

States' 4-H International Exchange Programs



2024 Summer Inbound Program HOST FAMILY GUIDEBOOK

States' 4-H International Exchange Programs



CONTACT INFORMATION

STATE COORDINATOR

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone: () _____
Email: _____

CHAPERONE

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Telephone: () _____
Email: _____

States' 4-H International Exchange Programs Headquarters



Yoko Kawaguchi
President & CEO
yoko@states4h.org



Marti Deyo
Associate Director
ib@states4h.org



Grace Evans
Program Support Specialist
exchange@states4h.org

Address: 3600-136th Place SE, Suite 300
Bellevue, WA 98006

Telephone: 1-206-462-2200

Hours: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Pacific Time

Website: <http://www.states4Hexchange.org>

MEDICAL INSURANCE PROVIDER: USI AFFINITY, UNDERWRITTEN BY ALLIED WORLD ASSURANCE COMPANY, LTD.

Group Name: States' 4-H International Exchange Programs
Patient Address: 3600-136th Place SE, Suite 300 Bellevue, WA 98006
Emergency Medical Hotline: (888) 647-3105



WELCOME

THANK YOU FOR HOSTING

Dear Host Family,

Thank you so much for hosting a delegate this summer through States' 4-H International! Your willingness to open your home and share your culture with a States' 4-H delegate is a huge step in the promotion of international friendship and understanding. Host families are at the very core of our programs and are absolutely vital to the success of our programs.

As you prepare for the arrival of your delegate, please review this handbook. It provides many suggestions about hosting, resources for language learning, and information about what you can expect as a host. Just remember that every family and every delegate is different, and you will create your own unique experience this summer.

Half of the fun in hosting is in preparation—exchanging letters, e-mail, and photos and learning about a new culture. This guidebook provides the basics. You can also learn about their country through movies, websites, and books. Conversations with people who are from their country or those who have traveled there are helpful for additional learning.

Host families have often said that hosting an international delegate was the highlight of their summer. We hope it will be yours as well.

Again, thank you for hosting through States' 4-H International. Together with dedicated host families like you, we are able to accomplish our mission to enhance world understanding and global citizenship through cultural immersion programs!

ENJOY YOUR SUMMER!

-The States' 4-H International Team



This guide was compiled by States' 4-H for participating states and host families. If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions for improving this book, please contact States' 4-H at 206-462-2200 or exchange@states4H.org.





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FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS AND TERMS

Chaperone:	Adult who comes with delegation from the home country
Delegate:	Youth who is participating in the exchange
e-HFIS:	Electronic Host Family Information Sheet
HF:	Host Family
IP:	International Partner
NP:	Natural Parents
PIS:	Personal Information Sheet (Delegate application)
SC:	State Coordinator





STATES' 4-H MISSION AND HISTORY

ABOUT 4-H

4-H is the nation's largest youth development organization and is found in more than 50 countries in North America, South America, Central America, Europe, Asia and Africa. In the United States, 4-H is a community of six million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. 4-H National Headquarters is located in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and is overseen by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). 4-H programs are implemented by the 109 land-grant universities and the Cooperative Extension System through their 3,100 local Extension offices across the country. Learn more about 4-H at 4-H.org.

ABOUT STATES' 4-H INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

States' 4-H is a not-for-profit educational and cultural organization, established under IRS code 501(c)3, in the State of Washington. States' 4-H is governed by a board of directors comprised of 4-H Extension professionals from across the U.S. with overall operations overseen by the States' 4-H president. States' 4-H is headquartered in Seattle, Washington where full-time staff manage the programs.

The 4-H National Headquarters at NIFA has authorized States' 4-H to use the 4-H name and emblem. States' 4-H is a member of and is granted full listing by the Council for Standards on International Educational Travel (CSIET). States' 4-H is granted J-1 Visa issuing authority by the U.S. Department of State. States' 4-H programs are coordinated through the State 4-H Office by 4-H Youth Development Centers of the Cooperative Extension System at Land Grant Colleges and Universities in each state.

Since 1972, States' 4-H has empowered over 63,000 delegates and families; over 52,000 families in the U.S. have hosted youth on short-term visits from Argentina, Costa Rica, Finland, Korea, Kenya, Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, Japan and Tanzania ranging in ages from 12 – 18. Over 8,000 American youth have made reciprocal visits to Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Korea, Japan, Norway, and Tanzania. Since 1988, States' 4-H has hosted over 2,000 academic year-long students from Korea, Japan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Moldova, Mongolia, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Romania, Senegal, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

MISSION STATEMENT

Enhancing world understanding and global citizenship through high-quality 4-H international cultural immersion and exchange programs for 4-H aged youth.

OUR VALUES

- Multiple perspectives
- Respect for others
- Cultural understanding
- Global connections
- Diversity
- Learning by doing
- Tolerance
- Innovation
- Engaged citizenship

VISION STATEMENT

States' 4-H International Exchange Programs is the leading provider of cultural immersion and educational exchange programs for the 4-H system, enhancing world understanding and global citizenship.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

As an organization comprised of 4-H members, States' 4-H prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.





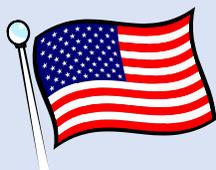
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



States' 4-H International Exchange Programs

States' 4-H International is the sponsoring organization for the in-USA program. States' 4-H works closely with State Coordinators and International Partners, coordinating the exchanges and ensuring that all program policies, regulations, and safety practices are followed. States' 4-H oversees screening and selection for host families, provides handbooks for host families and State Coordinators, provides on-program support for the duration of the exchange, and administers evaluations for the program.

States' 4-H provides leadership, guidance, management, and training to the member states. States' 4-H develops, maintains, and enforces all policies and procedures to ensure compliance with federal regulations, standard risk management practices, and non-discrimination policies of the Cooperative Extension System, as well as ensures that programs meet the educational youth development objectives of the 4-H Youth Development Program of the Cooperative Extension System.



States' 4-H State Coordinators

Coordinators are 4-H employees or volunteers responsible for managing the in-state components of the States' 4-H programs. They interview and select host families for the delegates, conduct in-state arrival orientations, midpoint gatherings (if applicable), and departure debriefings. They work with States' 4-H and the Chaperones to successfully manage the States' 4-H exchange.

American Host Families

American host families volunteer to host an international visitor in their home for 4 weeks. They provide a bed and all meals for the delegate in a safe, caring environment. Host families have a child of the same sex and approximate age of the delegate they host.



International Partners

These are the sending organizations that select and conduct pre-departure orientations for the delegates. They provide 24/7 contact with the Natural Parents.

Adult Chaperones

Chaperones are selected and trained by IPs. Chaperones are responsible for the well-being of all delegates. They help the delegates prepare for their trip, travel with them on international and domestic flights, and provide monitoring and counseling during the exchange program.

Delegates

Delegates are 12-18 years of age. They are pre-approved by IPs to participate in the exchange and undergo an intense preparation process before coming on the exchange.

Delegates' Natural Families

Family members back home support the delegate as they prepare for the exchange.





RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HOST FAMILY

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

- ✓ Attend Host Family orientation.
- ✓ Contact your State Coordinator if there are any changes in your family after your application has been completed or if you are concerned about your delegate's behavior during the exchange.
- ✓ If your child is participating in 4-H or other camp (church, band, scout, day) during the homestay, your delegate can go along too! **Important: Be sure to notify your State Coordinator in advance, to receive approval from the natural parents to pay for their delegate's camp fee.**
- ✓ Save your coordinator's phone number in all family members' cell phones.
- ✓ Keep important contact information, insurance information, and delegate Comprehensive Release forms in an easily accessible location.

