



## Host Family Handbook

**MAY NEED TO BE TRANSLATED**

Chapelgate Christian Academy  
2600 Marriottsville Road  
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## Updates to Host Family Handbook

(If you are considering being a returning host family or a new host family, below are the basic requirements. The handbook will go more in detail about what is expected. If, after reading over these points, you decide this ministry is not for your family, please let the host family coordinator know.)

- Transportation to and from school and school related activities is the responsibility of the host family. While delays and early dismissals can be difficult with work schedules, host families are expected to make arrangements for their student just as they would for their own children. The only instance where an international student should pay for any taxi service to get to school is if the student did not get up on time and missed the ride to school. If your student is continually causing a problem with rides, please contact your homestay coordinator
- Airport pick up and drop off is the responsibility of the host family as long as the student has given sufficient notice and/or has communicated with the host family about a mutually agreeable time.
- Please help students monitor their absences. With the attendance policy stating students can only miss 14 days before their final grades are dropped by a half percentage point for every absence over 14 absences, it is important that the students are in school. If this becomes an issue, please speak to your homestay coordinator.
- A reminder of tax due dates: **January 15** (for July – December) and **July 15** (for January – June) (This is if you are planning on turning in tax documentation for a reduced 1099 from the business office.)
- Although it is not expected that you provide international food for your student every day, we encourage you to ask your student (maybe once a month), to share a favorite food or recipe that you could buy or make and enjoy together. One major way that students feel welcomed in your home is through your noticing and caring enough to provide the foods they like. When your student first arrives, please be sure to take them to the grocery store and allow them to pick out things they like. Please take note of these things and try to have them regularly in your home so your student feels comfortable. This is truly the first step of hospitality and will make things go more smoothly throughout the year.
- Travel outside the state of Maryland without the homestay family will only be considered if the natural parents have indicated they are okay with their child traveling without the host family. If this is the case, then students need to go through the steps detailed in the Student and Host Family Residential Agreement (and mentioned in this handbook). As the host family, you will know if the natural parents have given permission at the beginning of the year. Host families still have a voice in the decision of whether a trip is approved or denied and are responsible for making sure students fill out the necessary paperwork.



- We have found regular family meal times are extremely important for the student to attach to and feel part of the family. It also allows for a natural flow of conversation that will help your student with their English development. We understand this may look different for each family.
- Constant communication with the student is crucial for the student to adjust and do well. In the beginning, parents must initiate these conversations and eventually the student will begin to reach out and begin the conversations.
- Your student must have access to your house if you are not there. This may come in the form of a key, a code to unlock the doors or a hidden key.
- Although the natural parent is responsible for putting money in the Lunch Time account, please help your student monitor their account. You will get emails from school which will allow you to help your student.

## Overview

Chapelgate Christian Academy (CCA), a ministry of Chapelgate Presbyterian Church, Inc., offers a homestay program for international students enrolled at the school. An important part of an international student's stay in the United States is his or her relationship with the host family. Through their home stay, the student will not only improve their English but also learn about life in an American community. CCA seeks families who are enthusiastic about the International Program and are willing to embrace the hosting experience wholeheartedly as a ministry.

## Host Family Handbook

*The Host Family Handbook* provides processes and guidelines for many situations and issues that may arise during the hosting year. The handbook should be used as a resource for setting guidelines for students and addressing concerns.

## Host Parent Application

### Spiritual Requirements

CCA seeks host parents who are interested in the spiritual health and well-being of international students and whose core values are in alignment with the core values of Chapelgate Christian Academy. The CCA Statement of Faith can be found in the *CCA Parent-Student Handbook* which is on the Chapelgate website: [chapelgateacademy.org](http://chapelgateacademy.org)

### Spiritual Requirements for Host Parents

- Maintain a personal relationship with God.
- Maintain an exemplary Christian life.
- Maintain a faithful witness for Jesus Christ.
- Be a faithful member of a Bible-believing local church.

Potential host families who are interested should contact the International Host Family Coordinator through the school office for assistance with the items listed below.

## Complete and submit the following documents:

- Host Family Application through the online link provided by the International Host Family Coordinator
- Host Family Residential Agreement

**After the forms listed above are submitted, the potential host family and the Host Family Coordinator will work together to complete the following items:**

- Home Visit
- Host Family Orientation
- Host Family Provider Contract

Potential homestay parents will be notified by email or phone by the Host Family Coordinator when their application has been approved.

## Arrival & Adjustment

### Preparation for Arrival

After completing the steps for becoming a host parent and having received notification of a student placement, it would be helpful to do the following:

- Contact your student in advance of arrival if you are provided with contact information.
- Read the *Host Family Handbook* thoroughly and make a simplified list of house rules and consequences.

### Review General Expectations upon Student Arrival

Even international students who have already studied in the US or are very familiar with American customs may not understand your individual family structure or expectations.

