



KELOWNA  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL



HOMESTAY FAMILY  
HANDBOOK

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# ABOUT KELOWNA CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Kelowna Christian School is to educate, equip, and inspire our school community to become disciples of Jesus who love and serve God and others.

### **Vision**

Life changing education. World changing students.

## CORE VALUES

### **Biblical Foundation**

At KCS we take the Bible seriously. As the inspired Word of God, it's the foundation of everything we do as a school - from our approach to education to relationships and discipline.

### **Prayer**

We are a community committed to prayer. It's a source of strength and an acknowledgement that we are utterly dependent on God and His purposes. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." - Philippians 4:6 NIV

### **Creativity**

Confronted with a rapidly changing world, we believe students and staff must be creative and flexible in their approach to changing and new challenges.

### **Excellence**

We don't just mean high test scores. We mean students should strive to do well, and through encouragement and engagement achieve their personal best in a process of continuous improvement. Excellence at KCS means we push ourselves and our students to keep getting better using our best effort.

### **Perseverance**

True excellence requires an ongoing effort - perseverance and grit. A willingness to accept failure and use it as a springboard for continued effort. As a Christian school we acknowledge and want to develop the inclination to trust God to be there in the hard times.

### **Integrity**

Acting with integrity means a willingness to make the right call even when no one sees it or whether it comes with a personal cost.

## A BRIEF HISTORY

In 1982, two small schools (Evangel Christian Academy and Kelowna Christian School) amalgamated under the name of Kelowna Christian School. In 1984, we leased the new education wing of Evangel Tabernacle on Gordon Drive. In 1997, the new Benvoulin campus opened for grades 6-12. A new grade 6-9 Middle School with a Sports Academy was formed at the Benvoulin campus in September 2015.

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Kelowna Christian School's Homestay Program brings together Kelowna families and international youth for a wonderful experience in sharing cultures and expanding horizons. Local families generally host teenagers for an entire school year, informally adopting them into their family lives. KCS international students come from a range of countries and attend KCS to improve their English and experience a first-class education.

This handbook is intended to prepare and guide homestay families for hosting international students during their stay in Canada. Adding a new child to your family is a big decision, and you will experience all the ups and downs of raising a child. Taking the time to read all the valuable information and insight here will help you on your journey as a homestay parent. Our hope is that you will have a rewarding experience and that with your help we can facilitate a unique educational and Canadian cultural experience for our international students.

## QUICK FACTS

- KCS international students come from a range of countries, mostly in Asia.
- Most international students stay for the full school year.
- Most international students are between 13 and 16.
- Most international students have studied English for many years but have used it very little. They can often hold basic conversations slowly and will need your help in learning important words and phrases to use around the house and when interacting with your family.
- International students must have their own bedrooms with a lockable door and window that meets local city requirements regarding bedroom windows and fire escape routes.
- International students stay with their homestay families during Christmas and Spring Break.
- Although we prefer that homestay families have children, it is not necessary.
- Generally, KCS does not place international students with homestay families that host international students from other schools at the same time.
- To maximize the student-homestay family relationships, KCS generally only books one international student per homestay family.
- Homestay families are paid a monthly stipend to cover the costs of hosting a student.
- Homestay parents are not the legal guardians for international students. A KCS staff member is custodian and is consulted on all major decisions regarding international students.

Homestay parents are encouraged to keep open doors of communication with the student and their parents. Please advise the homestay coordinator of any concerns regarding behaviour, medical needs and issues. If an international student's parents need to be contacted regarding a serious situation, the school will do so.

# HOMESTAY PROGRAM POLICIES + PROCEDURES

## BECOMING A HOMESTAY FAMILY

Families of all shapes and sizes are welcome to apply using our Homestay Family application. After meeting initial criteria, the applicant family will have a home inspection and meeting scheduled with the Homestay Coordinator. This meeting and inspection allow KCS staff and the family to become acquainted and clarify all expectations, as well as to confirm that the home and homestay student bedroom is safe and meets KCS program standards.

All adult family members and household residents will need to undergo criminal background checks before being approved to host international students. The process is simple, free and completed online. Once you apply, you will receive an online link and password to the KCS account where you will complete the criminal background check.