A TOUR OF THE HOME

- ✓ When your delegate first arrives, take time to show them around your home.
- ✓ Show them their room and where to unpack their belongings. Provide a place for their personal things, and tell the delegate that they may retire to their room when they feel the need for privacy.
- ✓ Tell the delegate how laundry will be handled and show them where to put their used items. You may need to instruct the delegate on specific things, as their laundry day routines could look very different to yours.
- ✓ Be alert to any clothing needs and lend warmer or cooler clothing, if appropriate. Try to explain to the delegate why you are offering different clothing so they do not feel embarrassed as though a mistake has been made.
- ✓ Explain family ground rules and any emergency procedures you may have. For example, in case of a fire, inform the delegate how they should evacuate.
- ✓ Explain your family's daily work routine, meals and relaxation, and what you generally do on weekends. Tell the delegate what time you get up in the morning and the plans for the next day. Explain that you expect them to stick to the family routine (when you get up, eat, and go to bed). It may help to write down a simple schedule for the exchange period, since the delegate may understand written English better than spoken.
- ✓ Make sure the delegate knows how to operate your appliances safely.
- ✓ Encourage them to let you know when they do not feel well.
- ✓ Introduce your delegate to any household pets. If you live on a farm, give the delegate a guided tour early in their visit and explain how to stay safe around animals.
- ✓ Repeat the entire process the next day, as the delegate will likely be tired and disoriented and might not have understood the first time.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

- ✓ Provide your delegate with a bed (delegates may share a room with a host sibling of the same gender, but they cannot share a bed).



MEALS

- ✓ Provide your delegate with 3 meals a day. If your family eats a meal outside the home, it is your responsibility to pay for your delegate's meal. This includes all meals including fast food, meals at the fair or at a sit-down restaurant. (The delegate may buy between-meal snacks with their own money, if your own children are required to do the same)
- ✓ If your delegate is expected to prepare their own snacks, show them what to do as they may not be used to helping themselves to food.

FAMILY TRAVEL

- ✓ Host families should not plan extended vacations during the exchange. Short camping trips or visits to relatives are fine, but trips longer than one week are discouraged, as they do not provide the daily life perspective that is integral to the program. If trips longer than two nights are planned, please inform the State Coordinator of your plans and give a phone number where you may be reached.
- ✓ For trips involving air travel in the US or any travel to Mexico or Canada, you must seek approval from the State Coordinator in advance (laws regarding documentation required for minors traveling across borders without parents change often). Always be sure to bring the delegate's passport and the original Travel Authorization/Liability Release Form.
- ✓ Chaperone travel has limitations and restrictions. Please consult with your State Coordinator to see if the travel plan can be approved.

HELPING YOUR STUDENT ADJUST

- ✓ If your delegate has his or her own room, then you may need to check in on them the first morning and make sure they feel welcome in your family activities. Some students may be feeling shy and might not leave their room without being asked to.
- ✓ Include your delegate in regular family routines.
- ✓ Try to be understanding and patient while communicating with your delegate, it may take time for them to open up or feel comfortable communicating.
- ✓ If your delegate is extremely homesick even after the first few days, contact your State Coordinator. Your State Coordinator may have ideas based on past experience or they can ask the Chaperone to call the delegate and speak with them in their native language.
- ✓ Encourage your delegate to write postcards and letters to family and to the Chaperone.

ENSURING DELEGATE SAFETY AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES

- ✓ Make sure that your delegate is supervised or that host siblings and your delegate are aware of what to do in emergencies when an adult is not present.
- ✓ Consult with the SC if there will be regular periods of time when the delegate will be left unsupervised.
- ✓ Consult with the SC if there are any notable changes in your family before/during the hosting period that would impact the delegate.
- ✓ Follow States' 4-H Safety Guidelines at all times. (*see following page)
- ✓ **If sick or injured, care for your delegate as you would your own son or daughter and make medical decisions as necessary.**
- ✓ Consult the delegate's medical history form to check for allergies before giving any over-the-counter medication, or contact SC for advice. States' 4-H will reimburse the cost of such medication with receipt.
- ✓ Present insurance ID card and Comprehensive Release form when delegate receives medical care.
- ✓ Promptly report any delegate illnesses or injuries to your State Coordinator. Keep a detailed record of illnesses or injuries which require attention from a medical professional and report this information to your State Coordinator.
- ✓ Use the Emergency Room (hospital) for true emergencies (see "Insurance/Medical Care/Emergencies").



- ✓ If a non-medical emergency arises during the homestay, host families should provide a safe environment, the same as for their own children, for as long as necessary. If the original host family is unable to fulfill this responsibility, States' 4-H will arrange for alternate hosts until it is safe for the delegate to return to the original family.

✓ **Please note:**

Host Family's Use of Marijuana: Although laws vary from state to state, marijuana is still illegal at the federal level. We strongly request that host families do not use marijuana, even in states where marijuana is legal. If the host family does use marijuana recreationally, we ask that they refrain from using it during the exchange program period. In the case of medical marijuana, we respectfully request that the use is discreet for the sake of the delegate. Marijuana use in some of our participating countries is culturally unacceptable and carries severe legal consequences. We thank you for your cooperation and understanding.





SAFETY GUIDELINES

READ THIS LIST CAREFULLY WITH ALL FAMILY MEMBERS BEFORE YOUR DELEGATE ARRIVES. PLEASE NOTE THAT DELEGATES AND HOST FAMILIES MUST COMPLY WITH ANY ADDITIONAL STATE-SPECIFIC 4-H SAFETY REGULATIONS THAT ARE PROVIDED TO YOU BY YOUR STATE COORDINATOR.

Delegate and chaperone safety is very important to a successful exchange experience. Host parents should be aware of delegates' whereabouts at all times.

****POST THIS LIST IN A PROMINENT PLACE DURING THE EXCHANGE****

AIRPLANES, ETC.

Delegates are NOT allowed to fly in private airplanes, hot air balloons, or other small aircraft.

ANIMALS

Many delegates have no experience with farm animals or large household pets. If the delegate will be around animals, make sure s/he handles them correctly and safely. Delegates are allowed to ride horses but must wear a safety helmet and be under responsible adult supervision.

APPLIANCES

Explain and demonstrate how household appliances work, the hazards of using them, and safety precautions. Be sure to include cooking range, refrigerator, dishwasher, toaster, washing machine & dryer, garbage disposal, trash compactor, microwave, smoke detector, fan, etc. If kids are inexperienced at cutting or using graters, show them how to properly use these utensils before allowing them to use them.

BICYCLES

Show delegate how to use bicycle brakes, since they may be different from bicycles in the delegate's home country. Because of different traffic patterns, extreme caution should be used. Delegates must wear helmets while riding bicycles.

BOATS

Delegates may ride in a boat. HF's must follow state safety regulations and explain them to the delegate.

BUNK BEDS

If the HF has bunk beds, encourage the delegate to sleep on the lower bunk. Past delegates have seriously hurt themselves after falling out of a top bunk!

CRIME

Because crime can be much lower in other countries than in the U.S., delegates might be used to wandering off by themselves in a crowd, at the mall, or from home, with no fear of harm. Host parents should keep an eye on delegates in public places and explain the importance of checking with the HF before walking off alone.