Identify clear expectations for your student regarding:

- How the student should address host family members (by first name, by last name, mom, dad, etc.)
- Behavior
- Study time
- School and grades
- Co-curricular activity participation
- Attending family activities
- Helping with chores
- Appropriate home attire
- Hosting friends
- Communicating with natural parents
- Communicating with host family about daily school progress and concerns
- Notifying you when they do not feel well
- Understanding our healthcare process
- Explanation of who pays for what
- Accountability to host family

# Host Family Responsibilities

## Overview

Welcoming an international student into one's home is like sharing your interests, religious beliefs, political beliefs, social causes, and ideals with someone outside of the immediate family. There will be times when a student is unsure how to respond to their new environment in a respectful manner. Keep in mind this is a huge adjustment period for the student and please exercise patience.

While learning how to connect with a student's culture and assisting them through the various stages of adjustment, members of the host family should treat the international student as family: provide all meals, set bedtime schedules, identify expectations for hygiene, identify chores, and communicate expectations and family rules along with lots of caring. It's very important to remember that these students are very far away from loved ones and all that is familiar to them. Sometimes the host family "feels sorry" for the student and hesitates to correct the student or give them chores. Remember, the student will be with the host family for months, and if treated as a guest, the student will wear out his or her welcome very quickly. As a family, host parents are entitled to have household rules specific to each home and routine. Do not feel "badly" or "guilty" because a student does not like the rules -- it's okay to be firm as long as it is balanced with lots of grace and love.

## Safety and Well-being

- Be aware of your student's whereabouts at all times.
- Provide a warm, secure, and healthy environment for the student.
- Immediately notify the International Program Staff of any significant changes in the student's overall mental status.
- Report any misconduct to the Host Family Coordinator in a timely manner.
- Ensure the student receives proper medical attention in case of emergency.
- Treat the student with respect and kindness and expect the same in return.
- Have a family emergency drill that will be shared with the student.
- Interact with the student daily and include the student in appropriate family activities.
- Be sensitive to cultural beliefs, values, and differences of the student.
- Speak English with the student.

**A host family's legal status is defined by the POA which is signed by the biological parents. Host families should refer to the POA if there is a question.**

## Academics

### Overview

Host parents are expected to provide oversight for the international student in all academic areas. This includes the following:

- Ensure students have resources available to support their studies such as a quiet place to study with a desk, chair and lamp.
- Periodic check of the student's grades and homework obligations by regularly checking the parent's Power School account. However, the international student has the final responsibility for their grades.
- Communicate with the Host Family Coordinator regarding student progress and challenges.
- Host families may request help for the student if they feel the student is struggling. The host parent, Chapelgate Christian Academy staff, and the student will work together when the student is in need of resources.

### Testing

All first year international students are required to take the TOEFL test once in the fall and once in the spring, which is administered by CCA. This testing helps us with academic placement.

## Documentation

Host parents are responsible for keeping emergency and identification information on each student. Within a few weeks of the student's arrival, the International Students Department will provide the home stay family with information on the student. Please store this in a safe, yet accessible, place for access in case of emergency.

### Emergency Documents

- Copy of Passport and Visa
- Certificate of Vaccination and/or Immunization Record
- Physical Form (for athletes)
- Copy of Insurance card
- International Student Contact Information Form
- Copy of POA and Medical Release

## Finances

### Host Family Obligations

Host families are required to pay for the following items:

- Basic housing expenses
- On days that there is no school, half-days, weekends and holidays three meals per day and snacks.
- On school days, students will buy a lunch at school through their LunchTime account. Although the natural parent is responsible for putting money in the LunchTime account, you will get emails from school which will allow you to help your student monitor the amount of money in their account.
- Any student activity initiated by or required by the host family. (It is appropriate for the student to pay for an activity if they have the option of not participating, i.e., family vacations).

### Agreements between Host Families and Students

Host families are **not** permitted to enter into any financial agreement with the student, student's family, or student's agency, apart from the knowledge and agreement of Chapelgate Christian Academy. This includes, but is not limited to, extensions of hosting agreement for subsequent years outside of the CCA Homestay Program, accepting monetary compensation for hosting the student's natural parents, accepting monetary compensation for providing English tutoring services, co-signing bank accounts, co-signing cell phone accounts, and/or co-signing any other financial account with the student. Host families (including host children) and students are not permitted to borrow or lend money to each other. All financial questions should be directed to the Director of International Student Programs.

### Monetary Concerns

If a host parent feels their student is not receiving enough money or their spending is too excessive they should contact the Host Family Coordinator.



## Host Family Stipend

The host family stipend is paid at the beginning of each month. For more details on stipend payment, see the Host Family Provider Contract in the Appendix.

In accordance with Publication 15, Circular E, Employer's Tax Guide, Chapelgate Christian Academy issues 1099s. Per IRS rules, these stipends are considered taxable income. In an effort to minimize the tax impact to our Host Families, CCA handles Host Family Stipends under an accountable reimbursement plan. Host Families will receive a monthly stipend (August and June stipends will be pro-rated). Twice a year on January 15 and July 15, Host Families may turn in an expense report (sample attached) which details the expenses incurred on behalf of their international students. Receipts, invoices, or other supporting documentation will be required to support the expenditures listed on the expense report. If a Host Family's expenses equal or exceed the amount of monthly stipend income, there is no taxable income to report and NO 1099 will be issued. If a Host Family's expenses are less than the monthly stipend income, the net amount will be reported on a Form 1099. If a Host Family chooses not to turn in a timely expense report, the full amount of the monthly stipend income will be reported on a Form 1099. The Form 1099 will be issued to the Host Family by January 31 of each year.

