



# Homestay Family Guidelines

## What to Expect

Homestay families are expected to act as the international student's "family away from home". You are not merely offering room and board to these students. Your role is to offer a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for these students to live in, just as you would your own children. Conversely the international students are not to look at your relationship as if they are "guests" to be waited on hand and foot. The relationship we are looking for is one of mutual understanding and trust and one where the homestay students should respect you and your children (if you have children) as they should respect their own family in their home country. We hope that not only can your homestay student learn much about Canadian culture and lifestyle but that you too can learn much about your student's culture and way of life. These intrinsic rewards should be first and foremost for you rather than financial considerations.

## Your Responsibilities

- All household members must agree to host a student.
- The Homestay family must provide a clean, friendly, and safe living environment.
- The Homestay family's primary consideration in hosting a student is for the cross-cultural experience and the intrinsic rewards that that would bring.
- The Homestay family must provide the student with a private bedroom complete with a bed, dresser, desk, chair, lamp, and closet space.
- The Homestay family can expect the student to do reasonable household chores but does not expect the student to maintain their house or yard, babysit their children, or cook their meals.
- Homestay family members must be willing to respect the religious or non-religious beliefs of their student.
- Homestay family members agree to respect the culture and values of their student.
- The Homestay family will provide a variety of nutritional, well-balanced meals three times a day as well as daily snacks.
- The Homestay family is willing to do the student's laundry, or provide laundry detergent, instructions, and a schedule for the student to do her/his own laundry.
- Homestay family members are willing and able to involve the student in various activities and outings.
- Homestay family members do not abuse alcohol or drugs.
- Homestay families are under no obligation to provide accommodations for the student's family. It is recommended that visiting parents arrange hotel accommodations during their visits.
- If the student makes a request to move to another Homestay (and the request is studied and granted by the Homestay Coordinator) the Homestay family will not be required to refund any fees paid to them



in the month in which the request was granted. However, if the request was made with fewer than fourteen days remaining in the month, then the student will be responsible for paying the Homestay family the homestay fee for the first half of the next month as well.

- Our experience tells us that all parties involved in the International Student Program need to opportunity to “recharge their batteries” over the summer. **Therefore, unless certain conditions are met (please refer to the Homestay Agreement for details), all year-long international students MUST leave Chilliwack between July 5 – August 25 each summer.**

## The Process

If you wish to participate in our Homestay Program, please complete a Homestay Application form and return it to the address on the application form or bring it in to the School Board Office.

As a prospective Homestay family, all members of your family 16 years of age and older must have a Criminal Record check done (at their own expense) through the RCMP. Furthermore, the District Homestay Coordinator will conduct a home inspection and an interview with all family members. If you are successful in your application, you will be placed on our roster of Homestay families. When there is a match between the expressed wishes and conditions of a Homestay family and those of an incoming student we will supply you with the specifics regarding your new family member. Once this information has been provided to you, please feel free to communicate with your new student and his/her family. They will no doubt be thrilled to hear from you.

## Homestay Guidelines

This information is intended to address the broad range of concerns of prospective homestay parents. In doing so, it deals with potential challenges, problems, and responsibilities that homestay parents may have to face in accommodating a foreign student. It should be stressed that homestays are normally rewarding experiences for both parties.

### 1. Why and when are these students coming to Chilliwack?

Foreign students want to improve their English fluency and benefit from an international experience. A number of these students will only be staying for a year or perhaps even shorter, while a good number of them will study here until they graduate. After graduation some stay in Canada to go to university, some return to their home countries, while others go on to post-secondary studies in countries such as the United States and Australia.

### 2. What can a homestay family do to prepare for an international student?

Send an email message or letter to your student. Describe your family, any pets you may have, lifestyle, and your neighbourhood. Relate funny or typical family incidents. Include photos of your family, home, neighbourhood, and Chilliwack.

Send an email message or write a letter to your student's parents. Reassure them that you are looking



forward to hosting their son/daughter. Encourage them to write to you. Don't worry if they can't speak English. They will be very excited and grateful to receive your letter and they will quickly find someone to translate it for them. After all, you will be the caregiver for their son/daughter while he/she lives and learns in a new country halfway across the world. It would be very reassuring for them if you made contact with them.