FARM EQUIPMENT

Delegates are NOT allowed to operate any farm equipment. Delegates are only allowed to ride on farm equipment that is designed to accommodate passengers and is operated by an adult over the age of 18. **(Note: This does not include ATVs, 'Gators', Lawnmowers or other prohibited vehicles noted in the Vehicles and Lawnmowers sections).**

FIREARMS

Any firearm or gun (toy or real) that shoots bullets or pellets is not to be used by a delegate. Paintball,



Nerf, airsoft and laser tag are prohibited. If a scheduled camp or group activity involves using firearms, the delegate should have another activity planned at that time. Keep all firearms in the home **locked away** out of sight and inaccessible. Ammo should be kept separate from the firearm and locked up as well. Archery is allowed only when supervised by a trained adult. Water squirt guns are permitted.

FIREWORKS

Delegates should not handle or ignite fireworks themselves. If fireworks will be used by family members, ensure that the delegate understands all necessary safety precautions.

FIRE EXITS

Show the delegate how to get out of the house in case of fire.

HIGH-RISK ACTIVITIES

Delegates are NOT allowed to participate in high-risk activities such as sky diving, parachuting, hang gliding, glider riding, parasailing, bungee jumping, snowmobiling, horse racing, spelunking, etc. Zip-lining is permitted if facilitated by a professional. If unsure about the “high risk” nature of a particular activity, contact States’ 4-H for guidance.

HIGH ROPES COURSE

Delegates are allowed to participate in a high ropes course, including zip lines, under the supervision of properly certified staff with proper safety equipment.

HUNTING

Delegates are NOT allowed to hunt or participate in any hunting activities.

LAWNMOWERS

Delegates are not allowed to operate any motorized lawn equipment. This includes push mowers and riding lawn mowers.

ROCK CLIMBING

Ordinary hiking is fine, but any rock climbing or hiking which requires ropes or other equipment is prohibited. Use of indoor rock climbing walls is allowed if the delegate is under the supervision of properly trained adults.

TRAFFIC

Explain driving on the right-hand side of the road. Tell the delegate to always look both ways before crossing the street (taking care to look especially to the left) and to walk, not run, across streets.

Motorcycles or ATVs

Delegates may NOT operate or ride as passengers on **motorcycles or ATVs**.

Vehicles

Delegates are not allowed to operate cars, trucks, or any other motorized vehicles. Delegates may ride as a passenger in a golf cart only if the cart remains on the golf course and if a licensed adult is driving. Delegates may ride in go-karts only on “tracks” at amusement parks or similar venues. A delegate may ride in a passenger vehicle that is operated by an adult over the age of 17 with a full driver’s license (not a permit) and must wear a seatbelt. They may also ride in a vehicle designed for mass transportation, such as a bus. The driver of any vehicle in which the delegate rides must hold a valid driver’s license AND abide by all state laws. If driving with a 17 year old, the delegate is only allowed to ride with the youth for everyday outings on local roads (no freeways and no long distance drives).

WATER SPORTS

Delegates are not allowed to jet-ski, snorkel, scuba dive, or deep sea dive. Tubing and water skiing are allowed at the host parents’ discretion. White water rafting is permitted if guided by a licensed and insured guide for class 1, 2, or 3 class rapids. A life jacket must be worn during these activities.

NOTE ON ADULT CHAPERONES

Chaperones accompanying the delegates are mature adults who are capable of determining whether a specific activity is unsafe for them to participate in. However, chaperones are expected to follow the same safety guidelines outlined above in order to comply with insurance policies.





STATES' 4-H PROGRAM POLICIES

ON-PROGRAM COMMUNICATION POLICY

Delegates are not permitted to call, email, or use social media to communicate with their family or friends in their home country during the exchange. While host families might think that sending emails and photos during the exchange sounds like a kindness, 40+ years of experience shows that it tends to make parents 'homesick' for their child (and vice versa).



The natural parents understand that 'no news is good news' and it is not necessary for you or the delegate to contact the delegate's natural family directly at any point during the exchange. If there is any kind of question, misunderstanding, illness, or accident, please address it through official communication channels with your state or local coordinator. If there is something the child's parents need to be aware of, we will inform them. While delegates are not permitted to email or call home, they are allowed to receive letters and send letters home or to friends. Chaperones may ask delegates to send them postcards to report on how the exchange is going. Please assist delegates with how to properly address letters and postcards for the American postal system.

Delegates are allowed to bring cell phones so that they can use them in case of an emergency during their travel to/from airports in their home countries. **Once in the USA, delegates may also use their phones as a form of camera.**

Compliance with this policy allows delegates to make the most of their exchange by focusing on communication and interaction with new friends and family in North America. Please see "Delegate/Family Communication" for guidance on pre-program communication with your delegate and their family.

COMPUTERS, TV, AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

We advise that these activities be kept to a minimum during the exchange. Hosting can provide the perfect excuse to spend quality time together as a family, playing outside or doing other "unplugged" activities. Establish guidelines and enforce HF rules about tech early!



VIDEO GAMES

Host parents are asked to use their own best judgment when considering what games will be played while they are hosting international delegates. Emphasize the importance of avoiding games which could be considered insulting to other cultures. In particular, do not allow host siblings and delegates to play first person shooter games set in WWII such as:

- Hidden and Dangerous
- Commandos
- Wolfenstein
- Medal of Honor
- Deadly Dozen
- Brothers in Arms
- Day of Defeat
- Call of Duty
- Battlefield
- Red Orchestra

APPEARANCE CHANGES

Normal haircuts do not require permission unless they are quite eccentric. Tattoos are not permitted by International Partners. Occasionally delegates ask to have their ears pierced or make other appearance changes such as perming or coloring their hair during the homestay. If they do ask, contact your State Coordinator for advice.

CELL PHONES

Delegates are only allowed to bring cell phones so that they can use them in case of an emergency during their travel to/from airports in their home countries. Phones should be set on airplane mode while in the United States. They are also permitted to be used as cameras for participants.

DELEGATE SPENDING MONEY

If your family participates in activities that cost money, it is your responsibility to pay for your delegate's share if this activity is something you would normally cover for your own child. Any kind of special items, snacks, or souvenirs the delegate may want (outside the ordinary) can be paid for by themselves.

Delegates are not supposed to bring more than \$300-\$350 in spending money with them. You may want to sit down with the delegate at the beginning of the homestay and help them budget their spending money (advise them on prices, find out what they want to buy, and so on). **The delegates are instructed before arriving that it is their responsibility for keeping their money, passport, and other valuables secure.**

Most delegates will bring U.S. cash or traveler's checks in U.S. dollars. Host parents should assist the child in cashing traveler's checks by going with them to the bank and reminding them to take their passport.



CAMP

If your child is participating in 4-H or other camp (church, band, scout, day, etc.) during the homestay, your delegate can go along, too! **Important: Be sure to notify your State Coordinator in advance, to receive approval from the natural parents to pay your delegate's camp fee.**

You have two options regarding payment for camp. You may pay for the camp "up-front" and then submit a receipt to your State Coordinator for reimbursement. Or, you may have the camp director send your State Coordinator a bill for payment.



Please write to your delegate in advance and tell him or her a little about the camp experience; what to expect, necessary clothes and other items, dates, times, daily schedules, expectations, etc. The more they know in advance, the more secure they will feel at camp. Experience has shown that it is essential that the youth spend the first few days in your home recovering from jet lag, so we ask that no delegate be taken directly to camp upon arrival.