Once KCS confirms that an applicant homestay family meets the necessary criteria, including receipt of criminal background checks, successful homestay families will be welcomed into the program. At this time, families are requested to write a generic welcome letter to potential students. KCS will provide a sample, and finished welcome letters will be used when booking students with the homestay family.

## THE BOOKING PROCESS

KCS Homestay Coordinator reviews homestay applications from international students and then matches the student to potential homestay families. Students and families are matched on a wide variety of preferences and lifestyles, including:

- number of family members
- number of young children
- number of pets
- health conditions (allergies, medical conditions, etc.)
- preferences about smoking
- bedroom location
- neighbourhood/distance from school
- gender
- personality

Potential homestay families are contacted to confirm availability and interest in hosting an international student. At this time, families will be provided with basic information about the student (e.g. gender, age, health conditions). Families may accept or decline hosting an international student. However, once confirmed and placed, changes are discouraged. This is because we encourage homestay families and their international students to connect and communicate before the student arrives to help break down the natural anxiety the students will feel about moving in with a Canadian homestay family. It is disruptive for students to connect with a family, building relationships and an important level of comfort, only to have those connections broken.

Once fully confirmed, families will receive detailed information about their future international student, including a contact email to begin communicating and building connections. We encourage appropriate and encouraging contact with the student.

Please note, student bedrooms should not be switched without inspection by and approval of the Homestay Coordinator. KCS is obliged to confirm the safety and appropriacy of all home and sleeping arrangements for its international students.

## **PAYMENT POLICIES**

There is no fee for applying to be a homestay family. Homestay families are paid a monthly stipend (\$850) for hosting their international student. Homestay families are not intended to profit significantly from hosting international students, so this is intended to cover reasonable and predictable costs for hosting an additional family member. This includes expenses such as:

- food
- utilities
- everyday transportation
- small gifts on birthdays and holidays
- toiletries
- entertainment with family

Homestay families are not expected to buy or pay for the following for their international students:

- clothing
- long distance phone calls
- excessive Internet usage
- personal appliances for the student's exclusive use
- expensive or non-standard hygiene or personal items (makeup, organic shampoos, humidifiers, etc.)
- medical expenses (anything above and beyond items like bandaids, Polysporin, Tylenol, etc.)

The monthly stipend will be pro-rated when students do not stay for a full calendar month. Please note, homestay families cannot ask students to provide a damage deposit, pay rent, or contribute to household bills.

## **REQUESTING TO MOVE A STUDENT**

As with any family, it is normal that disagreements will arise. Most disagreements can be resolved with a calm and respectful conversation about the matter. If conversations do not provide resolution, homestay families are expected to contact the Homestay Coordinator for assistance. If all avenues of resolution have been exhausted, homestay families can request to move a student within a reasonable amount of time. Families will need to fill out a form (available from the Homestay Coordinator). If approved, the family will have to refund to KCS the portion of their monthly stipend that covers days after the student moves out.

On rare occasions, students may need to be moved for additional reasons:

- violent or inappropriate behavior (by the student or a homestay family member or resident)
- medical emergencies or serious health considerations

## **KEEPING UPDATED FAMILY + HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION**

Homestay families are required to notify the Homestay Coordinator of any changes to family members and household residents. Additional adult residents will need to undergo criminal background checks.

Also, the Homestay Coordinator should be notified of any significant changes to your home. You may be asked to supply updated household photos. If you intend to change the location of the student's bedroom, the Homestay Coordinator must be notified prior to making any changes. An inspection and additional photos will be required to ensure the new bedroom meets KCS safety and quality standards.

# HOMESTAY FAMILY EXPECTATIONS

Hosting international students is a wonderful opportunity to develop friendships, learn about different cultures and develop global citizenship. Strong relationships are usually formed as a student learns to trust and feel comfortable with a group of strangers and the homestay family embraces an additional member with acceptance, patience and respect. Often these relationships become lifelong, and the benefits to your family of hosting international students continue long after the student leaves.