Do some homework. Study a few words of your student's language and read up on the history and culture of your student's country of origin. Learn to pronounce your student's name correctly.

Prepare your student's room with the required desk, lamp, bed, closet, and dresser. Other niceties such as putting up a welcome banner, providing a plant, magazines/pamphlets, or perhaps a small gift or treat on the bed would no doubt be greatly appreciated and make the student feel welcome in his/her new home.

### **3. What are they like?**

First and foremost, they are children. They share many of the characteristics common to young people anywhere. As individuals they are at various levels of maturity and sophistication. Through time you will be able to determine your student's personality and degree of responsibility. Just treat him/her accordingly.

Some have previous international travel experience. Some have grown up in an urban environment. They may be used to a greater measure of personal independence than our children experience or less independence.

All of our students will have studied some English prior to arriving in our schools. Their English abilities will vary greatly though. Some students will come to us quite fluent and confident in their English abilities while others will arrive here not feeling very comfortable at all in speaking and comprehending English. With these students you will have to repeat and re-word sentences. Check for comprehension. Be patient and understanding, but encourage them to speak English immediately. Explain that it is a Canadian custom to speak English in front of other Canadians. Although it is difficult and frustrating to speak English all the time, it is rude to speak a foreign language in our presence.

### **4. How will they adjust to life in Chilliwack?**

The first few weeks of the homestay will involve significant adjustments on the part of the students and the homestay families. Often students are away from their families for the first time. They can experience jet lag, culture shock, and homesickness. Homestay families should expect "shyness". Generally speaking, Oriental students are not used to outward shows of affection such as hugging in their own cultures, and therefore may be embarrassed by it. Students from many other cultural backgrounds are much more comfortable with such outward signs of affection. Furthermore, the academic workload is very demanding for these students, especially in the beginning. Be supportive of your student, comfort them and try to ease the pressure they are feeling to excel.

The homestay family should do whatever it can to smooth the way for the student and at the same time adjust family life to accommodate the student as a new family member.

Within the first few days of arriving the homestay family should:

- inform the student how to address you, e.g. Mr./Mrs., John/Mary, Mom/Dad, etc.



- take them through the home routines, e.g. mealtimes, snacks, showers, laundry, chores, how to make a bed, etc.
- demonstrate how to use all electrical appliances.
- invite the student to go grocery shopping.
- give the student your name, home address, and phone number on a card that will fit into a wallet.
- take the student on a sightseeing tour of the area.

Because of the cultural and language barriers, it may be difficult at first for the students to make friends. They will not automatically make firm friends with family siblings. Much like natural siblings, they will relate better to some family members than others.

#### **5. Can homestay families expect foreign students to conform to family rules of conduct?**

Absolutely! It would be wise to establish with your student an understanding of house rules and regulations as soon as possible. Be sure to explain why you have set such guidelines. Kids are kids world-wide and your student will likely conform to your household routines and family rules much more easily if he/she is clear on just what they are.

- students must understand that hosts are surrogate parents – not landlords or hoteliers. Students are expected to conform to the normal rules of family life and contribute to the routine operation of the household.
- **THE USE OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL BY STUDENTS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.**
- Immigration Canada does not permit students to hold jobs in Canada.
- **OVERNIGHT STAYS OUTSIDE OF THE FAMILY HOME AND OUT OF TOWN TRAVEL ARE SUBJECT TO THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF BOTH THE HOMESTAY COORDINATOR AND THE HOMESTAY FAMILY.** It is the duty of the homestay family to make personal contact with the parents in the home where the student will be temporarily staying before approval for the overnight stay will be considered.
- the students **MUST NOT** be left overnight unattended. Adult supervision (someone twenty-five years of age or older) must be arranged for your student if you will be away from home overnight. The homestay family is responsible for compensating the substitute family (\$30/night) unless other mutually agreeable arrangements are made.
- If students choose to participate in family holidays and/or travel where costs are incurred, they are expected to assist in bearing the costs. Where students choose not to participate in the activity, they must accept alternate arrangements made by the homestay family.
- you will have to determine a curfew for your student based on his/her age and maturity. Make sure that the curfew is clearly communicated to your student and that they always communicate to you where they are going and who they will be with.
- explain clearly your rules regarding:
  - a) showers and baths
  - b) use of the telephone (the student may want to get his/her own telephone)
  - c) table manners
  - d) manners in general
  - e) calling home when late
  - f) smoking rules



## 6. What are host parents expected to provide?

Homestay families provide students with a home away from home in a supervised environment where the student's welfare is as important as that of any family member.