(Note: International partners do not encourage having delegates attend multiple camps, as they want to ensure the delegate can enjoy the daily life perspective that is integral to the program)

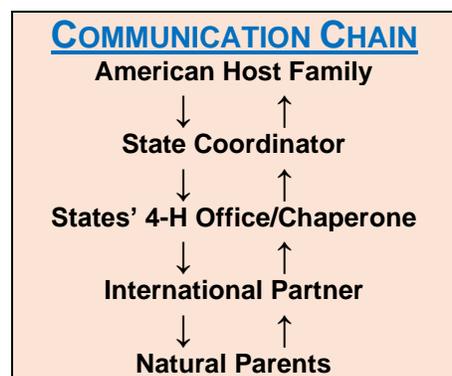
When To Contact Your State Coordinator

If your delegate...

- Has an accident and gets hurt
- Goes to the doctor or receives any medical attention
- Has a hard time adjusting to the exchange program (crying frequently, refusing to eat, behavioral issues, etc.)
- Loses spending money or has other money problems
- Loses passport
- Has any other issue that you need advice about

If your family...

- Has a major issue that affects the home environment (long power outage, flood evacuation, etc)
- Plans to travel with your delegate (staying somewhere besides your home overnight)
- Plans to have the delegate stay for a significant period of time with someone other than the host parent
- Experiences some scenario that may compromise the safety or well-being of the delegate
- There are changes in your family that will impact the delegate (e.g. stay-at-home parent gets a new job)





INSURANCE / MEDICAL CARE / EMERGENCIES

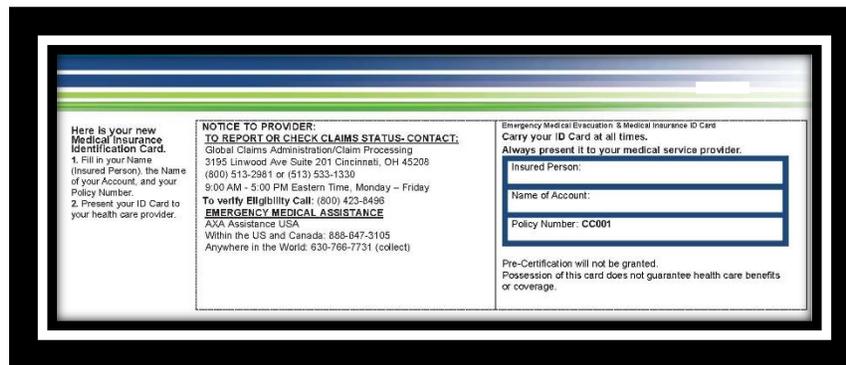
AUTHORIZATION TO ACT AS DELEGATE'S GUARDIAN

All natural parents sign an agreement giving rights to the host families and to States' 4-H representatives to care for their children. Therefore, during emergencies **the delegate should be treated in the same fashion as one of the host family's own children**. The Coordinator should be contacted immediately after the safety of the delegate has been assured. The Coordinator should then contact States' 4-H Headquarters who will communicate with International Partners.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

All delegates are covered by USI Affinity, underwritten by Crum & Forster SPC, under the following policy:

Name of Account: States' 4-H International Exchange Programs
Telephone: 888-647-3105



WHAT IS COVERED	WHAT IS NOT COVERED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any services for injury due to accident • Any services for sickness/illness • Prescription drugs • Emergency relief of dental pain (limited) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental services (unless due to injury) • Eye exams (unless due to injury) • Services for pre-existing conditions • Routine physical exams (e.g. sports physical) • Immunizations/Vaccinations • Over-the-counter drugs

TREATING MINOR ILLNESSES AND INJURIES

If the delegate has a minor illness or injury that does not require professional attention, please care for him/her as you would your own child. Consult the delegate's medical history form to check for allergies before giving any over-the-counter medication, or contact the State Coordinator for advice.

SEEKING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FOR MAJOR ILLNESSES AND INJURIES

Emergency rooms are expensive and not always the best way to receive medical care. If the delegate's medical condition is not truly an emergency, you can take him/her to your family doctor, local clinic, or urgent care facility. If an emergency room visit is necessary, ask if there is a free translator or a picture patient communication board.



IMPORTANT:
**For billing purposes, when filling out address information for the student list
the States' 4-H Headquarters address:**

**3600-136th Place SE, Suite 300
Bellevue, WA 98006**

1. **At the Provider** (doctor, hospital, clinic, etc.) – present the Insurance ID card when asked for insurance information. Also bring the delegate's comprehensive release form and medical form to all medical appointments.
 - List States' 4-H's address on the provider forms. This will prevent bills being mailed directly to your home. If the provider will not accept an out of state address, list your home address (*NOT* the delegate's address in their home country). You will then need to forward any bills received to your State Coordinator as soon as possible. Bills submitted more than three months after service is provided may be rejected.
2. **After Doctor's Visit** – Call your State Coordinator to advise him/her on the delegate's health. Follow the treatment plan recommended by the health care professional.
3. **Out of Pocket Expenses** – In rare cases, you might need to advance minor cash for over-the-counter medication, or to pay a small medical provider that does not accept the insurance card. Please submit detailed original receipts for these expenses to your State Coordinator, and States' 4-H will reimburse as soon as possible. **Be sure to submit prescription receipt/labels which include the patient name, medication name, prescription number, date filled, cost, and prescribing physician's name.**
4. **Unpaid Bills from Provider** – If you receive bills or other correspondence from the Provider, please do not pay them. Submit the invoice(s) to your State Coordinator right away. **Do not file any insurance claim forms yourself, States' 4-H will file a claim on the delegate's behalf.**

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. Your delegate may be scared to see the doctor. Ask the State Coordinator to call the Chaperone to explain US medical processes and to reassure the delegate.
2. Keep the State Coordinator's number close at hand. Always contact the State Coordinator as soon as possible to report the emergency.
3. For non-medical emergencies (inclement weather, civil unrest) provide a safe environment to the delegate as you would your own child.
4. If a nationwide emergency occurs and the Summer Program is cancelled or suspended, delegates will be returned to their home country as soon as it is deemed safe to travel.





PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE EXCHANGE

THE FAMILY EXPERIENCE

Part of what makes exchange experiences so great is learning and sharing about two different cultures. Your delegate will likely be interested in your everyday life and what everyday life *is* for an American family!

Exchange delegates report being surprised that American families spend so much time together and are so open with one another. Parents are often eager to talk over the day's events with their children, which may come across as unique to some delegates. Many delegates report that American family time is a pleasant surprise and a wonderful learning experience, but others may feel some resentment from parental interest in their lives. They may see it as intrusive or meddling. Please encourage your delegate to interact with you and other family members. It may take your delegate a while to get used to this kind of relationship.



A major expectation of the delegates is that one member of their American family will be their “special friend.” This is the child in your family who was matched by gender and interest to the youth (the host sibling). The delegate frequently calls this person “my host,” or “host friend.” Of course, the whole family is involved in the hosting experience, but the child will expect their main host sibling to give them special attention and share activities. We ask that the main host sibling keep the child uppermost in mind during the exchange period and be familiar with the skills that they will be gaining by participating in this experience. Host siblings often report increased abilities in the 5 “C”s of Positive Youth Development as a result of the hosting experience.

If the host brother or sister is busy, it would be appreciated if other 4-H members, neighborhood children, or family members could spend time with the delegate. To help the child meet more than the immediate host family, involve neighbors and 4-H club members' families in planned activities for the month.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

When the delegate arrives, introduce them to your community--where you shop, where your children go to school, your 4-H club and other community organizations. Don't forget the post office, school, newspaper office, radio and television stations and the library. All of these give an idea of how an American community functions. But it is best not to schedule activities for the first two or three days. Give the delegate a chance to adjust to your household first.