The following pages have lists of expectations to help homestay families understand their role as adult caregivers / homestay parents for international students. It is important to remember that international students should be welcomed into your home and treated as you treat your own children. However, their parents' wishes and limitations should be respected, especially regarding independence, romance, sexual activity, etc.

One of the main sources of discontent with hosting international students is misaligned expectations. If families are unsure of any expectations or want clarification regarding specific situations not listed here, we hope you will contact the Homestay Coordinator (Cyndy Loewen; [homestay@kcschool.ca](mailto:homestay@kcschool.ca)).

## **Our expectations of host families are the following:**

- to arrange all transportation to and from the airport on arrival and departure
- to provide a safe, supportive, and welcoming home environment for the student
- to treat the student with respect, patience, and support
- to speak to the international student every day
- to introduce the student to all household visitors
- to clearly communicate the household rules, including around use of phone and Internet
- to clearly discuss expectations regarding independence, food, privacy, problem solving, etc.
- to be patient with the student's mistakes, especially in the adjustment period (first 2 months)
- to show the student how to use the plumbing facilities, security systems, household technology, safety equipment, etc.
- to provide basic guidance on communicating in English around the home and with the family
- to provide a separate bedroom which minimally includes a lockable door, bed, light, window and closet, and ideally also has a dresser and desk; the window must be no more than 1.5m from the ground, have an opening of 3.75ft<sup>2</sup> (with no side shorter than 15"), and have a minimum of 21" of clearance outside (for basement windows).
- to provide a healthy breakfast, lunch, dinner and reasonable snacks daily for the student unless other arrangements have been made for the day
- to provide an English-speaking environment in the household
- to do the student's laundry (or provide laundry facilities and guidance if the student wishes to do their own laundry)
- to explain/show the student what is expected in cleaning their bedroom and bathroom (provide supplies and guidance)

- to accompany student to and from school for the first week or until you and the student feel sure they are comfortable getting to and from school on their own
- to orient the student to the city, your neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood of the school
- to involve the student in all family activities whenever possible
- to encourage the student to learn about Canadian culture, lifestyle, and family life
- to take an interest in the student's progress at school and provide reasonable homework support as you would with your own children
- to respect the rights, privacy, and culture of the student
- to demonstrate appropriate behaviour toward the student at all times
- to provide or arrange for safe transportation to and from school each school day
- to have a minimum of \$2 million insurance on the vehicle(s) used to transport the student
- to allow students over 12 years of age to have a set of keys to the house
- to take the student to a doctor or counsellor (only after notifying the school) when necessary

In addition to the expectations, it is important that all members of homestay families understand their limitations. KCS requires that homestay families **not:**

- engage in romantic or sexual relations with the student
- Allow students to drive any vehicle that is not their own and without written permission from students' parents and agency
- Allow students to stay overnight at home alone without written permission from students' parents and agency.
- have or allow the student to babysit
- leave the student home alone overnight
- have the student do unreasonable cleaning or cooking not required of the family's other children
- ask for rent or damage deposits from the student
- pay for medical expenses on behalf of the student
- enter into any contracts with or on behalf of the student (e.g. for a cell phone)
- serve alcohol to the student
- allow the student to use illegal drugs
- share a bed with the student
- unfairly restrict student usage of the phone or Internet, especially for contacting their family
- permit the student to be sexually active (Please contact the school if you are concerned about this.)
- request contributions to household bills from the student
- attempt to make any changes to the student's visa



## COMMON HOMESTAY FAMILY EXPENSES

Homestay families are expected to provide:

- a balanced and healthy diet in reasonable adult-sized portions
- food requested by students, within reason (e.g. instant noodles, rice, etc.)
- toilet paper, facial tissue, soap and cotton balls
- all household cleaning supplies
- basic personal hygiene items (e.g. deodorant, toothpaste, shampoo, tampons, gel, etc.)
- communally used personal appliances (e.g. hair dryers, flat irons, etc.)
- bedding and towels
- access to communal family sporting equipment (e.g. balls, bicycles, racquets, etc.)
- basic household medical items (e.g. Band-Aids, pain killers, ointments for cuts)
- access to the family phone, TV and computer(s)
- meals when eating out as a family (i.e. homestay family covers the cost of the student's meal)
- entertainment when out as a family (i.e. homestay family covers student's entrance fees on outings)

