the Rotary Counselor or YEO.

School Attendance

- Regular school attendance is not optional - it is required.
- The District has very good relationships with the high schools in our host communities, and must maintain them. Please notify the school if your student will be absent for some reason

Relations with Schools and Friends

Host parents, especially the first family, will want to be aware of their student's school activities. For example, course changes may be necessary after the student has attended classes a few times. The Rotary Counselor or YEO should normally take care of such matters, but the host family is often the first to become aware of a potential problem. Also, host parents are in the best position to make sure that their student does not become involved with students of questionable reputation. Usually, this is easiest to accomplish by encouraging friendships with students known by the host family to be of "good character".

Conflicting Invitations

Some Rotary functions take priority over all other functions. Please contact the YEO or counselor if there is any question as to which function the student should attend in a particular case. The student's next priority is to the current host family, over other host families or friends.

The Counselor or YEO will decide which invitation the student should accept only if the student and the "inviters" can't resolve the situation, normally with some guidance from the current host family.

Responsibilities of Each Party to an Exchange

Exchange Student Obligations

- Adapts positively to the host family.
- Works at developing good friendships.
- Agrees in writing to accept all the rules and conditions of the program (*Standards of Behavior*)
- Accepts the supervision of the receiving host District, Club, and Family.
- Trusts the host family judgement about friends, school, activities, and curfews.
- Attends host Rotary Club meetings and events as requested by the Rotary Club.
- Makes continuous language improvement, leading to practical fluency in English.
- Limits their total electronic communications (text, voice calling, video calling and similar services (general guideline is 30 minutes per day)
- Engages with the local community and environment so as to be an exceptional ambassador for Rotary International.
- Completes monthly reports to District 5080 in a timely manner
- Limits communications with natural parents and friends back home and agree to live in the present in their host community.
- Adheres to all Rotary district policies, including but not limited to: travel, the D's, Visits by natural parents, etc.
- Avoids employment – Rotary & visa rules. Students may occasionally do yard work or babysit for extra money but may not hold regular employment.
- Returns home at a time and by a route agreed to by the Rotary club and district 5080 Inbound Coordinator.
- In general, behaves like a member of their host family.... keeps their room neat and orderly and honors your wishes about the rest of the house, dresses in a manner acceptable to you, abides by household rules.

Host Family

- Advises the student regarding options for local transportation.
- Transports students as needed. Students are not allowed to drive any motorized vehicles. Refer to District 5080 Driving Policy and Regulations.
- Advises the student about matters such as the family, school, and community functions during the period of exchange.

Natural Parents or Guardians

- The parents of an inbound student are required to undertake the following financial obligations:
 - Rotary International approved medical, travel, and liability insurance.
 - All medical expenses incurred (including upfront payments and uninsured costs)
 - Toiletries and Medications
 - Clothing and school uniforms (if applicable) and appropriate outdoor/winter clothes.
 - Telecommunications (mobile phone, long distances charges, data charges etc.)
 - Optional trips not included in the mandatory district events list. Students are asked to pay a fee for the District Tour.
 - Provide the student with an Emergency Fund. This fund is to be topped up to the original amount required for the exchange as it is depleted. The fund is managed by the Rotary Club Counselor or YEO and is used for emergencies only. Parents must top-off the balance of the emergency fund within seven calendar days of being notified by the host YEO.

- Extra-Curricular school activity fees (sports, band, travel, etc.)
- Additional spending money.

Host Rotary Club (Counselor and YEO)

- Arranges 2-3 host families for each student. Provides host family orientation and maintain monthly contact with the current host family.
- Ensures complete vetting of host families.
- Visits, interviews, and orients each host family.
- Arranges secondary schooling. All educational expenses, including school fees, transportation to and from school, school supplies are the responsibility of the hosting Rotary Club.
- Appoints a counselor for each student.
- Meets the student upon arrival.
- Provides a monthly allowance to the student.
- Provides the host family with an Inbound Student binder. Tracks the binder location. Ensures document destruction and confirm destruction by submitting a copy of the Document *Management* form within 7 days of the student leaving the care of the District.
- Ensures regular attendance of the student at club meetings and functions.
- Ensures the attendance and provides transportation of the student to all mandatory District functions/events.
- Develops a suitable program of contact and activities for the student.
- Liaises with the student's school and addresses any concerns the school may have. Monitors student's reports.
- Meets student & school officials to discuss credits, graduation options, and participation in school activities, such as extracurricular activities.
- Tracks the progress of students and reports the same to the District monthly.
- Provides an in-person orientation to the host families.
- Provides support to host families by responding promptly to questions and/or problems that are reported by the host family and/ or the school. In particular, the club is responsible for moving the student if a serious conflict develops between the student and the host family.
- Supervises student moves to new host families.
- Arranges activities and introductions for the student that will help them to become acquainted with the community.
- Supervises travel – YEO must approve trips, enforce rules. Must know student's whereabouts at all times.
- Counselor serves as an advocate for the student, but also as a resource for host families.
- Arranges transportation for the student to all Rotary functions/events.
- Cooperates with the District Youth Exchange Committee to manage the student program.
- Provides the student with appropriate local contacts (addresses and telephone numbers) so they can get in touch with some responsible person in the event of real (or imagined) emergency. The district committee will provide each student with an emergency contact card.

