



International Student Program  
Host Family Guide

2014-2015



# Wesleyan Christian School International Student Program

## Mission Statement

Wesleyan Christian School exists to assist Christian families in providing their children with an outstanding education that is thoroughly grounded in Biblical truth and effective in forming Godly character.

The Christ-centered environment, coupled with our strong Bible curriculum with worldview integration is the foundation of our program. Wesleyan Christian School's dedicated and committed teaching staff and quality Christian community help produce a positive life change in every international student enrolled at Wesleyan Christian School.

## **Rewards of Being a Host Family**

Serving as a host family for an international student can be a very rewarding experience. It is like having a real world cultural experience in the midst of your family. Receiving an international student provides an opportunity to experience firsthand international culture without leaving home---exploring new customs, food, and perspectives.

We believe that every international student who attends Wesleyan Christian School (WCS) is here by God's design and that every host family has a very important role to play in that purpose. The host family aids in this by ministering the love of Jesus Christ and in demonstrating the positive attributes of a Christian family. Living a Godly life day by day will impact the life of every international student placed with a host family. The friendships established will last beyond a lifetime and into eternity.

## **Host Family Criteria**

**Age.** Our preference is to place international students with families that already have school-age children or have raised school-age children. Experience in raising a family is a valuable asset in hosting international students.

**Church Attendance.** The desire to influence our international students toward Godliness requires that all host families be regular church attenders. Children of the host families must also be involved with a church youth group and church activities. It is expected that the international student will attend church with the host family. To be effective spiritually, the home, church and school must make a concerted effort in these matters.

**Provisions.** A host family must be able to:

1. Welcome the student as a member of the family and encourage the student to participate in all aspects of family life.
2. Make a ten-month commitment to hosting the student.
3. Create a positive cross-cultural experience for the international student.
4. Provide a quiet place for the international student to study.
5. Provide a room with adequate heat, light and ventilation; and a bed, bedding, dresser, closet and desk (if room permits). If the international student is going to be sharing a room with someone, then it must be a child of the same gender and within four years of the student's age.
6. Provide transportation as needed to and from school and school-sponsored activities.
7. Provide the student with access to a bathroom and bathing facilities, including bath linens.
8. Provide the student with access to laundry facilities. Students may need to receive instruction on the procedures and routines relating to the laundry facilities.
9. Furnish access to a telephone if needed. Most international students will have their own cell phones in which they will make all calls. Decide what is agreeable in your household

regarding the amount of calls, length of calls, and time of calls. Discuss long distance calls with the student in terms of bill payment. International students may wish to purchase a calling card for long distance calls.

10. Encourage the exchange of ideas and provide the student with exposure to the cultural and social environment.
11. Provide the love and understanding a young person needs to have an enjoyable and successful experience.
12. Ensure the overall well-being of the student staying in the home.
13. International students are required to speak English in your home. It is critical for the student to be fully immersed in English to best help them learn the language and speed up their success in the classroom. Exceptions to this rule may be made by the host parents when the student is speaking on the telephone to family members in their home country.
14. Offer a language-rich environment for the student by spending time with him or her during the evenings and on the weekends.

Host families are not expected to provide advice on immigration and visa problems. These types of questions and inquiries should be addressed by the International Student Program Director.

## **Application Process**

It is important to begin the application process as early as possible. The following must be complete before a host family is approved:

**Application.** All host families must complete an application packet.

**Background Check.** Each adult living in the home of the host family will need to provide information for a criminal background check as well as a secondary criminal record check for sexual offense.

**Reference Letters.** Host family applicants are required to provide three letters of reference. One of the reference letters must be filled out by the host family's pastor.

**Home Visit.** A home visit must be scheduled and conducted by the International Student Program Director and Principal. The purpose of this visit is to verify the accommodations for the student.

Once this process is complete, the International Student Program Director will contact the family and let them know whether they have been approved to be a host family.