Students expect to have their own rooms, including a bed, bedding, a closet, chest of drawers, desk, and study lamp. Students should be able to have reasonable access to the bathroom and other common areas of the home. Outline to the student where he/she is free to go and which household areas are out of bounds.

They may want to phone friends and home often, during irregular hours. Parents should set a clear telephone policy as to when it is reasonable to place and receive phone calls. The students are responsible for all of their own telephone charges. Reasonable use of the computer and internet should also be clearly outlined.

Parents are expected to provide the student with three wholesome meals and snacks each day. If your student is a teenager, remember how much a growing teenager eats. Students can be expected to get their own breakfast and make their own lunch if this is what you prefer. However, with younger students you may have to provide some assistance and supervision. Regardless of the age of your student parents are expected to prepare the supper meal for the student. It is strongly recommended to take the student grocery shopping with you several times to determine their tastes and make them feel at home.

If your student is paying you directly (as opposed to someone else paying on their behalf), it has been explained to them to pay the \$900.00 homestay fee by the first of each month. In case your student forgets, a gentle reminder wouldn't hurt.

Students are responsible for paying for their own toiletries, entertainment, bus expenses, and school supplies.

## 7. What additional responsibilities do homestay parents have?

- a) **Medical Coverage** - You do not have to be concerned about medical coverage for your student as that will be taken care of by the Director of the International Student Program.
- b) **Bank Accounts** - Please assist your student in opening a bank account immediately if there is no student agent directly involved in handling their finances for them. It is advisable to use your own bank and branch. Students should be encouraged to have chequing accounts and to use cheques to pay for their homestay fees if they are making the payments themselves.
- c) **Home Insurance Policy** - Your property is most likely covered by your homeowner's insurance in the unlikely event that your student should damage anything. However, please contact your agent to be sure that you have adequate coverage.

## 8. What support is available to homestay families and students?

The Director of the International Student Program is based at the School Board Office and works to help the students with any school related or personal problems or concerns. Chilliwack School District has an International Student Homestay Coordinator, Barb Leetch who is available to act as a liaison between the students, the family and the school. Homestay families and their students should therefore direct any questions or concerns regarding homestay to Barb by calling 604-791-1312.

On occasion Barb will give you a call to say hello and see how things are going. However, please remember that you can give her a call as well – even if it's just to say that everything is fine.



Furthermore, academic and personal counseling services will be available at the school for your student in the same way that they are available to any local student.

Families and students are expected to make every effort to ensure that the homestay relationship is a success. Nevertheless, problems could arise as they do in any field of human activity. If families and students are incompatible and every effort has been made to improve the situation, but to no avail, the Homestay Coordinator will seek another homestay for the student. However, any student requesting a second homestay change within a year will be subject to a thorough investigation before a third placement is considered, and depending on the findings, the student may be asked to leave the Chilliwack School District.

## 9. When your international student arrives:

- a) Greet your student at Vancouver International Airport. Arrive a little early just in case the flight is early, but do be prepared for somewhat of a wait as the student has to pass through Customs and Immigration.
- b) Drive the student past his/her school on the way home.
- c) Have a quiet, relaxing day at home. Remember, your student has in all likelihood been up for over twenty-four hours and is coming from a country where the time difference may be as much as seventeen or more hours different from our local time. Therefore, there's a good chance that he/she may quite soon want to spend some time alone to adjust and rest and/or sleep.
- d) If your student doesn't have a student agent directly involved to handle their finances help your student to open a bank account within the first couple days of arriving. Discuss in advance the type of account that the student wants.
- e) Gradually during the week, discuss family routines, rules, and homestay payment procedures.
- f) Please don't forget to take your student on a tour of the area within the first few days of his/her arrival!