An example of how this process will work is as follows. These examples are from the 2016-2017 school year:

### **Example 1**

Monthly Stipend Income Received (August – December) -	\$3,825.00
Expenses reported by Host Family on January 15 expense report-	\$2,100.00
Taxable Income reported on Form 1099 on January 31	<u>\$1,725.00</u>

### **Example 2**

Monthly Stipend Income Received (August – December) -	\$3,825.00
Expenses reported by Host Family on January 15 expense report-	\$4,000.00
Taxable Income reported on Form 1099 on January 31	<u>\$0</u>

### **Example 3**

Monthly Stipend Income Received (August – December) -	\$3,825.00
Expenses reported by Host Family on January 15 expense report-	\$0
Taxable Income reported on Form 1099 on January 31	<u>\$3,825.00</u>



The expense report due on July 15 will relate to the Monthly Stipend Income received January through June.

The following expenses are considered appropriate expenses under the Host Family Accountable Plan:

- Certain expenditures will be calculated as a percentage of the total household expense. For these items, which include Food, Utilities and Entertainment, the percentage will be calculated using the number of international students in the home divided by the total number of people in the home.
- Mileage-including to and from school and calculated at the current IRS rate.
- Food-includes groceries and meals provided outside of the home (restaurants).
- Incidentals- includes toiletries and other household supplies
- Utilities-Electricity, Gas, Water, etc.
- School Expenditures-Any unreimbursed school expenditure including supplies, field trips, lunch money, uniform etc.
- Entertainment-This includes entertainment such as movies, sports events, museum admission
- Phone-any international phone charges related to the international student
- Miscellaneous-Other items such as postage

Depreciation on your home and home repairs (unless repairs are specific to the bedroom used by the international student) will not be considered appropriate expenses under the Host Family Accountable Plan.

Talk to your tax professional for further information.

## Home Life

Please review the Arrival & Adjustment section of this handbook and the cultural information in the Appendix for more information on fostering a welcoming environment for your international student.

## The Family Experience

Being away from family at any age is difficult. Although these students may seem strong and sometimes disinterested, it is important to always welcome them with love, acceptance, and opportunities to experience American life with your family. Host families should strive to create an environment of learning and sharing. Connecting with their host family is an integral part of a student's experience at CCA. Students are encouraged to join in all host family and community experiences when the opportunity is offered. If the student chooses to study or work on academics instead of joining in an experience, the host parent should provide guidelines to accommodate the student's needs.

### Setting Clear and Concise Household Expectations

Host parents should set up household rules for transportation, behavior expectations, bedtime, electronic usage, study time, household chores, and recreation. Review your house rules and consequences with your student within the first five days of the stay and a month later. Provide visual examples of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable when possible. The *Clarifying Household Expectations Worksheet* in the Appendix may be helpful.

### Topics to Consider when Determining Household Rules

- Computer Use
- Technology Rules
- Bathroom Use
- Curfew and Lights Out
- Laundry
- Homework
- Bedroom Cleanliness
- Special Activities
- Meals and Snacks
- Weekend Schedule
- Kitchen Use
- Borrowing and Lending Money
- Off Limit Areas (i.e. host family parent bedroom)
- English Language Usage
- Shared Living Areas

### Communication about Problems and Concerns

Host families should identify to the student how the family deals with issues and problems. Role-play various scenarios to help them understand. Ask open-ended questions so the student has to provide answers other than "yes" or "no". Clarify any questions you feel the student does not understand as they may be responding with what they think the right answer is.

## Medical

### **Reporting to the CCA International Department**

Please report student illness or injury to the Host Family Coordinator immediately. Please do not wait to report concerns until the situation has escalated to an emergency. Remember, the Host Family Coordinator and the Director of International Students are the main line of contact between you and the student's natural parents. Please contact the Host Family Coordinator if you are unsure how to handle a medical situation.

### **Student Insurance**

Accident and sickness insurance is provided by CCA for each international student. Your student will receive a card at the beginning of the school year. We recommend you make a copy for your records. The website is <http://www.betins.com/pgep>. There you will find information about the plan as well as claim forms and can print out a card.

### **Emergency Procedures**

- Review emergency procedures for fire, burglary, vehicle accidents, and medical emergencies.
- Review what 911 is and the critical information students would need to provide if 911 is called.
- Write down a list of emergency contacts for each student including relatives, neighbors and International Student Department contact information.

### **Illness or Injury During School Hours**

CCA staff will respond to international student health concerns in the same manner that they would for traditional students. In most cases, the student's host parents will be contacted. An early pick up may be required, depending on the severity of the situation. In this situation, host families participating in carpool or other alternate transportation options will be responsible for picking up their student early from school.

### **Cultural Differences**

Please be aware that many of our international students may prefer to treat certain ailments in a different manner than to which host families are accustomed (i.e. many students from eastern Asia prefer to drink plain hot water to soothe sore throats, while many American students prefer cold foods for the same purpose). Please be sensitive to cultural preferences and realize that physical, spiritual, and mental health is an integral yet unspoken part of many cultures. Always remember that as the student's guardian, it is a host parent's responsibility to ensure the student is receiving proper medical attention.