Homestay families are not expected to provide:

- regular access to specialized or expensive food items
- a TV in the student's bedroom (strongly discouraged)
- a computer for the student's exclusive use
- spending money
- expensive or non-standard hygiene or personal items (e.g. hair dye, organic shampoos, humidifiers, etc.)
- non-standard personal appliances for the student's exclusive use (e.g. humidifiers)
- electric blankets and personal heaters
- bicycle helmets for the student's exclusive use
- prescription medication or doctor-prescribed medical supplies
- long distance calling expenses (students should use international calling cards)
- unreasonable Internet usage (i.e. excessive bandwidth associate with streaming videos for hours a day)
- a cellphone

## SCHOOL + INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM RULES

Please ensure that you read the student's handbooks for the school and international program. You should be aware of the rules that your international student is expected to follow at school.

# SUCCESSFUL HOMESTAY EXPERIENCES

Successful host families acknowledge that they are welcoming an international youth into their family. The family understands that they will provide a home away from home for their international student, and the family welcomes and embraces the student accordingly. At the same time, the international student understands that they must adjust to living in a new home, with rules, expectations, food, and practices likely quite different from their own. The student acknowledges that the experience will help to learn about Canada's culture while improving their English skills.

Successful homestay experiences navigate a lot of adjustment and bridge unfamiliarity with acceptance, open communication, and support. The following information will help you through the adjustments to having a new family member and begin bridging the unfamiliarity of a new experience in your home.

## THE STUDENT

International students generally come to Canada for two reasons. For most, their primary goal is to improve their English skills, which will improve their opportunities in life. At the same time, they want to experience the way that Canadians live, how we respond to the world around us and understand reasons behind our way of life. They are really quite impressive young people – children and teens willing to leave their families, friends, and preferred food to live with strangers in a foreign land and with limited ability to communicate to everyone there. Realistically, most adults would not put themselves in this situation. These young people are taking on a significant life challenge, often at a time when life's challenges are already great: the teenage years. For these reasons, when welcoming the student into your family, respect, patience, and support should be your guiding values.

Respect that this young person

- is bravely willing to take on an amazing challenge
- has intelligent and valuable ideas, even if he or she struggles to make them clear
- has a wonderful and firmly-established culture that they will not and should not abandon during their time in Canada
- has many wonderful things to teach you if you are open and willing to learn

Be patient when the student

- goes through the various stages of culture shock
- is slow to adapt to all the changes in his or her life
- struggles to communicate and understand you
- doesn't know or understand everything you expect of him or her.
- forgets information and rules (especially in the adjustment period of the first two months)
- displays totally normal and age-appropriate but frustrating behavior

Support your homestay son or daughter as he or she

- attempts to be accepted by classmates who may be judgmental or lack understanding
- tries to build friendships and connections with total strangers and in a foreign language
- experiences all the typical physical, emotional, and social changes of youth
- becomes comfortable speaking in a language that he or she has likely only written and read

## THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Hosting international students is blending two cultures. Although the student is in Canada to learn about Canadian culture, it is an excellent opportunity for your family to learn about his or her home culture. The experience should allow for the exchange of cultural knowledge for everyone involved.

The student's impression of Canada will, to a large extent, be formed by his or her relationship with you and your family. Canada is a fabulous country and a great place to live; but we must remember that international students should not be convinced that Canada is better than their home country. Homestay experiences develop mutual respect and understanding of two countries and cultures. Although it's quite natural for people to think that their own culture, customs, beliefs, and moral values are the best ones, global citizens learn that there is value in many cultures, customs, and beliefs. They accept that "different" does not mean better or worse. Try to withhold value judgments and create an atmosphere of mutual respect to encourage greater understanding. Avoiding cultural pre-judgments will increase the chances of having a good homestay experience. It may be helpful to prepare for your student's arrival by researching his or her homeland. This can also be a great way to start simple conversations – by asking a question about their country.