## 10. Homestay Family Guidelines

To help ensure that you and your student have an enjoyable time together, we have these basic guidelines for you. Visiting students will also be given guidelines covering most of the same points but from their perspective.

Cultural differences can often make the most basic areas of daily life a problem for an overseas student. Sensitivity and awareness on your part will help ease the student's adjustment to life in your home. It will be helpful to both you and your student if you have a discussion of family rules and schedules shortly after his/her arrival. Patience will be required in all of your explanations to the student. If he/she seems to have difficulty understanding you, it is often valuable to write things down. The students often have a greater comprehension of written English than they do of spoken English.

When you guide the student through your home, it is a good idea to explain how to use some of the facilities. Encourage them to ask questions and try to use simple language in your explanations. We hope that the exchange of cultures that occur as you and your student interact on a daily basis will be an exciting part of the homestay.

- a) **Food** - To a student from overseas, Canadian cooking may seem very exotic indeed. Just as you may find squid a little unusual (or not), your best barbequed bacon cheeseburger may puzzle your student. The whole idea of homestay is to experience Canadian life so don't make drastic changes to your family's meals. Most students enjoy trying new food. However, you should be aware of your



student's preferences. If you and your student are so inclined, it might be fun to go to the grocery store together to purchase groceries that would allow the student to cook for your family a traditional dish or meal from his/her country. Students are normally happy to share their culture with you in a way that would be mutually beneficial.

Your student is not just a guest, but hopefully will become a part of your family for the time he/she is with you. Inviting him/her to join in a few household responsibilities will help him become involved. Shyness comes from not knowing what to do. Setting the table, helping with lunches and so on, when defined clearly by you at the outset, can become activities to further your communication. Clearly inform students of meal schedules in order to avoid confusion and suggest that he/she lets you know if he/she is going to be late.

Children like snacks – this is a universal phenomenon. Please discuss this topic with your student explaining what snacks and drinks are available, how to prepare them, and when it is appropriate to have a snack. You will probably want to include the topic of “cleanup” in this discussion.

- b) **The Bathroom** - The bathroom is probably the most puzzling room in your house for overseas students because once the door is shut, they are on their own. Start with the guided tour – show your student where extra towels, face cloths and soap are, how the shower is turned on and how to draw the shower curtain. Students from Asia, for example, have very different bathroom routines. Bathrooms are fully tiled and equipped with a drain in the floor so many students from Japan, China, and other Asian countries are not used to keeping water contained in a tub. Any generic brand of soap, shampoo, and toothpaste should be provided by the homestay parent. Any exotic soaps or shampoos, toothbrush, hair sprays, cosmetics, etc. are the student's responsibility.
- c) **Sleeping Arrangements** - Here again, your guidance is essential to help your student feel at home. Define clearly where the student can put his or her clothes and belongings and make sure that he/she understands how covers on the bed work. The Japanese, for example, often simply use a futon and a quilt and are unused to getting under the many layers of covers that we use. Show your student how to make the bed and let him/her know at what times you will be retiring and eating breakfast. This will facilitate setting up schedules and settling into your family's routine.
- d) **Language** - The primary reason for the student's visit to Canada is to study English. They learn much at school but they have a chance to use it in your home. Therefore, it is good to try to engage your student in conversation. Speak in short, basic sentences at first to help reduce confusion if your student arrives here with rather limited English skills. Avoid negative questions, such as “Don't you want any more?” because the answer will likely be “Yes, (I don't want any more)” instead of “No, I don't.” Many languages respond to the verb rather than the meaning of the sentence. Be clear regarding “yes” and “no”. Many times students will indicate that they understand when they do not. This is because they do not want to bother you. You need to paraphrase often and check that they understand clearly. This is especially important when giving instructions so that the students don't let you down.
- e) **Insurance** - The students are covered by medical insurance for illness and accident. However, your home may not have coverage for the student's property in your home because the student is not a relative. Your property is most likely covered in the unlikely event that your student should damage anything. Please contact your agent to be sure that you have adequate coverage. If you have any problems or questions regarding insurance coverage in your home please feel free to contact your Homestay Coordinator.