## Reporting Requirements

The Host Family Coordinator is the main flow of information between the student's natural parents, host parents, and educational staff at CCA. It is crucial that host families keep in constant contact with the Host Family Coordinator to provide feedback on the student's well-being. Too much information is better than not enough!

The Host Family Coordinator will provide email reminders throughout the year.

## Required Reports

- Quarterly Residential Reports with pictures, if possible. More frequent reports may be requested as needed.

## Important Reminders

- Contact the Host Family Coordinator if problems arise between student and family members and work with the Host Family Coordinator to reach a reasonable and equitable solution.
- Please copy the Host Family Coordinator on any important communications with the natural parents to avoid miscommunications.

## Staying Informed – Connecting to CCA

### Back to School Night

Chapelgate Christian Academy hosts a "Back to School" night at the beginning of each school year. Host parents will have the opportunity to meet teachers and staff, tour the school facilities, and hear critical school information. Host parents need to attend this event, as they are standing in as a parent for their student, and it gives the opportunity to connect with the teachers. This event is held the second Thursday evening of September. Host families should check the school calendar on the website or contact the school office for details.

### Calendar of Events

The Chapelgate Calendar of Events can be found on [chapelgateacademy.org](http://chapelgateacademy.org) under the "News and Events" or the "CCA Portal" tab. The calendar is updated regularly and provides information on school activities and scheduled early dismissals and school closings. Please note: Inclement weather closings and delays are not listed on the school calendar.

### Newsletter

The *Head of School Newsletter* is posted to [chapelgateacademy.org](http://chapelgateacademy.org).

### **Power School**

Power School provides the main flow of information between teachers and parents regarding student academics. Each host family will be provided with a username and password at the beginning of the school year. Each international student will be linked to the host parent's account. Grades and teacher contact information can be found on this site. International students' parents can also be provided with a student account where they can view similar information. **You will receive a *Host Parent Log-on Instructions* sheet for Power School which will be mailed to the home at the beginning of the school year.**

### **School Alerts - One Call Now**

This is an important gateway for information between CCA and parents. Important school news is announced by phone via *One Call Now*, including weather-related announcements and other important emergency and school-wide announcements. All CCA families will be getting a test call from the Assistant Head of School at the beginning of the school year.

### **Website**

The CCA website, [chapelgateacademy.org](http://chapelgateacademy.org), provides much useful information. Host families are encouraged to browse the website.

## **Transportation**

### **Student's Participation in School-Related Activities**

It is the host family's responsibility to provide transportation for students to and from school and provide transportation for after school programs and activities that have been previously discussed between the host parents and the international student.

### **Carpooling**

Families and CCA host families are permitted and encouraged to carpool with other host families or other CCA families.

### **Cultural Differences**

Many of our international students are used to mass transit and traveling independently of their family. Our system of parent-centered transportation will need to be explained and may be a source of frustration for students in the beginning. Set clear expectations for arranging transportation needs.

### **Transportation for Arrival and Departure**

Airport pick up and drop off is the responsibility of the host family as long as the student has given sufficient notice and/or has communicated with the host family about a mutually agreeable time. The host family coordinator is available for guidance and assistance.

### **Storage & Security of Personal Items**

Host families must give students access to their home. This can come in the form of house keys, hidden keys, or garage codes. Students are advised to take precautions in securing items of value in their room and on their person. Neither Chapelgate Christian Academy nor the host family accept responsibility, nor will they provide compensation for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

At the end of the school year, the student is expected to clean their room and return it to its original condition as host families may use the room for other purposes or have guests over during the summer. Students should pack their belongings and take them with them when they return home. Some host families may be willing to store student belongings over the summer. If students would like to store luggage with their host family, they need to communicate with the host parents at least 2 weeks in advance of their departure. **If they do not communicate this and leave their belongings at the home without permission, the host family has the right to move or discard the belongings, and neither the host family nor the school will be held responsible for damaged or lost items.** CCA can arrange to store bags for returning students only if notified by May 15<sup>th</sup>. The fee will be \$100 per bag. Items must be packaged in either suitcases or boxes, take up no more than 3 cubic feet and CCA is not responsible for any loss or damage. If for any reason, plans change and the student doesn't return to the host family for the next school year, the student's family will be responsible for arranging for the bags to be moved and pay a \$100/bag storage fee to the host parents. If the bags aren't removed within 2 weeks the host family has the right to dispose of them in any way they choose.

### **Damage Assessment**

**Students are responsible for any damage done to personal or host family property.** Occupants of a room may be charged for the cost of repairing or replacing damaged or missing property or if the room is not cleaned satisfactorily at the end of the school year. This does not include wear and tear from normal usage. The host family, in cooperation with the Host Family Coordinator, reserves the right to determine the cost to repair or replace any damaged property.

## Travel

### Family Vacation

See *the CCA Parent-Student Handbook* for attendance policies regarding family vacations. If the host parent is planning a family vacation and the international student is invited to go, it is appropriate for the host family to pay. If the student is required to pay for the vacation, they must also be given the alternate opportunity to stay at a friend's house or in respite care. The host family is not obligated to include the international student on their vacation in which case respite care policies apply.