Understand as well that our culture influences so many things about us. Culture dictates how closely you stand to someone, the appropriate behaviour for greeting someone or congratulating a friend, and even our thoughts and values. There's a good chance that a student from a dramatically different culture than Canada's will, quite naturally, behave quite differently from your children, have different expectations about your role as a parent, study differently, and have different priorities in life. It is important to respect the role of culture in the international student's behaviour and provide guidance about any behaviour that is inappropriate in Canada.

Below is a list of behaviour that is generally acceptable and expected in Canadian culture. Your student may not automatically do these things because they don't exist or are unacceptable in her or his culture.

- Make eye contact when speaking with adults or older peers.
- Speak up when we feel something is inaccurate or unfair.
- Show physical affection to family members or close friends (hugs, kisses, etc.).
- Express unhappiness with someone for their behaviour.
- Initiate and comfortably participate in conversations with adults or older peers.

## YOUR EXPANDING FAMILY

As a family, you are embracing a new member, and each family member plays a role in helping your international student become a part of the family. Speak to your family before the student arrives about what they can do to welcome your newest family member. Share with all family members any information you have about or communication you receive from the student.

As a member of your family, your international student should share equally in the pleasures and duties of your home. Normal family responsibilities should become part of the student's

daily routine. Your student can generally be expected to take on the same household responsibilities as your other children are expected to do. At the same time, your student should be welcomed in common family activities, such as family meals and TV time, as well as family outings or evening walks. Your student should also be supported in the same way your children are, particularly in terms of supervision of homework and assistance with medical concerns.

Because each family member will connect with your international student in different ways, there may be growing pains as your family members and your international student adjust to living together. As a parent, it is a good idea to monitor the relationships that are forming and support the adjustment process.

## WELCOMING THE STUDENT

You will generally be given an email address to connect with your student before he or she arrives. Taking the time to communicate with your student before arrival can make a significant difference in how quickly he or she comfortably settles into your home and family routines. Write positive and encouraging emails, but be patient if responses are short or slow to come. It's possible your student is anxious about using English with a native speaker, and it takes time to build confidence.

You will need to meet your homestay student at the airport and bring them back to your home. You will be emailed a sign that you can print off and take to the airport to make it easier for your student to identify you. When you meet your student for the first time, he or she may be feeling a little insecure. In fact, you may be feeling the same way. Still, a welcome hug and smile will go a long way to making your student feel welcome.

On the drive home from the airport, your student may be unusually silent due to fatigue and the realities of suddenly being surrounded entirely by English. This distance and quiet may continue for a few days as he or she adjusts to an unfamiliar home, new food, and jet lag. Gently encourage your student to hang out with you and your family members. Try not to leave the student alone in his or her bedroom for hours during the day. At first, it is probably best if you speak slowly and not expect your student to answer questions at great length. Within a day or two though, it is important that the student begins to find his or her confidence in speaking in English, so begin to ask more questions that require longer speech.

Show your student the entire house and where things are: the bathrooms, closets, dresser, and household appliances, such as laundry. Do not assume that showing the bathroom is enough. Plumbing and appliances can be very different in their home countries. For example, many Asian bathrooms are wet rooms with no shower stalls or shower curtains. Show them how much to fill the bath and how to use the shower curtain. Don't be afraid to get in the tub and pull the curtain, explaining, "This keeps the water inside the bath and not all over the floor." Review how often to show and how long they should shower for.

## YOUR ROLE AS A HOMESTAY PARENT

As a homestay parent, you are the daily supervisor for your international student. You are responsible for daily well-being, keeping in mind your student is a minor. You should be aware of where your student is at all times, generally at school during school hours, and at home or with friends outside of school hours. If you allow your student to visit with friends, ensure you know where your student is, who he or she will be with, and what adults will be present. Use judgment when allowing teenage students to go out with friends without adult supervision or sleep over at a friend's houses. Your homestay student must follow your rules and instructions regarding this.

You are responsible for monitoring your international student's health, both physical and mental well-being. As with your own children, help with any minor medical concerns that arise at home, including the need for band-aids, ointments and non-prescription pain killers. If you feel your student needs to see a doctor, please notify the Homestay Coordinator first. The student will have medical insurance, and there may be certain procedures that must be followed before receiving care from medical professionals. If you feel the student needs to be taken to the hospital's emergency department, notify the school before you leave your home. If you need to call 911 for your student, call the school after you get off the phone with 911.