## **Matching Families to Students**

Once a family has been approved as a host family, the International Student Program Director will match students with families based on a number of variables; for example:

Family's values.

Kinds of activities the family is involved in (sports, arts, intellectual pursuits, etc.)

Type of student requested; for example, quiet or outgoing.

Gender requested.

Hosting does require a period of adjustment for all family members and for the international student. Common interests and values make that adjustment easier.

## **Preparing Host Families**

Each host family should review this Host Family Guide. This will serve to assist in meeting the needs of the student assigned.

Host families will be required to attend a host family orientation conducted prior to the start of the school term. This will provide an opportunity for host families to meet each other, instruct and pre-teach them on any situations that may arise and to ask any questions.

## **Financial Responsibilities**

One of the primary questions asked by the host family is, "How much does it cost to host an international student?" Hosting an international student should not cause a financial hardship on a host family.

The international student's family will reimburse the host family for costs incurred to host the student. The cost for the entire year will be paid by the student's family to WCS prior to the beginning of the school year. The amount agreed upon will be deposited into an account and a stipend will be forwarded to the host family on a monthly basis.

The stipend is not intended as compensation for the host family's services but rather to offset the expenses incurred by the host family. Any stipend amount which exceeds the total expenses the host family incurs is taxable and is required to be reported to the Internal Revenue Service. It is recommended that host families keep all receipts and other documentation which may be required by the Internal Revenue Service to document an expense incurred as a result of hosting the student.

**Expenses Covered.** The stipend given for hosting the international student is intended to cover the following minimum requirements:

- Three meals per day, one of which is either a packed school lunch or money given to the international student to eat in the cafeteria. Snacks should also be provided for the student in the home.
- Transportation to and from school as well as any activities or sporting events.
- Supplies for doing laundry.
- Bedding and linen needs.
- Family outings (e.g., movies, recreational activities, restaurant meals).
- Utilities.
- Transportation to and from the airport.

**Expenses Not Covered.** The stipend given for hosting the international student is not intended to cover the following items:

- Clothing.
- Personal Items.
- Individual outings with friends.
- Personally chosen snacks or treats.
- Any personally chosen purchase.
- Special dietary requirements.
- Toiletries.
- Transportation not related to going and coming from school; for example, visiting relatives in other cities, going on mission trips.

## Medical Expenses

**Medical Insurance.** Health care for major illnesses or accidents can be extremely expensive in the United States, so health insurance is essential and required for an international student to be enrolled.

1. Although host families will need to accompany international students to the doctor's office, they are not responsible for medical expenses.
2. The international student's family must provide health insurance coverage. The host family may be asked to help with the purchase of insurance needs prior to starting school. The international student needs to show the school their insurance card, and a copy of the card should be made and kept by the host family.

**Health Needs.** Host families are expected to take care of the health needs of their student. Treating health issues of the international student in the same manner as one would treat a member of their immediate family is the best approach.

**Medical Treatments.** Medical treatments (excluding eye examinations, treatment for preexisting conditions, dental care, and routine physical examinations) are covered to the extent of each individual policy. It is important for the host family to have a copy of the student's medical history, which the school will supply.

**Medical Expenses.** In the event medical expenses are not covered by insurance, the student or natural parents are required to make payment. Except in the case of emergencies, the international student's parents should be advised of treatment and costs, and confirmation should be received that they agree to the payment of such costs **before** medical treatment is given.

**Claim Forms.** In the event there is a medical need, the host family should take the responsibility for completing insurance claim forms. In some cases, medical providers may require payment at the time of treatment. The international student should be able to pay this charge with their credit card (recommended for all international students).

## First Impressions

It is important to remember that international students and host family members each have their own language, beliefs, attitudes and customs. To a large extent the impressions that each makes on the other will be as a result of the impressions and relationships established while living together as a family under one roof.