**The Host Family Coordinator must always be informed of any overnight travel plans of an international student. This is a US government requirement.**

### Independent Student Travel

**Host families are responsible for guiding students through the proper travel forms when they are traveling independently of their host family.** These forms may be found on the school website [www.chapelgateacademy.org](http://www.chapelgateacademy.org).

**International students at Chapelgate Christian Academy are not permitted to leave the continental United States or go to a different state** (without their host parents) unless a written release has been signed by the student's natural parents and the Host Family Coordinator. Please talk to the Host Family Coordinator if you hear of any trip plans to help our students be in compliance with US government regulations.

## Support for Host Families

### Host Family Coordinator

The Host Family Coordinator is an expert with host family issues and knows whom to contact to find out any answer she/he does not have in their experience or find in the handbook.

### Connecting with other Host Families

Experienced host families can be a great resource for providing suggestions. However, the host parent has the final decision in any situation. Host families are encouraged to work together to support each other through various events -- carpooling, respite care, sleepovers, family activities, sharing ideas for addressing culture shock and homesickness, etc. **Please make sure to check adult to adult for any student planned sleepovers in order to verify proper supervision and whereabouts.**

## Respite Care

It is appropriate for host families to contact other CCA-approved families directly with respite care requests. In this situation, both host families are responsible for handling the financial arrangements without the assistance of CCA. **The rate for respite care is \$34.00 per day, per student.** If exchanging money, for tax purposes, please write a check so documentation is available for your tax specialist. Oftentimes, host families work out a trade agreement so that no money needs to change hands. Please remember to contact the Host Family Coordinator if you have arranged for respite care. If you are unable to find respite care please contact your Host Family Coordinator.

## Chapelgate Staff

Chapelgate Christian Academy will address common school issues with host families just as they would address any student issue with a guardian or parent.

## Student Discipline

The Assistant Head of School, Director of International Student Programs, Host Family Coordinator, and host family will work together to address critical student discipline issues.

## Things to Remember

### **What is Culture Shock and When Does it Matter?**

Symptoms of culture shock are similar to depression. Students may be okay one minute and lethargic or withdrawn the next. Review the Cultural Awareness information section in the Appendix for more information.

### **When and Who to Ask for Help**

The Director of International Student Programs, Host Family Coordinator, staff, and CCA faculty are here to support host families during the hosting journey. Families always have the option to discuss issues with their Host Family Coordinator, academics with the school faculty, school issues with faculty or staff, and major concerns with the Director of International Student Programs.

### **Homesickness**

Homesickness stems from the instinctive need to be loved and protected. When routines, familiar surroundings, and faces are replaced by new activities, scenery and people, homesickness often results. Although homesickness can happen to anyone at any age, it might be easier for adults to recognize and handle. One cannot prevent the feelings of loneliness and nostalgia of homesickness altogether, but a host parent who understands the signs and symptoms might better be able to help the student in their care. Review the Cultural Awareness information at the end of this handbook for more information.

### **The Role of a Host Sibling**

Host siblings help to make the new guest family member feel welcome. They can assist with translating generational understandings between parents and international students. Remember, not only is our language different, but parent/child relationships differ. Host siblings can help to provide a safe environment for students. While host siblings play an important role, they should not feel pressured to be responsible for the international student's social life and well-being.

### **Host Family Role in Making this a Great Year**

- Remind yourself that these are God's children. They are far from home in a culture and immersed in a language not at all familiar to them. You are an important part of the student's successful cultural integration.
- Be patient. Repeat expectations several times if needed. Have students repeat the expectation back to you.
- Use your resources. No one person has all the answers all of the time. Lean on those with experience and who are trained to support you.

We are excited to have you involved in this ministry with our international students. Please contact us if you have any questions.

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## Appendix

## Clarifying Household Expectations

### Worksheet for international Students and Host Families

<b>Meals</b>	<b>In My Home Country (Student's answer)</b>	<b>In My Host Family (Host Family Answer)</b>
What we eat for breakfast		
What we eat for lunch		
What we eat for dinner		
What we eat for snacks		
Who prepares meals		
Who cleans up		

### Schedule

Wake up time		
Breakfast time		
Lunch time		
Dinner time		
Homework time		
Time to be home at night		
Bedtime		
Weekend Expectations		

### Personal Hygiene

Shower – Time of day		
Shower – Time Limit		
Describe a typical bathroom in your country		
Disposal of personal hygiene items		
Storage of toiletries		

**Chores – Who is responsible?**

Laundry		
Bathroom		
Bedroom		
Cooking		
Other		

**Technology**

Rules for Academic Use		
Rules for Personal Use		

**General**

Off-limit areas of the home		
Special Customs		
Rules for making plans with friends		
Getting permission to go out		
Most common form of transportation		

**Additional Items**


## Culture Shock

***Taken from "Host Family Survival Kit" by Nancy King and Ken Huff***

Culture shock is a phrase that was popularized in 1958 by anthropologist Kalvero Oberg to describe the feelings of disorientation and anxiety that many people experience for a period of time while living in a foreign country. It results from the awareness that one's basic assumptions about life and one's familiar ways of behaving are no longer appropriate or functional.