For international students, medical insurance coverage starts upon boarding the airplane for the departure flight to Canada and terminates upon the arrival of the return flight to their home country. The costs associated with doctor and hospital visits will be covered by the student's medical insurance. While some medical clinics will bill the medical insurance company directly, others will require payment at the time of the visit. This payment is the responsibility of the student, and the school can facilitate payment in these situations. Under no circumstances will a host family be held responsible for payment of a student's medical bills. Please make sure that the doctor signs the medical form supplied by the insurance company and forward the documents to the school for submission to the insurance company.

Mental health is also a concern for any young person, especially teenagers. Considering the impressive challenges international students face and the likely occurrence of culture shock, keep a close eye on the overall behaviour and moods of your student. If you are concerned in any way, please contact the Homestay Coordinator. Even if you feel the student is somewhat down, please notify the school. It is important that his or her program supervisor and school support network are aware.

Keep in mind that you are not the legal guardian for your homestay student, so you cannot make key decisions about medical procedures, immigration status in Canada, school enrollment, etc. If you have a question or there is decision that needs to be made that you would like guidance on, please don't hesitate to contact the Homestay Coordinator.

## SAFETY

Just as you care for the safety of your own children, you must help your international student with safety both inside and outside the home. In the early days of your student's stay, you might need to be more diligent about safety. This is because safety equipment and procedures often vary between countries, so your student may be unaware of how to use some equipment or unsure of the meaning of common safety symbols.

The following are some safety considerations you should review with your student:

- *Fire Safety* - The location and sound of smoke detectors, explaining that they should not "hush" or "silence" alarms without checking with you first. If you have escape ladders in upper floor rooms, ensure students know their location and how to use them. Review your family's fire escape plan and practice as a family.
- *Security Systems* - The location of all security system sensors and how to arm / disarm the system (if you wish to share this information with your student).
- *Neighbourhood Help* - Introduce your student to any close neighbours that they can turn to if they need help and cannot locate you. You might also have a list of phone numbers the student can use for help.
- *Emergency Services* - Explain the purpose of 911 and discuss situations in which the student might call it and also situations when calling it is inappropriate or unnecessary. In some countries, people regularly attend a hospital emergency department for colds or flus, so be sure to clearly explain when calling 911 isn't necessary.
- *Household Safety* - Show your student how to be safe and use (if appropriate) any major appliances, including the oven, microwave (including not putting metal in it), the iron (including not leaving it plugged in or "face down"), furnace, and hot water tank. Also review any chemicals you keep in your house and their safe usage. Discuss opening the door to strangers and who to let in the house (e.g. vetting repair technicians).
- *Neighbourhood Orientation* - First, ensure your student knows your address and phone number. You should give him or her a card with the home address and your contact information on it. Then, show your student around your immediate neighbourhood, including bus stops, parks, community centres and dangerous areas. Give your student clear boundaries where she or he may freely play and / or roam without express permission. Point out any highly visible landmarks that can help your student if he or she gets lost.
- *Street Safety* - Discuss general street safety with your student. Don't assume that he or she will recognize dangerous areas or situations. Discuss being outside at different times of day, protecting personal possessions by keeping them close, and general safe handling of cash and credit cards.
- *Peer Safety* - Let your student know that they can opt out of any activity with their friends if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Peer pressure is a difficult part of the teenage years, but following "the pack" in unsafe situations can create lifelong difficulties.
- *Public Safety* - Explain that the three main resources for public emergency assistance are the police, fire department, and ambulance workers. Some countries have significantly different levels of respect and trust for these groups, so explain that here they can be trusted and turned to for help.
- *Legal Safety* - Explain that students will be breaking the law if they smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs, including marijuana. Let them know that they should not sign any contracts without your assistance in helping them understand all their obligations.