The experience of living with another family or having an additional member in the family provides invaluable insights and involves changes, questioning and frustration. In order for this to be a valuable experience for both parties there must be openness, sensitivity and respect. There must be a willingness to sit down and discuss expectations, misunderstandings, and problems when they arise. Both parties will have excellent opportunities for growth.

Many international students come from families in which the student's sole responsibility is to concentrate on academics and music or other specialized studies. These students may not be

accustomed to removing dishes from the table following a meal, loading the dishwasher, doing laundry, etc. As a result, the host family may need to patiently guide the student in the day-to-day responsibilities which are a part of your family's routine.

**Before Arrival.** Communicating with the assigned international student either in writing or by email will lower the anxiety of leaving a safe and secure home environment and entering into one that is virtually unknown.

**Send a detailed letter.** Within five days of the initial notification of the selected student's acceptance, send a letter to the student. In your initial letter, be careful not to use colloquial/regional terms or phrases, especially if your student is from a non-English speaking country.

Here are some suggestions for topics and details that the letter should address:

- Introduce each of your family members. Include a family picture(s).
- Elaborate on what the student should expect academically and socially.
- Request a travel itinerary. Recommend that the student arrive before registration day or a minimum of one week (or more) prior to the first day of school. This allows the student to recover from traveling to adjust to his or her new environment and to take care of school-related issues well before the first day of school.
- Let the student know of some fun things that you have planned to do with them when they arrive.
- Describe Oklahoma's climate. Be specific about the weather the student will encounter. Stress the need to bring both summer and winter clothing. Some students have heard that Oklahoma is very warm and do not realize that it also gets cold.
- Ask the student to assemble questions he or she and family members may have, and mail or e-mail those to you as soon as possible.
- Identify the date and time you will place an international call (or Skype) to the student to answer their questions. Pay careful attention to calculate the time the call will be received in that country.
- It would be nice to send the student something with the school's name or logo on it like a shirt or hat. Students enjoy getting items of this nature before their trip.

After you have composed this letter, send a copy of it to the International Student Program Director to be retained in the student's file.

**Telephone Call.** You may wish to follow your initial letter with an international telephone call to the student and their family.

- The date and time of the call should be clearly defined in your first letter. Placing the call may take several attempts.



- The call will give you an opportunity to answer any questions the student and their family may have, and the international student's family considers this call to be very special.
- Speak with the parents if possible; however, many parents of international students do not speak English. This raises their comfort level and begins to develop bonds of friendship.
- Extend an open invitation for them to visit their son or daughter while in the country. In doing so, make certain the parents know if they will be able to stay in your home or will need to plan other accommodations.

## **Family Safety and Security**

The safety of the international student is one of the top concerns for the host family. Depending on the country a student comes from, his or her perception of safety and security may be different than that of the host family.

**Curfews.** Host families need to provide for safety and security just as if the student were their own child. It is advised that students not be out by themselves at night. In addition, the students should not be left alone for long periods of times. Host families should provide the student with contact numbers they can use in the event they need assistance. Each student will be provided with the number of the International Student Program Director.

**Out of Town.** In a two-parent host family, if one of the parents is to be away from the home overnight, the host family is asked to notify the International Student Program Director. If both parents are going to be gone, then it is the responsibility of a host family to make housing arrangements with the director's approval.

## **Family Outings**

Students who are part of a host family expect to participate in family living experiences. Although they have come to study, they also want to learn about American culture and to have rewarding experiences rather than just participate in a travel program.

Most host families enjoy exposing their student to what makes the United States so special. For most students, their only exposure to America has been at international airports. This will be a great opportunity to share in these experiences with your student.

**Optional Events.** Throughout the year the International Student Program Director will be coordinating additional events for all of the international students and host families.

## **Home Visits**

**Overnight Stays at a Friend's House.** Permission to stay overnight at a friend's house is at the discretion of the host family, provided this has been arranged and agreed on by both the host parent(s) and the friend's parent(s).