In time, the differences between cultures become increasingly noticeable, and the potential for culture shock emerges. In addition, international students sometimes have unrealistic expectations for their sojourn, and letting go of these expectations can be unsettling.

### Unrealistic Expectations

Overly positive expectations come in many guises, sometimes sending students in search of such things as "*perfect*" *host parents* or a family experience that is tension-free and brimming with boundless affection. As lovely as they may seem, these unrealistic expectations can cause an otherwise promising experience to go awry.

A more common, though equally unrealistic, expectation is that their foreignness will automatically transform them into *special people*. They sometimes expect to be showered with attention in the classroom, enthusiastically embraced by the popular kids and invited to join the high status cliques. When they are at times received with disinterest or even ridicule, they can become crestfallen and disillusioned.

Another faulty expectation is that the student and the family will share a *Hollywood lifestyle*. Since many international students know about the U.S. only from what they have seen in movies, they at times erroneously expect their host families to live like flashy movies stars who own lavish mansions, dash off to Las Vegas nightclubs on weekends and entertain the jet set at posh parties. Similarly, they might expect the children in these families to be freewheeling and zany.

Many foreign international students encounter surprises of a different kind. They expect to find U.S. towns and communities that are bustling with activity, equipped with modern rapid transit systems, and futuristic in outlook and design. They are not prepared for the fact that many host families enjoy a slower-paced, small-town atmosphere or the simplicity of a tranquil farm community.

### **Effects of Culture Shock**

The helplessness and anxiety of culture shock can manifest itself in unusual actions, emotional extremes or frightening thoughts. Some people become excessively concerned about cleanliness and begin to bathe or shower repeatedly. Others might become overly preoccupied about sickness or safety. Eating may increase, although some people lose their appetite almost completely. Insomnia and oversleeping are fairly common behavior changes. Emotional reactions can include withdrawal, irritability, moodiness or exaggerated elation.

*Atypical Behavior.* When culture shock begins, host families sometimes wonder if someone switched students on them. That person who was so friendly and outgoing can turn sullen or cling like a frightened child. It can be quite disturbing to try reasoning with someone who over-reacts, under-reacts, makes harsh judgments, isn't logical or has scaled the pinnacle of stubbornness by insisting absolutely, "I'm NOT going through culture shock!"

*Anger.* When confused, sojourners often find it comforting to put the blame on someone or something else, and one of the easiest targets available to a foreign sojourner is the new culture. After all, things were fine until arrival on foreign soil, so blame oozes out in the form of complaints and irritability. "This culture (or country, or place) is bad," reasons the student, "because it makes me feel bad." The counterpart to a student's intolerance for the new culture is exaggerated praise for one's home culture. "My country's way of doing things," the sojourner might boast, "is so much better."

### **Host Family Culture Shock**

“At first everything was perfect. But after we’d had Juan awhile, the honeymoon feelings vanished,” states one host mother who began to notice things that were either surprising or upsetting. A host father occasionally found himself “fed-up” and began asking: “Why did we make this decision? What am I getting out of this experience except aggravation?”

A third host parent explains: When things suddenly aren’t wonderful any longer, that’s usually a sign that the family has entered a period of intense learning and adjustment. It helps an awful lot if the family understands what’s happening and can see the benefits of it.

*Experienced families say there’s a good chance that the family’s version of culture shock will start out mildly and then intensify two or three months into the homestay before it begins to ease up. By the mid-way point, few symptoms may remain. But to some extent, it probably will be around as long as there is an international student in the home.*

How much or how little a host family experiences these reactions will depend somewhat on family members and how deeply they want to become immersed in learning experiences—experiences that can prompt quasi-culture shock reactions. Some may desire only a quick dip in and out. Others may feel challenged to take an extended plunge.

If you want to temper or slow down the frequency of quasi-culture shock reactions, we suggest that you mention to your international student that you prefer not to discuss sensitive topics or debate cultural differences for a while. Also, try to schedule a lot of shared activities (trips to museums, craft fairs, sports events, special celebrations, etc.) and de-emphasize lengthy or deep discussions.

### **Rewards for the Family**

Host families frequently believe that the principal value in having an international student is the opportunity to share their home and lifestyle with someone from a distant land. As one family put it, “As Americans we have such abundance, so why not share it?” It was only after their student had returned home that they realized that something more and unexpected had happened, that they had been significantly changed by the experience. They had become more attuned to world issues, more mindful of their own enculturation, more cognizant of how people tend to “see” events from their own cultural perspective and more sensitive to the idea that each culture’s way of life is equally valid.