4-H Youth Development

The 5 C's of Youth Development	
Competence	Positive view of ones actions in specific areas such as school, social, cognitive, or family.
Confidence	A positive internal sense of self worth and ability.
Connection	Positive bonds with people and institutions where a multidirectional exchange in both directions is present.
Character	Possession of standard for correct behavior, a sense of morality, and integrity.
Caring	A sense of empathy and sympathy for others.



COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

Before going somewhere, be sure to explain where you are going, why, for how long, what you will be doing, who will be there, and proper attire. Also, be sure to explain how long the car ride will take. (Imagine how difficult it would be to take a trip or journey and have no idea whether you'd be in the car for 10 minutes or two hours!)

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Your delegate will probably want to visit your place of worship with your family (if they don't, however, we request that you do not insist).

They may not know the ritual etiquette involved, so please do explain such things as putting on or taking off hats, special seating arrangements, when to stand, sit, or kneel, etc.



QUIET TIME

It is very important for your visitor to have some quiet time for personal needs, such as letter writing, reading, relaxing, or just being by themselves. The fast-moving (often frantic) American pace may be a great strain, in addition to other adjustments. Please keep in mind that just the mental effort to understand and to speak in English can be exhausting by the end of the day.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

A note about money: If your family participates in activities that cost money, it is your responsibility to pay for your delegate's share if this activity is something you would normally pay for your own child. Any kind of special items, snacks, or souvenirs the delegate may want can be paid for by themselves.

Games

Many children's games can be played with very little explanation. Bring out the jigsaw puzzles. Your delegate may know some good card tricks. "Uno" is a popular card game around the world.

Music

Listen to a variety to expose the delegate to all types of American music. Seeing live music is also a great opportunity. A favorite album is a nice gift.

Baking simple foods

Make some cookies, breads, pies and cakes – whatever you like to bake!

Other food ideas

Some families enjoy planning special occasions involving food – a Thanksgiving menu or dyeing eggs to explain holiday traditions or making homemade ice cream. Canning or freezing some fruits or garden produce, making relish, jams or jellies are additional suggestions. If some of the canning is done in small enough containers, 3 or 4 jars would be an excellent gift to send back to your guest's family. Be sure the jars are tightly sealed to avoid problems at customs inspection.

Pictures

Take lots of pictures of your delegate - with farm machinery, animals, buildings, and in your home. Remember, your home is different than theirs. They may not always think of it, but they'll treasure having the pictures later.



NOTE: States' 4-H IB Photo Contest -- States' 4-H holds an annual photo contest for host families each year. Action shots and/or photos displaying the bond between host siblings and delegates will be given preference in the contest. Winners will receive prizes and a chance to have photos published in the States' 4-H annual newsletter and other publications. The submission deadline is usually in mid-September. Please contact your State Coordinator for additional details.

Crafts

Make a scrapbook of their visit together. Try a cultural activity from their home country! Sewing and knitting are great activities and leave the delegate with a keepsake of the exchange, too. When they wear the clothing you made together, it will be a great memory.

Outdoor activities

Try fishing, gardening, camping or canoeing. Many of the delegates have few opportunities to experience the outdoors and would love to try such activities here. These are great ways for them to see and learn more about the area they are living in.

Chores

Give them a daily chore and expect it to be done. This may seem strange at first, but it gives the feeling of being a member of the family.

Visits to farms or petting zoos

Touch and feel animals, ride a horse, see chickens, cattle, sheep and pigs. Delegates may not have the opportunity to experience these animals at home.

Pets

Some delegates are not accustomed to indoor dogs and cats, so give them a chance to adapt, but do not push. They may fear animals.

Cooking

Try a shopping excursion to a greengrocer or market for vegetables. It's fun to try items that your delegate is familiar with but that are new to you and your family. Or prepare a dish from their culture together!



GIFTS

Please remember that it is important to the delegate to purchase these gifts for family and friends back home and allow some time for shopping. At the same time, delegates are specifically told that the exchange program is not a shopping trip; do not feel that you need to go out of your way or take the delegate to the mall every weekend. One or two trips to the mall, Wal-Mart, or another shopping outlet should be plenty.

The items listed below should **NOT BE GIVEN** as gifts, even if they are intended for the natural parents. They are forbidden from returning home with the delegate:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Firearms
- Fireworks
- Knives
- Gun Powder
- Seeds, live plants, or items containing soil
- Live animals
- Fresh fruits, vegetables or meat products; dried meat products (such as beef jerky)

Your delegate will probably present a gift to you upon arrival, and you may want to also give them a memento of your time together as a family. No doubt, a gift will be cherished by your delegate, but keep it small. Remember, it is the spirit of the gift that is important. Personalized items are far more appropriate than those of material value. A photo album of the month's activities would be a good farewell gift. Also consider 4-H items, a hand-sewn item, homemade jewelry, and items unique to your state, such as T-shirts or calendars. For other gift ideas, watch to see which things your delegate admires, buys or collects. Remember the delegate has limited suitcase space and a luggage weight limit. If the delegate requests that items be mailed back to their home country, please keep in mind that the US Postal Service only offers airmail which can be costly, and mailing will be at the delegate's expense.

You may wish to send a small gift back with the youth for each member of their household. If so, check your delegate's biography to see if a grandparent lives with the family.

Note: If your delegate's birthday is during the exchange, surprise them with a modest celebration.

But much more important than material gifts are the ideas and frame of mind your visitor takes home. If the delegate returns with greater confidence and courage to build a better future at home, then they have been enriched indeed. If you want to show generosity, be generous by respecting their country, its history and achievements, and by trying to understand its problems. Be generous in admitting to yourself and to your delegate that no one is perfect, and we always have much to learn from one another.





DELEGATE/FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Among all states participating in our national evaluation, communication is always listed as the number one challenge for host families. The success of your hosting experience will be directly proportional to the rapport that is established between you and the delegate. Please remember that English fluency does not determine the success of a homestay. There are a lot of different ways to communicate with one another!

PRE-PROGRAM COMMUNICATION

Correspondence is **extremely** important. Your delegate is anxious to learn about your family, especially about the child that is nearest the age of the delegate. Work hard on your letters and as soon as you receive a letter in return, answer it immediately so you can build a good friendship long before he or she comes to live with you.

Email has become the express mode of correspondence, but receiving an email rarely brings the same joy as receiving a hand-written letter or card. Please try and send a letter to your delegate if possible. A post-card with scenery from your state is always a good idea. A brief message using short sentences is best.

See “States’ 4-H Program Policies” for information on communication with delegate’s natural family during the exchange.

LANGUAGE

Language capabilities of delegates will often be extremely limited. Be aware that the delegates may not understand much of what is going on for the first few days. Even if they say “yes,” they may not actually understand and are simply replying because they feel they should or to ease tension. Some delegates’ language ability may improve slightly as they start to feel more comfortable.



Experience shows that the biggest challenge in language ability in a homestay setting is fear of failing. As often as possible, ask for the word for something in their native language and try to repeat it. Delegates are more willing to make mistakes if you make mistakes with their language. Being an enthusiastic learner of their language is the best way to encourage them to use ours.

Be ready to repeat words using alternatives, speaking more slowly (but not more loudly!) than you normally would. Use short, simple sentences, avoid slang terms and idioms, and watch for cues indicating confusion. When you have said something really important, ask your delegate to confirm that they understand.