- f) **Manners** - Manners vary greatly from culture to culture, so your student may require some guidance from you in order to avoid embarrassment. If your family wears shoes inside the house, let your student know that it is common in Canada and acceptable in your house. The Japanese, in particular, always remove their shoes at the door and may feel uncomfortable wearing them in your home.

Meal time is a very personal arrangement in the family, and some of the best times spent with your student will likely be over dinner. If your student is helping with preparations, give careful guidance. Electric stoves and other Canadian kitchen appliances may be new to your student. Forks, knives, and spoons may be familiar but your student may ask advice on the finer points of using them.

Many Asian cultures feel that making noise while one eats is a compliment to the cook. If it offends you, you may want to explain that Canadians usually eat quietly. Teach your student a few of the "Please pass the ..." phrases in order to help him/her feel comfortable at the table.

If your student is going to a restaurant without you, inform him/her that at many restaurants you must wait to be seated and of the appropriate tip that should be left. In some countries there is no tipping of people working in the service industry so the concept of tipping may be totally foreign to your student.

Please set definite guidelines regarding phone usage. The students already know that they are responsible for any long distance charges that they incur. When the telephone bill arrives please show them the charges for the calls they have made (if any) and ask them for the amount owing. Furthermore, students should be made aware of your rules regarding the amount of time they spend on the phone.

The International Student Program STRONGLY DISCOURAGES its students from smoking but smoking is not against the rules of our Participation Agreement. In the unlikely event that your student smokes, please make absolutely clear what your own household rules are regarding smoking.

- g) **Transportation** - International Program students are NOT permitted to drive any type of motor vehicle unless the following conditions are met:
- i. he/she is 17 years of age or older.
  - ii. he/she was an "A" or "B" Honours student on the most recent report card from his/her school in the Chilliwack School District.
  - iii. he/she takes an approved driver training course in Canada.
  - iv. he/she has the written approval of the International Student Program Director.

On a rare occasion in the past, homestay families have helped their international students to get a driver's licence and purchase a car without the approval of the Director of the International Student Program. SUCH ACTION WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT BEING DISMISSED IMMEDIATELY FROM THE PROGRAM AND THE HOMESTAY FAMILY BEING REMOVED FROM THE DISTRICT'S LIST OF ELIGIBLE HOMESTAY FAMILIES.

Students are encouraged to use the bus system and/or purchase a bike. If the student is going to use the public or School District bus system, inform them as to what the procedures are. Please prepare written instructions for destinations, bus names, and transfers for the student's use.

- h) **Laundry** - Please inform students about arrangements for laundry in your home. Students need to know where to put laundry and the timetable for cleaning as well as their specific responsibilities





with their laundry. Some of the older students may prefer to do some of their own laundry on their own. Arrange a schedule and a process that suits everyone.

- i) **Visitors** - Your home is your student's home. It may be that he/she wishes to invite a friend home to be sociable or to work on homework. Please discuss this in advance with your student and agree on notice, times, and any other aspect such as snacks. Having guests over if parents aren't present is strongly discouraged.
- j) **Religion** - Please respect your student's religious beliefs (or non-beliefs). Invite him/her to join you if you go to church, but be very understanding if he/she chooses not to. Absolutely no attempt should be made to change your student's religious beliefs.

### 11. Transfer of International Students

Either a student or homestay parents may request a transfer to a new home. If the student initiates the request every effort will be made to find a way to resolve the situation such that both the student and the homestay parents are happy with the solution and the student will stay with his/her original homestay family. If a mutually agreeable solution cannot be found, the student will be allowed to move to a new homestay. However, as mentioned previously, any student having problems with a second homestay family will be subject to a thorough investigation and may be asked to leave the Chilliwack School District.

### 12. Enjoy!

The vast majority of homestay relationships wind up being very pleasurable and rewarding for both the homestay family and student. The most difficult part for many, is having to say good-bye when it's over. The best part is that many lifelong friendships are developed!