## ENTERTAINING YOUR STUDENT

We encourage you to explore a range of activities with your student, beginning with creating conversation opportunities. Have a conversation with your student every chance you get. This is one of the best ways for them to develop fluency in speaking English and for you to strengthen your relationship with him or her.

### INEXPENSIVE ACTIVITIES

- Picnics
- Community sports
- Ice or roller-skating
- Make a scrapbook
- Go berry picking
- Bicycle riding
- Bake a pie or cookies
- Bowling
- Swimming
- Daily walks
- Hiking
- Crafting
- Board games / card games
- Movie nights

### SHARE

- Your photo albums
- Funny family stories
- Baby books
- Your hobbies

### VISIT

- Flea markets
- Museums and art galleries
- Parks
- Local universities

### GO

- Shopping
- To local tourist attractions
- Camping
- To the movies

There is also great benefits in having your student accompany you on seemingly mundane or routine activities because these offer new opportunities for vocabulary and to experience culture:

- Grocery shopping and errands
- Visiting friends
- Church events
- Your children's activities

Keep your student involved. There is no need to overspend. It is important to keep a normal family routine. Most of all, talk and have fun!

## HOUSEHOLD RULES

Your student must follow your household rules, but she or he can only do that if you explain them clearly. Review all your rules for them, and provide them in written form if possible. Be patient as your student adjusts to the rules, and be prepared to repeat them occasionally. Remember that jet lag, language, culture, and the adjustment period are all barriers to clear communication in the early days with your student. Also discuss clear consequences for breaking major household rules. Again, there will likely be cultural differences about consequences and appropriate discipline methods. The most important thing is to be clear, consistent, and fair.

Keep in mind that your student may be accustomed to more or less independence than you give your own children. If a student comes from a protected environment, he or she will need the security of being told what to do. However, the student who is accustomed to coming and going without supervision may need to be given certain instruction for their own protection. Follow whatever policy you would for your family and community. Be sure to let them know this is for their own protection and safety and not because you don't trust them.

The following are common points of contention, so review your expectations about them with your student.

- *Long Distance Telephone Calls:* Students rarely make phone calls anymore. However, if the student wishes to do so, they must ask your permission first. They should use a calling card or call collect if they make any long distance telephone calls.
- *Computer and Wifi:* Homestay parents are not required to provide a computer for students. Most students will come with their own computer, though you are encouraged to allow your student to use a family computer if they don't have their own. We recommend that you set clear restrictions, such as hours of use and types of websites that they may visit. We request that all electronics be brought out of their rooms (to a separate place where parents can see the devices) at 10pm on weekdays and 11pm on weekends.

Explain too that movie streaming and gaming can take up quite a wide portion of your wifi bandwidth, so these are generally to be avoided. Internet access for students is required for academic purposes, and it is also one of the main ways that students keep in touch with family and friends.

- *Physical Appearance:* Students may not make drastic changes to their appearances or bodies while they are in Canada. This includes piercings, tattoos, and hair colouring.

## FOOD

Food is not an easy adjustment for most international students. Even if they enjoy the food they are given at each meal, there's a good chance their bodies and emotions will struggle adjusting to a foreign diet. It isn't easy suddenly introducing or losing a key food group or type from your daily eating routines. Homesickness can affect hunger levels, and it's quite normal for international students to desperately crave their favourite dishes or treats from home. Try to encourage your student to sample different foods, but be patient if they don't seem adventurous with meals. After all, they are already being adventurous just by coming here and living in a foreign country. If possible, experiment with basic meals from their culture, and talk to them about snacks that are available in the ethnic section of your supermarket.

It's important to be clear about meals, snacks, and food options. Tell your student if you are willing to buy or cook certain foods specifically for your student. Also explain if there are several snack or meal options (often at breakfast and lunch). For example, if you only ever offer your student cereal at breakfast, he or she may not realize that oatmeal, yoghurt, fruit, eggs, and toast are also available to them. If students are allowed to help themselves to snacks, show them what they may eat. If possible, it's a good idea to leave a fruit bowl and healthy snacks readily available.