You can communicate by gestures, written words and spoken language. Make it apparent that you are eager to help them learn the language. Young children are often the best English teachers. Children are patient and not too polite to correct errors. Also, their English is often simpler than that of adults.

Try to phrase your questions to avoid “yes” and “no” answers. To be polite, your delegate may answer “Yes” although they mean “No”.



HELPFUL LANGUAGE HINTS

Use online resources and study up. Your effort at using some phrases in their native language will help your delegate be encouraged to use their English.

NON-VERBAL GESTURES

Gestures have different meanings in every region of the world. If your delegate uses a gesture which is considered obscene or inappropriate in our culture, gently explain this to them.

EXPRESSION

The words “please” and especially “thank you” are used often and automatically by most Americans. This may not be the case with your delegate. Many hosts notice that they are not thanked by their delegate for small daily kindnesses. The delegates on this exchange have been told about the custom of saying “please” and “thank you” in English. However, they don’t realize how often and when these words are used – and that they are used even to family members and in everyday situations! Another reason for this apparent rudeness may be a simple lack of knowledge that English, too, has many nuances and different levels of politeness. For example, instead of saying “Could you to drive me to the store, please?”, your delegate may say, “I want go shopping.” If you feel your delegate is being rude, please gently explain how requests are phrased in English.

TECHNOLOGY

- As with youth in the United States, you can expect that your delegate will be very used to using technology.
- Be sure to set any HF rules early.





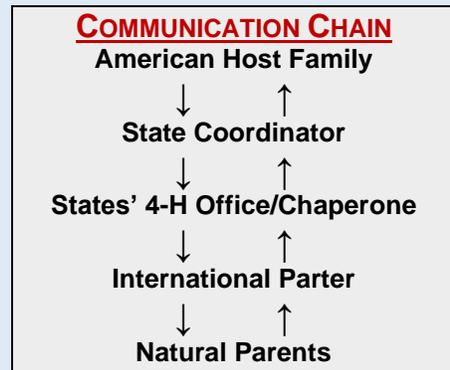
COMMON ISSUES & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

During the exchange program, there are many people involved in making sure host families and delegates have a positive experience. Nonetheless, it is possible that problems or issues might happen during the exchange.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MY DELEGATE?

1. First, try to work out the problem with the delegate and your family. If language differences create a barrier, get creative with your communication. Show the delegate what you need him/her to do. Write down simple sentences, since some delegates might understand written English better than spoken. Consult a dictionary. Have them draw pictures of what they need.
2. Contact your State Coordinator for advice. Some states have Local Coordinators available as well. With many years of experience in international programs, States' 4-H coordinators have a lot of knowledge to share.
3. If you need the assistance of a Chaperone that speaks their native language, let the State Coordinator know. Do not contact the Chaperone directly.
4. If there is something you feel that the natural parents should know about, please follow the communication chain by telling your State Coordinator. Do not contact the natural parents directly.

NOTE: Do not hesitate to contact your coordinator if you are experiencing a problem with the delegate. Small issues can become big problems if not dealt with promptly.



CASE STUDIES

Below are some descriptions of situations that have occurred in the past and how they were handled.

1. Homesickness

Incident: Host mother called the SC explaining that the delegate was crying a lot and suffering from homesickness. The delegate reported that she could not sleep at night because she felt lonely.

Solution: The SC reported to the Chaperone who encouraged the delegate to show her photo album about her family and country to the HF and told her that her trying to use English and trying to communicate with her HF would make things better for both the delegate and her HF. The Chaperone called her again a few days later, and reported that her mood had improved.

2. Lack of Interaction with Family and Host Sibling

Incident: State Coordinator received a message from the host family that their delegate refused to do anything with the HF or their children, including activities such as visiting a farmers' market, going on walks, fishing, or boating. He only wanted to spend time playing video games.



Solution: The SC requested the Chaperone to call the delegate and encourage him to interact and be more involved with the HF. After the call, the delegate's attitude was reported to have not improved and the HF requested he be taken from their home for the remainder of the program. After further discussions with the Chaperone and SC, the delegate's attitude improved. He was reported to be more kind, interactive, and shared his album and discussed about their home country with the HF more openly.

3. Delegate Behavior Issues

Incident: Delegate had moments where he did not communicate with his host parents or host sibling and displayed anger towards his host sibling. The Chaperone called and spoke with the delegate, after receiving updates from the State Coordinator, and learned that feelings were hurt during a game and he quit in anger and then remained angry for more than a week. Things continued to decline as time passed and the delegate's anger became more pronounced despite the host families patience and attempts to cheer him up.

Solution: States' 4-H and the International Parter organization spoke with the HF and delegate respectively, and helped create mutual understanding. The lead Chaperone and delegate discussed anger management, being more considerate to the HF, and about him shutting down and being non-communicative. After these discussions the delegates behavior was reported to have improved.

4. Host Family Activities/Interests

Incident: States' 4-H received a phone call from the State Coordinator regarding the delegate not wanting to join the family in any activities and spending a lot of time sleeping during the day. The SC believed the family and delegate would be a good match based on the shared interests listed on her profile, but when the host sibling suggested doing those activities together, the delegate did not want to join. The family felt confused about the situation and were worried they did something wrong.

Solution: The SC spoke with the family and Chaperone (who communicated with the delegate), they encouraged the delegate to be more open and participate in activities with the family even if she wasn't interested in doing so at that time. They also asked the delegate to be more open to expressing her feelings and interests to the family.

ADJUSTMENT ON ARRIVAL

Take your delegate into your family in much the same way you might receive a niece, nephew, or cousin. They will undoubtedly arrive a bit travel-worn, suffering from jet lag, curious, somewhat apprehensive, and perhaps a little homesick. The degree of homesickness and apprehension will vary with each individual child. Do not worry if the delegate is silent – they will talk as the feeling of strangeness wears off. Getting involved quickly with the family routine may be the best prevention for homesickness.

LANGUAGE CHALLENGES

Delegates will likely have had some basic English instruction, but speaking and understanding English will still be a challenge for them. Remember that one very important aspect of communication is non-verbal signals and cues. You can develop a heart-to-heart, deep mutual understanding even without words. Delegates are not linguistically equipped to discuss complex or abstract topics such as politics, economics, or religion. See "Delegate/Family Communication" for additional guidance.



JET LAG

In order to help the delegate adjust to the new time zone, host families should see that they keep with the host family's schedule - getting up when everybody else gets up, eating with the rest of the family, and so on. The first few days may be difficult, but sticking to a regular time schedule is important for getting the child adjusted to the new surroundings. Do not plan any family trips near the arrival date, because the delegates are still very tired from their long trip and are still getting used to the new time and climate.

Because of jet lag, delegates will often have different energy levels at different times. Help them adjust as quickly as possible by keeping them busy during the day. Activities that require moderate physical exercise are ideal.

COPING WITH HOMESICKNESS

Many delegates do experience some homesickness during the first few days of the exchange while they are adjusting and overcoming jet-lag. Most delegates will begin to feel better within the first week of the exchange. In order to ease the transition into your family rhythms, consider:

- Review the delegate's application and consider planning an activity they enjoy
- Let your coordinator know if you think it would be helpful to have a chaperone call and speak with your delegate in their language
- Plan activities to keep the delegate busy, but don't over-program as your delegate will still be tired
- Play games that don't require English, or ask the delegate to show you a game from their culture
- Offer your delegate a hug!

THE NEED TO ADJUST

One comment sometimes mentioned by delegates is, "I don't like to see my host family fighting and yelling."