## Ways to Help Your Student Cope with Culture Shock

*Taken from Host Family Survival Kit by Nancy King and Ken Huff*

- Allow for “Time-Out” Periods. Culture shock behavior is not a continuous thing; typically, it comes and goes. One day a student will be fine; the next day she may feel miserable. During periods of misery, it might be best if you refrain from deep or complicated discussions, refrain from teaching new customs or new household routines and refrain from introducing additional stress. You might want to think of these as “coasting” or “time-out” periods when communication and learning are postponed.
- Allow for Periodic Withdrawal. There are times when a student just doesn’t want to be involved in much of anything and might withdraw temporarily. This may occur because he is feeling confused, mentally exhausted or homesick. Needing time to be alone, rest and think things through, she may retreat to her bedroom and lock the door. As one student stated, “In those moments I just needed my ‘lonely time.’” If, during these withdrawal periods, your student seems to be oblivious to your existence, try not to view this behavior as a sign of rejection.
- Expect Disagreements and Respond to Them. If disagreements develop between your student and your children, try to minimize the amount of time they spend together. Then explain to your children that your international student may not have the strength, at present, to be a friend.
- Be Prepared for Judgmental Remark. If you find your student reacting to your ways of doing things with comments like, “that’s stupid,” or “how disgusting,” it may help to:
  - Remember that this is a culture shock reaction; the unspoken message is “I can’t cope”.
  - Try not to get involved in a discussion since your student will probably not be open to your ideas.
  - Try to be understanding and respond by saying something like, “it sounds like our custom doesn’t make any sense to you,” or “I can see you are really disgusted and upset about this.”
- Encourage Extra Rest
  - When things seem bewildering or threatening, students can begin to feel physically drained and need extra rest. One host parent explained that for several weeks her student came home from school, ate a small snack and then slept until suppertime. “Takeshi wasn’t being lazy,” she explained, “he needed the sleep to recuperate from the ‘American high school maze!’”

- Encourage Your Student to Talk with Other Students
  - In addition to getting rest, students also need to find ways of strengthening their sense of cultural identity, which may be a bit shaky. For some students, a call home to loved ones during this period can be reassuring; for others, talks with other international students who have experienced the same feelings may be the answer, giving them the sense that the reactions which are upsetting them are understood and experienced by others. As one student explained it, “When I call my parents, they try to understand what I am going through, but sometimes they can’t. When I speak with another international student, we understand. We speak the same ‘hard times language.’”
  
- Tolerate Your Student’s Intense Feelings
  - After a phone call home or a chat with another international student, your student may seem more agitated than relieved. This frequently occurs because contacts with loved ones and co-nationals can stir up a variety of strong feelings: tenderness, loss, closeness, relief, and joy. All these feelings may be expressed in an outpouring of tears. Although intense, such moments can be quite beneficial—easing your student’s recovery. As one student stated, “I would have feelings jailed up inside of me. I had to liberate them. Crying was the best way. Afterwards I got better.”
  
- Minimize Complications
  - While your student is going through culture shock, he might experience considerable anxiety and depression. Just coping with simple things like getting up in the morning, being civil with the family or concentrating on homework assignments can require a lot of energy and seem like major accomplishments. Because your student may already be coping at his maximum, try not to do things that could create additional stress. Increased stress might come from:
    - Leaving the student home alone for extended periods of time
    - Taking him on trips or to parties
    - Introducing him to relatives
    - Pressuring him to get high grades at school
    - Prohibiting him from calling home or talking to co-nationals
    - Pressuring him to recover quickly from culture shock
    - Teasing or joking about his strange culture shock behavior

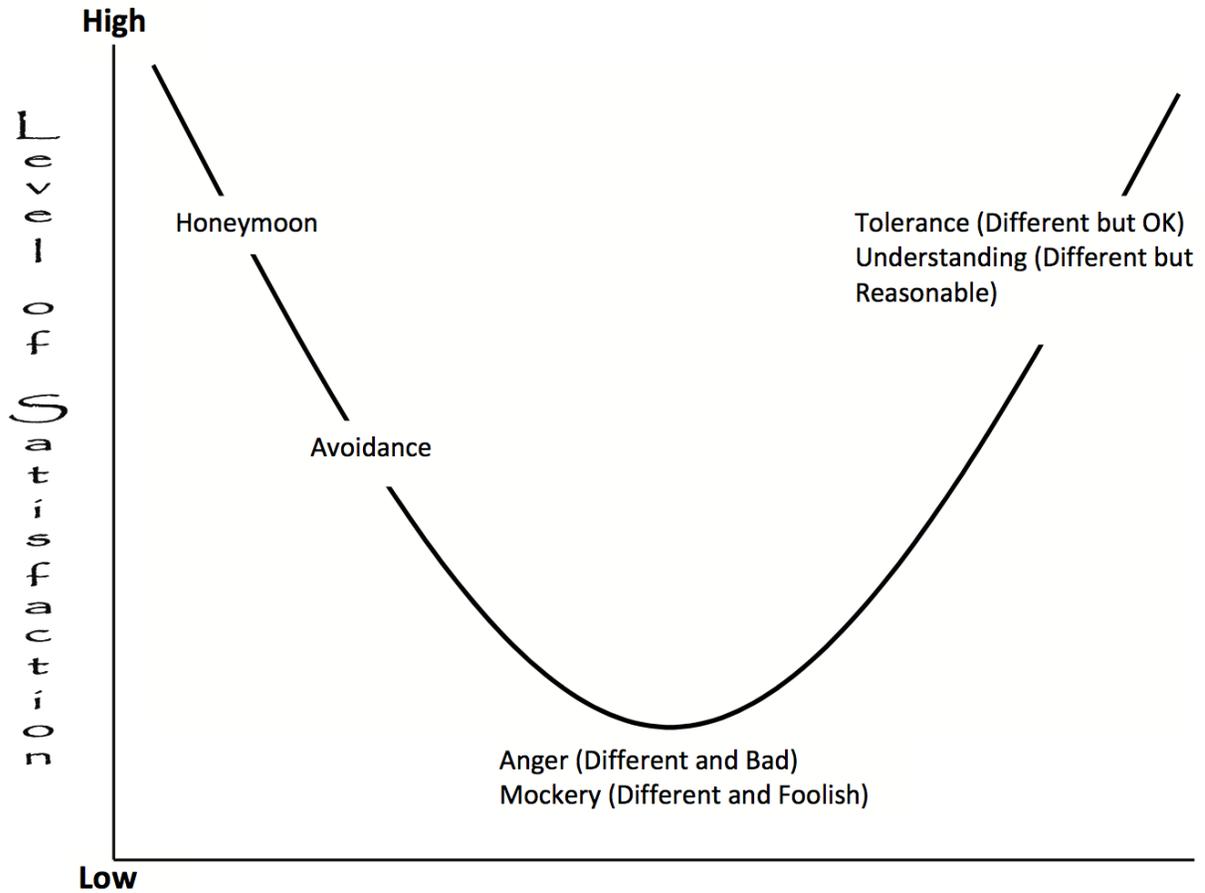
**Warning Signs that May Signal the Need for Professional Help.**