Host District Youth Exchange Committee:

- Arranges a suitable orientation for newly arrived students.
- Maintains contact with the student and the sending District during the exchange period.
- Tracks the progress of all inbound students and intercedes when necessary.
- Provides support to Host Clubs as needed.
- Makes critical decisions regarding discipline (warnings and carding)

Travel

It is important for students to understand **travel is a privilege, not a right**. Students are required to be engaged in the exchange program and to have demonstrated **good behavior**. Students are responsible for knowing the travel policy and completing travel approval forms (available on the District website). Unauthorized travel may result in the student returning home early.

Travel on organized school trips is authorized, but the Rotary YEO or counselor must be advised.

- Other travel may require special permission from the natural parents and from the Rotary District Youth Exchange Committee. **Please refer to our Travel Policy** included in the host family binder. When in doubt contact the Club YEO or Counselor
- We have an obligation to the student's family and home Rotary Club to know where our exchange students are at all times. If there is a family emergency, the YEO or counselor must be able to contact the student - therefore the counselor or Club Youth Exchange Officer, must be advised of all travel plans in advance.

Local Travel

Normally students should be driven by an adult, however local travel (within about 30 miles or 50 km of the host community) may be with a teenage driver on occasion - provided the host family knows the driver and would normally allow their own child to ride with that person. Please refer to District 5080 Driving Regulations Policy in the Host Family binder.

Travel and Visitation with Natural Parents

District 5080 Youth Exchange **strongly discourages** parents visiting their child during the exchange year. Parent visits cannot interfere with mandatory school or Rotary activities and events. If parents insist on visiting their child during exchange they will only be allowed to visit during the last three months of exchange and **not** at the end of the exchange and only with written approval from the Host Club, the District Inbound Coordinator and the District Chair. Approval must be requested at least 30 in advance of the parent visit.

Visitations from friends, siblings, extended family or students traveling to visit extended family is not permitted.

Returning Home

Students are not permitted to travel home with natural parents and should leave from the same port of entry. They must take the most direct route reasonably possible. There should be no expectation of a host bringing a student to a departure airport different from the one the student arrived at. No diverted or additional travel is allowed enroute home. Students should depart for their home country on or before July 7th.

Mandatory District Events

Students are required to attend:

- Inbound Orientation (September)
- Hallowe'en Weekend (October)
- Winter Weekend Event (Jan/Feb)
- Outbound Orientation (May)
- District Conference (May – students do not attend every year)
- District Tour (May – Follows the outbound orientation)

Students will be provided a calendar in September at their Orientation weekend where they will be told that attendance at the above district events is mandatory and a condition of their exchange. Host family, natural family, and school events/activities are not reasons for students to miss the mandatory events. It is the responsibility of the host club to ensure the students are safely transported to and from each event.

Optional tours

Optional Rotary approved tours are offered to our students every year. The students must have written permission from their natural parents, host club and the District Youth Exchange Chair to participate in these tours. Students bear the cost of these tours.

Student Expenses

- Exchange students pay for their clothes, cell phone charges, and personal items. One host family paying for any of these items could embarrass other families that follow the guidelines.
- Host Rotary Clubs give exchange students a monthly allowance, and host families should not provide any additional allowance.
- The Rotary Club pays for the student's meals at Rotary meetings.
- Students usually expect to pay their own way to shows and similar events.
- If students are invited by host families to go on trips, vacations, etc., sharing of costs should be discussed with the student before the trip begins. The host family may choose to pay all costs especially if that is the practice for other family members.

Insurance

All students coming on exchange to District 5080 have purchased Rotary International approved medical insurance. Students should have their medical insurance card on them at all times. It is a good idea to make several copies of their insurance card to have on hand. There should be a copy of the student medical insurance card in the host family binder.

Medical Health Issues

In the event of illness/accident:

1. Medical care is pre-authorized by the natural parents in the student's application. A copy of this consent is in the Host Family binder.
2. Get medical attention for the student as needed. Remember to take the student insurance card and a copy of the medical consent form.
3. Contact the student Rotary youth exchange officer and advise them of the medical situation.
4. In the event complex urgent care is required, contact the District Inbound Coordinator immediately who will contact the District Chair. The District Chair will contact the student's natural parents. Email the Rotary Club Counselor and YEO advising them of the situation.
5. Host families should not sign financial liability forms.

Student Mental Health

Homesickness

Every student experiences homesickness to some degree and the extent of this problem will depend largely on the student's own background and personality. Host families should be appreciative of this fact and should expect the student to have some adjustment problems. Many students say they feel there are times when they want privacy to cope with feelings of homesickness. If your student spends some time alone in his or her room, do not be alarmed – this is fairly normal behavior. But if the student spends a lot of time alone in their room, this could be a signal that all is not well. The student who is actively involved in the community will be less likely to suffer from adjustment problems and homesickness than the non-participant so do all you can to encourage your student to accept the opportunities available to become involved. The holidays can be especially difficult for students. We review homesickness, culture shock and ways to cope at the student orientation camp in September.