Although you should be aware that this aspect of your lifestyle may be difficult for your delegate, there is no need to drastically alter your patterns. By the end of the exchange, they may come to realize that it is our culture's way of encouraging independent thinking. Basically, your family should follow its usual routine so your delegate can learn to understand you.

At the same time, cultural differences may require some adjustments on both sides. This is the essence of the experience. **Exchanges are a two-way street to improve understanding of others and ourselves.** As a host family, you are the key to such understanding because the visitor has the opportunity to learn about a different way of life by living it with you.

We do have an occasional disappointing experience for a family or for a child. In these cases, neither party is usually "bad" or "wrong." Think of the exchange experience as a blind date...sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't! Fortunately, though, bad hosting experiences are not standard. Should a problem develop, contact your State Coordinator. Adult Chaperones are also available to help with misunderstandings.

BOYFRIENDS AND GIRLFRIENDS

If you are hosting an older delegate, and your own child has a boyfriend or girlfriend, please be sensitive and make sure that your delegate does not feel left out. The delegate should not be sitting at home alone at night while the host sibling is out with a boyfriend or girlfriend.





FAMILIARIZING YOUR DELEGATE WITH YOUR HOME AND ROUTINES

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS & PERSONAL SPACE

It is not necessary for the delegate to have a private room, but they must have their own bed or mattress. Some delegates are happier sharing rooms and are less likely to become frightened or homesick at night when not left all alone in a room.

It is important that your delegate be provided an area for personal use. Clean out one or two drawers and/or a shelf and indicate that this is for his/her use. The delegate is responsible for keeping his/her passport and other important items safe and secure.

If your child has a sleep-over planned with friends during the exchange, offer to host it at your house. Since the parents of your child's friends have not gone through a background check screening, the delegate is not permitted to spend the night at their house.

Special Note: Please see the "Safety" section of this handbook for information about bunk beds.

SHOES

Wearing shoes into the house may or may not be very strange for the delegate – be sure to communicate with them what is allowed when it comes to footwear in the home.

BATH / SHOWER

Take special care to go over instructions on how to use the bath/toilet, as the delegate's bathing customs and actual bathing facilities can be very different from those in your home.

If they use a shower, please carefully explain how to combine hot & cold water. Make sure that the delegate understands that the shower curtain must be inside the tub. Also, please inform the delegate of a limited hot water supply (if that is the case).

FOR HOST FAMILIES OF FEMALE DELEGATES

Depending on their age, some female delegates may be on their monthly periods during the homestay. Please show your exchange daughter where menstrual supplies are kept and how they should be disposed of. Emphasize, if appropriate, not to flush them down the toilet. Girls who experience their period may have been given information about the menstrual cycle during school, or their mothers might have already explained it to them. As in America, though, not all mothers are as thorough as they could be on this topic. Please ensure that your delegate feels informed and comfortable with your procedures. An adult Chaperone may be telephoned to assist in translating.



CHORES

Delegates in this exchange have been told that as a member of their host family, they will be expected to help with household duties. It might not come naturally to them to bring dishes to the sink, prepare their own drinks, or serve themselves at mealtime.

Assign chores to your delegate as you would your own children. Have your delegate do the chores with their host siblings. Since the delegate may have little or no experience with household chores, they may need to be shown how to do specific tasks around the house (how to do the dishes, prepare their own snacks, where to bring the laundry, and so on).

FOOD PREPARATION

It is possible that your delegate comes from a culture in which children do not prepare or serve themselves food; mothers do. Delegates could be used to being served not only their meals at regular hours, but also all snacks. In many countries, it is considered impolite to open the refrigerator in someone else's house and take food out. Children may also not be used to making choices for mealtime, as the mother may be in charge of deciding what the children will eat.

However, in American homes, children often prepare their own lunches and help themselves to food when they want a snack. Take special care to see that the delegate is getting enough to eat. Teach the delegate how to make a sandwich or other snacks. Let your delegate know he/she may "raid the refrigerator" when hungry if the rest of your family does. Let the child know what can be eaten when they are hungry.



EATING SCHEDULE

Ask your delegate about their eating schedule at home, as it may be more or less formal/scheduled than in your home. In American households, mealtimes may be more irregular (brunches, picnics, snacks), and meals may be eaten at the kitchen counter, in the car, or in front of the TV. Follow your normal eating pattern but do tell your delegate about your family's system (or lack thereof). If there is a change of eating schedule, simply tell the delegate.





CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG

It is difficult to define what 'culture' is or how it influences our behavior. Often when you ask someone "tell me about your culture?" they will list and describe film, music, food and other objects. However, these could be considered 'cultural products' or our 'surface culture'. What about the belief systems, values, nonverbal norms, and attitudes? These are harder to list and define. We may not even recognize this type of culture because we have not been exposed to other cultures. Thinking about culture as an iceberg helps to differentiate between our visible, surface culture and our invisible, deep culture.

Just like a ship hitting an iceberg, when cross cultural conflict occurs it happens underneath the surface, our belief systems collide. When we experience behaviors that we do not understand and perhaps do not agree with, it is due to a difference in belief systems. Understanding this concept can create empathy as we realize that it is extremely difficult to change one's deeply-seated belief system and that our attitudes are also defined and difficult to reshape. Rather, accepting that differences exist can turn a situation of conflict into one of empathy.

Knowing what you know from the previous pages about your delegate's culture you can see that the United States and their home country have different cultural icebergs. The behaviors of your visitor come from a cultural belief system that has been shaped by different influences than yours. Have patience, strive for empathy, and take the opportunity to really learn about your visitor and where he/she comes from.

The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional load: relatively low

food • dress • music •
visual arts • drama • crafts
dance • literature • language
celebrations • games

Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional load: very high

Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

Emotional load: intense

courtesy • contextual conversational patterns • concept of time
personal space • rules of conduct • facial expressions
nonverbal communication • body language • touching • eye contact
patterns of handling emotions • notions of modesty • concept of beauty
courtship practices • relationships to animals • notions of leadership
tempo of work • concepts of food • ideals of childrearing
theory of disease • social interaction rate • nature of friendships
tone of voice • attitudes toward elders • concept of cleanliness
notions of adolescence • patterns of group decision-making
definition of insanity • preference for competition or cooperation
tolerance of physical pain • concept of "self" • concept of past and future
definition of obscenity • attitudes toward dependents • problem-solving
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

Indiana Department of Education • Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education • www.doc.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning





LIVING IN ANOTHER CULTURE

ACROSS CULTURES

Anyone traveling overseas for more than just a vacation experiences some culture shock, and your delegate will probably experience it to some degree. What is culture shock? How can you help?

The country of "X"

Imagine you are visiting a country called "X". In this country people eat one meal instead of three. They sleep during the daytime and are awake at night. They do not go to work or school, but have parades, dance, and trade stories all night long. Because they sleep during the day, their houses have no windows. The best bed in the house is always given to the dog, because dogs are considered holy in that culture.

Silly as these customs appear, imagine how you would feel about each of them. How would you adapt? The exaggerated example can help you understand what "culture shock" is like. Sometimes your delegate will feel as if the United States is almost as strange as the country of "X"!

Growing up, we learn a lot of "rules" for dealing with everyday situations. We are taught when to shake hands, what to say when we meet people, when (and if) to give tips, how to give orders in a restaurant. We know when people are being serious and when they are joking. A child knows when adults are tolerant and when they "really mean it". To be in your own culture is very comfortable. But when you enter a strange culture, you will be surprised at how many little "rules" have disappeared. That's why you experience culture shock.