**Relatives and Family.** Relatives and family members who desire to visit with the international student will be expected to provide their own accommodations with regard to meals and a place to stay during their visit.

## **Travel**

Students must ask permission from their host family when opportunities are presented to take a trip.

**Travel with Non-Host Family.** Expect the following:

- Require a written list of details of dates, times, means of travel, those accompanying them and names, contact addresses and phone numbers of where they will be staying.
- Ask them to describe the types of activities in which they will be participating.
- Work with them on outlining costs of the trip and means of paying for these activities. The student is responsible for all costs.
- If there is a question of approval, the host family should discuss the activity with the International Student Program Director. Should a student wish to undertake travel on days when school is in session, permission will need to be obtained from the school principal.

**Travel with Host Family.**

- Travel with the host family involving a stay of one or two nights (or a long weekend) do not have to be reported to the natural parents or the International Student Program Director. Courtesy dictates that it is polite to inform the natural parents of this travel.
- Permission from the natural parents and notification to the International Student Program Director are needed for travel involving a longer time away from the host family home.
- The host family is expected to pay for the student's costs to the extent they would pay for their own children.

## **Cultural Differences**

There will be cultural issues that both the host family and the international student will face. At first, everything is exciting and intriguing and the student is the center of attention. After this initial period, the student's focus shifts to differences rather than similarities. Expect and adjust to these cultural differences.

The host family should also be aware of the perceptions international students may have of Americans. Some of the more common stereotypes of American citizens include: boastful and arrogant; disrespectful of authority; extravagant and wasteful; generous; ignorant of other countries cultures; insensitive; lazy; loud and obnoxious; racist; rich and wealthy; rude and

immature; and know-it-alls. Being placed in a Christian host family should help to eliminate these stereotypes.

**Cultural Integration.** Having an understanding of cultural differences before a student arrives is the first step. Consider the following suggestions:

- Attend the Host Family orientation workshop.
- Do some research on differences in celebrations of holidays; these times are the ones that contribute most to an international student becoming homesick. Students who experience severe cultural shock may want to spend abnormal amounts of times sleeping, staying in their room and/or with students of the same nationality.
- Learn about the culture of your prospective student which will help in overcoming differences of culture.
- Do not give up on ministering love and acceptance, even though differences between the host family culture and the culture of the international student can become irritating. Keep in mind that this is a normal occurrence and can be overcome.

**Cultural Factors.** Host family members and parents of the international student, if possible, should discuss cultural differences and come to some conclusions about adjustments and expectations. Consider developing a list of cultural differences that can be shared with the student to help eliminate frustration. You might consider some of the following for your list:

- **Dress.** Americans dress casual and informal most of the time. Some international students may dress in attire that is considered stylish in their country, but we may consider inappropriate. These students may be unaware that they are being looked at in a negative way, and it would be helpful for you to have that discussion beforehand.
- **Native Language.** International students are required to speak English when they are in your home or at school. It is permissible and appropriate for you to engage them in learning some of their language, but keep in mind that they are here to better their understanding and learning in English.
- **Punctuality.** Being on time is important. However, in some cultures, asking someone to be present at 10:00 may result in their showing up at 10:15 and expecting this to be normal practice.
- **Taboo Subjects.** Subjects such as salary, mortgages and age are considered private. Personal privacy may not be considered important in some cultures, so private papers can be looked at by visitors. Privacy is an important issue to review with international students.
- **Please and thank you.** Everyone likes to hear people say "Thank you." This may be something that the international student is not used to or aware of that can be taught. Also, it may be polite in the country the international student is from to refuse two or three times if someone is offering them something. The student needs to know that it is okay to respond positively the first time, since two or three offers may not be given. This is especially true if they are hungry or thirsty.