Anxiety and Low Mood

Exchange students can be especially susceptible to anxiety and mood swings. In extreme cases the student's counselor or YEO should be alerted.

Culture Shock

Rotary Youth exchange students living and studying in a different culture and living in the host families homes often experience significant culture shock, sometimes on a continuous basis, throughout their stay. For more information refer to the "Culture Shock" article in the host family binder.

Also, understanding the Phases of a typical exchange experience will be useful.

Mental Health Issues

Just like anyone else, from time to time, students may experience mental health issues. Just being an exchange student can sometimes be stressful, precipitating mental health issues.

If you suspect the student has a mental health issue:

- Refer to the “How to Spot General Warning Signs of Common Mental Health Struggles on an Exchange” in the Host Family binder.
- Contact the Youth Exchange Officer. The YEO will report to the counselor and the District Inbound Coordinator.
- Do not confront the student. Allow the District and/or a professional to confront the student. District 5080 has a mental health professional who can provide early intervention, direction, and care.
- Only the District Chair is to contact the natural parents and will be supported by our mental health professionals.

Youth Protection

Rotary takes the safety of their students very seriously, it is our number one priority. Rotarians, their families, and non-Rotarian volunteers are expected to use their best efforts to safeguard the welfare of and prevent the physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or harassment of every student with whom they come into contact. To safeguard our students, all parties with extensive contact with students are vetted according to the requirements of Rotary International and, in the case of U.S., Cubs, the overlapping U.S. Department of State regulations.

Rotary International and Rotary District 5080 are committed to protecting the safety and well-being of exchange students and will not tolerate abuse or harassment directed at the youth. Unfortunately, no organization or program is invulnerable to abuse or crises. They can and do occur in even the most seemingly positive settings. All allegations will be taken seriously. If you become aware of any abuse of your student, please contact the District Youth Exchange Inbound Coordinator and District Chair immediately.

District 5080 students, volunteers, host families and youth exchange committee members are required to take the NAYEN Youth Protection on-line course annually. YEOs and students are trained in youth protection by the District 5080 Youth Protection Officer at the student orientation in September. The Rotary Youth Exchange program is regulated in the United States by its Department of State. Most of those regulations mirror those of Rotary International.

We strongly encourage you, as Host Parents, to visit our website www.rotaryye5080.org and review:

- The complete text for *The Department of State Exchange Regulations*
- Rotary Youth Protection Guide
- Youth Protection Checklist
- Electronic/Online safety Considerations

Some Youth Protection Guidelines

1. Always treat students with respect and request that others do the same.
2. Touch and hug students only in ways that are appropriate for teenage children in your family.
3. However, be aware that the appropriateness of hugging and other forms of touching vary considerably from one culture to another. (it is good practice to ask)
4. Respect the right of the student to privacy.
5. Never engage in or allow physical force or emotional abuse or harassment.
6. Never make sexually suggestive comments, even as a joke.
7. Spending excessive time alone with a student is never a good idea.
8. Communicate immediately with Rotary if there are allegations or suspicions of abuse or harassment.

Crisis Management

A crisis involving Youth Exchange may involve international students hosted in District 5080 or District 5080 students hosted in our International partner Districts. The crisis may involve an individual student or a group of students within a region. District 5080 provides training related to crisis management for its youth exchange students and volunteers at the orientation camp in September and/or once per year through webinar delivery. District 5080 has developed a *Crisis Management Plan* to serve as an important procedural resource to assist our volunteers and participants in responding effectively when a crisis occurs. The *Crisis Management Plan* can be found on our website.

This is a lot of information to absorb. Take your time in going through the material. Remember that you are never alone in this journey; your Rotary host club Counselor and Youth Exchange officer are here to support and guide you, as is the District 5080 Youth Exchange Committee. Feel free to reach out at any time should you have questions or concerns.

Welcome to the Rotary District 5080 Youth Exchange “Family”. We appreciate your willingness to host an exchange student! Host families are critical to the success of our exchange program and we thank you sincerely for hosting our student.

Helpful Hints for the Host Family

Host families provide a safe, nonthreatening, respectful and appropriate environment in which trust and friendship between the family and the student can develop.

- Provide room and board for three or four months. Room and board includes three meals per day. The student may utilize the lunch supplied by the school or pack a lunch from home. Either way the host family must provide or pay for this.
- Maintain communication with the local Rotary Club so that any problems may be addressed and resolved quickly. Voice any questions or concerns – even seemingly insignificant ones – to the student’s counselor or Youth Exchange Officer.
- It is desirable for the student to have their own bedroom or, alternatively, to share a room with someone of their own gender and age group. They must have their own bed.
- Is not obliged to provide the student with spending money nor to finance clothing, travel or other expenses.
- Should include the student in all family activities accepting the student as one of the family in all respects.
- Supervise the school and leisure hour activities of the student as if he or she were their own child.
- Exercises parental responsibilities and supervision as would the student’s own parents.
- Help with typical challenges such as language acquisition, friendships, culture shock, local customs, etc.