Culture shock is the feeling of disorientation a person feels when visiting another culture. It is the awareness that one's familiar ways of behaving are no longer appropriate or functional.

Host Family Survival Kit, by Nancy King and Ken Huff, gives this advice for helping your delegate deal with culture shock.

1. First of all, you should simply be *aware* of culture shock. For the visiting delegate, behavior which was logical, proper and correct back home doesn't always "work" in the U.S. Of course, this is part of the fun and excitement of discovering a new culture. But it can also lead to some confusion, since everything can seem upside down and backwards! If your delegate seems to spend a lot of time on the sidelines (especially at first), remember that he's just trying to make head or tails of it all. Your delegate will sometimes feel as if he's trying to put together two gigantic jigsaw puzzles (one representing the United States and one representing their country) whose pieces have become thoroughly intermingled.
2. Accept culture shock as real. You can compare the situation to one in which a friend complains about motion sickness on an airplane. In such a situation, you would not accuse your friend of exaggerating, and would sympathize if he felt a little "out of sorts" or uncommunicative. You would not feel responsible for having caused the discomfort and would not feel responsible for making it go away. Similarly, you should not feel responsible for your delegate's culture shock. You should show your delegate sympathy and try to minimize any additional stress factors until the temporary condition passes. The delegate is likely to be more "up" on some days than on others.



3. You may notice that your delegate likes to spend time alone in his room. This is very common among delegates and should not be taken as a sign of rejection. Remember that being surrounded by a foreign language is tiring. Your delegate needs time to rest and absorb everything he's seen and learned. In the unlikely event that the delegate spends an *excessive* amount of time in his room, he might be suffering from severe homesickness. He might like to speak to the chaperone about his feelings.
4. Don't be surprised if your delegate sometimes thinks the American ways of doing things are not as good as their culture's ways. A person traveling overseas cannot help but be constantly comparing cultures and cannot help but see his own culture as "normal". You would probably feel the same way if you went to their home country. But please don't "put down" your delegate or their country/culture. Rather, explain that customs may be different, but one is not necessarily better than the other. Please be sensitive to your guest and do not put down their culture.
5. Remember that misinterpretations can occur, because what is proper behavior in one culture may not necessarily be proper behavior in another. After a few days, you and your delegate will grow accustomed to one another, and find you can communicate your feelings quite well. But at the beginning, try to be tolerant of misunderstandings.
6. When your delegate first arrives, they may be tired from traveling. Don't plan too much the first day, to avoid over-stimulation. Sometimes host families are a little hurt by what they perceive as a lack of excitement on the part of the delegate. "Sure, he's a little tired from traveling," the family thinks, "but if he really wanted to, he could overcome it and enjoy it." Remember that on the first day, the delegate has arrived physically, but that's about all. He may have a strange, free-floating feeling, even though he's glad to meet you and see your home. Let him have plenty of rest the first few days.
7. Remember that your own children may have reactions, too. They'll probably understand that a delegate needs extra attention, but this also means there's less time for them. They also have to get used to the fact that they have less privacy (especially if a bedroom is being shared). Help them realize that sharing involves both losing and gaining.

Some more about that word "culture"

There's a saying: if you want to know about water, don't ask a fish. This may seem strange -- doesn't a fish know more about water than anybody? But a fish lives, sleeps, and breathes water until he is no longer aware of it. He's never experienced anything *other* than water; he doesn't realize the water is cold because he has never experienced heat. He doesn't even know his own skin is wet because he has never experienced dryness!

Similarly, if you want to know about American culture, don't ask an American! Our country's culture is all around us; we've absorbed it from storybooks, television shows, advertisements. You probably have never thought seriously about yourself *as an American*, but when you have a delegate, you'll find you think about it a lot.

The following excerpts are from survival booklets designed for foreigners coming to the United States. The foreigners are being told what to expect from those strange creatures -- Americans!

"Americans are very open and friendly to newcomers. This is probably because they themselves are highly mobile and have adapted to this by developing skills which allow them to make new friends quickly. Their initial warmth does not, however, mean that they are interested in pursuing a long, intimate relationship with you... Don't be disappointed if someone says "I'll call you" and never does, or suggests that you "come over sometime" and never invites you.



"Many Americans are uncomfortable with silence, and they tend to take silence in a conversation to indicate that they need to start talking. Delegates often study with music playing in the background, and people working around the house will often have the television or radio on "to keep them company." If you are silent in a conversation or gathering for a long time, Americans will try to "draw you out" (get you to talk) and may even ask if you are all right or if there is anything they can do to help you."

--*Living in the United States, The Experiment for International Living*

"Americans tend to value their individuality, to think themselves the equal of any man or woman, and to believe they are masters of their own destiny. They feel free to speak their minds on most subjects and are often astonishingly frank in expressing political opinions, cherishing above all rights the freedom of speech guaranteed by the Constitution. They are direct in their communications; they ask questions when they need information; they say no when they mean no.

"Most notable is the questioning spirit that permeates the classroom. From their earliest school years, American children are taught to speak up when they do not understand what the teacher is saying -- or even if they hold a different opinion. By the time they reach university age, the habit is firmly entrenched."

--*Guide for Visiting Fulbright Scholars, Council for International Exchange of Scholars*

These excerpts are fascinating for a number of reasons. First of all, an American who has never left the country may be amazed that the traits described are not universal. Isn't it *natural* to say no when you mean no? Isn't it natural for a delegate to speak up when he or she doesn't understand something?

It seems natural to us. Sometimes we think of American values as *human* values; we think everyone shares them! This is understandable if we have never lived elsewhere.

In a survey, Newsweek magazine asked people from 6 countries to look at a list of 14 characteristics and choose which ones they most and least associated with Americans. Write an "X" next to each word you think describes American culture. When you are finished (no peeking!) look on the next page to see how your answers agreed with those of the citizens of South Korea, France and other countries.

Friendly _____
Sophisticated _____
Honest _____
Rude _____
Greedy _____
Inventive _____
Industrious _____

Energetic _____
Sexy _____
Lazy _____
Self-indulgent _____
Intelligent _____
Nationalistic _____
Decisive _____



Characteristics **most** often associated with Americans:

FRANCE sees us as:

Industrious
Energetic
Inventive
Decisive
Friendly

JAPAN sees us as:

Nationalistic
Friendly
Decisive
Rude
Self-indulgent

BRAZIL sees us as:

Intelligent
Inventive
Energetic
Industrious
Greedy

GREAT BRITAIN sees us as:

Friendly
Self-indulgent
Energetic
Industrious
Nationalistic

Think about your own stereotypes of the cultures above. How much of your view of other people is determined by the fact that you are seeing them through American eyes? Every culture sees itself as central, as "normal." If we think we have the *normal* amount of flag-waving patriotism, we might claim that other people don't love their country enough. They, on the other hand, may see us as dangerously nationalistic.

A great American writer expressed it this way:

"I've often thought there ought to be a manual to hand to little kids, telling them what kind of planet they're on... called "Welcome to Earth"... and one thing I would really like to tell them about is cultural relativity. I didn't learn until I was in college about all the other cultures, and I should have learned it in first grade.

A first grader should understand that his or her culture isn't a rational invention; that there are thousands of other cultures and they all work pretty well; that all cultures function on faith rather than truth; that there are lots of alternatives to our own society."

--- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.





States' 4-H International Exchange Programs

1-206-462-2200
exchange@states4H.org

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