- **Greetings.** Be aware that in our culture we frequently greet each other with a handshake or a pat on the back, this may cause unease to a student who is used to greeting with a slight bow and no contact.
- **Modesty.** Different cultures have different ideas about modesty. This issue will most likely arise in clothing styles and in doing laundry.
- **Servants or Maids.** Sometimes international students come from well-to-do families where they have several servants or maids to do the work. Clear expectations and guidelines need to be set forth as to what is expected of them in the home.
- **Chores.** As a family member, the international student is expected to share equally in the chores and duties of the home. It is essential that the student come under the authority of the home, just as one's own children would, such as making their bed and picking up their own things and sharing in other household chores. The host family should explain what is expected relative to the cleanliness of their bedroom, the sharing of facilities, etc. The student may need patient guidance in performing these expected chores.
- **Food.** Food can be one of the most difficult issues for host families. The host family is not under any obligation to prepare special meals for the international student. However, it is a good idea to explore different foods that the international student may be more accustomed to from time to time.

## **Conflict and Problem Resolution**

Most parents from time to time have conflict with their children. The same is true in caring for an international student. It is inevitable that small problems will arise and most of these challenges are the result of gaps in communication and lack of understanding.

**Communication.** "Frustration ends when communication begins." Good honest communication will solve most of the day-to-day issues that may arise. If, however, either a host parent or an international student feels the need for additional support to solve a conflict, the International Student Program Director is available for consultation, support, or mediation. Situations between international students and other WCS students should be brought to the attention of the principal.

**Changing Host Family.** On occasion, issues may arise where an ignored problem grows into a bigger one and, in spite of attempts to work through the problem, it may become necessary to move a student to a different host family home. There can be many reasons this can occur. Typically, a problem-solving approach is taken and time is given for the solution to be tried. On the other hand, under unusual circumstances, the International Student Program Director reserves the right to move a student immediately, either at the request of the family or the student. If this happens, you will no longer receive host family monies.

**Sending Students Home.** Significant violations of the standards established by host families and lifestyle violations established by the school may require that an international student be sent home. If this were to be the case, arrangements for the student's departure will be coordinated by

the International Student Program Director. In the event a student must be sent home, the host family will no longer receive host family monies.

## **Family Schedules**

The host family needs to share with the international student any family rules and the reasons for these rules. A few minutes of explanation could save a lot of irritation and concern. The student can be provided with a typical schedule as to when meals are served and how schedules differ on the weekend.

The international student is expected to share with the host family where they are going and with whom they are going. In like manner, the host family needs to keep the international student informed as to their schedule of activities.

The student is expected to "ask" permission from the host parent as opposed to "tell" the host parent when they wish to go somewhere or do something. Some international students are not accustomed to asking. Encourage the student to follow the rules followed by your children in this regard.

**Study Time.** Some students will need direction in setting aside time for studying and doing their homework. The student should be able to study in a quiet area free from the noise of television, noise, etc. The host family may need to ensure that a study time is established and implemented with distractions kept to a minimum.

**Television, Telephone, and Internet.** Guidelines need to be established for the usage of the telephone, television, music, computers and the internet. Internet access is not a part of the hosting agreement, but it is recommended that internet access be available as students often need it for their studies. Internet use is available in the school computer lab. Students may be accustomed to studying or speaking with friends late into the evening. The host family may need to establish a bedtime deadline on electronics use on school and church nights. If a student does not follow these bedtime guidelines, it may become necessary to remove the student's laptop, cell phone and other electronic devices from his or her room.

Many problems and conflicts can be avoided if these items are addressed at the beginning of the stay.

## **Student Questions**

Most students coming to stay in an American home for the very first time will have a number of questions. Although answers to some of these questions have already been provided, actually compiling a written response to the questions listed below will help clarify expectations and boundaries and provide for a smooth transition to a host family home.

- What do I call you? Mom, Dad or first name?
- Do I have to make my bed and clean my room everyday?
- What other jobs and chores should I do around the house?