In the rare event that your student has extreme reactions over a prolonged period of time or becomes unusually disruptive, he/she may need professional help. Here are some behaviors that would signal the need for outside help:

- Excessive sleeping or insomnia
- Significant weight gain or loss
- Prolonged acute depression
- Repeated use of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Drastic decline in school grades or truancy
- Excessive calls home or to co-nationals
- Serious communication barriers with the host family
- Suicidal tendencies and/or behavior

If your student experiences one or more of the above reactions, it may be merely an indication of a very intense—though normal—culture shock reaction which will subside with time if special support is prescribed. On the other hand, there are times when an intense culture shock reaction may be the symptom of more fundamental problems. Sorting out the difference and recommending appropriate interventions should be left to professionals.

## Stages of Transition



Lisa Espineli Chinn (David Pollock, Interaction)  
International Ministries Fellowship  
10523 Main Street #34  
Fairfax, VA 22030



**Host Family Provider Contract  
2020 – 2021 School Year**

Host Family:	Date:
Physical Address: Mailing Address:	
Email addresses:	Phone Numbers:

Please initial each item:

- We understand that attending **Host Family Orientation** each year is required and that the business office will not cut the first check until attendance has been verified.
- We have read the **International Student and Host Family Residential Agreement**
- We have read, understand and agree to abide by, to the best of our ability, the **Host Family Responsibility** portion of the 2020-2021 **Host Family Handbook**.
- We have read, understand and agree to abide by, to the best of our ability, the **Reporting Requirements** as outlined in the 2020-2021 **Host Family Handbook**.
- We have read, understand and agree to abide by, to the best of our ability, the **Respite Care Policy** as outlined in the 2020-2021 **Host Family Handbook**.

**Stipend**

For each month the student lives in the host family’s home, the host family will be paid \$1030/month and will be paid on the first of the month. August’s stipend will be prorated at \$515 and will be included in the September check for a total of \$1545. If the student is in the home in June that stipend will be prorated at \$515. If the student leaves by May 31 then the last stipend will be for May.



**Release of Liability**

Chapelgate Christian Academy (CCA), a ministry of Chapelgate Presbyterian Church, Inc, reserves the right to move a student to a different home without the usual advance notice if a situation is unsatisfactory or if problems cannot be resolved between family members and the student, or if any of the responsibilities in this contract have been neglected. If a student reports that there are problems in the home such as alcohol, drug abuse, sexual impropriety, inappropriate conduct, abusive language or behavior, Chapelgate Christian Academy reserves the right to remove the student from the home without notice, stop all stipend payments, and pursue legal or other actions if warranted. If emergency relocation has occurred due to either host parent violation of the law or neglect of the Host Family Provider Contract it will be the Host parents' responsibility to cover all cost of student relocation. The Host Family Provider Contract will be terminated at that time.

Host parents hereby agree to release Chapelgate Christian Academy from all liability for loss or damage to their home caused by the student(s) and hereby release Chapelgate Christian Academy and the agents and employees from all liability arising out of the participation in the Hosting Program, without limitations for property damage or loss, or the debts, conducts or actions of the students assigned to the home.

Students are responsible for their own debts, conduct and actions while in the Host Family's care, and Chapelgate Christian Academy will urge any student who has caused damage to pay for repairs or replacement.

All persons 18 years of age or older that may be in residence within this Host Family during the student's stay must read the contract and sign below.

Printed Name Date	Signature

<b>Office Use Only</b>	
Date received:	Reviewed by (Name and Date):
Check one: _____ Approved _____ Denied	Date Host Family Notified:
Notes:	