Bagged lunch is sometimes another source of discontent for international students. The common practice of sandwiches or leftovers is difficult for many students to adjust to. In



many other cultures, families don't eat leftovers, and students may feel like you're unwilling to make a "real" lunch for them. Explain that leftovers are commonly used for lunch and even dinner the following day. For many international students, eating a sandwich for lunch every day becomes tiresome, and even painful. Many other cultures do not eat as much bread-based meals as North Americans, so try to find a common ground for satisfying and enjoyable packed lunches.

At the end of the day, food problems are usually connected to portion size, meal variety, and adjusting to new food types. Talk to your student and work together to find a happy solution. No one is happy when they are hungry or feel unwell because of what they ate.

## LANGUAGE LEARNING

The primary reason for your international student's trip to Canada is to learn English. No matter how many years a student has studied English, most experience some difficulty speaking it. Their trip to Canada is often the first time they have had to use their English for everyday communication and with native English speakers. Also, the everyday English that you use is likely different from the formal or generic English that they have learned in their home countries. You will need to adjust your English a little to help your student become comfortable using English. However, as your student becomes more conversant, remember to return to regular speaking patterns (words you choose, speed of speech, etc.). Too often, people unnecessarily continue to "help" their students by speaking slowly or with simple words, when they are, in fact, limiting the student's learning opportunities.

When speaking with your student, remember to slow down and speak clearly. When your student doesn't seem to understand, repeat what you said and then rephrase it. Give your student time to process what you say; it often takes language learners up to five full seconds to fully process a question and prepare their answer. Give them this processing time before jumping in with answers or repeating the question, and feel free to pause between sentences or ideas to allow them to follow what you're saying.

Most students will also appreciate help in learning English. You may actually find it difficult to help them with their English language homework because they study English very differently than native speakers learn it (for good reason). The best help you can give your student is to teach them common expressions around the house and correct their pronunciation. Try to be consistent though, and don't give up on this invaluable help after the first month. Such interaction is one of the best ways for them to improve their English language skills. If students are open and earnestly try hard, you will be surprised at how quickly they can learn new phrases. However, don't be discouraged when students get tired or frustrated. Remember, they are adapting to many new aspects of everyday life, and they will be understandably exhausted from all the adjustments they are making.

## CULTURE SHOCK

Most international travelers experience some form of culture shock while visiting foreign countries with decidedly different cultural patterns. Culture shock results when a person's surroundings, language, food, and social norms are no longer familiar. Symptoms of culture shock may include:

- extreme homesickness
- depression
- strong feelings of frustration
- excessive criticism of host culture
- insomnia or extreme lethargy
- significant decreases or increases in appetite
- unusual anxiety

Language difficulties are one of the most significant contributors to culture shock. Your student may seem quiet or disinterested when they are really too tired to concentrate or talk in a foreign language. If you've ever travelled to a non-English speaking country, you may understand the level of focus and mind power necessary to speak in a new language and to grasp complicated conversations.

To help combat culture shock we suggest the following:

- communicate your concerns with the Homestay Coordinator so the student's school support network can assist
- schedule times for different family members to converse with your student
- students suffering from culture shock tend to retreat; encourage them to come out of their bedroom and spend some time with the family
- encourage your student to make friends with people of other nationalities, not just their own nationality
- involve your student in activities that do not require constant communication such as sports, cooking, music, and art
- remember the situation is temporary; culture shock should pass and the student will soon be happily enjoying family activities

# CONTRACT FOR HOMESTAY FAMILY SERVICES

## **IN THE MATTER OF the agreement of accepting the responsibility as a host family for Kelowna Christian School**

I/WE \_\_\_\_\_, residing at  
(name of primary contact for host family)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address, including postal code)

1. Have read, and agreed to, the information and rules in this Homestay Family Handbook;
2. Have discussed these expectations with the Homestay Coordinator during an interview;
3. Have or will shortly submit a Criminal Record Check for every adult residing in my home;
4. Will keep the Homestay Coordinator informed of any pertinent issues related to the well-being of the international student (i.e. homesickness, illness, etc.); and
5. Will keep the Homestay Coordinator informed of any changes to my family profile, household residents (including pets) and my house (i.e. renovations).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Host Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Host Parent Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Homestay Coordinator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Homestay Coordinator Name (printed)