- Should I be responsible for washing my own clothes?
- Where should I keep my bathroom toilet accessories?
- What time is my curfew if I go out?
- What time do we eat, and what is expected of me at mealtimes?
- May I help myself to food and drink in moderation at any time or must I ask first?
- What areas are strictly private and I should not get into?
- May I put up pictures, posters, etc. in my bedroom?
- Where can I store my suitcase?
- What time is bedtime during the weekday and on weekends?
- What time must I get up on weekday mornings?
- When is the best time for me to use the bathroom on weekday mornings?
- Can I have friends stay overnight?
- What are the rules about local phone calls?
- May my friends phone me?
- What are the rules for internet use?
- What is the procedure for sending a letter?
- Do family members have any dislikes or hates, e.g., chewing gum, music, lack of punctuality, being interrupted while reading or watching a show.
- What are your policies for using any electronic devices?

## **Guidelines**

The following guidelines have been established to direct decisions made on behalf of international students.

**General Requirement.** International students placed with host families must agree to abide by the guidelines established by the host family and accept responsibility for adhering to these guidelines.

Students must follow agreed-upon conditions regarding curfew, dating, and any household policies and chores for which they are assigned. Guests may be invited to the host family's home once permission is obtained.

This guideline pertains to the expectations that students will adopt and comply with the host family customs, rules and expectations. This will require patience, hard work, understanding and good communication between both parties.

Host families making commitments to host an international student are agreeing to treat the international student as they would one of their own children. Firm guidance and discipline may be necessary at times, just as encouraging words and expressions of love and acceptance are appropriate at other times. Host parents may need to consider certain of the student's cultures and customs in expectation that the student will comply with the family's cultures and customs.

**Spiritual Opportunities.** International students will be expected to attend church and youth activities with the host family. The host family is crucial in the spiritual development of the international student. It is best for them to attend worship together so that the host parents can feel comfortable engaging in spiritual discussions and topics that may arise from sermons or daily activities.

**Academic Applications.** International students will be enrolled in core subjects and are responsible for attending school and achieving satisfactory grades. The student must follow all of the coursework outlined for WCS students. Before any changes can be made in the outlined course work, the student must complete a class change request form and have it approved by the International Student Program Director and the High School Principal.

**Driving.** International students under the age of eighteen may not drive motor vehicles except within the context of a formal Driver's Training program. At the end of the program, a student may not drive unless he or she is over the age of eighteen. International students are not allowed to be passengers on motorcycles, motor bikes, or scooters.

Only those students over the age of eighteen may purchase or own a motor vehicle. The title of the motor vehicle must be in the student's name or the parent's name but **may not be** in the host parent's name. A student who is eligible to drive must provide a copy of his or her driver's license, proof of insurance, and a copy of the motor vehicle title to the International Student Program Director.

**Independent Travel.** International students may not travel independently while school is in session without the written permission of the school. Any travel that a student undertakes should only occur during school vacation times. If students plan to travel during vacation times they must have the written permission of their natural parents unless the students are traveling with their host family. Students may not take vacations alone or with other students. They may travel alone but the destination must be to stay with an adult who is responsible for the student.

**Life-Changing Decisions.** International students cannot make any life-changing decisions or actions while participating in the WCS International Student Program. Life-changing decisions include changing religion (i.e., changing from Christianity to another religion), becoming pregnant or getting married.

**Life Style.** It is expected that all students attending WCS will be committed to following classroom rules and policies and the WCS Honor Code of Conduct. Violation of the honor code is justification for returning the student home. Host parents will be proactive in monitoring the

comings and goings of their international students and for inspecting living quarters to ensure compliance with the honor code.

**End of Program.** Host family members will not be responsible for students after a two-week period following the end of school. By this time, host families have fulfilled their contractual obligations to the international student. If host families decide to keep the international students during the summer months, then a separate agreement will be made between the host family and the international student's natural family.

**1780 Silver Lake Road . Bartlesville, OK 74006 . (918) 333-8631**

***[www.wesleyanchristianschool.com](http://www.wesleyanchristianschool.com)***